

Homogeneous River and Heterogeneous Communities: Implications of Local Practices of Sustainable River Basin Management

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Abstract

This paper examines the concept of resources and communities¹ as it is rigorously used in the sustainable development discourses. The legitimisation of the local practices of sustainable development in turn conceptualise natural environment as a resource which needs to be protected with the help of local participation and local knowledge². As a result of this process of sustainable management of environment, the complexity of heterogeneity exists in the community as well as the natural life supporting system is ignored. The discussion draw on the qualitative ethnographic field work conducted at Thirunelli Grama Panchayath in Wayanad, Kerala³ which is complexly comprised of six different tribal communities and other different non-tribal settler communities from Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

Keywords: Local Knowledge, Heterogeneous Communities, Natural Resource, Kabani River, Wayanad, Sustainable Management

Introduction

The weaknesses of the usage and practice of the term sustainable development globally called for critiques since its implicit bearing of the ground realities (Escobar, 1998; Lele & Norgaard, 1996; Meadowcroft, 1997). There are already profound literatures on the sustainable development and the local participation. But the one which try to penetrate into the very clear stand of it in developing the homogeneous identity to both the natural life supporting systems and community who depends on it have been so rare. This paper is trying to fill that particular gap in the sustainable development debates by exploring the existence of imagined homogeneity in River and communities in the practices of sustainable development.

The sustainable development discourses largely emphasises the need for better use of local knowledge and participation in management of natural environment. There are many critiques on the term 'local' itself since it romanticised the marginalised communities and their coexistence with the natural environment regardless of considering the structural inequalities and hybridity of knowledge exist in every communities (Escobar, 1998; De Souza, 2010). This results in the conceptualisation of natural environment as a resource which needs to be protected with the help of local participation and local knowledge. This type of conceptualisation causes to see the natural life supporting system as a homogenous entity which eventually develops the idea of homogenisation of communities who directly depended on it. At the same time they propose to utilise the local knowledge in search of conserving the 'natural resource' by ascertaining the existence of heterogeneity in the community. As a result of this, the complexity of heterogeneity exists in the community is ignored by the process of sustainable management of environment. Therefore, this paper specifically deals with understanding the heterogeneity of different communities, social hierarchies in the village, knowledge of the local communities in river and its management, how the knowledge is used, by whom the knowledge is used and the local level implications of the present management of river basin⁴.

The major argument this paper poses is that, the heterogeneous community experiences in a village has never been considered by the state policy measures while planning and implementing any interventions in a river. The existing basin management experiments have failed to understand the power structures in the community and that led to the exclusion of the marginalised people from managing and deciding over the river. By exploring the complex and heterogeneous relations of communities

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themselves and with the river, this paper could find the river as a strong political space in the village. The State interventions in the forest, land and river which directly or indirectly applying the sustainable development values in a river basin is taken as cases to analyse the reality in ground. The study also argues for a need to redefine the homogenous conceptualisation of natural environment and the community who depends on it.

The Imagined Homogeneity- 'Resource' and 'Community'

The homogenization process has happened gradually over years and the sustainable development discourse is just rhetoric of the larger process of conceptualizing human-nature interaction. The origin of the conceptualization of nature as an object started in early 1930s⁵. According to Eder (1996), the earlier major theoretical grounds which interpreted the human relation with the nature are of naturalist and culturalist⁶. The economic interaction of human society with the environment was the primary concern of these discourses in its earlier period, which eventually changed to an emphasis on environmental degradation during its later stage⁷. The comparison of the state of environment was the major concern in later period (Grove & Damodaran, 2006). But both the traditions failed to account for the heterogeneous identities possessed by the environment and the people within a society. The political ecological theory tried to accommodate the idea of subjective presence of nature in society in later stage.

