

**LAND ALIENATION, IDENTITY AND
MOBILIZATION: A STUDY OF TRIBAL
MOVEMENTS IN KERALA**

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the award of the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY



HONEY MOHAN

CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110067
INDIA
2016



DATE: 26th July 2016

DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation titled "Land Alienation, Identity and Mobilization: A Study of Tribal Movements in Kerala" submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this university or the other university.

HONEY MOHAN


CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Prof. ANUPAMA ROY

Prof. NARENDER KUMAR

 CHAIRPERSON
 Centre for Political Studies
 School of Social Sciences
 Jawaharlal Nehru University
 New Delhi - 110067

 SUPERVISOR
 Centre for Political Studies
 School of Social Sciences
 Jawaharlal Nehru University
 New Delhi - 110067

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is a humble gesture to record my gratitude and indebtedness to everyone concerned with this work.

I want to express my immense thankfulness to my research supervisor Prof. Narender Kumar, Centre for Political Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University for his patient guidance, encouragement and for his time to time insightful comments and valuable suggestions during the dissertation work.

I can't simply thank you, T.Kannan as I am sure it would not have been possible without your kind support; apart from the direction you bestowed me throughout my dissertation writing.

I also wanted to thank, Kiran for his help with the technical aspect of the dissertation.

Above all, I convey my gratefulness to the Almighty God, my parents, brothers and dear friends for their blessings and support, which motivated me to carry out this work.

Date: 26th July 2016

Place: New Delhi

HONEY MOHAN

Contents

Acknowledgement

Abbreviations i

Kerala State Map ii

Scheduled Tribes of Kerala iii

Tribal Population of Kerala (District-Wise) iv

Chapter One:

Introduction 01-18

Chapter Two:

Land Alienation and Tribals in Kerala 19-39

- *Alienation of Tribal land in India*
- *Land Alienation in Kerala: Causes and Consequences*
- *Land Reforms and Land Alienation in Kerala*
- *Land Alienation and Discontents*

Chapter Three:

Development, Globalization and Tribals in Kerala 40-65

- *Development and the 'Outlier' Phenomenon*
- *Development and the 'Inaction' of the Public Action*
- *Globalization and Kerala*
- *Globalization and Tribals in Kerala*
- *Analysing the Impact of globalization on Tribals in Kerala*

Chapter Four:

Identity Politics and Mobilization among Tribals in Kerala 66-86

- *The Tribal mobilization: Historical Context*
- *Radicalism and Identity Mobilization among Tribals*
- *The Muthanga Agitation*

Chapter Five:

Conclusion

87-97

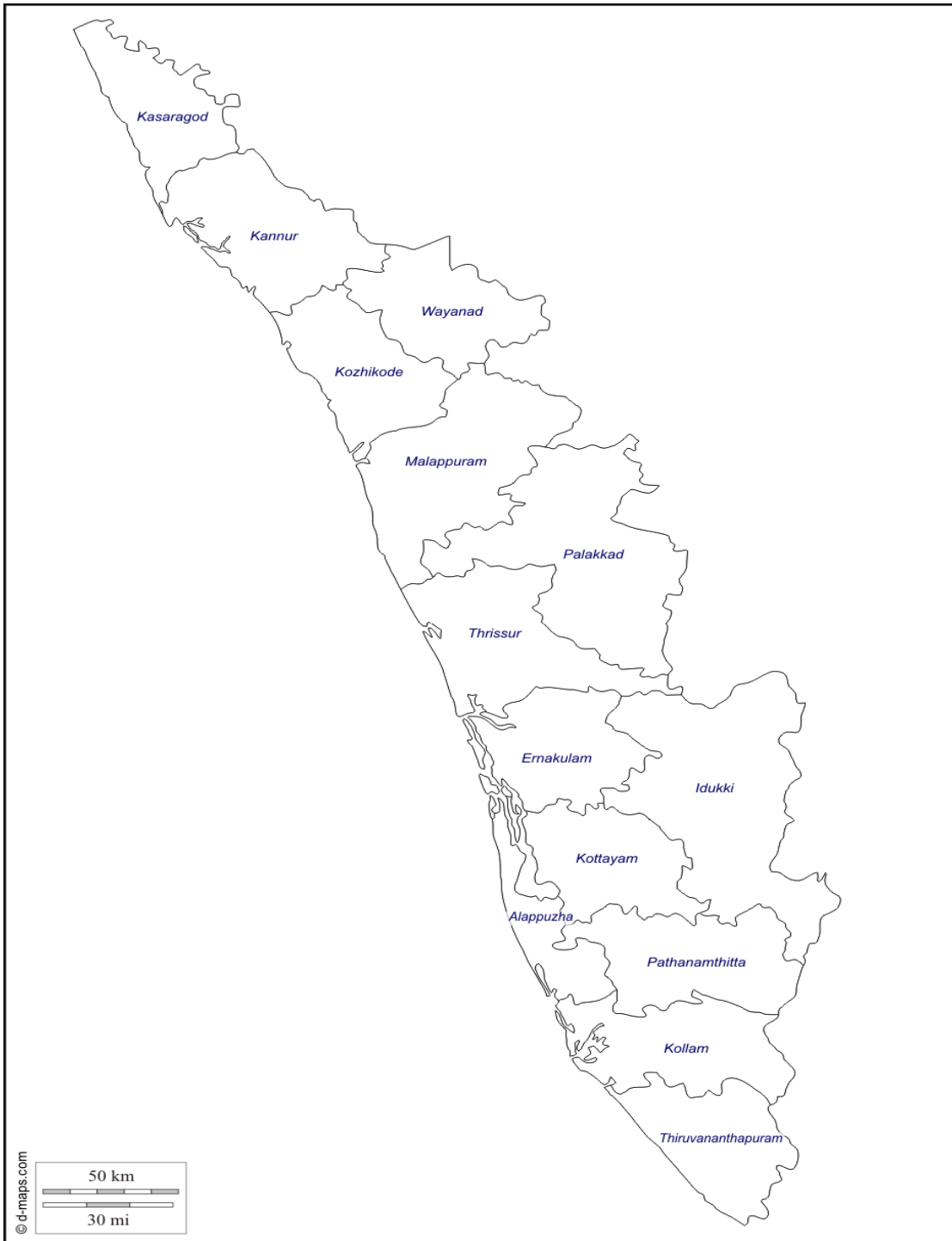
Bibliography

98-103

Abbreviations

ADSS	:	Adivasi Dalit Samara Samiti
AVPS	:	Adivasi Vikasana Pravartaka Samiti
AAS	:	Adivasi Aykya Samiti
APL	:	Above Poverty Line
BPL	:	Below Poverty Line
CBI	:	Central Bureau of Investigation
CPI (M)	:	Communist Party of India
GDP	:	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	:	International Monetary Fund
IPC	:	Indian Penal Code
KSKTU	:	Kerala State Karshaka Tozhilali Union
LPG	:	Liberalisation, Privatisation & Globalization
LDF	:	Left Democratic Front
NSM	:	New Social Movement
NGO	:	Non Government Organisations
PDS	:	Public Distribution System
RSS	:	Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh
SZAF	:	South Zone Adivasi Forum
UDF	:	United Democratic Front
WAS	:	Wayanad Adivasi Sangam
WTO	:	World Trade Organisation
WHO	:	World Health Organisation

1. Kerala State Map



2. Scheduled Tribes of Kerala

Sl.No	Tribe	Location(District-Wise)
1	Adiyan	Wayanad
2	Arandam	Malappuram
3	Eravallan	Palakkad
4	Hill Pulaya	Idukki
5	Irulan	Palakkad
6	Kadar	Palakkad
7	Kammara	-
8	Kanikkar	Thiruvandrum, Kollam
9	Karimban	-
10	Kattunayakan	Wayanad, Malappuram
11	Kochuvelan	Pathnamthitta
12	Kondakapus	-
13	Kondareddis	-
14	Koraga	Kasaragod
15	Kota	Wayanad
16	Kudiya,Melakudi	Kasaragod
17	Kurichchan	Wayanad, Kozhikode and Kannur
18	Kurumans	Wayanad
19	Kurumbas	Palakkad
20	Maha Malasar	Palakkad
21	Malai Arayan	Idukki, Kottayam
22	Malai Pandaram	Kollam,Pathanamthitta
23	Malai Vedan	Kollam,Pathanamthitta
24	Malakkuravan	Kollam,Pathanamthitta
25	Malasar	Palakkad
26	Malayan	Thrissur, Ernakulam
27	Malayarayar	Idukki, Kottayam
28	Mannan	Idukki
29	Muduvan	Palakkad, Idukki
30	Palleyan	Idukki
31	Palliyan	Idukki
32	Palliyar	Idukki
33	Paniyan	Wayanad, Kozhikode,Kannur, Mallapuram.
34	Ulladan	Kollam, Alapuzha, Ernakulam, Pathanamthitha
35	Uraly	

Source: R.Rajeevan, *Towards Political Empowerment (2010)*175.

3. Tribal Population in Kerala (District-Wise)

Districts	Total		
	Females	Males	Persons
Thiruvandrum	11003	9890	20893
Kollam	2743	2447	5190
Pathanamthita	3365	3184	6549
Alapuzza	1566	1565	3131
Kottayam	9368	8972	18340
Idukki	25463	25510	50973
Ernakulam	4967	5079	10046
Thrissur	2533	2293	4826
Palakkad	19675	19990	39665
Mallapuram	6271	5996	12267
Kozhikode	3016	2924	5940
Wayanad	68668	67394	136062
Kannur	10176	9793	19969
Kasargod	15206	15132	30338
Total	184020	180169	364189

Source: N. R. Nithya, Globalization and the Plight of the Tribals: The Case of Kerala: 752.

Chapter One

Introduction

“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 obloquy attaching to them, as it does in the caste structure, following tribal traditions, beliefs and customs, illiberal of naturalization of ideas from alien sources, above all conscious of homogeneity of ethnic and territorial integration.—D.N. Majumdar”¹

In the Constitution of India there are nearly seven hundred tribal communities which are notified under article 342. These Tribal communities are well dispersed all throughout the country. Standing to the vision of the Constitution maker, the Constitution stood for the Tribal community’s right to their habitat and their own governing systems. These rights were further enshrined into the Constitution under the Fifth and the Sixth Schedule. But these provisions have numerous shortcomings and their implementation in protecting tribal rights is far from satisfactory.

These shortcomings in the proper implementation of the provisions of the Constitution have made the Tribal people to question the aspect of homogeneity, which the state tries to project. Devoid of their traditional rights the Tribal communities have started raising their demands for acceptance of their cultural uniqueness and their entitlement to their lands.² This has made them to object to national integration thrust of the governments.

¹ Nadeem Hasnain, *Tribal India* (Lucknow : Palaka Prakashan, 2011),

² Luisa Steur, “Traveling Models of Indigenism and Kerala’s Emergent ‘Adivasi’ Politics”, *Anthropological Notebooks* 17, no.2 (2011): 91.

In similar vein, the Tribal movement in Kerala is not only about demanding proper functioning of the re-distributing mechanism in the society but also recognition of their distinct identity and culture. The life of the Tribals in the state of Kerala has reached a new low because of the constant reluctance on part of the state government and political parties to consider Tribals as a vital part of the Keralite society. This reluctance can be seen affecting the overall development aspects of the Tribal people from inadequate health care and education facilities to lack of access to their own land.

The Tribals of Kerala constitute 1.4 percent of the total population in state. Their uniqueness also owes to their occupancy of the mountains and forest lands in dense forest areas of Western Ghats in country. The Tribal in these places are culturally very different from the Tribals in other part of the country.

In Kerala among the thirty six Tribal communities, the biggest tribe is the tribal community of Paniya. Because of the re-organisation of state in 1956 and subsequent carving out of the districts both vertically and horizontally, has rendered the scattered habitation of the Tribals in the mountainous places in Kerala. This also meant that the Tribal communities in Kerala have been historically excluded, marginalized and oppressed by various development factors and forces.³

The problems of the Tribals in the state started the moment the non-tribal migrants encroached on their habitual lands and snatched them of their cultural and traditional rights. This process is actually not a phenomenon specific to post-independence rather it started from the British period itself. But what was ironical in the post-independence was the persistence of the same kind of laws and attitude from the state similar to the colonial rule. It's a fact that the laws and legislation brought for the welfare of the Tribal people in Kerala has further deteriorated their conditions and socially excluded them.

³ Raman, Ravi, "Breaking New Ground: Adivasi Land Struggle in Kerala", *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, no. 9 (2002):917.

Social exclusion is conceived as a multidimensional concept. It is a combination of material deprivation, insufficient access to social rights, a low degree of social participation, and a lack of normative integration. Several factors which are in relation to each other play a larger role in the occurrence of social exclusion among the Tribals. This social exclusion got deepened with the process of state politics and working of the state machineries. The rise of identity based mobilization among the Tribals in Kerala is to be seen in the larger background of state politics.

There are many scholarly studies on how identity politics fits into the political backdrop. The aim of identity politics is to subvert a given legal ethical background accord and to change the constitutive nature of the body politic. It is an indicator of social forces questioning and attempting to change the hegemonic ideas governing societies in the world polity. The occurrence of identity politics worldwide can be interpreted as a challenge to established norms of secular modernity and democracy.

According to Habermas, movements such as Tribal movements are different in different societies depending on the situational connotations of the particular Tribal groups and their surroundings. These situational aspects determine their relative strength and the force of their challenges. However all these movement leads to formation of identity among the subjugated groups like Tribals. Developmental processes lead by mainstream, tend to create social spaces of inequality as they are generally insensitive towards the vulnerable sections of society.

Tribal communities thus are facing marginalization virtually in every sphere of social life. They are estranged not only from the development process but also from their own dwellings. Singhroy argues that the problems of tribal people are almost universal and such situation has so often been reasonably problematic. Social exclusion and marginalization has many links to the nexus state and globalization.

In the contemporary world, globalization and changing role of the state have contributed to the deteriorating scenario of marginalization. It's very paradoxical in the wake of globalisation that small privileged sections of society are enjoying the benefits of development while large vulnerable tribes have been sacrificed.⁴ The aspect of social exclusion is of two types; active and passive.⁵ While the active exclusion is clear denial of rights to the Tribals, but in Kerala the Tribals are rather facing a passive form of social exclusion, where the state disguise the larger society about their intentions.⁶

Series of protests spearheaded by the Tribals in the post-reform period foregrounds the growing disengagement between the society-state relationship on the questions of development and assertion for self respect and dignity. Conceptually identity politics is linked with social exclusion and marginalization.

The present study dwells upon the question of social exclusion and identity politics in the specific context of the Tribal mobilization in Kerala. This shows a paradox since the state of Kerala is often talked about for their achievements in the Human Development Index, which is near equal to developed countries. As an introduction to the Tribal movement in Kerala, this chapter tries to unravel important aspect of Tribal identity mobilization in the following sections.

Social Exclusion and Tribals

The exclusion of Tribals from the success story of Kerala's development has gone relatively unacknowledged. The Tribal communities in Kerala continued to face marginalization over decades. Consequently, they are forced to create a specific space for themselves. Plausibly, the basic question of the Tribal communities in

⁴S.N Tripathy, "Paradox of Development and the Plight of Tribes in India", in S.N Chaudhary(Ed), *Globalization, National Development and Tribal Development* (New Delhi:Rawat Publications,2013):99.

⁵ Amartya Sen, *Social Exclusion: Concept, Application and Scrutiny* (New Delhi: Critical Quest, 2004), 13.

⁶ Ibid,13.

Kerala today is land alienation. Contrary to accepted notions, the land reforms in Kerala failed to provide the land to actual tillers.⁷

In recent decades many commentators of Kerala politics have raised a concern for the incapability of the large segment of the Tribals to participate in the development process, which they argued was a result of the landlessness of the Tribals. And going one step forward criticised the state governments for fuelling the Tribal struggles in the decades after 1990s.

New social movement theories provide a framework for understanding social exclusion and marginalization and the rise of identity politics among the Tribals. There are several studies on new social movements. NSMs represent a new era and a paradigm shift. Many scholars try to make understanding of the appeals to identity in the new movements in connection with the individual or group autonomy. The NSMs deploy a method of politics that tries to subvert/replace conventional political activities. The NSM theory deems identity as the cardinal characteristic that distinguishes the 'new' from the 'older' social movements.

The scholars argue that the New Social Movements are a product of contemporary politics since they showcases a very new forms of collective action with new goals, values and constituents. In Kerala also, the Tribals resorted to newer ways of protest all throughout their struggles. Even though there are plenty of literature available on land reforms in Kerala, it will be helpful to specifically look at some of the more recent debates and findings by critics, especially from Tribal communities.

The challenges to their civil, political, social, economic and cultural heritage and traditional knowledge including intellectual property rights, cultural rights have received opposition from the Tribal communities today, insofar as they perpetuate extreme form of deprivation in many ways. For the Tribals the upmost important thing is their occupancy of the forest.

⁷ Suma Scaria, "Changes in Land Relations: The Political Economy of Land Reforms in a Kerala Village", *Economic and Political Weekly* 45, no.26/27 (2010): 191.

It is ironical that worlds poorest people resides in areas of richest natural resources. Their customary rights over natural resources such as forests, cultural identity heritage and traditional knowledge including intellectual property rights, cultural heritage and traditional wisdom have been continuously at stake due to the interplay of various factors and forces.

Problems of Tribals in Kerala

In Kerala, the larger concentration of the Tribal population is in Palakkad, Wayanad and Idukki, with a percentage of 10.8, 37.36 and 14 percent respectively. The Tribal population in Kerala is thus not only scattered as mentioned before but also very rural confining basically to the forest places. The celebrated Kerala model of development has not brought much change for the socio-economic life of the marginalized sections of Kerala.⁸

Nithya in her article clearly demonstrates the problems in Kerala. These are : “Acute levels of poverty, deprivation and vulnerability, high levels of exclusion, both developmental and social, intense low levels of empowerment (political, social and economic), rapid marginalization due to unfair, unequal and manipulative relations of production, and exchange between tribal communities and others, limited access to entitlements, zero participation in development matters with no autonomy in any form of decision making, unusually huge siphoning of developmental resources and benefits meant for tribal people by middleman, poor human development index, with low levels of literary and access to health care, rapid estrangement of assets like land, alarming depletion of social capital, especially traditional forms of organization and leadership, rapid worsening of traditional knowledge systems and cultural attainments, fast-increasing tendency to use tribal people in criminal activities like unlawful distillation, cultivation of narcotic plants, stealing of forest wealth etc., high levels of abuse among women by outsiders, weak delivery system of public services, dependency-inducing developmental programs relying on distribution of benefits,

⁸ N.R, Nithya, “Land Question and the Tribals of Kerala”, *International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research* 2, no. 9, (2013):103.

rather than building up of capabilities, implementation of developmental programs in the absence of proper planning, very weak monitoring systems etc are the problems faced by the tribal community”.⁹

Land Alienation among Tribals in Kerala

The most serious problem for the Tribals in Kerala is the alienation of their land. Since the land is the major source of their livelihood and sustenance, they are totally depended on it. Not only land provide livelihood to the Tribals but it is also culturally and emotionally attached to the Tribals. In light of this reality, it’s unfortunate that in the last few decades the landlessness of the Tribals in Kerala has risen alarmingly.

On the exterior it’s been argued that this land alienation has happened because the Tribals gave away their lands to meet their credit requirements since they are highly dependent on the non-Tribals and even the socio-economic surveys such a phenomenon. But land alienation among the Tribals cannot only be attributed to this phenomenon because whole lot of factors rather interplay in denying the land o the Tribals.

Among the Tribals in Kerala the main cause of land alienation and landlessness can be attributed to “poor economic conditions, drinking habit, indebtedness, urbanization, industrialization, lack of land records, administrative inefficiency, delay in getting judgments, oral mortgage of lands in the hands of non-tribals, non-possession of judgements, interest not shown by tribal pleaders or not taking interest due to heavy bribe, fear from police and court establishing marriage with tribal women and share cropping.”¹⁰

The process of the intrusion of the non-Tribals continued unabated in the post-independent Kerala, which resulted in massive loss of land among the tribals. They lost their lands to mega projects, dams, etc. The much talked about Kerala

⁹ Ibid,103.

¹⁰ V.A Haseena, “Land Alienation and Livelihood Problems of Scheduled Tribes in Kerala”, *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 4, no.10 (2014)77.

Land Reforms Act of 1963, even after having the slogan ‘land for tiller’ didn’t provide enough lands to the landless Tribals. In fact the legislature and its very provisions proved to be very hostile to the Tribals as they kept on losing their land and non-tribal migrant became the owner of Tribal lands. This resulted in the total derailment of their life.

On top of it, the famed ‘Kerala Model of Development’ also proved to be not competent enough to bring necessary transformation in the life of the Tribals. As many scholars have argued, from the benefits of the ‘Model’ the Tribals have received next to nothing because of their inaccessibility to dominate the working of the ‘Model’ and it remains a visible blot on the ‘Model’ in the recent times.

In trying to understand the Tribal mobilisation in Kerala from the last 100 years, one can see nearly millions of Tribal lands to be snatched from the Tribal communities. However, their long confrontation to regain the forests and lands where their ancestors have lived for generations was intensified after the starvation deaths of 32 Tribals 2001.¹¹ Looking at the present scenario it can be argued that the movement is beginning to give some relief to the Tribals in the form of schemes of the government directed at the Tribals.

