

# Development Experience of Adivasis: Case Studies from Kerala

Divya K\*

## Abstract

Two different cases of conflicts over natural resources from the Indian state Kerala such is analyzed in this paper- Kadar Adivasis and Wayanad. Reasons, causes of migration and changed gender relations due to development and policy interventions are the focus of the first case, the second case is policies in conflict with rights to resource access. Both these cases tell us some insightful stories about the Adivasi experience with the idea of development. This paper largely argues for inclusivity in terms of the cultural heterogeneity of the Adivasi communities in the whole development scenario. And also, the sustainability of the communities would only be sustainable by giving rights on the resources they possess.

Keywords: Development, Migration, Wayanad, Kadar, Conservation

## Introduction

World has started using the term development since last 50 years. Esteva (2010) brings historical emergence of the word “development”. After world war II, America wanted to bring some new agenda, it was part of their political campaign to seal their hegemony in the global world. President Truman marked the era of development where he says the development benefit our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdevelopment areas. He adds by saying that they replace the old plan of imperialism with development, where we envisage is a programme of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing (Truman cited in Esteva, 2010). The term underdeveloped was ever first used in the history, that is on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1949, 2 billion people became underdeveloped. In 1942, Wilfred Benson a former member of secretariat of the international labour organization, referred under developed areas. There are

many other articulations of development also. Esteva (2010) brings other articulations of development. Nyerere proposed that development be the political mobilization of a people for attaining their own objectives, Rodolfo Stavenhagen proposes today ethno development or development with self-confidence, conscious that we need to ‘look within’ and ‘search for one’s own culture’ instead of using borrowed and foreign views, Jimoh Omo-Fadaka suggests a development from the bottom up: conscious that all strategies based on a top-down design have failed to reach their explicitly stated objectives, when Orlando Fals Borda and Anisur Rahman insist on participatory development, conscious of the exclusions made in the name of development. Development became the central category of Marx’s work: revealed as a historical process that unfolds with the same necessary character of natural laws. Both the Hegelian concept of history and the Darwinist concept of evolution were interwoven in development, reinforced with the scientific aura of Marx.

Haeckel says Development is, from this moment on, the magic word with which we will solve all the mysteries that surround us or, at least, that which will guide us towards their solution. The idea of growth further worsened the concept development. UN defines development as growth plus change. The next decade, the 1980s, was called ‘the lost decade for development’. The ‘adjustment process’ meant for many countries abandoning or dismantling, in the name of development, most of the previous achievements. By 1985, a post-development age seemed to be in the offing (Rist in Esteva).

Ferguson (1994 ) sees development as “ anti political” machine, where he says the intervention of bureaucratic state power in peoples everyday life is increased. The term “people” tend to appear as an undifferentiated collection

\* PhD Scholar, Department of Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.  
Email: divyakmankada@gmail.com

of individual farmers and decision makers, a concept which reduces political and structural causes of poverty to the level of individual values attitudes and motivation. Ferguson (2006) questions the whole concept of ‘failure of projects’ by bringing an example from Lesotho, where the project has not decentralization or popular participation, but it was instrumental in establishing a new district administration and giving the Government of Lesotho a much stronger presence. He further says that development is very hegemonic why because it considers poverty reduction is a technical problem and it finds technical solutions to the suffering of powerless and oppressed. He says this is the way they depoliticize the entire question of poverty.

The 1990s, by contrast, have given birth to a new development ethos. This follows two clearly distinguishable lines. In the North, it calls for *redevelopment* – that is, to develop again what was maldeveloped or is now obsolete. In the South, redevelopment also requires dismantling what was left by the ‘adjustment process’ of the 1980s, in order to make room for the leftovers from the North (atomic waste, obsolete or polluting manufacturing plants, unsellable or prohibited commodities). In the South, however, the emphasis of redevelopment will not be on such ventures, existing in the form of technological and socio-political enclaves. Rather, redevelopment implies the economic colonization of the so-called informal sector. In the name of modernization and under the banner of the war on poverty – pitting as always the waged against the poor, not a war against poverty itself – redeveloping the South involves launching the last and definitive assault against organized resistance to development and the economy. Conceptually and politically, redevelopment is now taking the shape of *sustainable development*, for ‘our common future’, as prescribed by the Brundtland Commission. Conceptually and politically, redevelopment is now taking the shape of *sustainable development*, for ‘our common future’, as prescribed by the Brundtland Commission.

The history of Subjugation over Adivasis dates back to colonial rule. Different clashes has been reported between the Britishers and the local people in different parts of the country in terms of resources. There are also places in the country, where the subjugation happened even before British rule. In the post independent era, a large shift happened in the total approach of the state in the development scenario. It was Nehruvian model on development, “high modernity” which captured the

resources of the tribal population. A lot of development structures like dams, roads and reservoirs have come in the forest areas and were justified in the name of ‘national interests’ (Baviskar, 1995). The post-colonial state in India always encountered with various challenges when it comes to the question of tribal development since the adoption of “Panchasheel” during the reign of Nehru. During that time, Nehru even called dams are the ‘temples of modern India’. As far as the resource conservation is concerned, it was basically continuation of the colonial policies which is monotonous in nature. Again when the time moves on, the next large change is that shift in economic policy of India in 1990s. Then onwards, India opened its market for all under neo liberal conditions. Special economic zones were established and Indian forest resources were opened to the multinational Companies. Adivasi lands were hugely acquired for the public purposes and theory of the eminent domain worked. Huge protest happened in different parts of the country, mainly from the part of farmers and Adivasis against the land possession by the state. Levien ( 2013 ) further says that such real-estate driven SEZs have become the epicentres of “land wars”. Simultaneously, by 1990s, government has also introduced new participatory measures for forest resource management including the local population.

