Constructing The Adivasi Identity:
Reading the Dominant, Reading the Adivasi

A thesis submitted to
the University of Hyderabad
for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in the School of Humanities

K.C. Bindu

May 2003

Department of English
School of Humanities
University of Hyderabad
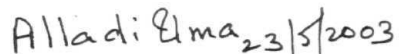Hyderabad- 500 046

Dated 23rd May 2003

This is to certify that I, K. C. Bindu have carried out the research embodied in the present thesis for the full period prescribed under Ph. D. ordinances of the University.

I declare to the best of my knowledge that no part of this thesis was earlier submitted for the award of research degree of any university.
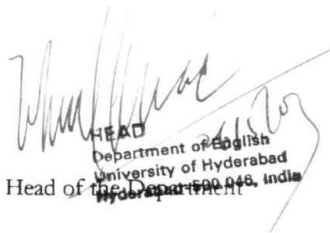
(Signature of the Candidate)

Name: K. C. Bindu
Enrollment No.: 96HEPH04

Signature of the Supervisor

Head of the Department

Dean of the School

Contents

Chapter -1

Introduction

This dissertation is written in the turbulent times when the Adivasis in Kerala, like the indigenous people in many other parts of the world are engaged in a struggle for survival. The struggle for land rights had taken a violent turn with the police firing at Muthanga, Wayanad on 19-2-2003.[1] The leaders of the Adivasis, including C.K. Janu were arrested and put in jail. The State repression of Adivasis continues with daily tortures and harassments in Adivasi colonies.

The dissertation draws its immediacy from the burning situation in Kerala. But, this is not a sudden crisis that has erupted into public consciousness. The Adivasi as figure has been there, constructed and reconstructed by the "mainstream" society. What is new is the countering of this by Adivasis themselves in a language that is accepted and legitimate with the mainstream society also.

The object of this research is this mainstream society, which I wish to name as dominant culture. Simultaneously, I am also looking at the Adivasi who is sometimes affected by the constructions of the mainstream, sometimes using it, sometimes countering it, very often negotiating with it. The word "dominant" signifies a difference in power - and that is what I also wish to evoke as far as the relation between the Adivasis and others are concerned.

To be more specific the dissertation examines the dominant group's construction of Adivasi identity. I have used Wayanad, Kerala as a specific instance to examine the problem. The Adivasi voice has served as a backdrop for this dissertation. Rather than an exercise in trying to express the "authentic" Adivasi voice, it attempts to be an exercise in listening, to various cultures which have constructed the Adivasi identity, including the Malayalee, upper caste, Hindu culture of which I am part. It is also

an attempt at reconstructing the academic culture which draws its life breath from the Western notions of the "primitive". I can claim a membership in that culture too.

Why this **Dissertation?**

This dissertation is written at a critical juncture for the Adivasis of Kerala. They were involved in a struggle **in** 2001 that they described as their last struggle for survival.[2] The situation also raises pertinent questions regarding the category "identity" in general, especially subaltern identities and Adivasi identity in particular.

The question is whether Adivasi identity, like any other subaltern identity, is to be raised as a separate articulation. In fact, it is a Catch–22 situation for any subaltern identity politics. If the issue is not raised as an "Adivasi issue" the mainstream society will not notice particular oppressions that they have faced as a group. It will conveniently be swept under the carpet of "human rights issues". Yet if it is raised as an Adivasi issue, it will be relegated to the margins of popular mainstream discourses and remain there. That means, it will never be articulated as a national issue, or even issues relating to the wider society. This situation is not peculiar to the Adivasi issue but is faced by all the identity movements. What the identity movements might be asking for is the dismantling of the structure itself. But, the mainstream society very often reacts either by massive repressions or by token inclusions.

At this point, it is important to analyze the techniques by which the dominant groups construct any subaltern identity. As a non-Adivasi woman, it became imperative for me to understand my own culture's construction of one of the most marginalized of identities.

Defining Terms

I had entered the doctoral programme with the idea of studying the "tribe" in the English Department. Yet, getting into the topic of the dissertation, I discovered that the identity "tribe" immediately created problems. One of the questions which haunted me

throughout my research was asked at the beginning of my PhD admission itself. The question was "What is a tribe?" or "How do you define a tribe?"

It was with excitement and horror that I discovered that there is no essential definition of the term that I am working with. Various dictionaries of course assured me to the contrary; that the term did have definitions. They included such definitions like "any aggregate of people united by ties of descent from a common ancestor" [3]. The origin was supposed to be from the Latin word "tribus" meaning "each of the three divisions of the Roman people representing the Latin, Sabine and Etruscian settlements."[4] All of them assured me of the present derogatory use of the word.

Yet, all that was less than a definition. It raised a whole lot of questions in my mind. Did any of the communities that I was familiar with as "tribes" fit into these definitions? On the contrary, didn't many of the communities who do not claim any status as tribes fit in perfectly under these specifications as tribes? This question of definition which doggedly followed me from the beginning of my research gave me many a sleepless night. Little did I know at the beginning stage of my research that huge structures of administrative machinery had been erected around the category without so much as a thin definition even to hang the weight!

Yet, there were clear distinctions between tribes and non-tribes as we know it. I knew intuitively, that a Parsi or a WASP couldn't be a tribe! There were some distinctions to be made. Later, the "derogatory" term in the dictionary led my way towards defining. There was a particular way in which tribes were seen—the ongin of the derogatory feeling came from their primitivity and our modernity.[5] Thus I felt, it was a wild goose chase to hunt for the perfect definition of the word. In fact, no such definition exists, since the category itself is constructed for specific purposes. It is clearly the examination of the notion of primitivity that might lead towards a contemporary understanding of how the dominant cultures look at tribes.

Various Terms to Denote the Concept

The various terms used for Adivasi also created a confusion. Later, this very confusion became the points which led me at least towards tentative conclusions. The myriad ways in which Adivasi has been seen is represented by the variety of terms available. For instance, they include terms like "savage", "primitive", "barbarian", "aborigine", "tribe", "Scheduled Tribe", "Adivasi", "indigenous people", "the fourth world", "girijan" or "vanavasi". Each term has its specific connotation and history. The self perceptions of these communities might vary from the meaning conveyed by some of these terms or many of them together. But, most of the communities see themselves is specific groups–like Paniyas, or Kurichias.

The terms savage, primitive and barbarian have been used by the nineteenth century anthropologists to describe non-European cultures that they thought represented a stage in human civili2ation. These are connected to the notions of modernity and progress that Europe had. If I have used the term "tribe" along with the above mentioned words in the first chapter, it is to connote this derogatory use of the term by the nineteenth century European academicians.

The word "Scheduled Tribe" comes from the administrative category of "tribe" which evolved through the British administrative system in India. They are the communities included as the Scheduled Tribe according to Article 342 of the Indian Constitution. When using the term "tribe" in chapter 3, I have used it strictly as an administrative category with no connotations of primitivity attached to it.[6]

The word "Adivasi", as used in the third chapter connotes the romanticized notion of the "tribe" with the noble savage myth attached to it in the post 80s context in India. Chapter 4 does have this connotation of the term.

I have retained the term in chapter 5, though I use the specific community name wherever possible. The term also has connotations of the political mobilization that the

4

Adivasis are undertaking right now all over India. I did not want to lose out on this meaning and have retained the term that the groups use to describe themselves politically. Wherever I have expressed my own views, I have retained the term "Adivasi".[7]

Rarely have I used terms like indigenous people to connote a universal political identity that is emerging among the communities termed like that. For the specific context of India and Kerala, I have not used the term. The term "aborigine" has been avoided because it is used only in relation to Australian indigenous populations. Strictly, it means, "from the sunrise" and should mark the autochthonous nature of populations, which Indian Adivasis cannot claim.

The Category of "Identity"

There are certain notions of identity that inform the dissertation. They are as follows:

1. It is relative. That means, one can define a particular identity only in relation to some other identity. That is, it exists in contrast. It is the "them" which defines the "us" and the "you" which creates the "me".

2. This "us" and "them" keeps changing according to circumstances. The non-fixed nature of identity thus comes into our perception.

3. Also, identities have various aspects which are constantly in dialogue with each other. Thus, a gender identity cannot exist in isolation from identities of tribe/race/caste, nation, age, sexual preference etc. Even when one foregrounds one aspect for analysis, it is often not theoretically wise to dismantle categories.

4. The definition of one's identity is often a statement about the existing hierarchies (power) in society. But, identity is seen not just as a reflection of power, but as a site for struggle and resistance as well. This is exactly why identities demand more theoretical attention also.

Organizing the Dissertation

The dissertation has been arranged according to the way in which the term dominant culture could be seen. Wayanad is a district in Kerala. Historically it belonged to the British Malabar province. The district is known for its fast depleting stretches of rain forests and the Adivasi population who stay in the district.

In a very local sense, historically the dominant communities would be the Hindu upper caste groups, (who own most of the land in the district), Jains, Chettis and Mappilah traders. There is also a strong Christian migrant population in Wayanad who settled there from the 1940s onwards.

No present is unconnected with its past. These local dominant groups are the dominant groups in Kerala as well.[8] These groups are also connected through historical processes. When one examines "present" identities, one is confronted with a mosaic of happenings—in the present and in the past. This does not mean that there is a clear and unbroken flow through generations, or an evolutionary idea of a particular identity. Yet, one has to examine the past to understand the present.

Thus, the history of colonization in India, where the British gave their own ideas of modernity and primitivity, administrative forms becomes important in understanding any post-colonial Adivasi identity. In some ways, the present work can be described as an elaboration of what the term dominant is. It describes three forms of dominance—the Western conception of the term "tribe", especially its disciplinary articulation forms the second chapter. The idea of primitivity that is intertwined with the idea of the tribe is examined in this chapter. The stereotype of the primitive and its political implications are examined here.

The third chapter deals with the category as a modern one. The birth of the nation, India and the way the tribe is constructed here are the subjects of this chapter. The imagination of India as a conglomeration of castes, and the sharp division that

emerged with the tribe as outside caste is examined. The tribe that appears as a shadow to this "casted" India is brought to the foreground by examining the strands that construct this India. The methodology followed is an examination of colonial census records from the first All India Imperial census in 1872 to the beginning of the last century when the identities that finally were defined as the nation were being fixed.

The fourth chapter looks at one of the main ways in which the tribe is constructed in contemporary debates, both in Kerala and outside the state. Here I focus on the anti-modernity debates which emerged in the eighties that took the tribes as a site to critique modernity. I examine the figure of Verrier Elwin as portrayed by the theorist Ramachandra Guha in the 90s. Also, I examine K.J. Baby, a non-Adivasi writer who has taken up the issue of Adivasis in Malayalam literature to deal with the manifestation of these ideas in Malayalam.

The fifth chapter deals with self-constructions of the Wayanad Adivasis themselves. For this, I have dealt with some of their negotiations with modernity. I have taken changes in religion, a pervasive feeling of being "wronged" which many Adivasis share and some political movements for a detailed analysis in this chapter.

In the sixth chapter, I make a summary of the conclusions arrived at in the previous chapters and also point to the possibilities that a research like this can take.

Methodology

My methodology does not have a convenient name. Each chapter in that sense, evolved its own methodology. Very often, I have felt ashamed to admit that I do not have a name to call them. But, post-structuralism and the debates around the limitations of positivism as well as its reflections in the Humanities which simultaneously produced a questioning of the close reading techniques we were taught to learn gave me some amount of confidence.

To admit an embarrassing confession, it was not done deliberately to shock others or myself. It happened in the course of the dissertation. I was forced to take roads which I never thought I was either capable of or I would enjoy. Just to name a few of the things I was doing—reading the history of the construction of the notion of the primitive in the West, ploughing through forest department publications of the past 75 years ending just with Independence, going through census documents (again stopping with Independence) in Calicut archives, a field work (as the anthropologists call the phenomenon) lasting for more than 4 months in Wayanad, collecting the oral narratives of both Adivasis and non-Adivasis. I feel due to the multiplicity of the methodology, each chapter requires separate elaboration that I have attempted.

There are confessions to make as well regarding the material collected. Many researchers assure me that it is a common enough complaint that people keep coming back to: "Yes, I could have done better." This is a "Yes-I-could-have-done-better" confession section.

I have not looked at the major changes that have happened to Indian Adivasis after the writing of the constitution, where the Scheduled Tribes become an Administrative category. It required the going into the constitutional assembly debates that I could not manage to do. Thus, the post fifties scenario, especially in the national construction of the tribal identity, remains a weak point of the dissertation.

I have not scanned the Malayalam weeklies and magazines seriously and systematically for material on tribes. In my hurried visits home, I used to come across a sea of material in my house itself. This made me aware of the immense material available in *Deepika, Mathrubhoomi* or *Manorama* archives. I could not "exploit" them.

There is a more serious confession than lack of discipline and work. I suspect, I have not always been able to combine in my analysis various identities that were interacting in such a complex topic. If my focus was on the Adivasi identity (or the

dominant group's identity) I kept seeing myself forgetting gender. Moreover, though I was aware that my own identity was shaping the dissertation at every point, I was not able to bring out its import at every instance. They come out as flashes.

A note on the translation of Malayalam material. I myself have translated the material from Malayalam and I have not indicated at each point specifically, especially when I have used the oral narratives collected in the field. The documentation has largely followed the MLA handbook, fifth edition. I do not have a separate "Works Cited" towards the end of each chapter, but the original works from which the quotes have been taken have been indicated in the "End Notes" itself. The complete reference is given in the "Select Bibliography". Oral narratives have been documented as "Talk with —" or "Interview with---" in the endnotes. I have appended three interviews as well as the list of political groups in Wayanad.

Why Study "Tribe" in the English Departments?

Though it was the discipline of Anthropology that took the prerogative to theorize and study the "primitive", these ideas percolated to all disciplines, including literature. English Literature has always had its own set of primitive portrayals. Students of the discipline are familiar with Good Friday and Conrad's famous journey into the *Heart of Darkness*. Literature, like any other product of cultural representation has always been a site of power play. Representation of the primitive has been especially laden with power and has been part of the canonical texts of English Literature.

But there is one major difference in the way these representations were perpetuated through these disciplines. Anthropology did this in the name of science, whereas, English Literature did mis with the pretension of delving deep into the dark recesses of human civilization and presenting these as Universal Truths. Yet, it is a fact that both "art" and "science" have taken and given to each other. They continue to do so.

The history of most of the academic disciplines we know of today can trace their roots to the Enlightenment modernity of Europe. English Studies evolves as a discipline quite late, and recent studies have traced the discipline's origins connecting it with colonization.' It is not quite surprising that the "tribal" did not figure in any noticeable way in the English Department. They could not be the artists who would have produced great works of art, or critics who have torn them apart, or analyzed their aesthetic qualities logically.

Moreover, the "tribe" has been a subject of study in the Department for quite some time. G. N. Devy in his works has consistently brought the figure of Adivasi into focus, and very often from the English Studies perspective as well. His recent anthology, tries to introduce the Adivasi writing in translation to an English speaking audience.[10]

But they did figure as representations. Moreover, the so-called literary representations and other representations shared a lot of things in common. In fact, the disciplinary boundaries seemed to blur when one reads into the politics of these representations. The "objective" representations on the ethnographic descriptions and the aesthetic descriptions of tribals in Literature seemed to draw from each other.