The Alienated Tribal Land (Restoration) 1975 brought some hope to the Tribals when it was passed in the Kerala Assembly and was seen as big step in bringing back the ‘stolen’ land to the Tribals. However the Act was stalled and not implemented on ground. From the late 1980s the state government under the influence of the non-tribal migrants brought about many ordinance to modify the original Act, which made a Tribal activist called Dr Nalla Thambi Thera to file a petition writ in the High Court requesting the full and final implementation of the 1975 Act. But unfortunately the state government was able to ward-off any strong opposition due to absence of strong and stiff struggles from the Tribal communities.

¹¹Op Cited, Raman, Ravi, “Breaking New Ground: Adivasi Land Struggle in Kerala”. 916.

The problems of the Tribals got aggravated with the absence of cultivable land and very meagre wages in the crises of the agriculture sector following the new generation economic policies.¹² Land is considered to be the most important resource; while forest provided food, fodder and raw materials to them. Thus land was a source of supplementary income and life support.

But the “Tribals who formerly regarded themselves as lord of the forest were through a deliberate process, turned into a subject and placed under the forest department”. A sizable section of Tribals had possessed land. But today they are not able to make a living out of cultivation of land.

Whatever be the type of farming, certain features are common to all tribal agriculture. They are: primitive methods and tools of cultivation, reluctance to adopt modern methods of agriculture like use of high yielding seeds and use of manure whether natural or chemical, single-crop cultivation, lack of irrigation facilities, and low productivity. Because of primitive methods of cultivation, land is not a sure source of livelihood for Tribals, especially since the price of most agricultural crops is very low.

Therefore, along with the effort of restoring land to the Tribals, it is very important that they are helped to solve the above deficiencies in the mode of their cultivation. The forest department put many restrictions which prevented the Tribals from accessing the privileges and resources of the forest. The loss of land and forest has reduced them to the status of casual wage labor, and they have been constrained to buy most of their requirements from the market.

Thus, the traditional self reliant, non-monetized tribal economy got gradually transformed into a dependent and monetized economy which became highly vulnerable to the external economic and social environment. This had an impact on the perceptions of the new generation aspiring for the better living conditions, housing and enhanced social status.

¹² Matthew Aerthayil, *Impact of Globalization on Tribals* (Jaipur:Rawat Publications) 114.

“Land alienation has given birth to several allied problems among the Tribals, i.e. increased poverty among the Tribals, decreased the occasion of employment, migration of Tribals (though in less numbers), mistreatment of Tribal laborers, exploitation of tribal women, created tension between Tribals and non-tribals, increased the distance between the rich and the poor Tribals, developed extremism and Naxalism in tribal areas, brought law and order problem in tribal areas, directly or indirectly and brought the incidence of beggary and prostitution in the tribal areas.”¹³

Lack of legislation to prevent the passing of Tribal land into the hands of non-tribal has added Tribal unrest.¹⁴ It's the faults which are prevalent in the state machinery that has helped the alienated land to remain within the grasp of the non-Tribal migrants. And state led development for projects such as industrial, power; mining etc has also led to curtailment of the Tribal land entitlements.

Impact of Globalization on Tribals

The phenomenon of globalisation had many fold effect on the Tribals throughout the globe, no matter its degree of effect may differ from place to place and among different Tribal communities. In India, the Tribals have been a very bad casualty of the globalisation led development in last few decades. From independence to till late 1990s nearly a whopping 213 lac persons are re-located because of the various project, out of which eighty five percent were the Tribals. This process of displacement has got further increased in the wake of globalisation.

The effect of globalisation has lead to debt, poverty, unemployment, etc in the lives of the Tribals all throughout the country and specifically in Kerala. The impact of globalization on the Tribals was different from state to state. But the

¹³ibid,117.

¹⁴ Haseena V.A and Mohammed P, Ajims, “Impact of Globalization on Tribals in Kerala”, *International Journal of World Research* 1, (2014):2.

common thread running through all the Tribals throughout India, in the wake of Globalization was the accelerated process of alienation of the Tribal lands.

This globalisation led development was in a way protested by the Tribals in form of starting social movement against dominant forces in society. The strength of these social movements were directly related to the fact that, where the globalisation led development proved to be more devastating on the Tribals, more the intensity of the movements was experienced.

It was the availability of the employment, which was most directly affected by the globalization for the Tribals. The fall in the cash crops price in the wake of globalisation forced the farmers to either stop or drastically reduced agricultural operations of these crops, especially coffee and tea. Since the Tribals were dependent on these farms and estates for wage labor, they lost their regular employment there.¹⁵

Thus the average working days of the Tribals per year decreased resulting in less income, leading to adverse effect on their livelihood. Thus the policies of globalization followed by the Indian government directly affected on the livelihood of the Tribals, the most marginalized group in India and Kerala, and made their life vulnerable than earlier. And the various Tribal Forest Acts have found to be incapable of arresting the problems of the Tribal communities.

Since the Tribal Forest Acts are about rights and occupation of forest land by Tribals, its relevance is more profound in Kerala. These acts are basically of three nature; firstly, the Tribals who are living within the area of reserved forest or close to it as in Idukki or Palakkad district, could be given forest rights and title deed so that they are not evicted on the basis of forest laws, and are also able to get the benefit of electricity and other public utilities. Secondly, Tribals are allowed to collect minor forest produce as permitted by the Act so that they have supplementary income for survival. Thirdly, Tribals are to be properly resettled and rehabilitated in case of eviction for common purposes.

¹⁵ Op cited, Matthew Aerthayil, *Impact of Globalization on Tribals*.165

The central and state governments should make necessary rules and legal structures to implement the provisions of this Acts so that the Tribals in Kerala get all benefits of this Act at the earliest. Tribal organizations and NGOs working among Tribals can facilitate in getting this long awaited law operationalised in the state.

It is desirable that the government should make necessary rules and legal structures to implement the provisions of various Tribal Forest Acts so that the Tribals in Kerala get the benefits of the Act, including ownership of forest land and the right to collect minor forest products. As part of forest rights, Tribals could be allowed to participate in protecting forests and its resources as is being done successfully in the state of Orissa. But unfortunately in Kerala all throughout the history it's been found that various Tribal Forest Acts were regularly been stalled by the state government at various places.

The Development Model of Kerala and the Tribals

The development experience of Kerala, which was hailed as a Development model came to be scrutinized in the last two decades, which is directly the result of the development crisis that the present state of Kerala is facing. Kerala is facing severe crisis on many fronts: stagnation in industrial and agricultural production, out-migration of industries, very high unemployment rates, acute power shortages, persistence of islands of poverty and all round reduction in the quality of services.¹⁶

It can be argued however that the central feature of this development crisis was the stagnation of the commodity producing sectors, especially of agriculture and allied sectors and industries. And therefore all the other dimensions of crisis, such as high rates of unemployment, degeneration of the service sector, worsening of the fiscal situation are the secondary effects of stagnation afflicting the commodity producing sectors.

¹⁶ K.J Joseph and K.N Harilal, "Regional Implications of Globalization: An Analysis of Kerala", in Joseph Tharamangalam(Ed) *Kerala: The Paradoxes of Public Action and Development* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 2006), 100.

Therefore the Kerala state has neglected the importance of investing on economic growth straightaway, which meant the unanimity to the developmental crisis which the state is facing in the wake of liberalization. Viewed in this way, it is the lack of progress on the basics of having an open and competitive environment for economic activities that seems to have hindered economic growth in Kerala.

The sequences of priorities that are now needed are accordingly different in Kerala as compared to other developing economies. While the other countries have already focused heavily on the basics of competition and economic stability, Kerala will now need to pay special attention to these aspects.

However the stagnant economic growth along with its secondary problems was not the only paradoxes that affected the Kerala's development, but the state development experience came under heavy scrutiny for the so called 'outlier' phenomenon.¹⁷

Kerala's experience with development was highly covered in the development literature and discourses. Although comparison of the Human Development Index might indicate that the Kerala Tribes are doing well than the other Tribal communities across India. But what it hides is the fact that they are on the extreme side of stagnation when compared with the other sections of society in Kerala.

The biggest criticism of the Kerala Model of Development is its exclusive nature of not taking the concerns of the Tribals, fisher folks, Dalits and a few sections of Muslims of the state in its fold. John Kurien argues that the development of state of Kerala is caught between its 'Central' tendency and the 'Outlier' phenomenon.¹⁸ While the Keralite people occupying the 'Central' were able to

¹⁷ Joseph Tharamangalam, "Understanding Kerala's Paradoxes: The Problematic of Kerala Model of Development", in Joseph Tharamangalam(Ed) *Kerala: the Paradoxes of Public Action and Development* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 2006), 8.

¹⁸ John Kurien, "The Kerala Model: Its Central Tendency and the Outlier", *Social Scientist* 23, no.1/3(1995) 87.

ripe the benefits which the state offered, the sections at 'Outlier' such as Tribals and fishery communities continued to stagnate.¹⁹

In their article, "Interrogating Development: New Social Movements, Democracy and Indigenous People's struggles in Kerala", T.T Sreekumar and Govindan Parayil have argued that the image of an over-extended state going all-out to redistribute income and wealth to the underprivileged breaks down when we encounter the situation of two important, but marginalized communities in Kerala- the fish workers and Tribals.²⁰ The social reality of the Tribals in post-colonial Kerala is characterized by poverty, illiteracy, socio-economic and sexual exploitation by the settlers, the depletion of their traditional resource base and state restriction.

Land grabbing and development projects have resulted in apparent shrinkages of the absolute area of land possessed by the Tribals. The depletion of forest resources and excessive restrictions imposed on the extraction of forest produce jeopardize the Tribals existence, leaving them only with the option of selling their land to outsiders when confronted with financial crisis.

Land Struggles and Tribals

The increase in poverty among the Tribals led to rising cases of starvation deaths in Kerala in the late 1990s, which perpetuated the distress among the Tribals to a new height. It resulted into a struggle waged against the state by the Tribals on their own. A new leader C.K Janu was at the forefront of the Tribal organisation called Adivasi Dalit Samara Samiti(ADSS), which was able to provide limelight to tribal issues in Kerala.

While on one hand the Tribal organisations were raising their claims, on the other hand the state was on no mood to relent on its strategy of favouring the non-tribal

¹⁹ Ibid, 88.

²⁰ T.T Sreekumar and Govindan Parayil, "Interrogating Development: New Social Movements, Democracy and Indigenous Peoples Struggles in Kerala", in Joseph Tharamangalam(Ed) *Kerala: The Paradoxes of Public Action and Development* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 2006), 216.

migrants. This made nearly five hundred Tribals under the leadership of C K Janu to wage a agitation in Muthanga forest in Wayanad districts.

Obviously this new form of agitation drew the attention of the governments at all levels. What was significant and sad in this agitation was the harsh state repression of the poor Tribals, including many womens and childrens. And false cases were registered against the Tribal leaders and the poor Tribals. It meant that the Tribals while fighting for the land on one hand had to also fight against their harassment in the hand of the state machineries. But Muthanga was just the beginning of the various land struggles that was to be witnessed in Kerala in 21st century, because soon after Muthanga agitations, Aralam Farm strike and Chengara struggle shocked the entire state and brought out the paradox of the land reforms in Kerala.

An elaborate analysis of the long history of Kerala will bring into limelight the fact that the major issues of the Tribals all throughout had not been dealt properly by the state governments. This is because of the reality that, being just 1.4 percent of the total population of Kerala, the Tribals do not pose a big threat to the government on one hand while on the other they are not decisive vote bank to be appeased by the political parties.

Looking to the peoples organizations, it is also disappointing because these organisations come up to help Tribals in wake of the projects and again become dormant once the project is over. This failure of political parties and individual organisation to take up the issues of the Tribals, led to forcing the Tribals to wage their own movement to win back what has been lost.

Panikker offers an insightful analysis on identity politics which he categorized into two, the politics of domination and politics of resistance. According to him, the main aim of the former is the quest for power for which identity is involved as a means of mobilization. The other is the politics of rights in which identity serves as a cohesive force for achieving internal solidarity. Pathak says that a major reason behind the proliferation of identity politics in the contemporary era is that

the hitherto subdued groups are overcoming the age-old silence and refusing to be defined through the categories of dominant group.

Similarly, Illaiah speaks on identity politics in the context of Indian Dalits saying that for a people who had no identity of their own over centuries, the struggle for identity becomes central in the realms of both thought and action. For him, this is a historical process that remained invisible for centuries. Guru would argue that the pursuit of modernity is bound to create structures of inequalities, thereby its own 'margin'.

There are also historical and scholarly studies on the Tribals in Kerala such as Luiz(1962), Mathur(1977), Krishna Iyer(1909), Shashi (1995), Menon(2001), Shankar(2004), Kunhaman(1989) et al. Kunhaman(1985) also offers one of the insightful studies on the Tribal economy of Kerala which has been characterized by land alienation, indebtedness, exploitation, bonded labour system and poverty.

About tribal land alienation in Kerala, the works of Bijoy(2003), Furer-Hameindrof(1988), Kulkarni(1974), Perera(2009), Bhengra, Kurup(1981) Varghese(1970) et al are of immense importance, Kyosavik(2006) who wrote a seminal study on the Adivasi Identity in Kerala, argues that the Tribal identity could be articulated into the Adivasi movement in the process of the struggles. Luisa Steur (2009) observes that Adivasi identity is better understood as a reaction against the hollowing out of the class politics.

Analyzing the emerging scenario of the indigenous people's struggles in Kerala, Sreekumar and Parayil (2006) argue that social movements of Tribals find themselves in deep conflict with mainstream political parties and their front organizations. New forms of radical mobilization have emerged through the re-negotiation of the arena in which social struggles for democracy and resistance to marginalization take place.

There are several works which provide insight into the Adivasi life world, their struggles and mobilization. Janu (2004) (2010), Cheria, Narayanan, Bijoy and

Edwin (1997) Bijoy (1999) Raman (2002) Bijoy and Raman (2003) etc are some of them. The present study, while drawing insights and information from some of the theoretical and empirical works in place, tries to offer a different framework of understanding the Tribal question in Kerala from a perspective of marginalization, identity politics and political mobilization.

Objectives of the Study

With such an understanding and background, this dissertation tries to study and understand the processes of land alienation among the Tribals in Kerala and the resultant identity mobilization by the Tribals. Within the overall framework of new social movement theories, the study seeks:-

- 1, to conceptualize social exclusion in the context of the Tribal movements;
- 2, to comprehend dynamics of identity politics and to situate Tribal question in Kerala
- 3, and to examine the Tribal land alienation question

The dissertation raises the following questions:

- (a) Does social exclusion have any structural linkage with identity politics?
- (b) Has marginalization of Tribal community led to identity politics, thereby propelling the political mobilization of Tribals?
- (c) Why have the land reforms in Kerala failed to help Tribals cause even when it has been targeted for them?
- (d) Does the Tribal struggle in Kerala represent the characteristics of new social movements?

Chapterisation and Methodology

The dissertation would be both explanatory and exploratory, as the study is concerned with causes or “why” factor about phenomenon and its explanation. The thesis is structured under five chapters: - the first chapter gives the introduction to thesis. It also deals with theoretical questions on social exclusion and identity politics and also theoretically explores the possibility of understanding the tribal movements in Kerala within the framework of new social movements.

The second chapter analyses the tribal question in Kerala in relation to the land alienation, the constitutional and legal implications of the aspirations and responses of Tribals. It also analyses the tribal question in its socio-historical context. This chapter tries to understand the shortcomings of the land reforms in Kerala.

The third chapter examine the life and problems of Tribals of Kerala and the impact of globalization on their livelihood, socio-cultural life, health and education. It also tries to suggest alternative strategies for Tribals to face the challenges of globalization. It helps us to understand the paradoxes and crisis within developmental model of Kerala and the negligence of the state towards Tribal population of Kerala.

The fourth chapter provides a clear understanding of the Tribal mobilization in Kerala. There is an attempt to draw a link between the land alienation of Tribals and their identity mobilizations. The chapter also tries to present the Tribal mobilization in Kerala into different phases.

The last and concluding chapter interrogates development, new social movements, democracy and decentralisation and indigenous movements and struggles in Kerala. It provides the summary and conclusion of the study. It also gives certain suggestions and recommendations to be followed by the government to solve the problem of land alienation among Tribals in Kerala.

Chapter Two

Land Alienation and Tribals in Kerala

Tribals in Kerala are up in arms due to many fold increase in alienation of Tribal lands in the state. Forest and Land are two most important sources of their survival and sustenance. Being denied of these, their livelihood is at stake. The concept of land alienation assumes significance here. The recent Tribal uprisings are related and inter-linked to the land alienation and related issues. The land question, more specifically land alienation, is a major factor of tribal identity and sustenance.

Historically speaking, the Tribals in Kerala based on their socio-economic conditions have conserved and managed natural resources, along with cultivating the land. They have viewed both the forest and the land to be important collective resources which is to be used according to their survival needs. One of the integral aspects about Tribals in Kerala is their judicious use of the natural resources, which runs deep into their own cultural beliefs and traditions.

Most tribal communities do not view land as a ‘commodity’ which can be bought or sold in markets, nor do they consider the trees, plants, animals, and fish which cohabit the land as ‘natural resources’ which yield profits or rents.²¹ On the contrary, the tribal view is that land is a “substance endowed with sacred meanings, embedded in social relations and fundamental to the definition of a people’s existence and identity”.²²

Therefore, the most striking feature of the Tribals in Kerala (as the case with Tribals throughout the world) is their close bond with the nature and natural resources. Acknowledging this the United Nations Development Programme

²¹ Sunil Kumar, *Marginalisation and Identity Politics: The Tribal Question in Kerala*, Ph.D. Thesis (Kottayam: Mahatma Gandhi University, 2012)73.

²² *Ibid*, 73.

(UNDP) report claims that indigenous people like tribes “have a special relationship” with the land. For them it is still their “source of livelihood and sustenance and the basis of their existence as communities.”²³

Historically there has always been a strong belief among the Tribals that the forest belongs to them since they were till recently enjoyed the liberty to utilize the natural resources bestowed in forest and were free to manoeuvre in the forest. However this conviction was soon to be challenged by the non-Tribal population. The state of affairs came to be completely overturned when the people from outside started venturing into the forest for cashing on to the vast and abundant wealth of the natural resources. This intrusion of the non-Tribal in forest was also aided by the British rule in India as they resolved to make calculated utilization of the Indian forest for their capital expansion.

With the advent of modernity the concept of alienation has reflected on certain trends affecting millions of Tribals in India. Alienation is characterized by the universal extension of the transformation of everything into commodity. It may be noted that the tribal communities in India lived, by and large, in pre-capitalistic socio-economic formations.

This is because the community ownership of land in India was not commoditized prior to the dawn of the British capital. In the later period, the British colonial interest had necessitated the transformation of the Indian society into a reproductive one. It resulted in setting up of the required infrastructure such as the establishment of massive railway lines and irrigational activities to promote the manufacturing industry.

As far as the tribal people of India were concerned, the land was not a commodity as it was freely available to them for cultivation and had been at their disposal for centuries. Though the tribal community was dependent on land for making their livelihood, it never used to be the means of individual private ownership of property. However, when outside forces started encroaching on their lands and

²³ Ibid, 73.

environment, their activity gradually became limited to a narrower area, particularly for the purpose of cultivation. It was further accentuated and later strengthened in the early twentieth century with the emergence of settlers and initiation of the survey and land records.

Alienation of Tribal land in India

Alienation of Tribal lands can be traced back to 1855, as the British colonial government passed a memorandum which was titled as “Charter of Indian Forests”.²⁴ The charter was in many ways proved to be very detrimental for the cause of the Tribals all over India. This charter was significant for transferring the large areas of the forest lands as belonging to the government, thereby necessitate government interventions. The second in line to accelerate the process of alienation of Tribal land is the passage of the Indian Forest Act of 1865, which upheld that lands covered with bushes and trees can be declared as forest and are to be kept under the purview of the government machineries.²⁵

These two important steps of the British colonial administrators are important on three accounts; firstly, it heralded the process of intrusion into Tribal lands, and secondly, the idea of common property resources was pushed to backgrounds and thirdly, it became the start for series of laws aimed at curtailing the traditional rights of the Tribal people in their habitual land and forest.

Independence did not bring much relief to the Tribals as was intended by many of the Tribal people on the verge of independence. The new National Forest Policy was devised by the Indian government in 1952, which was seen to be very discriminatory towards the Tribals all throughout the country. While before this new policy, the Tribals were free to carry on their cultivation which was only

²⁴ Darley Jose Kjosavik and N. Shanmugaratnam, “Property Rights Dynamic and Indigenous Communities in Highland in Kerala, South India: An Institutional-Historical Perspective”, *Modern Asian Studies* 41, no. 6 (2006): 1217.

²⁵ A. Damodharan, “Tribals, Forest and Resource Conflicts in Kerala, India: The Status Quo of Policy Change”, *Oxford Development Studies* 34, no.3 (2006): 361.

subjected to certain conditions and more or less they were free enough to do free grazing.

But all these liberties were now being barred after the new National Forest Policy of 1952. The new policy completely barred any form of cultivation and also required a paid permit for grazing, which was very hard to get. Elwin very aptly depicts the position of the Tribal people in the changed circumstances. Thus the Tribal who regarded himself as the lord of the forests, was through a deliberate process turned into a subject and placed under the Forest Department. Tribal villages were no longer an essential part of the forests but were there merely on sufferance.

Therefore the traditional rights of the Tribals are no longer recognized as just rights, they were only reduced to concessions to be given by the Government of India. In 1960, the President of India by utilizing the powers vested in his office under section 339 of the Constitution of India, appointed the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission. The commission was headed by Dhebar. The commission was largely focused upon understanding the existing forest policies and its impact on the Tribal populations.