In this paper, two different cases would be analysed from the state of Kerala, where the first case would be the impact of development on Kadar tribe. Here, the causes and route of migration of Kadar is analysed. The second point would be discussed here is the impact of conservation policies on the gender relations of Kadar tribe, where they had a comparatively egalitarian status before when we are comparing with the mainstream population. The second case, Wayanad, the historical domination over its resources had started in the thirteenth century and still continues. In different times in history, people find Wayanad as a resource rich place to migrate. Even the State also promoted migration to Wayanad and it further reached in to domination of their resources and Adivasi people. All pressure on Wayanad ultimately results in the resource alienation of Adivasis. Again, when how the policy efforts has been diluted and under weighed by the involvement of settlers have also been analyzed.

## Case Studies

### Kadar

Kadar community is one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups of Kerala with a population of 1,805 as per the survey of Kerala Institute of Local Administration in 2008 and it is just 0.03% of the total tribal population of Kerala. Kadar are the food gathering, seasonally nomadic and forest dwelling community endemic to the Anamalai hills of Southern Western Ghats. Food gathering is an ecologically viable subsistence activity as far the activities of the Kadar are concerned (Mahendra kumar, 2005). The entire population of Kadar Tribal Community is distributed in the tropical rainforests of the Western Ghats in Thrissur and Palakkad districts of Kerala. Kadar territory has been found suitable for the construction of a large dams and reservoir for the irrigation and electrification of the plains and cities of Cochin. A number of times the Kadar were evicted and from their places and they had to migrate to other places as labourers and coolies which caused tribal disintegration. A portion of the traditional hunting grounds of the community was drowned under the dam reservoirs and that is likely to affect the life of the tribe (Ehrenfels, 1952).

A series of dams has been established in the Chalakudy river such as upper Sholayar, lower Sholayar, Poringalkuthu, Thoonakadavu, Peruvareppallam and Parambikulam. These projects have resulted in the submergence of large forest area and thereby their resource dependent areas shrunk. There was no mention of tribal displacement or rehabilitation in the Parambikulam Aliyar Project<sup>1</sup> related documents, though it resulted in migration (Ravi, Madhusoodhanan, Latha, Unnikrishnan & Amita Bachan, 2004).

Aside from the development activities in the regions, many conservation programs started since 1970s also impacted the Kadar life, such as a Wildlife Protection Act (1972), Forest Conservation Act (1980) etc. For example, the Parambikulam area which is one of the Kadar populated region has been declared as Wildlife Sanctuary in 1973 and the status further upgraded to Tiger Reserve in 2009. This has restricted the access and control of Kadar over the forests in many ways. The way the State exercises power on the resources is understood in the frame of eminent domain. Eminent domain is the unilateral power of the State to acquire both revenue and forest resources. The institution eminent domain is defined as the sovereign power of the State to acquire property for the public purposes without the consent

## Methodology

This study has been conducted in two forest divisions of Kerala namely Vazhachal and Parambikulam. The design drawn for doing the research is ethnography. The research has incorporated the views of the participants (*emic*) as well as the views of the researcher (*etic*). Here the researcher has used oral history methods, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions and participant and non participant observation as major methods to collect data from the participants. For this research, both primary and secondary data were used for analysis. Various data of forest department, such as Forest working plans, Management plans, Forest administrative reports, reports of different forest management programmes etc. were used for analysis. The researcher also applied data triangulation method in this work by simultaneously discussing with different stakeholders.

## Migration:

Kadar were connected to the mainstream economy of the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. The traditional economic systems of Kadar were discontinued before centuries and this is also an attempt to find out the causes of discontinuity by going back to the history. According to Ehrenfels (1952), two factors contributed significantly as far as the change in the economic activity of Kadar tribe is concerned. One is the opening of the forest for tramway line for timber transport and it has reached the heart of Kadar country. Second is the beginning of auction of Minor Forest Produces to contractors by the Forest Department.