The environmentalist views has its origin from this naturalist school of thought and later, the discourses around the need for community participation has come into the front to overcome the drawbacks of earlier environmentalism with the help of accommodating culturalist interpretation. The earlier works of anthropologists on landscapes comes under the culturalist interpretation of nature and society. The culturalist discourses later came under the cultural ecology discourses. It is majorly because the earlier environmentalist views could not give a democratic space for the local people to control their nature and its resource. As a result of these larger debates, the concept of sustainable development has come into force in 1987 (Press, 1994). Even though it has a recent origin, it has played a larger role in developing the concepts of resource and management of resources at local level (Meadowcroft, 1997; Lele et al., 2010). The objectification of nature thus

predominant in the early environmentalism has come in another bottle in the name sustainable development during the late 1980s globally (Lele, 1991). The major local resistance for the stake of nature and its resources in India during that period itself shows that both the objectified nature and the symbolic nature have been coming in the way together. However, it needs to be examined whether the common interest or particularistic interest hold the power, in the present scenario of social movements in relation with the environment and society. At this situation the need for further investigation on the existing power structures in a society is to be surveyed in relation with the access to the nature and conceptualization of nature and the people who depended on that. The politics behind the conceptualization and dynamics of the conceptualization by the process of local practices of sustainable management of the environment is yet to explore (Agrawal, 2005; Foucault, 1979 as cited in Babidge et al., 2007).

In case of the interventions in the rivers globally and nationally, the concept of integrated river basin management by taking river basin as a unit of management has been developed since the first half of 1980s. The earlier integrated practices were more focused on the technological interventions in rivers and the critiques also started in end of the 1980s. The environmental views in the integrated management of river got popularised during the early 1990s and it found its base principles within the concept of sustainable development (Downs, Gregory, & Brookes, 1991). Therefore, considering these backgrounds of discourses on integrated management of river and the sustainable development, along with the Dublin Statement on water and sustainable development in 1992, the river basin has been identified as the natural unit of management of a river. Even it has been critiqued in the later studies on water management and river basin management (Sreeja, Madhusoodhanan, Shetty, & Eldho, 2012), the construction of homogeneity for both the identities of community and the river in sake of this process has not been touched rigorously. The analysis of the river basin management at local level will lead to understand how the tools like stake holder participation and environmental sustainability altogether used to achieve the sustainable development objective.

The sustainable development concept which strongly expressed itself as combining both the development and environment aspirations also carried away with the construction of nature as an object. The Brunt land

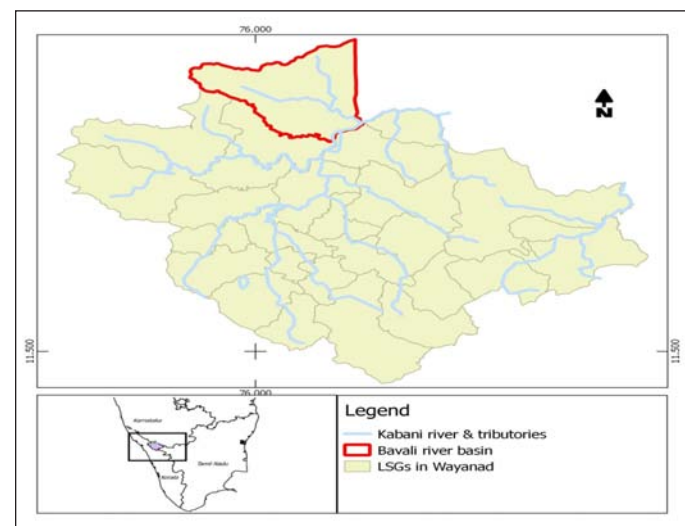
commission report which is considered as the major back bone of the sustainable development concept itself represent the conceptualisation of the natural environment as a homogenous entity called ‘resource’⁸. The main critique it bears is that, it could not deal with the concept of development and that ground for another critique of its use of the term ‘for future’ (Ostrom, 1994). It was later called for many critiques from the political ecologists and proponents of the cultural politics since it developed an imagined community and nature to conserve and to be conserved respectively (Baviskar, 2007). Here also the major aim is to conserve the homogenous environment. Since the local knowledge is considered as a strong tool to legitimate the local practices of sustainable development, it peripherally accepted the different community knowledge in sake of conserving the homogenous environment (Agarwal, 1997; De Souza, 2010). But even then, it could not count down the local power structure which rules the knowledge of different communities at local level. So the real heterogeneity in the natural environment and the people is not counted as real.