The Dhebar commission (as it is famously known) was significant for raising the issue of importance of forests for the life and survival of the Tribal communities on one hand, on other hand it severely critiqued the intrusion and undue interference of the government machineries into the forest in the name of management of forests as it proves to be detrimental for the life and economy of the Tribal communities.

The commission after considering the aspect of Tribal development came to a conclusion that the concept of Scheduled Areas may not be extended to the tribes of peninsular India and instead recommended a process of acculturation.²⁶ These processes were seen by the commission to be important to bring the Tribals into

²⁶ It's a process of changes in ones culture and psychology owing to interaction of different cultures.

the path of modernization and modernity. However this meant a very significant altering of the structure of Tribal occupation from that of forest orientation to that of performing agriculture and doing animal husbandry.

These recommendations even on first seem uplifting for the Tribals but on the hindsight it necessitated a strong state management of the forest and the Tribal communities. Following the Dhebar commission the Planning Commission constituted a National Committee on the Development of Backward Areas in 1980 and the report of the committee was published in 1981. Importantly the report accepted the views expressed in the National Commission on Agriculture and upheld the curtailment of rights of Tribal people on their habitual land and forest.

The concept of land as a commodity came into conflict with the traditional concepts of common property and with societies such as those of many Tribal people throughout India, who generally do not have a documented system of land rights. It is important to understand that at the heart of the debate lays the question of land use, since majority of the Tribal population in India lived in resource-rich parts of the country. This fact lead to growing greed for these parts of the country on part of both the government and the private business houses, as they wanted to plunder the natural resources by gaining access and control over the forest and the Tribals.

In the process, depriving tribal groups of land has become the norm, as they are routinely displaced and, in most cases, not even able to claim compensation since they have no legal proof of ownership. Various studies say that over 20 million people have been displaced from their traditional lands because of large projects such as dams, railroads, etc since independence, and a majority of them have been Tribals. This has happened despite the fact that special legal provisions exist to protect the land and other assets of Tribal people. This happened because even the

judiciary and legislature admit that the Tribal community should be given alternate land rather than leaving them on their own lands.²⁷

Driven away from their homes and with little or no resettlement assistance, they join the ranks of the landless. As Tribals had cleared off the forest tracts for cultivation purposes, they no longer became the masters of those pieces of land; rather the newly entered settlers took them over. This made them helpless objects having lost control over the products which they created. The mainstream society, however, does not fully understand the sensitive feelings of Tribals towards their land. Losing the land amounts to losing a part of one's own identity.

Land Alienation in Kerala - Causes and Consequences

In Kerala, alienation of the Tribal land is a very big obstacle in the chances of basic survival of the Tribals. Being a tangible asset of the Tribal community, nearly 80 percent of the Tribals are dependent on forest lands and allied activities associated with those lands. In the last few decades landlessness among the Tribals has increased many fold. This phenomenon can be attributed to many factors.

Land as discussed in previous section was always been an integral part of the Tribals community but they never had to fight for it since it remained to a large extent community property. Therefore the ownership of the land was undisputed on many accounts. Even when the Tribals started cultivation on a particular pattern and with individual Tribals being given a particular land to cultivate, the problem of ownership of land never arrived since families were cultivating for their subsistence and not profit.

In fact the Tribal families entitlement to their cultivating land was always safeguarded by the larger Tribal community because the families were one important part of that larger community. In substance, the tribe as a whole retained the 'ownership' right and the family within it continued to enjoy

²⁷ M. S. Sreerekha, "Challenges before Kerala's Landless: The Story of Aralam Farm", *Economic and Political Weekly* 45, no. 21 (2010): 55.

operational right. The tribal economy as such remained an “undifferentiated, homogenous community of primary producers.”²⁸

But in the latter years due to constant interactions with the non-Tribal population the Tribal economy underwent a drastic change. Kunhaman pointed out that this “structural change varied spatially according to the type of socio-economic system to which the outsiders belonged as well as the policy measures followed by the rulers of the larger political systems encompassing the tribal areas.”²⁹

The interaction between the Tribals and non Tribals eventually resulted in sowing the seeds of a differentiated Tribal economic structure which, in turn, affected the man-land relationship among the Tribals. In places like Malabar, the Tribals who cultivate were dispossessed by the non-Tribals while in places like Travancore region; the Tribals were pushed towards intensive forms of agriculture instead of the extensive one because of the growing non-Tribal interference. In short, the historical process of differentiation caused the division of the Tribals into ‘landed’ and ‘landless’.

Based on some of survey conducted among the Tribals, it’s been found out that a larger sections of the Tribal community alienate their lands in order to meet their domestic expenses and paying off their earlier debts. The main causes of land alienation and landlessness among the Tribal’s are poor economic conditions, drinking habit, indebtedness, urbanization, industrialization, lack of land records, administrative inefficiency, delay in getting, judgment, oral mortgage of lands in the hands of non-Tribals, non-possession of Judgment, interest not shown by Tribal pleaders or not taking interest due to heavy bribe, fear from police and court establishing marriage with Tribal women and share cropping.

While land alienation is itself a result of many factors, but in hindsight it also give rise to many problems associated with it. These problems can be “increased

²⁸ Op Cited, Sunil Kumar, *Marginalisation and Identity Politics: The Tribal Question in Kerala*, 75.

²⁹ Ibid, 75.

poverty among the Tribals, decreased the occasion of employment, migration of Tribals, exploitation of Tribal labourers, exploitation of Tribal women, created tension between Tribals and non-Tribals, increased the distance between the rich and the poor Tribals, developed extremism and Naxalism in Tribal areas, brought law and order problem in Tribal areas, directly or indirectly and brought the incidence of beggary and prostitution in the Tribal areas.”³⁰

After independence in Kerala, increased land alienation among the Tribals happened precisely because of the intrusion of large number of non-Tribals into Tribal natural habitats and also because of development projects. Importantly, the state government has been found to be reluctant to control these phenomenons. One good instance for such a reluctant approach on part of the state government can be the Kerala Land Reforms Act of 1963. While the Act was intended towards providing the land to tillers but in reality this meant that the non-Tribals who were now the occupier of the land became its owner and the Tribals became landless labourers.

This enactment of the severely altered the balance in favour of the non-Tribal migrants as they now started behaving ruthlessly towards the Tribals in places like Attapady and Wayanad. This was the result of official recognition of the non-Tribal migrants as the real owners of the forest lands. They started exploiting the Tribals to extreme. In fact it was the apathetic attitude displayed by successive governments that made the issue more complicated. Thus the Tribal issue in Kerala presents a dismal picture.

Therefore the deprivation of Tribal lands and the intrusion the non-Tribals in forest lands constitute the present day land question in Kerala. Tribals are often criticized for being greedy of acquiring land but all these argument fails to understand the sensitivity of the Tribals towards their habitual lands. It's not

³⁰ Ramachandra Guha, “Adivasis, Naxalites and Indian Democracy”, *Economic and Political Weekly* 42, no.32 (2007):3304.

merely about the land that the Tribals are fighting for; it's about the values that are assigned to it by the very cultural identity of the Tribal existence.

According to official statistics, by 1976-78 nearly 30 per cent of the Tribal households remained landless. This was the lowest among the tribal households in the south (especially in the erstwhile Princely States of Travancore and Cochin) and the highest in the districts of Kannur, Kozhikode, Malappuram and Palakkad (in the erstwhile Malabar area). The spatial variation in the proportion of landless households was due to many reasons. According to Kunhaman, the dominant tribes in the districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Kottayam and Idukki (such as the Kanikkars, the Malayarayans and the Muthuvans) were the first to emerge as settled agriculturalists in the state. This made them “capable of adjustments in the emergent market situation as independent producers on an equal footing with the migrant non Tribal farmers.” What strengthened their desire for individual land ownership was the continued market involvement which, in fact, had brought about changes in the nature, pattern and intensity of cultivation.

Table 2: Landless Tribal Families- District Wise

Sl. No.	District	Landless Families	Land Below 1 Acre
1	Thiruvandrum	13	1101
2	Kollam	10	572
3	Pathnamthitta	54	1032
4	Alappuzha	3	568
5	Kottayam	134	1340
6	Idukki	-	4458
7	Ernakulam	-	724
8	Thrissur	251	840
9	Palakkad	5379	2637
10	Malappuram	178	2224

11	Kozhikode	0	787
12	Wayanad	12564	12184
13	Kannur	2249	2249
14	Kasaragod	171	171

Source: R.Rajeevan, Towards Political Empowerment (2010), 180.

Land Alienation and Land Reforms in Kerala

In the history of Kerala, the Land Reform Bill of 1957 is seen as an important event in relation to the Tribals. It's not to argue that it was the first step for land reform in Kerala because even before the formation of the present day Kerala, in 1954 Restriction on Possession and Ownership of Lands Bill was passed. However the act of 1954 did not prove to be significant in terms of its effects on the society at large. Therefore it was left for the Land Reform Bill of 1957 to significantly alter the land relations in Kerala in general and on the Tribals in particular.

The Land Reform Bill of 1957 while on one hand fixed tenure on all tenants, while on other hand ceiling limit was placed on families. The bill was said to fix around 15 acres of cultivable land on a family of five members and for an unmarried adult the limit of land that was fixed was seven and half acres of cultivable land. Whatever land that is left was said to be distributed among the agricultural labourers having no land. But significantly the entire plantation lands were not brought under the ceiling mandate.

The proposed bill run into extreme opposition from many sides and with the imposition of the President rule in 1959 saw the President returning the bill for some changes. On 15th October 1960 the proposed bill was passed but again many of the dictates of the bill was removed by the judiciary. So a fresh bill was passed on 1963 under the name Kerala Land Reforms Act. The Act gave fixity of tenure to tenants, giving at the same time a limited right of resumption to landlords. The bill also brought out a uniform rent rates all throughout the state and an

amendment to the bill also meant that ceiling limit was further reduced along with removal of certain exemptions attached to it.

The legal abolition of landlords in 1970 in Kerala meant a great impetus to the process of land reforms in the state. Now the tenants were made as the owner of their cultivation lands subjected to certain provisions of ceiling and payments. It seemed that the main beneficiaries would be the landless people but ironically the provisions of the ceiling in the said bill were not able to effect the surplus land distribution as it was expected.

It may be noted that in 1959, the estimated surplus land was about 7,20,000 hectares. But the extent of land orders for surrender was only 67000 hectares in 1988.³¹ By showing fake tenancies many of the big landowners have easily escaped from the ceiling provisions of the act, thereby defeating the said aim of the bill.

The exemption given to plantations proved to be detrimental for the act in general and Tribals in particular. The cultivated land with rubber, coffee, cocoa, tea and cardamom were considered as plantation lands. Due to this fact many of the land owners converted their lands to plantation land. Since many of the Tribals worked in these plantations, they were devoid of any protections. The encroachment on the Tribal lands by the non-Tribals uprooted Tribals from their habitat and alienated them from their lands.

It is not to argue that the land reforms in Kerala was a total failure because it was able to defeat many of the bad practices associated with landlordism, but as Nair argues the real problem with land reforms in Kerala was to carve out the strategies to place the control of the lands in the possession of the actual tillers on one hand and most importantly to see that these lands remain with them. It is to be argued

³¹ Op cited, Sunil Kumar, *Marginalisation and Identity Politics: The Tribal Question in Kerala*: 77.

that on all these fronts the land reforms in Kerala are found to be far from the desired targets.

Many commentators on Kerala land reforms argue that it was not able to secure social justice and development of the subaltern groups, more specially the Tribals and Dalits in Kerala. As Gail Omvedt argued that both Dalits and Tribals in Kerala has not benefitted from the land reforms in the state. They also argued that providing land rights for the tenants and securing higher wages for agricultural labourers is not social justice since all this depends on how far all these things will be retained.

In sum therefore, abolition of tenancy and landlordism, fixity of tenure and protection of forceful eviction had no significant advantage for the Tribals. Most of the Tribals engaged in shifting cultivation under oral tenancies were given no protection. The intrusion into their land by non-Tribals and the legitimization of such encroachments displaced the Tribals. This actually happened in the post-land reform period. The prevalence of ownership of plantations on colonial patterns has further rendered the land reforms in Kerala to remain weaker.³²

Land Alienation and Discontents

It is to be noted that the plantation lands which are exempted from the land reforms were the backbone of the Kerala economy. But this also meant that it also get ruined by the economic interests of the Indian and global businesses. The concepts of eco-tourism, development projects and social forestry in all over India has disturbed the Tribals living habitat and forced them to take up the fight back to the development projects.³³ Here it is important to note that originally the concept of social forestry was envisaged by the government in order to resist the undue cutting of the forest covers. Social forestry was said to involve the Tribals

³² K. T. Rammohan, "Caste and Landlessness in Kerala: Signals from Chengara", *Economic and Political Weekly* 43, no. 37 (2008): 14.

³³ Muzzaffar Assadi, "Tribals on Warpath: Confronting Eco-Terrorism", *Economic and Political Weekly* 31, no 40 (1996): 2722.

and rural communities, and landless people, so that their needs for sustenance can be met along with conservation of the forest.

But in the practice the initiative of social forestry was not able to take-off because of the ambivalent attitude of the government towards having the Tribal involvement in forest management. Instead, the plantations stood witness to numerous projects which catered to the commercial and urban interests via enormous rise of fast-growing tree species for pulp and paper manufacture, rayon production, urban fuel-wood supply, and other commercial uses.

Ironically this practice of growing for commercial and urban interests have taken under its control the wastelands and community lands, as a result the accessibility of the Tribals to fuel wood, fodder and other forest products is strictly got reduced. While on one hand the cultivation of these monoculture tree species, especially widespread cultivation of water-consuming trees like eucalyptus reduced the water table and degraded the soil and on the other hand these trees were not able to provide fuel-wood and fodder to meet the daily livelihood requirements of the Tribals in particular.

Along with this, big hydroelectric projects and dams like at Idukki, Karapuzha and Chimmini snatched great amount of habitual lands from the Tribals and resulted in land alienation among them. Not only this, creation of national parks and wild life sanctuaries like Wayanad and Periyar sanctuaries have literally led to complete dislocation of Tribals from these parts of forest.

While the government all throughout 1980s and 1990s kept on spending huge amount of money for the development of the Tribals, but in reality landlessness among the Tribals kept on increasing. Of the total thirty six thousand Tribal families in Wayanad, nearly sixteen thousand did not have home of their own and nearly seven thousand eight families did not have any land.

Such a scenario resulted in escalated suicide incidence among the Tribals. For instance, in Attapady under the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme, the money given for soil conservation, afforestation and water

preservation were used for other purposes. While it was argued that this would lead to employment among the Tribals, but in reality these projects were handed over to the contractors, who denied Tribal employment.

Similarly there are numerous cases of Tribals being cheated in Kerala. In Wayanad, for the development of the Tribals a project called Cheengari Tribal Project was launched in 1957. According to this project, 526 acres of land was assigned for rehabilitation of nearly 100 Tribal labour families with 5 acres per family within a stipulated period of five years. While the total number of families to be rehabilitated increased to 250, but out of the total land nearly 200 acres was given to agricultural department and nearly 100 acres was encroached by the non-Tribal. All the successive state governments from 1957 failed to check the land alienation among the Tribals.

In light of the incapability of the state government it is important to note that even the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (1996) of Central government did not bring any relief to the Tribals in Kerala as no Tribal area in Kerala has been notified as a scheduled area. This happened even after the recommendations of the Dhebar Commission (1960) and the Scheduled Areas and Schedule Tribes Commission appointed under Article 339 of the Constitution, that all the lands of Tribals alienated after 1950 must be restored to their traditional occupants. And on top of that, the land reform measures in Kerala also did not help the Tribals who have lost their occupancy rights to the settlers who had now become their 'tenants'.

In 1971, under the Kerala Private Forest (Vesting and Assignment) Act of 1971, nearly twenty three thousand hectares of land were to be distributed among the landless Tribals but nothing was given to them till date.³⁴ To mitigate the phenomenon of land alienation among the Tribals in Kerala, a resolution was

³⁴ Op cited, Sunil Kumar, *Marginalisation and Identity Politics: The Tribal Question in Kerala*: 85.

passed by the state ministers to prevent this phenomenon as urgently as possible. The state ministers also underlined the incapability of the different legislature to stop land alienation among the Tribals.

All this effects resulted in the passing of the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act, 1975 on 14 November 1975. Most importantly the Act of 1975 put restrictions on the transfer of lands from the Tribals to non-Tribals and stood for restoration of lands which are alienated in past from the Tribal people, with coverage over entire Kerala. After the commencement of this Act a person is liable to be punished with rigorous imprisonment of one year, or with a fine of 2,000 rupees, or with both if he/she indulges in transfer of immovable property from the Tribals.

The Act also made a condition for a competent authority, with reference to any land, means the District Collector of the district in which the land is situated or any other officer appointed by the Government to be the competent authority for the purposes of this Act for the area in which that land is situated.

What was sceptical about the act was the time it took for this act to get framed and put into force. The Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act, 1975 was notified into gazette after 11 years on October 1986 and only in 1982 the act was came into force. It is to be noted that the reason for such a delay was the changing socio-political scenarios in the state of Kerala.

In late 1970s there was not much pressure on the political parties to pacify the Tribals since the political parties were able to make inroads into the Tribal hamlets by controlling the non-Tribal populations. Above all the growing state power and growing market for cash crops in these places meant that probability of radical movements gets reduced among the Tribals.

Along this period, the inhabitant hamlets of the Tribals became dominated by the non-Tribals and Tribals became a numerical majority in their habitual lands. For instance, the Tribals who constituted 63 per cent of the population in 1961 in

Attapady had been reduced to 39 per cent by 1991. The Act of 1975 is also interesting because while the government and political parties supported the Act initially but made a u-turn and started openly challenging the Act. It was argued that since it was the non-Tribal settlers who have invested their energy and money for the welfare of the area and any removal of the non-Tribal settlers from these areas would lead to undue problems between the Tribals and the non-Tribals.

As a result the act was not able to bring any drastic changes on the ground zero. Even amidst the restriction on the transfer of the Tribals lands to non-Tribals, the alienation of land continued unabated. The provision that required Tribals to return the transaction amount along with the cost incurred by the non-Tribals, itself ensured that the land will eventually remain with the powerful non-Tribal encroachers.³⁵

According to some numerical calculations there was seven fold increases in the number of landless Tribals families in Kerala from 1976 to 2001. Under the act, nearly eight thousand five hundred applications were placed but no action was taken for restoring lands to these applicants, thereby Act became a joke which further encouraged occupancies of the Tribal lands by the non-Tribal settlers.

This gross violation of the Act of 1975 has prompted many Tribal activists to take resort to public interest litigation. One such activist was Nalla Thampi Thera. He filled a PIL in Kerala High Court in 1988 to accelerate the proper implementation of the 1975 Act. The High court responded with issuing a mandamus on 1993 but the UDF (United Democratic Front) made an attempt to bring up an ordinance to amend the Act of 1975. The supporters of the Tribal rights cried foul on the act of the Government as it was completely unjust because it made legal all transactions of tribal land up to January 1986.

The LDF (Left Democratic Front) that came into power in 1996 was no different to the earlier government. The LDF government responded to the High Court by filling an affidavit arguing that the state government is not in position to

³⁵ "Fading Hope of Restoration", *Economic and Political Weekly* 36, no. 42 (2001): 3958.

implement the Act of 1975 as it was presupposed by the government that it might lead to conflicts in Kerala society. But the Kerala High Court did not agree to the justification given by the state government and ordered the government to implement the 1975 Act within 6 weeks.

With the prospect of being in a spot of bother, the state government decided to pass the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Amendment Bill, 1996 to escape contempt of court proceedings. While this was a welcome step but in reality it neglected the cause of the Tribals because the amendment did not take into consideration thousands of land restoration applications already pending with authorities and the message was clear to not help the Tribals cause at all.³⁶

Later on based on two writs filed by Niyamavedi of Kochi and the Peoples Union for Civil Liberties, a division bench of High Court termed some of the sections in the Kerala Restrictions on Transfer by and Restoration of Lands to Scheduled Tribes Act, 1999 as unconstitutional and ordered the state government and its machineries to restore the land alienated from the Tribals on the guideline of the 1975 Act. And the authorities were further ordered to not to go ahead with forcing the sections of 1999 Act which are deemed unconstitutional by the Honourable High Court since the Court found the Act to be more protective of the non-Tribals than the Tribals.

However in hindsight as Krishna Iyer argues this restoration of the alienated land back to the Tribals is not an easy thing to accomplish because although the base of the 1975 Act was giving back land to Tribals for resettlement but all the period of development in these places has seen huge investments by the non-Tribals which cannot be neglected completely. Krishna Iyer said that “Exceptions may have to be made to exclude from resumption church buildings, schools, essential community centres and the like.” However, “where there has been expansionist

³⁶ K. Ravi Raman, “Muthanga: A Spark of Hope”, *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 48, no. 1 (2004): 127.

encroachment” of the tribal land, “there is clear justification for evicting the occupants.”³⁷

He further goes on to add that this process of evicting will lead to huge problems in these places, as the reluctances of the state government to implement the 1975 Act and subsequent legislative attempts to thwart the process of giving back the land back to Tribals, goes on to demonstrate the growing political might of the non-Tribal migrants.

