

**UNDERSTANDING THE ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE IN TAMIL NADU: A
CRITIQUE OF CULTURAL ECOLOGY THROUGH THE STUDY OF NEDUVASAL
PROTEST**

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

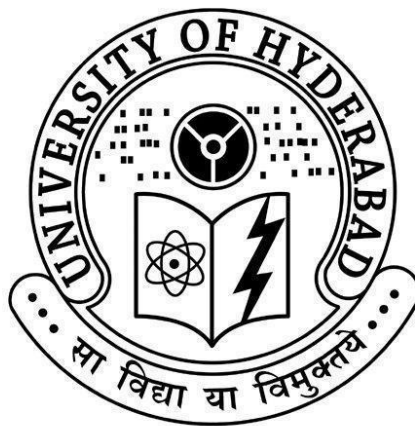
IN

ANTHROPOLOGY

By

SABARI GIRISAN M

(17SAHL01)



DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD

HYDERABAD- 500 046

JUNE 2019

**UNDERSTANDING THE ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE IN TAMIL NADU: A
CRITIQUE OF CULTURAL ECOLOGY THROUGH THE STUDY OF NEDUVASAL
PROTEST**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the University of Hyderabad in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of**

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

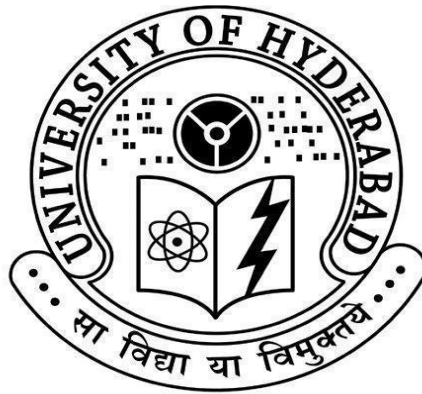
IN

ANTHROPOLOGY

By

SABARI GIRISAN M

(17SAHL01)

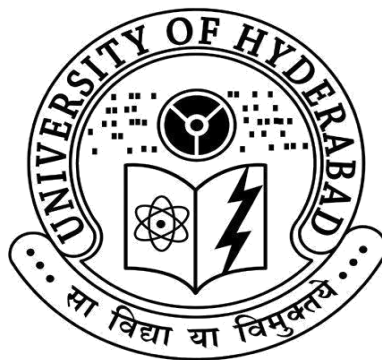


DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD

HYDERABAD- 500 046



DECLARATION

I, **SABARI GIRISAN M**, hereby declare that this thesis entitled “**Understanding the Environmental Discourse in Tamil Nadu: A Critique of Cultural Ecology through the Study of Neduvasal Protest**” submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of Professor **B V. SHARMA**, is a bonafide work which is also free from plagiarism. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodhganga/ INFLIBNET.

A report on plagiarism statistics from the University Librarian is enclosed.

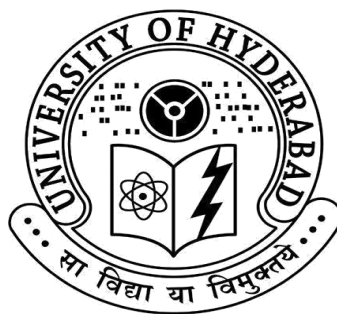
Date: 28th JUNE 2019

Name: SABARI GIRISAN M

Signature of the Student:

Reg. No: 17SAHL01

JUNE 2019



CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**Understanding the Environmental Discourse in Tamil Nadu: A Critique of Cultural Ecology through the Study of Neduvasal Protest**” submitted by Mr. SABARI GIRISAN M. bearing Reg. No. 17SAHL01 in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy in Anthropology is a bonafide work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance which is plagiarism free thesis.

The thesis has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

Prof. M Romesh Singh
Head of the Department
Department of Anthropology
University of Hyderabad

Prof. B V. SHARMA
Supervisor
Department of Anthropology
University of Hyderabad

Prof P. Venkat Rao
Dean
School of Social Sciences
University of Hyderabad

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations	i
Acknowledgments	ii
Abbreviations	iii
INTRODUCTION	iii
The Context	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Objectives	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Methodology	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Chapters	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Disclaimer	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Chapter 1	1
1.1. The Field	1
1.2. The Protest	5
1.2.1. The Rise of Protests	6
1.2.2. The Coal bed Methane Project	9
1.2.3. The Neduvasal Protest	10
Chapter 2	15
2.1. The Issue Matters	15
2.2. Culture and Anthropology	17
2.3. Ecology and Anthropology	22
2.4. Environmentalism, Discourse and Culture	27
Chapter 3	32
3.1. The Transnational Interactions	32
3.2. The Frames	36
3.2.1. The Invocation of Tamilness	36
3.2.2. The Idiom of 'Vivasayi'	38
3.2.3. The Delta Affiliation	42
3.3. Claims of Science and Claims of Rights	43
3.3.2. State Apparatus at the Local Level	48
3.3.3. Claims over Landscape	51
CONCLUSION	55
References	59

List of Illustrations

Map

Location of Neduvasal Village.....	3
------------------------------------	---

Figure

Christmas Tree of the Exploratory Well.....	11
--	----

Acknowledgments

I express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor Prof. B.V. Sharma for giving me a free mindspace that was necessary to arrive at and explore the themes that are deliberated upon in the thesis. I am deeply indebted to the encouragement and assistance offered by him along with his patience that eased my stay and study here in this university.

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of the faculty of Anthropology Department. I learnt greatly from the courses on theories and methods that were taught by Prof. R. Siva Prasad, Prof. George Tharakan, Prof. Romesh Singh and Prof. B.V. Sharma in the first semester. I wish to thank Prof. George Tharakan who was part of my Research Advisory Committee. I am immensely grateful to Prof. R. Siva Prasad for his ideas and suggestions with regard to my research. I wish to thank the Head of the Department Prof. Romesh Singh and non-teaching staffs for helping me carry out official documentation procedures without much difficulty.

My parents and my sister have offered huge emotional support to me besides giving immense freedom to pursue all my endeavours.

The members of Vithaikalam, a youth-run organization in Pudukkottai who engage in tree planting activities every week all over the district, helped me get exposed to wide range of people who are engaged in environmental activism and campaigns all over Tamil Nadu. Particularly, I wish to thank Mr.U. Karthikeyan of Vithaikalam for accompanying me during the first day of my fieldwork which helped me break barriers with the people of the village and made my interaction with them smoother.

The interactions that I had with Raj Kaithwar played a crucial role in the development of ideas that run through the thesis. My camaraderie with Samiksha Bhan in the university served as a buttress to the thoughts and words that I was involved with. I wish to thank my seniors, fellow classmates and all my friends for supporting me throughout the course of two years.

Abbreviations

AIADMK	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CBM	Coal Bed Methane
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPI(M)	Communist party of India (Marxist)
DMK	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
GAIL	Gas Authority of India Limited
HELP	Hydrocarbon Extraction Licensing Policy
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MP	Member of Parliament
NELP	New Extraction Licensing Policy

Chapter 1

PEOPLE, PLACE AND THE PROTEST

1.1. The Field

Two years back, me and a close friend of mine from Kumbakonam, a culturally and economically vibrant town in the delta region of Thanjavur district, took a road trip to visit the historical temples that are situated in the western part of my home district, Pudukkottai. Within five kilometers of ride outside the town, he was startled by the lack of vegetation and population density in the region. Pudukkottai district is considered as one of the dry districts of Tamil Nadu whose agriculture primarily depends on the rainfall and in recent times, borewells. However, I was reminded of the trip that once we did towards the eastern side of the district to Maram Thangasamy's self-grown forest in Senthankudi village which is located in the Alangudi taluk. Maram Thangasamy of Senthankudi village is known for his tree planting efforts all over the district and more importantly for his 12-acre forest in which he grows more than 120 species of trees. I could recollect green pastures and orchards in the region and wonder how come there can be such a stark contrast in geography between the eastern and western parts of the district. Later, when I heard that protests were happening at a village called Neduvasal and the farmers were apprehensive that their fertile lands would be destroyed thanks to a proposed hydrocarbon project, I was able to make a guess that the village must be located somewhere in the eastern part. I also got to know that Maram Thangasami was bedridden then and his son, Thanga Kannan participated in few of the protests that happened. So when I started my fieldwork, I decided to contact him hoping I would get a superficial idea about the people and geography of the area and also about the protests that happened.

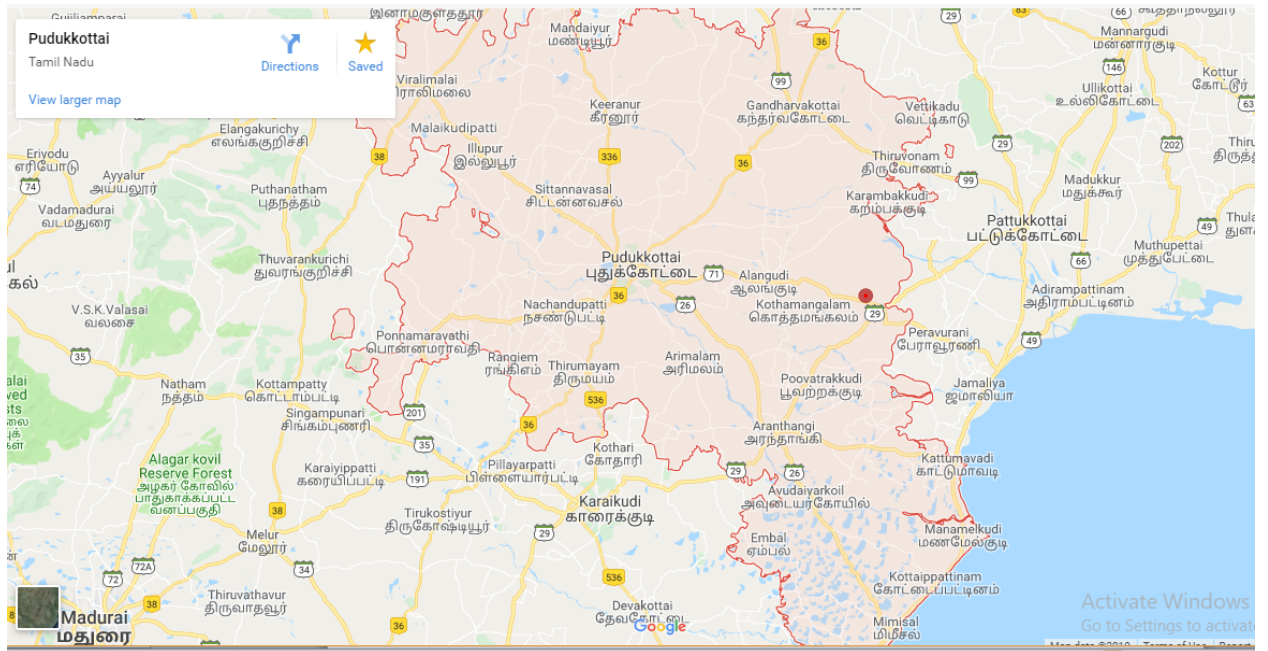
Senthankudi is located 35km east from my hometown which entails passing through the towns of Alangudi and Vadakadu. Despite being located in my district, I never had a chance to explore this part of my district except for the short visit that we did when we were in school. I left my home at noon, and my journey from Pudukkottai to Alangudi was marked by dry air passing through the vast swathes of eucalyptus trees. The scenario started changing once I went past Alangudi. I was able to see paddy fields and coconut and banana plantations at both sides of the road. As I was getting closer to Senthankudi, the surrounding became greener with plantations of chrysanthemum flower, pepper, jackfruit etcetera.

Upon entering Senthangudi, I was pretty sure that it would not be difficult to find Maram Thangasamy's house and I right away got the direction to it. His wife was sitting outside the house and informed me that Thanga Kannan was out and would be back in a minute. As he got back, I started the conversation with the contrast that I had mentioned earlier. He explained that the region that lies after Alangudi was close to the delta and was actually part of the Thanjavur district before it was clubbed into the then newly formed Pudukkottai district in 1974 and hence the people who reside there still consider themselves to be part of the delta region.

He also explained how the farmers in the region, thanks to lack of perennial water supply from rivers, started cultivating cash crops like pepper, jackfruit and various flowers in recent decades and the role played by his father in bringing up the change. After discussing wide-ranging issues, I decided to have a look at Neduvasal village once before heading back to my home.

Neduvasal is situated almost 6km from State Highway 71 connecting Musiri with Peravurani through towns such as Viralimalai, Pudukkottai, Alangudi and Vadakadu. It comes under the Cauvery Delta Agro-climatic zone¹ which includes districts of Thanjavur, Nagapattinam, Thiruvarur, Trichy and parts of Karur, Ariyalur, Pudukkottai and Cuddalore. It is almost 40 km from the district headquarters of Pudukkottai and 420 kilometers south of state capital of Tamil Nadu, Chennai.

