

**CHANGING SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND HEALTH
PRACTICES: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF
MALAYALIS, YELAGIRI HILLS, TAMIL NADU**

**Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
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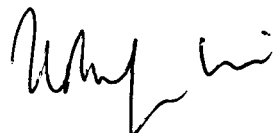
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CERTIFICATE

This dissertation entitled “**Changing Social Institutions and Health Practices: An Ethnographic Study of Malayalis, Yelagiri Hills, Tamil Nadu**”, is submitted in partial fulfillment of six credits for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (M. Phil)** of this university. This dissertation has not been submitted for award of any other degree of this university or any other university and is my original work.


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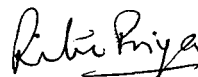
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Dedicated to

my parents & sisters

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDMK	<i>Annaiithu India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam</i>
CRHSE	Centre for Rural Health and Social Education
DMK	<i>Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam</i>
EDP	Electronic Data Processing
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ICDC	Immanuel Child Development Centre
LAMPS	Large scale <i>Adivasi</i> Multipurpose Societies
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
OPD	Out Patient Department
PHC	Primary Health Centre
SC	Scheduled Castes
SHG	Self Help Group
ST	Scheduled Tribes
THADCO	Tamil Nadu Housing and <i>Adi-Dravidar</i> Corporation
VAO	Village Administrative Officer
VHN	Village Health Nurse

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

History has shown that no society is static. Societies are dynamic and change due to different factors. Anthropologists who believed in unilinear evolution of human being stated that all societies move from simple to complex whereas multilineal evolutionists theorized that societies develop through different stages. Currently, one can see the societies and culture of varied stages on one hand, we have small bands tribes which are still living in hunting and gathering and shifting cultivation on the other are the societies which have become advanced in all spheres economically, socially, technologically and politically.

Tribes across the world have been dependent on the natural resources and also protectors of the immediate environment. Due to the abundance of rich and natural resources around them, they have been exploited by the more powerful outsiders whether it is by building dam, mining or promoting tourism.

This chapter first of all would look into the concepts of tourism and tribes, tribal researches in India, different tribal development policies adopted from time to time and further it highlights the areas of tribal research, a brief chapterization, and limitation and scope of the study.

Exploratory research design was adopted for the study of the changing phenomena in social institutions and health practices that are influenced by tourism and related developmental activities. Qualitative techniques and ethnographic methods such as non-participant observation, interviews and focus group discussions were used. Two villages of Yelagiri Hills namely, Athanavoor and Poonganoor were purposefully selected.

The planned development efforts brought with them various mega projects in the tribal lands which not only displaced the tribes from their settlements but also forced to integrate with the mainstream population. The introduction of tourism in the tribal area had further increased the distress and misery by loosing their rights over lands, livelihood, culture, traditions, etc. There are number of studies undertaken in the field of social anthropology and sociology which explored their

culture and social problems. But no empirical work has been done on the issue to describe the implications of tourism on tribal institutions and their health practices. Hence, this study has a greater relevance in present context of assimilation and transformation.

Tourism and Tribes: A Review

Nash highlights that the anthropological study on tourism is still in its infancy. To him, any definition of tourism should have a tourist at the centre. From this point of view he cites Boyer who records the first emergence of tourism in the 18th century in the form of a young English gentleman travelling abroad with a tutor. MacCannell has adopted sightseeing definition of tourism in which the tourists are the typical modern man. Sightseeing is considered as touristic and the sightseer 'who lie on the beach, walk, ski, shop, swim, sleep, race, visit, or pursuer a host of other activities' are also called tourists.¹ Cohen provides a conceptual clarification to tourism that 'involves voluntary, nonrecurrent, novelty-seeking, temporary travelling or sojourning'.² According to Nash, there can be no tourism without leisured travelers, he further adds, 'where travel and leisure intersect, tourists and tourism are produced'.³

Cohen categorized eight varieties of conceptual approaches to tourism. He describes tourism as a commercialized hospitality, a democratized travel, a modern leisure activity, a modern variety of the traditional pilgrimage, an expression of basic culture themes, an acculturative process a type of ethnic relations and as a form of neo-colonialism. According to him, the sociology of tourism has four principal issue areas namely, the tourists, the relations between tourists and the locals, the structure and functioning of tourists system, and the consequences of tourism. While reviewing the impact studies he categorizes them into eight major topics: foreign exchange, income, employment, prices, the

¹ Nash, Dennison., 1981, "Tourism as an Anthropological Subject", *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 22(5) Oct., 461-481.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

distribution of benefits, ownership and control, development, and government revenue.⁴

Tourism benefits those locals who are directly involved in it and creates hardships and distress for the rest of populations. Development of tourism involves the penetration of outsiders that leads to dislocations. Tourism does not engender linkages with agriculture which institutionalizes the structural underdevelopment. The socio-cultural impacts of tourism, he classifies them under ten major topics: community involvement in wider frameworks, the nature of interpersonal relations, the bases of social organization, the rhythm of social life, migration, the division of labour, stratification, the distribution of power, deviance, and customs and the arts.⁵ Even though Cohen's contribution to the study of tourism is noteworthy, his unit of analysis focuses only on the international tourism which may not have the characteristics of rural tourism promoted in India.

Tribes in India

The social categories in terms of religion, territory, language and caste were reinforced during the British rule through their enumerations and classification of the population. A new category of tribe was added to the existing categories. The category of tribe has been described as the colonial construction.⁶ Britishers meant the term tribe as to refer a group of people claiming descent from a common ancestor and to the people or the communities living in primitive or barbarous conditions.⁷ There is no mutual acceptance among the social scientists. There has been an ongoing debate in conceptualizing the social group. The confusion in the use of the terms tribe, indigenous people, aboriginal people, simple society, traditional society, adivasi, etc. exists although there are slight differences between these terms. Majumdar defines,

⁴ Cohen, Erik., 1984, "The sociology of Tourism: Approaches, Issues, and Finds", *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 10, 373-392.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Singh, K. S., 1993, "The Problem" in "Marginalized Tribals", *Seminar*, 412.

⁷ Hasnain, Nadeem., 1983, *Tribal India Today*, Harman Publication: New Delhi.

A tribe is a social group with territorial affiliation, endogamous, with no specialization of functions, ruled by tribal officers, hereditary or otherwise, united in language or dialect, recognizing social distance from other tribes or castes but without any stigma attached in the case of a caste structure, following tribal tradition, beliefs and customs, illiberal of naturalization of ideas from alien sources; above all conscious of a homogeneity of ethnic and territorial integration.⁸

The tribal population in India is spread over the country with the exception of Panjab, Hariyana, Jammu and Kashmir, Chandigarh, Delhi and Pondicherry. Tribes are classified on the basis of their (i) regions namely Himalayan region, middle India, western India, south India, and Islands; (ii) ecological habitat such as hill, forest, rural plains, urban and industrial area; (iii) language, namely Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austric and Tibeto-Burman; (iv) physical traits like Negrito, Austrloid, Mongoloid, Dravidian, and Aryan; and (v) size of tribal communities.⁹ The tribal population in India is a distinct from each other by their identities or ethnic and cultural configurations.

According to Nayak, the tribal people have a distinct identity which is different from national, religious, political and social groups and they are described as ‘a distinct product of colonial history, have an ethnic identity, an enlightened culture, a group psychology, a survival economy and customary politics’.¹⁰

Vidyarthi traces the stages of tribal research development in India as (i) formative phase (1874 to 1919) during this period the Asiatic Society of Bengal carried out several studies on social categories and made inventories of castes and tribes in the form of handbooks, monographs, gazetteers; (ii) constructive phase (1920-49) during this period anthropology was introduced in the Indian universities; and (iii) analytical phase (1950 onwards) several action oriented studies were initiated by the Anthropological Survey of India, Universities and Tribal research institutes.¹¹ Majumdar also categorises these studies into three phases, namely, formulatory

⁸ Cited in Hasnain, Nadeem. 1983. *Tribal India Today*, Harman Publication: New Delhi.

⁹ Xaxa, Virginius., 2003, *Tribes in India*, In *The Oxford Indian Companion to Sociology and Social Anthropology*, Veena das (ed.), New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 380.

¹⁰ Nayak, R. K., 2002, “Identity, Development and Politics of Tribal and Indigenous Peoples of Eastern India: Some Reflections”, paper submitted at Indigenous Rights in the Commonwealth Project South & South East Asia Regional Expert Meeting, Indian Confederation of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ICITP) India, New Delhi: India International Centre. 11th - 13th March 2002.

¹¹ *Ibid.* no. 9.

(1774-1911), constructive (1912-1937) and critical (1938 onwards). These classifications comparatively similar with slight change in terminology of two of the three phases and the period of all the three phases, especially the third phase.¹²

The colonial administration allowed Christian Missionaries to function in the tribal areas. Colonial power required cheap labour for their plantations and soldiers for its army. So, tribal studies were encouraged to have the knowledge about the tribal culture to extent their domination in these regions. British rulers initiated a series of studies - undertaken by Dalton, Risely, Thurston, Enthoven, Crooke, Russell who probed into social and religious life, political and economic organizations, and behavioural patterns of tribals in India.¹³

Carstairs studied the misunderstandings difference between the points of view of the western doctor and the village folk with regard to 'different theories of etiology, different techniques of cure and different conceptions of the role of the physician'.¹⁴ Marriott studied the medical practice and practitioners in Kishan Garhi, a village in Uttar Pradesh. It analysed the socio-cultural problems involved in introducing the western medicine.¹⁵

Tribal development was initiated during the British rule in India in the inaccessible hilly regions. Realizing the nature of tribes the British adopted the policy of segregation and maintained the tribal regions as prohibited area.¹⁶ After independence, India treated tribals as homogeneous and backward. The policy of isolation manifested the initial schemes and programmes. Special attention was given to the welfare of the tribal people. Verrier Elwin favoured the policy and suggested a sort of "National Park" to keep the tribals away from the mainstream population, later he realized it is impractical and ludicrous. Nehru opposed the

¹² Padmanabha, P., 1978, Indian Census and Anthropological Investigations, Xth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences. Government of India.

¹³ Ibid. no. 7.

¹⁴ Carstairs, G. M., 1955, Medicine and Faith in Rural Rajasthan, in *Health, Culture and Community*, B. D. Paul. Russell Sage Foundation: New York, p. 107-134.

¹⁵ Marriott, Mckim., 1955. Western Medicine in a Village of Northern India, in *Health, Culture and Community*, B. D. Paul. Russell Sage Foundation: New York.

¹⁶ Singh K S 1982 "Transformation of Tribal Society: Integration Vs Assimilation", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XVII, No. 33, pp. 1318-40.

policy of treating the tribals as the “anthropological specimen”. Hence, policy of assimilation was adopted which rules out any special treatment to the tribals and advocated complete absorption of tribal culture, customs and traditions in the mainstream.¹⁷ Nehru came out with ‘Panchasheel’ policy for tribals. According to his view on tribal development, “(i) people should develop alone on the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them; (ii) tribal right in land and forest should be protected; (iii) we should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development; (iv) we should not over-administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through and not in rivalry to their own social and cultural institutions; and (v) we should judge results not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the quality of human life that is evolved.¹⁸ The tribal population in India, besides their fragile socio economic conditions, have numerous problems. Poverty, indebtedness and land alienation are the most dominant problems. Nayak categorizes these problems as historical, demographic, cultural, psychological, economic and political. Therefore he calls for a model which is organic, humanistic, people-oriented and holistic to solve the problems of these tribes.¹⁹

The interest of sociologists and social anthropologists related to tribals health focused on health and culture; food-habits and environment; medicine, health and community; fertility and mortality among the tribals; interaction of traditional and modern system of medicine at various levels; and traditional tribal medicine.²⁰

There are voluminous studies available on tribal life but surprisingly no study was undertaken to relate the promotion of tourism and the related social change among tribals.

¹⁷ Ibid. no. 7.

¹⁸ Ibid. no. 9.

¹⁹ Ibid no. 10.

²⁰ Chaudhuri, Buddadeb., 1986, Medical Anthropology in India with Special Reference to Tribal Population, in *Tribal Health: Socio-Cultural Dimensions*, Buddadeb Chaudhuri, (ed.), Inter-India Publication: New Delhi, pp. 3-11.

The present study on Malayali tribes of Yelagiri Hills, Vellore district, Tamil Nadu was completed with the aim to explore the changing social institutions due to tourism and related development; and to describe the implications on health practices of the tribe.

Chapterization

The study is presented in five chapters. Chapter one deals with concepts of tourism and tribes, tribal research and tribal development policies. Second chapter presents short notes on tribes in Tamil Nadu, the touristic destinations in Yelagiri hills and a profile about Malayali tribe. It also presents methodology adopted for this study. A brief description of tourism in Yelagiri hills, origin of Malayalis and changing social institutions including family, marriage, education, religion and culture, status of woman, political economic aspects etc. are presented in third chapter. The healthcare practices including causation of diseases/illness and tribal responses, traditional healers, herbal treatment, reproductive health practices, healthcare providers, etc. are analyzed in chapter four. Finally, chapter five presents the concluding observations.

Limitations and Scope for Further Research

Since the study is the part of M. Phil dissertation very little time was spent in the field. The research explores the social changes of Malayali tribes at a peripheral level. However, prolonged field work ^{would} helped to probe various aspects of tribal life, their history further enhancing the richness of data. This is purely an exploratory and a descriptive study of particular tribe. There is a great scope to do an analytical study in trying to understand the historical changes and influence of outsiders on the Malayali tribes and bringing out the association/~~on~~ impact of the tourism on the lives of the people of Malayali tribe.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

Tribes in Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu has two geographical divisions namely the eastern coastal line and the mountainous region of the north and west. The later includes the important hill ranges of Tamil Nadu i.e. Jawadhi hills, Yelagiri hills, Kalrayan hills, Pachamalai, Kolli Malai, Yercaud hills, Anamalai, Sitteri hills and Palani Malai. ¹

There were 36 Scheduled Tribes (ST)² in Tamil Nadu according to Census of India 1991³ with tribal population of 5.74 lakhs. Among the 36 Schedule tribes, six are recognized as the Primitive Tribal Groups accounting 18.3 per cent of total tribal population of the state. They are Todas, Kota, Kurumba, Paniyan, Irular, and Kattunayaken. The first four tribes exclusively live in the Nilgiri district and Irular and Kattunayaken are living in the districts of Nilgiris, Kancheepuram, Madurai, Thiruvarur, Nagapattinam, Thiruvallur and Vellore. Thirteen tribes are identified as Dispersed Tribal Groups inhabiting in different districts accounting 11.5 percent of total tribal population. About 3.07 percent comprising 16 tribal communities are declared as controversial and untraceable tribes in Tamil Nadu. Malayalis and Irulas are the two tribal communities accounting highest tribal population in the state. The remaining tribal communities are very small by their numerical strength.

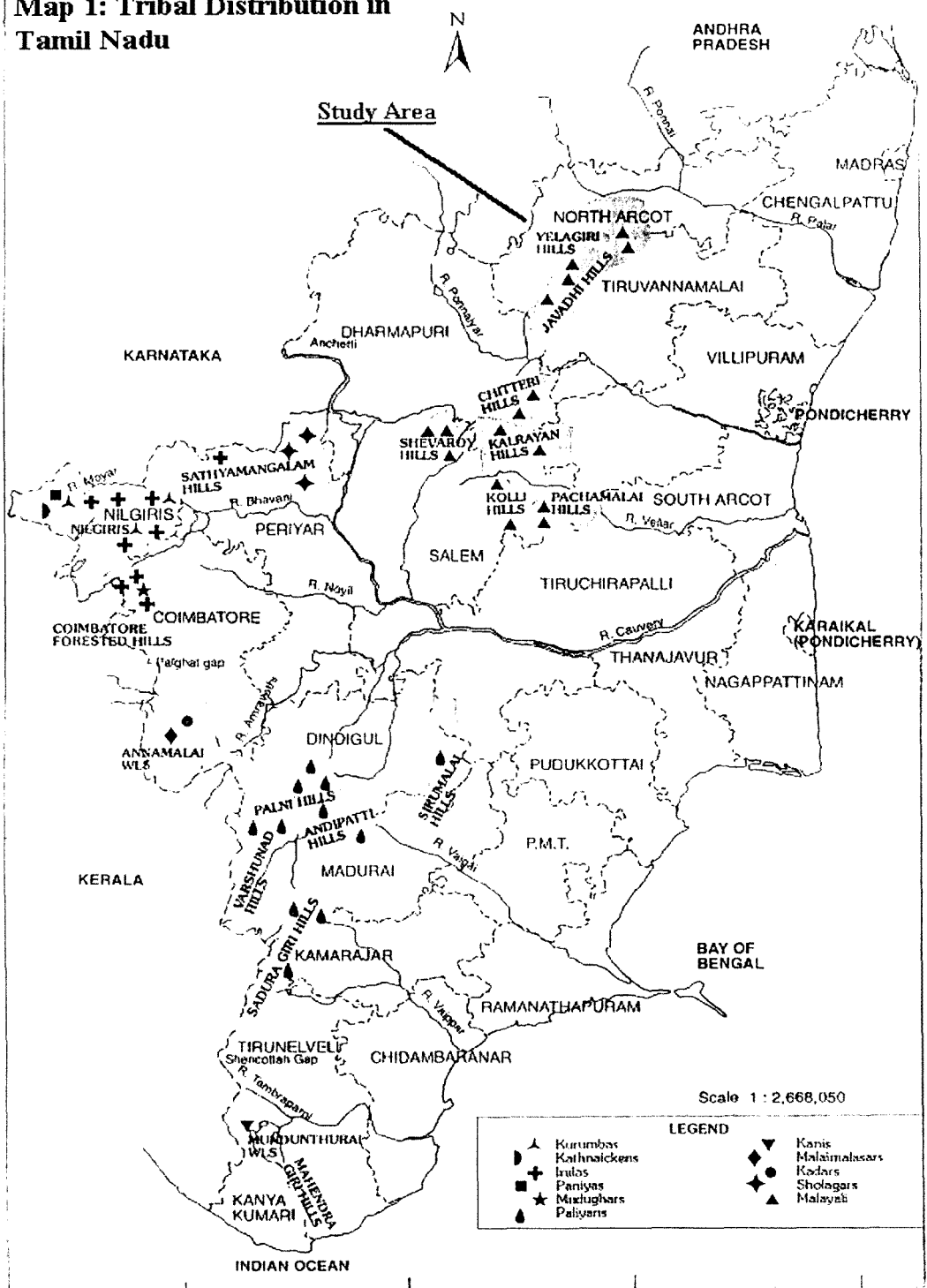
Map 1 shows the distribution of Kurumbas, Kattunaicken, Irulas, Paniyas, Mudugar, Piliyan, Kani, Mala Malasar, Kada, Sholaga and Malayali tribes in the state.