Therefore this was the phase of a different kind of legal confrontation between the Tribals and the state establishments. However this increased resorting to legal mechanism also meant that, the Tribals were eventually also losing out their hard-earned money for redressing their grievances thorough judicial proceedings. And there was an increase in suicides among the Tribals in Kerala around late 1990s as nearly 30 Tribals committed suicide. After 1999, there was sudden increase in the starvation deaths all throughout Kerala and most particularly in places like Wayanad. All this pushed the Tribal mobilization to another level of confrontation and brought together the Tribals at all levels.

In this renewed atmosphere once again the Tribals started being highly vocal about their desire to own their land. They argued that only by having the possession of their land they will be able to alleviate themselves from all their problems. While, as mentioned before, the raising of such a desire at this time of the century when the state government was marching under the banner of development, it was inevitably known fact that they will have to face some of the worst state actions since they also were devoid of strong political backing.

It is to be noted that the growing state actions on one hand and failure of peaceful democratic have frustrated the Tribals to a large extent and forced them to resort a

³⁷ Op cited, Sunil Kumar, *Marginalization and Identity Politics: The Tribal Question in Kerala*: 85.

tactics of taking possession of government land by encroaching and putting their hamlets in these places.

As the dawn of Globalization started setting in Kerala, one witness a rapid increase in the cases of harassment of the Tribals in both inside and outside of their traditional hamlets. Responding sharply to such a phenomenon, the Tribals in Kerala started becoming more eloquent of their cause and began mobilizing at all levels. In this background, there was the emergence of the C. K. Janu's Adivasi Gotra Maha Sabha. The emergence of a coherent organization further added to the already ongoing struggles of the Tribals in Kerala.

The forty eight day sitting dharna in 2001 is yet another case of discontent among the Tribals in Kerala. The dharna was a part of the protest headed by both the Adivasi Gotra Maha Sabha and Adivasi Dalit Samara Samiti. They sat in front of the state secretariat to demand for the instant giving of land to landless Tribals and ending starvation deaths among the Tribals.

The dharna resulted in an agreement between the Tribal leaders and the state government. It was decided that all landless Tribals will be provided with one to five acres of lands. The agreement indicated that it will be on the state government to decide as to which all places it will demand from the central government for the purpose of converting them into Scheduled Areas.³⁸ These Scheduled Areas are to further to be divided among the landless Tribals for the fulfilment of the agreement. These areas are to be further protected by the state government to safeguard Tribals livelihood and culture by bringing suitable legislature.

The land meant to be distributed to Tribals was never given to them before the stipulated date of January 2002 and the government sacrificed the important provisions of the agreement. This forced Adivasi Gotra Maha Sabha to lead the Tribals into starting numerous land assertion mobilizations. The first in the line of

³⁸ "Forests and Tribals", *Economic and Political Weekly* 38, no. 10 (2003): 921.

these land assertion attempts was the Muthanga agitation in the district of Wayanad in February, 2003.

Alongside the Muthanga agitation, a place called Aralam farms was occupied by the landless Tribals and they started cultivating the fields over there. However the chain of events that unfolded in Muthanga later on shocked the entire nation and also brought Tribals issues in somewhat limelight.

But even the media coverage of the Tribal issues in Kerala, the state atrocities and exploitation of the Tribals after the Muthanga agitation has further got increased. This was the militant phase of Tribal movement in Kerala. Tribal men, women and children's were tortured, harassed and many also went missing.³⁹ Many of the Tribal leaders like Geetanathan and C. K. Janu were arrested and put behind jails. As C. K. Janu argues that the rise of the militant phase of the Tribal movement in Kerala has witnessed many false cases being registered on Tribal leaders, activists and local Tribals to weaken the Tribal mobilization.

The biggest jolt for the Tribals in Kerala was however came from the Supreme Court, which while hearing the special leave petition filed by the Kerala government rejected the Tribals demand for putting a stay on the state authorities actions against the protestant Tribal people. And it upheld the constitutional validity of the 1999 Act and repulsion of the 1975 Act.

The Court went further in upholding the differences between the agricultural land and the non-agricultural land given by the government in the 1999 Act, since it classified all forest as agricultural lands. However the court ordered the state government to provide for the land meant for the Tribals and if it's been denied to them then the Tribals can take recourse to the judicial remedies. However nothing was enough to curb the growth of land alienation among the Tribals in the decades of 1990s and 2000s.

³⁹ Tomy Jacob, "Tribals Struggle for Land in Kerala", An Unpublished Paper accessed through Internet.

It is to be noted that the rise of Tribals and the increase in the alienation of their lands along with the ambivalent attitude of the state government was also a result of the larger effect of globalization. Globalization as way of perpetuating interactions among different parts of the world has in principle been very hostile to Tribals in third world countries, most particularly India.

Especially in the state of Kerala the dawn of globalization along with its supporter in the form of liberalization and privatization has severely made a dent into the life and livelihood of the Tribals in Kerala. On various fronts the ill-effects of the various aspects of globalization can be seen affecting the Tribals. Ranging from unemployment to culture changes, nothing seemed to be left protected from globalization. It therefore also raises a very important question in terms of the famed “Kerala Model of Development” because all was seen to be a part of this model whereas the sections of the ‘Outlier’ continued to be subjugated and suppressed.

Summing Up

To sum up, it can be surely argued land being the most important asset of the Tribals, is remained elusive from the reach of the Tribals. The Tribal mobilization in Kerala is a direct result of the alienation of their land and the failure of the state to implement land reforms over a long period of time. While the state legislature did manage to bring suitable legislature from time to time to arrest the phenomenon of land alienation among Tribals in Kerala, but the lack of political will among the politicians and bureaucrats had made the dream of Tribals for their lands elusive.

Development, Globalization and Tribals in Kerala

The state of Kerala has long been lauded as a model of social development, particularly in terms of education and health. But even though Kerala leads the rest of India and approach developed countries in terms of social development, its level of economic development is low and more low among the Tribals in Kerala. The reason for such a mismatch is its stagnant agriculture, low industrial growth and uneven development among different sections of the society. In this celebrated Kerala Model of Development what was neglected were the plights and hardships of the Tribal communities in Kerala.

The so called “Kerala model of development” came under scrutiny in 21st century. In fact Kerala’s developmental experience has remained a hot topic well in advance from later half of 20th century. “Kerala model of development” often tagged as the alternative, has achieved unquestioned acceptance of its modus operandi in the developmental literature. Apotheosized as the people's alternative to the dominant models, the case of Kerala generated considerable interest. For a long time the notion of Kerala model survived unquestioned.

It was in this period when many scholars began interrogating the ‘Developmental Paradox’ i.e. the combination of poor economic performance and exceptionally high social achievement.⁴⁰ And some scholars have gone further and questioned the very claims of the social development from the perspectives of subaltern sections in Kerala, particularly the Tribals.

Therefore Kerala which has emerged as a “model” in the popular discourse on Human Development was also seen by many as being in the throes of a crisis because of its economic stagnation and social political atrophy.⁴¹ By the 1990s at

⁴⁰ Vinod Thomas, “Kerala: A Paradox or Incomplete Agenda?” in Joseph Tharamangalam (ed) *Kerala: The Paradoxes of Public Action and Development* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 2006),71.

⁴¹ Joseph Tharamangalam(ed) *Kerala: The Paradoxes of Public Action and Development* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 2006), vii.

least some scholars and observers were suggesting that all was not well within the developmental model of Kerala. The model was seemed to be mired in prolonged economic stagnation, mounting fiscal problems, exceptionally high unemployment, and socio-political atrophy.

Doubts were slowly raised on whether Kerala's achievements could be sustained at all. Against this backdrop, this chapter tries to situate the debates pertaining to Kerala's developmental experience in a larger context focusing on globalization its effects on Tribals. An attempt is also made to understand the paradoxes of the Kerala model of development in comparison to its neglect of the Tribal communities in the state.

Kerala has in the past attracted the attention of several scholars both within the country and abroad for its unique development experience. For those observing the state, the important feature has been its impressive achievements in contributing to the quality of life of its people. The development which was witnessed by the Kerala society in the decades after the formation of the state was often noted. Then there are scholars who have hailed the development in the state which they felt were able to meet the needs of the most vulnerable sections of society.⁴²

It was observed by academicians across the world that something notable was going on in Kerala society. The initial years, the short term rule by the communist government which led to the creation of a strong civil society and an emphasis on public education and health care and there was a spirited struggle against feudal forces. The exceptional nature of Kerala's development attracted scholarly attention very soon.

The political economy outlook widely employed to study the development and which considered development as the growth of economic indicators found that

⁴² K. P. Kannan, "Declining Incidence of Rural Poverty in Kerala", *Economic and Political Weekly* 30, no 41/42 (1995): 2651.

Kerala was very well ahead in terms of social indicators while it was lagging in economic development and the quality of life among the Tribals.

These are; the high level of literacy (which is now almost universal with very low differential as between the rural and urban areas and most importantly, between men and women), the high life expectancy, the extremely low infant mortality rate, a favorable sex ratio, high trend in the other health indicators and very high achievements on the demographic front.

Education, health and demographic indicators are but a few examples of the nature of social development in Kerala. Equally impressive are those, which are less amenable for quantitative expression such as the vibrancy in political participation, social movements, and the enormous expansion in the circulation of the printed materials! (Newspapers, Magazines, Books etc).

In a detailed study on Kerala, Amartya Sen and Jean Dreze have used the concept of 'public action' to describe the reason behind the things that produced the Kerala Model.⁴³ State action through public provisioning and public support measures is crucial, but public action is more important because it involves public participation through independent action by the public as well as through pressure put on the state by such institutionalized democratic means as public debates, a free press, a opposition parties and adversial politics.⁴⁴

A number of studies carried initially, focused on solving the riddle of a state, which was able to achieve high levels of social development despite low economic development. The significant role played by the state governments since independence have been emphasized by most of these studies. However the weak economic base on which the foundation of the state stood raised questions regarding the sustainability of the achievements of the state in the social sphere.

⁴³ Joseph Tharamangalam, "Understanding Kerala's Paradoxes: The Problematic of Kerala Model Of Development", in Joseph Tharamangalam(ed) *Kerala: The Paradoxes of Public Action and Development* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 2006), 6.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 6.

Several academicians and scholars including those who were once the ardent admirers of the model have raised questions regarding the sustainability of the model.

Kerala Model of Development in the social science literature related to Kerala is a very popular and frequently employed concept or analytical tool whenever issues related to livelihood, poverty or human development come up for discussion. Kerala Model of Development refers to the particular development experience of Kerala after the sixties and early seventies when it had exceptionally high levels of physical quality of life despite low economic growth.

Kerala model of development was considered as a challenge to the conventional approaches to development which tends to view development as the result of the economic growth. So Kerala Model of Development emerged as a challenge to the growth theorists. It demonstrated that there can be changes if there is public action and social intervention.

Development and the 'Outlier' Phenomenon

However, the authenticity of the model was slowly challenged as the model started to face challenges so that its very sustainability was put into question. The neo liberal reforms which prevented even the facade of social justice from being retained have resulted in the accelerated degradation in social justice aspects of the model. This had opened the flood gate of criticisms from various excluded and marginalized groups and the authenticity of the model stands challenged.

Although Kerala presented a unique developmental pattern till recently in the recent years grave challenges have appeared questioning the very basic assumption of the Kerala model. Kerala model is often referred as the model which failed and many argue that from the point of sustainability Kerala can't be accepted as a model.

In fact the continued use of the word 'model' requires a brief explanation. One problem with the usage is that the word is often taken to mean an exemplar to be held out for emulation by others when, in fact, Kerala's development pattern show

some serious flaws. Therefore how far it would be right to call Kerala development experience as a model requires not only a detailed discussion but also steady investigation into its growth and specificity because it had many paradoxes which became wide open in late 1990.

Kerala is widely acclaimed for its achievements in social development as it boasts a near total literacy, comparatively higher life expectancy, and land reforms. However, the exclusion of Dalits who constitute 9.8 percent of the state's total population, and Adivasis, who constitute 1.14 percent from the success story of Kerala's development, has gone relatively unacknowledged.⁴⁵ More recently, scholars have drawn attention to the landlessness of Dalits and Adivasis that has made large segments of these social groups incapable of participating in the developmental process, and to the land struggles that have ensued as a result over the past decade.

The condition and grievances of the Adivasi community in Kerala is very disastrous and disturbing. In their article, "Interrogating Development: New Social Movements, Democracy and Indigenous People's struggles in Kerala", T. T. Sreekumar and Govindan Parayil have argued that the image of an over-extended state going all-out to redistribute income and wealth to the underprivileged breaks down when we encounter the situation of two important, but marginalized communities in Kerala- the fish workers and Adivasis.⁴⁶

The social reality of the Adivasis in post-colonial Kerala is characterized by poverty, illiteracy, socio-economic and sexual exploitation by the settlers, the depletion of their traditional resource base and state restriction. Land grabbing and development projects have resulted in apparent shrinkages of the absolute area of land possessed by the Adivasis. The depletion of forest resources and

⁴⁵ John Kurien, "The Kerala Model: Its Central Tendency and the Outlier", *Social Scientist* 23, no1/2(1995):72.

⁴⁶ T. T. Sreekumar and Govindan Parayil, "Interrogating Development: New Social Movements, Democracy and Indigenous Peoples Struggles in Kerala", in Joseph Tharamangalam(ed) *Kerala: The Paradoxes of Public Action and Development* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 2006), 216.

excessive restrictions imposed on the extraction of forest produce jeopardize the Adivasi's existence, leaving them only with the option of selling their land to outsiders when confronted with financial crisis.

Development and 'Inaction' of Public Action

As mentioned before, scholars like Amartya Sen and Jean Dreze have given 'public action' all the credit for Kerala's achievements at the wake of its low economic growth. Broadly speaking, public action is concerned with the provision of social security, or "using social means to prevent deprivation and vulnerability" and the most immediate 'social means' is the provision of direct support to the vulnerable in acquiring the means to basic capabilities.⁴⁷

Public action is concerned with both protection and promotion of people well-being. Therefore, it includes not only what is done by the state for the public, but also what is done by the public for itself. In past Kerala has progressed because of the enhanced 'public action' in the state. Hence scholars have drawn attention to the role of women agencies, social reform movements and political activism in transforming the lives of the people of Kerala.

But with time it has been realized that 'public action' is and cannot be a homogeneous entity, therefore it includes divisions based on class, caste, gender, ownership/occupation divisions and the like, each of course with its own diverse interests. So conflict and cooperation are part of public action, which raises the question of 'what' and 'whom' public action.

The public action which was very important for Kerala's development in the past has now been suffering a heavy retreat in the wake of heightened political polarization in the state, which has meant that the civil society has been in constant contradiction with the political society. Public action in Kerala has turned pathological in some significant respects. Social security is in danger

⁴⁷ M. A. Oommen, "The Dreze-Sen Theory of Public Action and Kerala's Development Experience", in Joseph Tharamangalam (ed) *Kerala: The Paradoxes of Public Action and Development* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 2006), 339.

because of increases in the suicide rates, crimes, gangsterism, political killings, alcoholism, deaths due to liquor poisoning and the growing presence of a political class that wants to acquire special rights for itself. In recent years, the suicide rate in Kerala is highest among all other Indian states.

The theory of public action advanced by Amartya Sen and Jean Dreze works only towards improving the existing social order, stressing improvements in the functioning and capabilities of the disadvantaged and enhancements in their effective freedom in achieving such improvements.

The analytical path they chose does not critique the process of accumulation and marginalization inherent in the capitalist system, nor does it envisage any alternate social system. Therefore, the negative aspect of the public action is not considered, when it is becoming a disturbing reality in present day Kerala.

The negative aspect of public action reduces capability and social capital which is a result of shrinking of the autonomous spheres of society and sources of social action. Due to heightened political polarization in recent years, political society has begun to encroach and dismantle the edifice of civil society, which was the base for 'positive' public action. As a result, the much heralded process of democratization in the state also appears to have slowly brought to a halt.

In conclusion, it can be argued that the Kerala development experience portrays paradoxes of plenty as far as both its success and failures are concerned. While it's been hailed all over that Kerala has achieved the maximum social development, it's an irony that many new social movements have emerged in condemnation of these claims.

These social movements are very important critics of the Kerala model of development, as they question the very basis on which the Kerala model of development was based i.e. social achievements. Dalits, Adivasis and Women are some of the 'outlier' phenomenon who have not found significant place within the grand model of development.

But more important of the paradoxes seems to be the growing negative aspects of the public action, which has further rendered inactive in the context of globalization. The contemporary experience of Kerala in the wake of globalization has no resemblance to the positive aspects of public action of the state in the past. It appears that the answer to the development malaise consists in reconstructing public action, based on the new agenda of what we may call 'developmental dialogue' in which political parties, voluntary groups, social activities and social scientists participate.

Globalization and Kerala

In Kerala's post-liberalization period, starting in 1991, the tensions inherent in an alternative model of development that forsakes capitalist accumulation and global competitiveness in favor of the redistribution of wealth through land reforms and the provision of general social security through social programmes and labor regulation have become ever more pronounced. Globalization is a concept that has been defined variously over the years, with some connotations referring to progress, development and stability, integration and cooperation, and others referring to regression, colonialism, and destabilization.⁴⁸

According to Immanuel Wallerstein, "Globalization represents the triumph of a capitalist world economy tied together by a global division of labour". Martin Khor defines, "Globalization is what we in the Third World have for several centuries called colonization."⁴⁹ It is driven by integrated global economy which influences both economic as well as social relations within and across countries.

The process of globalization has invaded Kerala too since the introduction of the New Economic policy of the nineties, which is a complete reversal of the welfare and socialistic essence of the Indian Constitution. The protective and welfare role

⁴⁸ N. R. Nithya, "Globalization And The Plight of Tribals: The Case of Kerala, India", *The Dawn Journal* 3, no.1(2014):728.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 729.

so far played by the state suddenly shrink once the state decides to make accessible these natural resources to global and private powers.

Now in the globalised world, what has gained eminence is market value of profit making and community causes have taken a back seat. The international transnational and national business enterprises keep on making pressure on the national and state government. The mounting pressure on the governments inevitably leads to shifting of forest resource control from the Tribals to that of these big business houses and ironically the elected governments have found to be more susceptible to the needs of these business houses than the livelihood problems of the Tribals and affected constitutional changes to facilitate these transitions.

All laws and polices relating to Scheduled Areas – the land transfer regulations, the Forest Act, the Environment protection Act, the Land Acquisition Act are all under immediate threat of repeal, dilution or amendment.⁵⁰ It is to be kept in mind that these laws and policies were in their existence because of the need to protect these people and their natural habitat. However, the law and its policies and above all its implementations have projected a clear contradiction to its aim enshrined in the Constitution of India and various other statutes of the state.

The new economic policies have serious impact on the Tribals lives whose right over access to natural resources, livelihood opportunities, right to primary education and health, protection from atrocities and human rights abuses and the right to uphold their traditional and customary practices, are under serious threat due to the changes in laws and policies.

The encroachment on the Fifth schedule of the Indian Constitution is seen to be the bigger and grave threat to the Tribals in the globalised period. At many instances, it has been found that both central and state government have tried to amend the laws prescribed in the Fifth Schedule and their corresponding state

⁵⁰Ajmal Khan, “Globalization, Development and Tribals of Kerala”, *CounterCurrents*, (2012).

laws in order to allow private and corporate players to take over Tribal and forest lands.

One of the ways of globalization in India is disinvestment or privatization. Many public sector enterprises are being sold off to private sectors with the objective of raising revenues to meet the fiscal deficits and to improve efficiency. Profit making enterprises like BALCO, which are in the Tribal belt, have been privatized. Public sector enterprises in the Tribal belt were beneficial to Tribal people giving them employment and livelihood.

Privatization of these enterprises will adversely affect the Tribal people and disturb the regional balance in terms of industrialization. Opening of an economy increases competition internally as well as externally, leads to structural changes in the economy, alters consumer preferences, lifestyles and demands of citizens. While mainstream economists suggest that globalization process is a strong force for equalizing per-capita income between nations, others say that the developing countries are exposed to threats of further aggravation and marginalization in the process.

Kerala is one state in the country, which had to suffer a lot as a result of the process of integration of economy with the international market place much before the advent of globalization. In fact, for Kerala, globalization started the moment the colonial raiders set foot on its soil, inaugurating the western conquest of India. Kerala's agricultural products found its way to the European markets and, in course of time, domestic production had to be fine-tuned to the vagaries of international market place.

Coconut, coir, cashew, spices etc which were and continue to be the mainstay of Kerala's agriculture, faced ups and downs consequent on the changes in demand and supply at the international level. However this state was also not free from the national level policy changes that were adopted in a particular period in time.

Starting in 1991 in Kerala, the tensions inherent in an alternative model of development that forsakes capitalist accumulation and global competitiveness in

favor of the redistribution of wealth through land reforms and the provision of general social security through social programmes and labour regulation have become ever more pronounced.⁵¹

In an increasingly liberalised market, Kerala faced lack of industrialisation and high unemployment rates. With the LPG policies, (Liberalisation, Privatisation, Globalization) all those cushions have been done away with. The removal of import restrictions has seen the market flooded with imported agrarian produce. It has literally crushed Kerala's agriculture.

The other policies of the central government, especially in areas like education, health, public distribution system, industrial policy, had made far reaching consequence in the economy and society of the state. When ninety percentage of Tribals are engaged in the primary sector, it also has to be noted that they are the meagre workers and don't own any thing, the same sector was hugely attacked by policy changes adopted by the state and this was reflected directly in the livelihood of the Tribals in the state. The state has become a mere consumer of products with a remittance economy by the Keralites working outside the state and country.