¹ <http://tnhorticulture.tn.gov.in/horti/agro-climatic-zones>



Pudukkottai district map retrieved from <https://pudukkottai.nic.in/pudukkottai-district-map/>. Neduvasal lies roughly around the red dot marked near Alangudi Taluk.

Before the formation of Pudukkottai district in 1974, it was part of the southwest region of Thanjavur District which Beteille calls as the New Delta region comprising of Arantangi, Peravurani and Pattukkottai taluks. He describes it as the New Delta region because the region then was dry compared to the other regions of the district which he calls Eastern and Western zones of Old Delta. The region got connected to river irrigation only in 1934 after the construction of Vadavar and grand Anicut canal. The introduction of tubewells increased the agriculture productivity of the region to a huge extent. (Beteille, 1974).

Beteille said this when he had to describe the New Delta region's agro-geography:

“The New Delta has a different physical appearance from the old and this difference was much greater until the mid-thirties. Much of Arantangi, Orathanad and Pattukkottai are still dry and covered with scrub. Traditionally

only dry crops such as *cholan* and *kombu* were grown here. The extension of irrigation since the mid-thirties has led to the cultivation of paddy, but the area has not acquired as yet the lush character of the western *taluks* with their paddy fields, banana orchards and betel gardens closely packed together.”

(Ibid, p. 149)

The above said description does not stand true for the current scenario.

I left Senthankudi for Neduvasal by almost three in the afternoon and the summer of April was at its full vigour. As I took the left turn to Neduvasal, the coconut and teakwood plantations that flanked both sides of the road provided some respite from the heat. The village is administratively divided into Neduvasal East and Neduvasal West. Nadiamman Temple, the primary site of the protest which later became the face of the village is situated right in the middle of the village, few metres away from the bus stand. The roofed structure in front of the temple served as the place of gathering of the protest, though I heard there were scattered gatherings at various spots in and around the bus stand. The place is further cooled down by the banyan and pupil trees that provide shade to the nearby village market and the pond adjacent to the temple.

Neduvasal combinedly has a population of 4803 people of which 2369 are male and 2434 are female. There are 1162 scheduled caste people in the village. There are 2475 workers in the village out of which 601 are owner-cultivators and 1031 are agricultural laborers. Neduvasal West has a significantly higher percentage of owner-cultivators and lesser percentage of scheduled caste people than Neduvasal East. Compared to the 2001 census, Neduvasal has seen a manifold increase in the number of agricultural laborers though there is a decrease in the overall population². You can see incidences of many marginal landowners engaging in manual work at factories and households within and outside the village. According to the interviews with the participants, about 20 to 30 families

² <http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-Common/CensusData2011.html>

amongst the landowners own 15-20 acres of land and the remaining are small and marginal farmers with 2-3 acres of land.

Coconut is one of the major crops grown in the village. Besides coconut sold as a food product, its fiber is used for processing ropes. The village even has a fiber processing plant for this purpose. Another major crop grown in the village is tuber which became profitable thanks to the increase in consumption of parotta all over Tamil Nadu.

Though they used to get water from ponds and wells for irrigation, now they entirely rely upon borewells and water is said to be available almost 400ft below the ground.

1.2. The Protest

Having delineated the geographical, demographic and socio-economic profile of the protest site, this chapter intends to have a look at three things that are necessary for establishing the ideas that are put forth later in the thesis. Firstly, details of the notable environmental protests that have happened in recent years are put forth. Two things are needed to be noted down here. Protest movements against development projects citing hazards that the projects may cause to health and environment began proliferating and started making huge presence in the public discourse in the past decade. Having a look at some of their features might give us a better understanding of the genealogy of the current discourse on environment in Tamil Nadu and the actors involved in it. Secondly, a deeper look at the chronology of the protests against the coal bed methane project that happened a few years ago in the neighbouring towns of the delta is done. Thirdly, the significant events and actors of the protest under study would be put forth along with the prevailing political situation during the protest. This chapter does not aim to provide a causational analysis of the events that unfolded but simply aims to locate the protest in a broader political scenario.

1.2.1. The Rise of Protests

There is no dearth for protests against development projects in Tami Nadu in the past decade. The Environment Justice Atlas³ categorizes environment protests based on projects against which protests are carried out:

- “Nuclear
- Mineral Ores and Building Extractions
- Waste Management
- BioMass and Land conflicts
- Fossil Fuels and Climate Justice
- Water Management
- Infrastructure and Built Environment
- Tourism Recreation
- Biodiversity Conservation Conflicts
- Industrial and Utilities Conflicts”

In the past decade, Tamil Nadu has seen major conflicts over everything other than tourism recreation, biodiversity conservation and water management. (Radhakrishnan, 2018)

Even during the months of my fieldwork in May-June 2018, the headlines and breaking news were often the protests against the Sterlite power plant in Tuticorin. On May 22, 2018, the police opened fire at twenty thousand people who were marching toward the Collectorate to submit a petition seeking closure of the plant. This resulted in 13 people getting killed and another dozen getting wounded. This event sparked widespread media attention and outrage all over the world ⁴

³<https://ejatlas.org/>

⁴<https://indianexpress.com/article/what-is/violence-in-tuticorin-what-is-the-protest-sterlite-copper-about5186849/>

However, nothing before the Neduvasal protest gained so much attention than the protests against the Kudankulam Nuclear power plant. It was a product of memorandum that was signed in 1989 between the Indian and Russian government. The project was in limbo from 1989 thanks to the breakup of Soviet Union and the construction began in 2002. The Government of India announced the construction of four more reactors in 2001. Though the People's Movement Against Nuclear Energy (PMANE) was started by SP Udayakumar on 2001 and there were claims that the project faced backlash from the local fishers both in 1986 and 2001, the resistance against the plant attained a new height in 2011 after the Fukushima nuclear disaster. (Venkat, 2016)

Poovulugin Nanbargal, one of the most active environmental NGOs in Tamil Nadu, filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in Supreme Court against the nuclear plant in 2011 and thousands of people from villages in the vicinity of the plant went on street protests, highway blockade and hunger strikes. The protest went on for a year gaining support from NGOs and activists all over the nation. Groups such as 'Chennai Solidarity for Koodankulam Struggle'⁵ was formed and the protest was supported by many 'activist groups'.⁶

However, the protest began to lose its vigour by 2012 after severe repression by the government. Finally, the 2013 Supreme court verdict in favour of the plant more or less put an end to the resistance.(Venkat, 2016)

A year later, another agitation began to occupy the space in public discourse. This time it was against the gas pipelines that were proposed to be laid on agriculture lands by the Gas Authority of India Limited as part of the project to build Liquefied Natural Gas pipeline from Kochi to Bangalore. The protest which was started in 2012 got intensified in February 2013. Unlike the case with Kudankulam protest, the State government was in

⁵ <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/protesters-term-verdict-on-kudankulam-as-unjust/article23104515.ece>

⁶ Activist groups here refer to organizations that, though not contesting in elections, are politically active and take part in various protests that fits into their ideology. Unlike NGOs, they usually take a stand against the state and central government, though they may not employ violence as a means for their militancy.

support of the protesting farmers and directed the company to lay the pipeline along National Highways rather than on agricultural lands. This forced GAIL to move to Supreme Court which ruled in favor of it. However, thanks to the lack of cooperation by the state government, the proposed project was called off by the company in 2014. (Raj 2015; Sangameshwaran 2016)

Another protest that occupied headlines during my fieldwork was happening in Kathiramangalam which was against a proposed Hydrocarbon extraction plant. It was started few months after Neduvasal protest in 2017 and continued almost until May next year. (Poonkuzhali, 2018)

Protests against Neutrino projects, Ennore coal plant, Enayam port are some of the other notable protests in the name of environment and livelihood that have happened and still going since the last ten years.(Radhakrishnan, 2018)

The parties involved from the state's side would be Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) which would initially give sanction to the project, the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) whose approval is necessary to implement the project in the state, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) which was established in 2010 for speedy disposal of cases pertaining to environment and the High Court and Supreme Court of India.

Though each protest has its own course of events and its own set of actors involved in it, each protest at some point would involve a struggle-group comprising of local activists and politicians who are at the helm of the protests who would later be seen as core members representing the protests. Besides them, there are politicians like Vaiko of Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Seeman of Naam Tamizhar Katchi and leaders of activist groups like Thirumurugan Gandhi of May 17 movement who have extended their support to almost all of the protests mentioned above.

1.2.2. The Coal bed Methane Project

In my interviews with people who were at the helm of the protest, it became clear that the discourse that emerged during the protest against the coal bed methane project played a crucial role in the formulation of their opinions about the Hydrocarbon project.

The Coal Bed Methane project was the product of memorandum signed between the then DMK government and GEECL on 4th June, 2011. The simmering against the project started around October 2012. Vivasayigal Sangam affiliated with CPI(M) along with Tamil Nadu Science Forum (TNSF) jointly organized an agitation in front of the Collector's Office on June 4, 2013 citing lack of clarity with regard to the water requirement and the environmental consequences of the project. Following widespread protests against the project in the districts of Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam district, the state government suspended the project in July 2013 and decided to constitute an expert committee to assess the various problems associated with the project. (Venkatesh 2016; Kumar & Ramakrishnan 2016).

After a series of litigations in the High Court and the Supreme Court, the project was finally scrapped in November 2016.

The protest movement was primarily spearheaded by the Anti-Methane Project Movement, of which T Jayaraman, a retired professor, was the chief coordinator. V Sethuraman of Tamil Nadu Science Forum and S Renganathan of Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam also became prominent voices of the movement.

Nammazhvar was an organic farmer, environmental activist and author of several books who had been campaigning against usage of fertilizers, pesticides, genetically modified crops and ill effects of globalisation in favor of sustainable organic farming. He is believed to one of the early campaigners against Methane and GAIL pipeline projects which became his primary agenda from 2010 until his death in 2013. He became the ideological root of the protests whose image was used extensively in the protest campaigns which became to denote many things right from organic farming, sustainable agriculture and environment sustainability. (TNN, 2013)

The points put forth by the activists against the methane project was that it uses fracking method which requires injection of water through borewells to create fissures on rocks to release the gases locked in between the coal seams. There have been oppositions to this process historically all over the world for various reasons. The people who oppose fracking claim that this process has various hazardous effects such as:

1. The usage of huge amount of water and transportation to the extraction site.
2. Earth tremors during the extraction, especially the drilling process.
3. Release of toxic gases into the atmosphere.
4. Groundwater contamination.⁷

The project that was proposed in Neduvasal simply mentioned Hydrocarbon extraction as its purpose and the company and ONGC made it clear that it was not coal bed methane or shale gas extraction. Hydrocarbon is an umbrella term for all forms of fossil fuels including crude oil and natural gases that includes methane. There was no specification in the contract either about the method of extraction or about the material that is to be extracted.

However, the points that were put forth in the opposition to coal bed methane project played a crucial role in the formation of opinion with regard to hydrocarbon project.

1.2.3. The Neduvasal Protest

At the end of January, Tamil Nadu was shook by two crucial political events, the demise of ex-Chief Minister J.Jayalalitha which created a huge political instability in the state and the Jallikattu protest which is seen by political analysts as one of the largest protests to have happened in Tamil Nadu both in terms of scale and the sections of the people who participated⁸.

In 2006, Oil Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) took pieces of land from four people on lease in Neduvasal village to dig exploratory wells to find the possibilities of extracting

⁷ http://www.tnpcb.gov.in/pdf/Great_eastern%20Energy_Thiruvarur.pdf

⁸ <https://scroll.in/article/864404/we-work-in-it-firms-deliver-milk-every-morning-how-chennai-jallikattu-stir-changed-young-people>

hydrocarbon from the land. Similar wells were dug in surrounding villages nearby and explorations were also claimed to have done.

On February 15, 2017, the Cabinet Committee for Economic Affairs approved the award of contract of 31 areas to 22 different companies, both public and private, to start the hydrocarbon extraction process under the Discovered Small Fields (DSF) policy that was introduced by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas in 2015 to extract various hydrocarbons such as petroleum, natural gas etcetera in small fields⁹. It was given under the new HELP (Hydrocarbon Extraction Licensing Policy) which gives single window license to extract all hydrocarbons that are present in the allotted field. The fields in Neduvasal was allotted to Bangalore based GEM laboratories and the lease was automatically transferred from ONGC to GEM laboratories.



Figure 1: Christmas tree of the exploratory well in Karukkakurichi, a village near Neduvasal.