¹ Karuppaiyan. E., 2000, Alienation of Tribal Lands in Tamil Nadu: Panel Data Analysis. *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 9, p. 3344

² Considering primitive traits, distinctive culture, shyness with the community at large, geographical isolation and socio-economic backwardness of a group or a community is notified as Scheduled Tribes notified under Article 342 of the Constitution by the President of India after consulting the Governor of respective State of Union territory. <http://www.tribal.nic.in> accessed on 05 June 2005.

³ Census of India, 1991, Special Tables on Scheduled Tribes Series 23 Tamil Nadu Part VIII (II) Vol. 1, Chennai: Directorate of Census Operation, Tamil Nadu.

Map 1: Tribal Distribution in Tamil Nadu



Source: Keystone Foundation. 2005. Tamil Nadu Empowerment and Poverty Reduction Project: Tribal Development Plan. Kotagiri: Keystone Foundation.

The state decadal percentage of tribal population to the state total population is declining from 1.07 in 1981 to 1.05 in 1991⁴ and 1.04 in 2003⁵. The Census of India has not been consistently maintained the list for its enumerations. Ambiguity over identification of the ethnic groups makes hurdle to have correct tribe wise population in the state.

A large majority of tribes live in the districts of Nilgiris, Salem, Namakal, Thiruvannamalai, Villupuram, Dharmapuri and Vellore. Table 2.1 gives the picture of district wise tribal population as per 2001 Census. 85 per cent of the tribals live in rural areas of which majority of the tribal communities live in hilly and forest terrains. The main occupation of these tribes is agriculture and most of them are working as labourers or collecting minor forest produce. Their agricultural employment is seasonal and often poorly paid. Exploitation by traders, tribal leaders and money lenders keep the tribes oppressed with low socio economic profile. Apart from these, unemployment, illiteracy, poverty, indebtedness, land alienation, poor health conditions, less communication facilities, poor transporting infrastructure are some of the other problems of these tribal groups encountering in their daily walks of life.

Yelagiri Hills –As Tourist Spot

Yelagiri hills are located in Eastern Ghats, 213 kilometres south west of Chennai, 91 kilometres from Vellore the district headquarter and 18 kilometres from Jollarpettai, of which 14 kilometres are mountain road having 14 hairpin bends, with few mountain viewpoints. Each bend is named after the great Tamil scholars and patrons as Paavender, Bharathiyar, Thiruvalluver, Elango, Kambar, Kabilar, Avvaiyar, Paari, Kaari, Ori, Aayi, Athiyamaan, Nalli, and Pegan. The weather in winter in Yelagiri is 11° Celsius and in summer 34° Celsius, which is considered to be the coolest place in the district. The average rainfall is 900 mm. Yelagiri in

⁴ Ibid. No. 1.

⁵ Directorate of Census Operations, 2005, Statistical Hand Book 2003, Tamil Nadu. Department of Economics and Statistics, Chennai: Government of Tamil Nadu. <http://www.tn.gov.in> accessed on 13 January 2005.

its forest has number of flora and fauna some of which are considered as the rare species. Yelagiri Hills occupies area of 29.2 sq kilometres.

Table 1: District Wise Scheduled Tribes Population by Rural and Urban Distribution

Sl. No	District	Total Population	Scheduled Tribes			% of District Total
			Rural	Urban	Total	
1	The Nilgiris	762141	19600	8773	28373	3.72
2	Salem	3016346	98722	5199	103921	3.45
3	Namakkal	1493462	50454	962	51416	3.44
4	Tiruvannamalai	2186125	69198	3562	72760	3.33
5	Villupuram	2960373	61687	2233	63920	2.16
6	Dharmapuri	2856300	57763	1786	59549	2.08
7	Vellore	3477317	58237	4803	63040	1.81
8	Tiruvallur	2754756	28885	8973	37858	1.37
9	Ariyalur	695524	7907	622	8529	1.23
10	Kancheepuram	2877468	18062	8446	26508	0.92
11	Tiruchirapalli	2418366	14383	4529	18912	0.78
12	Erode	2581500	15120	2573	17693	0.69
13	Coimbatore	4271856	19559	9544	29103	0.68
14	Perambalur	493646	2768	539	3307	0.67
15	Cuddalore	2285395	7241	4532	11773	0.52
16	Dindigul	1923014	3512	2972	6484	0.34
17	Kanniyakumari	1676034	3561	1882	5443	0.32
18	Tirunelveli	2723988	3202	5156	8358	0.31
19	Nagapattinam	1488839	1618	1802	3420	0.23
20	Tiruvarur	1169474	971	1702	2673	0.23
21	Madurai	2578201	2054	3918	5972	0.23
22	Thoothukudi	1572273	1060	2434	3494	0.22
23	Thanjavur	2216138	1302	2339	3641	0.16
24	Chennai	4343645	0	6728	6728	0.15
25	Karur	935686	1075	375	1450	0.15
26	Theni	1093950	1046	640	1686	0.15
27	Virudhunagar	1751301	953	1404	2357	0.13
28	Ramanathapuram	1187604	396	682	1078	0.09
29	Sivagangai	1155356	375	708	1083	0.09
30	Pudukkottai	1459601	432	360	792	0.05
STATE		62405679	551143	100178	651321	1.04

Source: Directorate of Census Operations, 2005, Statistical Hand Book 2003, Tamil Nadu. Department of Economics and Statistics, Chennai: Government of Tamil Nadu. <http://www.tn.gov.in> accessed on 13 January 2005.

Yelagiri was declared as the tourists spot in 1984 by the government of Tamil Nadu. Since then, various development initiatives had been undertaken and several places of interest were set up. In Poonganoor, a Lake was constructed for purpose of tourism occupying area of 56,706 sq meters with capacity of 4.86 million sq ft water⁶. The depth of the lake is between 10 to 20 meters. A concrete road around the lake was build to facilitate the tourists to move around the lake. A private boathouse is functioning in the same lake to entertain the tourists. Different species of fish is farmed and sold to the tourists. In the centre of the lake a colourful artificial fountain is constructed to beautify the lake. A Children Park is constructed nearer to the lake covering area of six acres having lawns, trees, paths, playgrounds, picnic areas and other facilities for recreational and relaxation. The Park also has a mini zoo, which is maintained by Forest Department, Tirupattur. The Department also owns a nursery where rare species of *Siddha* and *Ayurvedha* herbal plants are cultivated, but they are not for the sale. Lord Murugan Temple is another centre of attraction closer to which a community hall is built to conduct public meetings, marriage and other festivals.

A Telescopic Centre in the thirteenth hairpin bend of the mountain road is setup by the forest department, Tirupattur, at an altitude of 1000 meters. With its powerful telescope the tourists can see the distant places and even locate certain landmarks in the nearby towns.

Temple of Yelagiri Tamilannai is constructed in the seventh hairpin bend. The tourists, vehicle drivers and the tribes perform Pooja for Goddess of Tamil, Lord Ganesha and Anumaan.

Swami Malai, near Village Mangalam, is the highest hilltop in Yelagiri. Evidences for early civilization are found and preserved here. Mountain caves, Matheswaran trekking point, sun set and sun rise viewpoints, bird eye view of Kavalur Telescopic Centre and the plain land of Jawadhi rang are some of the other interested places for the tourists.

⁶ Department of Tourism, 2002, VELLORE ELAGIRI Tamil Nadu – India (Pamphlet), Chennai: Government of Tamil Nadu.

Jalagampaarai water falls, temples of Nilavoor, hotels and restaurants, guesthouses, residential schools and other educational institutions, weekly market, forest fruits and other minor produces, summer festival, and *paran* house are other centre of attraction in the hills.

There are twenty hotels, lodges and health resorts cater the boarding and lodging to the tourists. In addition to these private hotels, Yatri Nivash by the tourism development corporation is under construction to cater the needs. Three camp sites offer facilities for various training and retreat programmes with boarding and lodging. Six provision shops, seven tea shops, one hardware shop, three ice cream parlours, few nurseries, numerous fruit-stalls on the road side, one boat house canteen and numerous petty-shops and five banks involved in trade and commerce in Yelagiri. The profile of government educational institutions includes one higher secondary school, three primary schools, five crèches, seven midday meals centres, and a residential primary school for boys and girls up to Class V and a Scheduled Caste (SC) welfare hostels for boys up to Class XII. There are twelve private schools and seven hostels also cater the educational needs. There are about thirty government offices functioning in Yelagiri Hills.

Yelagiri is a Panchayat comprising fourteen villages namely, Muthanoor, Kottaiyur, Poonganoor, Athanavoor, Kottoor, Pallakanivoor, Mettukanivoor, Nilavoor, Rayaneri, Paaduvanoor, Putthur, Thaayaloor, Mangalam and Manchankolli Pudhur. This Panchayat is administratively functioning under Jollarpettai Block and Tirupattur Taluk. Malayalis are the only predominant scheduled tribe inhabits in this hilly region.

Malayalis of Yelagiri Hills – A Profile

Malayalis is the Tamil speaking community scheduled as dispersed tribal group in Tamil Nadu, mainly dwelling in isolation in the forest and hilly terrains of Dharmapuri, Vellore, Pudukottai, Villupuram, Thiruvannamalai and

Tiruchirappalli districts. Malayali⁷ is a Tamil word to denote hill dwellers, hill people, and inhabitants of the hills or the rulers of the hills. Very little is known about the history of them. They call themselves as *Malaikaran*, *Mala Gounder*, *Vellala Gounders*, *Mala Jati* and *Malayal*. It is believed that they are basically cultivators migrated from Kanchipuram⁸ to the hills of south-west Tamil Nadu a few generations ago and predominately distributed in Jawadhi hills, Yelagiri hills, Shevaroy hills, Sitteri hills, Kalrayan hills, Kolli hills and Pachamalai.

According to Thurston Malayalis have divisions among them namely, big Malayalis or Kanchi Mandalam Malayalis, little Malayalis and middle Malayalis. The big Malayalis live in the Shevaroy hills, little Malayalis in Kolli Malai and middle Malayali in Pachaimalai regions⁹. The Malayalis of the Yelagiri hills are called without prefix. The customs followed by these Malayalis at different hills do show variations that are unique to each other.

According to Census of India 1991, their population was 33,450 in Vellore district which is 67.1 percent of total tribal population of the district and 13.4 percent of total Malayali population of the state accounting for about six percent of the total scheduled tribe population in the state. Salem district has the largest Malayali population than Vellore and Dharmapuri districts.

It is the forest economy in which Malayalis inhabit depending on the utilization of various forest resources. Practice of barter was existed until recent times. They were self sufficient with their local resources except oil, cloth and salt. In exchange of the minor forest produces they used to buy these commodities from

⁷ Singh K. S., 1994, *The Scheduled Tribes*, Delhi: Oxford University Press

⁸ Elderly Malayalis described that Periyanna was responsible for such migration. He fell in love with a Bhramin girl so he was exiled with his family and migrated into the southwest forests and hills. Similarly another legendary story reveals that due to the fear of Tipu Sultan's invasion in late 17th century, a group of farmers under the leadership of Shevarayan from the bank of river Cauvery in the Krishnagiri was fled to the hills and settled down in the Shevaroy hills. Thus the hill is known as Shevarayan hill. Later, the group moved to the neighbouring hills viz. Jawadhi, Pachamalai, Chitteri, Kalvaran etc.

⁹ Thurston. Edgar and Rangachari. K., 1909 (reprint 1993), *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol. IV, New Delhi: Asian Educational Series, p. 407.

the weekly market in Kodyur. However the infrastructural development had facilitated to have the weekly market in Yelagiri hills since 1980s.

Their main economic activity is agriculture, cattle rearing and poultry. A great majority of them own at least a small piece of agricultural land. They supplement their income by collecting minor forest produces and by working as labourers with forest department. Women equally take part in economic activity. Monsoon failures increased unemployment that forced them to change their tradition occupation. A large majority of Malayalis including both men and women are commuting daily to the nearest towns for mason work. Educated youth and government employed Malayalis mostly migrate to their working places. However, they keep their identities and linkages with Yelagiri and tribal tradition.

Malayalis were shifting cultivators then become settled cultivators. They cultivate *samai, ragi, thinai, Kambu* and *maize* and a few vegetables for their local needs. But due to the changes that brought out by the process of modernization and the contacts with outside population they had started cultivating paddy and certain other cash crops such as rose, pepper, coffee, plantain, sugarcane, mustard, *kadukaai, daniaya, yellu*, and tapioca.

PROBLEM FORMULATION

Tribes in India constituting about 8 per cent of the total population had been subjected to oppression and exploitation for several years even after independence. They had been facing various social and economic problems such as poverty, hunger, unemployment, exploitation, illiteracy, inequality, discrimination, remoteness, exclusion, deprivation, alienation of land and forest, indebtedness, bonded labour, lack of food, shelter, clothing, malnutrition, poor sanitation, unsafe drinking water, etc.

Against this backdrop, tribal development is given national importance and protection and promotion of the welfare of the scheduled tribe is one of the constitutional provisions. Numerous schemes had been introduced by the central

and state governments namely, Community Development Programmes, Multipurpose Tribal Development Schemes, Integrated Tribal Development Projects, 20 Point Programmes with special reference to tribals, integrated rural development programme, Tribal Sub Plans and Hill Area Development Programmes. Moreover, number of non governmental organizations also had been actively involved in uplifting the tribes in our country. But their status and problems have not changed remarkably. Tracing the reasons and accepting the critiques of development thinkers the tribal development strategies had been changes accordingly aiming to achieve maximum community participation. However, the outreach by programmes and the utilization and accessibility of these programmes remains limited. Certain pockets of tribal settlements and few tribal groups even in the project area had been neglected. Their oppression and exploitation never come to an end. Transformation and liberation in terms of social and economic development need urgent appraisal. The development initiatives must consider the uniqueness of the people, their knowledge and their culture.

Tourism was promoted as an industry by the state in the places where people had attraction due to its climate, physical features, availability of forest resources, etc. Some of these tourist spots had been the home for many tribal settlements. Tourism is considered as a developmental initiative for the regional development, social and economic transformation of the local people.

The research problem is formulated on the basis of linkages between tourism and tribal health. Tourism is hypothetically considered as an engine that has brought out changes among Malayalis of Yelagiri hills. The study tried to explore various changes like (i) social change such as educational attainment, women empowerment, better housing, drinking water and sanitation, social consciousness, etc. (ii) economic change namely, employment opportunities, increase in family and individual income, etc. (iii) cultural change such as the change in the marriage pattern, child rearing practices, health seeking behaviour, food habits, clothing, etc. and (iv) political changes for instance, changes in social

organization, local self administration, political affiliations, etc. and (v) changes in the health practices are interlinked with tourism and related development carried out in Yelagiri hills.