Globalization and Tribals in Kerala

The Tribals livelihood in the state of Kerala is largely dependent on their access to the forest and their natural environment. It is very important for the economy and culture of the Tribal community. Life of the Tribals in Kerala to a large extent is dependent on their forest rights, which they require all through out their lives. It is with recognition of this vital role that the Constitution of India has provided with certain forest rights to the Tribals.

But even after being guaranteed of these rights by the supreme law of the country, the Tribals have found it difficult to gain access to the forests due to state apathy. This played a large role in the social, economic and political stagnation of the

⁵¹ Mathew Aerthayil, *Impact of Globalization on Tribals: In the Context of Kerala*, (New Delhi: Rawat Publication,2008),77.

Tribal communities. This stagnation has further got aggravated and enhanced in the wake of Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalization (LPG).

The various policies of privatisation and liberalisation, and the changing perceptions of the state on resource utilisation-exploitation have strictly divided the state and the Tribals in two distinct terrains. While on the one terrain, the state is committed to carry on with developmental projects and on the other terrain the Tribal's cries have not reached the echelons of the powers in the state. These differences further got aggravated with the coming of Globalization's market-oriented philosophy of development. The gains of globalization have reached to those who already have education and skill advantage. For the Tribals, globalization is associated with rising prices, loss of job security and lack of health care.⁵²

The post globalised developmental projects and developmental dreams of the state have again made the deprivation of the Tribals of Kerala and the developmental divide has increased between the Tribal and non-Tribal in the state.⁵³ Hence the Government should frame special policy and programmes that are required to address and redress these differences especially on the context of globalization. When we plan for Tribal development, we have to regard these differences, take a special note of their situations and capabilities and provide them facilities to develop on the line they want to take. Unfortunately in the state of Kerala, the governments are found of not being sensitive to the livelihood crisis of the Tribals which has a direct or indirect relation to Globalization and the flawed development for which the state is lauded.

Analysing the Impact of Globalization and Liberalisation on Tribals in Kerala

Tribals are the most marginalised section of the population in India. In Kerala, particularly they are facing a lot of problems which got highlighted through their unending struggles for land. Since land is a necessary means of livelihood for

⁵² Op cited, Ajmal Khan, "Globalization, Development and Tribals of Kerala".1

⁵³ Ibid,1

Tribals and since they were unjustly deprived of it over the years, land should be an important factor for their development.

This is all the more so in a globalised world when they do not have any of the other source of livelihood which other sections of the population have. Land is the mainstay of the Tribals and more than 90 per cent of them are dependent on agriculture. Land is the only tangible asset of a Tribal community, and they are emotionally attached to it. The number of landless Tribals has increased during the last decade and several reasons can be attributed to this phenomenon.

Globalization and Land Alienation

In the wake of globalisation, the new industrial policy paved the way for Tribal land alienation. This resulted in the alienation of Tribal lands for various purposes like construction dams, mining projects, setting up of wildlife sanctuaries, construction of government infrastructure and encroachments by non-Tribals. While the Tribal have been displaced and pushed into the fringes of globalization, the natural resources were victim to large scale destruction directly for industrial purposes and indirectly by the non-Tribals.

As a result the Tribals ended up as debris in the globalised policies unable to access the resources which were their life sustaining forces or to compete with the mainstream society to be absorbed into alternate economies. Those absorbed in the new industries and projects were minimal compared to the extent of displacement and the destruction of traditional livelihood.

“Land alienation has given birth to several allied problems among the Tribals, i.e. increased poverty among the Tribals, decreased the occasion of employment, lead to migration of Tribals, exploitation of Tribal labourers, exploitation of Tribal women, created tension between Tribals and non-Tribals, increased the distance between the rich and the poor Tribals, developed extremism and naxalism in Tribal areas, brought law and order problem in Tribal areas, directly or indirectly and brought the incidence of beggary and prostitution in the Tribal areas”.⁵⁴ In

⁵⁴ Matthew Aerthayil, *Impact of Globalization on Tribals* (Jaipur:Rawat Publications) 117.

post-independent Kerala, large-scale alienation of Tribal lands took place mainly due to the immigration of plainsmen to the hill areas, displacement for projects and construction of dams etc.

Table 3: Tribal Land Alienation for Dams

Project	Area(Hectares)
Parampikkulam-Aaliyar	2389
Mullapperiayar	2890
Bhuthathankettu	608
Valayar	259
Peechi	1263
Vazhani	255
Neryamangalam	413
Kundala	230
Aanayirangal	433
Ponkudi	260
Poringalkkuthu	263
Chenkulam	33
Others	16627
Total	25924

Source: R.Rajeevan, Towards Political Empowerment (2010)180.

When they lost their land, the only means of livelihood available to them was wage labour. Thus most of them started working in plantations of cash crops and paddy fields as coolie workers. When the price of agricultural products drastically came down, farming operations got reduced, resulting in decrease in employment. The Tribals who were dependent on agriculture were thus destroyed.⁵⁵The impact of globalization is strongest on these populations perhaps more than any other because these communities have no voice and are therefore easily swept aside by the invisible hand of the market and its proponents.

Globalization is not merely a question of marginalization for indigenous peoples it is a multi-pronged attack on the very foundation of their existence and livelihoods, for example:

⁵⁵ B. Ezhilarasu, "Impact of Globalization on Tribals in India", *Indian Journal of Applied Research* 4, (2014):177.

1. “Indigenous people throughout the world sit on the “frontlines” of globalization’s expansion; they occupy the last pristine places on earth, where resources are still abundant: forests, minerals, water, and genetic diversity. All are ferociously sought by global corporations, trying to push traditional societies off their lands.”
2. “New advances in technology, the reorientation toward export-led development, and the imperatives of pleasing global financial markets are all driving forces in the extermination of countless native communities which stand in their way.”
3. “Traditional sovereignty over hunting and gathering rights has been thrown into question as national governments bind themselves to new global economic treaties.”
4. “New trade and investment agreements, which are opening up previously inaccessible territory to industrial extraction of natural resources, has forced indigenous peoples to defend their homelands under an invasion of unprecedented rate and scale: Big dams, mines, pipelines, roads, energy developments, military intrusions all threaten native lands.”
5. “Global rules on the patenting of genetic resources via the WTO have made possible the privatization of indigenous peoples’ genomes, the biological diversity upon which they depend, and the very knowledge of how that biodiversity might be used commercially.”
- 6.” National governments making decisions on export development strategies or international trade and investment rules do not consult native communities.”⁵⁶

Globalization and Crisis in Agriculture

Globalization appears to be the main reason for the crisis in agriculture in India, particularly in Kerala. Studies show that during the period of globalization from 1991 onwards agriculture in India was facing a crisis in production and profits for the farmers and there was an overall decline in agricultural growth. Tribals who had some land are also adversely affected since they do not get remunerative price for the cash crops. Thus income from their land, which is often less than one acre,

⁵⁶ Ibid,178.

is also considerably reduced. Since tribals totally depend on agriculture and related occupation, their livelihood like forest produce and cottage industry do not exist now.

If there was a crisis in agriculture throughout India as a result of globalization, it was particularly so in Kerala with its over-dominance of cash crops. Special importance attached to cash crops has aggravated the problems in Kerala. WTO and GATT agreement have very complex conditions and laws. The agricultural sector in the State recorded a negative growth of 1.3 per cent during the 11th Plan periods (2007-2012). Its share in the GSDP dropped to 9.1 per cent in 2011-12 compared to 26.9 per cent in 1990-91.⁵⁷ The removal of quantitative restrictions on imports under the liberalized regime has been pointed out as the major reason for the fall in prices of agricultural commodities.

Agricultural agreement and intellectual property rights implemented as part of these, has created very adverse impact on Indian agriculture. The price of coconut, pepper, ginger, tea, nutmeg etc. fell due to the agreement of the central government with countries like Srilanka, Indonesia and Malaysia. These countries were allowed to import these products duty free. This was admitted by the central agricultural minister, Ajit Singh, when he said that Kerala was the most badly affected state in India, especially since Kerala depended on cash crops the price of which crashed due to WTO and globalization, due to the import policy of the Central Government the price of major cash crops- coconut, rubber, pepper, coffee, tea, areca nut, ginger, cardamom, turmeric- fell steeply in the years 2000-2002. The agricultural sector in the state thus incurred a loss of Rs 6645 Crores. "Drought and disease hurt us... it is free trade policies that have driven prices down" said a farmer from Wayanad.

The National Sample Survey (2003) states that one in two Tribals live below poverty line in rural India, which is almost double the figure for the general population in rural India. What is worse, the only social category whose below the

⁵⁷ Op cited N.R.Nithya, "Globalization And The Plight of Tribals: The Case of Kerala,India":745.

poverty line population increased in the 1990s, are the Tribals, in terms of changes in poverty in 1990s, it is found that while scheduled caste, agricultural labour (rural) and casual labour (urban) households experienced decline in poverty on par with the total population, scheduled tribe households fared badly in both segments. In other words, during the post-reform period the economic situation of Tribal population in India got worse.

Because of the crisis in agriculture, the worst sufferers were the Tribal population who mostly depend on agriculture. Globalization has definitely hit the Tribal groups as these are the sections which largely rely on agriculture. This is what happened particularly for Tribals in Kerala.

No wonder the life of Tribals became miserable due to the problems in agriculture, which was a direct consequence of globalization. For Tribals, globalization is associated with rising prices, loss of job security, and lack of health care and Tribal development programmes. This is true of Tribals in other parts of India too. They are adversely affected by globalization.

Wayanad, with the highest concentration of Tribals and with major cash crops of coffee, pepper and tea, is a typical example of how agricultural crisis has affected the livelihood of Tribals. The huge fall in prices has savaged the district of Wayanad. In real terms the collapse in price of pepper and coffee affected the labourers who depended on them and Tribals were the worst sufferers. One of the main reasons for this situation was the dumping of imported goods, which was directly due to liberalisation.⁵⁸

The agrarian crisis and farmer's distress in Kerala over the past one decade are loosely linked to the neo-liberal policy regime implemented in the country in the recent past. The association between the two is more in the regions of the state which are heavily dependent on export oriented crops, such as coffee and pepper. The worst affected are the small farmers, as they are more vulnerable to crop and

⁵⁸ Mathew Aerthayil, *Impact of Globalization on Tribals* (Jaipur:Rawat Publications,2008):114.

price fall. They find it extremely difficult to pay back the loans they have incurred, in order to grow crops and survive.

Globalization, Migration and Food Security

In the economic sphere, globalization had a negative impact on the Tribals causing migration of youth to big cities, affecting not only a brain drain but also a generation drain. The reference is to Tribals in Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh, who migrated to the cities in the north when they lost work in agriculture fields in their own places. In Kerala also a similar phenomenon has happened to Tribals in Wayanad district, who have migrated, not to the cities for jobs but to places in Tamil Nadu for agricultural operations. This was destroying even their socio-cultural life.

In post reform period the central government was consistently increasing the price of essential commodities with a view to reducing subsidy of the government as part of the policy of globalization. The result has been disastrous for Tribals, as they are experiencing decreasing income. Thus globalization has led the Tribals to greater poverty and misery. The government has to change its policy of PDS in favour of the most vulnerable section of society.

During the last ten years of post-reform period since the Tribals were depending on work provided by agricultural farms mainly of cash crops like coffee and tea. As a result of crash in prices of these commodities agricultural operations have almost been stopped. Reduction of price of agricultural crops was due to liberal imports of these commodities agricultural crops from other countries, which was directly related to the liberalisation policy of the government.

Thus one of the obvious effects of globalization on the Tribals in Kerala was their loss of work with the result of adverse impact on their livelihood. Though economically very backward, the Tribals had certain food security because of the public distribution system in Kerala. But a large section of Tribal households are buying cereals from private shops. The main reasons were the high price and poor

quality of the PDS food grain. Globalization also affected the medical needs of the Tribals.

Food security by means of availability of essential commodities is very important for the people, especially the poor. So, essential commodities like food grains and kerosene are provided to the people through the Public Distribution System at subsidised rates. This has been a great source of food security for the marginalised people like Dalits and Tribals. The experience of the Tribals with regard to essential commodities through PDS is confirmed by the national level situation of PDS as followed by the government in the post-reform period. Although there was increase in food production and food stock, there was decrease in distribution through ration shops.

One main reason was that as part of the globalization policy the Central Government reorganized the ration distribution among people on the basis of Below Poverty Line and Above Poverty Line and steadily increased the price of ration goods.⁵⁹ As a result, people did not have purchasing power to buy even the ration food grains; it is a clear case of how the poorest people in India are hit by the policy of reducing the subsidy as part of liberalization.

The government was consistently increasing the price of ration goods so that it could reduce its subsidy on PDS. For this, they also classified people as BPL and APL and reduced a substantial quantity of essential goods for APL category. Reducing the subsidy for and withdrawal from PDS by the government is necessitated by the conditions of WTO and IMF. As government's withdrawal from the socio-economic sphere is part of the proclaimed policy of globalization it is enforced on PDS, which was meant for the poorest of the poor in our country. Thus they lose the food security they have been enjoying so far without substituting alternative source of income or food.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 104.

The Tribals in Kerala are mostly illiterate and unskilled, and their traditional coolie work has been substantially reduced as an aftermath of the liberalisation policy of the government. When their purchasing power is lowered even to buy the existing commodities in PDS, they will be all the more hard-pressed to buy at a higher price. Naturally they are compelled to buy essential commodities from private shops at a higher price. This badly affects their spending on other essential needs of the family like health and education. Thus globalization has adversely affected the Tribals, the most vulnerable section of the people of Kerala.

Poverty and misery of Tribals have increased as an outcome of globalization. When there is lack of sufficient work their main source of income is lost. Since they have hardly any other source of income, they face deprivation and starvation. Besides, their suffering further increased due to the rise in price of essential commodities including those provided through the PDS.

Since the Tribals do not have purchasing power they are not able to procure food even from the ration shop. Naturally they suffer from poverty and malnutrition. As a result of globalization the Tribals face unemployment, poverty, disease, starvation and death. They are on the verge of extinction.

Tribals, thus, are the first victims of globalization. It is embarrassing to note that the desired level of development of the Tribals could not be achieved even after large quantum of money from various sources is being spent. This is due to various factors, including the cultural milieu of the Tribals. Each Tribal community has their own traditional belief and customs.

Paniyans of Wayanad district form the major community among Tribals [21.81%] in Kerala. Intellectually, they are very backward and can be rated even behind the level of primitive tribes. Absence of saving habits and drug addiction are common to all communities. Till recent years, majority of the Tribals were not aware of the benefits given to them through various sources. This short fall had given room for various forms of limitations. Even now the Tribals' participation in development

programmes is limited. Because of this the implementing agency failed often to find the real needs of the Tribals.

This paved way for unsustainable utilization of the benefits. One drawback of the present strategy of development is that it cannot convert a Tribal into an independent, innovative and ambitious person. In a good number of programmes, we see a kind of spoon-feeding in which the Tribals' intellect and other capabilities never develop. There is no difference of opinion that education and employment in an organised sector would gradually change the socio-economic status of them and consequently the growth profiles of the next generation will be much faster.

We may think of earmarking and depositing a portion of TSP funds in public or private undertaking with a view to reserve certain posts [say class IV] in these institutions, rather than wasting huge amount of money for infrastructure, which have no direct benefit to the Tribals. Lack of close monitoring at grass root level regarding the aspect is one of the main drawbacks of the present system.

Globalization and Culture

Tribal culture is unique and differs significantly from mainstream cultural practices. Commonality is the essence of Tribal life which gets illustrated in its value system. Tribal culture has its bearing from the nature that counts land, forest and water and are marked as their foundation. Their culture and social customs bear the mark of nature.⁶⁰ All rites, rituals, festivals of the Tribals have an inbuilt system of nature worship in one or the other form. Tribes have an inbuilt worldview, and that is based on their social system, set of customs, economy and sustenance.

These are the elements that combine to give the Tribals their livelihood and economic sustenance. Together these form their livelihood and give them an identity which is expressed in their culture. The second commonality is the set of

⁶⁰ Sreekala, "Culture Clash in Marginalization and Globalization: A study in Contemporary Kerala Scenario", *International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature* 3, (2015):1.

values i.e. intra and inter-generational equity on which their culture is built. The Tribal people express their cultural identity and distinctiveness in their social and political organizations, language, rituals and festivals, as well as in their dress, ornaments, technology, art and craft.

Tribals live a communal life sharing almost everything among themselves. In order to ensure the sustainable use of their livelihood, the Tribals kept it under the control of the community and developed the myths and social control mechanisms required to meet the needs of every family in the present generation and prevent it's over exploitation by anyone. Thus it was renewed and preserved for posterity. Social change is incessant for its indispensability in human life. Change is the law of nature. No society remains static and goes through a process of change and a Tribal society is no exception to it.

The dramatic changes in the economic and political environment of Tribal population had a profound influence on the social order prevailing among most of the Tribes. Tribal society accordingly has made a shift from archetype to a contemporary society under the pressure of changing situation.⁶¹

Traditionalism got itself transformed to some extent under the current of modernity. Contemporary society incorporates various social processes such as industrialization, urbanization, liberalization, privatization globalization etc. Among all those ongoing social processes, globalization as a process had its far reaching consequence within India and abroad. Globalization has its impact on local communities too.

Globalization has affected every facet of Tribal life ranging from social, cultural, economic to political spheres. Socio-economic organization of Tribal underwent significant transformation under its effect. Tribals are affected more than the others (because their regions are rich in natural and mineral resources). So the Tribal communities run the risk of greater marginalization than in the past.

⁶¹ Ibid, 3.

Local technology, culture and economy were delegitimized and under the influence of the new value system, the indigenous value system of the Tribals got drastically changed. A change of culture is basic to the globalised economy and the tool used today is the information technology. The main value projected is consumerism.

Cultural life of the Tribals in Kerala has been adversely affected by globalization. When they were alienated and in many cases uprooted from land, the basis of their culture was destroyed. Through their contact with people of mainstream culture they not only lost many Tribal practices and values like community living and sharing, but they also tended to imbibe the bad habits of mainstream culture like consumerism and drinking.

The modern media, particularly television and cinema, replaced Tribal cultural forms, religious practices and lifestyle so much that the modern generation of Tribals had no interest in and even knowledge of their traditional practices, customs and traditions.⁶²

Tribal customs and life styles, art, artefacts and festivals should be protected. For this the Tribals should be taught to value their Tribal identity and culture through studies, seminars and training programmes. In addition to these, cultural and artistic organisations should be formed to protect Tribal culture which should organise cultural melas consisting of traditional Tribal cultural forms, art, and music.

NGOs can play a vital role in this effort and the government should support and supplement the efforts of the NGOs and Tribal organisations in this regard. Tribal culture and cultural forms should be included in the school syllabus so that the educational system itself nurtures and supports Tribal culture. The living environment of the Tribals should be restored. For this, land, soil, trees, forest,

⁶² Alochana Sahoo, "Traditionalism and Globalization: A Discourse on Tribal Transformation", *Odisha Review*, (2014):95.

water and other natural resources should be made available to them and they should be allowed to live close to nature and natural habitat.

The cultivation of land by the Tribals could be based on sustainable development by using organic farming and natural manure. Developmental activities which endanger the traditional way of life and culture of Tribals should be avoided. “Oorukootam”, the traditional Tribal panchayat should be established wherever it is possible.

These socio-political structures will supervise the activities and life of Tribals according to Tribal culture and customs and will also be able to resist the onslaught of globalization on Tribal culture. Encroachment and occupation of Tribal land by non-Tribals who destroy Tribal culture should be prevented by legal measures enforced strictly.

Under no circumstances should outsiders be allowed to control the life and culture of the Tribals. This is important to check the adverse influence of globalization on the culture of the Tribals. Tribals should be encouraged and motivated to give up and resist bad and harmful habits and practices, values, and lifestyle typical to the globalised world, which have become part of the mainstream culture. Tribals too get influenced by advertisements on television and they buy non-essential consumer goods with their meager income, thus often falling into a debt trap.⁶³

They should also be made aware of the evil effects of drinking and taking drugs which are very much prevalent in the mainstream culture. Modern media like video and television which are the concrete mirrors of globalization should be discreetly used without replacing the religious and cultural practices essential to the Tribals.

Globalization and Health Scenerio

The policy of the government in the era of globalization has affected the health situation of the Tribals. This is seen by the increasing number of Tribals going to

⁶³ Ibid, 96

private hospitals. The main reasons for this shift are non-availability of medicines and lack of medical facilities and medical care. This is because the government is not spending enough to maintain government hospitals; rather it seems to be withdrawing from health field as part of the policy of globalization. It is instead allowing private sector to take care of the health need of the people. Since the Tribal settlements are situated far away from hospitals and health centers, the Tribals are not able to make use of available medical facilities.

The Tribals are suffering from several kinds of diseases such as TB, Leprosy, Scabies, Waterborne diseases etc. The Health Services Department runs 63 primary health centers in the Tribal areas. Besides these, the ST development department has 5 mid wifery centres, 17 Ayurveda Dispensaries, 3 Allopathy Dispensaries, 1 Ayurveda Hospital, 2 mobile Medical Units, 1 Allopathy Hospital at Mananthavady and 3 Allopathy Clinics in Idukky and one in Attappady. However there are a few remote Tribal settlements in the districts of Idukky, Palakkad, Trisoor, Wayanad and Malappuram where such facilities are still lacking.⁶⁴ In spite of the health facilities already existing in Tribal areas, Tribals of certain localities are found to be suffering from communicable as well as malnutrition based diseases. The Tribals are facing severe problems including inability to get timely treatment for patients who need emergency treatment.