Cochin was a Princely State of India before integration, which was ruled by the Royal Family of Cochin. The idea of extracting the magnificent teak forests in the Parambikulam valley by means of tramway was first suggested by J C Kohloff in 1894, who suggested the construction of a wooden tramway from Orukomban<sup>2</sup> to Anapandan, a distance of twelve miles. The proposal was then extended till Chinnar and the total length was 82 Kilometers (from the nearest town Chalakudy). The structure of this tramway was commenced in 1901, and in 1907 tramway became an independent department directly under Diwan<sup>3</sup>. Tramway has been visualized as part of developing Cochin in to a major trade centre under

the Maharaja. The forest tramway was designed solely for the purpose of transporting timber from inaccessible locations with a view to secure a steady income from the forests. The total proposed cost of the tramway was Rs. 24.17 lakhs. Private traffic of the train was also allowed as and when it did not interfere with the departmental work<sup>4</sup>. “Tramway not only depleted the valuable trees, but also devastated the vegetation in the vicinity of the line by making large demands for wood fuel with the locomotive burnt”<sup>5</sup>

In 1926, the special finance committee recommended the abolition of the tramway. But Government showed its unwillingness to wind up the project at any cost. By 1942, Anamalai-Chalakudy road was opened and timber transportation was made possible by road thus removing the unique dependency on tramway for timber extraction. In 1950, a special committee was set up under Chief Conservator of Forest to evaluate the functioning of tramway. The committee recommended not to use the tramway because of its high maintenance cost. The recommendation came through an order in 1951. By 1963, the tramway was demolished by the Government. Chundamannil (1993) has written about the meager role of the community played in the tramway construction.

Forefathers of the present generation were involved in the tramway work and the memory of the present generation starts from the concluding stage of the functioning of the tramway. A thorough critical analysis from the part of the community was missing in this section. The Kuriarkutty settlement was set up for getting laborers to the tramway work (Varma, 2005). This point was also approved by the community. Scott (1998) sees this as a state attempt to make society legible. He says that state was always seemed to be the enemy of the people who move around. In the case of South East Asia, there has always been efforts to permanently settle down the mobile people (sedentarization) are a state project, he further adds. They also remember that women did not used to go for any kind of work related to the tramway. Kadar were staying scattered in the forest areas of Orukomban mainly for fishing and they did not find any other reason to come and settle down here in this particular place other than tramway. Kadar were forced to become the part of labour force for the tramway and it also resulted in changing their economy at one hand and the culture at the other hand. There is a strong association between the culture and economy of the tribal community.

The histories of Kadar are rich with incidents of evictions and subsequent migration. From 1950s onwards, they were evicted three times. In order to understand the issues of eviction which is a result of the State-sponsored project of ‘development’, we should have a better understanding about the social institutions of the community such as clans.

“The Kadar of the area can be divided into two clans, the Anamalai Kadar living at Parambikulam and the West Kadar residing at Athirappilly”<sup>6</sup>. But there is no academic works available on the migration of Kadar from Parambikulam area to the other areas of Vazhachal. There were habitations near to the Athirappilly waterfalls, but all other hamlets in the Vazhachal Forest Division were formed later on. Here is an attempt to trace the route and analyze the reasons of migration.

The Kadar migrated from Paramabikulam and Kuriarkutty in different groups. There are three important routes of migration in different times.

1. One route started from Parambikulam and then proceeded to Orukomban, Muthirachal to end at Charpa. A group of people in Vazhachal hamlet also took this route.
2. The next route started from Kuriarkutty and proceeded through Madambra, Kozhikuthu, Orukomban, Kuppachaval, Shoalayar river, Ambalaparadi, Mukumpuzha and, Poringal dam. People living in Poringalkkuthu, Anakkayam and Sidhanpocket hamlets basically followed this path.
3. Yet another route started from Parambikulam and ended at Chandanthode. People living in Malakkapara, Sholayar and a part of Vachumaram hamlets chose this route.

Kadar usually live along the banks of rivers or streams, all the above mentioned routes also touches the river banks. Kadar gave different names to groups of people based on the landscape they belong to such as *Kottaral*, *Thaliyal*, *Aanamalalay*, *Padinjaareyaal*<sup>7</sup>.

All these migrations have started since the end of 1950s. Based on the information gathered from the community, it can be seen that all these migrations to Vazhachal started after the demolition on tramway line and during the different construction phases of the Parambikulam group of dams as a part of Parambikulam-Aliyar Inter Basin River Linking Project (PAP). People had to move from areas around the Parambiulam dam (Started

construction in 1958 and commissioned in 1967). Some of them reached Chandanthode, near Sholayar before and during the construction of the Kerala Sholayar dam (commissioned in 1966). People who were already there in Chandanthode, staying close to the Sholayar River were asked to move to other hills by the authority for constructing Sholayar dam. All these dams are the part of the same chain, but construction started in different years. They used to set up temporary shelters constructed of reed leaves in all these times.

The Chalakudy-Anamalai road was opened in the year 1942 and the forests on both sides of the road began to perish heavily. Several feeder roads were set, but the annual coupes were not demarcated and the felling was spread out over a very large area. Later on people who were residing at Athirappilly and Charpa area started moving to both the sides of the road and by 1980s, people in Vazhachal almost settled. A few families came to Vazhachal area during the construction of the road. Kadar had never claimed and did not possess land on the hills (Thurston, 1909). This basic nature of Kadar helped the State to evict them from the places they belonged to. It can also be read that by the demolition of tramway, people again got the freedom to move around based on their instinct. This could also be one of the reasons for migration along with destruction of their areas due to development projects. A total submerged area of three dams of PAP is 2466.66 Ha of forest area<sup>8</sup>. Here we are discussing the impact of this intrusion on the economy and livelihood of Kadar, which forced them to move to other places. All these migration of the community is also understood in terms of the strongest conflict existed with the State actors. The area of conflict is completely absent in the mainstream literature.