⁹ <http://www.puthiyathalaimurai.com/news/special-news/16959-hydrocarbon-project-scheme.html>

There were reports that some 200 villagers gathered in the bus stand under former councilor Mr. T. Dakshinamurthy in the very next day to mark their opposition. In my conversation with Ramkumar, director of the film Kaththukutti and part of the struggle-group that was at the helm of the protest, he claimed that he came to know about the government press release and the protest through family WhatsApp groups on 16th February early in the morning. Many people who were at the core of the protest pointed out that there are about 200 people from the village working at Petroleum Extraction companies both in Arab countries and within Tamil Nadu. Their narration of the extent of protection safeguards employed at their worksites, the statutory warnings that were given to them by their companies and the fact that these wells are situated far away from human inhabitation there seemed to have played a crucial role in the framing of opinions and instilling of fear among the villagers. (Jayaraman 2017; Thirumurthy 2017)

Next day hundreds of villagers under former MP Raja Paramasivam along with former MLAs Swaminathan and Rajasekaran and local activists visited the Pudukkottai District Collectorate to submit a petition to stop the project from moving ahead. Protests were also conducted at various places in Tamil Nadu¹⁰. In Pudukkottai, Naam Thamizhar Party conducted a protest at Chinnappa Park on 20th February, students of Rajah's college staged an agitation on 21st February and Urimai Meetpu Kuzhu conducted a hunger strike at Thilagar Thidal on 26th February¹¹.

Protests and hunger strikes were conducted all over Tamil Nadu by various sections of people including students at various universities and colleges and employees of IT companies¹².

By the end of February, people, especially youth, from the surrounding villages and all over Tamil Nadu started flocking the protest site at Neduvasal. Particularly on 27th February, people from 70 villages marched to the protest site to attend a huge public

¹⁰ <http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2017/feb/17/pudukai-villagers-stage-protest-opposing-hydrocarbon-project-1571475.html>

¹¹ <https://www.dinamani.com/editorial-articles/special-stories/2017/feb/24/நெடுவாசல்-ஹைட்ரோ-கார்பன்-திட்டம்-தொடரும்-துயரம்-2655346.html>

¹² <https://www.dtnext.in/News/City/2017/02/24231342/1028022/Save-Neduvasal-movement-gathers-momentum-in-Chennai.vpf>

discussion meet. Politicians from various parties addressed the meeting. Two significant resolutions were made during the meeting: the need to consolidate the protest under single struggle group and the need for politicians who organize and participate in the protest to set their political inclinations aside while addressing the issue in any form. The village was frequented by leaders from all political parties and activist groups. The politicians also visited the nearby villagers to enquire about the project and had a look at the installations there¹³.

A struggle-group named “Group Against Neduvasal” comprising of local political leaders including former MPs and MLAs from DMK and CPI, political activists and members of the village – both who were living in and outside the village - was formed. This group became the representative body of the protest. It was popularly known in social media as “Save Neduvasal” group. It is important to note that the current MLA of Alangudi constituency under which Neduvasal comes under also identified himself as one of the core members of the struggle-group.

Meanwhile, protests also spread to the surrounding villages of Vadakadu, Vanakkankadu, and Kottaikadu.¹⁴

The struggle-group met Chief Minister Palanisamy and then Central Minister for Petroleum Dharmendra Pradhan in March. While the former announced that the project would not be given approval by the State Government, the latter assured that no project would be implemented in Tamil Nadu without consulting the concerned people. After the assurances given at Central, State and Local level, the struggle-group decided to temporarily put the protest on hold on March 28th ¹⁵.

However, on April 8th, the Neduvasal village committee decided to resume the protest after Dharmendra Pradhan passed a resolution allowing the companies to continue with

¹³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZfLXzq098>

¹⁴ <http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2018/feb/19/neduvasal-hydrocarbon-project-residents-to-resume-protest-from-april-12-1775385.html>

¹⁵ <https://www.dtnext.in/News/TamilNadu/2017/03/02005551/1028346/Wont-allow-Neduvasal-project-Edappadi-K-Palanisamy-.vpf>

exploration¹⁶. This second phase of the protest continued for almost 174 days until it was again put on hold on October 2017¹⁷.

With the case in National Green tribunal pending and ONGC having distanced itself from the case, in May 2018, the GEM laboratories withdrew itself from exploration plans from the village. The villagers welcomed the decision by bursting crackers. However, the members of the struggle committee announced that this was only a partial victory and the protest may continue until the Central Government scraps the project completely. In their next meeting, they also condemned the cases that were put against people who participated in the protest months after the protest was put on hold (Ezhilarasan, 2018)

The protest site was marked by speeches given by politicians and leaders to address the people who are gathered. It was also accompanied by musical and art performances along with sloganeering. The significance of Nammazhvar's image as a mobilizing tool for the protest is evident by looking at the photos of him in the public spaces of the village even now. Though the primary concerns raised by the villagers are groundwater scarcity, groundwater contamination and loss of the land (turning of agricultural land into a desert) due to the toxicity of the products extracted and the waste generated, one can also see the discourse turning into one based on rights and cultural identity. As evident from the speeches made during the protest and my own interaction with the people who participated in the protest, the trope of central and state government trying to snatch away the rights of the farmers and the central government attempting to betray the rights and interest of Tamil people were repeatedly used.

While this chapter presented the chronology of the events that marked the protest and the actors who were involved in it besides giving a glimpse at the mode of the protest and the narratives that emerged, a deeper look the discourses that emerged during the protest and the claims that were made by the actors and their analysis would be presented in the third one. Now we move on to the second chapter which lay the theoretical framework for the thesis.

¹⁶ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/trichy/neduvasal-protest-may-resume-soon/articleshow/58087838.cms>

¹⁷ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/neduvasal-villagers-call-off-stir-temporarily/article19787252.ece>

Chapter 2

CULTURE, ECOLOGY AND DISCOURSE

In the last chapter, the chronological events of the Neduvasal protest and other related protests were presented along with the empirical data regarding the demography and geography of the region. In this chapter, after a brief justification for bringing in ecology into the ambit of the research, we move on to the recent critiques and reformulations of culture and ecology within anthropology. The penultimate section deals with various meanings that the term discourse undertakes and its relationship with concepts like culture and environmentalism. The last section probes the possibility of analysis of protest through the cultural lens, particularly through the notion of frames as espoused by Jasper (2014).

2.1. The Issue Matters

What are all the ways in which a protest or a movement can be studied anthropologically? One way is to look at how the movement is mobilized along the lines of ethnic and caste identities and how identities get transformed and modified in the course of the movement. Another way is to look at the role played by various kinship groups, local heads and other members of the society in mobilizing the protest (Baviskar, 2008). James Jasper (2014) explores further possibilities of looking at protests and movements anthropologically through the categories of morality, emotions and cognitions.

However, the primary concern of these frameworks is that of the protests and movements themselves rather than the issues that those protests undertake. They rarely take into account the object or issue around which the protest or movement is centered.

As Latour (as cited in Cody, 2011, p. 47) points out what is being debated and represented should matter as much as the technologies of representation. According to him, “political subjectivity gathers around particular things of concern that are hence

made public, issues that might range from purported weapons of mass destruction to the problem of global warming”. (Ibid., p.47)

Warner, in his conceptualization of public, regarded it as “a social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse.”

“Texts do not create public, but the concatenation of texts through time. Only when a previously existing discourse can be suppressed and a responding discourse be postulated, can a text address a public.”

(Warner, 2002: 62)

Thus the issue that is being addressed matters as much as how it is addressed.

It is in this context that we turn our attention to ecology. The issue that is being addressed in this context is not just one of protecting the environment but that of saving the livelihood of people from possible environmental deterioration. People from multiple villages are protesting against a proposed project citing possible threats the project may cause to the natural resources and livelihood of the people.

There are two broad dimensions along which the arguments are put forth in this research: one is to look at how people of the region associate themselves with agriculture and environment. Particularly, I wish to study how they articulate this association during a protest. Secondly, I wish to look at how the political and geographic history of the region and the prevailing discourses on environment shaped their articulation of the association.

Thus, though the views that people have about the environment and the practices that they follow can be studied under the framework of cultural ecology or environmental anthropology in general, these views are articulated at a particular juncture: during a protest. Thus, this research follows an intersectional approach that takes into account both cultural ecology and cultural study of protests for making the study meaningful and enriching.

2.2. Culture and Anthropology

One thing that is characteristic of researches conducted in social or cultural anthropology over the years is the centrality of the concept of culture, particularly the specific human form that it takes. However, culture has always remained a contested category at any given point of time. Anthropological studies on culture mostly confine it to refer to a system of meanings that in turn might help us to define a particular section of people belonging to a social unit. This also leads to culture being regarded as a ‘shared’ system of values with a notion of homogeneity attached to it. (Hannerz, 1992)

However, there is a growing literature in anthropology that attempts to revisit the conceptualization of culture as a homogenous system of meanings. Some of them go further to question the necessity for anthropological works to take on the concept of culture.

For example, Descola (2013) traces how culture, in its both singular and plural form became a category of analysis in anthropology.

He claims that though the concept of culture, at least in its plural form, can be understood without pairing it with the concept of nature, the western social sciences instilled an epistemological purification to make the idea of culture as an irreducible totality.

He says this nature-culture dichotomy cannot emerge, without the prevalence of another dichotomy namely nature-human nature.

He attributes the conceptualization of the mechanical idea of nature to the seventeenth-century scientific revolution which paved way for elements’ behavior to be explained by laws within a totality that is seen as the sum of its parts and the interactions of those elements. This, on the other hand, was made possible by the autonomization of humans and human nature from the totality mentioned above. Man was considered “distinct from the reality that he studies and the God “had invested man with power, authority, right, dominion, trust and care ... to preserve the face of the Earth in beauty, usefulness and fruitfulness” (p. 36) This Western episteme was disturbed when Man himself became the

object of the study by the end of late eighteenth century as explained by Foucault in his work *The Order of Things*.

The origin of culture in the western epistemology can be traced to EB Tylor's (1871) definition of it which goes like: "Culture or Civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (as cited in Descola, p.37)

However, this unified idea of culture that is peculiar to humans as opposed to nature later paved way for the study of various 'cultures' as separate units that get shaped by their own respective history and environment.

With Malinowski's Scientific Theory of Culture, the singular notion of Culture got reconciled with its plural ones in such a way that it was thought that it was both possible and desirable to find regularities and invariants—not to mention universals—in the human condition that could account for a unity of culture that underlay the multiplicity of its particular manifestations. (p.37)

One can see this conceptualisation of culture in various schools within anthropology right from structural functionalism to structuralism to symbolic interactionism with their own respective formulations.

Descola argues against this essentialization of culture as an entity that is drawn from the autonomy that is regarded to nature as a totality and humans as beings distinct from it. He regards this formulation as one of the four ontological variants and calls it naturalism. He gives three other hypothetical variants in his ontological schema namely animism, totemism and analogism which are cognitive processes through which the beings detected in human surroundings are associated by humans by the dualistic interplay of physicality and materiality.

Hannerz (1992) in turn asks for a notion of culture which is based not on replication of uniformity but on the organization of diversity. According to him, there are three dimensions to the study of culture:

- “i) ideas and modes of thought as entities and processes of mind
- ii) forms of externalization the different ways in which meaning is made accessible to the senses, made public.
- iii) social distribution – the way the first two are spread over populations and its social relationships.”

(p. 7)

In this framework, the distributive aspect of culture namely how values and meanings are distributed among the people in question is emphasized. Here emphasis is given not only to the internalization of norms and values by various sections of the people but how various aspects of culture are externalized by them which in turn are further internalized in various modes by the people.

These processes of internalization and externalization involve exchange and mediation of information whose source cannot be limited to any particular society, nation or network of people. Hence, the idea of culture as a shared system of meanings, even if not closed, needs to be questioned.

Frederik Barth (2002), on the other hand, problematizes the largely ideational conceptualization of culture that is prevalent in anthropology. He says when anthropologists speak about culture, they largely confine it to the ideas and views that people hold and ignore how those ideas affect or get shaped by people's actions. This is despite the fact that there has never been a clear conceptualization of culture within the field of anthropology. The prototypes that are often used to formulate culture such as 'customs', 'social identity' or 'otherness' also deal culture largely in the ideological realm. He also questions the inherent generalization that culture and the theories that are attached to it instill upon the people being studied. When the observer goes to the field,

she is confronted with immense variations in people's actions upon which the ethnographer has to apply her theories to find commonalities.

Instead, he suggests a formulation of a culture that is less theoretical and one that encompasses as many variations in the empirical data as possible. Citing recent anthropological literature that does not even attempt to expound 'culture' at all, he says how one can build "cultural facts prejudging pattern, eliding variation, or stereotyping ideas by looking at human actions and human lives and human representations and constructions". (Ibid, p.32)

The formulation of culture as something present in the ideational realm and how it shapes or guides the social actions of the people has been a recurring more specifically in the sociological theories on culture. Max Weber is claimed to be one of the significant theorists of the actionist model of culture whereby he saw people's action to be guided not only by instrumental rationality but also by norms and values that are drawn from culture. There are two important formulations of culture within the actionist model as explained in the Cambridge dictionary:

“ Thus the contemporary debate is structured by two positions, that of culture-in-action ...and that of culture as thick environment for action.... Both approaches have significant insights to offer. The first emphasizes that actors continually work to render coherent and solvable discursive and institutional problems that arise in the flow of social life. The second emphasizes the way in which the social world is constructed for the actor by previous interpretations and collective languages.”