The health extension work is rather poor in Tribal areas. It is seen that the health service institutions in Tribal areas always lack the services of dedicated doctors and paramedical staff. The recommendation to offer a package of incentives for attracting them is already under the consideration of the state. In this case government may take suitable policy decisions like giving weightage to Tribal area service in Medical PG admission, high special allowance for paramedical staff, good quality quarters, vehicle facilities etc.

This additional cost involved can be met from funds under article 275. The existing norms for sanctioning of PHCs /CHCs in the Tribal areas may be suitably

⁶⁴ Op cited, Mathew Aerthayil, *Impact of Globalization on Tribals*:126.

revised in consultation with State Health service department. The UNICEF aided Tribal health project started during 2000-01 can solve this problem in a phased manner. During the 10th plan, the hospitals under the Wayanad Tribal Health Care Society at Mananthavady and Idukky Health Project hospitals will be made full-fledged by starting special units and improving the function of existing OP clinics.⁶⁵ However the state government in the time of globalization has been reluctant to provide extensive health care to the Tribals in their natural habitats.

Summing up

To sum up the discussion on this chapter it can be argued that the livelihood prospects of the Tribals in the state of Kerala has been severely affected in the wake of Globalization. But what was more interesting to note is the phenomenon of state 'inaction' to reverse any of the harsh affects of the Globalization on the most subjugated sections of the society, particularly the Tribals. It will be completely wrong to understand this subjugation of Tribals only on the parameters of globalization because in hindsight the process of globalization is itself the part of the larger developmental aspirations of the state from the very moment of their formation.

In this light the state of Kerala while amassing the achievements on the Human Development Index, was however found to be not catering to the needs and cries of the weaker sections of the society. The famous Kerala Model of Development was thus criticized for being only catering to the 'Central' tendency and neglecting the 'Outlier'. While the social development indicators for the major sections were reaching above the national average but at the same time the indicators of socio-economic development, among the Tribals in particular, was showing negative signs with increased starvation deaths and extreme forms of poverty. This subjugation at the hands of the state and dominant sections of the society ensured that the Tribals are left with only one option i.e. to mobilize on their shared identity and to take fight back to the state and their oppressors.

⁶⁵ Ibid,127.

Chapter Four

Identity Politics and Mobilization among Tribals in Kerala

The Adivasi Nilpu Samaram⁶⁶, the local Tribal protest against the Kerala state government in Trivandrum from July 2014 to December 2014 has again brought into limelight the growing Adivasi unrest in the state. The Adivasi Nilpu Samaram is significant on at least two accounts; firstly, this protest was waged constantly for a period of 162 days, which received coverage all throughout the country and secondly, the state government reluctantly conceded to the demands of the Tribals. However what seems to be more important is the re-enforcement of the identity politics among the Tribals in Kerala's socio-political history.

From early 1980's, there has been a visible presence of the Tribal mobilization centred on the independent Tribal identity in Kerala. The mobilization around identity has given Tribals a social force to manoeuvre, and to make their presence felt in the social and political landscapes of the state. The articulation of the Tribal identity as a social force is a direct result of the marginalization of the Tribal communities in Kerala, which again stems from the issues such as denial of basic rights such as right to life and livelihood and more importantly the alienation of land.⁶⁷

The experience of the Tribal mobilization would show that Tribal identities are constituted by and constitutive of the struggles in which they have been engaged. As Darley Jose Kjosavik argues that an ideology embedded in the Tribal identity could be articulated into the Tribal movement in the process of the struggles which are waged by them against the others. Therefore, the Tribal identity is more about becoming than being. The Tribal mobilization is a result of articulation of

⁶⁶ It was a 'standing up protest' held in 2014 in front of Kerala secretariat by the Tribals of the state.

⁶⁷ Rajeevan R, *Towards Political Empowerment: Political socialization and Political Participation of Tribal Community in Kerala*, (New Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2010),89.

shared interest and grievances among the Tribal people. Kjosavik thus argued that the articulated ideologies provide the necessary substance for social action, which is the expression of the subjective meanings of the Tribal objective realities and which in turn reinforces political action.

The formation of the Adivasi Aikya Samithi(The United Adivasi Forum), a platform of various indigenous groups at the local level, which united itself at the regional level to create the Adivasi Vikashana Pravarthaka Samithi(The Adivasi Development Activist Forum) was the culmination of these articulations among Tribals. It led to the emergence of a significant group of leadership among the indigenous people. C. K Janu can be a case in point. Their position as Tribals and the rights inherent in their identity supplies the impetus for the struggle for land.

It is pertinent to note that the larger global scenario is to be seen as important reinforcing factor for the identity formation and mobilization among the Tribals in Kerala, as also in other parts of the world. In changing scenario the rights of the indigenous people were articulated by many scholars from every nooks and corners of the world in 1980s and 1990s. Two significant developments after 1990s that helped the Tribal movements and struggles world over were; firstly the declaration of 1993 as the International Year of the Indigenous People and secondly the adoption of the decade from 1995 to 2004 as the United Nations Decade of the Indigenous People. These developments gave the legitimation for their struggles for land and livelihood. The global movement of indigenous people presented a discursive force for the Tribal articulation of their interests and grievances.

Therefore in the last two decades, the Tribal movement in Kerala has received a lot of confidence and guidance from the global indigenous rights discourse, which challenges the state and its apparatus at its various levels.⁶⁸ Another important and significant aspect of the Tribal mobilization was their emphasis on regaining their

⁶⁸ Steur Luis, "Traveling models of Indigenism and Kerala's emergent 'Adivasi' politics", *Anthropological Notebooks* 17(2)-2011: 91.

land which is historically been their natural habitat on one hand and while on the other hand objecting to all measures of the state to re-locate the Tribals from their historical land and habitat. Therefore Wayanad being the most turbulent place in terms of the Tribal mobilization remained witness to such struggles of the Tribals to fight for their historically occupied land. They are not ready to accept lands given far away from their natural habitat and rather fought to regain lands which are traditionally their possession.

In this regard, the Kerala Restriction on Transfer and Restoration of Land to Scheduled Tribes Act 1999 gave impetus to their re-imagining their identities. While the Act seemed to be beneficial to the Tribal, as it provide for the alternate land to those who have had their land alienated, and land to the landless Tribals, but implicitly it had lot of problems of Tribals untouched. As the reason the Tribals objected the Act.

These kinds of rejection of the state government act by the Tribals were taken by many scholars as the dawn of the emergence of a Tribals identity by fostering their attachment and admiration for their habitat land. Tribals main contention was the fact that unlike the non-tribals settlers such as Dalits, their demand is their land which they inherited historically for centuries. As such the Tribals demanded that the government could give alternate land to the non-tribals settlers on one hand and on the other hand their right to their land should be acknowledged by the state.

The rationale for such demand was the assumption that non-tribals can sustain themselves elsewhere while Tribals can only survive in their habitat and land. In various struggles that the Tribals of Kerala waged with the state fostered the emergence and strengthening of Tribals identity. While throughout the 1990s the state governments attempted to effect certain changes to alter the parent bill of Tribal Forest Act of 1975.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ K Ravi Raman, "Muthanga : A Spark of Hope", *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practise* 48, no.1(2004):127.

From Muthanga to Chengara to Wayanad, the Tribal identity is of prime importance than adapting into mainstream. While in the initial years of the Kerala's history there were attempt on part of the political elites to bring the Tribals on the mainstream through effecting certain legislations which would have benefitted the Tribals in particular and the poor on large, but their failures meant that they are to wage the fight against the mainstream. The left parties CPI and CPI ML were said to be in favour of affecting positive changes in the life of the Tribals but as Luisa Steur argues "Tribal identity is better understood as a reaction against rolling out of the class politics".

However it would be pertinent to mention that it was not only Tribals who are responsible for the emergence of the identity among themselves but also certain non-tribal members of the civil rights organization and political parties who played a larger role in making of their identity and consciousness. They helped in bringing the Tribals question to the centre-stage of the political deliberations of the state. But their initiatives were limited as far as fighting for restoration of land to Tribals is concerned and they missed various other important issues such as social discrimination.

Now therefore the situation was such that it led to independent Tribals mobilization by themselves on their own and Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha being a most important and significant example of such mobilization by the Tribals. The politics of the land struggles taken up by the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha had in a long way enhanced the growth of both political mobilization and militant struggles among the Tribals in Kerala. Therefore the Tribals mobilization is centered on the issues of survival, struggles and negotiation.

The Tribal Mobilization- Historical context

In as early as 1950s, the Communist Party of India in Kerala was gaining considerable advancement among the Tribals in the state through their expansive drive and struggle against the landlords. The communist leaders were however only able to organize the Tribals on the basis of class, as many of them worked as the bonded laborers, whereby some of the very basis issues remained unattended

by the Left parties in Kerala in the early decades of independence. The Communist Party of India in 1950 and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in later decades subsequently were mobilizing the Tribals communities for better wages.⁷⁰ Two significant result of such a approach were: (1) the efforts of the CPI and CPI(M) to mobilize the tribals gained support and (2) it lead to complete negation to raise the important and survival issues of the Tribals.

Complex issues of identity, encroachment of forest and Tribals land by immigrant settler farmers from other parts of the Kerala were never the priority of the Left party.⁷¹ This was the shortcoming which forced many of the Tribals sympathizers within the communist parties to form the Wayanad Adivasi Swayam Sevak Sangh(WASSS), which was an organization of all Adivasi communities of Wayanad.⁷²

Functioning as an umbrella organization, the Wayanad Adivasi Swayam Sangh was able to unite and bring various Tribals groups under its fold, even when members of these different Tribals groups belonged to different and diverse political ideologies.

Even though the Wayanad Adivasi Swayam Sangh was considered to be a non-political organization, but it was very vibrant in mobilizing the Tribals. The WASSS protested against the levying of taxes on Tribal farmers and against alienation of Tribals land. However within the Wayanad Adivasi Swayam Sangh there was a growth of different groups belonging to different Adivasi communities. One such splinter group was dominated by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh(RSS) within WASSS, which formed an another Adivasi organization by the name Wayanad Adivasi Sangam(WAS) in 1970

⁷⁰ N.R, Nithya, "Land Question and the Tribals of Kerala", *International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research* 2, no. 9(2013):102

⁷¹ Rajeevan R, *Towards Political Empowerment: Political socialization and Political Participation of Tribal Community in Kerala*, (New Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2010),84

⁷² Ibid,84.

Wayanad Adivasi Sangam consisted of various Tribals communities such as land owning Adivasi community, Kurichiar and members from various political inclinations. They had championed the cause of Tribals in Wayanad district, abolition of bonded labor, restoration of alienated Adivasi land and opposed the spread of Islam and Christianity in Wayanad. Wayanad Adivasi Sangam was able to considerably raise the issues of the Tribals in the Wayanad district in particular and in the state.

In Kerala, the time of emergency meant that all the activities of different Tribal organization were put to hold due to regress state apparatus. But in the renewed atmosphere post emergency saw the emergence of yet another Tribal organization in Kerala. Kerala Adivasi Samajam was created by the Congress sympathizer of the erstwhile Wayanad Adivasi Swayam Sangh.

Kerala Adivasi Samajam was the predecessor of Adivasi Vikas Parishad of the Indian National Congress. In these years of massive break-up the remaining members of the Wayanad Adivasi Swayam Sangh went into CPI (M) and formed a yet another Tribal organization called Kerala Girivarga Sangam, which worked as a support organization of the peasant union of CPI (M), Kerala State Karshaka Thozhilai Union (KSKTU).

The Kerala State Karshaka Thozhilai Union (KSKTU) was influenced by the young cadres who were influenced by the extreme Left and were come to known as Naxalites. This group of people while organizing the peasants to wage war against the government, identified Adivasi bonded labor as potential support base in their struggle against landlords.⁷³ Some Adivasi communities particularly the bonded labourers provided tacit support to them.

But following the state repression, the movement dissipated gradually. During the 1980s and early 1990s, issues related to Tribals were in the agenda of the district units of all major political parties. However it was only in 1990s that a major Adivasi organization came into existence cutting across various differences, this

⁷³ Ibid,85.

was the Adivasi Kshema Samithi under patronage of the Kerala State Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

The party machinery helped the Adivasi Kshema Samithi to get hold of the Adivasi belts in the state, particularly Wayanad. It is based in Wayanad and has membership up to fifteen thousand Tribals in the state, in which predominant members were women. The major concern of the organization has been land issue of the Adivasi population and the method of struggle it adopted was occupation of forestland for cultivation.

Ironically enough all this measure did not bring about necessary outcomes and response from the state and therefore Tribal questions were constantly neglected by the state and its machineries giving way for radical uprising among the Tribal communities in the state. In October 1996, a group called Ayyankali Pada stormed the Palakkad Collectorate and held the then collector in hostage for hours.

Assessing the gravity of the situation the state government came hard on the extreme act of the Tribals and the incident also made the political parties of the state aware of the growing radicalism among Tribals. Above all they all felt an increased need to do something to prevent agitation of these kinds from happening in future.

Interestingly, the incompetence on part of the state to reach out to the Tribals had directly resulted in the fostering a cordial breeding grounds for the radical and extremist groups among the Tribals. These groups were successful in espousing the cause of the Tribals on one hand and on other hand searing to empower the Tribal communities to take fight back to the state and non-tribals.⁷⁴

The disillusioned Tribals people now were ready to move towards radicalism to achieve their desired goals and to mitigate their grievances. The National Adivasi

⁷⁴ Ravi Raman, "Breaking New Ground: Adivasi Land Struggle in Kerala", *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, no.9,(2002): 918

Sangamam held at Mananthavady in the year of 1992 organized by the Adivasi organizations of the South India proved to be a turning point with regard to the mobilization of the Tribals in the South India is concerned.

It was the first ever national occasion where the Tribals expressed their cultural identity as distinct and themselves as the dignified people of national polity, and set their political agenda for future. As mentioned before, this identity formation on part of the Tribals to a certain extent was result of the activities of Christian missionaries, voluntary agencies and Hindu communal organizations from 1990s onwards.

At the top of this Tribal Sangamam was C.K Janu, the renowned Tribal activist of Kerala. The gathering at Tribal Sangamam resulted in yet another forum of Tribals all across the four southern states of India. The forum was known as South Zone Adivasi Forum (SZAF) and C.K Janu was elected as the president of South Zone Adivasi Forum. However frequent frictions and power struggles within SZAF resulted in its gradual decline. Disappointed with this development C.K Janu now decided to rather focus on micro level (Kerala) rather than on the macro level (South India).

In congruence to her decision to focus on micro level, she started the Adivasi Samyuktha Samara Samithi, which was a result of collision of different Tribal organizations in Kerala, but more particularly those organizations which were active in Wayanad district of Kerala. These Tribals organisations were; Adivasi Vikasana Pravarthaka Samithi(AVPS), Adivasi Aykhya Samithi(AAS) and Kuruma Samajam. These Adivasi organizations were earlier formed the part of the erstwhile South Zone Adivasi Forum. In the Adivasi Samyuktha Samara Samithi C.K Janu put forward the call to secure right over the land to be the main agenda of ensuing political struggles.

The infamous Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction of Transfer of Land and Restoration of Alienated Land) Act, 1975 came under huge scrutiny from these Tribal organizations in Kerala. The act found to be discriminatory and un-just to

the Tribals of Kerala because while on the one hand it made all transactions of Tribal land during 1960-1976 invalid and mandated returning it to the original owners, but at the same time the act was found wanting because of its eminence on documentary evidence for the reclamation of the land.⁷⁵

Because of this discriminatory nature of the Act, out of the total application for the reclamation of the land, only small amount of Tribals were able to get the land back. Ironically enough when the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction of Transfer of Land and Restoration of Alienated Land) Act was finally operationalised in 1986, the ground reality in terms of the political scenario of the state was no longer the same as 1975.

The relative strength of the Tribals in 1980s got reduced as compared to 1970s, as Tribal community started losing political significance because of their frequent migration to one place to another. These migrations on part of the Tribals significantly altered their population in different places in Kerala, and due to this scattered nature of their living they were not strong enough to force their demand on any of the political parties.

The political decline of the Tribals in Kerala saw the simultaneous rise of the domination of the migrant settlers. These migrant settlers in this process were able to stall the successful implementation of the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction of Transfer of Land and Restoration of Alienated Land) Act, 1975.

To justify their stalling of the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction of Transfer of Land and Restoration of Alienated Land) Act, 1975, the migrant settlers argue that the said Act was unjust to them and will only lead to chaos and conflicts in the settled society.

Preferably for the non-Tribal migrant settlers the policy implementation mechanisms at many places were under their influences, which made it easy for

⁷⁵ Tomy Jacob, "Tribal Struggle for Land in Kerala", *An Unpublished Paper assessed through internet.*²

them to manipulate things according to their needs. More importantly the Tribals themselves were divided among themselves on the party lines which were well utilized by the migrant settlers to further their interest on top of the grievances and needs of the Tribals community.

All this meant was a complete failure of the state mechanism to safeguard the interests of the Tribals in Kerala. And as C.K Janu opined “at the ground level the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction of Transfer of Land and Restoration of Alienated Land) Act, 1975 progressed at the snail’s pace, and was gradually aborted by the governments that ruled from time to time”.⁷⁶

Ironically whatever land the government acquired as the alienated land of the Tribals, was not distributed to the landless Tribals and rather these alienated lands were placed under the purview of the rehabilitation projects of the Tribals. Although on top, the rehabilitation projects might seem to be beneficial for the Tribal development and welfare, but in hindsight one of the biggest problem with Tribal development and rehabilitation projects are the errant bureaucratic structure, which has been found at many place to be hap-hazard in planning for the Tribals in Kerala and there were also instances of money irregularities on part of the bureaucrats responsible for Tribal development and welfare.

The various Tribal development and rehabilitation projects in Kerala, from Cheengari to Sultan Bathery, from Sugandhagiri to Vythiri, etc. has exemplified the nexus between the political and bureaucratic elites in exploiting the Tribals, whereby totally not considering the dignity, basic human rights and constitutional safeguards of the Tribal population.

Therefore, the inability of the state and the law to protect and more importantly to restore their lands has increased the pressure on the Tribals to start their struggle for their right over their land. One important result of this realization on part of

⁷⁶ Sunil Kumar, *Marginalisation and Identity Politics: The Tribal Question in Kerala*, PhD Thesis (Kottayam: Mahatma Gandhi University, 2012)73.

the Tribals was the minority non-party alliance of the Tribals. This alliance made a public declaration on 26th January 1994 about its intention in Wayanad district of Kerala.

The aim of this alliance was to occupy and gather all the lands which are due to the Tribals in the backdrop of the failure of the government to act in adherence to the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction of Transfer of Land and Restoration of Alienated Land) Act, 1975.

Terming this non-party alliance of the Tribals as milestone in their struggle for their alienated land, C.K Janu termed this change in the attitude of the Tribals as the transformation of Tribals struggle and strategies from first stage to second stage.⁷⁷

There were marked difference between the first and the second stages of the Tribals movements in Kerala, while the first stage was more peaceful and quiet since the Tribals were contained with waging their struggle more legally and democratically, like performing dharnas, protesting around the government establishments.

But with gradual realization that their strategies of harmless protesting will not bear any fruits, that the Tribals in Kerala have moved towards the second stage of Tribal movements which adopted more radical and harmful strategies to bring their causes into the policy agendas of the government.

In the second stage of the Tribal movement in Kerala, the Tribals resorted to aggressive methods such as forceful take-over of the government lands and staging hunger strikes. A good example of this change in the Tribal strategies was the Ambukuthy incident. In 1994, in place called Ambukuthy, nearly 200 Tribal families led by Adivasi Vikasana Pravarthaka Samithi, occupied and constructed their house in the forest.

⁷⁷ C.K Janu, "Mother Forest: the Unfinished Story of C.K Janu" written by Bhaskaran, (New Delhi: Kali for Women and Women Unlimited) 2004. 7

All this happened along with repeated warning from the state and forest officials. In response the state officials demolished the houses of the Tribals which led to strong Tribal struggle against the state with C.K Janu leading the struggle with fast unto death.

Radicalism and Identity Mobilization among Tribals

In this renewed atmosphere, the Tribals became more vociferous and vocal about their rights and demands. The demands of the Tribals were basically four-fold; (1) The Tribals now demanded a complete and immediate restoration of their alienated land,(2) They demanded 5 acres of land to all families of Tribals who are landless,(3) To make public all the details of money spent and to be spent on the so called Tribal development and rehabilitation projects by both the state and central government,(4) To make sure the Tribals are handed over all the Tribal related projects to themselves and (5) To put to an end all kinds of atrocities by the non-tribals and state on the Tribals in the state.

The very next day after the eviction of the Tribals from the Ambukuthy forest, a protest rally was organized and participated by large number of the Tribal organizations. The rally was able to hugely influence and pressurize the government machineries and it forced the then chief minister to give a public assurance that the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction of Transfer of Land and Restoration of Alienated Land) Act, 1975 will be amended.

This amendment ordinance was to be based on the recommendations and grievances of the Tribal communities and will effect changes in its implementation. In similar vein, on 7th April 1994 the revenue minister of the state made the announcement that there will not be any eviction of the tribal settlers. However the state again was seen to be reluctant to fully fulfill the promises made and therefore struggle further got accentuated.