A series of development projects has also come up in the Kadar areas of resource management during 1950s. The way the State exercises power on the resources is understood in the frame of eminent domain. Eminent domain is the unilateral power of the State to acquire both revenue and forest resources. The institution eminent domain is defined as the sovereign power of the State to acquire property for the public purposes without the consent. This has resulted in mass displacement and dispossession. Ramanathan (2009) observes that

“the disregard of customary law, the relationship of local communities to natural resources and the presumption about the sovereign power of the State over such resources

all indicate the power that eminent domain has handed over to the State”.

In the Kadar inhabitant area also, State has shown its power through various forms started during colonial times. Gupta (2012) argues that the concept of eminent domain is an inherited concept from the Britishers and deep rooted in colonialism. She also adds that theory behind the concept shows the relationship between land, State, citizen, community. Land acquisition act, 1894 is the perfect example for this. The Indian State has also followed the colonial way of management of resources for a long time. The policy formulation of the State as a result of various interconnected elements such as politics, bureaucracy, power etc.

### Culture-State Interface; A Reflection on Gender Dimension

This is an effort to make a small reflection of the gender relations in the study areas due to various kinds of interfaces. Kadan family ties have strong emotional and practical value system. Kadar family organization may be considered as bilateral, with a high degree of consideration for maternal relationship. It is not matrilineal, patrilineal or patriarchal. Ordinarily Kadar men and women still do more or less the same work together, prepare and eat their food together, dress in a similar way, but after having contact with the outsiders from the plains, the role of women radically changed because of the influence of modern machine civilization (Ehrenfels, 1952).

Kadar are a tribal group totally following the nuclear family system. As per the community system, they will be forming separate houses for new couples immediately after they get married. Since the right to habitation is totally different in both the forest areas, visibility of certain things such as fishing, firewood collection, etc. as family business are completely absent in the protected area. Usually when a Kadar member goes to forest for fishing and resource collection, he is accompanied by his family including wife and children and the most inevitable part of their life is their permanent companion, dog. The division of labour among Kadar families is more prominent where the Vana Samrakshana Samithi (VSS) activities are strong. There has been documented evidences about the purposeful attempts from the side of mainstream actors to back drop women from almost gender equal roles.

In the reserved forest area, there is no full time employment available for Kadar of all the eight hamlets before the implementation of Participatory Forest Management<sup>9</sup> (PFM). Due to the eco tourism activities, Kadar of Vazhachal settlement are getting regular employment, where as Kadar of all other seven settlements are getting only seasonal Van Samrakshana Samiti<sup>10</sup> (VSS) work, mostly during the summer season. Kadar women of Vazhachal settlement are mainly involved in the ecotourism management activities. Usually VSS women get allotted duty for the cleaning works and in the interpretive center meant for environment education. Men who are mainly involved in the check post and watchmen duty. A complete division based on gender can be seen in labour allotments. In addition to this, Kadar were not getting involved in any of the creative works other than the manual works such as cleaning and weeding.

*“Both men and women seem to be lazy going to the forest and labor division based on gender started after the VSS work”<sup>11</sup>*

Generally, forest dependency for livelihood requirements have sharply come down in Vazhachal hamlet, but it was evaluated as laziness by the community itself. But some women prefer to go only for fishing during the monsoon season. This shows that Kadar women have always possessed an instinct to maintain the relationship with nature by claiming their basic indigenous occupations<sup>12</sup>. Reserved forest always keeps an option to do this. But the situations of gender relations in the other Kadar settlements remain unaltered in the reserved forest area. Krishna (2009) criticizes, JFM increasing women’s labour while continuing to keep them out of the decision making process.

The situation of women in the protected area is much more challenging than the other. The habitat rights of these people are not practical due to the legal restrictions. The employment situation of the protected area is that almost all men are working as either watchers or tourist guides. Women may rarely get a chance for a full time watcher.

Kadar women who were always seen with their men are non-existent now. This can be considered as double marginalization of women. Watchers who work in the interior forest areas are also not allowed to take women with them. Gender concerns are unevenly incorporated in the policies for management of natural resources. Krishna(2009) observes mainstreaming is not necessarily

empowering unless the course of the mainstream of development and resource management is itself re-aligned gender concerns needs to be both intuitively perceived and rationally analyzed. The contribution of women to the economy became close to nil and their roles have been shrunken to the domestic wife of a mainstream family. Here women’s role in access and control over resources are hugely curtailed. During the interview with the women participants of the protected area, they showed their deep distress of limiting them from roaming in the forest and also restriction in collection of tubers. Women of the protected area tried to familiarize me the taste and leaf structure of different tubers through their enthusiastic narration, even though they could not have collected these for many years due to the gender discrimination. All these attempts can only help in making women more vulnerable and keep them away from all creative roles that they ought to perform. The holistic vision to see Kadar’s dependency on forest was missing. It was underestimated as just an employment and its multiple implications on the society was not anticipated. This may be due to the mainstream notion of keeping women away from all economic contributions and to strengthen the argument that economic activity is only the responsibility of men. Ehrenfels (1952) also observe that the contractor system consciously tried to lower the position of Kadar women by not dealing with them. So it is evident that, this attempt has started in the very beginning from the part of the mainstream.