The narrative techniques which the Department has taught me, I found could be used in a variety of texts. Once the definition of "text" could include unconventional material, it did not just open up a Pandora's box in the English Studies discipline, but I feel, it also opened up new possibilities. Hitherto, "untouchable" subjects could be confidently dealt with in the discipline itself. I place my dissertation also in the not-so-novel tradition of studying culture in Literature Departments.

Notes:

[1] See Knshnakumar, R, 2003: 42-44. Also see Roy, 2003:45; Thekaekara, 2003: 46-48.

[2] Adivasi-Dalit Samara Samiti, 2001.

[3] *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language.* New York: Portland House, 1989, 1511.

[4] *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language.* New York: Portland House, 1989, 1511.

[5] Tharu, 1999, Hyderabad.

[6] The administrative category itself may have such connotations when one traces its history.

[7] For the politics of retaining the term "Adivasi" in contrast to the term "tribe" which has colonial connotations, see Omvedt, 2000.

[8] This is not true of Jains and Wayanadan Chettis who cannot be seen as the dominant groups in the whole state, since they are found only in Wayanad.

[9] Viswanathan, 1989.

[10] Devy, 2002.

Chapter - 2

Constructing the "Primitive": A Short History from the West

One of the most paradoxical features of early twentieth-century was the way the new was equated with the ancient, the avant-garde with the atavistic.[1]

Beyond Europe was henceforth before Europe.. .[2]

This chapter examines the history of the concept of the tribe as constructed in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century Europe. In the general scheme of the dissertation, this is the examination of one of the *dominant* groups in relation to the tribe— namely the West.

Any identity in postcolonial times, for that matter, has to talk to and sometimes talk against, the dominant Western Enlightenment constructions of identities. The resultant Victorian Anthropology of the nineteenth century, a carry-over of the Enlightenment philosophical tradition becomes important in the examination of the category "tribe". In this respect, the category shares similarities with any other modern concept. The indigenous people all over the world have been affected seriously by the phenomenon of colonization by the West. Whole cultures have been either wiped out or completely marginalized. Due to all this, the social constructions of the tribes do have a universal resonance and can be studied only by going into the Western dominant constructions of the tribe.

The tribe was constructed primarily as "primitive" by Western culture. Among a number of sites where the primitive was produced, the academia can claim its own share. The academic interest in the exotic and the primitive almost always combined with the colonization of these very people. Both factors together created the global notions of the primitive.

A number of related academic disciplines can be seen to have taken part in the production of the tribe. For example, the science of Geology that interpreted the different levels of geological strata to analyze the history of the region affected the study of the tribes seriously.[3] The discipline of Ethnology and its later version of Anthropology, the "science" of Phrenology, or the study of human skulls, Eugenics, the study of race, Evolutionary Biology, and recently Genetics can all stake a claim in producing the tribe that we know of.[4]

This chapter attempts--to borrow from the research methodology of the Social Sciences--a survey of literature and to locate the present dissertation in the ongoing discussions. A summarizing of the leading arguments in the purview of the study is given with critical analyses of the same. In other words, this chapter presents a reading of the critical works, which have looked into the construction of the tribe in the Western disciplinary context.

The Construction of the Primitive

The ways, in which the tribes all over the world have had their histories written, however diverse and non-universal they have been, illustrate some common features. The condition of many of the indigenous people all over the world has been described as containing the feature of the "primitive". The terms "tribe", "aborigine", "savage", and 'barbarian" have been used in this dissertation. There are of course obvious differences and connotations connected to each term. Yet, they point out to a common assumption. The terms mat are used in local languages to signify tribes also indicate this construction. For instance, in different parts of India, words like *Kadan, Junglee, Kaliparaj* etc. have been used to describe the tribal people.[5] Though the words signify only the place of residence, the forest, it is usually used derogatorily and very often connotes primitivity. In English, a "barbarian" almost always has the connotation of a tribal person. Needless to say, these are usually negative stereotypes associated with the notion of tribe.

Apparently, positive versions of the same stereotype are seen in words like "nature's children", *Vanavasi* etc. These contrasting stereotypes have functioned as different ways of seeing the tribal people by the dominant, non-tribal cultures. These stereotypes, when examined, lead towards the history of the dominant group's gaze on them.

To understand the "primitive" then, it is necessary to understand it as a notion rather than as reality. The primitive as a notion inhabits a realm in the distant past of humanity. But since this very same notion is applied to gaze at contemporaneously existing societies, (which are clearly not primitive in that historical sense) it is necessary to deconstruct this all-pervading stereotype.

Disciplining the Primitive

The idea of the primitive has a long history. It is intimately connected to the various notions of race that have circulated in the Western imagination. Stocking traces some of the words that have been used to indicate the tribes to the origins of Western civilization itself. I quote from his work:

> The cultural contrast implicit in the idea of "civilization" is surely as old as civilization itself. And some of the words by which it has been expressed go back to Greece and Rome. "Barbarian" derives from the Greek contrast between those who spoke intelligibly and those beyond the pale of civil life whose language seemed simply reiterative mumbling—notably the Scythians, who for centuries were the archetype of the barbarian nomads of the Eastern steppes. A second contrastive term derives not from language but from habitat: "savages" (from the Latin "sylva") were those who lived in the woods, rather than in the city--and who with the era of discovery, were more apt to be encountered by seafaring Europeans venturing West than to thunder out of the East on horseback.[7]

Though it has had its pre-modern articulations, with modernity, the notion took on particular shapes. The term "tribe" was forced to bear a lot of theoretical weight (very often not justified) due to the peculiar social and intellectual climate of the late nineteenth century.

The discipline of Anthropology, along with many other disciplines, was one of the sites where these articulations took shape. As Adam Kuper says: "Speculations of the primitive society took a distinctive and novel version and crystallized with Anthropology between 1860s and 1870s."[7a]

It is true that Anthropology has been one of the most self-reflexive of the academic disciplines with a critical eye turned on itself in the recent past.[8] Moreover, some of the anthropologists have been among the first to give up the notion of the primitive on which the foundation of the discipline was built. Kuper, for example, even goes to the extent of calling the notion of the primitive "an illusion." [9] One of the ways in which this self-criticism happens is by going back to the origins of the discipline itself and re-reading what the construction of the primitive has been and what the role of the discipline has been in it. The following section draws heavily from this strain of anthropological writings in many ways.

The classification and objectification of the groups dubbed primitive have helped in justifying their colonization and continuing exploitation. Their colonization has even led to some of the groups being wiped out in a genocidal manner. At other times, they have at least been made into cheap labourers for the running of the system. Kaushik Ghosh, for instance, comes up with the constructions of primitivity in the "coolie narratives" of the late nineteenth century India and connects the way in which the image of the "primitive" has conveniently alternated with that of the exotic, classified object under study and that of the cheap labourer. According to him: "...colonial obsession with the primitive on the one hand reifying it through the display and classification of aborigines, and, on the other fetishizing that same aboriginality as a magical solution to the colonial demands for labour.. ."[10]

The disciplinary incarnations, not just of Anthropology, but of other disciplines also have been of special significance to us in the academy. This has led to a mutual

sharing of ideas between the academicians and the other wings of colonial machinery. The dominant culture's construction of the primitive draws very centrally from this rendering.

It should also be noted at this point that there has been a stringent critique against seeing the history of any subaltern group only in terms of Western colonization. The framework that defines the dominant cultures as easily White and male and history as having begun for any modern category only with the Western Enlightenment is highly problematic. Taking this argument into consideration, primitivizing of tribals seems to be a wrong place to start. Along with this, or before this should have come the examination of dominant pre-modern cultures in this country's construction of the different groups now known as tribals. I follow G. Aloysius in his understanding of subaltern historiography. To quote him:

> Imperialist historiography painted a grim picture of premodern society in the sub-continent as politically fragmented, socially anarchic, culturally decadent and economically stagnant. The situation of the labouring groups was shown as particularly pathetic: while in the only economic activity–agriculture–they were held everywhere in some form or other of slavery, an extreme and textual form of caste discrimination and oppression characterized all spheres of corporate life. Against this, the British rule was shown as the harbinger of peace and progress for all and a benefactor and liberator especially of under-privileged groups. Nationalist historians, on the other hand produced a diametrically opposite picture: the traditional India was seen to be constituted of self sufficient and harmonious village republics in which the different ascripitve groups fulfilled their duties according to their *dharma* based on natural tendencies; the relations between groups were cordial and complementary until the British came on the scene and sowed seeds of discord, competition and conflict.[11]

He rejects both versions of looking at colonialism and sees the continuation of the pre-modern forms of power in reforged ways in colonial times. This framework opens up possibilities of a different order. This means that we need not fall into the trap of giving the central agency only to British imperialism, but still see colonialism as important in constructing any post-colonial identity. Along the same lines, the present

dissertation sees tribal identity, like any other contemporary identity, as a modern category and rejects the popularly accepted premise of primitivity. In fact, it is seen that this pnmitivity is historical and has been attributed to the groups now called tribes at a particular point in history.

Once one accepts the modernity of the category tribe, colonization with its roots in Europe cannot be ignored. The deep changes, which identities went through to be remoulded in modernity, have direct connection with colonization. That does not mean, I repeat, that colonization has to be seen as a break—as the nationalist historians do; nor is it necessary to go to the other extreme and see it as a neat continuation of the pre-modern categories that comfortably fitted into modernity.

Evolving the Primitive

The interest in primitive societies has taken a distinctly different shape in the West after the latter part of the nineteenth century. This marks the immediate aftermath of the publication of the work on evolution, *The Origin of Species* in 1859.[12] The work not only influenced Natural Science, but found its exponents in such diverse fields like Economics, Sociology and Anthropology.

But before going into a discussion on the evolutionist origins of the discipline which had immense influence over the destiny of the people named tribes, let us examine what the characters of this primitive society, as imagined by the discipline was.

Kuper, who worked on the nineteenth century anthropologists thinks that they drew the primitive society in the following colours:

1. The most primitive societies were ordered on the basis of kinship relations.

2. Their kinship organization was based on descent groups.

3. These descent groups were exogamous and were related by a series of marriage exchanges.

17

4. Like extinct species, these primeval institutions were preserved in fossil form, ceremonies and kinship terminologies bearing witness to long-dead practices.

5. Finally, with the development of private property, the descent groups withered away and a territorial state emerged. This was the most revolutionary change in the history of humanity. It marked the transition from ancient to modern society.[13]

Though the suspicion and embarrassment about using words like "primitive", "savage" and "native" had started bogging the practitioners by the 1950s itself, they still subscribed to the essential idea behind the primitive. Dozier describes the primitive society, or the classical subject of anthropological study, as he understood it in the fifties as having the following characteristics:

> (1) absence of a written language, (2) a relatively simple technology, (3) social institutions which are cast in a simpler mold, (4) smaller numbers, (5) relative isolation, and (6) societies whose cultures are in general characterized by slower rate of change.[14]

When one analyses what the characters of this primitive society are that was imagined by the nineteenth century fathers of Anthropology another default society appears before us. That is the *mainstream* society of the modern Europe. The primitive society was imagined to be the antithesis of "civilization". The impulse behind the imaginings of the primitive society was to see one's own society as radically different from the earlier one. In fact, the late nineteenth century intellectuals saw their own times as undergoing serious changes:

> Europeans believed themselves to be witnessing a revolutionary transition in the type of their society. Marx defined a capitalist society emerging from a feudal society; Weber was to write about the rationalization, the bureaucratization, the disenchantment of the old world; Tonnies about the move from community to association; Durkhiem about the change from mechanical to organic forms of solidarity. Each conceived of the new world in contrast to "traditional society"; and behind this "traditional society" they discerned a primitive or primeval society.[15]

If the primitive society was "nomadic, ordered by blood ties, sexually promiscuous and communist", it was because the modern society was **defined** above all by the territorial state, the monogamous family and private property and the primitive society had to be imagined as the direct opposite of all this.[16]

One of the main tenets on which this imagination of the primitive rested was that of progress. Society was supposed to be progressing in stages. The idea of progress rook upon itself many contemporary sciences and their vocabulary transferred them onto the study of "man".

The scholars, especially the social Darwinists, who had formed the discipline of Anthropology, were mostly influenced by the debates around evolution. The search for a primitive society was a very real adventure for them. Conjectures about early human civilization were drawn with impudence and not much proof.

The evolutionists (in their own way) were drawing from Darwin, or some popular interpretation of his theories. According to them, all species were seen to be evolving from the one-celled bacteria to the pinnacle of civilization--the rational human being. The same model worked for societies as well. Thus, the social evolutionists were conveniently translating some version of Darwin's theory into human societies. They decided that society evolved from simpler systems or organizations based on kinship ties, progressing towards a more complex organization of power and state systems based on social contract. The primitive society was thus imagined to be on a lower rung of the social evolution ladder, than say, "the developed" Western societies.

Almost all the anthropologists, who were contemporaries of Darwin are now clubbed as evolutionists. This includes Bachofen, Maine, Fustel de Coulanges, Lubbock, McLennan, Morgan and Taylor. But Kuper says that most of them were drawing from Lamarck, who used his own brand of social Darwinism, more than Darwin.

This idea of "progress" on which the evolutionists based their theory necessarily involved a judgment of the so-called older races, and along with it, the contemporary tribes, as inferior. All of human society was imagined to be moving towards a common destiny. In this imagination, different societies were placed in a pyramid like structure of progress with the Western cultures placed on the top and other societies given a place in the pyramid according to their nearness towards achieving the status of the Western society. To quote Morgan for instance:

> The inferiority of savage man in the mental and moral scale, undeveloped, inexperienced, and held down by his low animal appetites and passions, though reluctantly recognized, is nevertheless, substantially demonstrated by the remains of ancient art in flint, stone and bone implements, by his cave life in certain areas, and by his osteological remains. It is still further illustrated by the present condition of tribes of savages in a low state of development, left in isolated sections of the earth's monuments of the past...[17]

The early evolutionists even went to the extent of dividing the whole of human society, contemporary as well as historical into neat stages. Morgan as well as Taylor subscribed to the division of savagery, barbarism and civilization. As Taylor puts it:

> ...while the general tenour of the evidence goes far to justify the view that on the whole the civilized man is not only wiser and more capable than the savage, but also better and happier, and that the barbarian stands between...[18]

These stages were not just seen as explaining the general condition of "man", but all human institutions, including family and the State. The doubts whether the ancient cultures were patriarchal or matriarchal which resulted in the anthropological debates between Maine and McLennan in the latter part of the nineteenth century is one such instance.[19] Both were drawing conclusions about ancient cultures by reading accounts of travellers in other countries and then forming opinion about ancient cultures. Darwin himself could have been the first person to distance himself from these theories. The evolutionists who based their arguments on the idea of progress would have been

disappointed to know that Darwin did not attribute any idea of progress or direction to evolution. According to Kuper, he had argued: ".. .natural selection worked upon more or less random individual variations."[20]

This would have been unacceptable to most of the evolutionists who interpreted Darwin's theories for the human society.

It was not just Biology with its theories of evolution that influenced Anthropology's construction of the primitive. The discipline of Geology had its own share to play in the complex invention of the primitive.