(Reed and Alexander, 2006: 114)

The sociological approaches to culture either substantialize it as a set of norms of that guides people's actions or reduce it to a symbolic realm whereby it helps people of a particular group to interact and form social relations.

The early anthropological formulations of culture have been criticized, on one hand, for being an apriori generalizing tool that at sometimes assume ahistorical universality among the people who are being studied and on the other hand for the delimitating the unit of study, either territorially, linguistically or in terms of the scale unto which the problem can be analyzed.

The abovesaid issues gain more significance considering the level of migration of peoples and ideas at the interstate and transnational level. Even though the group of people who are observed can be defined along the lines of caste, community, race and other forms of social groupings, the researcher needs to be constantly aware of the sub-divisions within the group, the historical factors that have shaped and continue to shape their grouping and at last, the fluidity of their identity.

Arjun Appadurai (2005) notes that though the cultural transactions have been happening among societies and nations for centuries, these were restricted primarily to three specific modes namely warfare, trading and religious conversion endeavors. The growth of mass mediation and mass migration has taken the cultural transaction to a much higher level which entails serious qualifications of the current theories on culture.

This large scale cultural transactions has led to two important phenomena namely, the emergence of a diasporic public sphere and the increased role of imagination in the social life of the people. The new form of imagination is not just a nostalgic rumination about the places, people and events of the past, but it is a nostalgia of the present. This imagination exists not just in the ideational sphere but, through various forms of reproduction and transaction, it has become a social practice in a post-national scenario. However, we shall take a deeper look at it in the third chapter which incorporates analyses of the events that happened and the claims that emerged during the protest.

He prefers to use the concept of culture in its adjectival form rather than in its noun form. This shifts the perception of culture as a substance that is present in our mind to that of “a dimension that attends to situated and embodied difference”. Among various kinds of differences, he specifically defines those differences as cultural “that set the mobilization of group identity and that has been mobilized to articulate the boundary of difference”.

He further qualifies the definition by saying that this mobilization does not lead to the extension of primordial units into larger and larger social units unidirectionally nor is it simply drawn from sentiments of family and kinship groups. In this regard, he perceives “culture as a pervasive dimension of human discourse that exploits difference to generate diverse conceptions of group identity”. (Ibid., pp. 12-13)

Having discussed the contours of the conceptualization of culture with the field of anthropology and the recent crisis and reformulations that it is undergoing, we move on to the discussion of how the domain of ecology and environment has been dealt with in anthropology as a way to situate the arguments put forth in the thesis and the methodology that is used within the broader anthropological framework and within environmental anthropology specifically.

2.3. Ecology and Anthropology

Sutton and Anderson (2010) define ecology as “the study of the relationships between organisms and their environment, the ‘economics’ (or livelihood) of the earth and its totality of life forms” (p.35). Considering the encompassing nature and scope of the concept, there are multiple modes in which the questions can be framed and researches can be done in order to regard those as ecological studies. It can also be studied through the lenses of multiple disciplines like geography, biology, anthropology, sociology and even history at various scales. The broadness of the concept also gives huge scope for any research conducted under its ambit to be interdisciplinary.

Environment refers to the biotic and abiotic factors surrounding a particular organism.

“The abiotic component consists of the inorganic materials present in the environment, including elements such as oxygen, nitrogen, sodium, carbon, and compounds such as water and carbon dioxide. The abiotic component also includes physical factors, such as weather, climate, geological materials,

geography, time, solar radiation (the source of most energy), and even the cosmos. The biotic component consists of all of the materials that are biological in origin: plants, animals, and microbes, either living or dead.”

(Ibid, p. 36)

Thus when humans speak about environment, they mostly mean the surroundings around them. The relationship of humans with their environment can be studied either at the biological level or at the cultural level. While the former type of research is mostly done under human ecology paradigm, the latter is dealt with by cultural ecology school.

The early anthropological literature that touched upon ecology and environment mostly dealt with the interaction between culture and the environment. For example, Marcel Mauss in his anthropogeographical study of the Inuits studied how the social morphology of the Eskimos depends upon the seasonal variations.

“...by this term social morphology, we refer to the science whose investigations are intended not just to describe but also to elucidate the material substratum of societies. This includes the form that societies assume in their patterns of residence. The volume and density of the population, the way in which the population is distributed, as well as the entire range of objects that serve as a focus for collective life.”

(Mauss, 2008, p.157)

Through his study, he explained how the social life of the group, their festivities and rituals change during winters and summers. For example, in summers they live as nuclear families in tents and the concentration of the group increases in winter when they live in houses called kashims. He also claims that the seasonal variations affect the ideas, collective representations and the entire mentality of the group.

Julian Steward, considered as the father of ecological anthropology, on the other hand, explained how the cultural ecological process of Shoshoneans prevented interfamilial pursuits and how families functioned independently in most cultural activities. (Steward, 2008)

Geertz compared the Balinese and Moroccan irrigation systems and how each of them got adapted to their respective environments. He says:

“As a chameleon tunes himself to his setting, growing into it as though he were part of it, just another dun rock or green leaf, a society tunes itself to its landscape, mountainside, river fan or foothill oasis, until it seems to an outside observer that it could not possibly be anywhere else than where it is, and that, located where it is, could not be otherwise than what it is.”

(Geertz 2008, p. 199)

Rappaport in his study of Tsembaga presented how the rituals seem to produce “practical results on the world” such as regulating the relationships of the groups, redistributing land among people and people over land, and limits the frequency of the fighting. (Rappaport, 2008).

Even Beteille (1974) in his comparison of Old and New Delta in the then Thanjavur district had to say this to describe the contrast:

“..the contrast between the Old and the New Delta is not merely an economic contrast but a cultural one. On the one hand, there are differences in ecology (including water supply), crop pattern (including intensity of cultivation) and density of population (including the settlement pattern). On the other hand, there are differences in antiquity of settlement, concentration of temples and places of pilgrimage, and the development and cultivation of the arts of life.

These two sets of differences are interconnected. On the whole, one notices the greatest cultural elaborateness in those areas where ecological conditions have in the past been most favourable to the development of intense cultivation.”

(p. 150)

Thus the earlier theories of the relationship between culture and environment dealt with how the environment shapes the culture of particular people and how humans adapt to environment through culture.

This mode of theorizing the relationship between culture and ecology was congruent with the formulation of culture that perceived it to be a system, mostly closed, of values, ideas and norms that guides the actions of the people.

However, as we have seen, the relatively old conceptualization of culture that attempted to generalize the views that people has undergone severe criticism in recent years. Recent trends in anthropological research demand rigorous observation and variation in the values and actions of any community or unit that is being studied. On the other hand, there is a serious concern raised against the synchronic analysis of a particular community and attempts to formulate theories based on such observation. The need for more historization of the study of culture or of any anthropological research is also being stressed by various scholars.

For example, Roy Ellen (2005) in his study of the Nuaulu tribe of Indonesia, viewed culture as a dynamic entity by historicizing people’s relation to the environment and their constructions and representations of nature, particularly in the context of colonial and postcolonial state engagements.

With regard to India, Amita Baviskar’s (1995) study of Narmada Bachao Andolan, looks at the social structure and cultural traditions of the Bhils tribe, the role of the Sangath in consolidating multiple strategies and ideological strands into a mobilization against the

project and finally the representation of the Bhil people and the movement by the intellectuals.

She argues that the beliefs held by the Bhil tribe towards nature are contradictory. While they do rituals and sacrifices to show their reverence to nature, one could not regard their resource use as environmental friendly. The very idea that they hold that nature can regrow itself and is superior and more powerful than humans let them not care about the ecological degradation. Thus she problematizes the romanticization of the livelihood of the tribes as being harmonious and nature friendly and viewing the environmental consciousness as being embedded in their culture.

She looks at the movement at three levels namely, the local, the Sangath and the Andolan. She describes the role of Sangath in bringing together multiple groups that have disparate ideologies and strategies.

She also explains why the representation of the movement as a critique of development is problematic considering the domination of the movement by Patidars whose mode of production is the antithesis of sustainability. She argues that adivasis, after all, fight for their basic subsistence and the intellectuals and the urban supporters conflate the movement to be one for sustainability and regard that as an expression of a distinct adivasi way of life.

In a similar vein, Haripriya Rangan's (1999) work on the Chipko movement, problematizes the narrative that was built around the movement by environmental activists like Vandana Shiva and Sundarlal Bahuguna and scholars like Ramachandra Guha who tried to portray the movement, in one or the other way, as people's resistance to development. Some of them also tried to portray the movement as a feminist or an Indic civilizational critique of development. Rangan points out how the people who spearheaded the movement were themselves local contractors who got disgruntled by tree loggers from outside thanks to whom their livelihood started getting affected. She says how the demand for Uttaranchal can be seen as a continuum of Chipko movement since both spring out of the underdevelopment and poverty of the region.

Recent studies emphasize how cultural meanings attached to places are dynamic and contentious and how the geographic imaginaries and practices play a crucial role in mobilizing people in their assertion of rights and the formation of political subjectivity.

Taking this framework, Subramanian (2009), puts forth a series of arguments in her study of the politics of space among the fishers of Kanyakumari district. Among the many observations, she analyses how “cultural common sense has been elaborated through the production of geographic distinctions thus lending culture an environmental cast”. She also explains how “the meaning that people attach to spaces are not fixed and how the struggle over rights in the region has been a battle over competing forms of space making”(p. 252).

Having discussed the criticisms leveled against the anthropological engagements with culture and ecology and the attempts at reformulations of the concepts, at this juncture, we are ready to move on to the relationship between discourse and culture both at the conceptual and the methodological level. This ought to be done considering that the analysis of discourses that emerged during the protest through various media is one of the primary components of the thesis.

2.4. Environmentalism, Discourse and Culture

Kay Milton when looking environmentalism as a discourse defines discourse in the following way:

“In social theory, discourse carries implications both of process and of substance. In the first sense, discourse as process denotes how social reality is constituted by the organization of knowledge in communication (Fairlough 1992, as cited in Milton, 2005). In the second sense, a discourse is a field of communication defined by its subject matter or the type of language used.”

(Milton, 2005, p. 7)

Discourse and discourse analysis gained prominence in sociology and anthropology after the linguistic turn when the analytical scope of language is broadened beyond mere communication to include the perlocutory, context-specific usages of language, the performative aspects of it and its embeddedness in social relationships. (Heritage, 2006)

Discourse in this sense can be analysed anthropologically by analyzing the speech act and how it is “embedded and have consequential effects on social relationships”. Discourse analysis in this framework, primarily looks at “the endogenous norms, practices and reasoning which inform the participants’ construction and interpretation of social interaction”. (Heritage, 2006, p. 146)

Ideas of Michel Foucault altered the meaning of the term discourse which then came also to mean the process of historical constructions of landscapes of meaning which play an essential role in various social processes which also serves as a way of understanding and describing the world. This notion of discourse analysis is also helpful in analyzing the perpetuation of various forms of social exclusion through various modes of power and ideology. With its focus on text and other forms of cultural production, “this form of discourse analysis has affinities with cultural and semiotic analysis”. (Ibid., p. 146)

Kay Milton argues that at an analytical level, it is difficult to see culture beyond a particular social unit whereas discourse is not bounded to any social or geographical unit. However, at a processual level, discourse can be seen as consistent with the concept of culture, especially when we take the actionist model as developed by Habermas and Giddens. These theorists, along with Bourdieu, view social practice to be constituted and transformed by itself. The primary mode through which this constitution and transformation happen is through communication and discourse. Thus, *culture*, which has been seen by anthropologists as the mode through which information and knowledge are transmitted among the people and between people of successive generations gets equated with *discourse* which more or less plays a similar role at the social level. This framework, coupled with the analytical formulation of culture as a unit of analysis gives rise to terms

like trans-cultural discourse which refers to transactions happening among various cultural units.

This thesis looks at a protest movement that happened in a group of villages in Tamil Nadu which later gained widespread support from people all over the state. In this regard, it is problematic to delimit the scale of analysis to any particular village. The claims made during the protest also involved a wide range of actors and discourses that emerged from varied sources, particularly the claims that have their roots in related protests preceding the Neduvasal one.

In this regard, the term *cultural* is used in the sense as espoused by Appadurai (2005) as a set of differences that help in mobilizing the group identity. It has a dialectical relationship with discourse in such sense that it both help in constituting the discourse and gets solidified by it in the meantime.