*“In this basically bilateral society, the comparatively equal and strong position of women was solely based on a sense of equity and economic cooperation and not on any legal regulation. But the change was not yet complete because it was still counterbalanced by the strongly developed sense of equity by which a simple, bilateral social organization such as the Kadar is characterized” (Ehrenfels 1952).*

The system Kadar tried to balance was again trying to be changed through other coercive policies by the State. The sexual act of Kadar is generally banned in their houses and the sexual intercourse generally takes place during day time when couple goes to the jungle for collection of minor forest produce or firewood. This also ensures the constant companionship of man and wife in the economic pursuits of life (Encyclopedia of Dravidian Tribes 1996). The norms that set in the policies are favouring the patriarchy or in practice, men are only getting employment. Participating the tribal families in the conservation and

management are limited to the involvement of men. Policy or program does not foresee the involvement of men and women together for ensuring better conservation, which shows the narrow vision of the same. From all of these, it is evident that gender mainstreaming has not become the part of policy planning and implementation.

## Case 2- Wayanad

Wayanad is always a contested space in Kerala in terms of politics. It is the district in Kerala with highest Adivasi population in the state (71.95 %). Even before the invasion of British to the land, there were other sort of migration happened to the place starting from thirteen century. Rather than external pressures on the people and resources, there were pressure from the nearby regions. The domination on the resources has mainly happened from the Kottayam Rajas. Wayanad was a land ruled by the Veda Kingdom, they were the native Adivasis. Even they have also brought Kurichya, the warriors with them to Wayanad for defeating the Veda Kingdom. Through this action, the Kottayam rajas have established hierarchy among tribes. Again, Wayand is the place where a lot of migration happened and livelihood and nature of the groups are very different from each other. Sreekumar and Parayil (2006) brings the very critical fact that the social reality of the Adivasis in post-colonial Kerala is characterised by poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, socio-economic and sexual exploitation by settlers, the depletion of their traditional resource base and state restrictions. They further say that forest resource depletion in Kerala, particularly along the Wesern Ghats, has had a deleterious effect on the livelihood systems of indigenous people. Again, land grabbing and development projects have resulted in an apparent shrinking of the absolute area of land possessed by Adivasis.

The concept of inclusivity was completely absent in the development of Wayanad. A large number of Adivasi in Wayand are landless and many of them were slave under many feudal landlords. The voice of Adivasis was never heard in the whole development discourse. It is always the non-Adivasis, mainly settlers who dominated. Since the Adivasis of Kerala remain as a huge minority and therefore, they cannot make any magic in electoral politics. This is also one of the reasons for the political parties to take a distant stand.

## Methodology

Primarily, this part of the paper has been developed from the secondary data. The focus of the secondary data was mainly the history of Wayand and also the issues happened in the line of enactment and implementation of the act Kerala Scheduled Tribe Alienation and Restoration of Land(1975)

Primary data was collected from in-depth interviews and field level observations. In depth interviews were conducted with the Adivasi Activist of the area.

## Wayanad-Its History of Oppression

The history of Wayand generally starts with the history of Pazzasi raja and with the Kottayam Kingdom. More or less it is the glorious history of feudalism, plantation and administrative history of colonialism. The sharp difference between the history of the mainstream and the Adivasis, is not clearly documented.

Waynad, as its name denotes, is the land of forests. The correct name is *Vana-nad* (Forest country) which, by lapse of time, is pronounced *Vaya-nad or Wynad*, as it is now spelt. Gopalan Nair (1911) introduces the geography of Wayanad, as a mountainous country, with a general elevation of 2,000 to 4,000 feet and with ranges of hills, some with peaks over 7,000 feet high. To the west and south are the low lands of Malabar, to the east rise the Nilgiri hills, to the northeast lies the Mysore plateau, while to the north-west the chain of ghats stretches away into the province of Coorg.

It was the “Veda Kingdom”, they were ruling Wayanad till the invasion of Kottayam Kingdom, but the documentation of Veda period is completely lacking in the history. The Veda Kings were conquered by the Kshatriya Kottayam and Kurumbranad rajas. Vettu kurumar (Urali) said to belong to Veda’s race. There has been a long history of migration that starts from the thirteen century with the farmers of Karnataka who follow Jainism. Later on, invasion of the Kottayam Kingdom to Wayanad including different groups such as landlords, their dependents etc also migrated to Wayanad, followed by the Muslim merchants who had treaties with the East India company on agricultural products. Muslim culture in Wayanad can claim the history of more than four century. The North Indian Muslims had arrived in Wayanad as part of their

religious propagation. They were holding the history of business monopoly till the end of the last century. All these organized migrations in different centuries have pushed the Adivasis of Wayand in to the margins.