Sumit Guha tries to trace the disciplinary connection between Geology and Anthropology.[21] He says that Geology had emerged as a major threat to the Christian orthodoxy by 1830s. This happened with the publication of Lyell's *Principles*[22] that talked about the age of the Earth and thus undermined the creation myth. The proponents of racial Anthropology wanted to create a similar science. Ironically, here science was used to undermine claims of human equality, which religion, through a belief in the common origin of humanity was upholding. Racial Anthropology wanted to prove that different races of human beings evolved from different descents.

Moreover Guha goes on to prove that the concepts used in Geology, like the stratified rock system, became a favourite metaphor amongst Anthropologists to speak about human civilizations. Then the latest strata, and correspondingly, the newest race, came to represent progress, whereas the strata, imagined to lie at the bottom represented primitivity. This thinking was clearly racist in import:

> [T]he project was to create a science of man (anthropo-logy) analogous to that of the earth (geo-logy) and distinct from the less explicitly racist study of peoples (Ethnology). Ethnology in the 1830s was in fact linked with humanitarian dismay at the brutalities inflicted on African and Australian populations. Anthropology would see these as natural and inevitable consequences of race contact.

Ethnology as a discipline had connections with the Quaker and evangelical philanthropy. As Lively writes:

> In 1838 the Aborigines' Protection Society was formed by, among others, Thomas Fowell Buxton, a Quaker who had inherited the mantle of Wilberforce as leader of the anti-slavery movement in Parliament. Alongside its "first object", which was to collect "authentic information concerning the character, habits and wants of the uncivilized tribes", went a commitment to evangelism as the only "effectual method to civilise" dark-skinned savage peoples. The Ethnological Society of London was formed in 1843 by the Quaker doctor Thomas Hodgkin.. .as an offshoot of the Aborigines' Protection Society. The formation of the Ethnological Society was symptomatic of a split within the Aborigines' Protection Society between those concerned with missionary work and those interested in "scientific" observation.[24]

Anthropology as a discipline comes as an effort to purge even the remains of the missionary 2eal that were carried over in the Ethnological Society. Geology was their model for quite some time. Many members of the British Association for the Advancement of Science feared that giving the ethnologists recognition might compromise the cause of science for they were seen to be producing political or religious polemics.[25] Later, towards the end of the nineteenth century, in what can be described as a clear academic coup, the anthropologists who believed in the inherent supenority of the Western races took over the discussions from the ethnologists. This was clearly to make the humanitarian voice silent in the academy.[26]

Methodology has to follow theory. Thus in the comparative method, which many of the early evolutionary theorists adopted, the terminology used for companson might seem almost offensive to the twenty first century reader who is familiar with the arguments raised against these stereotyping by the so-called indigenous people themselves. Unlike the new generation anthropologists, Morgan, and many others following him, used the scales of comparison that divided the whole humankind into neat stages of savage and civilized with the barbaric in between."

Though the discipline moved away from its evolutionary origins, the ideas of the primitive still seems to be haunting the world at large.

How the jump from the imagined primitive society was made to existing and contemporary societies of indigenous people is a wonder in history. The concept of time is especially useful as far as the contemporary "primitives" are concerned. Skaria, along the lines of Fabian's famous concept of the *Time and the Other*.[28] points it out as the politics of time.[29] If one accepts the notion of progress and defines the Western, White society as the most advanced, then some people, or groups of people, are seen to be removed in time as well. Since the present is defined as contemporary West, they are seen to be living in the past. The ways in which the West has constructed the primitive throws light to the particular "othering" processes that have been part of those constructions.

The Fear of the "Other": The Primitive as Barbaric

The most common stereotype of the primitive is that of the barbarian—being removed in everyway from civilization. In the eighteenth century, this racism even went to the extent of not considering the Blacks as human and comparing these groups to the great apes.[30] Words like "species", "race" and "kind" were used interchangeably in the eighteenth century.[31] In fact, there were two schools of thought regarding human origins before Darwin conclusively proved the common origins of all humankind. They were monogenism, which believed in the common origins of all mankind and polygenism, which believed that different races were actually different species altogether and had different points of origin, respectively. The polygenists, who are now interpreted as racists, were in their times seen to be radical. This is because they were seen to be questioning the monogenist assumptions in the Bible. The discipline of physical Anthropology drew heavily from the pseudo-science of Phrenology based on the measuring of skulls of different races. Incidentally, one becomes surprised by the

persistence of race theories in the academy in general. The questions of Biology and race had found a resurrection in the twentieth century. This happened through discussions around the concept and existence of hereditary genes for personality traits in the biological sciences.[32]

With the evolutionary paradigm firmly established in the later part of the nineteenth century, this comparison happened with the authenticity of science rather than religion. Consider for instance the words of John Hunt the founder of Anthropological Society of London in his lecture "The Negro's Place in Nature":

> We have recently heard discussions respecting Man's place in nature: but it seems to me that we err in grouping all the different races of Man under one generic name, and then compare them with the anthropoid Apes. If we wish to make any advance in discussing such a subject, we must not speak of man generally, but must select one race or species, and draw our comparison in this manner. [33]

In most of the representations of the barbaric primitive, s/he always possesses outer markers, like looks, clothing, societal organisation, customs etc. The outer markers did not just mean superficial difference. They were used as indicators that led to other more important inner difference with the "progress" groups.

The first and most important marker is of course race. The looks of the aboriginal evoked so much curiosity (and perhaps disgust as well) among the Europeans. The Anthropological discussions try to mask this disgust in the endless objectifications around the size of the nose, the eye colour, texture of hair and other physical features of the aborigine. For instance, Thurston, following the example of his more illustrious anthropological predecessors writes in the beginning of the twentieth century about Todas thus:

> The typical Toda man is above medium height, well proportioned and stalwart, with leptorhine nose, regular features, and perfect teeth. The nose is, as noted by Dr. Rivers, sometimes distinctly rounded in profile.[34]

This should be read in comparison with the lack of any physical descriptions as far as "higher civilizations" are concerned.[35] These lengthy descriptions of the primitive distance the viewer/speaker from the gazed object. The gazed other becomes the race and nothing but the race. Any specimen is fine. They are nothing but the body.[3*]

Description of clothing is one major way in which "culture" is signified. Lack of specific forms of dressing, especially if the dressing can be seen as scanty by European standards might be one way of naming the group as barbaric.[37] In a similar way, ornaments, or lack of them, will be read as barbaric according to circumstances. Even in the late twentieth century the easiest way to signify a person belonging to a tribal group seems to be the lack of conventional clothing.[38]

Clothes can also be read as a gesture that signifies a total abandon in sexual codes. The whole of primitive society has been seen as sexually loose, with as little of taboos around the free display of sexuality as possible. The White society has constructed itself as having pruned the instinctual urges and redirected them to safer and more controlled channels. The barbaric primitive is basically the one who is not able to, or will not control her/himself sexually. The special meaning of primitivity varies of course for the primitive man and woman. The extreme cases of sexual exploitation of tribal women by non-tribal men common in almost all tribal areas can often be traced to the legitimacy given to the stereotypes of the sexually loose primitive societies. This stereotype has also affected the way the primitive has been constructed. Thus, Engels quoting Morgan believes that in the ancient times the determination of who the father of a child was impossible.[39] In the imagined primitive matriarchy, the lineage had to be determined only through the mother's line due to "sexual promiscuity". The whole debate around the patriarchal theory of human origins advocated by Maines and its counter claim by Morgan that primitive human society was actually organized around matriliny is a debate around primitive promiscuity as well. The controlling of sexuality

through monogamous marriages, which was also linked to property, was one of the major ways in which Western society has seen itself as civilized.

Yet another way to primitivize is to point out to the societal organization of these communities that will be read as "simple" in contrast to the State based power systems of "modern" cultures. The barbaric primitive is understood to be organizing her/his society based on instinctual relationships of blood and not on social contracts. This kin based bonding, though existing and very often idealized in the Western societies, is not given ideological legitimacy except with the immediate family. Almost all the ancient societies were of particular interest to the legal historians of the nineteenth century because the societies were seen to exist in a condition beyond State power.

The other point, which is seen to mark the barbaric primitive from the civilized, is her/his religion. Primitive religions are seen to be based on superstition and fear, rather than on a universal spiritual understanding, which is seen to be the organizing principle of the "higher races". The ritual based religions are seen to worship nature directly and not symbolically, like other religions. It is not an attempt to lead people towards a higher humanity, which is the prerogative only of the more developed religions. The studies, which have happened in the discipline, and some of which are still happening, betray these very White racist tendencies.

The methodology of research projects undertaken encouraged students to take up projects dealing with societal organization that they would look at employing an elaborate kinship terminology that marks the specialist's language from that of the layperson. The same kinds of descriptions are seen to continue when one talks about the twentieth century "aborigines" as well.

The notion behind these constructions of the primitive contains another related concept-the division between nature and culture. Nature was seen as wild, untamed and

dangerous. Culture on the other hand, was pruned, contained and sophisticated. Lively speaks in the context of Black culture in the eyes of Whites:

> Seen positively, they are more authentic and less emotionally inhibited than Europeans. Seen negatively, they are closer to some inherent evil, some heart of darkness, in human nature.[40]

Along with the division between nature and culture, the notion of the primitive was also part of another related concept, which was actually the hallmark of Western modernity: Rationality and its "other"–intuition or emotion. In a world where rationality was the mark of humanity, and only one kind of thinking was seen as rational, it was impossible for cultures other than White culture to be called rational. Primitive society was definitely in the modern culture's imagination marked by a lack of rationality. As mentioned above, the societal organization was based on blood ties and not on contract. This becomes significant when one realizes that social contract is seen as that which makes the modern human being different from "brutes". The other defining characteristics of the primitive society like sexual promiscuity, religion based on fear of nature etc. have all seemed to highlight this very character of the primitive society.

From the above discussions, it might be clear that the primitive conceived as barbaric is the "other" of the Western society in every way. Such contrast which marks the dominant society as positive and the other as negative clearly betrays the fear of the other. In building the primitive as barbarian, what the dominant culture is doing is to build itself–as civilized.

The clear "othering" process that is at work also shows that the dominant culture is fearful of the "primitive". It is its threat at the difference that is evident in the process.

This fear of the other is not just the fear of difference. It is the fear of oneself. The primitive is so interesting and so loathsome precisely because s/he is seen as oneself.

Appropriating the "Other": The Savage as Noble

Another way of seeing the primitive, again by the Western society after Enlightenment, is by invoking the figure of "the noble savage,". There are different ways in which the primitive was seen as noble. One way was the evangelical way of seeing the victimized aborigine instead of the evil barbarian in the eighteenth century. These portrayals surrounded the debates around the abolition of slavery. The abolitionists, "in a twist characteristic of evangelical Christianity--exalted victimhood to a state of masochistic nobility."[41] Lively mentions the most dominant image of the Negro in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century as the abolitionist medallion which silhouetted the figure of the kneeling slave, "manacled hands raised in supplication, framed by the words 'Am I not a man and a brother?'"[42]

In this portrayal of the pure victim who is noble in suffering, the actor as well as the audience is the White person. The abolitionists dealt with most of the questions raised by the racist portrayals by appealing to the mercy of the White society, mostly by evoking their religious sentiments. In these narratives, the main character is always the White, either portrayed as cruel or generous. The aborigine is shown as the passive recipient of either of these sentiments.

The abolitionists dealt with the "criticisms" of the White society against the so-called savages by very often not directly confronting them. A good example is the question of primitive promiscuity that they didn't even touch but just elided over. Only the victimization of the slave/aborigine is dealt with.

But, there is another very important way in which the "savage" has been portrayed as noble. This portrayal does not deal with the victimization of the "aborigine" at all. Instead, the "savage" is seen as more noble than the "civilized".

In this portrayal, the primitive is conceived as inhabiting a pure space before corrupt civilization happened. The primitive's figure here comes to represent again all

that modernity is not. Quite unlike the barbaric primitive, s/he is in a state of pure nature. This portrayal is apparently positive, compared to either the barbaric primitive or the victimized aborigine.

While the general way in which Enlightenment saw the primitive was as described in the previous section, the more complex reaction was that of romanticizing the same things that were degraded. The most famous exponent of the idea is supposed to be Rousseau.[43]

The same binaries that informed the barbaric primitive also inform the noble savage, but the meanings apparently change and should be read as the opposite. The binary of nature and culture plays an important part here. But, apparently, the hierarchy is reversed in favour of nature, instinct and community ties. The tribe still stands for all that modernity is not--but with the positive quality which is invested in the imagined tribe rather than culture.

In this scheme of things, there is a fallen tribe and an unfallen one. The unfallen tribe, when one analyzes the concept, is nostalgically invoked to fill in some void that the invoker her/himself feels in modernity. Thus, the community ties of the savage are invoked to comment on the alienation that the modern man feels in the city. The pure instinctual way in which "man" and god interact in tribal religion is seen to be the unsullied communion with nature, whereas the rationalists would call it primitive superstition. Sexual promiscuity, by these theorists, is understood to be the non-existence of oppressive customs that bound sexuality with private property.

The stereotype of the idealized tribe can also be deconstructed to yield an essentialized picture that speaks more about modernity than about tribes. There is thus a connection, which is usually drawn between the present constructions of the tribes as noble savages to the Romantic Movement in Europe.[44] The Romantics were searching for unsullied corners of the world, be it the village, the folk, the tribe or nature itself. We

can place these constructions in the context of profound changes that were happening in eighteenth century Europe. Modernity with its emphasis on the material and its slogans of equality, fraternity and liberty, disturbed various fronts. Industrial revolution had brought about the collapse of the feudal order. Along with material changes, there was the construction of a new kind of self--the individualistic person emerging from the communitarian past. This individual did not experience kinship or regional affinities, nor was s/he bound by them. This condition led to the formation of the alienated self.

At this point, it is not quite surprising that the tribe emerged as a site of unsullied human interaction with each other and nature. The philosophy of cultural primitivism was the result of the desire of the modern West for its own unproblematic mythical past. Lovejoy and Boas define it as "...the discontent of the civilized with civilization, or with some conspicuous and characteristic feature of it."[45] But, while civilisation desires, it also condescends. Here also, the framework of the adult-child works. This stereotype was used by the racist theorists who portrayed the tribes as barbaric. It is the adult West condescendingly gazing upon the child tribe with nostalgic desire that we encounter in the noble savage notion.

Moreover, the ideal notion of the tribe will never have any connection with living communities. In fact, these communities are supposed to be frozen in time. Any display of dynamism in these communities, which allows them to survive will be read as a corruption of the ideal state. Thus, the eternally child-like, eternally natural tribe exists only to be idealized theoretically, (but materially exploited) by a nostalgic modernity hunting for ideal others. This is clearly the politics of appropriation of the "other." In Sangeeta Kamat's words:

> Such a theorizing predicated as it is on an image rather than on actually existing situation has allowed both for a romance with, and a rejection of tribals. The modern subject's nostalgia for a "lost" state of freedom, on the one hand, and its censure of the non-modern, on the other, coalesce around this image.[46]

Let us examine Rousseau, supposed to be the originator of the idea of the "noble savage" for a more detailed analysis.