RESEARCH ISSUES

Tourism as the development initiative had never been studied by any as to document its impact on tribal life. Tourism can grow only in the places where it can attract the tourists by its physical features such as coastal, water falls, caves, hill stations, forests, etc. Nevertheless, tourism had been introduced in certain pockets of tribal settlement. Considering the above reasons, the impact of tourism on tribal life had never been the interest of researchers. If the tribal population is culturally rigid and socially isolated and economically self reliant the society is hardly affected by tourism or the intrusion of non tribals. But in the case of transforming societies which are dynamic, any intervention would definitely bring changes. These changes may be favourable or unfavourable. With this assumption, this study is formulated to invest the issues - (i) Socio-Economic Development: What are the socio economic implications on the social life of the tribals due to tourism and related development in Yelagiri Hills? Has tourism brought any improvement in educational attainment of the tribals? Does tourism provide employment opportunities? What are the issues related to land and other tribal resources that have been affected by tourism? (ii) Cultural and Political Changes: What are the issues related to cultural changes due to tourism such as changes in marriage, food habits, family planning, clothing, shelter, social organization, etc? Has there been any change in the political arena? What are the ways in which these changes affect the tribal life? And how the knowledge from the tourists influences their culture and political consciousness? (iii) Tribal Health Practices: Has tourism influenced the health seeking behaviour of tribals? How does it affect the indigenous health practices?

OBJECTIVES

Considering the research issues raised above, the following objectives had been adopted to describe how tribal health conditions are affected by the ongoing tourism in the study area.

- To make an in-depth qualitative analysis of social, cultural, economic and political changes among the Malayalis of Yelagiri Hills.
- To investigate the implications of tourism and related development on their health practices.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Exploratory Research Design:

The study investigated the socio economic and health implications by tourism and related developmental activities. Qualitative techniques and ethnographic methods such as participant observation, in-depth interviews and focus group discussion were administered for the collection of data.

Field of Study:

The study covers the Mere Malayalis of Yelagiri Hills, Vellore district, Tamil Nadu. The time and other constrains wouldn't allow to study the entire population. Therefore, two villages were purposefully selected among thirteen villages of Yelagiri Hills.

Selection of Study Population:

Malayali tribe has three categories in Tamil Nadu namely *Periya* (big) Malayalis of Shevaroy Hills, Salem district and Kalrayan Hills, Villupuram district; *Pacha* (green) or *nadu* (middle) Malayalis of Pachamalai Hills Trichirapalli district; and Malayalis of Jawadhi and Yelagiri Hills, Vellore district without any prefix. The

third category of Malayalis of Yelagiri Hills, Vellore district had been selected as the study population.

Selection of Villages:

Two villages were purposively selected considering the physical proximity between these villages and researcher convenience. The researcher had hired a house between these villages for easy accessibility. The tribal settlements in these villages are highly scattered and they have been demarcated only for the purpose of revenue administration. The villages have many places of tourist interests and hence attract more tourists than any other villages of Yelagiri hills. Favourable climate, road communication and other infrastructural development in these villages facilitate intensive tourism and more non-tribal settlement. **Village I - Athanavoor** has schools, hostels and educational institutions, hotels, restaurants and teashops, government and non-government offices, weekly market, business and trade centres, bus stand, health centres, banks and finance companies, LAMP society and other cooperative societies. Athanavoor is the biggest village having 225 tribal families and considered as head quarter of Yelagiri Hills. Being the main village in Yelagiri hills, Athanavoor has high concentration of non tribal settlements. Masons and other building in this village will give an outlook of a small town. While **Village II – Poonganoor**, is another village adjacent to Athanavoor comprising 60 tribal families. The extent of non tribal settlement in Poonganoor is very less.

TOOLS OF DATA COLLECTION

Sources of Data:

Secondary Data: Information relating the research issues and study population is collected through books, journals, reports and documents of various authorities.

Primary Data: Information gathered through fieldwork from the study population is constituted as the primary data of this study. It was generated through the following ways.

Focus Group Discussion:

A general focus group discussion (FGD) guideline was prepared to collect information well in advance. The guidelines includes tourism and its impact on tribal life such as favourable and unfavourable effects on tribal life by tourism and socio economic and health conditions such as housing, sanitation, drinking water, diet, status of women, education, decision making, family planning, common diseases for men, women, children and aged, availability and accessibility of health care services, indigenous health practices, health seeking behaviour, economic development, occupation and employment opportunity, role of government and non government development initiatives, health problems and environmental hazards due to tourism etc. In order to maintain the quality of data collection and to ensure validity and reliability of information the following standards were observed. Homogeneous tribal key respondents including males and females were selected for FGDs. Common places were selected for the conduct of FGD to ensure the respondents accessibility and acceptability. All the discussions were tape recorded with the consent of the respondents. The field notes and researcher observations written during the discussions were supplemented the tapes for making the analysis. Summaries were made at the end of each FGD to get group agreement.

Non Participant Observation:

During the field work (mid November 2004 to mid February 2005), the researcher had stayed along with the tribals and collected relevant information required for this study. Considerable time had been spent on winning the confidence of the tribal people and creating good rapport with them. The day-to-day life of the tribals namely indigenous health practices, health seeking behaviour, clothing, drinking and smoking, dieting, personal hygiene, sanitation, child rearing, occupational pattern, social organization, women status, relationship with tourists and non tribals, community participation in local self administration, status of women and aged, folk drama, marriage, festival, trade and commerce, etc.

Interview:

Considering nature of the study respondents were purposefully selected. Casual, unstructured and in-depth interviews were conducted depending upon contribution and knowledge of the respondents about the study area and population. Elderly people, key tribal leaders, community influenced individuals, educated youths, women, government official, NGO officials, office bearers of various associations, school teachers, shopkeepers, PHC staff, medicinal men, private health practitioners, non tribal settled in Yelagiri, tourists etc were interviewed. Data gathered through participant observation is cross checked with these interviews.

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CHAPTER III

CHANGING SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS OF MALAYALIS

Tourism

Malayalis of Yelagiri hills lived in isolation even after Independence. The construction of Ghat road (1964) had improved the communication facilities and altered their isolation. The pleasant and cool weather of Yelagiri hills fascinated many people from the neighbouring towns. But there was no place to enthral them except the forest, temple and the Ghat road. However, the Government of Tamil Nadu declared Yelagiri hills as the tourist spot in 1984 and it was described as “the Ooty of poor”. Department of Tourism acquired land from a Malayali and created an artificial lake in Poonganoor. An artificial fountain was installed at the centre of the lake which sprinkles water up to 15 ft. The lake and the fountain were illuminated with colourful lighting. Boating service was introduced to enchant the tourists. Children’s park, mini zoo, *paran* house, and telescopic centre were the consecutive developments initiated with the collaboration of various departments. The wide publicity and the summer festivals had further attracted more tourists across the state. Yelagiri Hills Development and Tourism Promotion Society was established in 1993 to look after the tourism related development activities. Although there are more than fifteen hotels providing accommodation, the tourists from the neighbouring towns will not stay in Yelagiri hills. Therefore, the nature of tourism in Yelagiri hills may be described as “day tourism”. However, tourists from distant places do stay in the hotels but they visit only during the weekends. Yelagiri hills attract both rich and poor tourists. The pleasant and conducive environment attracted the non-tribals to settle in Yelagiri hills. As there is no statutory restriction on land transfer, acres of lands had been transferred from tribals to non-tribals. In addition those who are working in the government and private institutions have also settled in Yelagiri. It is said that most of the rich visit Yelagiri hills in search of land for constructing farm/guest houses. Further, the industries in the neighbouring towns have constructed their guest houses in Yelagiri.

Though tourism is a recent development in Yelagiri hills it is playing a key role in bringing out changes in the traditional Malayali society not only in its structure but also in its traditional customs and practices. The following section examines these changes.

Origin of Malayalis

The origin of Malayalis can be traced from Thurston's book on "Castes and Tribes of Southern India". Citing H. LeFanu's Manual of the Salem district, Thurston writes, Malayalis are the inhabitants of hills. To him they are not "an ancient hill tribe, but are a Tamil-speaking people, who migrated from the plains to the hills in comparatively recent times¹". According to a belief, he further writes, "the malaiālis originally belong to the vellāla caste of cultivators, and emigrated from the sacred city of Kānchipuram (Conjeeveram) to the hills about ten generations ago, when Muhammadan rule was dominant in Southern India²". According to another tradition he quotes H. LeFanu that the uncomfortable Malayali deity Karirāman left Kānchi with his three followers (Periyanan, Naduvanan, and Chinnanan) and their families to take up a new abode³.

While tracing the origin of Malayalis of Javadhi hills, Thurston quotes from Manual of the North Arcot district:

In S.S. 1055 (1132 A.D.) some of the Vēdars of Kangundi asked that wives should be given them by the Karaikkāt Vellālas of Conjeeveram. They were scornfully refused, and in anger kidnapped seven young Vellāla maidens, whom they carried away to Kangundi. To recover them, seven Vellāla men set out with seven dogs, leaving instructions with their wives that, if the dogs returned alone, they should consider that they had perished, and should cause the funeral ceremonies to be performed. Arriving at the Pālār, they found the river is flood, and crossed it with difficulty; but their dogs, after swimming half way, turned back and returned to Conjeeveram. The men, however, continued their journey, and killed the Vēdars who had taken away their maidens, after which they went back to their homes, but found that they had been given up as lost, their wives had become widows, their funeral ceremonies performed, and they were in consequence outcastes. Under these circumstances, they contracted marriages with some Vēdar women, and retired to the Javādis, where they took to cultivation, and become the ancestors of the

¹ Thurston. Edgar and Rangachari. K. 1909 (reprint 1993). Castes and Tribes of Southern India. Vol. IV. New Delhi: Asian Educational Series. p. 406.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid, p. 407.

malaiāli caste. This account has been preserved by the Malaiālis in a small palm-leaf book⁴.

However, the oral tradition that prevails among the elderly Malayalis varies. Ganesan, 34 years old male⁵, a social worker, Immanuel Child Development Centre, gives a detail account on their origin. He described that there were many stories. The dominant belief is that Malayalis migrated from Kanchipuram. But there are three versions, that is, (i) Malayalis directly migrated to Yelagiri hills, particularly to Thayalur, as their ancestors found the forests had more livelihood resources than in Kanchipuram; (ii) Malayalis first migrated from Kanchipuram to Jawadhi hills, as their population grew, they needed more settlement, for this reason they then migrated to Yelagiri, specifically to Nillavoor; and (iii) Periyannan, the ancestral leader migrated to Pachamalai with his brothers and their families, as they were exiled from Kanchipuram for the reason that he fell in love with a Brahmin girl. There was rift between brothers, so Periyannan then moved to Yelagiri hills – Kottaiur and Mangalam are their early settlements. The second tradition, which is also dominant in the study area, believes that the *Naatan Kudumbam* (Nasi Family) migrated to Yelagiri hills from Yelagiri Gramam, a village near Tirupattur, fearing Tipu's invasion and assaults of his troupes.

Ponnurangam (50/m), Panchayat President held the view that Malayalis are the agricultural community migrated from Pudurnadu, Yelagiri Gramam and Natrampalli. He describes,

my grand father told me, that my family with ten others were the first group to migrate to Yelagiri hills from Yelagiri Gramam, a village near Tirupattur. That is why the hill is named as Yelagiri as to remember our ancestral village in the plain.....*PoongaNasi amman* is our goddess.

He further narrates,

due to the war disturbance in the plain, people from Natrampalli near Krishnagiri migrated to this hill. We do not keep the matrilineal relations with these

⁴ Ibid, p. 408-409.

⁵ Henceforth age and gender (m = male and f = female) are given in parenthesis.

groups.....and the third group is believed to come from Pudumadu with whom we have marriage relations.

Majority of the tribal believe this story. Similarly, Govindaraju, (64/m), Nillavur, former Panchayat President holds the view that,

we are not tribal.....we are *vellala gounder* (agricultural caste) migrated from the plain to the hill during the Carnatic Wars. Our people did not like to take part in the wars. They wanted to hide from their rulers.

The narration continues and traces the evidence,

...there is no difference between us and the agricultural caste in the plains. We speak the same language; we worship same deities, for instance, Maariamma, Annumaan, Murugan, Munisvanran, etc.

In contradiction, Manickam (59/m), *Voor Gounder* (Village Chieftain) Athanavoor acknowledges similar to Thurston's view that three brothers with their kins were exiled from Kanchipuram for the reason that the elder fell in love with a Brahmin girl. He narrates,

...when I went for a meeting in Salem, a college professor from Madras told about the story. I was amazed to know about it. However, the Periyanna should not have loved a Brahmin girl. If he would not have committed that mistake we would have been in Kanchipuram. Anyway that is history...

From these narrations, it is observed that people claim themselves as *vellala gounder* and as a part of Hindu society.

There are two divisions among Malayalis in Yelagiri hills – *Karalar* and *Vadakathiyar*. *Vadakathiyar* are those who had migrated from Pachamalai and Themmalai. *Karalar* are those who migrated from Jawadhi and Yelagiri Gramam. *Karalar* are superior to *Vadakathiyar*. *Vadakathiyar* are also known as *Vellalar*. There is no marriage relation between these two. It is believed that both these *vaghar* were originated by brothers. Therefore, they are called as *Pangali* with whom marriage is not allowed.

The informal discussion with the educated youth reveals that they are not interested in all these myth. For instance, Sounderajan (23/m) remarks,

what's there in knowing all these ancestral myth. It exists for the *koothaadi* (drama player) and has no meaning in the modern world.

Kasturi (16/f), eleventh class student asserts,

my parents heard my grannies and they heard their ancestors and they had spare time to share it. But now things have changed. I leave home by seven in the morning and return around half past six in the evening. I have homework to do. Similarly my parents don't have time to sit with me. They work through out the day and watch television while I study in the night... .. Of course one needs to know his or her origin but what's the gain.

The above narrations clearly depict that in the modern times, younger generation is busy perusing education and parents busy with their lives and livelihood, so hardly interact and thus hardly listen and believe in the oral traditions. Malayalis preserved their ancestral myths and promoted artistically through drama in the past but now the younger generation shows less interest in it. Moreover, the drama is substituted by programmes of satellite televisions.

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Malayali Family

Malayalis live in *kudumbangal* (families) which are formed by the marriage relations. Each *kudumbam* will have a head generally a male and elderly will hold this position. The head will decide on all matters that concerns the family. They lived in joint family. However, this tribal society has been changing from its joint family structure to nuclear structure. Maari (85/f) narrates the advantages of joint family, as

...in joint family, elders and aged were more supportive in rearing the children, grassing the livestock in the forest, treating the ill, providing solutions and alternatives whenever it is required in the family...

Dhallali Aandi (54/m) adds,

elders know what to cultivate and when to cultivate... they are good in assessing the monsoon and choosing the right crop for that season. Besides these, due to their experience, the family can avoid unnecessary crisis ...

In spite of the advantages, most of the tribal *kudumbangal* have become nuclear families except a few traditional *kudumbangal*. Following are the major reasons for the transition in the tribal society.

The first and foremost reason is the exposure to non tribal communities. Pungan (65/m) remarks,

contacts with the non tribal have brought changes. Observing their life style and interaction with them had transformed our family structure. The present generation wants equal economic contribution from everyone in the family. My son and daughter in-law do not want to live with us.

He broke while explaining the adverse changes. He further adds,

in our last days, we wish to spend time with our grandchildren, but we are not blessed. Our tradition of living in *kudumbam* has changed.

This illustration evidently depicts that the existence of generation gap. In most of the narrations, people expressed that the time had tremendously changed traditional society which is inevitable. But all these changes are not always progressive.

It is observed that changes in the employment have often worked as a factor in bringing out changes in the family structure. The monsoon failure, non availability of agricultural employment, land alienation and insufficient access to forest resources forced them to seek employment in the neighbouring towns. The informal discussion with them reveals that people had temporarily migrated to Tirupattur, Vanniyambadi, Ambur, Salem, Hosur, Trichirapalli and Bangalore.

The process of migration itself is gradual in the sense, first the employed and spouse and the later stage children will also get shifted. Once it happens this families comes back to hometowns once in a year for special occasions like village festival, pongal, marriage, harvest, etc. Moreover, those who migrated to the plain for employment will expect a share from the harvest, but he or she will not contribute anything back; they are interested only in settling well in the plains by buying a flat or constructing a house etc. This outflow trend didn't encourage those who work in the field and give the share to their siblings in the plain with

better employment. Therefore, there are cases of rivalry and people want their assets to be shared. As a result the system of joint family breaks at this point.

Besides this migration, the educated also migrate to the neighbouring town or to their place of employment. Pandian (21/m), an ITI diploma holder, working for Southern Railways, settled in Chennai with his wife. However, he visits Yelagiri during the weekends. He narrates,

at present, we have no children. We can easily shuttle between the workplace and the native but later we can't think of visiting Yelagiri frequently. As others, settled in Madras (Chennai), I will also settle there. We will have all the facilities, entertainment, schools, transportation, hospital, etc. Whenever, there is a need we will pay a visit. This will prolong until my parents are alive and living here. They don't want to come to Madras.