This formulation of culture is taken into account not only on behalf of the research objectives but also considering the recent criticisms leveled against the earlier configurations of culture and ecology which was discussed in the previous sections.

I would like to conclude the chapter by deliberating with a bit more specificity as to how culture is used as a frame in making political claims, particularly in a protest movement.

2.5. Protest and Culture:

The 1970s and 80s saw a series of work that attempted to study the modes of resistance by people against various forms of power that collided with the literature on agrarian studies. James Scott (1985) in his work on peasants in Southeast Asia did a class-based analysis whereby he divided the people into those in power and the subordinate classes and looked at the autonomous spaces in which the subordinate classes attempt to defy the authority through their quotidian practices. (Moore, 1998)

Criticisms have been leveled against this body of work for fetishizing resistance and to regard it outside power's purview. It is also being criticized for excluding people's practice from the analysis and focus exclusively on the intentions of their actions rather than the consequences. Moore argues that the sovereign self of the subordinate arises

from the culture-as –text formulation whereby it orders the performance of the social actors as the text resides in a static space removed from practice, performance, power, and process. Subramanian (2009), in a similar vein, views “subalternity in relational and processual terms”. She explains how fishers of Kanyakumari district “constitute themselves as subjects of rights in a dialectical relationship with hegemonies unlike the popular regarding of them either as non-moderns inhabiting a bounded world of affect and hierarchy or as moderns captured by statist logic”. (p.253) She explains how when the church stopped the fishers of a particular community who uses boats from fishing for a certain period while allowing those who use trawlers to go ahead with their work, the former sought the state as their patron to intervene the church’s decision.

James Jasper (2014) in his attempt to give a framework to study social movements through cultural lens views culture through three components namely morality, emotions and cognitions and analyses social movements with those lenses.

By morality, he refers to the explicit principles and intuitions that guide our actions and by emotions, he tells how humans feel their way about the situations.

However, considering the scope and limitations of the research, his idea of cognition remains more relevant for our study.

By cognition he means:

“the words we use, the beliefs we have about the world, the claims we make about how the world is, the distinctions we draw between one thing and another (between one group and another, for instance). These include frames, such as “the 99 percent,” implying a theory of victims, a theory of villains (the 1 percent), and a diagnosis of the problem, namely the enormous gap between the two. They also include collective identities, in this case again the 99 percent and the 1 percent. Stories, each with a beginning, a middle, and an end, are also part of cognition. Even tactics, such as “occupy,” are ways to tap into culturally formed understandings of how to act.”

(Jasper, 2014, p. 7)

He also analyses how meanings are circulated through “physical carriers such as sermons, letters, advertisements; frescoes, paintings, and stained-glass windows; rituals, parades, and other actions; as well as words in a book, newspaper, or website”. (ibid, p.7)

While this formulation cannot help us understand people’s everyday practices and their association with the environment, it gives us a framework to analyse the modes in which they formulate their claims when a conflict arises.

Thus, in this chapter, we saw an outline as to how the concepts of culture and ecology have been conceptualized historically in anthropology, the rising criticisms against those conceptualizations and in what sense the terms discourse, culture and ecology are used in this thesis. Now, we move on to the analysis of the claims that were put forth and the discourse that emerged during the protest in the next chapter

Chapter 3

CLAIMS, FRAMES AND THE DICHOTOMIES

This chapter is divided into three subsections: The first one deals with how claims that were made in the protest are formulated from information drawn from various transnational sources. The second one specifically deals with the frames through which the claims were made by various sections of the people and the contingent situations under which these frames emerged. The third section attempts to problematize the dichotomies such as nature-culture and state-civil society that are usually used in researches on political ecology and movements.

3.1. The Transnational Interactions

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Nammazhvar, an organic farmer and environmental activist played a crucial role in laying out the problematic and initiating the campaigns against the hydrocarbon project. Let us have a look at his worldview and opinions on environmental degradation in general and oil extraction projects in particular.

Nammazhvar, who graduated from Tamil Nadu Agricultural University was inspired by the global green movement that was emerging in the 1970s and turned towards organic farming. He set up his own farm at Kadavur in Karur district which continues to undertake research and training in organic farming¹⁸. One can see the confluence of multiple ideologies in the formulation of his worldview.

The essays written by him over the course of two years for Pasumai Vikatan, a magazine that is specially dedicated for agriculture, were compiled and published as a book titled ‘Uzhavukkum Undu Varalaru (farming has a history of its own) by Vikatan in 2006. The essays cover a wide-ranging array of topics including the people and the body of works that served as his inspiration for organic farming, the origins of green movement around the globe and his propositions for organic farming and indigenous way of life.

¹⁸ <https://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/Down-to-earth/article12542533.ece>

His ideas on organic farming were largely drawn from Japanese farmer Masanobu Fukuoka who advocated no-till farming, also called as do-nothing farming. According to Fukuoka, farming or agriculture itself involves human intervention which disturbs the harmony of natural processes.

Nammazhvar did not subscribe to such deep ecological worldview. In contrast, he insisted on the traditional mode of agriculture that is indigenous to the nation and vehemently opposed any modern intervention in agriculture which includes not only genetically modified crops, pesticides, fertilizers but even tractors. While the former viewed agriculture itself as a harmful human intervention, the latter stressed more on the indigenous ways of practicing agriculture.

The 1970s also saw the rise of the global green movement in general marked by the release of the book 'Silent Spring' by Rachel Carson in 1962 and the introduction of the green revolution in India. He was able to make the connection between the globalization and development agenda which was seen to be done at the cost of environmental degradation.

However, he never failed to stress the importance of the 'Indian' way of agriculture. He attributed the current crisis in agriculture production initially to the taxation policies and changes in crop patterns introduced by the British and then to the introduction of fertilizers, pesticides and genetically modified crops by the postcolonial government in the name of green revolution, primarily to increase the crop yield.

He even explained how one of the early pioneers of the organic movement in the West, Albert Howard, got inspired and learnt organic farming from the Indian farmers during his stay in India.

His worldview is not restricted to organic farming and agriculture alone. He never failed to connect agriculture – its current state, problems and issues - not only to the politico-economic worldview but also to the everyday lifestyle of the people.

When it comes to the kind of state and the policies that a government should implement, he draws heavily from J.C.Kumarappa, renowned economist and a Gandhian. The state

and its economy should not be run on keeping in mind immediate short term gains and should not also be exploitative. The economy should be run in such a way that the sustainability of the next generation should also be taken into account. He also maintains that every household should grow cattle and manure for the whole society which in turn leads to self-sufficiency and employment for all.

In one of his speeches¹⁹ as part of his campaign against Hydrocarbon project, besides explaining the groundwater depletion that the methane extraction project may cause, he also points out how methane can be extracted from biogas through the processing of cow dung and agricultural wastes. He also explains how the real beneficiaries of the project would be corporate companies. He then moves on to point out how the extraction of oil and depletion of groundwater would not be restricted to the plots of land acquired since these are taken out through tubes that would cover much larger area underground. He also explains the possibility of fighting legal battle over whether the government has right over resources that lie beneath the soil.

Having discussed the ideas and views of the man who served as inspiration for the movement, let us have a look at what the people who had migrated to cities outside and within India who played a crucial role in mobilizing the people for the protest had to say about the project.

The narratives put forth by the people from the village who are working and were working in the petroleum extraction plants inside and outside India about the precautionary measures that they were made to take at their workplace played a huge role in instilling fear among the people of the villages.

Sreenivasan, who himself worked in one of the oil extraction companies in Abu Dhabi, put forth the following claim in an open interview conducted by a popular news channel during the protest²⁰:

¹⁹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwVj_rdEVaE

²⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jATp23Ydgso>

In Arab countries, the oil fields are situated 300km from human settlements. I worked in an extraction plant at Habshan. The extracted oil is taken to the refinery at Ruwais. Oil is available at almost all places there but they have made it a policy not to extract oil from human settlements. Before giving us the job, we were made aware of the health hazards such as proclivity to acquire cancer, sterility and were made to sign an undertaking. We were provided with proper safety equipment and the alarm goes off if the hydrogen sulfide levels go above 10 points. Oxygen cylinders were kept in reserve more than what is usually required. Every job has its own health hazards. But why do these plants are setup 300km away from human settlements? hy are we forced to take leave once in 30 days?

Another youth explained how the people who work at companies abroad helped them understand the issue:

....many of our brothers work as managers and technicians in oil extraction companies. So we know what is at stake. We did not get into this protest out of ignorance. Neither some anti-social elements instigated us into doing this as claimed by some ruling party politicians

Nammazhvar, besides laying the foundation for the campaign against coal bed methane project which served as the predecessor for the hydrocarbon project, gave an inspiration, if not an ideological framework, for the protest. However, there were disjunctures between the ideas put forth by Nammazhvar and the claims made by people during the protest.

Another important role was played by the imagination of the youth who migrated from the village to various cities. The people who are working in oil extraction companies attempted to justify their opposition based on rational claims based on perceived threats that they were aware of. Another youth who was working in Chennai mentioned that

though he works at a corporate company, his ultimate aim was to come back to the village and pursue farming. Thus, the nostalgia of the present and nostalgia of something that exists but being missed served as mobilizing tools for the protest.

3.2. The Frames

As mentioned by Jasper (2014), people just do not articulate their arguments but frame their claims through various modes. During this protest, two particular frames are noteworthy. One is that of identification with fellow Tamil people and the trope of how Tamil Nadu and its people are being exploited by the central government. Another is that of the category of farmer (*vivasayi*) and significance of farming as an occupation to the society. While these may seem as familiar frames at the outset, there were specific modes in which these frames were formulated and consolidated during the protest.

3.2.1. The Invocation of Tamilness

While one can see that the songs, speeches and essays were specifically addressed to Tamil people considering the fact that language serves as a fundamental element of communication and public discourse, one can also see reference to the idea of Tamil soil which belongs to the Tamil farmer and how the central government is trying to take away the resources that actually belong to them.

For example, a singer couple composed Neduvasal song which was often sung during the protest gatherings and circulated widely in the media.

“paatan pootenellam aanda nilam; namma pasi theertha vilai nilam;

Adha otta pottu urinji edukka vida maatom thamizhinam”

Which translates to:

“This soil has been tilled by our forefathers since ages; this agricultural soil solved our hunger; the Tamil people would not let it get drilled and sucked”

In my interview with the manager of the coir industry there, I found similar framing of the issue. He went on:

“There was Kudankulam, There was this Hydrocarbon; Now they speak about Neutrino project....what do they think of Tamil Nadu? Is it a garbage bin?”

Cederlöf and Sivaramakrishnan (2005) in their introduction to their book ecological nationalisms defines it “as a condition where both cosmopolitan and nativist versions of nature devotion converge and express themselves as a form of nation-pride in order to become part of process legitimizing and consolidating nation”.(Ibid., p. 6)

They also categorize ecological nationalism into two categories namely, “the metropolitan and secular view of nature and its economic and material uses for a nation. The other is an indigenist, or regionalist expressions of ecological nationalism which they say are mostly a reaction to the predatory state or to global encroachment on the life and livelihoods of communities being marginalized by such expansion” (Ibid., p. 7)

However, though the protest saw the participation of Tamil activist groups, the entire protest cannot be reduced to a mere expression of Tamil nationalism or resurgence of Tamil separatism. One can say that the Tamil identity served as one of the frames through which the people were able to articulate their claims besides serving as a tool for mobilization.

The above-mentioned statement by the manager also illustrates how the past and the present protests against projects such as Kudankulam, Neutrino, etcetera helped the people to consolidate the frame to give a stronger association to their claims. This also explains why any of these protests cannot be seen in isolation and the narratives put forth by the people has been built over the course of the years through “the reflexive circulation of public discourse” (Warner, 2002).

3.2.2. The Idiom of '*Vivasayi*'

Another frame that was employed was that of farmers as a legitimate owner of the land and the loss of land cannot be compensated merely through money. More interesting is the way in which the idiom of *vivasayi* (farmer) is being constructed. As mentioned in the I chapter, any village has various sections of people who engage in agricultural activities namely, the owner of the land, there are owner-cultivators and people who are mere agricultural laborers. Moreover, though these categories exist at the analytical level, they are actually more fluid when it comes to the concrete ground level. For example, when I visited the coir factory, I was received by a cook who was preparing tea. At one point of time in my interview, I asked whether she has any land with her. She replied, “ I have 4 cents of land and I employ labourers to till the land.” In another interaction with an agricultural laborer, I got to know that he himself had few cents of land and employ laborers to till the land. This is further illustrated in works done by scholars like Andre Beteille (1974) and Kathleen Gough (1955) on Thanjavur villages.

There are also caste divisions among what people generally refer to as ‘farmers’. Though caste-based data are difficult to obtain in this regard, majority of the landowners belong to the Thevar community. Though there is a phrase *vivasaya thozhilaligal* to refer to agricultural laborers in Tamil, it is less used in the rhetorical claims made in films and media compared to the umbrella term *vivasayi*.