We understand that the French Philosopher embodies to a certain extent all the contradictions connected to the noble savage idea. It can be proved beyond doubt from *The Social Contract* itself that he never meant a "return to nature" in any practical way. The primitive state invoked is in contrast to modern society. In *The Social Contract,* Rousseau develops a contrast between natural existence and civil society. In a neat binary fashion it can be summarized as follows:

Natural Existence	**Civil Society**
Instinct	Justice
Amoral	Moral
Appetite	Reason
Natural Liberty	Possession based on personal power
Individual Strength	Civil liberty, secure proprietorship based on respect for the law, general will.

Just to put any of our doubts at rest, one only has to know what Rousseau meant by appetite. I quote from *The Social Contract.* "The mere impulse to appetite is slavery, while obedience to a law, which we prescribe to ourselves, is liberty."[4]

So, it becomes amply clear that Rousseau never meant any comparison where the modern Western civilization would be seen in any bad light. In fact, he makes it clear in his own words:

> Although in this state [civil society], he (sic) deprives himself of some advantages which he got from nature, he gains in return others so great, his ideas so extended, his feelings so ennobled, and his whole soul so uplifted, that did not the abuses of this new condition often degrade him below that which he left, he would be bound to bless continually the happy moment which took him from it forever, and instead of a stupid and unimaginative animal, made him an intelligent being and a man.[48]

This is one way to critique the noble savage idea--that the proponents of the idea itself did not live up to it. Thus, Rousseau can be critiqued for never wanting to live up to

his own ideals--that the proponents of the noble savage themselves were advocates of civilization.

Another way is to deconstruct the idea. One can do this by exploring what are the binaries on which the idea is based. They are the binaries of wilderness/civilization, savage/modern, instinctual/rational etc. and see that one cannot exist without the other, that the division between the two is apparently fostered for the perpetration of power of one of the groups. Thus, it becomes clear that the "primitive" is a construction of modernity, rather than independently existing. The particular meanings associated with the "primitive" become intelligible only in modernity. The perpetuation of this binary depends upon the essentialising of the primitive and the modern.

Regarding the particular binary of the primitive and the civilized—it has now been proved beyond doubt that the ideal primitive does not exist and the primitive was never what s/he has been conceived of.

This has had far reaching effects on the groups called primitive. Idealization sees to it that these groups are seen to be valuable only if they remain in a non-modern state. Yet, in practical life, modernity does come to them affecting their lives. There are even studies which prove that the examples of ideal primitives which have been unearthed through enthusiastic scholars very often disregard their actual histories. Sumit Guha quotes a study about the San people of Africa who have long been cited as Neolithic survivals till the 70s. In his words:

> Edwin Wilmsen has convincingly demonstrated that their excision from history was due to the nineteenth century European search for "specimens" of the savage hunting stage. By a brilliant rereading of both literary and archeological sources, he has shown how the apparent isolation of these peoples at the beginning of the present century, far from being a primeval condition, was a consequence of the immediately preceding collapse of trading networks exporting ivory, ostrich feathers, and other commodities to the Western market. So it emerged that peoples with a far simpler political organization and more limited political repertoire than that of the bulk of the scheduled tribes of India were nonetheless the product of prolonged interactions with larger regional

and continental social systems, and their primitiveness was externally defined and enforced.[49]

Guha's own study proves that the groups now named "tribes" in India have not been the idealized noble savages, but historical groups which have been negotiating with powers-that-be at various points in history.[50] In the section titled "Identities and Aspiration: Not Noble Savage But Savage Noble" he finds that the references about Bhil ruler Umaji Raje is a complex documentation of bargaining for more status, both ritual and material with the higher castes as well as the British. This behavior is anything but that of the noble savage in close communion with nature!

In the twentieth century, proponents of certain schools of ecology, (especially of the deep ecology variety), have resurrected the "ecologically noble savage"[51]. These sentiments are seen in the construction of tribes as living in close harmony with nature and knowing the best ways to preserve nature.

The critique of the "noble savage" has come from two sides. One group that is disappointed that the tribes are not exactly living up to the expectations bestowed on them. The next group which questions the very basis on which the noble savage idea is built.

The conservationists who are disappointed with the tribes include environmentalists like Redford.[52] The other group, which critiques the idea of the ecologically noble savage, complains that in all these arguments, these groups can never fulfill the responsibility that is vested on the tribes. The tribes are burdened with keeping up an imaginary pre-modern lifestyle. The examination of the history of this category proves beyond doubt that the desires and anxieties of the already "modern" are pegged on the figure of the "savage". Moreover, these groups are not seen as people with histories (and very often histories of resistance).[53] The vision that sees them as embodying critiques of modernity and nothing else is problematic in itself.[54]

Also the specific history of the term "noble savage" reveals its connection with the racist views of one branch of Anthropological institution in England in the nineteenth century. Ter Ellingson proves that it was not Rousseau who used the term. It was attributed to Rousseau by Crawford, an Anthropologist of the late nineteenth century England.

As mentioned earlier, the earlier form of Anthropology was the discipline of Ethnology which had humanitarian and anti-racist agendas. They drew inspiration from the Quaker philosophy and were horrified at the humanitarian disaster that was happening in the New World as well as Australia. The Anthropological Society of London was formed by White supremacists in an academic coup by hijacking the platform from the Ethnologists. The myth of the noble savage had its own role to play in the perpetuation of racism in the name of "science".

Conjecturing the motive behind Crawford for attributing the myth to Rousseau, one has to understand the context in which the paper which first used the term, and which attributes this to Rousseau was presented. Ellingson proves that Crawford wanted to show the abolitionists and the human rights activists in a bad light. He wanted to prove that they were living in a fool's paradise. The idea that irked him to no end was the idea of universal human equality. That all races can be conceived as equal was threatening his racist imagination. He attacked any scientific or religious idea that was based on this argument. The attacks from Crawford were of course in the name of science. The new "science" of Anthropology provided a neat ground to base his arguments.

The supporters of human equality, including supporters of a common ancestor for the human race, were all placed in the category of Rousseau believers in the myth of the noble savage. When the abolitionists spoke about human rights in scientific and social science seminars, they were made to be advocates of a pre-modern paradise in

34

which the savage was nobler than the civilized White man. This myth of the pre-modern paradise was easy to refute and it was difficult for White do-gooders to counter. They surely did not want to say that White culture was better off than indigenous cultures. That would be racist, and the Ethnological society was based on anti-racist sentiments. Yet, to go to the extent of romanticizing the tribal way of life was also dangerous. This did not strike the reformers at that time.

They just entered the debate in Crawford's terms. Then they had to defend a myth—the myth of the noble savage. Instead of countering Crawford's words as an irresponsible parody of the quest for human equality, the White do-gooders in the late nineteenth century England also started actively perpetuating the myth and attributing the words to Rousseau. This gave Crawford enough room to counter a myth he himself had perpetuated in quite scientific terms.

This does not mean that the responsibility of creating the stereotype of the primitive lay only on the shoulders of the academicians or intellectuals. As Pickering points out, it was reflected in such cultural forms as Imperial exhibitions during the second half of the nineteenth century.[55] The effects of this Academic myth-making on indigenous people themselves have been quite serious. They are as follows:

1. They are exoticised, but that has not prevented the world from exploiting the indigenous peoples. In fact, exploitation thus has been part and parcel of exoticization.

2. The indigenous peoples have been seen as expendable, for the primitive existing in this evolved state should have become extinct. If they are exterminated it is only nature's way and not the responsibility of the society.

3. These attitudes have coloured local perceptions of tribes all over the world.

4. The dominant culture comes out as modern, advanced etc. due to these myths.

5. In the noble savage myth, progress is apparently critiqued. But that would place the discourse on their rights by the indigenous peoples themselves as corrupting modernity. The modern societies, though already "corrupt" come out as adult in comparison with the tribal societies that look "childlike" in contrast. Thus, these stereotypes lead to a hollow idealization of the tribal society that makes it easily exploitable.

6. This is the politics of *appropriation.* In many ways, when there is a hollow kind of idealization, the perpetuator of oppression is freed of guilt of actually looking down upon the groups s/he is exploiting.

When the anthropologists were searching for the elusive primitive society and finding the remains of that in living cultures, they were engaged in a search for their own selves. They were trying to draw some meaning about the serious changes in which they found themselves. It was necessary to classify and place them. Either the search was undertaken in a self-congratulatory mode, or it was undertaken in the desperate mode of searching for an alternative for the major changes that were disturbing the settled worldviews. It was a search for their own roots.

The questions about the primitive have been always asked as universal questions of all mankind! As to how the man behaves when left alone to himself. Is he selfish? Or is he free? This dichotomous way of seeing is expressed in the barbaric primitivity and the free noble savage–two apparently opposing stereotypes about primitives.

But they both agree on the basic question–that there is a state of primitivity. The way in which this question can be tackled is by understanding that the question is wrong. First of all, how do we find out if there is a "pure" state beyond culture? What is the compulsion that is driving one to imagine that condition? Isn't this imagination itself cultural? Two–another way is to say that the present people who have been dubbed

5. In the noble savage myth, progress is apparently critiqued. But that would place the discourse on their rights by the indigenous peoples themselves as corrupting modernity. The modern societies, though already "corrupt" come out as adult in comparison with the tribal societies that look "childlike" in contrast. Thus, these stereotypes lead to a hollow idealization of the tribal society that makes it easily exploitable.

6. This is the politics of *appropriation*. In many ways, when there is a hollow kind of idealization, the perpetuator of oppression is freed of guilt of actually looking down upon the groups s/he is exploiting.

When the anthropologists were searching for the elusive primitive society and finding the remains of that in living cultures, they were engaged in a search for their own selves. They were trying to draw some meaning about the serious changes in which they found themselves. It was necessary to classify and place them. Either the search was undertaken in a self-congratulatory mode, or it was undertaken in the desperate mode of searching for an alternative for the major changes that were disturbing the settled worldviews. It was a search for their own roots.

The questions about the primitive have been always asked as universal questions of all mankind! As to how the man behaves when left alone to himself. Is he selfish? Or is he free? This dichotomous way of seeing is expressed in the barbaric primitivity and the free noble savage-two apparently opposing stereotypes about primitives.

But they both agree on the basic question-that there is a state of primitivity. The way in which this question can be tackled is by understanding that the question is wrong. First of all, how do we find out if there is a "pure" state beyond culture? What is the compulsion that is driving one to imagine that condition? Isn't this imagination itself cultural? Two—another way is to say that the present people who have been dubbed

primitive and who have to bear the weight of being so for the moderns, is not exactly the right material to analyze "man" in his state of nature.

This chapter thus concludes that the category tribe is a modern category. By tracing its story through the nineteenth century and its construction of the primitive, what is attempted is to prove that the category was an invention of modernity. The next chapter examines the particular articulation of this category in the Indian context. This chapter sets the ground to analyze the category in the specific context of the Indian nation as a modern category.

I would like to end by quoting the guru of evolution, Darwin responding to the contemporary "savages" he encountered in Tierra del Fuego.

> The astonishment which I felt on first seeing a party of Fuegians on a wild and broken shore will never be forgotten by me, for the reflection at once rushed into my mind--such were our ancestors...For my own part I would as soon be descended from that heroic little monkey...as from a savage.[56]

The construction of the primitive was more a self-examination journey for the White Western civilization--the primitive being the site on which modernity was pretending to question itself. If the other is feared, it is also the other in oneself.

Notes:

[1] Lively, 1999, 99.

[2] McGrane, 1989, 94.

[3] Guha, S., 1998, 423-441.

[*] For details on how Phrenology affects the study of tribes see Lively, 1999, 48-9. The discussion on Eugenics is given in Rao, 2003, 697-699. How Evolutionary Biology has affected the study of tribes is a much discussed topic. For details, please refer to Kuper, 1988. For the discussion on Genetics refer to Radhakrishna, 2001: 1.

[5] These are words in Malayalam, Hindi and Gujarati respectively. Kaliparaj means "the black people." Hardiman, 1996, 198.

[6] Anthropologists in the twentieth century have been increasingly aware of the political connotations of the word "primitive" and "native" usually used to describe their subjects. For instance, see Dozier, 1956, 187.

[7] Stocking, 1987, 10.   7a Kuper, 1988,

[8] See Rosaldo, 1989; Marcus and Fischer, 1986 and Englund and Leach, 2000 for a discussion on the identity of the anthropologist affecting the data. See Kahn, 2001 for a counter critique of these, especially the latter work's theoretical positions.

[9] The tide of the work is *The Invention of the Primitive: Transformations of an Illusion.*

[10] Ghosh, 1999, 9.

[11] Aloysius, 1998, 24-25.

[12] Darwin, 1958.

[13] Kuper, 1988, 6-7.

[14] Dozier, 1956, 188.

[15] Kuper. 1988, 4.

[16] Kuper, 1988, 5.

[17] Morgan, quoted in Dozier, 1956, 189.

[18] Taylor, quoted in Dozier, 1956, 189.

[19] Kuper, 1988, 35-37.

[20] Kuper. 1988, 2.

[21] Guha, S, 1998, 425.

[22] Lyell, quoted in Guha, 1998, 425.

[23] Guha, S. 1998, 425.

[24] Lively, 1999, 101.

[25] Stocking, Jr., 1987, 245.

[26] Ellingson, 2001.

[27] See Dozier, 1956.

[28] Fabian, 1983.

[29] Skaria, 1997: 727.

[30] Edward Long, a West Indian planter, writes in 1774 that the "Negros and orangutans" fill the gap in the great chain of being where the European figures as the pinnacle of creation. See Lively, 1999, 38.

[31] Lively, 1999, 47.

[32] The result of the Human Genome Project finally disproved these connections conclusively. See Radhakrishna, 2001: 1.

[33] This is in spite of Darwin's theories that proved that all human beings are evolved from a common ancestor. Hunt quoted in Lively, 1999, 106.

[34] Thurston, Vol VII, 1975, 121.

[35] If body is objectified at all, as far the "higher" races are concerned, it is done in a poetic and idealized way, especially if it is the body of the woman from the same race.

[36] As mentioned above, this extreme physicalisation does not mean that the body remains just the body. To repeat, very often the physical characteristics are read as connected to inner qualities of races also.

[37] Quite ironically, when the European culture is loosing its inhibitions on clothing and swimsuits have an advertisement value of 'high culture' in the West, clothing (defined as excess of it)

suddenly seems to acquire connotations of primitivity. Thus, *burkha* attaches to itself notions of Muslim barbarism. This does not quite contain the tribal connotations of primitivity though.

[38] One is reminded of the whole genre of semi-pornographic movies in Malayalam which use an imagined tribal setting to show the half exposed bodies of women.

[39] "The rediscovery of the original mother-right gene as the stage preliminary to the father-right gene of the civilized peoples has the same significance for the history of primitive society as Darwin's theory of evolution has for biology, and Marx's theory of surplus value for political economy." Engels, 1976, Vol III, 201.

[40] Lively, 1999, 55.

[41] Lively, 1999, 55-56.

[42] Lively, 1999, 57.

[43] Ellingson refutes that Rousseau is the originator of the idea of the noble savage. Refer to the following section in this chapter itself. Ellingson, 2001.