It has been documented that the Kudumbi Kingdom had been ruling Wayanad and it was also believed that they are the forefathers of the Kurumba (Kuruma) Adivasis. Feudalism had laid its foundation in Wayanad by the rule of Kottayam Raja. By the end of the thirteen century, Wayanad became fully under the control of the Kottayam Rajas. The tribal Republics which was formed under Kudumbi Kingdom and Veda Kingdoms were fully washed away. During the Kottayam regime, Adivasi life had tremendously altered. The rights that Adivasi had in their own land had reached in the hands of Nair landlords. The Nayars from the plains were the first to come in. They were brought by the Kottayam Raja and were allowed lands to settle on, the leaders among them being appointed to responsible positions (Nair, 1911). Adivasis who were doing shifting cultivation, hunting and forest resource collection, lost all their resource base and forced to become landless slaves of landlords.

Wayanad stands unique in its political history. This was the only Taluk in Malabar which never bowed its neck to the Mysore yoke and which defied the British power until its ruler fell, fighting against the troops of the East India Company (Nair, 1911). In 1799, after the fall of Seringapatam, Wynad had been ceded to the British. The Guerilla war led by Kerala Varma Pazhassiraja against the East India company was considered as one of the initial threats to the imperialist forces in the entire Indian history. Kurichya were the first hand force of Pazhassi and Kurumba tribe were also joined them in the guerilla war. The name Kurichyan was given by the Kottayam Raja to this class of people as they were adepts in archery. The traditionary account of the Kurichiyans' advent into this country is that the Kottayam Raja brought them for fighting the Vedar rulers Arippen and Vedan.

The conquest of Wayand by the Mysore Sultans had a significant impact on the property rights of the indigenous communities. After Haider Ali invaded Wayanad in 1766 AD and brought it under his rule, the migration of Muslims to Wayanad, which had started in the 16<sup>th</sup> century accelerated. Since 1792, Wayanad came under the power of the company through the violation of Sreerangapattanam truce. Pazhassi did 9 year long resistance against British and British had to pay great loss for this. Finally in 1805,

the company defeated Pazhassi. After the Pazhassi battle in 1805, in 1812 Kurichya and Kuruma of Wayanadu launched an unexpected battle. After the death of Pazhassi Raja all the land and wealth of the Pazhassi supporters had been taken by the Company. Kurichya and Kurumas went landless. They were denied of doing shifting cultivation thereafter. Willam Logan finds two important reasons for such a battle in 1812, one is collection of tax as cash and the second is exploitation of the officials in terms of lease from the peasants. This resistance can be considered as the important agrarian war during the colonial times. Nair (1911) writes that after the death of Pazhassi, peace regained in the country and interrupted only by a small rebellion of Kurichyars and Kurumbar in 1812. Adivasis of Wayanad were first involved in the Pazhassi battle and it was in support of the feudal forces, but they have led their own war in 1812. This can be considered as a continuation of Pazhassi battle, at the same time it was fully led by the Adivasis. The conditions of Paniya and Adiya were continued pathetic. The landless Paniya and Adiya were forced to do labour not only for the upper caste Hindus, but also for Kurichya and Kuruma. This battle is considered as the first anti colonial resistance. By defeating this, colonialism has completely rooted its dominance.

According to the census of 1857, there are 16,561 Adiyalar in wayanad. The slavery prohibition act of 1792 could not alter the existing slavery system. British brought this act for availing cheap labour for their cash crop cultivations. During the period of East India Company, Wayanad was used for raising plantations and large scale cultivation of cash crops such as tea, coffee, pepper and cardamom. Even after the enactment of the act, both Paniyas and Adiyas, continued slaves of the nair families. There was strong slavery system existed in Wayanad where the Adivasis families were kept slaves for the period of one year by the Hindu landlords. Adivasis were also taken in to plantations as slaves. Tribals like Kurichya and Kurumas had been forced completely to shift their traditional shifting cultivation to the paddy cultivation due to the introduction of cash crops in Wayanad by the company. Those who are landless became slaves. The sad side of the entire Wayanad history is that those who had defeated the Adivasis were portrayed as heroes even in Wayanad. The history only talks about the history of the upper caste hindus. Veda History was never been written. The slavery of the Adivisis starts by the fall of Veda Kingdom. Kurichyars were the force of Kottayam

-Kurubranadu rajas. They are reaching Wayand from the Kottayam Kannavan forests for fighting against Vedas. They were also in the Pazhassi sena. There is a different form of slavery existed in Wayandu known as “Vallippani” had a history of four centuries.