Although majority of the Malayalis are still depending on agriculture, their family pattern has been changed as it is experienced by the general population in the plains. It is problematic to reason out the causative factors. It can not be attributed to tourism though the interactions with non-tribals to an extent influence the society. Employment related migration is one of the reasons for the split in the traditional family structure.

Marriage

Malayalis are divided into number of exogamous *kudumbangal* that are equal in status. *Kudumbangal* are named based on their *Kula Deivam* (family deity). Few of those are Poonganura, Mangalathamaba and Kottoorama. Cross cousin marriage is the most common marriage pattern among Malayalis. At present, the age at marriage for boys is around twenty years while girls get married after attaining puberty.

Spouses are acquired through trial in the past, in which the prospective groom will stay in bride's family before marriage. If they like each other and then the elder would arrange the marriage. Earlier there was a practice in which the girl should become pregnant before the marriage and show the person who made her pregnant. Then they will get married. At present, the marriages are generally done through negotiations, elopement and courtship.

In the present marriage pattern, the prospective groom has to visit the bride's house with his close relatives. If the bride's family likes the proposal, the same will be informed to the *voor Gounder*. He will ask *Udtheri* (messenger) to inform the villagers and bring them to *Jawadi* (a common place meeting). In front of the *Voor Gounder*, the elders will probe the groom and his relatives about their social and economic status which include the character of the groom, his abilities, potentialities etc. If the council feels that the boy is fit and the girl is willing to marry him, the *Voor Gounder* with *Voor* representatives and the relatives of the girl will visit the boy's *Voor*. They will have similar meeting in his village and examine the boy's family, wealth, status, character, etc. Finally the marriage date will be fixed.

The marriage rituals are performed as it is done in the Hindu marriage. But it is not performed through a Brahmin but by the local *poosari*. Marriage oath is taken on *samai or ragi* by both bride and the groom. Marriage is conducted in the groom's house. Traditionally, the ceremony lasted for five days but it is now reduced to two days. The groom hosts two feasts in which pork is a compulsory item in the menu. Depending upon the economic conditions and social status the feast is given. In addition, the groom will give clothes to his relatives. If he is rich enough, he will give cloths to all the invitees. There will be a procession of newly married couple in *mandai* (a common place mostly used during festival season). During the procession, the couple will get blessings from the villagers. The couple has to kneel down to everyone irrespective of their age. The couple accepts gifts from the marriage invitees. Generally, jewels are given as gifts. The value varies according to closeness of the invitees. This jewels become one of the valuable assets for the couple and in time of need it is pledged for loan in Tirupattur.

Traditionally, the poor Malayali let their son to work for master for two to three years or until his marriage is held. They are known as attached labourers (*kollakaran*). These attached labourers along with the son or sons of the master get married on the same day. The system of collective marriages is common to reduce the expenditure.

The village council's role in the observance of marriage is vital. Aandi (47/m), *poosari*, Athnavoor remarks,

it is not possible to perform all the rituals within a few hours... people become time conscious and they only want to knot the *thaali* (a gold chain or a turmeric smeared cord with holy pendants tied by the bridegroom around the bride's neck at wedding)... They feel shy... The marriage rituals have lost its significance and have no meaning for the present generation.

Sanskritization⁶ has been attracting the rich people among the tribals. This has influenced their traditional practices. A few instances were reported that their marriages rituals have been performed by Brahmin and which were entirely different from the traditional marriages. Presently, Malayalis have started to give Sanskrit names to their off-springs as against the traditionally given Tamil names.

Parayam (bride price) and *voor kattu* (marriage fee paid to the village) is paid at the time of marriage both in cash and kind by groom. *Parayam* is given to the bride family traditionally it was a meagre amount as a compensation toward the labour power lost in the family. But, as they came in contact with the general population, the amount of bride price has been increased gradually. At present, paying the bride price has become a customary practice. The bride's families are expected to give dowry of two to five *putti* (1 *putti* = 40 *marraka*, 1 *marraka* = 8 liters) of grains with several grams of gold and silver ornaments and cash as well. It is interesting to note that a car was given to a doctor groom by one of tribal leaders in Athnavoor. Initially, the dowry was given to the high profiled and employed grooms but now it has gone to the extent in which no marriage is solemnized without dowry. Though it is adopted from the non-tribals the demand for government employed groom and social prestige allowed the practice to be persistent.

Sounder Rajan narrated a case in which a tribal girl fell in love with a non tribal who is well settled in Tirupattur. They wanted to marry with the consent of both the families. The boy's relatives approached the girl's family. As per the tribal

⁶ In 1952, M. N. Srinivas first introduced the notion of Sanskritization in his book "Religion and Society among the Coorg". He defines it as process of positional change by which a low caste or a tribal group changes its customs, rituals, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high caste.

custom, it was reported to the village council. A meeting was called after a week. Both the parties were blamed and declared guilty. In his words,

what is wrong falling in love with 'kizh-al' (non tribes from the plain)? It is not a crime, but the council had fined Rs. 20,000/- to both the families. They refused to pay the fine. They registered the marriage after a month. The law has recognized their marriage but the council didn't. Since the tribal family did obey the council, they were isolated and not allowed to access the common resources. The family lived in depression for about six months. They had huge landholding and the council didn't allow anyone to buy their land also didn't allow people to work in their land. So they were force to undergo the harassment. Finally the family rejoined into the tribal community paying Rs. 35,000 to the council.

He questions,

who has formed the system? who has given the right to punish people? And who has given him (*Voor Gounder*) the authority? the aged never bother about the present generation. They always force their ideologies on us. We want to live a life with complete liberty.

At the same time, he accepts that the village council can control the village in certain matters when it concerns the total. When the concerned *Voor Gounder* was asked about the case, he replied,

it was not my decision. The Panchayat suggested me so I did. We restored *Voor Kattupaadu* (village control). The youth will not understand our motive. We always do for their best. If we allow this, most of the tribal girls would prefer to marry kizh-al and scarcity for girls will arise. We fined the family which is affordable to them. Let this be the lesson to others..... Of course the time has changed, but the attitude of *kizh-al* has not changed. They will still call us as ST. It is easy for the girls; she will go to their spouse family after marriage and get assimilated to the caste of their spouse. But in the case of male it is very difficult to get *kizh-al* girl as well as to assimilate into different caste.

In contrast, Vadyaar Periyaandi (49/m,) a leader expresses,

the time has changed. We, the elders have to move with it, without damaging our culture and tradition. I personally support our people getting married with *kizh-al*. It is a good sign of development. The present generation has well exposed to the outer world. They are educated and know things better than us. Their attitude is entirely different. We wanted such change. For this reason, many of us have spent huge amount of money to get them educated and exposed them to the outer world. We are only concerned about their prosperity.

In support of this, Chinna Kuzhandai Gounder, remarks

we had never opposed any proposal with *kizh-al*.

Though it is an exogamous society the above case well depicts the hostility and patriarchal attitude. Though the concerned parties and a few youth agitated the

decision of the council they could not simply overthrow the traditional organization.

Monogamy is common among Malayalis although polygyny is permitted. But the present generation is not willing for polygyny. Sunder Rajan asserts,

one can enjoy the pleasure having two wives but it not long lasting. History taught us. There is always rivalry between the wives and their off-springs. It is not wise to have two wives.

Selvi (38/f) ventilates,

desire made me to fall in love with him (her husband who is already married to another lady of the same village). My parents advised me against it but I didn't listen to them and was adamant to marry him. After the marriage, he showed his colour. We have rifts everyday. I've to fight with him and with her. My child's needs are unmet. He has money for his drinks. Never give single *ana* (6.25 paise) to me or to my child. She (her rival counterpart) often beat my kid. I know this fights will never end. I would pray God, such married life should not be given to anyone.

However, the instances of polygyny are very few. The life style of one-to-one is now dominating the youth.

Divorce is allowed. If the man claims divorce the man has to pay compensation to the female and an amount as *voor kattu* to the village. Generally, this is determined by the bargaining capacity of the groom. Similarly, if a female claims divorce she has to pay back the *pariyam* that was paid by the groom to her family at the time of their marriage. Although getting divorce is easy procedure in the traditional society the number of divorce has drastically come down to a low level.

Junior sororate and junior levirate remarriage are allowed. But nowadays, this practice is not prevalent. The sisters or brothers of the deceased spouse show unwillingness to this type of remarriage with the deceased brothers or sisters. Similarly the deceased brothers or sisters also express unwillingness to marry the brother or sister in-laws.

Education

Education is perceived as the tool for social change. The 1991 census⁷ shows that the literacy rate of Malayalis of Yelagiri is 1622 persons (39.21 percent), of which males (54.83 per cent) are more than females (22.75 per cent).

Fr. Gurzou, SDB., a French Christian Missionary since 1958 has been encouraging and supporting the Malayalis of Yelagiri hills. He is often referred as the living God of Malayalis. He sponsored not only the tribe but also created institutional infrastructure for the improvement of educational status of the population. He financially supports and has donated schools and colleges in Tirupattur. Therefore, if he refers any Malayali students to these institutions he or she is given preference. Similarly, Immanuel Child Development Centre, a protestant Church based NGO supports the education of the Malayali children.

Discussions with the tribals reveal they are inspired by the non-tribals and tourists. They spend lump sum amount on their children's education in the well reputed private institutions although it is not affordable with regular income. Instances of land selling to meet the educational expenditure are very common feature in Yelagiri.

Status of Woman

The efforts of Christian Missionaries and Non Governmental Organizations have encouraged education among Malayali children more particularly for the education of girl children. Discussions show that the educational performance of girls is better than the boys. However, it is observed that the drop outs among girls are more than the boys. Since girls are married after their puberty they are not encouraged for higher education. However, there are instances; where the girls are studying in the professional colleges at national level.

⁷ Census of India. 1991. Special Tables on Scheduled Tribes, Series 23 Tamil Nadu Part VII (II) Vol. I. Chennai: Directorate of Census operation

Malayali women are treated equal to their male counter part. They actively take part in economic activities as well as in the decision making process. However, regarding the marriage, the women have low profile and status. If a male decides for second marriage he cannot be stopped.

Women are responsible for keeping the house, fetching water, firewood collection, cooking, rearing and caring their children at home. In addition they take part in all agricultural activities in the field. The workload for females is always more than the males. Males are paid better than the females. It is said that heavy works are not given to females in the field. However, females are given highly skilful and labourious works.

Women are the working members compared to their husbands in many families. Often, it is reported that males are not responsible for caring the family and its needs. The Self Help Groups initiated in these villages by the Centre for Rural Health and Social Education has brought a remarkable change in women's empowerment among the Malayalis. Very recently, Government of Tamil Nadu has awarded these groups as the best in the state considering their extraordinary performance. They are involved in small trades and business that could be carried out in Yelagiri hills. It is reported that 80 SHGs in Yelagiri are involved in more than 100 activities under a common brand name "*SEM Magalir Mangram*". Goods produced by these SHGs were even exported to Germany and Saudi Arabia, etc. They hold a general store, medical shop, and canteen and they take the lease to maintain the boat house and to collect fee from the tourists. Males are also included in these women's self help groups as they are unemployed.

Political System

Village is called as *voor* (village) and approximately thirty to fifty families constitute a *voor*. A *voor* is administered by a village council. All the families in a particular settlement are the member of the council. *Voor Gounder* (village leader), *Udtheri* and *Poosari* are the office bearers of the council. They execute its functions in consultation with its members. The council will meet in a common

place called *Jawadi*. The council will decide on all the matters concerning the village and its people. Any personal or public issue which needs the council's recognition or help will be brought to the notice of *Voor Gounder*.

By the order of *Voor Gounder*, *Udtheri* (messenger) will inform the villages and ask them to assemble at *Jawadi*. *Voor Gounder* and other important elder will set on the stage of *Jawadi*. *Voor Gounder* will wear *thalai paagai* (head covering) while he starts *Panchayat* (village meeting). This is also known as *mudi kattu*. The petitioners and the respondents have to stand when they are asked to report or answer. After hearing both the parties, *Voor Gounder* will seek public opinion. Sometimes a jury will be formed to investigate the issue if another *voor* is involved. All the members are free to suggest the council or to resolve to arrive at a solution. However, finally the *naayam* (verdict) is declared by *Voor Gounder*. If guilty is proved, the cow-down is applied on the criminal's head. Later this punishment is given with fine. The council had dealt all the matters in the past such as marriage, separation, crime, village festivals, public works etc. The entry of police, judicial administration and Panchayat Raj has limited the scope of the traditional village council. At present, the council deals with conjugal matters and the disputes that can be settled at the village level. Chinna Kuzhandai Gounder (47/m) explains,

The council always seeks amicable settlement between the parties. Depending upon the nature of the cases, even the police would refer the parties to consult the council first. In few cases, if party is not controlled by the council and continues asocial activities will be hand over to police to take legal action. For us Panchayat is the first level of court. We have no law that governs our Panchayat. Justice and righteousness are the guiding principles while we take decisions. We never harm or harass the parties. Generally people reach a compromise after a confrontation. We want our people to live in peace and prosperity. We arrive to resolve disputes within short span of time. If the same is taken to the court it will take years to get justice in addition both the parties have to spend money going around courts. Of course we do charge the parties, but it is minimal and the same is used as a common fund for our festivals.

It is evident from the above narration that the tribal council has an important role in solving the disputes. Tribals hold high respect for the Panchayat and *Voor Gounder*. Though the society has transformed, the traditional village council has

not lost its identity and relevance. There are agitations and non-cooperation regarding the council decisions on certain issues.

Traditionally, if the dispute is not amicably settled at the *Voor Panchayat* the matter will be referred to *naatar*, who is the tribal leader of a *Nadu*. Ten to fifteen *voor* constitute a *nadu*. Yelagiri *nadu* comprises fourteen villages. The role of *naatar* is to settle any dispute that arises between *voors*. He is assisted by a person called *manthiri* (minister). Both of them are elected unanimously by the people and communicated to other *nadugal* (plural of *nadu*). *Naatar* will call the village representatives with *voor goundergal* (plural of *gounder*) of both disputed villages and negotiate with them to settle the issue.

If the dispute is not settled at this stage, or at any inter *nadu*, disputes will be taken by *Ezhu-Pattu nadugal* which are (1) Yelagiri Malai, (2) Jawadhi Malai, (3) Pongam Pattu Nadu, (4) Pudhur Nadu, (5) Nelli Vasal Nadu, (6) Jamanamattur Nadu, (7) Themmalai Nadu, (8) Chitteri Nadu, (9) Kolli Malai and (10) Kavarayan Nadu. All the *naatar* and their ministers and *voor goundergal* will be called for meeting of *Ezhu-Pattu nadugal*.

Pariyandi Vadyaar remarks,

since ezhu pattu nadu meeting is not held for years, I even forgot the names. We only receive chit (notice) about the election of naatar. As to reciprocate, whenever, we celebrate any local festival we used invite them. However, the response has been reducing year by year.

At present, *Ezhu-Pattu nadugal* has vanished as the judicial machinery legally solves the issues.

However, the relationship with Pudhur Nadu remains unchanged because Malayalis of Yelagiri hills have marriage relations with the Malayalis of Pudhur Nadu. Malayalis of Yelagiri feel that they are superior to the Malayalis of Pudhur Nadu. This is explicitly seen during the field work. Generally, if a *nadu* needs aid for constructing a temple, or to celebrate festival, or for any other common purpose, the representatives of that particular *nadu* will go on *sikkaaram*, a

customary visits to neighbouring *nadu* to raise fund. They will move *voor* to *voor*. The *Voor Gounder* and *naatar* host the representatives with respects. They will be given food and shelter during *sikkaaram*. Often they will be asked to stay in *Jawadi* (common place for meeting). If *Voor Gounder* is rich, he will provide food to the entire group else the *voor* collectively provide. In a meeting at *jawadi* the representatives will explain the purpose of their visit and the same night they will perform *therukuthu* (folk drama/play). The next day, there will be a *vur-vallam* (procession) of their village goddess. The villagers give their contributions and donation through *Voor Gounder*. On the same day, all the contribution will be handed over to the people who have come on *sikkaram*. Then, they move on to the next village. It was reported that Malayalis of Yelagiri never go for *sikkaram* to Pudhur Nadu. Ponurangam expresses,

if and when there is a need for aid and donations, we generally go to the plains and collect contributions from the industrialists in Tirupattur, Vanniyambadi and Ambur.

Political Affiliation

Malayalis were politically uninitiated in the past, very few like *kutthu vadyaar* (drama directors) who had some knowledge about the political happening in the state. They used to go to the neighbouring town to watch cinema, to the market and to consult other drama directors in the plain. At that time, they were told about the political changes in the state. They disseminated political awareness among Malayalis. They used to tell their fellow Malayalis about the policies and programmes that were introduced for their development. So, they remained as the liaisons between the plain and the hill and also between government officials and tribe. However, they were passive toward the political affiliation except those liaisons who were first inspired by congress party.