According to Moscovici (as cited in Eder, 1996), ‘*the transformation of knowledge on nature directly results in the objectification of nature*’. If the transformation of the knowledge uses the term local, this indirectly marginalises the already marginalised people (Agarwal, 1995 as cited in Forsyth, 2005). The anthropological works of Ferguson, 2005 and Ong, 2006 (as cited in Hess, 2010) in African and Asian post-colonial states also reveals the loss of sovereignty of small states through the incorporation of the local knowledge with the professional knowledge. Here the local knowledge is stressed as a strong political tool of social change but which rarely speak for the disadvantaged sections of the population. Since the sustainable development is also carrying this use of local knowledge and participation, it becomes very important to take up these ‘homogeneity’ debates in the foreground. Even social equity only do not automatically fulfil the environmental sustainability (Lele, 1991), without understanding the dynamics of the social power relations, the concepts like sustainable development might not be able to understand what the development meant by the different communities in different places. Then only the democratic value that sustainable development tries to ensure can be achieved in long run.

Case of Thirunelli village in Wayanad, Kerala

The study area is Thirunelli Grama Panchayath in Wayanad district of Kerala. The river passes through the panchayath is Bavali River⁹ which is one of the tributary of Kabani River. Kabani River is one of the major tributary of the Cauvery River. The Wayanad district in Kerala forms 2.5 per cent of the state’s population. The district has an area of 2131 sq km and it accounts for about 6 per cent of the total geographical area of the state. Majority portion of the land in district (83 per cent) is covered by the forest. There are 3 Block Panchayaths and 24 Grama Panchayath in Wayanad. The Thirunelli Grama Panchayath comes under the Manathavady Block Panchayath. The Adivasi communities living in the District are Adiyar, Then Kurumber, VettaKurumber or UraliKurumber, Mullu Kurumber, Paniyar, Malayarayar, Kurichiar and the non Adivasi communities include Hindu (Cherumar, Thiyya, Nair, Brahmin and others), Christian, Muslim communities (migrated from Mysore and Malabar) and Jaina communities migrated from Karnataka. As part of the Grow More Food Campaign (GMFC) in second half of 1940s, there had migration of non tribal communities from Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. These communities include Christian mostly from south Kerala, Muslims from Malabar and Hindus from different parts of Kerala.

Map (below) showing Thirunelli GramaPanchayath where the Bavali river basin boundary almost forms the boundary of the Grama Panchayath (Source: Neeraja K S)



The communities living in the district are very heterogeneous including both the tribal communities and

the non tribal communities considering their cultural, belief, migration histories and their present social situation in the district (Isac, 2012; Nair, 1911) and there is a strong unequal situation within the Adivasi communities in the district (Haddad et al., 2010 cited in Isac, 2012). Since the Kabani basin was entirely a forest area since long time, the land use change in the basin also grounded mainly on the forest land conversions under different departments over different times. The history of the development efforts under the colonial and post independent state in the basin revealed that both periods largely destructed the basic natural conditions that were available for the tribal communities in the basin. The colonial path of the catchment destruction was followed by the post independent government also. The Wayanad Wild Life Sanctuary (WWLS) plan explains that there was a high decline in the forest area of Wayanad district from 1950 to 1982. The post independent conversion of the forest area in the basin was mostly for the *forest plantation* purpose and cultivation. The basin forest land were also converted to plantation in the name of the tribal employment opportunities¹⁰(WWLS, 2010), the plantation development by the forest department directly affected the low carnivores since diversity of the tree species, fruits, invertebrates whom which the low carnivores depend for sustenance has very low in plantations. The Wayanad Wild Life Sanctuary came in 1972 also had an impact in the forest land use. But the forest conservation based management in the basin could not recognize the local people and their interaction with the river. The people were restricted to do fishing from the River where it flows through the forest area. But the below lines express how they feel while the forest officials doing fishing in night time. “The forest officials were fishing in the River using net in night time” (Interview with Kattunaikan Adivasi man and a non-Adivasi farmer on 29th April 2014)

Thirunelli Grama Panchayath is the part of Wayanad plateau which is geographically supported by the Southern Western Ghats Mountains and various types of forests, wild life, plants and rivers within the Ghats. The major portion of the Bavali basin is inside the boundary of present Thirunelli Panchayath. In Thirunelli Panchayath, only 34 per cent of land is occupied by the human community and the rest are under forest department (Department of Economics and Statistics, 2013). Agriculture is the main land use in the human habituated area in Thirunelli and there is wide diversity of the agricultural crops cultivated

by the different groups of people including 124 varieties of food crops (Arun, 2011).

The administrative structures were headed by Nairs¹¹ during that period in Thirunelli clearly tells about the prime role of caste hierarchy in that period. Nair (1911) writes that, “The offender who disobeyed the caste rule should give Kozha¹² to the deity and which constitute the fund of the temple. All other punishment was also ended up with the fee to the shrine”(Nair, 1911, pp. 23- 24).