[44] Ellingson says that this originary point is not quite correct. He traces the idea to renaissance times and a century and a half after Columbus and he says this happened due to a fusion of "classical mythology with the new descriptions that were beginning to be conceived by scientifically minded writers as 'observations,'. In these representations the savage man was noble because he could hunt and was warlike — both privileges accorded to noble men during that time. See Ellingson, 2001, 11-12.

[45] Lovejoy and Boas quoted in Guha, R. 1999, 122.

[46] Kamat, 2001, 31.

[47] Rousseau, 1950, 196.

[48] Rousseau, 1950, 195-196.

[49] Wilmsen, quoted in Guha S, 1999, 433-434.

[50] See Guha S, 1999,150-163.

[51] Redford, 1990 quoted in Ellingson, 2001, 345.

[52] Redford, 1990 quoted in Ellingson, 2001, 345.

[53] Nandini Sundar warns of being nostalgic about the resisting Adivasi in her work. See Sundar, 1997, *xv*.

[54] Chapter 4 deals with a specific manifestation of this idea in contemporary Kerala culture.

[55] Pickering, 2001, 58.

[56] Darwin, quoted in Lively, 1999, 120.

Chapter - 3

The Tribe in the Early Census Reports:
Constructing the Nation, Hindu and Outside Hindu

> So, by standards of missionary scholarship…Vedic Aryans were not
> Hindus; nor were Harappans whose civilizations the Aryan "invaders"
> destroyed. And now we are told that tribals are not Hindus. In short,
> Hinduism does not exist[1]

The previous chapter dealt with the ways in which the Western society has
constructed the "tribe" as primitive, focusing on the myth of primitivity ascribed to
contemporary communities. This chapter examines the construction of tribe in colonial
India that finally led to the post-colonial administrative category of the *Scheduled* Tribes.
In this chapter, I have used the term "tribe". A difference is to be noted in the usage
here from the previous chapter, where the term was used to signify the way Western
anthropologists used it to evoke the image of a primitive society still existing in
contemporary times. The usage of the term in this chapter, on the other hand, is to
denote the groups who have been classified as an administrative category.

The State systems and their constructions are necessary to analyze what a
"tribe" is here I go along with Morton Fried who says: "...the numerous communities
described as tribes could not be defined independently of State systems with which they
are associated."[2]

While affirming that the notions of primitivity examined in the previous chapter
did play a role in these constructions, the chapter is also organized with an understanding
that indigenous notions of tribal people also fed into the final shape that the category
assumed.

While examining how the tribe was constructed in colonial India, it becomes
imperative to show how the nation evolved based on the constructions of certain

categories, especially religious in nature and how the identity of the tribe figures in the history of these constructions.

The Impossibility **of Defining**

As Wiercinski mentions, there is no official definition of a tribe according to which the list of Scheduled Tribes is compiled in each Census. He elaborates:

> The famous Article 342 of the Indian Constitution states that the President may specify the tribes or tribal communities, or parts of, or groups within, any tribe, which shall for purposes of this constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Tribes and the Parliament has the right to include or exclude names from the list of Scheduled Tribes. In this way the problem of the definition of a tribe was avoided and left for theoretical dispute by academics.[3]

There are numerous controversies, both academic as well as political, of communities that are included as well as excluded from the Scheduled Tribes list. Many anthropologists feel that the government has not done justice to many communities by excluding them from the list. Others feel there are communities that do not exactly deserve to be treated as tribes included in the list due to their political clout.

This means that the problem of definition is not just an academic problem but one which has urgent political implications. In spite of this, there has been no effort to standardize the definition of the tribe. Examining the history of the category the reasons for the predetermined failure of such a venture become clear.

This does not mean that efforts at defining have not happened. In fact, the history of the category gives us numerous attempts at definitions. Virginius Xaxa who has tried to theorize tribal identity in the Indian context thinks that, however informal it was, some criteria did seem to work for drawing up the list. According to him:

> These ranged from such features as geographical isolation, simple technology and condition of living, general backwardness to the practice of animism, tribal language, physical features, etc.[4]

The problem was not that any criterion did not exist but that diverse criteria were used interchangeably and according to the convenience of the moment. The commissioner of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes in India in his report of 1952 noted eight common features in explaining how to identify the Scheduled Tribes. These ranged from places of residence to habits of communities. For instance he gives these characteristics to define the Scheduled Tribe, "Dwelling in forests and hills; ethnic origins like autsroloid, mongoloid or Negroid; animists worshipping nature, ghosts, spirits; primitive hunters and gatherers; carnivorous food habits; naked and semi-naked; fond of food and dance." It should be noted that not even one fifth of the notified Scheduled Tribes possessed these characteristics.[5]

Again going back to Xaxa:

> The result is that the list includes groups and communities strikingly different from each other in respect of not only size of the population but also the level of technology and other characteristics.[6]

The Absent-Presence of the Mainstream Society

Though the criteria of definitions of the tribes are never clearly pointed out, even a brief survey of some of these definitions will prove that there is a hidden yardstick used to compare societies working in them. The hidden yardstick is the "mainstream society" or rather, what the definer thinks of as mainstream society. For instance Vidyarthi and Rai in their famous classification of the tribes that has become a standard in Anthropology classrooms define the tribe thus:

> A - the lowest (as defined) stage of economic development (hunters and gatherers, shifting cultivators), today usually connected with the dying tribes
> B - tribes largely assimilated with general society
> C - assimilated tribes. [7]

In this classification what is clear is a never fore-grounded but always present notion of mainstream society where the tribal society is imagined in contrast to this. This

mainstream society is homogenized and the tribe exists only in connection to this. Xax has pointed out the problem with such a conceptualization:

> ...tribes have come to be primarily studied in relation to features and characteristics of the larger society. The focus is on how tribes are getting absorbed into the larger society, the so-called mainstream, by becoming caste, peasant, class and so on. With such conceptualization, the identity of the tribal group or community is indeed put at risk. This is because of the way tribes have been conceptualized in anthropological literature and the reference with which tribal society in India is studied.
>
> Tribes are primarily seen as a stage and type of society. They represent a society that lacks positive traits of the modern society and thus constitutes a simple, illiterate and backward society. With change in these features on account of education, modern occupation, new technology, etc. tribal society is no longer considered to be tribal. If transformation is in the direction of caste society then it is described as having become caste society. If the reference is peasant then it is posited as peasant society and if the general direction of transformation is social differentiation, then it is described as differentiated or stratified, and thus ceases to be tribal society. In the process it is forgotten that tribe besides being a stage and type of society is also a society alike and similar to any other kind of society, say Oriya or the Bengali. [8]

Apart from this major theoretical problem, as Wiercinski mentions, the statistical details about the tribal population in India is severely limited due to the fact that the numbers enumerated sometimes club whole communities that have distinct identities under one banner. Moreover, whole communities are left out of enumeration altogether. All this confusion makes us ask the question urgently: "Who are the tribes?"

"Tribe": Primitive or Modern?

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the category "tribe" in this thesis is taken to be a modern category. Thus, rather than taking it as a category that has existed from time-immemorial and as a surviving relic of the past, (which is the essentialist way of constructing tribes), the dissertation sees it as having evolved in modernity. Also, it understands that the modern articulation of tribal identities has been varied in different parts of the world and India had its own peculiar history of constructing the tribe.

When it is said that tribe is a modern category, it is not meant that the communities that are right now referred in that way did not exist before modernity. In

tact, what is meant is that these communities have been re-forged and put under one banner "tribe" during colonial rule and this bracketing affected not just the identities of the members of the community, but also their destinies in modernity.

Sumit Guha thinks that rather than taking these communities as actually being primitive, we have to see them as having been "primitivized" in modernity. In his outline of the book, . *Environment And Ethnicity In India: 1200-1991*, he observes:

> The role that the modern regime of the forests played in isolating one segment of the population within the newly drawn boundaries of the forest is highlighted in order to make the point that the resulting primitivisation of these peoples is a recent consequence of the breakdown of their political system.. .It is argued that by concentrating solely on the truncated remnant of the old hierarchy, observers overlooked the living apex of the new one, succumbed to the notion of the simple, primitive and egalitarian forest tribe, and hence failed to see the simplified, primitivized, silvicultural proletariat that it was being hammered into becoming. [9]

Another point that should be mentioned is the way in which colonial categories are treated in the thesis. "Tribe" as we know it today as the category that was officially consolidated in the post-colonial India as the Scheduled Tribes was first categorized by the British. But this does not mean that the native categories were all made from thin air by the colonialists. The British constructions were importantly influenced by the already existing elite constructions in Indian society. Also, the native constructions underwent major changes after the colonial categories were consolidated. Thus, it should be seen as a dialogue that was happening between the Enlightenment constructions of modernity and the native constructions that were available.

Following this logic, the dissertation also examines in a very brief way the precolonial dominant (read Brahminical) constructions of tribes. Also, this will make it clear that the stereotypical notions about the tribes were not peculiar to the colonial attitude. (The massive effort at categorization was peculiar to the British colonial rule).

Methodology

For the pre-colonial dominant constructions of the tribe, I have followed the readings from the works of historians who have worked on the topic. This reading is given so that it will not be assumed that the Indian colonial construction of the tribe is only coming from the West. Rather, it is an interaction that might have happened.

The second part of this chapter attempts a reading of the Census reports from 1872 to 1901 when the administrative identities consolidates in the reports.

Pre-colonial Dominant Construction of the "Tribe"

Many researchers have focused on the colonial times for studying "tribal" communities. Neeladri Bhattacharya blames them for not paying any attention to the pre-colonial experience:

> The social lives and practices of forest dwellers and peasants, shifting cultivators and pasturalists, were crucially affected by the way they were seen by state and society, as well as the self-conceptions of their own practice. Research on the theme, limited as it is, has tended to focus on the colonial period, and argumensts about dramatic changes in state attitudes have often been made on the basis of implicit unexplored assumptions about pre-colonial societies.[10]

This makes it imperative to at least take a quick look at the pre-colonial dominant constructions of the tribes. K.S. Singh thinks that though the colonialists claimed that all references to the tribes in pre-colonial India were contemptuous, it was not so. This is his quotation from *Kiratarjuneeyam*: "The Kirata King is a master of martial arts. Do not disregard him as a mountain dweller."[11] But rather than proving the point of K.S. Singh this unfortunate quotation proves the opposite point—that mountain dwellers were generally looked down upon, but the '*Kirata* king was an exception.

Unlike Singh, Romila Thapar does not find it necessary to see the dominant culture's perception monolithically—i.e. either as positive or negative. In her work, she examines the image of the barbarian in ancient India.[12] She thinks the image draws its genesis from "the curious situation of the arrival of the Indo-Aryan-speaking nomadic

pastoralists in northern India who came into contact with the indigenous population (possibly the remnants of the urban civilization of the Indus) and regarded them as barbarians."[13]

She adds that the distinction that was made with the indigenous population was a linguistic one (between the Sanskrit speakers and the non-Sanskrit speakers) and to a lesser degree, a racial one. [14]

The word that was used to describe the "other" in Sanskrit was *mleccha*. This word did not always refer to the tribes. Its usage varied according to the circumstance and times. But we have to follow the trajectory of this word to find out what the attitudes towards the tribes were by the Aryans.

Once the distinction with the language was made, the territorial distinction was also made with *Arya-varta* were the correct rituals were performed, or as Parasher-Sen points out, as the area where the *dharmasastras* prevailed.[15] This definitely places the areas other than *Arya-varta* at a disadvantage. She also thinks that the establishment of the *varnashrama* society also went hand in hand with these developments. Thapar says that by the second half of the first millennium B.C. that saw the extensive urbanization of the Ganges valley, the city dwellers were made to look down upon the forest and hill dwellers who were the tribes. The names of tribes mentioned during this period include Sabara, Pulinda, Mutiba and Kirata.[16] By now it included groups ranked as mixed castes, technologically backward tribes and communities along the frontiers as well as people speaking a different tongue. Later foreigners like *Yavanas* and even Arabs were included among the *mlecchas*. More than what the barbarian did, her/his exclusion was based on certain notions of ritual purity.

Even the Jains and Buddhists had pejorative terms to describe the tribes. Parasher-Sen proves that it was the social organization of these societies that were

supposed to place them at a barbaric level from the societies of the *janapadas*. Jain monks and nuns were warned to avoid the areas of "unlearned and barbaric people."[17]

As mentioned, it was the social organization of those societies that is pointed out to be the reason for their barbaric nature. The social organization not based on *varnashrama dharma* was seen to be outside civilization. This is particularly interesting because Buddhism is seen to be a religion that came to be as a questioning of the *varna* social structure.

Parasher-Sen examines the **Mauryan** attitudes towards the tribes in detail. Though the **Mauryan** Empire was supposed to be the first centralized government in the subcontinent, Parahser-Sen argues that the unconquered territories in the fringes of the empire determined the structure of the centre too. The attitude of the centre towards these fringes varied from fear to attempts at appropriation. In a quote from Kautilya, Parasher-Sen proves that the jungle tribes were equated with wild animals, all of who were considered unnecessary in an ideal *janapada*, or settlement.

The earlier Brahminical view was to avoid contact with the forest dwellers (known as *mleccha atavikas*). But, Kautilya advices direct contact with them and to use them against the enemy as spies. This was supposed to keep them from looting and plundering.

By the time of the Mauryan Empire, a distinction seems to have emerged about various tribes amongst the dominant culture. Thus, Kautilya mentions *aranyacaras* and *atavikas*. The *atavikas* have connotations of a "wild and savage tribe well entrenched in the jungle fastness who were ostensibly a nuisance to the State."[18] The *aranyacaras* were on the other hand, tribes who were entering into some kind of negotiations with the centralized State. They were seen to be lower than the people inhabiting *janapadas* but tamed unlike the *atavikas*.

Another level of the pre-colonial construction of the tribe also betrayed some grudging respect to the jungle tribes. Thus the *atavikas* were seen to be "well-organized and brave, practically autonomous and fond of looting and killing."[19]

Yet, Thapar believes that *mlecchas* were also incorporated in practice into the social, political and religious systems and were the progenitors of many of the essentials of Indian culture.[20] Bhattacharya sums up Parasher-Sen's work: "...the forest people were feared but also tolerated: political thinkers of the time, in fact, preferred a policy of non-interference." [21]

As mentioned in the beginning of this section the detailed summary of some of the dominant pre-colonial constructions of tribes is given here so as to counter the argument that colonialism alone stereotyped the tribes. In fact, the connections with the pre-colonial dominant constructions and the colonial constructions can be seen with the introduction of caste as a defining category in understanding tribes. Probably, the definition of the tribe that later the colonialists arrived as "outside caste", and which they interpreted as "outside culture", might have direct connections to the pre-colonial way of defining what is "civilization" by the Brahminical and later Buddhist-Jain systems of thought.

Colonial Construction of Tribe in India

The colonial times saw large scale remoulding of the Indian society. It not only witnessed the introduction of the idea of a centralized State, but also changes in the native sensibilities. Very often, these changes were talking to and taking from earlier forms of power available in India. It was a dialogue between European constructions of categories and native constructions. Surely, they operated with a power difference between groups evolving the categories. All categories were remoulded to suit modernity. The category "tribe" was one such.