Chinna Nasi Gounder and others took effort for the construction of hill road. They repeatedly approached government official and ministers in this regard. Finally, the road construction was started in 1960 and ended in 1964; then Chief Minister Kamaraju had inaugurated the hill road. This had encouraged people to affiliate

with congress party. Since then, the political consciousness emerged among Malayalis.

People supported congress party and formally elected their party representative. Nasi family dominated the party in Yelagiri. Since the *naatar kudumbam* supported congress party, Malayalis in total supported the party. But, the changes in the state politics also affected the political system in Yelagiri. As a result, political grouping and affiliation had also been extended to *Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam* (DMK) and *Annaithu India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam* (AIADMK). Due to the political affiliations and succession, the Nasi family divided into two; one supporting congress and another supporting DMK. This family traditionally holds the *naatar* position.

Consequently, due to rivalry, each had nominated separate *naatar* for their family and kins. The rivalry has created chaos and confusions for the traditional *nadu* administration. China Kuzhandai Gounder remarks,

they should have come for a compromise. One body can not have two heads. It is unsatisfactory. We want both of them. We do not want any unpleasant relations with these families. Therefore, we are forced with situation to strategically approach them before we give any official note or appeal.

Power equations among Malayalis can be analyzed through these political affiliations. Traditionally, when the society was passive towards the political party affiliations, the *naatar* and *voor gounder kudumbangal* dominated the rest of Malayalis. It remained unchanged even after the formation of political groupings. At present, the dominance of them has been challenged by a number of pressure groups such as self help group, NGOs, youth associations, etc.

Occupation

Agriculture is the main occupation of Malayalis of Yelagiri hills. Out of 4689.86 acres of registered land, 3556.2 acres of dry and 338.8 acres of wet lands available for cultivation in the Yelagiri (and the remaining land is not used for agricultural purpose). The land details, separately on Athnavoor and Poonganoor

could not be acquired. However, it is reported that the agriculture is only main occupation on which a large majority of Malayalis sustain their livelihood. The census 1991 records shows 834 persons (626 males and 208 females) of the Malayalis are cultivators in Yelagiri Hills. Another 679 persons (521 males and 158 females) are agricultural labours. They cultivate cereals such as paddy, ragi, *solam*, *makka solam*, *pani varagu*, *samai* and *thinnai*; pulses like *thuvurai*, *avarai*, *vulundhu* and *kollu*; cash crops like pepper, mustard, sugarcane, plantain, *yellu*, *daniya* and *kadukaai*; and vegetables such as, tomato, beans, jackfruit, lady's finger, drum-stick, brinjal, etc.

The tribal villages, the *nadu* and *voor* were governed by the tribal leaders, *natar* and *voor gounder* respectively. Before the introduction of *patta* system (individual landholding right), the agricultural land was the community property. So the leader would allocate the land to each family for cultivation every year considering the family size and its requirements. However, the leader would get more land than others. During the harvesting season, each family would deposit the grains in a common place under the custody of *voor gounder* as the measure of food security in case of monsoon failures in the forthcoming seasons. Whenever, there is a need the community will share the grains. In case if the common grain is exhausted the *gounder* would distribute his grains. In case of drought he and his *voor* representatives would seek help from *natar*. Besides the food security, the accumulated food grains had been used for the village festivals and tribal marriages. But after the *patta* system, the means of production is no more under community control. As a result, the practice of accumulating the grains in one place got vanished. For the purpose of festivals and marriage, the village council would fix the quantity to be deposited. Similarly, a deposit for seed is also collected and store in a safe common place as to prevent the seed scarcity. So the community deposit has changed from voluntary to forced deposit and from food security to seed security. At present people stopped even storing seeds as the hi-breed seeds are supplied through Large scale Adivasi Multipurpose Societies (LAMPS) by the government. The society also provides short term and long term loans to the tribes with subsidy. The Nation Farm and

State Silk Board also support the cultivators in providing them training and assistance.

Paddy cultivation is very recent development in Yelagiri hills. As the tribe developed contact with the non tribals, they were influenced by their food habits. Similarly, rice was sold to them at subsidized rate through the public distribution system and LAMPS. The Agriculture department and the Tamil Nadu Housing and *Adi-Dravidar* Corporation (THADCO) further supported the Malayalis to cultivate paddy. THADCO granted loan with 50 per cent subsidy under millennium scheme to dig wells and install pump sets with oil machines.

Malayalis mortgage their jewels to meet the agricultural expenditures. Though, the nationalized banks and cooperatives offers them gold loan they generally go to Tirupattur to pledge their gold. It is reported that the long formalities in the nationalized banks and high interest rate in the cooperatives forces the Malayalis to pledge their gold with the *marvadis* (money lenders) in Tirupattur.

Traditionally, the agricultural activities are carried out through *Voor Kambalam*. That is, the employer will inform the *gounder* about the need of labour. This message will be communicated to all families by *uddari*. One labour from each family will undertake the job. Male or female *Kambalam* is called by the needy depending upon the work. This type of employment ranges from half a day *kambalam* to till the work gets over. The practice of *kambalam* is flexible to meet the labour requirement and to provide equal employment opportunity to all the families. The nature of work available through *kambalam* are ploughing, sowing, weeding, harvesting, transporting the harvest from land to home, etc. Male is paid Rs. 25 and Rs. 20 to females per day with a noon meals as an honorarium. Generally, *samai choru* or *nellu choru* (rice) with *sambhar* is offered depending upon the economic status of the employer. *Nellu choru* is considered to be rich. But, nowadays, this menu is increased with *vadaa* or *orattu* or a sweet. Another notable change in the *voor kambalam* is *siru wardu kambalam*. As the difference

of opinion came between *kudumbangal* they stopped calling *voor kambalam*. Instead the *kambalam* is shared among relatives exclusively.

Besides agriculture, a large number of people earn their livelihood through gathering minor forest produce. Historically, even after settled agriculture, Malayalis were dependent on minor forest produce. They used to collect *moongil arisi* (bamboo rice), *theyen* (honey), *kizhangu* (yam), fruits, *puli* (tamarind), *kadukaai*, *dhandikaai*, *vasanai pul*, *manam pul*, *pungan*, *veppam*, amla, *seekakaai*, firewood and timber, etc. They hunted deer, pig, etc. for their meat. Usually, they used to go to the forest in groups; hunt animals; bring them to a common place and equally share among the families. However, hunting of small animals like rabbits, and birds were not shared. In the past, they collected the forest minor produce for their own consumption, and later they collected them to sell in the market in plains to buy cloths, jaggery, oil, kerosene and salt. As the demand increased, intermediates came into Yelagiri and they started exploiting the tribe by paying them less. The access to the forest is denied to Malayalis as the government declared it as reserved. Cutting of trees for timber and collection of firewood, for sale has been completely stopped. Consequently, people who lived depending on forest were force to violate the rules. This has become an advantage to the intermediates to exploit them severely. In addition, if anyone found violating the rule of forest preservation, they will be charged. The fine ranges from Rs. 25 to 1000 depending upon the charges.

As part of forest development, the forest department has formed a Village Forest Council, through which twenty one items (*sillilai vana magasul*) of minor forest produced are allowed to be collected by the tribe. Out of twenty one, only eight items are available in this forest region. In order to avoid the exploitation by the intermediate traders or middlemen, the Village Forest Council will sell the *sillilai vana magasul* (21 listed minor forest produce) through direct auction to tribes and some times it will be sold to LAMS. The Village Forest Council is given the responsibility to issue token to individuals to collect the minor forest produce. If

the forest guard finds anyone without token he/she will be charged. The revenue from this is used for tribal development.

Tamarind and *kadukaai* were not allowed to be collected. The forest department will take the yield every year. But the tribes will be given employment to collect these two items seasonally. The department will pay Rs. 25 to 100 depending upon the nature of work. The power equation plays a major role in getting these employments. By tradition the *Voor Gounder* will be informed about the job. He will pass the message to his villagers through *Udderi* (messenger). They assemble in *Javadi* (common place for meeting) and decide who should go to forest. Similarly, they select people for the Forest Development Agency seasonal temporary employment for three months (June- August) every year. The nature of this employment will be pitting, planting and soil works. The daily wages is Rs. 70 for the males and Rs. 40 to female workers.

Initially, it was determined genuinely but now, one of the unhappy members of the tribal Siva (30/m) narrates,

Gounderuku... Apuram... vana kuzhu thalaivaruku vennada patta vangala thaan select pannurango (Voor Gounder and the Village Forest Council president select only those of their well wishers). Generally malai-al (Malayalis) are not greedy and selfish. But now they have learnt to be.

Besides, the forest employment, the department has introduced several other reach-out programmes for the tribes through the Forest Development Agency. Its schemes are implemented through the Village Forest Council. At present the forest department has adopted two villages, namely, Kottaiyur and Kottur to implement its development schemes. A loan of Rs. 10,000 with 0 percent interest is given to 15 beneficiaries each village. These beneficiaries are selected by the President of Village Forest Council. There are proposals for housing scheme.

Malayalis have to get license to graze the cattle by paying an annual fee (Rs. 4 per cow) to the forest department. Usually, it is issued through a camp. It seems that the department has a target and if it is reached they will stop issuing the license. The sheep are allowed without fee, but goats are not allowed and license to goats

are not given. However, it is often violated. Goats for its mutton have high demand in the plains. Also collection of honey from the forest is prohibited. However, people were trained and supported to beekeeping.

Another segment of people live on construction works. From the late eighties, there has been lot of construction works in the Yelagiri which includes construction of hotels, shops, houses, schools etc. The influence of non-tribes and their housing type also was one of the reasons that many of the Malayalis have reconstructed their houses from *manji* (roof) house to *pacca* house or even to mansion type house. These changes have made a high demand for construction workers. During the initial period, Malayalis showed less interest in this job, but later, due to the non-availability of agricultural labourers and any related employment, they slowly took part in construction work. At present, the work force even goes to the neighbouring towns. The male worker will get Rs. 60 and female Rs. 40 as daily wages. However, mason will get Rs. 100 to 125. Generally masons are males and trained in construction works for at least few years. Nowadays, these construction workers make contracts with the house owners and share the total amount as their remuneration.

Finally, another small segment of people earn their livelihood through government and private services. It is observed that many Malayalis have settle in Central government services than the State services. This is because of the affirmative actions. The State reserves only 1 percent of vacancies while the Central government reserves 7.5 percent of vacancies for ST.

Land Alienation

It is reported that nearly half of the Malayalis are below poverty line. One of the reasons for the high poverty among Malayalis is the exploitation by money lenders, tribal leaders and officials. The poverty conditions lead the cultivation to take loans from money lenders and local tribal leaders. Though there is legislation against high rate of interest, these money lenders collect high interests. This leads the poor cultivators to high indebtedness. Consequently they are forced to sell

their land. Moreover, after the introduction of tourism and related development activities, the land value has increased. It is because the non-tribes particularly those rich politicians, actors, elite bureaucrats, business men and industrialists want to have a guest house, or farm house or a retreat house in Yelagiri hills. To beat the summer, they find this hill more suitable and economical. The discussions with Malayalis revealed that the non tribal who is in need of land will approach the money lenders or tribal leaders. They harass the indebted and force them to sell their land at cheap rates. In this manner, more than 50 per cent of land is transferred to non tribes. Besides this transfer, the family needs of Malayalis such as medical expenditure, marriage, education, house construction and even agriculture force them to sell their land to non-tribals. Non applicability of the tribal land protection Act in this region makes the tribals to sell their lands very easily to non-tribals. Karthikeyan Committee Report on Welfare of the ST of Tamil Nadu (1982-83) reveals that nearly 1313 acres of land alienation from Malayalis in the districts of North Arcot, Salem and Trichy. The report depicts that 378 acres of land were alienated in North Arcot district. A sample study conducted by Tribal Research Centre, Udgamandalam, Tamil Nadu during 1989 shows that out of 407 households 112 are alienated in North Arcot district and which accounts for 409.30 acres of alienated lands. And, another sample study by a NGO, ACCORD and *Adivasi Munnetra Sangam*, Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu during 1998 in collaboration with Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, depicts that out of 96 households 9 houses with 33.15 acres of lands were alienated in North Arcot district⁸.

Data on Yelagiri could not be acquired from the Village Administrative Office. However, the discussion with Malayalis reveals that more than 75 per cent of land was alienated. Land is alienated through outright sale, mortgage, lease and encroachment by the agents of alienation – government for hotel, government office, schools and for the purpose of tourism; private schools and other education

⁸ Karuppaniyan. E. 2000. "Alienation of Tribal Lands in Tamil Nadu: Panel Data Analysis". *Economic and Political Weekly* p. 3345

related institutions; hotel industries; non governmental organizations and non tribals.

There is evidence to show two extreme changes among Malayalis after the land transfer. A positive case may be illustrated as below:

Vedi is 40 years old male has only one daughter who studies in Class tenth in Ebenezer Residential School. He is a cultivator holding three acres of dry land which has kadukaai and jackfruit trees. Besides its yearly yielding he cultivates samai and yellu seasonally. The income from the land is not steady and sufficient to the family expenditure particularly to meet his daughter's education. He and his wife are not educated. They want their daughter to get good and quality education. The school fees are heavy and which is unaffordable through the income from agriculture and livestock. Analyzing the needs and realizing the demand for house accommodation for government officials, non tribals and tourists decided to construct houses to leave on rent. He sold an acre of land and constructed three small houses with attached toilets and bathrooms. These houses are given on monthly rent for Rs. 1500/- each to police. In addition, approximately Rs. 2000/- per month is gained through milk from his two cows. Now he is confident and says, 'I can purchase the land back. My calculation is always ambitious. I am not at all bothered about the land which I sold three years ago. Sir, I tell you, once my daughter finish her education, I will certainly get her at least a teacher post in the same hill. She can stand on her legs. After her education, we will save the income and get the land or... What is here in the hills? ... We can move to plains and purchase more fertile land than the terrain land.'

It is evident from the above case of Vedi who has transformed his life after selling the land. Moreover, it depicts that the tribe want to assimilate with the general population in the plains. But, the story is not same in all cases, who sold their land. In contrast to the above case the following reveals the situation of small farmers.

Siva is 30 years old man. He studied till class eight with the support of Fr. Gurzou, sdb. His family conditions and his unwillingness to continue further education stopped him from schooling. He got married to a girl who is from Pudhur Nadu, who studied till class five. They have two children, one girl and one boy. Their children are studying in the government school. Two years after his marriage, his mother fell ill. She was given treatment in Christian Medical College and Hospital, Vellore. Siva had to spend lot of money on her. Initially, he received some help from Fr. Gurzou but he could not get continuously. So he pledged the jewels of his wife. But he could not restore them. Also, he took money from money lender pledging his two acres of land. As his mother was sick, he could not concentrate on agriculture. He had to shuttle from hill to Vellore. As a result, he could not pay back the money. The money lender initially forced him to pay at least the interest. But he couldn't. His mother passed away in 2001. His indebtedness and the pressure from various sides forced him to sell the land to a non tribe. Finally he settled all his loans and now he became landless. At present he guards the same land which is now transformed in to a farm house of a NRI. He receives Rs. 300/- per month as salary. Though he is free from the indebtedness, his sufferings and poverty didn't liberate him. To bear the family expenditure, he and his wife now seek agricultural labour or the forest department employment. He narrates, 'it is my fate. Poongaatha (the goddess poonganasiyaman) wants me to suffer all these.'

However, selling land has become a habit for most of the Malayalis. If and when there is an emergency, they plan to sell few cents of land with that money, they spend that year's expenditure and the process of selling continues. The aged forecast and caution the present generation that if the same trend continues all the tribal members will be alienated from Yelagiri.

Culture and Religion

It is said that Malayalis' culture has been changing very quickly particularly in Yelagiri hills. Westernization has easily influenced the people through the intrusion of non tribals into their settlements. The dressing pattern of Malayalis has changed from their traditional dress. It was *kovanam* - a piece of cloth wrapped around waist by males to work easily in the field. They wore thick cotton or kaki shirts with a towel or shawl on their shoulder. This has changed. They started wearing white dhoti and shirts with cotton towel. Instead of *kovanam* they started wearing vests and briefs. The present generation wears pants and shirts. The private residential schools and English medium schools enforce the students to wear coats and blazers with tie and shoes. And until very recently, females did not wear blouse. They wore cotton *sarees*. But now they started wearing silk *sarees* and other artificial fibre *sarees* like polyester, voile, etc. They wear jewels and ornaments.

Similarly several other traditional customs have been changing through the process of Sanskritization. For instance, five days of marriage with traditional tribal rituals have been reduced to two days with Brahmin rituals; changes in the name from pure Tamil name to Sanskritized Tamil names; joint family to nuclear family; changes in food intake and so on.