When analyzing the discourses that emerged during the protest, it is not possible just to look at news media as your source of information. For discourse does not mean just facts or information that are being circulated but how ideas are expressed through claims through various medium.

In Tamil Nadu, films play a crucial role in the socio-cultural life of the people. This is evident from the number of films and the number of theatres present in Tamil Nadu.

The need for taking films into our consideration becomes more important if one of the films was produced by someone from the Neduvasal village itself.

Set in a fictional village in Thanjavur Delta, the film *Kaththukutti*(2015) tells the story of a son of a local Panchayat leader who though concerned about his village and the people, remains to be an irresponsible person. When he gets to stand in the assembly elections, he also manages to mobilize the villagers against the methane extraction project.

The film gives a preachy message about how the methane extraction projects would lead to earthquakes and spoiling of lands. It even has pictorial representations of how important monuments of the region are at risk of being destroyed because of the drilling caused by the extraction projects.

In a particular scene in the film, one of the elders in the tea shop after reading about the proposed methane extraction project attempts to explain the ill effects of the project.

If everyone sells their land by saying there is no rain, no water and no one to take care of farms, then who would do agriculture? Do you people think methane extraction is something like honey extraction? The fields cover our land like a green blanket,. They would drill our fields with bulldozers and borewells. Methane is a much bigger fuel than other petroleum products. That damn thing is abundant only in our four districts. In order to take that thing out, they drill a borewell for 6000 feet. They take out all the groundwater from below... Then they pump in lots of chemical inside it. When they take out and pour the chemicals outside, all our lands would become desert. In the boring process, all our historic monuments would get crumbled to pieces. Even I got loans from banks to sow. That day the bank manager bashed me for not repaying the loans. But does that mean I should sell my land? What people are going to eat instead of rice?

In the next scene, set in the same tea shop, a young person wearing formal shirt and trousers, belittles farmer suicides and says “Don’t these farmers have anything else to do? Why couldn’t they sustain themselves on the 20kg free rice provided to them? “ In

response to that the protagonist of the film goes on to explain the importance of farmers and agriculture:

Hunger deaths do not mean farmers died because of hunger. They died out of worry that they were not able to feed others. You do not need to show pity on us. But at least do not pass on wicked comments on the suicides. Even I am an educated person like you. I have a gold medal in M.Sc. But I am firm that I would not do anything other than agriculture. You are arrogant because you know that you would get rice if you pay money. The farmer who committed suicide yesterday had 15 acres of land. He could have sustained himself by selling his land. But he died because he was not able to feed others.

The film *Kaththi*(2014) starring popular actor Vijay which became one of the highest grossing Tamil movies of all time, also deals with a similar theme of farmers fighting against the corporate companies who forcibly take away their lands. The protagonist of the film, himself a hydrologist, initially tries convincing the farmers not to sell their lands citing possible groundwater resource that, if discovered, would help the village getting back to agriculture. However, his endeavor fails as the company manages to snatch away the land by violent illegitimate means. The story then moves on to the narrative of farmers led by the protagonists trying to fight against the state-corporate-media nexus. The film portrays the village to be an undivided social unit and address the group of villagers who are suffering as vivasyigal (farmers).

Even a migrated youth from Neduvasal village stressed that he was from a *vivasaya kudumbam* (agricultural family) and though now he works at a corporate company in Chennai, his dream was to come back to the village to engage in agriculture which is their forefather's profession.

Thus the frame of Tamil people versus the central government and that of farmers versus corporate combine to form the constructed identity of a Tamil farmer claiming the right over her land which then becomes a mobilizing tool for the protest.

Another motif that is present throughout the protest is to stress that the farmers provide food which is the most fundamental thing for livelihood and it is not possible to drink oil for a living. Thus agriculture cannot be compensated for the sake of anything else.

This regarding of agriculture as the highest form of vocation and those who engage in it are the most important people is not new to the current discourse and has been present since early literature.

Thirukkural, considered to be one of the earliest Tamil texts has one separate heading named *uzhavu* (farming).

One of the couplets goes like:

*“uzhudhundu vaazhvare vaazhvar matror
thozhudhundu pin selbavar”*

which means - ‘only those who live by cultivating land can be considered to be living, others are should follow and worship them’.

At the entrance of Thanga Kannan’s house, one can see the words ‘*aerp pinnadhu ulagam*’ from another couplet which goes like:

*“suzhandrumaerp pinnadhu ulagam adhanal
uzhandhum uzhave thalai”*

(Thiruvalluvar, 2010, pp. 215-216)

which means: ‘since the roaming world treads on the heels of the plough, however toiling it may be, agriculture is the highest of all vocations’.

Though there were protests in the name of environment and livelihood even before in Tamil Nadu, the Jallikattu protest and later the Neduvasal protest was able to reach out to wider set of people in large scale because they were able to formulate these two frames to the fullest extent possible and to consolidate them into a single frame of ‘Tamil farmer’.

3.2.3. The Delta Affiliation

As mentioned in the introduction, when I asked about the agricultural profile of the region, the first thing that Thanga Kannan mentioned was that this region is quite fertile unlike other parts of Pudukkottai district and was part of Thanjavur district until it was merged to Pudukkottai district in 1974.

In a similar vein, in an interview to a news channel, one of the youths mentioned that the village should be considered as part of the Cauvery delta region which is considered as one of the agricultural hotspots of Tamil Nadu.

Similar claims were made during my interview with the Panchayat President of Neduvasal who even claimed that there is a river that passes with three-kilometer ambit.

The region was indeed part of Thanjavur district and was categorized as Lower delta region in the literature pertaining to the agro-geographical profile of the region.

However, what was the need for the people to stress the past administrative category of the region and to stress their affiliation to the delta?

The need arises from the events that unfolded after the coal bed methane project in Tamil Nadu. The Thanjavur farmers claimed that the region is one of the agricultural hotspots of Tamil Nadu catering not only to the livelihood of the people but to the food need of the entire state and the region cannot be made susceptible to any sort of threat that emerges from projects like coal bed methane.

Acceding to their demand, the Tamil Nadu government categorically banned projects involving underground extraction in the delta region²¹.

This made the farmers of Vadakadu-Neduvassal region reclaim their past affiliation with the Delta region and to assert that their villages are as fertile as the villages of Thanjavur district.

Thus, besides making people stake claim over territory and invoking their past contestation with the territory, development projects also make people reclaim their past affiliation with a region whose boundaries are demarcated and controlled by the state. This also goes on to prove that the meanings that people attach to places are not fixed and are contingent upon many factors including the politico-ecological processes.

3.3. Claims of Science and Claims of Rights

In this section let us have a look at three things namely:

- i) The claims that are presented as facts both for and against the project and to use Latour's idea of socio-logics to understand how scientific claim making works when it comes contentious issues with regard to environment and development.
- ii) The positions that were taken by various government and administrative officials and various politicians to problematize the popular dichotomy of state on one side and activists, civil society and the people who are protesting on the other side and the frame of former trying to impose development and the latter standing by the side of environment. Special attention is given to the federal structure of the Indian polity.

²¹ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/state-bans-methane-exploration-in-delta-districts/article7751611.ece>

iii) The specificity of the claims of right over the landscape put forth by the people in Neduvasal that involves not just a display of affiliation to the land but the invocation of the labour involved in transforming the landscape.

3.3.1. Claims of Science

While the tropes of development and betterment of the nation can be seen in rationale put forth by the state²² and even the companies who have stake in any project, the specific modes and frames in which the state and other actors try to mobilise the consensus in our case needs to be studied.

For example, many scholars have analysed how the Iraq war was not just about oil but also about Arab nationalism, evangelical Christian fervor and ultimately about freedom, in whose name the war is waged. (Baviskar, 2008, p.3)

Going by the media report and the interviews that I conducted, the officials tried to convince the people by saying that they are going to extract kerosene. Kerosene is a product that is still widely used in households in Neduvasal for cooking, lamps etcetera.

Thus kerosene, though a hydrocarbon, is used every day within the households, unlike petrol or methane. Besides sounding less alarming than methane or petrol, as the Panchayat president said, the people thought that they would get immediate material gain from that.

However, after the campaign against the project started and people realized that they were not going to get any direct benefits from the project, the state had to justify the project in terms of larger national goals.

Like Lyle Mehta (2008) says in her study of drought in Kutch and how the word scarcity is culturally constructed, the idea of dependency or development has to be essentialized, universalized and presented in such a way that everyone has equal stake on it.

In the case of oil or any hydrocarbon extraction, other than development and economic profit, the dependency of India on other countries for oil to meet the energy and fuel

²²In this case, the state refers to the Union government.

requirements of the country becomes an additional frame through which the argument is built.

The dependency on other countries to meet the energy needs and the imbalance it instills to the deficit chart has been a major concern for the Indian economy historically. The problem is further exacerbated by the nation's dependency on oil and other hydrocarbons for its economic growth.

Successive governments have tried to address the issue. A separate Director General of Hydrocarbons was set up and the Discovery of Small Fields became one of its primary missions.

It is in this context that exploratory wells were drilled in Neduvasal area in 2006.

The press release statement of the award of contract after the first bid mentions the following point:

“The Government of India brought out a new policy for small fields known as Discovered Small Field (DSF) policy, 2015. This policy offers improved fiscal terms viz. no oil cess applicable on crude oil production, moderate royalty rates same as in NELP regime, no upfront signature bonus, pricing and marketing freedom for oil and gas and no carried interest by NOCs. This round has substantially removed regulatory burden on the operators and comes after 6 years (of NELP IX round)....As exploration and production sectors is one of the critical sector for India's Make in India initiative and energy security goals, Hon'ble Prime Minister has set out a target of reduction in energy import dependency by 10% by the year 2022. Aligned to this vision, the DSF bid round was launched to early-monetize the already discovered hydrocarbon fields²³.”

²³ http://182.19.5.116/dsf/Content/pdf/DSF_Press_Release_150217.pdf

Thus, besides meeting the energy needs of the country, the ease of doing business seems to be a major concern for the government.

Environmental conflicts are often portrayed in social science literature and public discourse as confrontations between the state with its developmental logic and scientific claims and the people who counter it in the name of rights, livelihood and nature. However, one can see claims made on scientific lines by both the sides of the conflict.

The license for the operation was issued under the new Hydrocarbon Extraction and Licensing Policy which gives single window license to extract and produce all forms of hydrocarbon under its purview. Unlike coal bed methane where there was some sort of clarity around the product to be extracted, the method of extraction and the perceived environmental effects, there was no clear process as to the method of extraction that would be employed in sites in and around Neduvasal. Moreover, the protest started at a very early stage and there was not a proper public hearing that was carried out.

Since the protestors framed the issue in lines with the arguments that emerged during the protest against coal bed methane project, a look into the claims that were made then by various actors would help us understand the discourse that surrounds both the protests.

A public hearing was held at Thiruvarur presided over by the collector of Thanjavur. GEECL was represented by Kadam enterprises which takes care of its preparation of environmental impact assessment report. V.Sethuraman of Tamil Nadu Science Forum and representatives from various farmers associations including T. Rengarajan, a geologist himself participated in the hearing.

Kadam initially presented the estimated levels of various indices of pollution such as Ambient Air Quality Monitoring, Soil Sample Analysis, Surface and Groundwater quality, noise level and emission of various pollutants. The fracking process that is meant for extraction involves pumping out of lower level groundwater which may include toxins. So they laid out the modes in which they plan to dispose and handle the pumped out water and other wastes that would be generated.

Mr. Sethuraman challenged the emission estimates of sulphur dioxide and the estimate of the amount of water that would be pumped out. Mr. Rengarajan questioned the very presence of lignite in the region which is essential for CBM extraction.

Among other general claims, depletion of groundwater, deterioration in the fertility of agricultural lands and dependency of huge population in agriculture were the prominent ones²⁴.

On the other hand, when it comes to the Neduvasal protest, the discourse is not marked by ambiguity but ambiguity became the crucial rallying point for the protesters. The uncertainty around the products that are to be extracted and the modes of extraction led to various speculations and fears among the people.

However, the central government and the Ministry of Petroleum kept assuring that the environmental hazard and the threat imposed by the project on the livelihood of the people is minimal.

Thus Science, claims and facts, especially the ones that carry the baggage of normative questions cannot be theorized simply based on rationality versus irrationality, science versus non-science or facts or factual statements versus value judgments.

Here I wish to follow Latour (1987) to ‘free’ myself from the dichotomy of rationality and irrationality to look at the claims put forth by various actors as chains of associations that the people make linking various heterogeneous elements and making stronger and resistant allies based on what they value the most.