There were many institutions that were connected to the colonial production of categories. Among others, this broadly includes the colonial State, academic, especially anthropological writings, and missionary writings. It is not as if these are watertight compartments. In the works of a figure like Edgar Thurston is combined the administrator and the anthropologist So too, the figure of Verrier Elwin combined the philanthropic missionary and the anthropologist (curiously called "philanthropologist"). Moreover the State policies were very often determined by the impressions and discourses around the categories dealt with. They were serving as inter-textual material and were interacting with each other.

For detailed analysis, I plan to examine the State construction of the tribes in this part of the dissertation. The post-colonial Indian State's perception of the tribes was directly connected to the colonial construction of the tribe. Kamat proves this point in the following way:

> Scheduled Tribes list and Scheduled Tribe areas refer to the Government taxonomy of tribes introduced in 1950, though it is substantially based on the 1936 Census by the British Government. [22]

Therefore, it is quite clear that it is important to look at the colonial administrative category that emerged through their Census to get an idea of what the roots were of the post-colonial administrative category. The Census documents should be taken as one among many sites of the construction of the category though it does not claim to be exhaustive in any way.

As mentioned above, the pre-colonial times also had notions of the forest dweller, the city-dweller etc. However, what is argued here is that the "tribe" with its anthropological and evolutionary meanings of "not advanced" and lagging behind in the evolutionary scheme developed along with colonization and modernity. In India, the notion of the tribe developed as communities outside caste and there also developed definite notions of primitivity along with it. Also, the notion of hitherto unconnected

49

communities coming together was a contribution of the colonialists' homogenizing tendencies. This has also led to the post-colonial Adivasi identity creation.

There are different theoretical frameworks by which the British documents have been looked at by the disciplines of Humanities and Social Sciences. There has been works on the British Census operations itself. I find Nandini Sundar's summary of the different positions within Social Sciences quite useful for my purpose. I quote hen

> At the risk of considerable simplification, it is possible to range philosophical positions on classification into three broad camps. The positivist or objectivist camp sees classifications or categories as corresponding to some objective reality or concept. The prescriptive or constructionist school sees classifications as based on symbolic conventions or social constructions. Finally, there is a sort of middle ground, which claims an objective reality for its classifications and definitions, but recognizes that the apprehension of this reality is mediated by language, or by particular discourses, and will almost definitely be partial, selective and sociologically situated.[23]

As Ranajit Guha says: "It is the ideology of 'Statism' that gives the status of 'history' or truth to anything."[24] The positivist reading of British documents would do precisely that—give the legitimacy of "truth" to State documents. Without taking the State's version of history as truth, one can still take it as an important material to analyze the process by which "truth" is created.

The Enlightenment way of writing history, of keeping records as markers of truth is largely a Western way. I would like to see them as narratives—official narratives about people. I feel it is important to see the frameworks used by these narratives so as to understand the compulsions that produced particular representations that later came to get the legitimacy of "truth".

Thus, my analysis will be closer to the constructivist school of Social Sciences than the positivist school. However, the way in which this school has interpreted categories is also problematic. The agency of creation or invention is given mostly to the State agencies and the analysis almost takes it for granted that the British invented India

through the categories that make it up as an administrative unit. But I feel what was happening is that local constructions of categories were interacting with colonial notions and inventing themselves anew to suit the modern circumstances.

The Census as Discourse

The dissertation considers the Census, especially colonial Census as discourse that is primarily responsible for constructing the category "tribe". To repeat, I do not mean that the communities now designated with the tribal identity did not exist before the Census operations and that it was a "fictitious" creation. What I mean is that the idea that Bodos in Assam and Paniyas in Wayanad could be brought under the same column was something new. Significantly, the post-colonial term for the tribes is Scheduled Tribes. This is the new belief that that they both have essentially something in common. It is this claim of commonness, which was emerging in colonial India. Census provides a very important arena to analyze this commonness.

Census is the enumeration of people. According to a definition, "in the literal sense the term 'population Census' is primarily an official enumeration through a direct **risit** of all the people either physically present or regularly residing in a country of any of its subdivisions."[25] Taking the number of people was a modern concept connected to the management of resources and people by the State. It has certain presuppositions. 1. Governance is management of resources and people. 2. That it is important to have the data of people and resources for effective management. Census assumes importance in that it gives the necessary demographic data of governable people and resources.

Philosophically, it can be traced to the Enlightenment tradition of the State as the expression of the fully developed individual who consents to be enumerated as a population. The idea of people becoming a population is very much there in the act of Census taking. The governable subject who willingly submits to the mechanisms of the State power is the imagined subject of European Census.

51

But, the Indian Census, though drawing from these roots, does not imagine a hilly formed individual. Instead, what is enumerated is a wealth of communities. There are resistances to these classificatory processes, which are recorded, very often from perspectives, which are both pre-modern and therefore non-rational, or from local powers, which were contested and therefore disturbed by the act of Census taking. The classificatory methods used by the British, angered many a native subject.   Thus, the 1881 Census shows that the resistance of the Bhils against the Census operations had to be quelled by the deployment of the army because they were "superstitiously" against it. Risley's list of Indian castes, which was published in their supposedly hierarchical order, was contested vehemently by the Hindus. Rajendralal Mitra's publication of the caste names based on Sanskrit sources claims that they were engaging with the British in textual terms, but texts of their choice.

Census is not just the data of the number of human beings. It is the data of classification. And this classification gives us an idea about how the people are imagined to be divided. This means that while the British thought they were just recording the groups available in this country, what was happening was that they were defining and constructing through these classifications. They remoulded the communities.   This is why I say tribe is a modern category.

The Imperial Census makes visible an interaction of both the classificatory mechanisms of locally existing classifications of people and regions and the classifications as the British were used to at home. It takes it for granted that a particular self that sees itself as part of a nation (India) and a self, that sees itself as belonging to a particular religion, has already emerged. Yet it is the process of evolution that one finds rather than the taken for granted way in which these categories are used today.

Pre-history **of the Census**

Before we proceed to the examination of the construction of identities and where rhe tribe figures in this, a short pre-history of the Census in India ıs given below. The first All India Census was held in 1871. Before this, there were attempts by smaller administrative units to conduct Census. Bernard Cohn traces the early attempts at population estimation and the taking of Censuses from 1820-70. But he traces a pre-history to the Census-taking ın India 40 years before this. In a sense, the British had tried to collect information about the local regions from the time they started systematic collection of revenue. Thus in 1769 the British had appointed Revenue Supervisors for Bengal and Bihar. The governor of Bengal drew up instructions, which included collecting information on the history of the districts, history of leading families and their customs. For these factors affected the landholdings. Later, this developed ınto the gazetteers. The first gazetteer was Walter Hamilton's published in 1820 and can be taken as the pre-Census document. The first Census of the northwestern provinces was taken ın 1847. In 1853, it was repeated due to the inaccuracies of the first.

But the moment, which I wish to focus, is the moment of enumeration of tribes ın India--the time of the first Imperial Census. I begin my examination from 1871 onwards, which is the first All India Imperial Census. In many ways, the formation of the modern Census in India can be understood to have happened between 1871 and 1901.

The Terms Used in Census

I am giving a summary of the terms used from 1891 onwards. Both the 1872 and 1881 Census are described in detail in the following pages so I have not given them in rhe columns.

The Terms Used for Tribes in Various Census Reports[26]

Year	Term Used for Tribe
1891	"Forest Tribes" under "Agricultural and Pastoral Castes"
1901	"Animists"
1911	"Tribal Animists or People Following Tribal Religion,"
1921	"Hill and Forest Tribes"
1931	"Primitive Tribes"
1941	"Tribes"

The tribe finds a place as "Forest Tribes" in the 1891 Census. Their population is estimated to be about 16 million. In the Census report of 1901, they were classified as "Animists" and in 1911 as "tribal animists or people following tribal religion."

The Tribe and the Hindu

The history of the connection between the categories "tribe" and the Hindu religious identity goes back to the construction of both these identities. The beginning of the consolidation of these identities shares a common story. In short, to ask who is a tribe in this country necessarily forces us to ask who is a Hindu. This is because the Hindu has been defined in particular ways in the British documents and the tribe has been defined in this category's shadow.

It is clear that the British considered "religion" as a major identity, which had to be enumerated and categorized. This was probably the follow-up of how society was perceived back home in Europe. Apart from Christianity, the other religions, which they were familiar with, were of course Islam and Judaism. A prophet, a holy book and sacred places where the religion is supposed to have originated defined these religions. They were of course familiar with the subdivisions within Christianity itself, the division of churches in Catholic and Protestant lines.

But, it should be noted that though they understood the importance of religion they refused to enumerate it back home. In fact, they thought it was necessary to do so in India. R.B. Bhagat thinks it is because of different reasons, the colonialists had in

taking Census in both places. In Britain, the Census was introduced as a result of the debates on population and poverty in the second half of the 18th century. While Census operations in Britain had direct economic and perhaps welfare motivations, in India, it was "the desire of the colonial government to learn all it could about the people and the land under its control."[27]

In India from the beginning of Census taking itself, that is, from 1872, the first Imperial Census, the data about religion had been collected. The colonial Census of India had questions on religion, caste and race from 1872 onwards. Moreover, religion was used as a fundamental category in Census tabulating and data and this was published without any restraint.

"What is a Hindoo?"

In their innumerable efforts to define the category "Hindu", we can see the Census reporters losing their ground and slipping. They very readily accepted that they were not on sure grounds.

It is true that there was no language to understand the religious system that the British saw in this country. As Bourdillon writes in the 1881 Census:

> ...concerning some of the faiths exhibited in Bengal, there could be no doubt. They stand distinctly apart. Their creeds are capable of definite formulation, and their followers are an acknowledged people, and an appreciable body in commonwealth. The Sikhs and Mahommedans, the Jews and the Parsees have an individuality which is impossible to mistake. The Christians profess a faith which separate them from all other classes of the community, and the Buddhists and the Jains, though they have been said to possess much in common, differ from each other by such imperceptible relation, and are separated from each other by such impalpable partitions, that is impossible to say where one ends and the other commences, so that the border land between each one and the next is a misty valley, now **narrowing,** but always thick with the exhalations of ignorance and the fogs of doubt.[28]

Due to this confusion, Hindu was defined against Islam primarily. As the 1891 Census report unabashedly claims about Hinduism:

Primarily and historically, it is the antithesis of Islam, and thus includes all Indian forms of faith in which the uncompromising Unitarianism of the adherents of the prophet detected signs of the worship of idols.[29]

The fuzziness of the category "Hindu" made many a Census official eloquent. The default religion of this place was named Hindu. But, this does not mean that the Census officials themselves knew what it meant. It was in the process of being formed precisely in these pages of the Census among other sites. Thus, the perplexity of Beverly who wrote the Census report of 1871 is evident in his exasperated questioning: "What is a Hindoo?"[30] Baines who writes the Bombay report for the 1881 Census repeats it when he says: "Beginning with Hindooism as the religion of the majority, we are met at the outset by a not uncommon difficulty, that of definition."[31] Beverly, who asked the perplexing question, also admits defeat with the definition:

> No answer in fact exists, for the term in its modern acceptation denotes neither a creed nor a race, neither a church nor a people, but is a general expression devoid of precision, and embracing alike the agnostic youth who is the product of Western education, and the semi barbarous hill man, who eats, without scruple what he can procure, and is as ignorant of the Hindoo theology as the stone which he worship in time of danger or sickness.[32]

In this perplexity, he is clubbing completely different groups as one—the tribes and the "Hindoos", among many others, thus theoretically share a brief stint of being one. Yet, with all these confusions of whether they were Hindu or not, the tribes seem to have been finally declared *out* of the Hindu fold. In fact, there is resentment from the colonial authorities if they are included as Hindu in the categorization. In fact, to avoid confusions, the 1881 Census even considers "tribal" as a separate religious category. The Imperial Census report of the year complains against Madras that refused to show a single aboriginal in the religious category:

> Madras…does not show a single aboriginal in its religious classification, but it is unquestionable that in the Neilgherries there are races who, if they profess any religions at all, are nature worshippers and not Hindoos, Mahammedans, or any one of the religions shown in the Madras tables. I understand these aboriginals have been entered as Hindoo.[33]

These attempts to mark tribal identity as a religious category are also visible in the methodology of organisation of the reports. For instance, the 1871 Census does have data on "Hindus", "Sikhs", "Mahomedans", "Budhists and Jains", "Christians", and "Others". There is also division which says, "Religion not Known." It is true that the tribes might have been conceived of as belonging to the "Others", or "Religion not Known" category, apart from being included in "Hindus."

Yet, the 1881 Census is very different. Here we find that "Aboriginal Religion" is a religious category that occupies the third position as far as population is concerned, with 6, 426, 511 people as members. (Hindu and Mahomedan religions being the first and the second.) My argument is that the trials in the 1881 Census to include tribal identity as a religious category was to mark its difference with the Hindu religion.[54]

Here is how the "aboriginal" is defined in the 1881 Census:

A very large number of persons is shown in the Imperial tables under the somewhat dubious term, dubious so far as religious designation is concerned, "aboriginal." Those whom I have grouped together under this term in the religious classification consist of the aboriginal tribes, who, not having been converted to Christianity, or to Islam, or to the Hindoo belief, retain, if they have any religion at all, the primitive cult of their forefathers, adoring nature under the various forms or images they have chosen to select as representative of Deity.[35]

We can find the confusions in the birth pangs of the category "tribe" in the index of this Census itself. There is a mention of the aboriginals who are Christians. If aboriginal is a religious category, then this is a contradiction in terms. For, one religious identity usually excludes others. For instance, one cannot imagine a column for Muslim-Christians in the Census.

It was quite natural that the category "tribe" was displaying such confusions in the early years of its trajectory in the country-for all the categories, religious or otherwise, were in the process of evolving. They were evolving precisely in these pages. At the time of the first Census the religious identity itself was being formed and people returned

the columns for marking religions with a caste name or a sect name. A humourous quotation from the Census report proves the confusion which itself finally crystallized as various religions that we know of today. Interestingly, the quote is about who are today known as tribes:

> The Deputy commissioner of Ellichpur, writes as follows: "When the hill people were pressed for a reply as to what their religion was, sometimes after much parleying, they said either that they were Hindoos, or that they knew nothing about religion, that they were arani log, ignorant people. All they knew was they were Korkus by caste. In one instance, two Korkus, brothers, one gave the one answer, and the other, the second...Now yesterday at Chikkalda there were representatives of eight villages present. Of these I called six Korkus, one Gaolan and two Nihals. All of the Korkus, when asked what their religion was, commenced by naming all the gods they worshipped as above. When further pressed as to what name the religion had in which these gods were worshipped, five answered without hesitation, Hindoo, and one said he really could not tell. What could he, a Korku, know about his religious name? The Gaolan replied that he worshipped exactly the same gods the Korku did. What ever their religion was called, that was his. He did not know its name. Of the two Nihals, both said they worshipped exactly as the Korkus did the same God; but they could not give the name the religion was entered by. How should they know it? Asked if they knew anything of the religions Mahommadans and Hindoos professed, one replied that the "deos" being the same, he supposed their religion was a branch of Hinduism. The other thought they were more like Mussalmans, except that the latter abhorred pig's flesh, which they Nihals liked.[36]

There was a general sentiment among tribes to be enumerated as Hindus, perhaps because of the vagueness of the identity "Hindu", or because of local associations with the upper castes. The same Census complains of Berar report:

> Where 37,388 only are showing "Aboriginal" under religion, but in the Tribal statement, to be found at page 78 of the report, 164,981 are entered as aboriginals without distinction of religion. I must question whether the provincial authorities have rightly acted in showing so large a proportion of these aboriginals as Hindoos.