The dance and dramas of Malayalis are *Theru Koothu*, *Sevai Aattam*, *Poikaal Attam* and *Puli Attam*. *Theru Koothu* is like a street play performed on a stage by a group of people with *pakavatham* (music). Stories for these dramas are taken from Ramayanam, Mahabatratham, Chilapathigaram and Thriuvilaiyadal Puranam. The *Sevai Attam*, *Poikaal attam* and *Puli Attam* are dance played with

sticks for 12 different beats of drums. These dance and dramas were played as the entertainment during the festival seasons. However, there is reduced interest among the younger generation toward these arts and they are not learning any of their dance or drama.

The important deities of Malayalis are Nasi Amman, Kaali Amman and Maair Amman. Yearly festivals for these goddesses are celebrated by all *kudumbangal*. They also worship Murgan, Ganesha, Thirumaal and Siva. Worship of these gods is done by individual *kudumbam*. Besides, nature worship is very common among Malayalis. They go Jawadhi hills for the *Kaali* Temple festival in Nadukuppam, Valluthalampatti and Vilaankuppam; and Vediappan and Siva Temple festivals in Mozhaai and Killanoor. Similarly, the Malayalis in Jawadhi hills come to Mettukaniyur for the Nasi Amman Temple festival. *Vuravu murai* (relatives) are honoured these festivals in a special manner.

They also celebrate all other Hindu festivals; however, *Pongal* is one of the important and special festivals of Malayalis. The *Pongal* festival is celebrated for five days. The first day is called *Bhogi*, Pongal is offered to cows and sun. The second day is *Perum Pongal*, the dead are remembered and Pongal is offered under a tree or in the garden. The third day is *Patti Pongal*, all the cattle are brought together in *mandai* and a special ritual is performed to safeguard these animals from diseases. *Pongal* is offered to these animals. The fourth day is *Erudhu Vidum* Festival on the day bulls are chased as an entertainment. Final day is ended with pongal offering to *Ganesha* and *Maari*. On all these five days there will be *Theru Koothu* and dance during the night. They worship *Amavaasai* and *Kirthikai* every month. The food is exchanged between families. But nowadays this exchange is dropped.

Malayalis follow largely Hindu traditions. It has reported that no conversion among Malayalis into any other religion. Though a few instances were reported but later those families have joined back into Hindu religion. If anyone is converted to any other religion he or she will not have marriage relation with

other Malayalis. This custom is the binding force and that prevents the conversion among Malayalis.

In short, the above analysis well establishes that tourism has not been the only factor that is directly changing in the social institutions. However, its impact on land value in Yelagiri hills may be considered as the causative agent of social change.

CHAPTER IV

HEALTH PRACTICES OF MALAYALIS

The previous chapter examined tourism and its influence on the tribal social institutions. The changes were not directly attributed to tourism and related developments. This chapter describes the effects of tourism on tribal health practices. The health problems of Malayali tribes, their cultural meanings and response to these problems are analyzed to understand their health practices.

CAUSATION OF DISEASE/ILLNESS AND TRIBAL RESPONSES

Malayali tribes have a variety of meanings to health such as absence of disease and illness; as physical state of well being; and as social and religious state. Disease and illness is understood as a consequence of physical, natural and supernatural displeasures. Malayali tribes have a strong belief in supernatural causation of disease. Indigenous medicine, strong belief in religious rituals and allopathic systems coexist depending upon the severity of suffering.

Displeasured Deities

Malayali tribes believe that disease and illness are caused by the anger of their goddesses - *Kaatteri amman* and *maariyamman*. *Ammai* (chicken-pox, measles) among children is one of such diseases caused due to displeasured *maariyamman* with Malayalis.

Children affected with *ammai* disease are given bath with *amman* (*marriaymman*) water, which is considered as pure and sacred water collected after washing *amman* statue. At times, they are allowed to take bath in warm water with *neem* leaves. Depending upon the severity of the disease, the children are reclined on *neem* leaves or on plantain leaves. Paste of turmeric and *neem* is applied over their body. Parents of these children distribute *pori* (buffed rice) and *kadalai mavu* (a kind of flour made out of rice and dhal) to the community as a customary ritual to please the goddess. Complete cleanliness is observed until the child is cured. The child is prescribed vegetarian diet and abstained spicy food moreover, the family is expected not to cook and consume meat. Women who are in their menstrual cycle are not allowed to visit these children and their families.

Traditionally these children were not given any allopathic treatment. But at present, they are treated by the private practitioners along with the above stated traditional practices. Vinodha (38/f) Athanavoor, narrates;

we never treat *ammai* and that will cure on its own within a week. Giving treatment is considered as the breach against *maiari*. The faithful Malayali will not go to hospital for treatment. We leave the child in the hands of the goddess and promise her a cock or a goat. She will be pleased with our vows and cure the child. We cannot cheat her because She has thousand eyes on us. If we fail to sacrifice a cock or goat during the next festival, She will come in our dream and remind us. If we don't mind Her caution, She will not have any mercy on us and even She will take the child's life.

Malayalis celebrate *maariyamman* festival in the month of *Aadi* (fourth Tamil month that is mid July to mid August) and sacrifice pig, goat, cock and buffalo calf to please Her. Since Malayalis abstain from beef, the meat of the buffalo calves is given to Irulas.

On the last day of Pongal festival celebrated in the month of *Thai* (tenth Tamil month that is mid January to mid February), *pongal* is offered with animal sacrifice to *amma*. On the same day, they collect the dresses and garlands of *amma* in plantain leaf. The village priest drops it in the river. This is known as *amma* in plantain leaf. The village priest drops it in the river. This is known as *amma* in plantain leaf. Failing to drop Her in the river is consider as the breach and as a result *amma* will take *vishvarupam* (merciless face) and severely attack during the forthcoming year.

Similarly, the displeased *kaatteriamman* (evil goddess) enters into human body and causes several health problems. This is detected through *koluvai* (a ritual performed to consult the family ancestors by the priest or by *koluvaikaaran* who has the power to converse with ancestors. *Koluvai* is generally performed during *aamaavaasai eravu* (night of new-moon-day) between 8 pm to 5 am in the grave yard. The suspected is placed in a star mark which has five ends filled with turmeric, rice flour and saffron powder. A *pooja* is performed with lemon, flowers, petal and areca nut, scented sticks, coconut, cock or pig depending upon the economic status of the people. The priest chants mantras and name of the village deities to bring the souls of dead. Finally, he reaches a stage in which he manages to converse with the family ancestors of the suspected person and finds the reason

for his/her illness. Sometimes, the souls of the ancestors will speak directly with family members. Very often the family members will have preferences to consult only with a particular ancestor. In such cases, the duration of the *pooja* is extended. It is believed that the priest or the *koluvaikaran* will request the soul for remedies and then the sick is informed. If the disease or illness is caused by *kaatteriamman*, a special *pooja* is offered, which is known as *patchai poduthal*.

In case of wide spread sickness and illness, the entire village is cleaned and decorated with mango and *neem* leaves. *Katteriyamman* is chased out of the village with drum beats and sound of *semakalam*, *sangu* and *mani* after a *pooja*. In the words of Kulandai Gounder,

the deity will come on any individual and inform us that she is not happy. (This is locally known as *deivam varuthal*). Sometimes, our *kula deivam* (village deity that protects Malayalis for all disasters) will come and caution us that *katteri* is causing all these health problems, based on Her warning, a special *pooja* is offered to *katteri* and then chased her out of the village, generally deep into the forest, where the priest offers *ratha choru* (rice mixed with the blood of goat, big and cock) to *katteri* and her *boodha padai* (army of monster that fulfils the commands of *katteri*). The villagers are then cautioned not to go to that side. It is believed that if anyone goes that side, will be eaten by *boodha padai*.

Kallup kazhiththal is another ritual performed to those individual who are captured by *muni* (evil god). This is generally performed to males. The captured is placed in the star shaped mark that has five ends and filled with turmeric, rice flour and saffron powder. The priest chants mantra and suddenly a handful of water is sprinkled on the face of a captured.

Breach of Taboos and Vows

Malayali tribe believes that illness and sickness are caused due to the breach of taboos and vows to community or family deities. In order to purify from the breach, depending upon their economical position, either they go on pilgrimage to Tirupati, Kanchipuram and Thiruvannamalai or fulfil the promises with special *pooja*.

They also believe in evil eye and fate. A rite is performed for release from evil eye. To dispel the evil eye Malayalis collect roof grass (*manji pul*) from three houses add it with dried red chilly, a pinch of salt and a few hair of the sick or child and rotate it both clock-wise and anti clock wise three times in front of the child or sick who have to spit on the collected item. This collection is then thrown into the fire. If the items burn with noise it is believed that the person is freed from the evil eye. This ritual is known as *thirushti kazhithal*. It is performed often to the children in the evening. In addition, a black mark on the chin of the baby is marked with eyebrow pencil. Similar ritual is performed in front of the shop at the time of closure; they light camphor and break coconut or pumpkin in the street.

Evil Spirit

Capturing of evil spirit is detected through *koluvai*. The evil spirit is asked by the priest to release the captured through a special *pooja* performed at the house of the captured. The priest recites mantra and name of the god and goddess while performing the *pooja*. A stone is kept on the head of the captured and taken the grave yard if the evil spirit agrees to leave from the captured body. A *kalappai kondi* (nail of the plough) with some hair of the captured are placed in a tree in the grave yard and then the captured is advised to return home without looking back. After a bath another *pooja* is done at the village temple (*patchai poduthal*). It is believed that male evil spirit catches female and *vice versa*.

Dissatisfied Ancestors

Malayali tribes also perceive that sometimes displeasured ancestors cause illnesses and diseases. The dead are buried and a stone is placed in memory of them in the land which is known as *kaani*. A place is allotted in the *naduveddu* (centre of house which is used for the conduct of *pooja*) at home besides *kanni*. On every new-moon-day and full-moon-day, they keep *thaluvu* (rice and *sambhar*, *dhal*, curd, gee and plantain are kept on a leaf to offer the ancestors) to please the ancestors. These *thaluvu* is then shared among relatives. *Mudhal mariayathai*

(first pooja) is given to *kaani* before starting any act, such as marriage, ear piercing, construction of house, etc.

Physical and Natural Causes

Apart from the supernatural faiths, Malayali tribes also believe that diseases are caused due to physical and natural conditions. They believe in miasma. It is noted that the forest provides them better health than the plains. Naidu also observed the same in his study conducted in 44 villages among four states of South India. The study reveals that “many tribals living in remote forest areas have a better overall health status and eat more balanced diet than tribals living in less remote forest areas.”¹

Besides the belief in supernatural power causing diseases, Malayali tribes also hold the view that the common diseases like cough, cold, fever, head ache, dysentery, etc are as the consequences of using fertilizers and pesticides and due to water contamination. Generally in case of such complications the sick is first treated with *polinthanni* which is the water extracted after boiling the Bishop’s weed and pepper. Depending upon the severity, further treatment is taken.

TRADITIONAL HEALERS

Traditionally, sick people are treated by *vaithiyakaran* (medicine man) with the locally available herbs and *kasayam* (syrup). He does not charge the sick for his service. It is believed that *vaithiyakaran* has learnt to treat the sick from *Siddher*² (unorthodox saint) and hence he practices *Siddha* medicine. The sick is treated based after reading their pulse.

¹ Naidu, T. Subramanyam 2001, “Socio Cultural Impacts on Health status of the Tribes in South India” in Souvenir, National Seminar on Tribal Health in India, Feb. 8-10. New Delhi: NFHS.

² *Siddher* is an eccentric and untraditional saint who has reached a stage in which he concerned only with spiritual matters and lives several hundred years. It is believed that *Siddher* possesses an extraordinary medical power by *thanga baspam* (mythological powder that change anything into gold) that helped *Siddher* to overcome death. *Siddher* generally live in deep forest in isolation. It is believed that *Siddher* is the forefather of Siddha medicine which is familiar in Tamil Nadu.

At present, the scope for *vaithiyakaran* has reduced due to the introduction of modern medical practices. People want immediate cure from sufferings, which is not possible in *siddha* and other traditional medicine. Further, people do not wish to follow the rigid diet control that is prescribed in the *siddha* medicine. Therefore people prefer allopathic medicine (locally known as English medicine). As a result, the strength of traditional practitioners has reduced to three for entire Yelagiri hills. Even though the traditional practitioners are vanishing, belief in ancestors and supernatural power among Malayalis is still dominate. They perform *kolluvai* alone with allopathic treatment.

Maruthavatchi (dai) is the lady traditional healer generally, consulted for mother and child related health problems. She does not charge her clients for her service. Most of the deliveries are conducted by *maruthavatchi* at homes. Previously, *kutchi* abortion (a kind of traditional abortion performed by a twig) was performed by these *maruthavatchi*.

Maruthavatchi were given special trainings by Centre for Rural Health and Social Education (CRHSE) for conducting safe deliveries. They are issued delivery kits. However, the deliveries are still conducted in a traditional way. Saroja (34/f) a traditional birth attendant describes,

We apply *mandricha ennai*³ (specially prepared oil after chanting mantras) on their (pregnant mothers) stomach and wash it with warm water. After a while the baby will be expelled normally. Some times we deliberately pull the baby. Though we have the delivery kit, we never use it. The umbilical cord is cut by an ordinary blade.

In case of severe jaundice, the patient is taken to Valajapet, a famous place near Arcot, Vellore district, for treating jaundice in a traditional way. Similarly, the fracture cases are taken to Puttur, a very famous place in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh.

³ She refused to reveal the ingredients added to this oil.

HERBAL TREATMENT

The herbal treatment among Malayalis is common. Almost all elderly people know about the herbs and their usage. The following are the common herbs and their medicinal values (i) *Arivaal manai poondu* for healing minor cuts and small wounds (ii) *Kizhaa nelli* or *karisilan kanni* mixed with buttermilk for treating jaundice (iii) *Vellai karisilan kanni* for anaemic problem (iv) *vallarai* for memory (v) *thumbai* for skin diseases (vi) *Arugampul* for dysentery and itching and (vii) *Pungan* leaves dried in shadow for treating venereal diseases.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH PRACTICES

The sections look in to the rituals related to reproductive care, the decision making power of the women to choose family planning and to decide number of children, method of abortion and delivery, etc.

Puberty Ritual

A puberty ritual is observed for seven days when a Malayali girl attains menarche. She has to stay in *thani gudisai* (separate temporary hut) which is constructed with bamboo with herbal leaves by *thaai maman* (maternal uncle). She enters home after bath on the seventh day and the *thani gudisai* is dismantled on the same day. The girl is given nutritious food during this pollution period. It is believed that giving rest with nutritious food strengthens the girl's uterus.

Polakaatchi Veedu

Tribal women have to stay in *polakaatchi veedu* (a common and separate house constructed in the outskirts of tribal hamlet) during their menstrual period. Food and other necessary items are sent to them from their respective families. During their stay, they have to take bath and wash their cloths in *polakaatchi aaru* (river) which is generally away from the village and its water is not used for drinking. These women are exempted from their routine and *voor kambalam* (village employment) and restricted to use the common places and streets. They must take

complete rest during menstruation. This pollution period ends on third or fifth day with a small *poojai* in the village temple.

These *polakaatchi veedu* is given much importance as equal to *jawadi* (common place for village meeting). However, due to non availability of water in the river, the custom of staying in the *polakaatchi veedu* is vanishing.

Adolescent Reproductive Health

The adolescent girls and other eligible mothers are given health education through Primary Health Centre (PHC). Undernourished and cases with anaemic problems are detected and given iron tablets under *Valar Elalam Pengal Nala Thittam* (Adolescent Girl Health Programme) on every Thursday. The tablets are distributed in the school for the girl students and at the sub-centres for the rest. However, discussion with the Malayali girls reveals that they are not taking those iron tablets issued by the paramedical personnel. Even though, they are explained the purpose of the tablets through health education programme, these girls have anxiety to take the tablets. It is reported that mothers and grand mothers of the Malayali girls do not allow them to take the tablets. For instance, Kali (84/f) remarks,

I have not taken any such tablets in those days. I have given birth to five children. Still I am healthy.

Her grand daughter Kasturi (18/f) studying 12th standard in St. Charles School narrates,

my convent sister (Christian nun) and Village Health Nurse (VHN) gave counselling. They made me to realize that I am feeble and weak. I was advised to take nutritious food along with the iron tablets. But I couldn't follow them because my grand mother is not allowing me to take those tablets. The sister (Christian nun) came to my home and explained to my grandmother. Saraswathi akka (CRHSE health worker) also told my *paati* (grand mother). But no one could convince her. She suspects me and my character. Therefore, I decided not to consume these iron tablets. But, my parents understood the need for nutritious food.