The struggle at Cheengari in 1995 again brought into limelight the apathy of the state government towards the indigenous of the state on one hand and on the other hand the renewed Tribal struggle in Kerala. Way back in 1957, Cheengari was

selected to start a rehabilitation project for Tribals over 528 acres of land, which was brought from the state of Tamil Nadu.⁷⁸

The acquired land was supposed to be developed as a coffee plantation with the support of the Tribal families who do not possess land. And these lands to be distributed to these landless Tribal families after a period of five years. But due to state apathy and reluctance these lands were not distributed to the landless Tribal families till as long as 1994 and rather were transferred to the agricultural department.

This transfer of their land to agriculture department was strongly resented by the Tribals in Kerala. This was because by putting Tribal lands into agriculture category, the state get empowered to do whatever it intended to do in name of protecting and promotion of the agriculture in the state. This effectively meant to manipulate Tribal laws and to control the Tribals in the state.

Knowing this canning nature of the state government intention, a massive mobilization initiative for self restoration of the land at Cheengari was started on 26th January 1995. This mobilization was carried on under the leadership of Adivasi Aikhya Samithi of the South Zone Adivasi Forum (SZAF). Acting on the basis of the direction given by the Adivasi Aikhya Samithi, as many as 250 Tribal families occupied nearly 100 acres of the Cheengari project land. The state government reacted to such radical Tribal act with hard hands and arrested many of the Tribal people who occupied the Cheengari project land and also was able to bring the land under its control.

The struggle at Cheengari is very significant as it brings to notice some of the important issues surrounding the Tribal movement in Kerala. Among all the issues none can be of more importance than the question of sustainability. As mentioned before being alienated from their land majority of Tribals are virtually landless. And now they were reduced to landless laborers.

⁷⁸ V.A Haseena, "Land Alienation and Livelihood Problems of Scheduled Tribes in Kerala", Research on Humanities and Social Sciences Vol 4, No. 10, 2014:77

Therefore in order to feed their family and sustain their life they are required to work on daily basis for meagre wages. This precarious situation of the Tribals in Kerala has at many points weakened, if not broken the movement's momentum to reclaim Tribal livelihood liabilities, cultural identities which are given by the Constitution and many of the consequent laws and acts of the state.

Taking account of this difficult position of the majority of the Tribal population in the state, the Tribal movements in Kerala has deliberately intended to focus on smaller (Micro) levels as against larger level. This was done in order to keep their struggles localized therefore within the capacities of the local Tribal communities, at the same time by bringing an organizational links between all localized struggles being waged by Tribals all throughout the state of Kerala.

Unfortunately, it was sad and disturbing to note that all together in these struggles waged by the Tribals of Kerala, there was near silence from both the United Democratic Front (UDF) and Left Democratic Front (LDF). It was ironical to see nearly all the political parties in Kerala, many of which constituted LDF and LDF, standing against the restoration of lands to the Tribals to its fullest. As C.K Janu after being a part the CPI (M) argued that the party itself tried to interfere and break the Tribals struggle and resolve.

Interestingly amongst all these roadblocks to their struggle, the Tribals were in no mood to relent their radicalism as they further intensified their mobilization strategies. To project their struggle and to garner support for their issues, the Tribals in the state went on a vehicular campaign all throughout the state in September 1995.

The projected aim of the vehicular campaign was to put forward their political agenda, to showcase the legal-social base of the ongoing Tribal movement and to get the socio-political support of different political parties and their grassroots organizations to give impetus to their ongoing struggle. And as aimed the Tribals in Kerala were able to get the backing of the Dalit organizations such as Kerala

Pulaya Mahasabha Athasthitha Navodhana Munnani, Bahujan Samaj Party, and the Dalit Panthers.⁷⁹

This growing radicalism on part of the Tribals in the state was challenged very vigorously by the political and bureaucratic elites of the state. But this time around the Tribals were high on confidence because of the support from the various sections of the civil society, which was silent on Tribal question for decades before.

The support of the civil society meant that the Tribals were more determined to speed-up their agitation through acquiring new sets of strategies. On 30th August 2001, in a symbolic gesture to stage a protest, the Tribals in Kerala built their huts in front of the Chief Minister's residence with the slogan that "*give us our land so that we may live*".⁸⁰

This time around the politics of agitation were different from the earlier agitations because now the strategies and its effects were well worked out even before the agitation has started. Tribals now were highly considerate of the possible backlash and retaliation by the state machineries and therefore focused on garnering maximum Tribal support on one hand and on other hand the possible way out mechanisms to protect the agitating Tribal population.

Before initiating the agitation the Adivasi leaders developed a two-pronged strategy. The first strategy was to form an umbrella organization to lead the movement. The umbrella organization was known as Adivasi Dalit Samara Samithi. All the progressive Adivasi organizations and also a council of elders and leaders representing the 34 Adivasi communities in the state of Kerala constituted the Adivasi Dalit Samara Samithi. Interestingly it is from this Adivasi Dalit Samara Samithy, that the most important Adivasi organization was formed,

⁷⁹ Opcited, Sunil Kumar, *Marginalisation and Identity Politics: The Tribal Question in Kerala*:77.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 77.

i.e. the Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha(AGMS). The second strategy was to mobilize support from the different ranks of civil society and sympathizers.

Most importantly, while the state initially was reluctant in accepting the demands of the Tribals in the state, but the growing popularity and strength of the Tribal movements has forced the state in Kerala to relent.

The Tribal leaders were able to garner backing from intellectuals, civil society and political parties from all over the country to support their demands. This proved to be vital strategy of the Tribals in Kerala. To further target and pressurize the government the leader of the Tribals C.K Janu went for fast unto-death. All this forced the Tribals to have negotiation talks with the Tribals in order to avoid wide spread criticism and loss of legitimation. The result of the negotiation resulted in an agreement on 16 October 2001. The major provisions of the agreement that the government took upon itself were;⁸¹

1. It was decide to give five acres of land each to Adivasi families living in project areas like Sugandhagiri and Pookode where this was possible. At other areas, where the Adivasi families were landless or possessed land less than one acres, land not less than one acres or up to five acres would be distributed.
2. Since there would be some delay in generation of enough livelihood income from the land thus provided, the members of the Adivasi families would be provided, for the period of five years, with job opportunities and enterprises that would help them get steady income.
3. The involvement of the Tribals would be ensured in the planning and implementation of the projects related to them.
4. The state planning board will prepare a master plan for the overall development of the Tribals and will implement it in a time bound manner.

It is important to note that even after being not fully satisfied with the provisions of the agreement, the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha decided to support the

⁸¹ Ibid,79.

provisions and to withdraw their agitation. This was seen important both by the Tribals and the state for the speedy and steady implementation of the provisions of the agreement. However the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha warned against any kind of reluctance on part of the state government in fulfilling their promises, which they have made in the agreement and the Tribals will start their agitation politics if these promises are not fulfilled by the state government.

As opined by the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha, the promises made under the agreement were not fulfilled by the state machineries, and the agreement run into many obstacles and complexities. The Tribal Commission argued that only 2.2 percent of the total 36,012 acres of lands were distributed to the Tribals and rest of the land remained with the state.

And on top of that, the state government reduced the Tribal Mission to the status of an advisory body and stalled all the process of land re-distribution. Working on the vested interest of the non-Tribal migrant settlers, the government also intervened into working of the master plan committees meant for Tribal development and welfare.

It was found that even the state departments were not in the favor of giving lands back to the Tribals. The situation was such that the state ceased to be arena or an entity for conciliation of varied interests in the society, rather it became more apparently a site of struggle for getting ones demands fulfilled through agitational politics.

The Muthanga Agitation

In the long history of the Adivasi struggle in Kerala, the Muthanga Agitation remains an important milestone. Muthanga agitation was a part of larger Tribal protest against the non-adherence of the government to fulfill its earlier commitments. As Ravi Raman and C.R Bijoy argue the Muthanga agitation was the culmination of the growing frustration among the Tribals over the failure of

the state governments to restore Tribal lands.⁸² Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha led by C.K Janu was at the forefront of the Muthanga agitation.

The Muthanga formed the part of the larger statewide campaign by the Tribals to occupy land. In January 2003, the agitation began with the Tribals building huts in the occupied areas and established the pickets for stopping the entry of forest guards and policemen. It can be seen that the state actually were responsible for this very sad state of nature in Kerala.

In order to intensify the agitation, Muthanga, which is a part of the Wayanad Wild Life Sanctuary, comprising of four forest ranges- Bathery range, Muthanga range, Kurichiat range and Tholpatty range was occupied by the Tribals under the aegis of the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha. It is to be noted that during the period from 1975-76, for eucalyptus plantation nearly half of the Tribals living in the Muthanga range were evicted. As a result by 1980s, only ten Tribal hamlets were allowed to remain within the Muthanga range.

After publicly announcing about their intention, on 4th January 2003 Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha forced entry into the Muthanga sanctuary and intimidated the forest officials with their intention.

It is to be noted that the AGMS intention for this agitation was to fulfill the Tribals age-old dream of having Tribals their land to live and survive on. It was also the result of the agreement that was struck between the United Democratic Front and the Adivasi Dalit Samara Samithi (ADSS) headed by C.K Janu and M Geethanandan on 16th October 2001.

To begin with the Tribals from various villages in Wayanad district belonging to different communities gathered at the Pulithooky and Thiruvannur colonies and started building their huts and schools for their children's. It is to be noted that the state machineries remained in no mood to intervene into the issue for initial 45

⁸² C R Bijoy and K Ravi Raman, "Muthanga: The Real Story- Adivasi Movement to Recover Land", *Economic and Political Weekly* 38, no.20(2003):1975.

days, but there after they showed one of the ugly faces of state-sponsored terror on the Tribals.⁸³

On the fateful day of 19th February 2003, a strong battalion of heavily armed 800 members of state police without giving any warning started indiscriminately attacking the Tribals people, with majority of them being women and children.

The police also did not allow the Tribals who are injured to be taken to the hospital and inhumanly they also attacked the health camps of the Tribals in the forest. It was evident from the way eviction was done, that it was pre-mediated for Tribal eviction at all cost. Violence on the Tribals continued in and around Muthanga for many days. Even C.K Janu and Geethanandan were arrested and tortured for many days without any medical aids.

It was however expected that the state will not relent on any of these Tribal act but what was shocking was the kind of brutal carnage that the state unleashed on the un-armed and helpless Tribals. Ironically this state repression has happened when the entire globe were observing the decade from 1995-2004 as the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People.

In Kerala, the decade from 1995-2004 was nothing but a decade of empty promises and betrayals, and hopes and frustrations, culminating in a violent turn of events. As the reason the Muthanga agitation came to global limelight. The Peoples Judicial Enquiry Commission headed by Justice V.R Krishna Iyer and Justice J Suresh brought out the detailed report on the Muthanga incident and accused the police of their inhuman and irrational action and demanded a judicial inquiry into the matter.

The Muthanga agitation while on the one hand brought solidarity among the different Adivasi communities in Kerala; on the other hand it has led to projecting of C.K Janu as the most important leader among the other leaders of the Tribals in Kerala. C.K Janu started her activism as the member of the Kerala State Karshaka

⁸³ Opcited, 1976.

Thozhilai Union (KSKTU), a union of agricultural laborers affiliated to the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and continued till 1992 when she left it to work for Adivasi directly and to mobilize them to wage struggles against the state.

C.K Janu long association with the Communist Party of India (Marxist) made her convinced that no political party whatever may be its orientation towards socialism can bring betterment for the Tribals in the state because of the deep-rooted vested interests of the non-tribal people, which will always remain contrary to the Tribal interests. Therefore the Tribals are to be mobilized from within, from its own communities of people sharing common grievances. This is what the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha caters to do through mobilizing the Tribals through their own people and not outsiders.

C.K Janu argued that it was the Muthanga agitation and its fallout that has strengthened the political consciousness of the Tribals in the state. And while responding to the question of Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha attitude towards the political parties, C.K Janu opined that they are opposed to all the parties and fronts because if these political fronts have had done anything in the past for the Tribal cause, there would have been no need to initiate the Tribal movement in recent times.

Since the cries of the Muthanga agitation fell on deaf ears of the government, the Tribal struggle set in motion a new land agitation at Aralam in 2006, when thousand of Tribals entered farmland and pressurized the government to give land deeds to the Tribals. The Kerala government bought Aralam farm (3,060 ha) from the Central Government as part of a post-Muthanga agreement in 2004.⁸⁴

It was agreed that nearly fifty percent of this land will be utilised for rehabilitating the Tribals having no lands. But contrary to what was said the state machineries took to convert the remaining part of the farmland into a company, declaring it as

⁸⁴ M S Shreerekha, "Challenges before Kerala's Landless: The Story of Aralam Farm," *Economic and Political Weekly* 45, no.21(2010):55.

an eco-tourism project.⁸⁵ It was an open inclination of the government priorities and neglect of the interests of the downtrodden people.

On 2006, a fresh land assertion movement was started by the Tribals of Kerala. Thousands of Tribals from different places entered the Aralam Farms and erected their huts. And they pressurized the government to give them the land that the state government has acquired from the Central government to rehabilitate the Tribals. Although the state government did give land deeds to the Tribals, but these were few and only given to Tribals from places like Kannur. This was argued as a policy on part of the state machineries to weaken the growing strength of the Tribals. The Aralam Farm strike was thus also stand witness to the fragmentation of unity among the Tribals belonging to different places in Kerala.

Summing up

To sum up, it can be argued that the rise of the Tribal leaders as a sign of emergence of identity based politics among the Tribals in Kerala, since no longer the Tribals are banking on the Left or the Congress for their upliftment. They have realized a need to make political force by forging a likely alliance with the other suppressed section of the society. The Adivasi-Dalit Samara Samiti is a good example of such a political strategy. This assertion by the Tribals is unique in its own ways because in comparison to the other subjugated sections of the society like Dalits, the Tribals are more focussed on obtaining the land rather than other aspects of development such as employment, political posts, etc.

⁸⁵ Ibid,57.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

An arresting political phenomenon in India, predominantly during the past decades has been the coming out of subaltern groups as a source of social power challenging the prejudice aimed at them from the state and the dominant sections of the society. Among the subalterns, Tribal groups are probably very important, as the leaders among these groups have started coming up to occupy positions of influence in states as well as at the centre. Tribal population in Kerala is gaining political attention in the state as a result of their vibrancy in the state politics.

All the proclaimed assumptions of the Kerala state of achieving great heights in Human Development Index, with near total literacy, higher life expectancy and land reforms have stood in contrast to the dismal socio-economic figures in relation to the Tribals in Kerala.⁸⁶ Even after being a near 1.14 percent of the total population in Kerala, the Tribals have been left out of the state development agendas.

The Tribal communities in Kerala also continued to face marginalization over the decades after independence. Consequently, they are forced to create a specific space for themselves. The fact that more than three-fourth of the tribes are landless and that their social conditions (in areas such as housing, health and sanitation, education, welfare etc) remained very much below the state average shows the extent of marginalization.

Many of the lands owned by the Tribal are now under the possession of the non-tribal migrants. Most of the land in Tribal areas has been now legally transferred to non-Tribals. In Kerala, Tribal movements demand this land to be returned back to Tribals. Historically, the Tribals had the entitlements to utilise and kill animals in the forest places. But now due to restrictions put on them by the government

⁸⁶ Joseph Tharamangalam, "Understanding Kerala's Paradoxes: The Problematic of Kerala Model of Development", in Joseph Tharamangalam(Ed) *Kerala: the Paradoxes of Public Action and Development* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 2006), 7.

they are fighting against the neglect of their entitlements. Due to this, the Tribals are continuously been harassed by the revenue officers, money lenders, etc.

The government assures as it says its revenue officers are now identifying surplus agricultural land in every part of the state to distribute among the state's Tribal population. The idea is to make Kerala India's first state without a single landless Tribal individual. But all these claims remain mainly on agreement papers and do not necessarily materialise on the ground. This has alone been a very big reason for the rise of Tribal mobilisation in Kerala

In 2001, Tribals under the leadership of C.K Janu reached a seven-point agreement with the government. The seven-point agreement of October 16 said that five acres would be given "wherever possible" while a minimum of one acre - - which could go up to five acres "depending on the availability of land" -- would be given in other places.

Needless to say, the agreement of 2001 was not just eyewash in the growing atmosphere of assertiveness by Tribals but also defeat of the very principle for which the Kerala state stood, i.e social justice through land reforms. The state government was able to spread a false perception about the Tribals throughout the state that, the Tribals are greedy for the land which they have sold to the non-Tribals on exorbitant prices and now they wanted it for free, from these non-Tribals through state provisioning. However this view about the claims of the Tribals for their land was insensitive to their attachment and livelihood based on their traditional lands.

As Nattan Mooppan states: "Since Tribals can never leave our ancestral land and traditional Tribal settlements, we should be given our own land which was occupied by non-tribal settlers. We believe that our forefathers still live in this area as also our forest gods whom we worship. We cannot leave this land because of the sentimental attachment to it. Our life is linked with the forest and the land we owned. Once we are forced out of it, our tradition, livelihood and existence are hampered. When we are removed from our original habitat, we'll perish like fish

out of water. Land is not only the lone dependable source of our livelihood, but also the foundation of our social prestige and standing within society. Social prestige among Tribals is measured in terms of land ownership, particularly possession of hereditary land. Providing alternative land can never be equivalent to our right on hereditary and ancestral land." "Those who have come from the plains to snatch our land have no such sentiments as the Tribals. Therefore, the government should give those who occupy our ancestral land the alternative land available for distribution with the government. The only solution to the whole gamut of Tribal land problems is the restoration of our ancestral land to us as per the 1975 Act."⁸⁷

Given the complex nature of the Tribal problem and ambivalent attitude of the state machineries, it is really very difficult to come up with an everlasting end to the Tribals with a various Tribal projects. In the Pooyamkutty project, nearly 66 percent of the Tribals were displaced and similarly in many other projects thousands of the Tribals are snatched of their land. On top of that, the relief and resettlement packages by the state have also not benefitted the Tribals, because it has been denied on the grounds of insufficient documents.

In this background, the question of looking into the land reforms was raised from all corners of civil society. In the wake of globalisation many projects have resulted in alienation of lands among Tribals in Kerala. This has further deepened the divide between the non-tribal migrants and the poor Tribals.

The goal of a sub- national movement is to attain a respectable position on the national map. The unequal development between Tribals and non-tribals accentuates this movement and the articulate sections among the Tribals take up the leadership role for demanding equal opportunities in employment and participation in political institutions.

⁸⁷Haseena V.A, "Land Alienation and Livelihood Problems of Scheduled Tribes in Kerala," Research on Humanities and Social Sciences 4, no.10(2014):77.

Other anthropologists believe that the nature and degree of involvement of Tribal groups in such movements are dependent on a number of factors including the locale Tribal groups vis-a-vis the core sections of the society, their numerical strength, and the degree of their exposure to and interaction with the non-Tribal groups.

In last decade, the numerous land grab agitations were seen in the state of Kerala by the Tribals. Indeed, these struggles and mobilization are the real fight of those who toiled in land and asserting their right to own sustainable land in a society that professes equality and fraternity.⁸⁸

“According to International Centre for Anthropological Studies (AICAS), in Attappady alone, over 10,796.19 acres had been alienated from Tribal people between 1960 and 80, reportedly the highest in the state. A common feature shared by most of the Tribal people is their remoteness and marginal quality of territorial resources. The recent rapid technological advancement and unrivalled economic and political strength of world capitalism, and the rising power of neo-colonialism through the IMF, WB, IBRD, etc., as agencies, have created favourable conditions for the evasion and extraction of natural resources from the ecologically fragile territories of Tribal people.”⁸⁹

“The forced evictions of Tribals to make way for mammoth capital-intensive development projects have become a distressing routine and it easily makes them the most attractive sites to locate development projects of various kinds. For multinational companies looking for investment opportunities these areas are fast becoming favourite destinations.”⁹⁰

Plausibly, the basic question of the Tribal communities in Kerala today is land alienation. More recently scholars have drawn attention to the landlessness of

⁸⁸ C. R Bijoy and K Ravi Raman, “Muthanga: The Real Story- Adivasi Movement to Recover Land”, *Economic and Political Weekly* 38,no. 20(2003):1975.

⁸⁹ Matthew Aerthayil, *Impact of Globalization on Tribals* (Jaipur:Rawat Publications) 125.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*,129.

Tribals, which has made large segments of this social group incapable of participating in the developmental process, and to the land struggles that have ensued as a result over the past decade. Notwithstanding the fact that there is abundance of research and literature available about land reforms in Kerala, it's important to transcend that narrow idea of land reforms and focus upon other understanding of land reforms.

Since the land and forest are there to provide for the particular needs of the Tribals, they never considered them as 'commodity' which is a prevalent attitude among the non-Tribals, which has been the reason for deteriorating conditions of the Tribals. Rather the Tribals view the forest land to be their own natural sacred habitat.

This idea and feelings of Tribals is to be not understood by the non-Tribals, who only look at these places as a root to make profit and amass huge wealth by looting the natural resources of the forest. This can be only done when the Tribals are displaced and evicted from the forest. The state has drawn nexus with the non-tribals for the eviction of the Tribals from their natural habitat. In this process, Tribal groups were deprived of land on routine basis. In most cases, they are not even able to claim compensation as they have no legal proof of ownership

The series of protests spearheaded by the Tribals in the post-reform period foreground the growing disengagement between the society-state relationship on the questions of development and assertion for self-respect and dignity. A common issue centred on these protests was on the question of land distribution, particularly for landless Tribals.