There is resentment when the tribes themselves ask to be enumerated as Hindus.

Thus Drysdale, referring to this topic, writes in the Central Provinces report

> The instructions to enumerators required they should as Gonds and all alike what religion they professed, and accept their reply as conclusive,

but the Hindoo agency were so influenced by individual views and prejudices, that a great variety of practice prevailed in the record of the religion of the hill tribes. The result however shows very clearly, there is, among the aboriginal races, a very general desire to be regarded as of the Hindoo religion. [38]

Yet, they were very clear of including the Dalit castes as Hindu even if they did not ask to be enumerated as such. Thus, it is reported in 1881 Census:

Another general doubt was what should be entered as the religion of debased castes like the Dher and Mang, who are generally ignorant of any religion except the superstitions of their caste, and are not admitted to the Hindoo temples. Many of the more bigoted High caste Hindoos employed as Census enumerators or supervisors objected to record such low persons as of the Hindoo religion. This was illustrated by numerous instances brought to my notice of such persons having been recorded as that of Dher. Mang or Chandal religion. Possibly some in their humility or ignorance may not even have claimed to be of the Hindoo religion. More probably they were not even asked. In my office they have all been tabulated as of the Hindoo religion, unless recorded as of some other recognized religions.[39]

The ignorance of the people was the ignorance of the category that was in the process of emerging--Hindu. Along with Hindu was also emerging the category under discussion--Tribe. It was the complexity of the forging of the categories in a particular way that one finds reflected in the Census pages.

Just to recount whatever has been discussed so far--Hindu has been defined against Muslim and other religions with Semitic properties. It has been seen as the default religion of the country. The tribes have not been included in the religion Hindu though constantly there are references to their closeness. In fact, even when the tribes themselves have specifically asked to be included in the category, they have been excluded from the category. Moreover, the brief trial at including the tribe as religion in the 1881 Census also shows that the British Census officials maintained the distinction between the Hindu and the tribes. At the same time, the Dalits have been without any doubt included in the category, Hindu. There are constant references to the

indistinguishability between the lower forms of Hinduism and the tribal religions. Yet, this distinction is made and also maintained between these groups.

This, I feel is important because of the way Hinduism was defined. It was defined as Brahmanism in its pristine form:

> What then is the text of faith which is to define the real Hindoo from the semi Hindooised aboriginal? Living for centuries side by side the two communities have acted and reacted on each other. On the one hand, the savage tribe have renounced their barbarism and adopted many of the rules and customs of the invader, on the other, the Hindoo religion has itself been debased from the Vedic monotheism of the middle land. Those who have made the subject their study, tell us that the Hindooism of the present day is as unlike the Hindooism of the Vedas.[40]

I feel, this argument is permeated by the absent presence of the criteria of defining Hindu religion—caste. The Census officials, like many other Britishers, felt the essential characteristic of the Hindu religion was caste. The ease with which the British excluded the tribes from Hindu was because they were conceived of as *outside* caste, and therefore as *outside* Hindu.

But, the Dalits were not given this opportunity of being seen as outside caste. In the eyes of the British, they were both united in a system that recognized communities placed in a particular hierarchy. The quotes from the Census do prove that they viewed caste as the distinguishing feature of Hinduism. For instance: "It is true that very high authorities have described caste as the "express badge of Hinduism."[41] Barthes is quoted in the 1891 Census to prove that "...this institution [caste] is not merely the symbol of Hinduism, but its stronghold and a religious factor of the very highest order."[42] Moreover, caste is defined as "the perpetuation of status or function by inheritance and endogamy."[43]

I feel, in the definition of tribes the distinction that the British made with the castes is crucial. Why did they not include tribes as part of the default order they found in this country, Hinduism? Why were they perceived as outside caste?

To seek answers for this, perhaps one should go back to the Enlightenment idea of the tribes that was being constructed in the West. As already discussed in the first chapter, the Western society, according to this worldview, was the fully developed society. Progress was marked in terms of how close you were to being the fully realized individual who enters into social contract with other individuals. State was this individual's social expression. In direct contrast was the society imagined to be practising primitive communism--the tribal society. In this hierarchy, caste was seen both as an expression of progress into a more complex power structure and falling short of being the fully individuated Western society. In this scheme of things, it was necessary to see the tribe as outside caste- therefore more egalitarian but also more primitive.

This is not quite a new argument. Many theorists have proved that by the mid-nineteenth century, this distinction between the caste and tribe was in place in India. As Ajay Skaria says: "By mid-nineteenth century, as is well known, colonial officials routinely distinguished between the castes and tribes of India, seeing the two as fundamentally different."*[4] My attempt was merely to see the process happening in the Census records.

Outside Hindu, Outside Caste

To summarize the argument so far, in India, the tribes have been defined *in contrast* to another category--caste. This section has seen its definition like that.

It is argued that the colonial machinery constructed India in relation to the identity of the British colonizers. Many studies proved that while the colonialists thought of the West as characterized by the rational self, India or the Orient, being its "other" was constructed as its' opposite. These arguments are elaborated by Edward Said's by now well-known arguments.[45]

Among all the countries in the Orient, India was seen in particular as spiritual. Among Indian Orientalists, we can trace two major streams---the Utilitarians and the

Romantics.[44] Both groups who were apparently against each other in their perception of India, agreed on one point—that India was basically Hindu. While Hinduism itself was portrayed as otherworldly and non-violent, the Utilitarians saw this as cowardice. The Romantics, on the other hand, saw this very character as gentleness that the Western rational self had lost in its march towards modernity.

If India was Hindu, and non-violence and spirituality were portrayed as characterizing the country's essential nature, its social expression was paradoxically seen in the hierarchical order of caste. Thus, like all other attributes, caste also came to define essential India. Again, both Utilitarians and Romantics differed in their interpretation of this order. The former saw it as a redundant system well suited to the successive conquests that India underwent. The Romantics tried to either justify *varna*, the "uncorrupted" theory of social stratification as a system that accords the station in life according to each person's inclination and abilities or saw *jati* as a fall from this pristine state.

One is struck by the absence of the category "tribe" in all these arguments about India. While the essential nation was being constructed, they were almost forgotten. This must be because, if the Orient is constructed as the "other" of the West, then the tribe is the "other's other". Thus, even in the construction of the Orient, there is a civilized orient and a primitive one.

To conclude, the difficulty of defining Hindu continues in a dogged way to haunt the definition of the tribe as well. It remains elusive and I hope the section above has proved it, with good reasons.

Notes

[1] Hotly debating the question of whether the Adivasis are Hindus a right wing website counters the missionaries, argument that they are of course Hindus this way. Prakash, "Nailing a Lie Floated by Missionaries", 14-04-2003.

[2] Quoted in Guha, S. 1995, 2.

[3] Wiercinski, 1996, 262.

[4] Xaxa, 1999 (b), 3589.

[5] Singh, 1996, 62.

[6] Xaxa, 1999 (b), 3589.

[7] Vidyarthi and Rai, 1976, 71.

[8] Xaxa, 1999 (b): 3589-90.

[9] Guha, S. 1999,8.

[10] Battacharya, 1999, 166.

[11] Singh, 1997,31.

[12] Thapar, 1978, 152-193.

[13] Thapar, 1978, 152.

[14] Thapar, 1978, 152.

[15] Parasher-Sen, 1999,173-191.

[16] Thapar, 1978, 159.

[17] Parasher-Sen, 1999, 177.

[18] Parasher-Sen, 1999, 179.

[19] Kautilya quoted in Parasher-Sen, 1999,179.

[20] Thapar, 1978,181.

[21] Bhattacharya, 1998,167.

[22] Kamat, 2001,30.

[23] Sundar, 2000, 113.

[24] Guha, R ,1997,1-12. He further goes on to say that the voice of the Adivasis is marginalized in the Statist discourse. Guha, R, 1997,12.

[25] Srivastava,1971,1.

[26] Table created based on the classification given in Verma, R.C, :1990,9-10.

[27] Bhagat,, 2003,686,

[28] Census of India, 1881,19.

[29] Census of India, 1891,158.

[30] Census of India, 1881,20.

[31] Census of India (Bombay Report), 1881,22.

[32] Census of India, 1881,20.

[33] Census of India, 1881,18.

[34] The other groups which are seen as separate religious groups like the aboriginals are Satnamis, Kabirpanthis, Nat Worshippers, Brahmos and Kumbhipanthis. Nat Wroshippers must be nature worshippers who again come under tribes. All the other groups challenged the British notion of Hinduism, either by questioning caste hierarchy like Satnamis or combined the imagined opposites of Hindu and Muslim as in Kabirpanthis.

[35] Census of India, 1881,18.

[36] Census of India, 1881,19.

[37] Census of India, 1881,19.

[38] Census of India, 1881,18.

[39] Census of India, 1881,18.

[40] Census of India, 1881,20.

[41] Census of India, 1891,182.

[42] Census of India, 1891,182.

[43] Census of India, 1891,182.

[44] Skaria, 1997,729.

[45] Said, 1991.

[46] Inden, 1986,401-446.

Chapter - 4

**The Construction of the Non-modern:
The Adivasi as a Site for the Anxieties of the Modern[1]**

> Earth is our place; this is the truth we have forgotten. What the civilized
> human being can forget the real inheritors of earth cannot. Now, when
> the humans are trying hard to create the right ecological awareness, there
> are some people who know the earth, know nature. Janu is their
> representative. Today, she is a sign, a symbol, a problem.[2]

Introduction

This chapter is an attempt to chart out how the debates against modernity have
tried to use the Adivasi as a site. Apart from other texts, this charting is attempted
through a reading of a K.J. Baby's novel *Maveli Mantam.* The text is read in the context
of the debates in Kerala on ecology and sustainable development especially after the
1980s. A reading of the novel in this context might provide us with a key to open an
important way in which the dominant culture uses the debates on Adivasi issues.

I have attempted to read two diverse and perhaps not usually compared texts for
this purpose. I have taken the environmental theorist Ramachandra Guha's articulations
on the Adivasis, especially his biography on Verrier Elwin and K.J. Baby's *Maveli Mantam*
for the study. The selection was made after a reading of many theorists on ecology and
parallel readings of many novels, which focused on the Adivasis, which appeared in
Malayalam.[5]

Guha's is a scholarly text, perhaps what can be described as an intellectual
biography of an eminent anthropologist. The other is fiction, a novel that uses the
technique of myth to express its own vision of a Utopia. Ramachandra Guha wrote in
English and his book was published in the nineties. *Maveli Mantam* on the other hand is
written in Malayalam and was published in the eighties.

With all these differences, the texts beg comparison. It is my contention that the
ideologies that informs both Guha's as well as Baby's texts are similar. Both can be

placed in an anti-modem rhetoric of retrieving the past. Both find Adivasis a platform to express their anxieties about modernity. They demand serious consideration and companson because this is a very common idea especially amongst the urban ecological debates.

A word on the term "anti-modem". Modernity has come under attack from many quarters, post eighties. Theoretically, the premises on which modernity has been built, the tenets of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity have been analyzed to reveal the non-inclusion of various groups. Poststructuralist critique on modernity has focused on the impossibility of complete inclusion under the banner of any Universal term. There has also been an essentialist critique of modernity. This group, I wish to call as "anti-modern." They have taken the critique from the poststructuralists, but have charted their own trajectory also. According to them, modernity itself is a problem. Modernity's efforts at universalizing, both philosophically and materially (through industrial revolution and colonization) is seen as its will to power. In India, this group is represented by Ashis Nandy who sees himself as defending the "innocence which confronted modern Western colonialism".[4] Though the anti-modernists might trace their lineage to Rousseau and even beyond, when I use the term, I mean specifically the post-seventies theorists. The related term "non-modem", points towards an imagination that these theorists have about a "pure" space uncorrupted by modernity.

These ideas are not particular to Kerala or India itself. The ideas that traditional societies did have the means of living a more sustainable life are quite common among ecologists. For instance the Norwegian politician who popularized the concept of sustainable development speaks thus:

> For generations, traditional cultures have lived in harmony and balance with the natural environment. People have managed to survive without compromising the ability of subsequent generations to satisfy their needs. Traditional cultures are generally characterized by their respect for and

ability to live within the constraints of nature. Such cultures regard the irrational use of natural resources as sin.[5]

In this scheme of things, the Adivasi issues become a site to express the dominant culture's own dread against a possible impending apocalypse, very often expressed in ecological terms.[6] In the context of Kerala, where the anti-modernity debates are quite powerful in intellectual circles, this examination, I feel, has deep significance.

Ramachandra **Guha and His Theorization on Adivasis**

Ramachandra Guha is an important theorist who has taken up the cause of the Adivasis in the academia. His famous biography *Savaging (be Civilized* is introduced in an advertisement as asking such important and relevant questions of the twentieth century as "...the future of development, cultural assimilation versus cultural difference, the political practice of post-colonial as opposed to colonial governments, and the moral practice of writers and intellectuals."[7]

A reading of his texts will be useful to understand and analyze the connection between the anti-modernity arguments and the connection they draw between Adivasis, ecology and anti-colonial struggles. The recent interest in ecology and Adivasi identity can also be traced to the conceptual understandings of the "new social movements." These connections, which are made are quite important since these represent to a large extent the eighties theoretical connection that is evolving between these categories.

I am limiting myself to his work on Verrier Ehvin, the anthropologist of modern India. He has published a biography of the anthropologist as well as a theoretical piece on how to read Ehvin in this context in *The Economic and Political Weekly.*[8] Both are extremely well researched works and perhaps one of the few pieces that combine archival history with the category of tribes. While admitting that he might be a pioneer in the writing of the history with a special focus on the category under discussion, especially

during the colonial times, it is also important for us to see how he has done this, and analyze the framework he has used for this.

A note of introduction about the style employed by Guha in writing the biography is in place. Paraphrasing is the usual style employed by him to speak about Elwin's life. As Guha himself says: "...the interpretation is in the saying."9 One engages with it almost as if it were a piece of literature, though the copious notes and references do remind one that it is part history, part life-story. Guha can be placed among such historians who take life-story as History. What makes the method interesting is that one does not know where Guha's own opinion comes through and where Elwin's opinions are aired. Guha's choice of the subject itself can be read as revealing his leanings. Elwin, a white missionary social reformer turned anthropologist is not important in himself for Guha. Rather, he uses Elwin to apparently speak about the subject matter that Ehvin returned, again and again in his works- the Adivasis.