It is observed that there is no resistance among the young mothers. The VHN, Children Welfare Organizer and the *anganwadi* workers have close contacts with

Malayali women. Anti-natal and post natal care is given to the pregnant women. The anaemic patients continuously take iron tablets from the sub-centre. It is noticed that there are a few pregnant women who take tablets regularly but have not improved their weight. Discussion with them shows that due to various reasons they could not change their food habits. For instance, Nagamma (19/f) is a high risk pregnant women, who is under weight and very feeble. Her husband is a coolie and a drunkard. They have a girl child who is one and half year old. The VHN warned Kaliaamma (54/f) who is Nagamma's mother-in-law about the high risk and suggested to feed Nagamma with nutritious food. Nagamma innocently expresses,

even for my first child, the VHN cautioned me to increase my weight. I did nothing except swallowing her (iron) tablets. Everybody suspected that I would not have normal delivery. But it was a normal delivery.

Delivery and Abortion

It is reported that no special food is given to the pregnant women and they are taken to their natal home for their first two deliveries. Most of the child births take place at home with the help of *maruthavatchi (dai)* in the *thani gudisai* (a separate temporary hut constructed near their house for the purpose of delivery by their brothers). A pollution period is observed for seven days. On the last day, both mother and child are brought home after bath. On the same day naming and *aruna kayaru* (a thread is tied around the child's waist) ceremony is performed at father's house⁴. The PHC record depicts cent percent immunization in Yelagiri hills. However, informal discussion reveals that there are children who are not immunized. But they asserted that they are healthier than those immunized children.

Abortion was once a common practice among them. Previously people didn't use any contraceptive methods to prevent pregnancy. Therefore frequent abortions were conducted at the *pozhakatch veedu* (a common and separate house

⁴ Parthasarathy, Jakka. 1997. "Malayali" in People of India: Tamil Nadu, (ed.) Singh. K. S. Vol. XL Part II. Madras: Anthropological Survey of India. pp. 906-911

constructed in the outskirts of village for women to stay during their menstrual period). It was generally performed by *maruthavatchi (dai)* with *yercum kutch* (twig of a wild herbal plant) or with a tiny bamboo stick. The aborted mothers were not given any medicine. Many deaths were recorded in the past due to this kind of abortion (*kutch abortion*). This practice existed until recently.

Family Planning

The interactions with the non-tribals, intervention of various non-governmental organizations such as CHRSE, and the PHC interventions have made a change among the Malayali women. At present, they prefer family planning voluntarily after two or three children. The decision is made by the husband and wife with the consent of their in-laws.

HEALTHCARE SERVICE PROVIDERS

Primary Health Centre (PHC)

There is a Primary Health Centre (PHC) in Athanavoor functioning since 1981 with two sub-centres in Athanavoor and Nillavoor. There are problems with infrastructural facilities available to these institutions. For instance, PHC has an overhead tank and a tube well but the pump is not working; the staff quarters are damaged badly and not safe to live in these houses; PHC was given an ambulance without driver, therefore the vehicle is kept in Jollarpettai PHC. Likewise, the sub-centres also have problem. Since they are constructed very recently, there is no electricity, water, etc. Several representations were made to the higher official but nothing was done to improve the poor conditions and facilities.

The doctor never stays in the staff quarters. This PHC is supposed to provide round the clock services but the doctor visits the PHC for the weekly meeting with the PHC staff and sits in the out patient department (OPD) for a few hours on Tuesdays and Fridays. Therefore the patient load is more on these days than other week days. People from all the villages come for the weekly market (*sandai*) on every Friday. While coming to the market they also visit the PHC and get

medicine either after consulting the doctor or directly from the pharmacist. The health supervisor and the pharmacist manage the PHC during the absence of the doctor. Incidentally, they are husband and wife and staying in the staff quarters.

Depending upon the crowd and the convenience of the pharmacist the PHC is opened. It is observed that the pharmacist writes patients' name, age, sex and village in a register, then enquire about the problem and the same is not recorded any where. He issues medicine without any prescription from the doctor. Sometime he also gives injections to the patients if the nurse is not around. He maintains a separate register for drugs accounts. He treats the patients depending upon their social status. He is often addressed as doctor. Because of his experience, he is even consulted by the doctor for sending any letters or reports to higher level officials. Besides the office hours, in case of emergencies he is consulted by the local patients. However, they expressed dissatisfaction over the OPD and casualty services. The services of a specialist are also not available to the patients.

The hospital authorities reported that the patient load is between 50 and 70 per day in the OPD for joint pain, tuberculosis, white discharge, hepatitis, heart diseases, respiratory infections and fever, cold, cough and head ache. They also reported that there are 19 cases of tuberculosis (12 males and 7 females) but none is from Poonganoor and Athanavoor; two leprosy cases (1 male and 1 female but both are orphans and not Malayalis; more than 40 white discharge cases are referred to Government Hospital, Tirupattur for further investigation and no follow up is undertaken; 19 cases of asthma (12 males and 7 females) and about 20 cases (all are above 70 years) with joint pain receive continues treatment from this PHC.

Apart from the OPD, the field level services by the Health Supervisor and her Village Health Nurse deserve high appreciation. They reach every nook and corner of the village and have up to date information regarding the mother and child health status with the help of anganwadi workers. The field staffs meet at

the PHC on every Tuesday and discuss the issues and problems with the PHC doctor. They also update their register frequently. They carry medicines and injections along with them to the field and render a mobile medical service to the needy in the remote villages.

Despite the problems, the PHC was declared as the best PHC in maintaining records and register by a Border Review Committee that has evaluated the PHCs in the borders of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. However, as revealed by the health workers, there are still problems that beset the PHC. Very recently the government directed the PHC to maintain a disease record which has disease classification distributed by the number child and adult patients per day. She did not know how to fill it since the PHC does not have any separate register that records the diseases of the patients. Therefore, the PHC doctor who is also relatively new to the profession directed the health supervisor to fill the columns with approximate numbers and to sum up them for monthly totals.

It is reported that the local population organized an agitation once and gave representation to the district collector to issue an order to the doctor to stay in the quarters. But soon after that the doctor got transferred and for about four months there were no one willing to undertake the job in Yelagiri hills.

Centre for Rural Health and Social Education (CRHSE)

A registered non-governmental organization based in Tirupattur has its branch in Yelagiri, which is known as Human Resources Development Centre (HRDC). The NGO engage in (i) improving rural health through the health clinic located at Athanavoor; (ii) imparting health education through women to women programme and children to child programme; (iii) organising AIDS awareness programme; (iv) conducting medical camps in three villages namely Athanavoor, Nillavoor and Kottur; (v) providing Electronic Data Processing (EDP) training to tribal youth, and (vi) conducting exhibitions of the products produced by 83 Self Help Groups. Its achievements are (a) nearly 1000 patients were treated at the Athanavoor health clinic; (b) around 700 women were organised in 30 Self Help

Groups; (c) 483 students were given education on health care; (d) 520 people were given AIDS awareness; (e) 210 members got EDP training in seven batches; and (e) coordinated several developmental programmes of different agencies.

Free medical services were given to the tribal since 1978 by the Secretary of CRHSE who is a dentist by profession. In addition, health education is given through health workers. Realizing the need for a separate clinic, the Athanavoor health clinic was established in 1999. The local people access the health centre which is presently managed by a female health worker who has 14 years of experience. The tribals access her services mainly for fever, cold, cough, head ache, body pain, anaemia, dysentery, diarrhoea and white discharge.

Donation of Rs 2.00 is collected from patients who are coming there for treatment. The clinic is open from 10 am to 1 pm. It is observed that the patient load has been coming down from 40 to 20 per day. It is because the health worker was now deputed as the coordinator for women empowerment programme of CHRSE and hence her activities related to the Self Help Groups have increased and less concentration and time is given for the clinic activities. Moreover, there is no one to look after the clinic during her absence. A medical shop is maintained in Poonganoor by SEM *Magalir Mangram* (SEM is the acronym of Social Education Movement) with the guidance and support of CRHSE.

First Aid Centre, St. Charles Convent

The sisters of St. Charles Convent, Athanavoor provide first aid services to the tribes. In case of emergency the patients are referred to Bethastha Hospital, Ambur and at times, they provide their convent vehicle for ambulatory services to the tribals. The locals consult these sisters and get free medicine for fever, head ache, dysentery, body and joint pain, etc.

Raja Clinic

This clinic was started in 1998 by Raja, a registered medical practitioner, but he has started another clinic in Jawadhi hills and permanently moved away. His assistant Narasiman now looks after the clinic in Athanavoor. He is consulted by most of the Malayali tribes for fever, cold, cough, head ache, ulcer, blood pressure and for treating wound and cuts. He delivers home services. He charges the patients per injection normally Rs. 25. Sometimes if the patient is severely ill he would give two injections. He also supplies syrups and tablets and additional fee is collected for this service. He refers the patients to the private practitioners in Jollarpettai and Tirupattur. Discussion with him reveals that he does not have even a rudimentary knowledge about diseases and proper treatment and he manages by experiences but interestingly, he knows the psychology of the patients and counsels them in a polite manner. Mover over, the responsiveness and visiting the patients at their home ensures more patients. Often, he refuses to attend severely ill patients.

Private Practitioners

Majority of the people prefer to consult the private doctors in Tirupattur and Jollarpettai. Most of the people believe that these doctors have a lucky hand that cures the patients quickly. Though it is not free, people readily avail these services. It is interesting to note that the sick are taken to these doctors by a few Malayali individuals who are familiar with Tirupattur and Jollarpettai. The patients have to bear the expenditure of these intermediators that includes their transportation, meals, tea, snacks and sometimes liquor.

NUTRITIONAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

Balwadis and Noon Meals Centres

Balwadis function under Tamil Nadu Nutrition Programme in both the villages. All pregnant mothers are given nutrition from their sixth month of pregnancy and it is extended for another six months after their delivery. All the children between

0-36 months are included under this scheme. Health education is given to all pregnant mothers and adolescent girls who are encouraged to include milk, green leaves - particularly drumstick green leaves, egg and vegetables with their normal diet. Children between 3 to 5 years are given pre-school education with noon meals. Green leaves, vegetables, pluses, eggs with rice are served as the noon meals to the preschool children.

Athanavoor balwadi covers 25 preschool children, 7 pregnant mothers and 43 babies between 6-36 months while Poonganoor balwadi has 25 preschool children (15 boys and 10 girls), 30 babies (14 boys and 16 girls) between 0-36 months and 7 mothers as the beneficiaries.

Similarly, there are noon meals centres under *Puratchi Thalaiver M. G. R Sattunavu Tittam* in all the government schools in which children are served nutritious food with green leaves, vegetables, pluses and eggs.

Immanuel Child Development Centre (ICDC)

A church based organization provides services since 2002 with financial aid from Compaction International, USA and Korea. ICDC aims to realise the children from their spiritual, socio economic and physical poverty. The agency supports the educational needs of 264 children in Yelagiri hills by providing tuition, note books, stationeries, school bags, dress, umbrella and other necessary items to the school children. Out of 264 total beneficiaries, 106 (54 boys and 52 girls) children from Athanavoor and 18 (11 boy and 7 girls) children from Poonganoor are covered. Special coaching using Montessori Method is given to the children in the evening between 4:30 to 6:30 pm with a dinner at 5:30pm. Nutritious food is served to the children and children are encouraged for sports and games.

HOUSING

Malayali tribes live in *manji veedu* (house roofed with a kind of hill grass – *manji pul*). These *manji veedu* are short and small in rectangular shape. These houses are constructed with primitive technology with *kaappu* (lengthy rip) and *dhulam*

(large piece of wooden used to support the roof and generally kept on the walls). *Kaappu* and *dhulam* forms a triangular shape and a portion of its bottom surface is filled with timber to form *attam* (like large shelf adjoining the roof) which is used store grains, utensils, cloths, etc. It is also used as a place to sleep. Generally, the walls of the house are constructed by mud and neatly pasted with *chemman* (red soil) and *saani* (cow dung). The floor is frequently cleaned and mopped with *saani*. They believe that *saani* has medicinal value which purifies the surrounding. For the same reason ladies spray *saani* water in front of their house on every morning. Each house has *thinnai* (raised platform at the entrance of a house for the purpose of resting). Since the goods and other household utensils are stored in *attam*, the house always looks neat. The shape and roof of these houses conditions the temperature; it keeps cool in summer and warm in winter. *Aduppu* (oven) is placed in the centre of the house however, during summer it is placed out side. Fire in the oven is always put on during winter season.

Apart from the *manji veedu*, there are *odu veedu* (tiled house) and *maadi veedu* (mansion). Very few houses have toilet and attached bathroom. It is interesting to note that most of the tribes own two houses one in the village and another in the field along with *patti* (shed for their cattle).

DRINKING WATER

Tap water is supplied twice in a week by the Panchayat. Water is fetched from a well near the lake in Poonganoor and water is pumped to overhead tanks, which are constructed in both the villages, and then supplied for public consumption. Once in every fortnight the tank is cleaned. In addition to the tap water several wells and tube wells are used. A few of them are dug by the Panchayat under its water supply scheme.

However, there is scarcity of water in the hills. Hostels and hotels are the two major institutions that exploit more water. Though they purchase water form local farmers, the general public is dissatisfied with their over consumption. For instance, Sunder Rajan says,

There are around 400 students in each hostel. Of course they are not taking the tap water for bathing and washing purposes. They purchase water for their consumption. Every day several tanks of water are supplied through tractors. In addition to this, hotel industries on the other hand extract more water for their commercial use. As a result, the ground water goes down day by day. Every summer the water scarcity troubles us. These schools, hostels and hotels can buy water. They are all commercial institutions and they earn profit through their boarding and lodging. But what do we gain except the scarcity.

Many Malayali women also expressed their dissatisfaction with insufficient water supply by the Panchayat. In fact, most of the tribes are not aware of the over consumption by the commercial institutions.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

Malayalis use open space for urination and defecation. There are community toilets and bathrooms in Athanavoor and Poonganoor, maintained by the Panchayat. These toilets and bathrooms are constructed under Watson Programme, which is a pilot community sanitation programme implemented through Centre for Rural Health and Social Education (CRHSE) with state funding in Yelagiri hills. But, these toilets and bathrooms are always locked. Discussion with the local people reveals their unwillingness to use the common toilets and bathrooms. The programme has provision to support the tribals to construct their own toilets as well. People wish to defecate only in the open field. Besides this, the assistance provided to construct own toilets was not sufficient

Most of the Malayali women use *aduppu kari* (burnt wood from domestic oven) to clean their teeth while men use *kutchi* (small twig of neem, *pungan* and other herbal plants) or *chengal thul* (power of baked brick). Recently people have started using tooth paste and brush. Dhallali Aandi (54/m) remarks,

though we use *aduppu kari* and *kutchi*, our teeth are strong and healthy. My children use tooth paste and brush but often have dental problems.

Each house has a *pozhakadai* (bath room) for bathing and washing. Generally it is detached and constructed in the back yard of the house. A typical *pozhakadai* is constructed with bamboo or any other twigs on the sides and its floor is filled with

sand to suck the drainages. A medium size stone is placed at the centre to sit or to keep the utensils while washing.

Malayalis do not bath daily. One local Malayali narrates,

the cold weather does not allow us to take bath daily. If we bath frequently we will definitely get cold and fever.

However, the younger generation started to take bath daily. Schools and NGOs in Yelagiri provide health education to the school children to have better personal hygiene. As a result, they started taking bath with warm water. Elderly people do not use bathing soap and shampoo. Instead they use *putruman* (soft soil of termite-hill) and *poovankaai* or *sikakaai* (kind of soap nut).

FOOD HABITS

Malayali tribes consume *kuzh* (porridge-like preparation from the flour of certain grains such as *ragi*, *cholam* and *kambu*) with pickle as the break-fast and lunch; *kali* (a dish made with millet flour thickened to consistency of a pudding) with *kuzhambu* (vegetable mix in thin consistency without *dhal*) or *samai* rice with *sambhar* (vegetable mix in thin consistency with *dhal*) or *rasam* (pepper water) as supper. They eat egg, chicken, mutton and pork. They refrain from beef. They consume milk, buttermilk and curd. Until recently, paddy rice, *idli* and *dosai* with *kari kuzhambu* (meat dish with thin consistency with or without vegetables) was their festival food. As the tribe developed contacts with the non-tribals and got exposed to their food habits they started to consume paddy rice. The availability of rice in the public distribution shops and in the local provision shops further facilitated the tribe to opt for paddy rice than *samai* rice.

Food items vary according to the economic conditions. The “well-off” families cook three times in a day and consume *idli* or *dosai* with *sambhar* or *chatney* for breakfast; rice and *sambhar* with *rasam* for lunch and dinner, while the poor and the middle class consumes the traditional food items, except on festival seasons.

Similarly, the food habits differ according to the occupation. For instance, those who go to the field or to the forest in the early morning will carry *kuzh* or *pazhuthu/kanji* (cooked rice kept in water overnight) and drink half of it around 6:30 to 7:00 am and the rest they will consume later around 11:00 am. In case of construction workers and other worker who work from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm will have *kanji* or *kuzh* around 7:00 am and have lunch around 1:00 pm. Those who are at home will consume the *kuzh* whenever they feel hungry. Dinner, generally *kali* with *sambhar* or *kuzhambu* is taken between 3:30 to 6:30 pm. Kulandai Gounder describes,

we take *kuzh* three to four times in a day depending upon our hard-work or hunger. Generally we have to eat more to keep our body warm. Moreover, *kuzh* is watery mix that easily gets digested within a short time. Sometimes we add curd to *kuzh*.