In an interview, one elder Adivasi woman (conducted on 3rd April 2014) said,

“Brahmin, Nayar, Nambeesan and other upper caste Hindus could only enter the temple that time. When man with white and white mundu [a cotton cloth used by men in Kerala to wear] and shirt came to us in the forest, we would run away at that time. We were having so fear of them. They took our paddy lands that my ancestors prepared of their sweat”.

The historical alienation of the tribal communities in the area could be understood by the above statements. The ruling history of Thirunelli also reveals the caste and power dynamics happened in the land for long time. The Thirunelli in earlier was believed to be ruled by the Vedar tribal families and then the Kottayam dynasty came over to rule till the attack of the colonial government after 1805. The colonial period witnessed mass destruction of forest land and continued even after the independence. The presence of feudalism in Thirunelli till 1970s became a ground for the ideological and political struggle between the rulers and the extreme Marxist people. The history of the Thirunelli temple and Valliyoorkkavu Temple also conjecture on this effect of feudalism in Wayanad which had continued till the 1970s in Wayanad (Bindu, 2003). When the Kerala Private Forest Vesting and Assignment Act effect in 1971, the majority of Adivasi communities had been again alienated from the land and the migrated people became the owners of majority of land in the basin (Kerala Institute of Local Administration, 2011).

At present time, the agriculture sector of Thirunelli became a part of the central market and finally it resulted in the marginalization of the farmers in the large markets (George & Krishnaprasad, 2006). This has later led the non Adivasi farmers to turn towards real estate and tourism business¹³. The Adivasi communities became labourers in tourism industry¹⁴ and also turned to the

workers in the plantation in Kodagu area of Karnataka. The local history of Thirunelli thus has been long time remained as a ground for the exploitation of the Adivasi communities in a great extent and then the marginal farmers also. So here in the study area, the communities are not a self-regulating in any periods but are very diverse and upheld by their beliefs and caste which exclude all the time some communities from the river.

River itself has heterogeneous identity when it flows through the revenue land and forest land. The position of river in the political jurisdiction of land also gives it different identities and the social reality also depends on which land the river passes through. If it is in forest land, the Grama Panchayath has to get permission from the forest department to get any clearances for their projects based upon the river. It is even more difficult for the communities who lives in the wildlife sanctuary to access water out of the river since it again influenced badly through the unfair relationship between the Grama Pachayath leaders and the WWLS officials. On the other side the community power structures historically defines the accessibility and relations of different communities with the river and various departments intervening in the river.

The case of a bridge construction over the river is given below to explain how the existing interventions of the state actors have taken the heterogenous community experiences over the River.

“There was only a hanging bridge earlier. The people requested for a bridge. There were earlier thick riverside plants and trees. People could bath in the River even in the sunny afternoon also. But in the name of the bridge construction, the Panchayath brought one JCB[an earth remover bulldozer] and destroyed the entire ghat area. Earlier where water was seen, all that places are now kara[dry land]. River in that part became all full of pits. All riverside trees were gone in the line of JCB. Therefore after that rainy season we witnessed the riverside erosion. At present, the bridge is of no use. All these are the laws of Panchayath” (Interview with old Adiya Adivasi¹⁵ woman in Thrissilery on 3rd May 2014)

“The bridge only helped to build a new resort in the side of the River by creating a new big road into that River side”(Interview with the upper caste woman in Thirunelli area on 5th April 2014).

Here the bridge was expected to connect one tribal hamlet to the road. By analysing the local discussion on the bridge construction, it is understood that the Kurichiar¹⁶ tribal community people who were the major beneficiary of the bridge lost their irrigation canal also by this collapsed bridge on one side. The other problem according to a Kurichiar tribal man was that they lost the riparian trees under those trees they usually get bunch of fishes for a day. For an Adiya woman in that area, the destruction of the riverside thick forest (that they earlier believed as a place where the god presents along the river) was the major problem. According to Seetha¹⁷ who was working for the tribal communities, the bridge created new roads for helping the tourism. However, after long debates within the local area, the bridge was remained there for no use for the tribal communities. Here the one intervention in the river shows how different communities experiences different attachments with the river. But for the State intervention, the community heterogeneity doesn't make any matter.