Valliyoorakaavu annual temple festival is the occasion where the Paniyas and Adiyas are starting their work as slaves under the landlords. By giving “nelli” (paddy), negligible amount of cash and a piece of cloth to a Paniya/Adiya family, they will become the slaves of that landlord till next festival. These slaves were known as “vellappanikar”. If any Adivasi run away from the particular work, he will be brought back forcefully. The land that was sold by the landlords to Europeans were including the Paniyas who were working there. Nair(1911) divides the people of Wayanad in to –Chettis (Edanadan Chettis, Wynadan Chettis and Mandattan Chettis), Hill tribes (Kurichyan, Mullukurumbas, Urali or Vettu Kurumbars, Kunduvatiyans, Karimpalans, Kaders, Pathiyans, Uridavans, Thachanad Moopens, Kanaladees , Aborigines or Predial slaves (Adiyans, Paniyars, Pulayans, Aborigines-Forest dwellers(Jain or Then Kurumbars and Kattu Naykans). Besides the above hill tribes, there are other inhabitants such as Nayars, Brahmins, Jains, Mapilas and Rowthens who have settled in Wynad. They do not really belong to this country, but are descendants of settlers. Kavita Philip (2004) says that forest department closely investigated the organization and segmentation of tribal groups and these were directly useful in categorizing and predicting labour patterns. Segmentation of Kurumbas in to three sub groups-Mullu Kurumba, Beta and Jena., this is a common part of regular forest reports. Mullu kurumba cultivate in wet land, required. The *Bet* Kurumbas, who are the local axemen *par excellence*, favour *takhal*, or shifting cultivation in virgin forest. The *Jen* Kurumbas . . . are the least civilized. . . . [They do some takhal cultivation, but mostly collect honey, roots, and fruits].

There are evidences available in the official records of Wayanad that how the tribe has been treated. Philip (2004) writes that by 1920s, plantations were established in Malabar and in Wayand area, so the forest department hired private employers for labour and they also employed a large number of local tribes. In 1929, in the working plan of Madras, conservator argues that every attempt should be made to settle the tribes in the forests so as to stabilise and enhance the local tribal population. Even

slash burn cultivation was allowed in bamboo forest or in the regeneration area to retain Kurumas for work. And the forest officers were asked to make good personal relationship with the tribals to manage the unsettled labour situation in wayanad (Philip, 2004). Philip also brings an important point that Forest department, a strong wing of the state took care to disrupt existing stratified, caste based relations of production. Forest department would obtain Paniyars for forest work by making agreements with the Chetties, to whom the Paniyars were bonded labourers. The three Chettis are by their status and wealth, placed on the top of the list. They are landlords and cultivators, have Brahmin priests to officiate, and have advanced in civilisation to the extent of supplying two members to the Taluk Board of Wynad.

Kerala Land reform Act is considered as one of the reformist act in the state. There are lot of criticism came against the formation and implementation of the act in the sense there are no proper land distribution happened to tribals and dalits of the state, they are the most oppressed and landless people of the state. Prakash (2012) observe that, only 5714 acres of land that is 8% has distributed to Adivasis. One of the main causes of this was the exclusion of plantations from land reform, that resulted in less distribution of land to tribals. The condition was that 50% of the surplus land would be distributed to the Adivasi and dalits.

Since the land alienation of Adivasis of Wayand has a lot of history. The first attempt to restore the alienated land was through the policy intervention was the formulation of Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer and Restoration of Alienated Land Act 1975 ( KST). In 1960, the Dhebar Commission recommended that all tribal land alienated since January 26, 1950 be returned to the original Adivasi owners. Followed to the Dhebar commission’s recommendations, Kerala state legislative assembly passed Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer and Restoration of Alienated Land Act 1975) (KST) to acquire the alienated Adivasi land and also to cease further land alienation. This act gave a different energy to the people. This was the only legislation enacted to protect the tribal land. But the Govt took another 11 years to prepare the rule. Revenue Divisional Officers of that time completed their formalities to restore the land, but Kerala government was reluctant to take action on this. On the basis of a petition from an activist, Kerala High Court directed the Govt to restore the tribal land based

on KST 1975. In 1996, Govt sent the amended ordinance for president's consent, but it was returned. By taking this act to the National level for dilution, both the ruling and opposition parties played an equal role in the process of sabotaging. In 1999, left regime of Kerala amended the act. It legalized the possession of Adivasi land (by the non tribes) to maximum 5 acres and restoration of land only if it exceeds 5 acres. Both the UDF and LDF together passed the amended act in the legislative assembly. The only one person who opposed the amendment was Gouri amma (she was the first revenue minister of the first communist ministry and piloted the Land reform bill). This amended act was again questioned in Kerala High Court and high court verdict explained that the amendment was anti-constitutional. Kerala govt approached Supreme Court in a special leave petition and Supreme Court partially agreed the amended act. None of the political parties took the implementation forward. Kerala state considered this only as the problem of 4000 agricultural tribes of the state.

The rationality behind bringing this example is to show that development of Adivasis is not that simple to obtain. It can't be easily achieved like a project. Regional politics has a mere role to play in the overall development initiatives.