He further adds,

...at present our people prefer rice. If it is not cooked at home, they even go to the hotel. People started to eat fried rice, fish curry, chilly chicken, noodles, *poori*, pongal, chapatti, *briyani*, etc. The food culture of Malayalis has changed. The children have started to eat junk food.

He recollects,

previously, we used to drink buttermilk when we come back home from hot sun... but now people prefer bottled soda and cola drinks or the packet juice.

Malayalis also learnt to drink tea and coffee. It is observed that all the tea shops in Athanavoor and in Poonganoor open early in the morning at around three. Almost all the farmers have cows and they bring milk to the cooperative store at Athanavoor that open at 4:30 in the morning and 4:00 in the evening. While they come to the cooperative store to sell their milk they consume tea or coffee. They also eat snacks like *bonda*, *vadai* and *bajji* (oily snacks). Most of them will spend their time in the tea shop between 4:30 to 7:00 in the morning. Vadyaar Peryaandi (49/m) narrates how he become habituated to consume tea very frequently,

I could remember there was only one tea shop in Athanavoor which was run by an old man from Kerala. We used to call him as Nair, who was kind and good friend of my father. Very often I was sent to his shop to buy *beedi* for my father. Sometimes Nair used to offer me tea without charges. Somehow I was attracted by tea that gave me warm feeling in the chilled weather. This is how I stated to drink tea.

He describes,

That was the only shop that had a radio in those days. Nair used to keep it in full volume. I used to spend my time in the shop to listen to music and radio news. Often I didn't like to sit in his shop without buying anything. So I kept an account with Nair and started consuming tea to pass my time. But later this has become a habit and now it is unavoidable. I take six to ten cups of tea everyday. Whenever I receive any guest I used to bring them to the tea shop and have tea or coffee with them.

SMOKING AND DRINKING HABITS

Malayali men habitually smoke *beedis*. A Malayali tribe from Poonganoor narrates,

I know I am smoking against my health. I often have cough and chest pain but I simply cannot leave this habit. I smoke three to three and half *kattu* (1 *kattu* = 20 *beedis*). I have been smoking since my childhood. Do you know...? My grand children who are studying Tirupattur do not like my habit and the *beedi* smell on me. They hesitate to come to me. I feel bad.....but that feeling will be lost in few seconds and I will light another *beedi*. Life without *beedi* is unimaginable.

Most of the elderly people worry but they could not overcome the problem. On the other hand, the youth smoke both cigarettes and *beedis* as a symbol of social status.

Apart from smoking, men chew tobacco leaves. Even though selling of *Pan Parag*, *Hans*, *Manikchand Gutka*, etc. are prohibited in the state, people of Yelagiri hills manage to get them. Malayali women chew betel leaves and areca nut with slacked lime and loose tobacco leaves. Malayali men regularly drink *sarayam* and *kallu* (illicit country liquor). A few women of Malayalis also drink occasionally during festival seasons. Malayali tribes spend a major chunk of their earning for smoking and drinking. Besides worsening the economic condition, there were always quarrels in the families between husband and wife due to alcoholism. The following case depicts how the Self Help Groups (SHGs) have transformed the tribal men.

Pungan (name changed, 48/m) who is a well known *koothaadi* (drama actor), but didn't have regular employment to sustain him and his wife. He joined the *SEM Magalir Mandram* (SHG) two years ago. The group helped him in several ways to improve his economic conditions. As a group member he has to save at least Rs. 20 per week and the same is deposited in the bank. Considering his needs and economic conditions, the group collectively contributes for him and exempts him from saving for a few months. But

Pungan used to spend a large portion of his earnings on drinks. His wife complained about it to his fellow member and the issue now taken up by the group. The group also observed him during the weekly meetings on every Friday. Pungan was suggested to come out of his drinking habits.

The SHG in that village have passed resolutions against the illicit liquor trade and its consumers. They also gave a representation to the sub-collector, Tirupattur to take action against illicit trade and removal of government run liquor shop in Yelagiri Hills. As a result, the shop was closed and police was instructed to keep a strict vigilance against the illicit liquor business. With the support of local youth the police arrested those people involved in the illicit business. They dismantled several ovens used to manufacture *sarayam* in the forest. But the social problem was not solved.

Malayali men used to go to plains in search of drinks. Our Pungan was one among them. In spite of repeated reprimand Pungan keeps on spending money on drinks. Finally, he was expelled by his group. He became jobless. He realized his mistake and appealed to the group to give him the membership once again. The group reconsidered its decision and gave him a chance with a condition. Pungan was asked to prove his trustworthiness. Pungan stopped drinking alcohol completely. However, the group observed him for three months and later he was given the membership with out any previous concessions. Now Pungan is one of the active members who campaign against smoking and drinking through his drama.

Besides the abolition of liquor, the SHG youth are also actively involved in village development activities like providing drinking water, repair the street lights and roads etc. The members of SHGs actively participate in every *Gram Sabha* meetings and demand the development official and Panchayat functionaries for their general development.

In a nutshell, the traditional health practices are not affected by tourism and related development. However, close interactions with the non tribals and tourists has made the people to access to the modern health care services along with their traditional healing practices. This duality has some association that qualifies the implications of tourism. The neglect by government health services at the PHC forces tribals to seek private services. Finally, the changes in the housing type, food habits, smoking and drinking also show the association.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The study was carried on Malayali tribes of Yelagiri Hills, Vellore district, Tamil Nadu. The main thrust of the study was to explore the changing social institutions due to tourism and related development; and to describe the health conditions of the tribe. The specific objectives are to make an in-depth qualitative analysis of social, cultural, economic and political changes among the Malayalis of Yelagiri Hills and to investigate the implications of tourism and related development on their health practices.

Since independence a number of schemes have been introduced to improve the living conditions of the tribals which have not properly reached them. As a result, conditions and status of this population are yet to improve. The planned development efforts brought with them dams, mines, industries and roads constructed in the tribal areas. They were displaced from their settlement or forced to integrate with the better equipped mainstream population. Besides development initiatives, the introduction of tourism in the tribal area had further worsened the weaker section consequently losing their rights, lands, livelihood, culture, traditions, etc. No empirical work has been done on this issue to describe the implications of tourism on tribal institutions and their health practices. Hence, this study has a greater relevance in present context of assimilation and transformation.

Exploratory research design was adopted to study the changes in social institutions including health care practices that are influenced by tourism and related developmental activities. Qualitative techniques and ethnographic methods such as non-participant observation, interviews and focus group discussions were used. Two villages of Yelagiri Hills namely, Athanavoor and Poonganoor were purposefully selected.

The study is presented in five chapters including introduction and conclusion. Second chapter presents methodology. A brief description of tourism in Yelagiri hills, origin of Malayalis and changing social institutions including family,

marriage, education, religion and culture are presented in third chapter. The health care practices of Malayalis are analyzed in chapter four.

Tourism is promoted very recently in Yelagiri hills (1984) and subsequent publicity made it popular. Boat houses, children's park, temple, Ghat road, telescopic centre, *paran* house, etc are the tourists' interest in Yelagiri. The hills receive more than a lakh tourist every year. The growth of catering and educational institutions further facilitated the intensity of non tribals and their permanent settlements in Yelagiri hills. The perception of tribals and non tribals vary on tourism implications. The outsiders view development as the result of tourism while the locals perceive it as engine that influences their socio-cultural life. However, the changes in the healthcare practices and social institutions show very little association with tourism. This is explained in the following pages.

The origin of Malayalis is expressed through multiple versions. These ancestral myths were preserved through their traditional drama and dance which were their only entertainment in the past. But now people show less interest in it. A vast majority of young Malayalis do not know even a single version. The advent of satellite televisions made the shift from traditional drama to modern cinema which is one of the responsible factors of social change.

An historical analysis of tribal area development and tourism promotion in Yelagiri show that the former is the causative factor for the social change. Several government institutions such as bank, electricity board, community hall, bee keeping training centre, silk boards, veterinary hospital, primary health care centre, Large scale Multipurpose societies, milk producers' cooperative societies and schools were established between 1964 -1982 which is immediately after the completion of the Ghat road. Therefore, there is a great need to qualify the association between these two.

Malayali family has changed from joint family to nuclear as it is experienced by the general population. Although this can not be attributed to tourism, the interactions with non-tribals to an extent have influenced the change.

Employment related migration is one of the reasons for the split in the traditional family structure.

They follow patrilocal rule of residence. Cross cousin marriage is the most common marriage pattern among Malayalis. Monogamy is most common among Malayalis although polygyny is permitted. Junior sororate and junior levirate remarriages are also allowed. Present spouses are acquired through negotiations, elopement and courtship. The role of village council is very important in marriage. The system of collective marriages is common to reduce the expenditure. *Parayam* (bride prices) was paid at the time of marriage to bride's family by the groom but now it exists as merely a custom. Dowry has become common. Divorce is allowed. Importance to the marriage rituals has reduced. Although the traditional society has an internal structure to protect and preserve the cultural identity without much influence of non tribals/tourists, the process of Westernisation and Sanskritization has transformed some aspects such as marriage rituals, education as described above.

They are inspired by the non-tribals/tourists and numerous educational institutions in Yelagiri. The contribution of faith based organization is appreciable in encouraging tribal children's education. However, further investigation is needed to justify it.

Women enjoy equality although the patrilocal rule of residence is followed. They actively participate in economic activities and are involved in decision making that concerns the family. Their suggestions are considered while making community decision by the village council. Their literacy rate is lower than their male counterparts. The self help groups have helped in uplifting their status to some extent.

The traditional political system has a top down structure. *Ezhupathu nadu* (assembly of all tribal chieftains and their ministers at the state level) on the top functions to resolve disputes between Malayali settled hills. However, this body has no relevance as the judicial system intervened. *Nadu* (constituency

comprising 10 to 15 tribal villages) at the intermediate level is to solve inter-village disputes. It is officiated by *naatar* and his minister. Village council is led by *voor gounder* with an assistant. All the families in the village represent the Village council. The political party affiliations influence the traditional administration. As a result, rival leaders have emerged in Yelagiri.

Malayalis predominantly depend upon agriculture. Most of them are cultivators and agricultural labourers. Frequent monsoon failures and non availability of agricultural employment forced them to find alternative employment in construction works. Forest department provides seasonal wage employment. *Kambalam* (traditional village employment at the harvest season) provides occasional employment. A segment of educated are placed in government position. The institutions in Yelagiri also provide sporadic employment opportunities. Self help groups are managing themselves through learning different trades and skills. Tourism has not created much demand and hence employment opportunities were meagre for the local people. Most of them are involved in unskilled jobs whereas the establishment of hotels, resorts are owned and run by people from outside.

Faith based organisations, non governmental organizations, and private schools and catering institutions are the major agents of large scale land alienation and these institutions exploit more natural resources while most of their services are for the outsiders except a few for the local people. The introduction of tourism and tourism promotional activities actually hiked the land value in Yelagiri. As a result, tribals were lured into selling to sell their land if and when need arises and at the time of economic crisis. The problem of land alienation has severely affected a number of families because of their poor financial management and other social and economic conditions although instances of economic transformation also are noted as the result of land transfer from tribal to non tribals.

The following sections summarize their beliefs and health care practices in response to various problems. Malayalis believe that the disease and illness are caused through the act of displeased deities, breach of taboos and vows, evil spirits, dissatisfied ancestors and due to physical and natural causes. Tribal response to these problems includes their traditional rituals along with herbal treatments. The traditional healers namely medicine men and *dai* (Traditional birth attendant) are first consulted at the village level depending upon the severity of the disease/illness.

The puberty ritual and care provided through *polakaatchi veedu* shows a special care for reproductive health of eligible mothers. There has been an attitudinal change which reduced unsafe abortion and increased the acceptance of voluntary family planning. However, adolescent reproductive health scheme implemented by the state through PHC has not achieved complete participation of the people. Anxiety and suspicion over the iron tablets restricts the girls to consume it.

Primary Health Centre (PHC) is supposed to provide the services round the clock. However, non-availability of PHC services force people to seek the service of private practitioners. The services of charitable organisations in providing first aid services receive high appreciation from the tribals. Balwadis and Noon Meals Centres run by the government provide supplementary nutrition and noon meals to the children. Drinking water is supplied by the Panchayat. However, people in field use other sources of drinking water and generally they fetch water from the well/tube well. Changes in housing, personal hygiene, food habits, drinking and smoking show the influence of non tribals/tourist behaviour.

Based on the exploratory study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Tourism related deviances such as theft, begging, prostitution, and fraud and tourism oriented diseases such as STD/AIDS have not blown up in Yelagiri.
- The social, economic, political and cultural changes happening in Yelagiri are not the direct impact of tourism.

- The high penetration of tourists/non tribals and their settlements in Yelagiri have not caused much destruction of the tribal culture. Their internal structure such as village council and strong faith in their traditions and customs protect and preserve their distinct identity even though they are exposed to different culture and people.
- Living conditions and life style of Malayalis has not improved due to tourism and related development.
- Tourism has not created much employment opportunities to the locals.
- Dichotomy regarding health practices prevails with traditional and allopathic system. A vast majority of the tribals access the private health services.
- Problem associated with land alienation in fact aggravated after the tourism started in this area, which has alienated many of the tribals from their property and it has led to indebtedness and in general poverty with a few exemptions. The people have developed a commercialized world-view especially regarding relationships with tourist and non tribals.
- NGOs and Faith Based Organizations in improving the status of the tribe have played some role in especially women empowerment and children's education.
- The dynamics of change among the tribes the impact of tribal development programmes, their health status, the issue of land alienation and its impact on livelihood, etc. need to be further investigated.

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APPENDIX – I

LIST OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN YELAGIRI HILLS

Government Institutions

1. Government High School, Athanavoor, 1983
2. Panchayat Union Primary School, Athanavoor, 1949
3. Panchayat Union Primary School, Mangalam
4. Panchayat Union Primary School, Nillavoor, 1956
5. Balwadis – Athanavoor, Mangalam, Nillavoor, Paadu Vaanam, Kottaiur
6. Residential Primary School (For ST)
7. Adi Dravida Welfare (Boys) Hostel

Private Institutions:

1. St. Charles Higher Secondary School –Tamil medium – since 1987
2. St. Charles Primary (English medium) School, Athanavoor - 1975
3. St. Charles Primary (Tamil medium) School, Athanavoor - 1987
4. St. Charles Nursery School, Athanavoor
5. St. Charles Nursery School, Nillavoor
6. St. Charles Nursery School, Mangalam
7. BICS –Bosco Integrated Computing Services - 1970
8. BICS – Info Tech Athanavoor -1998
9. BICS – IGNOU Special Study Centre, Athanavoor
10. Edhaya Deepam Seminary, Bosco Nagar, Mangalam
11. Samaritan Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Mangalam
12. Ebenezer Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Kottur
13. Yethen Yelagiri Hill Primary School, Thayaloor - 1987
14. Britani nursery school, Poonganoor
15. Immanuel Child Development Centre
16. Community College, Athanavoor
17. Don Bosco Boys Hostel, Athanavoor
18. St. Charles Girls Hostel, Athanavoor
19. My Nest Hostel for Boys and Girls
20. Edhaya Deepam Seminary Hostel, Mangalam
21. Amlanjali Convent, Mamgalam
22. R M Hostel
23. Kids House

APPENDIX – II

List of Government Offices

1. Post Office, 1942.
2. Forest Department Guest House, 1949
3. Electricity Board, 1964.
4. Circuit House (Highways), 1965.
5. Community Hall, 1968.
6. Bee Keeping Training Centre, 1968.
7. Micro Repeater Station, 1969.
8. Cooperative Society of Milk Producers, 1974.
9. Large scale *Adivasi* Multipurpose Societies, 1977.
10. State Silk Board, 1978.
11. State Bank of India, 1980.
12. Primary Health Centre, 1981
13. Veterinary Hospital, 1981.
14. Police Station, 1982.
15. Central Silk Board (Farm), 1982.
16. Panchayat Office, 1997.
17. Government Building Construction Centre, 1998.
18. Telephone Exchange.
19. Agriculture Department.
20. Village Administration Office

APPENDIX – III

List of Non Governmental Organizations

1. Amalanjali Convent
2. Centre for Rural Health and Social Education (CRHSE)
3. CSI Diocese Integrated Tribal Development Centre
4. Edhaya Deepam
5. Gandhiji Nature Cure Centre
6. Immanuel Child Development Centre
7. Ramakrishna Math
8. SC/ST Welfare Association
9. St. Charles Convent
10. Tribal Development Organization
11. Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)
12. Don Bosco (DB) Centre