Here another issue comes in to the foreground was the conceptualisation of development by the State actors. The watershed management which itself represented as sustainable practice of water management on one side actively progressing in the Panchayath and on another side the development intervention by the state itself is utilising the river in a manner where the communities have no stake in the interventions. Here the major dilemma comes for the sustainable development experiences in local level is that it could not find its clear stand on ‘development’ and to understand the basic problems inherited with the ‘development’ which is working based on the economic growth (Lele, 1991).

Cauvery Cell

Another case that can contribute to understand the local experience of sustainable management of river is the working of Cauvery cell. The Cauvery cell in Kerala specifically intervening in the river based on the inter-state water management measures. It could also create among the local state institutions that the identity of the river as inter-state river or Cauvery water. Since the Cauvery dispute and related conflicts lead to form the Cauvery cell, Cauvery circle and Cauvery division office in Kerala, the information on the projects or planning are also kept much undisclosed.

The Cauvery cell is not familiar with the local people in the basin. But they know that often there come some officials to do some measurement in the River. “Few days back some people came here and did some measurement over the river but we don’t know who they were and why they measured the river for” (As told by a marginal non-*adivasi* farmer in Panavalli area on 23rd April 2014).

The role the local people getting for the River basin management under this department is very clear from the words of the local farmer in Panavalli area. The motivation force behind the Cauvery cell is to utilise the water from Kerala part of river itself uncovered the reality of how the state policy measures ignored the ground reality of heterogeneous perceptions of communities living in the GramaPanchayath about the river. On another side, the river identity is also conceptualised as homogenous. For them, the river is only water, Kerala part of Kabani, etc despite of many identities it bears by its different names in different places, different attachment of people in different places, etc.

In the downstream area of the river, the people directly depends river for drinking purpose. But the drinking water projects are taking water from the nearby Kabani river instead of the Bavaliriver. But the *Adiya* community in downstream area believes that the water coming from the Kabani river is not good that of water from Bavali river.

“water comes in *valiyapuzha* [here Kabani River] is not good. All waste from the city will get dumped in the rocks inside the River. the colour of water in two rivers also different. *Valiyapuzha* is always brownish and Bavali will be black” (Discussion with the *Adiya* household members in Meenkolli on 15th May 2014)

Here the different perceptions of the local tribal communities on the River can be seen and on another side for the River basin based government institutions, the River is only meant as water that goes to the Cauvery River.

The intervention of the state at different times impacted in the livelihoods of the people. In the downstream area of Bavali River, the migrated farmers were earlier depended on the agriculture. But they did not get irrigation facilities in lean months. But, when the State lead tourism activities started in the River in that area, the small scales farmers turned in to the tourism jobs. “Earlier we were not getting

anything out of the River but now the River is our food” (Interview with one old Hindu *Ezhava* woman who was traditionally a farmer in Palvelicham area on 20th April 2014).

Even the two livelihoods are based on the River, the second one have given them better support for their present needs. So the intervention and non intervention by the government in the basin can change the people’s dependency with the River in to a different perspective. Here the River dependency which has given some productive value for the entire generation has become discontinued and one new livelihood based on recreational value has emerged out of the River management or mismanagement.

The above case explains how heterogeneity of the environment is ignored at local level by the state actors itself. This type of homogenisation of environments in turn leads to ignore the community, their existence and the heterogeneity when these state policies practiced in local level.

Local knowledge and participation

The major management practices over the River is watershed management practices by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and forest department, The River-forest management fund by forest department and the check dam construction by soil department. The local participation which is a major strength of the concept of sustainable development itself is practiced very problematically in the forest conservation strategies in the river basin.

“The forest department asked everyone in this area to participate in that meeting. It was told that it would protect the forest. All people in Thirunelli attended that program. After that, there had no information on them for the next three years. After three years they came back and called everyone in this area to make measurements on the whole area and the roads”(As told by old *Adiya Adivasi* woman in Thirunelli on 3rd May 2014).

The cultural and physical existence of the most disadvantaged communities is varied and also it is changing within a River basin. The culture and power when play together in a society by some communities, they will appropriate the power on the resources as per their priorities. The dominant groups are creating ‘the

homogenous local people' some times and after some time they will change the definition. The below case from the study area explains this situation. "We had given some recommendations in the watershed management plan to plant the bamboo in River side rather constructing embankments. But nothing had been put to practice"

Here the major intervention happening in the basin area could not incorporate the needs and the knowledge of the local Adivasi communities and the local marginal farmer. Even many studies suggest that the forest regeneration is one of the most important factors for improving the wildlife habitat (Santiapillai & Jackson, 1990; Nair, 2007; Oates, 1999). But at the same time the voice of the upper caste individuals and the farmers are represented more in the decision making process.