## Conclusion

The large question of development should be understood with ultimate criticality. A large number of people in the developing world are depending on the natural resources for their livelihood. Especially indigenous people are losing control over resources due to many reasons. Due to different development and conservation of the state, Kadar had to migrate from one forest area to another. At the same time, policy also did enough damage to the social relations of the indigenous communities; it was change in gender relations in the case of Kadar. The new participatory programmes for resource management (PFM), which was even conceptualized in 1990s failed to incorporate the gender elements in to its vision and further alienated Adivasi from the resources. Though Kadar live in the rich resources areas, they were denied access to use and conserve them. So, the ultimate development for the Adivasi will not be occur without giving them access and control on the resources they use. In the case of Wayanad, land and resource alienation started since centuries from

different groups. Wayand was considered as a resource rich area and different interventions such as plantations, invasion of Kottayam Kingdom, Travancore migration etc resulted in worsening their social conditions. By this time, a lot of hierarchies was developed with in the Adivasi groups and also a huge gap was also created between Adivasis and settlers. Adivasis were even not benefitted of Kerala Land Reform Act, which was considered as one of the reformist acts ever. When Kerala was far better in terms of all social parameters such as education, health etc, the conditions of the Adivasis remains unaltered. Adivasis of Kerala always stand out the whole Kerala Development Experience. And again the entire policy formulation was diluted and hijacked by the political parties and the settlers of the area. So, the whole development of Adivasis can be only reestablished by giving agricultural land to them. The paper largely recommend for a more inclusive frame work in which the Adivasis needs to be taken care of.

## Notes:

- 1 Parambikulam Aliyar Project is one of the largest inter river basin, inter-state river linking project.
  - 2 This is the place downstream to Kuriarkkutty where all tributaries of Chalakudy river join.
  - 3 Diwan is the Powerful position in the Cochin Kingdom
  - 4 Achyuta Menon(1911),The Cochin State Manual, Kerala Gazetteers department, Thiruvananthapuram
  - 5 Mammen Chundamannil(1993) History of Forest Management in Kerala, KFRI
  - 6 Working plan for the Chalakudy Forest Division(1954-1969)
  - 7 Kadar categories themselves in to four based on the landscape they belongs to. There is also slang change in their Kadan language.
  - 8 The First Management Plan of Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary, 1990-2000
  - 9 Participatory Forest Management is the management of resources including local population.
  - 10 Van Samrakshana Samiti( Forest Protection Village) is a joined committee of local people and forest department. In the Adivasi areas it is known as Adivasi Van Samrakshana Samiti(AVSS)
- Interview with a Kadan woman , Vazhachal settlement, Vazhachal FD, 06.08.13

## References

- The Encyclopedia of Dravidian Tribes.(1996). Kerala: The International School of Dravidian Linguistic.
- Baviskar, A. (2005). *In the belly of the river: Tribal conflicts over development in the narmada valley* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Bijoy, C. (2003, February). The adivasi of India: A history of discrimination, conflict and resistance. *PUCL Bulletin*.
- Burman, J. J. (2009, July 25). Adivasis: A contentious term to denote tribes as indigenous peoples of India. *Mainstream Weekly*, 48(32).
- Chundamannil, M. (1993). *History of Forest Management in Kerala*. Kerala: Kerala Forest Resesearch Institute.
- Ehrenfels, U. (1952). *Kadar of Cochin*. Madras: University of Madras Press.
- Esteva, G. (2010). Development. In W. Sachs (Ed.), *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (Second ed.). London and Newyork: Zenbooks.
- Ferguson, J. (2006). The Anti-Politics Machine. In A. Sharma, & A. Gupta (Eds.), *The Anthropology of the State-A Reader*. Australia: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Ferguson, J., & Lohmann, L. (1994, September/October). The Anti-Politics Machine: Development and Bureacratc Power in Lesotho. *Ecologist*, 24(5).
- Gupta, P. S. (2012). The peculiar circumstances of eminent domain in India. *Osgoode Hall Law Journal*, 49.
- K, P. P. (2012). *Annyaadheenappedunna Bhoomi-Adivasi Prashnathinte charithravum Raashtrryavum* (Malayalam). Kozhikode: Jayachandran Suhruksang amam.
- Levien, M. (2013). *The politics of dispossession: Theorizing India's landwars*. Sage publications.
- Mahendrakumar, M. (2005). Ecocultural adaptation of the kadars of Kerala. *Mountain Research and Development*, 21(3), 208-211.
- Nair, C. G. (1911). *Malabar series- Wayanad: Its peoples and traditions*. Madras: Higginbotham & Co.
- Philip, K. (2004). *Civilizing nature: Race, resources and modernity in colonial south India*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- Ramanathan, U. (2009). A Word on Eminent Domain. *Internatinal Environmental Law Research Centre*.
- Ravi, S., Madhusoodhanan, C., Latha, A., Unnikrishnan, S., & Amita Bachan, K. (2004). *Tragedy of Commons: The Kerala Experience in River Linking*. Kerala: River Research Centre and South Asian Network on Dams, River and Peple(SANDRP).
- Scott, J. C. (1998). *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. New York: Yale University.
- Sreekumar, T., & Parayil, G. (2006). Interrogating development: Newsocial movements, democracy and indigenous peoples struggle in Kerala. In J. Tharamangalam (Ed.), *Kerala: The Paradoxes of Public Action and Development*. Orient Blackswan.
- Thurston, E. (1909). *Castes and tribes of southern India* (Vols. III-K). Madras.
- Varma, D. R., Churchill, D., & Reusser, M. (2005). Commemorate the cetenary, 19062006 of the cochin state forest tramway-research and compilation. *Journal of the Cochin State Forest Tramway*.