“If we are no longer interested in adding to the many little clashes between beliefs, in establishing any grandiose dichotomy – child versus adult, primitive versus civilized, prescientific versus scientific... - then what is left to us in order to account for the many little differences between chains of associations? Only this: the number of points linked, the strength and length of the linkage, the nature of the obstacles. Each of these chains is logical, that

²⁴ http://www.tnpcb.gov.in/pdf/Great_eastern%20Energy_Thiruvavur.pdf

is, it goes from one point to the other, but some chains do not associate as many elements or so not lead to the same displacements. In effect, we have moved from questions about logic (is it a straight or a distorted path?) to sociologics (is it a weaker or a stronger association?)”

(Latour 1987, pp. 201-202).

3.3.2. State Apparatus at the Local Level

Now we move on to our analysis of how local politicians from various parties responded to the protest. None of them spoke in favour of the project nor did they try to convince the people by putting forth arguments in favor of the project.

Let us start with what the local BJP leader had to say about the protest when he was asked by the media²⁵:

First of all, I wish to greet the people who have gathered here. We got the announcement regarding the contract allocation on February 15th this year. However, the pilot studies for the project was started in 2006. The MLAs of the region had been from AIADMK for the past two decades. When the project was sanctioned, the Minister of Environment was A. Raja who belongs to DMK. So you cannot blame Bharatiya Janata Party for this project.... All the local cadres of BJP had a meeting and decided that we would participate in the protest. We also talked to local and central level BJP leaders and addressed the issue. Even the BJP government at the centre is firm that it would not let any project that would cause harm to the people would be allowed.

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bnVecv6dAml&pbjreload=10>

The Member of Legislative Assembly from the area who is from DMK who was also part of the struggle-group said:

At the initial stages, we also thought that the project was for kerosene extraction. We were not aware of the ill effects of the project. But as soon as we have gotten to know about the protest, we joined in. I was part of the delegation that went and submitted the petition to the collector. Our leader Stalin has written to the Petroleum Minister asking him to abandon the project immediately.... Methane project and GAIL project was stopped by the Tamil Nadu government²⁶, but the BJP government has topped all the useful projects that would have helped Tamil Nadu in many ways.

The Member of Legislative Assembly from Viralmalai constituency who also then served the Minister of Health in the then ADMK government said:

I have interacted with the people. Coal bed methane project, GAIL and other potentially harmful projects were stopped by AIADMK government only. Our Amma aatchi will not let this project also to continue.

The struggle-group of Vadakadu submitted a petition to the district collector registering their opposition to the project. In this regard, the collector assured the following measures in a written statement to the people:

²⁶ Though it was AIADMK government under Jayalalitha that had played a crucial role in stopping those projects

“i) We shall recommend the concerned agency to cancel the contract made by ONGC and return the land to the farmers after taking proper measures.

ii) Since coal bed methane extraction is banned in the Cauvery Delta region, the district administration would not give permission to methane extraction in Vadakadu region as well.

iii) As per the statement by Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, the district administration would not give permission for Hydrocarbon extraction in Vadakadu and the nearby village of Pullanviduthi, taking into account the damage it may cause to the environment and livelihood of the people.”

(retrieved from Ayyanathan, 2017, pp. 284-285)

One may question the sincerity of these statements and consider them as tactical moves to stifle the protest for a time being. Nevertheless, one can see how the local leaders, including the state government, could not afford to speak against the project.

As evident from the statements made by the politicians, the project’s progress has been seen through successive governments involving various parties including DMK. However, one can see the sitting MLA of the constituency who belong to DMK being part of the core struggle group.

Thus, the rendering of state as a unified entity in academic literature on protest movements, against whom the people resist for their rights seems problematic in various terms:

i) Considering the federal setup of administration and democracy in India, the responses of state government and local administration are varied and contingent upon the level of pressure exerted by the people.

ii) Since local level politicians, even those who are currently part of the administration, can be seen part of the people who are spearheading the protest, the distinction of people, civil society and state become further problematic.

3.3.3. Claims over Landscape

As mentioned in the introduction and elsewhere in the thesis, the region to which villages protesting against the project is considered as a relatively dry region which saw an increase in agricultural productivity only after the introduction of borewells in recent times.

In this regard let us have a look at the specific mode in which the farmers assert their claim over the land. Though lands are owned privately in the village, the land is rendered as a unified entity in the claims made by protestors, thus asserting that villagers claim over their land as a whole. There is an added dimension to this claim.

The people who articulated their right over land claimed that this area used to be a dry land and it took immense amount of labour to transform the land into a fertile one. In an interview to Puthiya Thalaimurai channel²⁷, a person from the village claimed,

... the lives of people of three generations were spent on digging wells. At least five persons used to die every year in the region while digging wells. Even after the introduction of tube wells, people went 50-100 feet underground to install motors and repair those. Only after the introduction of submarine motors, the number of deaths started to reduce.. we are not rich farmers.. it is a practice for farmers to form a group of four or five and share collectively the cost of digging wells and paying electricity bills.... Now almost all forms of crops grow in this region..paddy, sugarcane, coconut and even pepper that is considered to be suited for hilly areas. The coconuts and fruits, especially, jackfruit and banana are exported to all the places in India... If someone crosses the region, they feel like they are in Mettupalayam²⁸ rather than Pudukkottai.. Despite the lack of perennial water

²⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bnVecv6dAml>

²⁸ A town situated in the western part of Tamil Nadu that is known for its fertility and pleasant weather.

source and shrinking levels of groundwater, the people of the region, out of their sacrifices, have made and maintained the region fertile.

The above-mentioned claim can neither be reduced to simply a voice for protecting nature or environment nor mere resistance against threat to livelihood. It also cannot be reduced merely to the notion prevalent among early anthropologists that peasants are ‘attached to their soil’. (Redfield, 1956)

It should also be seen as a claim for justice to the labor that they put in on the land – in transforming the landscape into a fertile one - and the lives lost. This reminds us about Baviskar’s (2008) explanation of the term natural resources, “While nature denotes something that is outside the realm of humans, resources invoke utility, culturally produced use and exchange values, something to be efficiently managed. She says these antinomies are linked by notions of property and possession, stewardship and responsibility, the right to use and appropriate”. (Ibid, p.8)

In this case, the environment, in the sense of things that form the surroundings of the people, is itself created by human intervention and there is little that can be regarded as nature or natural. If you conceptualize culture in such a way to encompass social action or practices, the environment that surrounds the people of the village can be considered as part of their culture rather than their nature.

Fairhead and Leach (2008) in their archival study of Kissidougou and Ziami vegetations challenge the narrative that is built by social scientists and international agencies that romanticizes the pre-colonial traditional society of the region which resulted in “‘original climax vegetation’ that is the ultimate stage of plant succession which can exist under given ecological condition” (p.114). According to the narrative,. this was disrupted by the colonial and postcolonial governments and the concomitant increase in population and migration of people and the breaking of traditional institutional order. This has led to the ‘degradation’ of the environment and decrease in forest cover. Contrary to the degradation narrative, the authors look into the history of the region’s vegetation and suggest that the vegetation pattern has remained relatively stable over the years and there

are areas where the forest cover has increased. They highlight the recent works by climate historians who see vegetation history as a history of continual transition rather than divergence from single, once extant climax. Challenging the adaptation theories that have been dominant in anthropology which formulated a causational continuum between a static social structure and a stable harmonious environment, they highlight the significance of the emergent structuration theories that give importance to social action and its capacity to shape and determine rules. Giving that the Kissidougou people themselves have created forests when they had socioeconomic or political reasons to do so, both the social form and the vegetation of any region can be seen to be in continual flux and the vegetation values of the people as shifting at the conjunctures of social, economic and political changes. (pp. 114-115)

Now, if you look at the practices of the people like Nammazhvar or Maram Thangasamy who served as an inspiration and catalyst for the protest, one can see an interventionist approach to environment and agriculture. Nammazhvar, considered as an agricultural scientist, did not merely advocate organic farming but prescribed innovations in agricultural techniques to suit the economic needs of the farmer. He viewed the introduction of fertilizers and genetically modified crops as short term solutions that are detrimental to the viability of the land, diversity of the species and the financial independence of the farmers. In many of his speeches²⁹, he explains how spoiled impotent lands can be resurrected and made viable for agriculture through proper intervention. He viewed nature as a systematic harmonious whole that in itself is adaptive to new innovations and any intervention brought in should not be extraneous to it.

Maram Thangasamy, for instance, successfully managed to grow trees like redwood and sandalwood in his forest which were believed to be not ideal for the agro-geographical profile of the region. He grows these trees not just for the sake protecting the environment but for commercial purposes as well. This is not to discredit his tree planting efforts all over the region and his campaign for saving trees.

²⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKAhnuqptI>

Both the above said individuals viewed human beings as just one among many species and believed that there was a bonding between humans and other species that should not be disturbed. Though they were aware of the age-old hazards caused by humans and agriculture on environment in general even before the recent technological innovations, they believed that a compromise can be reached between outright assault and careful interventions.

Thus, the nature-culture distinction, so central to anthropology needs to be problematized. People's views on nature and environment and their practical relation to environment are dynamic and contingent upon their own geopolitical history, their respective social positions³⁰ and also upon the contesting discourses that are being circulated. In a similar vein, though all environmental movements can be seen as a fight for the protection of environment and livelihood, each of these movements and protests has their own specific context and history that shape their formulation of rights and claims.

³⁰ Sharma (2017) gives a glimpse of how Indian environmental history is dominated by Brahminical eco-casteist formulations which tend to romanticize the precolonial past of Indian villages as environmentally sustainable units and excludes the Dalit relation to the environment, particularly with water, which is marked by 'alienation and painful memories of punishment'.

CONCLUSION

The protest that happened at Neduvasal is usually seen by political observers as part of the series of protests that have been happening since the past decade citing environmental hazards and threat to livelihood. Non-affiliation to any of the major political parties and mediation by some of the known political and environmental activists and activist groups are characteristic features of all these protests.

However, the Jallikattu protest marked an event in Tamil Nadu's political history in various aspects. Firstly, the protest was not confined to any particular locality and happened in almost every nook and corner of Tamil Nadu. Secondly, people from various sections flocked from various cities to attend the protest gathering at Marina beach which was seen as the face of the protest. Though the protest against Hydrocarbon was restricted to the villages surrounding the locations where exploratory wells had been bored, people from all over Tamil Nadu visited the villages and participated in the protest.

This research attempted to look at the claims that were put forth during the protest and the discourses that emerged as a way of analyzing how those are contingent upon the geopolitics of the region, the transnational movement of people and ideas and the discourses on environment and politics that have been in circulation already.

Thus this research, at one hand draws upon both the theories on cultural aspects of protest movements while on the other hand revisits the existing mode in which ecology and culture have been dealt with in anthropology.

The ideational formulation of culture as a system of ideas and values that guides people's actions renders it a static and generalizing aspect to it. Thus, the earlier theories on anthropology that encountered environment studied how people get adapted to their environment through culture or how environment and geography condition people's culture.

This thesis uses the term ‘cultural’ in its adjectival form as rendered by Appadurai (2005) who regards it as a mobilizing tool for demarcating group identity rather than in its noun form which substantializes it to refer to a particular unit. On the other hand, considering the scale of flow of people, information and ideas, culture is conceptualized to be a dynamic entity that is contingent upon the constitution and flow of discourse besides geopolitical processes.

In this regard, the people who had migrated to cities within and outside India played a crucial role in framing the claims that were made during the protest. Particularly, those who work in oil extraction companies in Arab countries explained the potential health hazards that they were made aware of while working in those companies and the precautionary measures that are taken while working there. These narratives not only instilled fear among the villagers but also made the associations made in their claims stronger.

While at the outset it seems like people are fighting in the name of livelihood and environment against the language of science and development by the state and corporate companies, one can see that the claims are made along scientific lines by both the parties. Going through the arguments that were put by the company side on one hand and scientists and activists who opposed the project on the other forth during the public hearing that was held for Coal bed methane project, it becomes clear that scientific facts are not objective, not beyond human and social interventions and can be assessed through sociologies rather than rational scientific logic.

On the other hand, while there is a tendency to regard state as a unified power against which the people and activists fight, one could see local politicians from all the parties supporting the protest – some of them even becoming core members who led the protest from the front. One could also see administrators at the local level actively paying heed to the demands of the protestors within their own capacities. The federal structure of the Indian democracy also pits the state government and local politicians against the policies of the central government.

Protest movements cannot be simply understood in terms of the claims that were made. The framing of the issue that uses collective identities that help the people group themselves as victims against the opposition to build a coherent narrative of the issue.

Thus besides the issues that were raised with regard to threat to environment and threat to livelihood, one could see the invocation of the frame of Tamil farmer with multiple subframes and meanings attached to it.