The participation of the local people in developing the resource map as part of the Jalanidhi project and other watershed projects implemented in the Panchayath was only nominal. It is clearly projected by the above statement of the Adiya old man in Thrisilery. The process of making watershed map here only could see the physical structure of the basin not the organic life in the basin.

The Case of Foot Bridges and Check Dams in the Panchayath

There were many foot bridges seen in the River for the purpose of crossing the River. The bridges in the present day are very important for the local people especially during the monsoon season because without it they won't be able to reach the other parts of the basin like main roads, school, Anganwadi and stationary shops¹⁸. But there were seen remains of many foot bridges in the River. This shows that the limitation of the bridges constructed over the River as the construction was too irrational for the nature of the River.

"The nature of River is like that it needs strong pillars and the bridges were not good for the River. Also the riparian trees have been reduced now because of the halfway construction works done on the bridge"(Interview held on 8th April 2014)

The bridge specified in the above statement is in the Nettara area in Thirunelli where the half constructed bridge was proved useless for the people and also its construction adversely affected the River bank, River side trees and the canal network that had prevailed along the River bank did not exist anymore. During the field work period, it was observed that the local people there temporarily constructed one footbridge to connect the half constructed foot bridge of the Panchayath.

Case of the Begur area where the River flows entirely through the wildlife sanctuary

While elaborating the need to create more check dams in Thirunelli area, a Grama Panchayath member who is from the upper caste group legitimated what he saying by means of frequently revealing his distress of wasting of 'our Kalindiwater' to the Karnataka.

Here he appropriates the local as the all people who live in the basin inside the Kerala border. At the same time, he apposite the people who lives in the basin part of Kerala as a homogenous community. The use of 'our' is overtly reflects on that.

At the same time, while responding to the water problems of people in Begur area¹⁹, he suddenly restricted his own interpretation of earlier 'our' by excluding the tribal communities who live in the Begur sanctuary area. Here the factor for exclusion was seemed to be rooted in their less access in that particular area of basin, River water, channel and the tribal people in the sanctuary.

"We constructed five wells in Begur. In addition to that, we constructed a pump house using Jalanidi Project. They only need to pay Rupeeese thirty or thirty five per family in a month. But even that they cannot. Then how we get water to them? We were planned a check-dam there [Begur]. But the department [Forest Department] has not given permission"(Interview with an upper caste Panchayath member who owns a vast land in Thirunelli on 6th June 2014)

Here the local Panchayath member (member of local self-government institution) sees the Adivasi living in the Begur area as different category. The reason is that it is located inside the wild life sanctuary and thus Panchayath activities are restricted. Since the Panchayath is in conflict with the forest department, the people inside the sanctuary

also were kept outside of their 'beneficiary group'. On the other side, the other migrated non Adivasi community living in the Begur area is capable of accessing water from the River through hand pumps. While taking the situation in a larger context, these migrated non Adivasi communities who were facing the wild life attack on their farm lands are also come under the local. But here the researcher primarily considered the drinking water needs as an important factor to identify the local people in the area. So here the concept of 'local' is getting associated with the negligence by the power actors. Here the people in Begur area especially tribal communities become local people since the basic right of them for water is neglected by the power actors. Here the location of the area within a sanctuary, their Adivasi identity, location of Begur in downstream contributed their 'localness'. The existing basin management experiments have failed to understand these kind of interplay of power structures in the community and that led to the exclusion of the marginalised people from managing and deciding over the river.