Scholars argue that the civil and democratic rights of the people are not protected by the Constitution as a result of which they engage in movements such as Chengara, Wayanad and Muthanga. The protests demanded cultivable lands to landless Tribals, thereby causing confrontation with established political parties. Tribals organize and experiment with their own political forums/movements within the modern political structures. They thus try to raise their voice and stand

on their own. In a stark contrast to the previous strategy, the Tribals now started a settlement outside the controversial amendments of the 1975 parent Act.⁹¹

Communist parties that were behind the historic program of land reforms felt threatened by the gradual development of these autonomous movements that demanded the reopening of the 'settled problem' of land reforms in Kerala. At one level, it striped off the state's claims over its successful land reform and unmasks its historical failure to bring about any substantive change. On the other hand, the protesters challenged the authorities for the illegal encroachment and transfer of forest land to the private and multinational companies.

The Tribals have responded to such phenomenon by agitating against the attitude of the state by occupying places meant to be their natural habitat and in return received with hard hands by the state machineries. In such a scenario, where the Tribals are asserting for land than anything else, it's been a good case for political manoeuvring among the Tribals in Kerala.

A watershed in the history of the tribal demand for the restoration of their land was the 1975 legislation for restoring alienated land to the tribals. But it could not be implemented in the state due to the pervasive influence of the settlers. The alienated land has been, mostly, in the hands of non-tribes. This has apparently set the stage for political mobilization of the Tribals in the state.

Admittedly, successive governments in Kerala became a party to the perpetuation of injustice against the Tribal people. This provided a historical context of the emergence of identity politics among the Tribal communities which they effectively used for political mobilization. The discontent among Tribals was visible since early 1990s. A section of the tribals who were disappointed with the mainstream political parties formed an organization called Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha (AGMS) led by C.K. Janu.

⁹¹ K Ravi Raman, "Muthanga: A Spark of Hope", *Economic and Political Weekly* 48, no.1(2004):129.

It was an organization functioning among the Tribal communities in Kerala. AGMS has been able to bring the plight of Tribals to the limelight and set off a large-scale agitation, mostly in an unconventional way. The Muthanga struggle (in the Wayanad district of Kerala) in February 2003 was a culmination of the Tribals frustration over the failure of successive governments in the state to restore Adivasi land. The Tribals had put up huts and other shelters in the area and announced that they would start cultivating the occupied area.

Even after weeks of their occupation of the forest land, the government chose to remain silent. Capitalizing the aggressive mood of the local people and the agitating Tribals, the police launched its operation on 19 February resulting in human loss and considerable destruction. For more than 1000 Tribals living in the area for a month and a half, it was a day of horror. Muthanga was a turning point for the Tribal mobilization in Kerala.

The Tribals not only deployed unconventional tactics to highlight their marginalization, but effectively utilized the power of the media and the expanded circuits of communication. After one year of the Muthanga incident, AGMS became Adivasi Rashtriya Maha Sabha (ARMS) and put candidates in the Lok Sabha elections. The establishment of ARMS seemed to have opened a new history in the Tribal struggle.⁹²

It revealed the political consciousness of Tribal communities in Kerala with respect to the declaration of Tribal habitations as Scheduled Area under Scheduled V of the Article 244 of the Constitution. It may be noted that no Tribal habitation in Kerala has been declared Scheduled Area till this date, thus denying the enjoyment of this most vital and specific part of the Constitution by the Tribals of Kerala, in stark contrast to their counterparts in other states in India. Obviously, this paved the way for the assertiveness among the Tribals in Kerala.

Though late, the Tribal sections of Kerala realised the loss that occurred to their community and the need to regain their power and rights with the close of the 20th

⁹² Rajeevan R, *Towards Political Empowerment* (Delhi:Kalpaz Publications,2010):99.

century. Developmental strategies adopted by the mainstream political parties were also questioned by the Tribals. Tribals of Kerala are to a certain extent alienated from the mainstream political parties and are increasingly asserting their identity and culture outside these political parties.

They formed their own organizations and even political parties for the protection of their rights and the promotion of their interests. It shows that the political socialization process is taking place among the Tribals of Kerala in a better way. It made them conscious of their conditions and they realised the need and necessity of political participation for their total empowerment.

The process of socialization decides survival and continuity of a society. It is a process of acquiring social learning. It is the process whereby the individual relates himself in his own society. Political socialization imbibes a set of attitudes, cognitions, values, standards and feeling towards the political system.

Therefore Tribal mobilization in Kerala has been inextricably interlinked with the land alienation and related issues. The land is a major factor of Tribal identity and sustenance. As mentioned before among others, State is one of the external forces contributing to the rise in Tribal mobilisation. The state introduced, promoted and popularized institutions, schemes, ideas or culture, which directly or indirectly prepared the environment for a change in Tribal identity. Presence of State machineries can thus easily felt in Tribal areas. Coming of globalization is another major factor affecting Tribal identity and politics.

Due to socio-cultural and geographical limitations the diverse Tribal population has been largely cut-off from the mainstream of development, which is a cause of concern. The legal rights entrusted to the Tribal population have been disgustingly violated. The Tribal population, apart from facing socio economic marginalisation also faces the threat of undermining of their distinctive culture and identity, which is rooted in their livelihood patterns.

Suggestions and Recommendations

It is a known fact that both the Colonial and the Indian governments (both state and central) have performed unsatisfactory when it comes to Tribals in Kerala. Since the Tribals have limited access to the dominant forces in the state, they lack bargaining power. Therefore the government should take steps towards developmental activities in all oorus⁹³, including provisions for water supply, bus services and roads, constitute a 'Special Land Tribunal' to redress the grievances related to land alienations and prevention of any further alienation of adivasi lands.

The Tribal unrest is certainly a challenging issue to discuss today. Marginalization, landlessness, land alienation, and displacement are the root causes of their unrest. The state and established political parties have been continuously avoiding addressing the Tribal unrest.

In this context, to express their plight in front of public and the government, the Tribals have started mobilizations and movements to express collective voice against marginalization and landlessness and to articulate their will to join with the mainstream. So it is a need of the hour that the entire major political parties in the state, for instance the constitutes of UDF and LDF should make it a principle to bring the Tribal leaders into their ranks. This will make sure that the issues surrounding the Tribals are brought into the discussions of the parties and that it will be considered for legislation.

The problem of indebtedness among the Tribals is not an indication of their poverty but also reflects the wider economic malaise, i.e., lack of education, low purchasing bargaining power and lack of resources for engaging in gainful activity and meeting emergent expenditure. Therefore, the problem continues to persist with increasing menace as the indebtedness pushes the Tribals further into extreme conditions of poverty and forces them to dispense with their meagre

⁹³ It refers to natural habitat villages of the Tribals.

resources, including the small bits and pieces of land to pay off the loans at exorbitant rates of interest.

The initiation of commercial vending of liquor in Tribal areas has started impoverishing the Tribal population, making them victims of indebtedness and exploitation. The Tribal population has also become addicted to the liquor consumption especially during the 1990 decade due to opening up of large number of liquor shops in their habitat.⁹⁴

As far as possible the state government should make necessary steps to provide for closure of these liquor shops and to open banking facilities for the Tribals in their places. These banks are to be made sensitive to Tribals by charging less than other banks so that the Tribals are protected from falling into debt traps, mainly because of exorbitant interest rates of the non-Tribal moneylenders.

Since globalization has adversely affected many aspects of the life of the Tribals, the government and society at large has a responsibility to take protective measures for this marginalised group. The Tribals also should pressurise the government to protect their rights against the currents of globalization. For this, they should organise themselves as Tribals and work jointly with all like-minded organisations to work for the Tribal cause.

Thus together with all organisations of civil society and even of political parties, Tribals should work to counter the evil effects of globalization. Tribals are part of the Indian society, at the same time they are different. Age old exploitation and repression of the Tribals, have cut them off from the main stream of socio-economic development of the country as a whole. The Tribal population is identified as the aboriginal inhabitants of our country.

They are most vulnerable section of our society living in natural and unpolluted surrounding far away from civilization with their traditional values, customs and

⁹⁴Dilip M Menon, "From Pleasure to Tabbo: Drinking and Society in Kerala," *India International Centre Quarterly* 22, no.2/3(1995):147.

beliefs. The gains of globalization have so far accrued to those who already have education and skill advantage, easier market access and possession of assets for use as collateral to access credit. For the Tribals, globalization is associated with rising prices, loss of job security, lack of health care and tribal development programmes.

Globalization may also weaken the legal protections, in terms of education and job reservations given to Tribals. Hence the Government should frame Special policy and programmes that are required to address these differences especially on the context of globalization. When we plan for Tribal development, we have to regard these differences, take a special note of their situations and capabilities and provide them facilities to develop on the line they want to take.

Awareness building, training programmes and non formal education at the grass-roots level in districts where Tribal presence is strong, are needed to empower the Tribals. All Tribal organisations should be willing to consolidate and work together for the goal of empowerment and development of Tribals in Kerala. Activists, academicians and other persons from civil society should also be willing to give the necessary support to the Tribals. However, ultimately it is through the Tribals themselves that lasting development and liberation of Tribals can be realised. Only then will the Tribals in Kerala be able to face the adverse impact of globalization and move together with all other sections of people, towards their socioeconomic development and emancipation.

Bibliography

Books:

Aerathayil, Mathew. *Impact of Globalization on Tribals*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2008.

Bhaskaran. *Mother Forest: The Unfinished Story of C K Janu*. New Delhi: Kali for Women and Women Unlimited, 2004.

Chaudhry S. N. (ed.) *Globalization, National Development and Tribal Identity*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2013.

_____. *Social Movements in India*. New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2016.

Dusche, M. *Identity Politics in India and Europe*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006.

Govindan, Parayil (ed.). *Kerala: The Development Experience, Reflections on Sustainability and Replicability*. London: Zed books, 2000.

Habermas, J. Cronin and P. Degreiff (eds.) *Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory*. Cambridge, 1998.

Hasnain, Nadeem. *Tribal India*. Palaka Prakashan, 2011.

Kunhaman, M. *Development of Tribal Economy*. New Delhi: Classical Publishing Company, 1989.

Munshi, Indra. *Tribal Question - Issues of Land, Forest and Livelihood*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2013.

Nayak, Pulin. *Economic Development and Social Exclusion in India*. New Delhi: Critical Quest, 2004.

Ota B. A. (ed.) *Development Induced Displacement and the Tribals*. Orissa: Scheduled Castes And Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI), 2009.

Parekh, Bhikhu (2008). *A New Politics of the Identity: Political Principles for an Interdependent World*. London: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2008.

Pathak, Avijit. *Modernity, Globalization and Identity*. New Delhi: Aakar Books, 2006.

Rajeevan, R. *Towards Political Empowerment*. New Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2010.

Sen, Amartya. *Social Exclusion - Concept Application and Scrutiny*. New Delhi: Critical Quest, 2004.

Singh, K. S. *The Tribal Movements in India Vol.1*. New Delhi: Manohar Books, 1982.

Singhroy, Debal K. (ed.) *Social Development and Empowerment of Marginalised Groups: Perspectives and Strategies*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001.

Sisodia, Yatindra Singh and Tapas Kumar Dalapati (ed). *Development and Discontent in Tribal India*. Scholarly Books, 2001.

Sisodhia, Yatindra. *Political Conciousness Among Tribals*. New Delhi: Rawat Publication, 1999.

Steur, L. *Adivasi Mobilisation: 'Identity' versus 'Class' after the Kerala Model of Development*, Journal of South Asian Development. New Delhi: Sage publications, 2009.

Thakur, Ashutosh. *Tribal Development and Its Paradoxes*. New Delhi: Authors Press Publishers.

Tharamangalam, Joseph (ed.) *Kerala - The Paradoxes of Public Action and Development*. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2006.

Articles:

Babu, Suresh. "Civil Society with Fractured Social Capital: Foregrounding Contemporary Dalit and Adivasis Assertions in Kerala", *Kerala Sociologist* 40 no. 2, (2012): 119-141.

Baburaj, K. K. "Adivasi Struggle: A Feature and Translation." *Madhyamam Weekly* (Mal.), 2001.

Bijoy, C.R. "Adivasis Betrayed: Adivasi Land Rights in Kerala." *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, no.22 (1999).

Bijoy, C. R. and K. Ravi Raman. "Muthanga: The Real Story: Adivasi Movement to Recover Land". *Economic and Political Weekly* 38, no.20 (2003): 17-23.

Chathukulam, Jos and John M.S. "Issues in Tribal Development the Recent Experiences of Kerala," in ChandraRath Govinda (eds.) *Tribal Development in India*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006.

Ezhilarasu, B. "Impact of Globalization on Tribals in India". *Indian Journal of Applied Research* 4, (2014): 177.

Feroze and Aravindan. "Sickle Cell Disease among the Tribals of Attapady", KRPLLD Research Project, IRTC, Palakkad, 2004.

Forests and Tribals. *Economic and Political Weekly* 38, no.10 (2003).

George, Jose and P. Krishnaprasad. "Agrarian Distress and Farmers' Suicide in the Tribal District of Wayanad". *Social Scientist* 34, no. 7/8 (2006): 70–85.

Guha, Ramachandra. "Ideological Trends in Indian Environmentalism". *Economic and Political Weekly* 23, no. 49, (1988).

Guha, Ramachandra. "Adivasis, Naxalites and Indian Democracy". *Economic and Political Weekly* 42. no.32 (2007).

- Haseena, V. A. "Problems of Tribals in Kerala - Land Alienation and Livelihood Problems of Scheduled Tribes in Kerala". *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 4, no. 10 (2014).
- Iyer, V. R. Krishna. "Atrocities on Adivasis I & II" *The Hindu* (2003).
- Kakkoth, Seetha. "The Primitive Tribal Groups in Kerala: A Situational Appraisal". *Tribes Tribals* 3, no. 1 (2005).
- Kannan, K. P. "Declining Incidence of Rural Poverty in Kerala". *Economic and Political Weekly* 30, no.41/42 (1995).
- Kjosovik, Darley Jose and N. Shanmugaratnam. "Property Rights Dynamics and Indigenous Communities in Highland Kerala, South India: An Institutional-Historical Perspective". *Modern Asian Studies* 41, no.6 (2007).
- Kumaran, K. P. "Growing Rural Unrest". *Economic and Political Weekly* 28, no. ½. (1993).
- Kunhaman, K. "The Tribal Economy of Kerala - An Intra-Regional Analysis." *Economic and Political Weekly* 30, no.11 (1985).
- Menon, Dilip M. "From Pleasure to Taboo: Drinking and Society in Kerala". *India International Centre Quarterly* 22, no. 2/3 (1995).
- Mohanty, B. B. "Land Distribution Among Scheduled Castes and Tribes". *Economic & Political Weekly* (2001).
- Mohammed, P., Ajims and V.A. Haseen. "Impact of Globalization on Tribals in Kerala". *International Journal of World Research* 1 (2014): 2.
- Mukul. "Tribal Areas: Transition to Self Governance". *Economic and Political Weekly* 32, no.18 (1997).
- Nithya, N.R. "Globalization and the Plights of Tribals: The Case of Kerala". *The Dawn Journal* 3, no.1 (2014).

Prakash, P. K. “Muthanga Vaarshikathil Uyarunna Chodyangal (Mal.) *Madhyamam Weekly* (2004).

Rajasenan. “Human Development Report of Tribal Communities in Kerala”. State Planning Board, Govt. of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2009.

Rajeevan, R. “Towards Political Empowerment - Political Participation of Tribal Community in Kerala”, (2010).

_____. “Unveiling Injustice Towards Tribals: Kerala Scenario”. *Indian Journal of Human Rights and Social Justice* 1, no.1-2 (2006).

Raman, K. Ravi. “Breaking New Ground: Adivasi Land Struggle in Kerala”. *Economic and Political Weekly* 38, no.20 (2003).

Rammohan K. T. “Caste and Landlessness in Kerala: Signals from Chengara”. *Economic and Political Weekly* 43, no. 37 (2008).

Ravi Raman, K. “Breaking New Ground - Adivasi Land Struggle in Kerala”. *Economic and Political Weekly* (2002).

Ravi Raman. “Muthanga: A Spark of Hope”. *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 48, no.1 (2004).

Sahoo, Alochana. “Traditionalism and Globalization: A Discourse on Tribal Transformation”, *Odisha Review*, April, 2014.

Scaria, Suma. “Changes in Land Relations: The Political Economy of Land Reforms in a Kerala Village”. *Economic and Political Weekly* 45, no. 26/26 (2010).

Singh, K. S. “Transformation of Tribal Society: Integration Vs Assimilation”. *Economic and Political Weekly* 17, no. 33 (1982).

Sreerekha, M. S. “Challenges Before Kerala’s Landless: the Story of Aralam Farm”. *Economic and Political Weekly* 45, no. 22-28 (2010).

Sreekala. "Culture Clash in Marginalization and Globalization: A study in Contemporary Kerala Scenario". *International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature* 3 (2015).

Sreekumar, T. T. and Govindan Parayil. "Interrogating Development: New Social Movements, Democracy and Indigenous Peoples Struggles in Kerala", in Joseph Tharamangalam (ed.) *Kerala: The Paradoxes of Public Action and Development*. Delhi: Orient Longman, 2006.

Steur, Luisa. "Traveling Models of Indigenism and Kerala's Emergent Adivasi Politics". *Anthropological Notebooks* 17, no. 2 (2011): 91–109.

Tharamangalam, Joseph. "Understanding Kerala's Paradoxes: The Problematic of Kerala Model of Development", in Joseph Tharamangalam (ed.) *Kerala: the Paradoxes of Public Action and Development*. Delhi: Orient Longman, 2006.

Thomas, Vinod. "Kerala: A Paradox or Incomplete Agenda?" in Joseph Tharamangalam (ed.) *Kerala: The Paradoxes of Public Action and Development*. Delhi: Orient Longman, 2006.

"Tribal Land - Fading Hope of Restoration". *Economic and Political Weekly* 36. No. 42 (2001).

NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

Malayala Manorama

Mathrubhoomi

The Hindu

The Indian Express

Annexure-I

Jawaharlal Nehru University
Thesis/Dissertation Authentication Certificate

Name of the Author (Research Scholar)	HONEY MOHAN
Enrolment Number/Library ID	14162 / MS / 017
Degree	M. Phil
Department/Centre	CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES
School	SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
Name of affiliated Institution for which JNU is granting the degree	
Guide/Supervisor	PROF. N. ARENDER KUMAR
Thesis/Dissertation Title	LAND ALIENATION, IDENTITY & MOBILISATION A STUDY OF TRIBAL MOVEMENTS IN KERALA
Date of Submission	26-07-2016

I hereby certify that the ~~Ph.D./M.Phil/M.Tech~~ thesis/dissertation contained in this CD/DVD is in accordance with the guidelines issued by JNU for this purpose and complete in all respect, It is also certified that it is same as submitted in print and has also been checked for plagiarism using Turnitin - anti plagiarism software.

Signature of the Scholar

Place : NEW DELHI

Date : 26-07-2016

Annexure-II
Jawaharlal Nehru University
Thesis/Dissertation Metadata Form

1.	Title	LAND ALIENATION, IDENTITY & MOBILISATION + A STUDY OF TRIBAL MOVEMENTS IN KERALA
2.	Alternative Title, if any	—
3.	Name of Research Scholar	HONEY MOHAN
4.	Enrolment Number/Library ID	14162/MS/017
5.	Name of Guide/Supervisor(s)	1. Prof. NARENDER KUMAR 2. 3.
6.	Name of Degree	M.Phil
7.	Level of Degree	—
8.	Department/Centre	CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES
9.	School	SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
10.	Name of affiliated Institution for which JNU is granting the degree	—
11.	Date of Submission	26-07-2016
12.	Subject Keywords	1. LAND ALIENATION 2. IDENTITY 3. MOBILISATION 4. TRIBAL MOVEMENTS 5.
13.	Coverage (for time periods or spatial regions only)	—
14.	Language of the thesis	ENGLISH
15.	File Format of thesis and accompanying material, if any (PDF, MPEG, etc.)	PDF

Annexure-III
Jawaharlal Nehru University
Consent Form for Digital Archiving'

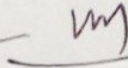
Name of the Author (Research Scholar)	HONEY MOHAN
Enrolment Number/Library ID	14 / 02 / ms / 017
Degree	M-Phil
Department/Centre	CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES
School	SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
Name of affiliated Institution for which JNU is granting the degree	
Guide/Supervisor(s)	Prof. WARENDER KUMAR
Thesis/Dissertation Title	LAND ALIENATION, IDENTITY & MOBILISATION : A STUDY OF TRIBAL MOVEMENTS IN KERALA
Date of Submission	26-07-2016

- I hereby give my consent to the Central Library, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi to archive and to make available my thesis / dissertation in whole or in part in the University's Electronic Thesis and Dissertations (ETD) Archive and to make it accessible worldwide under the conditions specified below in all forms of media, now or here after known.
- I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis/dissertation. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis or dissertation.

Conditions:

[The University recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances requiring restrictions on public access. Requests for restriction for a period of up to maximum 3 years must be specified by the scholar explicitly. However, the digital contents on JNU INTRANET will be available immediately after the award of Degree]

1. Release the entire work for worldwide access immediately		
2. Release the entire work for worldwide access after	1 Year	
	2 Years	
	3 Years	✓

Signature of the Scholar 

Place : NEW DELHI

Date : 26-07-2016