Firstly, there is the invocation of Tamilness as a mobilizing tool which helped people from various sections of Tamil Nadu to participate in the protest. However, this frame was never constructed in isolation. It was always associated with other frames like Tamil soil and Tamil farmer that reifies the identity by associating it with the people and the territory. Also, this frame, besides expressing solidarity with the linguistic group, was also used to define the opposition, in this case, the Central government, clearly. The climate of protests that was prevalent then, particularly the scale and success of Jallikattu protest played a huge role in the formulation of this frame.

Secondly, the term *vivasayi* (farmer) was used as an umbrella term to refer to everyone residing in villages. The frame of the farmer was employed in two ways. At one hand, there is an articulation of agriculture as the noblest of all occupation which provides the sustenance for the whole society. This valorization of farming is not peculiar to contemporary discourse and in the imaginations of the youth who migrated out of the village but has been present in Tamil literary tradition right from the age-old texts like *Thirukkural*. On the other hand, since agriculture involves toiling and labour put into the land, people associate with the land not just as a place of dwelling but as part of human activity, an entity upon which they act upon every day.

There is another specific dimension to the frame that arises out of the geopolitics of the region. The region in which the protests happened was part of Thanjavur district and was considered to be a dry region compared to the western part of the northwestern part of Thanjavur district. Thus, the people claim that it involved immense human effort in the form of digging and maintaining the wells in transforming the place into a fertile one in the absence of perennial water supply. While acknowledging Subramanian's (2009,

p.252) claim that space itself is an essential ingredient in struggles for rights, the space here is a landscape produced out of human labour and social practice.

In a similar vein, Nammazhvar, an organic farmer who was one of the early campaigners against the coal bed methane project and who served as inspiration for many of the protests that have happened in the name of environment, despite being vehemently against the use of fertilizers and genetically modified seeds, vouched for intervention and innovation in farming in such a way that the equilibrium and the viability of the environment do not get affected.

Thus, what would be regarded as nature or environment can be subject to processual changes and can itself be a product of human social actions. This not only blurs the nature-culture dichotomy that is present in anthropological literature but also problematizes the rendering of the protest movements as mere claims to protect the environment or to defy the threat to livelihood.

Thus, the various claims that were made by the people, and the views they have about environment and what is regarded by them as environment are themselves contingent upon various political-ecological processes and circulation of people and discourse at multiple levels in varied modes.

References

- Appadurai, A. (2005). *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press.
- Ayyanathan, K. (2017). *Hydrocarbon Abayam: Iyarkaikum Manidhakulathukkum Edhiraana Perazhivu Thittam*. Chennai, TN: Kizhakku Pathippagam.
- Barth, F. (2002). Toward a Richer Description and Analysis of Cultural Phenomena. In R. G. Fox & B. J. King (Authors), *Anthropology beyond Culture*(pp. 23-36). Oxford: Berg.
- Baviskar, A. (1995). *In the belly of the river: Tribal conflicts over development in the Narmada Valley*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Baviskar, A. (2008). *Contested grounds: Essays on nature, culture and power*. New Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Béteille, A. (1974). *Studies in agrarian social structure*. Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Cederlöf, G., & Sivaramakrishnan, K. (Eds.). (2005). *Ecological nationalisms: Nature, livelihoods, and Identities in South Asia*. Orient Blackswan.
- Cody, F. (2011). Publics and Politics. *Annual Review of Anthropology*,40(1), 37-52. doi:10.1146/annurev-anthro-081309-145626
- della Porta, D., & Diani, M. (2006). *Social movements: An introduction*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Descola, P., Lloyd, J., & Sahlins, M. D. (2013). *Beyond nature and culture*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Ellen, R. (1993). Rhetoric, Practice and Incentive in the Face of the Changing Times A Case Study in Nuaulu Attitudes to Conservation and Deforestation. In *Environmentalism: The View from Anthropology*(pp. 125-141). London: Routledge.
- Fairhead, J. & Leach, M.. (2008). False Forest History, Complicit Social Analysis: Rethinking Some West African Environmental Narratives. In M. R. Dove & C. Carpenter

- (Eds.). *Environmental Anthropology: A Historical Reader*(pp. 157-167). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Geertz, C. The Wet and the Dry: Traditional Irrigation in Bali and Morocco. In M. R. Dove & C. Carpenter (Eds.). *Environmental Anthropology: A Historical Reader*. (pp. 190-201). Malden, MA: Blackwell
- Gough, K. (1955). The social structure of a Tanjore village. *Village India*, 40, 1955.
- Hannerz, U. (1992). *Cultural complexity: Studies in the social organization of meaning*. Columbia University Press.
- Heritage, J. (2006). Discourse Analysis. In B. S. Turner (Ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*(pp. 145-146). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jasper, J. M. (2014). *Protest: A cultural introduction to social movements*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Jayaraman, N. (2017, March 1). All You Need to Know About the Neduvasal Protests Against Hydrocarbon Extraction. Retrieved June 4, 2019, from <https://thewire.in/environment/neduvasal-protest-oil-gas>
- Koopmans, R., & Statham, P. (1999). Political claims analysis: Integrating protest event and political discourse approaches. *Mobilization: an international quarterly*, 4(2), 203-221.
- Kumar, N. R., & Ramakrishnan, T. (2016, June 24). Suspend coal-bed methane project: Jayalalithaa. Retrieved June 4, 2019, from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/suspend-coalbed-methane-project-jayalalithaa/article4923411.ece>
- Latour, B. (1987). *Science in action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society*. Harvard University Press.
- Mauss, M. (2008). Seasonal Variations of the Eskimo: A Study in Social Morphology. In M. R. Dove & C. Carpenter (Eds.). *Environmental Anthropology: A Historical Reader*(pp. 157-167). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

- Mehta, L. (2008). Contexts and Constructions of Scarcity. In A. Baviskar (Author), *Contested Grounds: Essays on Nature, Culture and Power*(pp. 38-58). New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Milton, K. (2005). *Environmentalism: The View from Anthropology*. London: Routledge.
- Moore, D. S. (1998). Subaltern Struggles and the Politics of Place: Remapping Resistance in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands. *Cultural Anthropology*,13(3), 344-381.
- Nammazhvar, K. (2017). *Uzhavukkum Undu Varalaru*.Chennai, TN: Vikatan Publications.
- NewIndianXpress. (2018, May 11). Sigh of relief in Neduvasal, but stir to continue. Retrieved June 4, 2019, from <http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2018/may/11/sigh-of-relief-in-neduvasal-but-stir-to-continue-1813238.html>
- NewIndianXpress. (n.d.). Pudukai villagers stage protest opposing Hydrocarbon project. Retrieved from <http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2017/feb/17/pudukai-villagers-stage-protest-opposing-hydrocarbon-project-1571475.html>
- Poonkuzhali. (2018, June 19). Thoothukudi Isn't Alone – Tamil Nadu Has Been Rising in Protest for Decades. Retrieved June 4, 2019, from <https://thewire.in/environment/thoothukudi-isnt-alone-tamil-nadu-has-been-rising-in-protest-for-decades>
- Radhakrishnan, R. (2018, June 22). Environmetnal Conflicts in Tamil Nadu. *Frontline*.
- Raj, M. (2015, August 05). ONGC, GAIL restrained from going ahead with methane gas project in Tamil Nadu - Times of India. Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/ONGC-GAIL-restrained-from-going-ahead-with-methane-gas-project-in-Tamil-Nadu/articleshow/48364375.cms>
- Rangan, H. (2000). *Of Myths and Movements: Forestry and Regional Development in the Garhwal Himalayas*. Penguin Random House.

- Rappaport, R. A. (2008). Ritual Regulation of Environmental Relations among a New Guinea People. In M. R. Dove & C. Carpenter (Eds.). *Environmental Anthropology: A Historical Reader*. (pp. 254-264). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Redfield, R. (1956). *Peasant Society and Culture: An Anthropological Approach to Civilization*. Chicago, IL, US: University of Chicago Press.
- Reed, I., & Alexander, J. (2006). Culture. In B. S. Adams (Author), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology* (pp. 111-117). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sangameswaran, K. (2016, June 07). HC gives nod for GAIL pipeline project. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/hc-gives-nod-for-gail-pipeline-project/article5389515.ece>
- Scott, J. C. (2008). *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance*. Yale University Press.
- Sharma, M. (2017). *Caste and nature: Dalits and Indian Environmental Policies*. Oxford University Press.
- Subramanian, A. (2009). *Shorelines: Space and Rights in South India*. Stanford University Press.
- Sutton, M. Q., & Anderson, E. N. (2014). *Introduction to cultural ecology*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, a division of Rowman & Littlefield.
- Thirumurthy, P. (2017, February 28). All that you need to know about the Neduvasal Hydrocarbon project. Retrieved June 4, 2019, from <https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/all-you-need-know-about-neduvassal-hydrocarbon-project-57844>
- Thiruvalluvar. (2010). *Thirukkural: Puthiya Urai* (P. Kesikan, Ed.). Chennai: Poompuhar Pathippagam.
- Tnn. (2013, July 18). Nammalvar moots own panel to expose methane project in delta | Madurai News - Times of India. Retrieved June 4, 2019, from

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/madurai/Nammalvar-moots-own-panel-to-expose-methane-project-in-delta/articleshow/21155263.cms>

Venkat, V. (2016, September 20). The story of Kudankulam: From 1988 to 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/The-story-of-Kudankulam-From-1988-to-2016/article14564027.ece>

Venkatesh, M. R. (2016, June 04). Another row in Cauvery delta over methane extraction project. Retrieved June 4, 2019, from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/another-row-in-cauvery-delta-over-methane-extraction-project/article6117329.ece>

Visvanathan, S. (2018, July 16). An Emerging wave of Environmental Politics. Retrieved June 11, 2019, from <https://www.ecologise.in/2018/07/16/shiv-visvanathan-an-emerging-wave-of-environmental-politics/>

Warner, M. (2002). Publics and Counterpublics. *Public culture*, 14(1), 49-90.

Filmography

Karunamoorthi & Subhaskaran (Producers), & Murugadoss, A.R (Director). (2014). *Kaththi* [Motion Picture]. India: Lyca Productions.

Ramkumar, R (Producer), & Saravanan, R. (Director). (2015). *Kaththukutti* [Motion Picture]. India: OWN Productions.

Puthiyathalaimurai TV. (2017, February 25). Nerpada Pesu: Neduvasal Hydrocarbon Project Protest: Part 2. Retrieved June 18, 2019, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jATp23Ydgso>.

Puthiyathalaimurai TV. (2017, February 25). Nerpada Pesu: Neduvasal Hydrocarbon Project Protest: Part 1. Retrieved June 18, 2019, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bnVecv6dAmI>

TeaKadaiTv. (2017, February 24). Hydrocarbon Project in Tamilnadu | How to Stop it – Nammalvar. Retrieved June 18, 2019, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwVj_rdEVaE

Understanding the Environmental Discourse In Tamil Nadu: A Critique of Cultural Ecology through the Study of Neduvasal Protest

by Sabari Girisan M

Submission date: 27-Jun-2019 03:00PM (UTC+0530)

Submission ID: 1147433097

File name: Sabari_Girisan_M__Mphil.docx (688.54K)

Word count: 18955

Character count: 98790

Understanding the Environmental Discourse In Tamil Nadu: A Critique of Cultural Ecology through the Study of Neduvasal Protest

ORIGINALITY REPORT

1 %	0 %	1 %	0 %
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	Andre Beteille. "Agrarian Relations in Tanjore District, South India", Sociological Bulletin, 2017 Publication	1 %
2	epdf.tips Internet Source	<1 %
3	Submitted to Liverpool Hope Student Paper	<1 %

Exclude quotes On Exclude matches < 14 words
Exclude bibliography On

Understanding the Environmental Discourse In Tamil Nadu: A Critique of Cultural Ecology through the Study of Neduvasal Protest

ORIGINALITY REPORT

1 %	0 %	1 %	0 %
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	Andre Beteille. "Agrarian Relations in Tanjore District, South India", Sociological Bulletin, 2017 Publication	1 %
2	Fairhead, J.. "False forest history, complicit social analysis: Rethinking some West African environmental narratives", World Development, 199506 Publication	<1 %
3	epdf.tips Internet Source	<1 %
4	Submitted to Liverpool Hope Student Paper	<1 %



INDIAN ANTHROPOLOGY CONGRESS 2019

Anthropology for Developing India

Pathways to Policy Planning and Implementation

21-23 February 2019

This is to certify that **Mr. Sabari Girisan M** participated in the Indian Anthropology Congress – 2019 and presented the following papers

1. Debunking 'Science and 'Nature': A Study of Protest Movement in Tamil Nadu

Abstracts of the papers along with other session information was published in the Abstract book that was distributed to all the participants.

Mr. M's participation in the congress is much appreciated.

Chairperson

Prof. R. K.
Mutatkar

Co-Chairperson

Prof. Anjali Kurane

Member-Secretary
(INCAA)

Prof. K. K. Basa

Organising Secretary

Prof. Shaunak Kulkarni