Conclusion

The need for more studies to make the term sustainable development more clear to use as a strategy which leads the society to live in harmony with itself and the environment is stressed in this study. To go more on that direction, the localised knowledge needs to be read as a process to understand varied methods people use to overcome the existing conservation and management measures of environment they depended on. The case of Thirunelli and the Bavali river basin management shows that, there exists ignored reality of acceptance of heterogeneous identity of people depending on the river in management of river. The heterogeneous community experiences in a village have never been considered by the state policy measures while planning and implementing any interventions in a river. The river itself is also conceptualised differently by different communities at different places. But while coming to the management aspect, only the identity as flowing water has been there for the river. Even the different communities has conceptualised the river as water, god, place for recreation, fishing ,etc, only one identity for the river that is given by the State has been ruling the entire interventions in the river. Here, the participation of the people for the watershed management and other programs did not even consider the varied

power structures in community, the dynamics of interplay of different groups in grabbing access to the decision making on river but these programs itself becoming another set of strengthening of existing power structures. The ideas of sustainable development need to be explicitly uncover its political stand on the development itself in these particular cases. Otherwise, the peripheral act of conservation powered by different actors like State, civil society groups and the local power groups again threat the life of the most marginalised sections of the society in rhetoric of the sustainable development. Therefore, the sustainable management of river need to be considered as one side of the coin where the democratic management of river on another side will help to understand and redefine the existing social structures, citizenship through democratic planning, participation and decision making.

Notes

Endnotes

- 1 The term homogenous specifically used in the title is to represent the ever conceptualisation of natural environment as a resource and the heterogeneous communities to represent the peripheral practices of participation without considering the real heterogeneity community bears.
- 2 Local knowledge is the subaltern knowledge and in this study local knowledge is a form of hybrid knowledge (includes traditional, modern and indigenous knowledge) by considering the heterogeneity of the communities living in the study area.
- 3 This paper is prepared out of my ethnographic field work which conducted as part of my M.Phil. Dissertation (2015).
- 4 The terms river basin, catchment, and watershed are commonly used interchangeably to explain the entire area drained by a river. In this study the river basin is a strong political space rather than mere geographic space which hold water.
- 5 . The human ecology originated in 1930s and became a ground for applying natural ecology to explain human societies. Also it was earlier reworked as a tool for empirical analysis of general ecology in the sociological writings of the Chicago School of Urbanism. For more details see note on historicizing Roy Rappaport's Pigs for Ancestors by Vladimir Gil (1999).

- 6 According to Eder (1996), the culturalist interpretation of the human-nature interaction finds the nature as a symbol rather than as an object and here nature is perceived as something attached to people but they don't touch or conserve it but do peripheral act of conservation.
- 7 The anti-road movement and radical environmentalism discourses during 1990s in Western Countries can be viewed as part of this stage. Their major slogan was 'Earth first' and it was against oil market's pollution on Earth. For more details see Wall (1999).
- 8 As per the report, "Sustainable development is a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development; and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations" (United Nations, 1987)
- 9 The river in upstream area known as Thirunelli River and in downstream it has the name Bavali. In between it bears so many local names by different communities.
- 10 During second half of 1970s pepper plantations started in Kurichiat range in the name of tribal employment opportunities.
- 11 Nairs were a backward caste in Kerala earlier and later they became dominant power group in Kerala. In current situation in Kerala, Nair are considered as the upper caste people who come in hierarchical position just below the Brahmins and Nambootiris.
- 12 According to the book Malabar series by Nair 1911 (page, 25), it is the fine imposed, in addition to expiatory observances, for violation of caste customs.
- 13 According to the Inference from the field observation, there could be seen farmers turned into tourism related business in Thirunelli area and Palvelicham area, as part of the Thirunelli tourism and Kuruva tourism respectively.
- 14 Observation from the field Thirunelli and also the interviews with the Adiyar and Kurichiar in temple area told the involvement of people from tribal group as laborers in tourist resorts.
- 15 Adiyaradivasi community in the area are very marginalised groups and the name Adiyar itself was remaining as a symbol of subjugation by the migrated Hindu and other communities since earlier they were Ravulas by name. Adiyar in Malayalam means someone who is slave.
- 16 Kurichiar communities are in a high social position among the tribal communities in Wayanad. While writing the social hierarchy among tribal communities in Thirunelli from higher social position to lower, it will come like Kurichiyar, Mullukurumar, Uralikurumar, Adiyar, Paniyar and Kaatunaikar. When it comes to the whole society, all these tribal groups experience the social inequality in which the most disadvantaged are the Paniyar, Adiyar and Kaattunaikar.
- 17 The name used is a pseudo name
- 18 As told by many people during field work especially the Anganwadi social audit team. They told that during monsoon the children in tribal communities from the one side of the River was not getting food and other benefits from the Anganwadi in other side due to the impaired footbridges in Thirunelli area.
- 19 Begur lies within the Wayanad wild life sanctuary where forest department is the main authority.

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