Elwin is quite an important figure when one has to consider the history of policy of the Indian government towards the Adivasis. As Rudolph C Heredia points out, Nehru's Introduction to Ehvin's *Philosophy for NEFA* outlined the future policy about the Adivasis of India in general, and the Adivasis in the north-east in particular.[10]

Towards the end of the 20* century, with the rise of the new social movements, there has been a growing interest in ecology as well as in identities, especially subaltern identities, as a theoretical category. There are many diverse theoretical strands that have interacted with this. The essentialist schools have gone back to a pure non-modern position (theoretically of course!), drawing their sustenance from the cultural primitivists of the Romantic times in Europe. Many of the ecological arguments which keep going back to a lost Eden before modernity, and which keeps invoking the tribes as a lost world, have this very air about them. For instance, see the influential environmentalist

Anil **Agarwal** speaking about the "groups like tribals" living in "total harmony with the forests."[11]

It is in this context that one has to see Ramachandra Guha and his work. My own work draws a lot from the material that he has used for his research. His work has a surprising range and deals with apparently diverse topics like Ecology, struggles of the indigenous people, biographical writings, especially of anthropologists, forest history and history of cricket. One can perhaps see that the connecting link between these is the assumptions about modernity.

Before getting into what he has dealt with I would like to make an oblique entry point--what he has not dealt with! In other words, I would like to see the untold exclusions that the kind of work like Guha's necessarily has to make. It is not arbitrarily that one can speak of these exclusions also. If it is the situation of Adivasis that interested **Guha,** or if it is the anti-modernity argument that he wanted to propagate, then it becomes interesting why he left out some possibilities and took others. This I feel is a legitimate entry point to analyze why and how he has taken up the life and times of Elwin for detailed study.

There are three figures I want to consider whom Guha has left out from his detailed analysis of the tribal situation. The first is Kosi Elwin, Elwin's Gond wife. The second, Mohandas **Karamchand** Gandhi. A third figure is **Jaipal** Singh, the Adivasi leader who raised issues of tribal identity politically during the nationalist and post-independence times. These exclusions are not chosen randomly. They actually point to the subject that Guha has finally chosen and its inherent problems.

Kosi's exclusion as an issue has already been raised. The choice of the research topic raises questions about the politics of selection. If one wants to talk about Adivasis, why is it mat an anthropologist who worked among Adivasis becomes a more easily chosen subject than a **non-descript** "ordinary" Adivasi like Kosi? Arundhati Roy in her

defense of herself of Guha's attack, mentions that she would have been more interested in Kosi's life than Elwin's[12]. What she finds in the anthropological endeavours of self-search is a barely concealed will to colonize, like Conrad's.[13]   Guha claims that his project is one of recovery. He says the debates, which took place between Elwin and his contemporaries, though of national importance, have been long forgotten. Thus, it is definitely a project of resurrection. For he says, these are not irrelevant debates for today's India. Thus, Kosi would not have helped him reconstruct debates of "national" importance that have resulted in major policies of the nation. Roy in her feminist zeal is also hinting at a project of recovery. The life of a tribal woman who married and subsequently split from a white anthropologist who came to "study" her and her people. She is trying to suggest that the "objects" have more interesting life stories and histories than the anthropologists.

I feel Guha is quite justified in going back to the debates on the "aboriginals" that happened during and soon after India's struggle towards independence. The debates on assimilation and isolation, the policy of integration and protectionism, have determined the fate of these people for the past 100 years. It is important to go back to these debates placing them in the context of the formation of the nation.

But, I also feel that it is not just the reconstruction of "national" debates that would have pushed Guha to exclude Kosi's life. She is more a mute subject for him. She is the passive photograph, the confident woman who looks into his camera and allows her photo to be taken by an awe-struck historian reconstructing her life, among others. The romance with which he describes Kosi is unmistakable:

> It is late afternoon, the most written-about hour of the Indian day, the time the cows come home and the sun starts to set. "*Aap Kosi behan hain,*" we ask. "*Ji haan.*" She answers, "*wo hi hoon.*" Yes, I am Kosi. The moment will not return, so I ask her at once whether I can take a picture. She nods in assent, adjusts her sari, smoothens her hair, and pulls her *palloo* more closely around her head. The ease and grace, the sheer naturalness with

which she composes herself, takes my breath away, for she has not, I think, stood before a camera in half a century.[14]

For Guha and others in today's India, Kosi would not have represented the theoretical anxieties around modernity. She herself *is* the non-modern for Guha, and if we can believe Guha, for Elwin as well.

That prompts one to move on to Jaipal Singh. If it is the reconstruction of national debates on tribal policies, the one person who would have been of the greatest help to Guha is undoubtedly, Jaipal Singh. An Adivasi, very often compared to B.R. Ambedkar, Jaipal Singh can also boast of similar backgrounds and achievements like the maker of the constitution. His debates in the Parliament where he raised issues of the Adivasis are remembered to date. If Guha's project was to trace the history of policies related to Adivasis, then Jaipal Singh's is a striking exclusion. For, the choice of Elwin will immediately raise the question of why a non-Adivasi voice was given prominence when an Adivasi voice was readily available in history.

It is significant that Guha finds it more convenient to write a biography of Elwin rather than of Jaipal Singh, who almost at the same time as Elwin was raising crucial questions on tribal identity with an insider's perspective. Jaipal Singh was leading a militant movement in what is today Jharkhand, articulating the Adivasis' needs for more autonomy, both political and social.

In Guha's biography, Jaipal Singh comes as a fleeting presence. He only comes as a supportive voice for Elwin.[15] Guha recounts that the opposition to the policies outlined in Elwin's *A Philosophy for NEFA* came in the form of Lok Sabha debates between an Assamese member of parliament Hem Barua and Jaipal Singh. Here, Guha recounts that, Singh supported Elwin. I quote Guha: "'Dr Verrier Elwin,' he (Singh) reminded his colleague, 'is more Indian now than Shri Hem Barua. He is more tribal now than Jaipal Singh.'"[16] His references to Singh in his essay are also fleeting but

perhaps more telling. As part of building the atmosphere in which Elwin lived, Guha writes:

> But in the run-up to Indian independence, it was not Elwin alone who was concerned with the tribes. After the elections of 1937, Congress governments, while urging the scrapping of "Excluded Areas", commissioned a series of reports on the condition of the tribes, in belated recognition of a long neglect. Christian missionaries and the University anthropologists also contributed to this spurt of interest, while in Bihar a militant movement to distinguish aboriginals from Hindus was taking shape under Jaipal Singh, a tribal who had been up at Oxford at the same time as Elwin.[17]

Surprisingly, the exclusion of Jaipal Singh from Guha's analysis becomes even more stark because he deals with all the different representations of Adivasis; A.V. Thakkar's and Ehvin's debates, the former representing the Gandhian/Congress position, the missionary position as well as Ehvin's arguments with the anthropologists, represented by G.H. Ghurye. He only leaves out the Adivasi activist from his analysis.

There is one other reference to Jaipal Singh, when Guha describes the post 50s scenario where he casually mentions that Singh had already joined the Congress.[18] In Jharkhand itself, there is now a studied distancing from Jaipal Singh because many feel that he had betrayed the Adivasi cause by finally compromising with the Congress. Is this the reason why there was no consideration of Singh's trajectory by Guha? Or, is it some other reason?

Even as we leave these questions unanswered, another figure Guha had not taken up for detailed analysis rises before us—Gandhi. It will not be obvious why Gandhi should be treated as an exclusion. For, he had little to say about Adivasis. According to Guha himself, Gandhi, when once asked why he had paid little attention to the tribes, replied: "I have entrusted that part of our work to A V Thakkar."[19]

I want to consider Guha not taking up Gandhi as a figure of analysis, because he is deeply respected, and now being recovered by many theorists who analyze the social problems of India and other third world countries as connected to the imposition of a

71

Western modernity.[20] Thus, it is strange and quite surprising that he does not deal with this figure. For this school, Gandhi is the most convenient figure because of a variety of reasons. He represents not just the will to power of the Indian bourgeoisie that culminated in the birth of the Indian State in 1947, but also its discomfort with the very modernity that was the legacy of its masters. Thus, in the figure of one person is combined the urges of nationalism and anti-modernity at the same time.[21]

Gandhi never dealt with tribes as he dealt with the emotionally close (for him) issue of untouchability. In his whole career, his efforts were to keep a united front of Hindus against the British colonialists.[22] He mainly addressed the caste Hindus and appealed to their conscience in which he had immense faith. But, the changes he sought were reformist in nature and not radical. He wanted to retain a form of *varnashramadharma* with caste divisions on occupations remaining the same. He justified this with the clever shift of argument about the dignity of all labour, when it was clear beyond doubt that there were groups forced into lifestyles and professions which cannot but be termed undignified. While he speaks about a lost wholesome world, he infuses it with a Hindu religious colouring and names it *Rama rajya*.

He never took up the issue of the Adivasis as he claimed to take up the women problems and *"harijans"*. Perhaps his identification with the Hindu might have prevented him from addressing the Adivasi problem. For, the Adivasis were, from the beginning defined, as outside the Hindu folds by the colonialists and Gandhi also seems to have accepted this definition. Moreover, he was dealing with the problems of women and Dalits also because he saw a scope of reform within the Hindu fold since the colonialists were using these examples of inhumanity in Hindu society to continue the rule of the Empire. Probably because of these reasons the tribes were marginalized in the rhetoric of the nationalists as well because they figured nowhere as "burdens in the upper caste Hindu conscience."

But let me come back to why Gandhi does not appear as an interesting personality for Guha to work with. Interestingly, Gandhi does figure quite importantly in his narration of Elwin's intellectual journey. In fact, he emerges as a figure to be rejected. While tracing out Elwin's life, Guha does give a lot of importance to his break with Gandhi. Elwin's initial enthusiasm for Gandhi peters out once he starts his life amongst the tribes. Once Elwin's honeymoon with the missionaries ends so does his sermonizing life. Alongside this, he also starts questioning Gandhi, especially his ideas on sexuality. Guha rightly approves of Elwin's rejection of the social service mode that Gandhi advocated. In Gandhi's scheme, the Adivasis were people to be uplifted and improved. This stage in Elwin's life is portrayed as an explorative one, where he is experimenting with sex and relationships with women.

But Guha does not at all find it problematic that Elwin takes the tribal women as his site for explorations. It is after Gandhi comes between Elwin's first choice of a life partner, that Elwin enters into a stage of random experiments with the body.[23] The language in which Guha describes this definitely does not bring out the relative power difference between a White, male, anthropologist/philanthropist in a third world tribal area and the tribal women who are around. Any relationship that develops will also necessarily be inscribed in these contours. Yet, it is the "freedom" of the tribal culture, especially in contrast to the rigid Hindu and Christian cultures that is celebrated. Elwin is portrayed as a student, humbly learning in the school of liberated and natural Adivasis.

Elwin and Gandhi represent respectively two different streams of anti-modernity positions. The "Mahatma" would definitely not have approved of Elwin's numerous experiments with the body for numerous reasons. One of the reasons would be the condescending way in which the upper castes look down upon any other culture and their code of conduct. Gandhi's urge to "reform" does smack of this kind of a condescension and I feel, Elwin's rejection of Gandhi on this basis is justified.

73

Yet, while one agrees that other codes (other than that of Victorian rigidity) of sexual behaviour do and have existed, one also becomes wary of the free celebration of "liberated" Adivasi sexuality. This very stereotype is used in justifying the continued exploitation of tribal women's bodies.[24] Men who want to experiment with their sexuality find the exotic "other" women, who for various reasons do not or cannot afford to have rigid moral codes like the women from the elite groups, to be always their first "teachers" in such matters.

This takes us to the gender and race angle involved in the resurrection of a White, male anthropologist in an unproblematic way. An earlier Elwin might not be too displeased with the allegation or attribution that his marriage to an Adivasi actually proves his closeness to the tribals as a group.[25] He published an essay entitled "I Married a Gond" where he describes in great anthropological detail his wedding to Kosi according to Gond customs.[26] But, after a bitter divorce with Kosi, he decided to be more reticent about academically proclaiming his love for the Adivasis. Guha quotes the correspondence between a scholar who wrote an essay on Elwin and Elwin himself. In the essay, the scholar had praised Elwin for his choice of an Adivasi woman as wife, and said that it showed his appreciation of the tribal people. By now, Elwin was visibly embarrassed about this kind of an interpretation. He wrote back saying that this reference to his private life was in bad taste and also "...the fact that I could marry two or twenty tribal girls would not necessarily give any indication of my appreciation of the tribal people in general but would merely suggest that in erotic matters I was not limited by racial considerations."[27]

The earlier interpretation of the tribal culture, as more free and closer to nature, and therefore liberating in sexual attitudes has another implication. To portray any culture as more or less liberating than modernity is already entering into a theoretical problem because the discourse happens within modernity, using its scales and terms. To

compare, we are going back (or into imagingary (utopias) and trying to read cultures that were functioning with different codes for good and bad. It is not that comparisons are absolutely impossible, but the easy way in which certain cultures are seen to be "more" liberating does not take into account, the culture under study might not share our ideas of liberation at all.

I feel that the tribal woman is also very often made a site in this manner. The ideal situation of an untouched tribe is very often invoked in many a discussion about them. Sexuality of the woman (tribal) serves to score some point over modernity for the discussant. In itself, however problematic it is, it becomes more so when one understands that there is also a comparison involved between tribes themselves, then one gets at the nature of this nostalgic going back to a free primitive sexuality.

As Guha says, for Elwin there are pure and fallen tribes. This binary informs his works. And Elwin serves as a spokesperson for the "pure" tribes, a culture that is fast going off. Though Guha elicits from Elwin's writings this binary, he does not work towards deconstructing it, but he elucidates it further. He finds out the character of this "pure" tribal from a reading of Elwin's works. He finds out that Elwin's "pure" tribal has an absolute connection with the forests/nature, has a joyful rather than guilt ridden relation with sex, because of this perhaps the tribes treats their women with respect; children, irrespective of their gender are loved and cared for and there is a definite idea of unity and solidarity, a community feeling among these tribal. Moreover, Elwin's idea of the tribal life is marked by a kind of democracy where decisions were taken in consensus rather than on the basis of representation. Equality did not mean uniformity and boredom and each month there was a sharp break with some celebration or the other, which allowed the Adivasi to indulge in dancing and drinking, a symbol of the joy of life.

Guha's self-confessed attempt is to try and save Elwin from the parody he has become, as a supporter of the idea of isolation for the tribals. He proves through the biography the changes that the idea of isolation undergoes in Elwin's own career. Guha says that Elwin, unlike what his critics never tire of repeating, was not for complete isolation of Adivasis. According to him, after Elwin's critics, both from the academia and from the nationalist camp attacked him, Elwin clarifies his position on the much-misunderstood concept of isolation. He says that it was only for the Adivasis who were living in relative isolation that this policy was to be adopted. Moreover, it was not for ever that he foresees isolation as a policy for the tribes. Once India gained independence, Elwin was forced to accept the nationalist story of assimilation so that his own identity as a racial outsider was not to be questioned. He regretted the unfortunate word "zoo" which he used in connection to the isolation of some Adivasi groups. He later clarified that he did not like the idea of zoos where the animals were not in their natural settings and was arguing for just the opposite-to leave the wild and the untamed free.

In his elucidation of Ehvin, Guha proves more than ever that Elwin was for a "pure and unfallen" tribal culture that he saw in quite essentialist terms. Perhaps his capsule form of dealing with Elwin's ideas of a pure tribe is very useful in deconstructing these very notions. I have already attempted to deconstruct the idealized notion of Adivasi woman's sexuality that the anti-modernity theorists have in this chapter. The political implications of many of the ideas which idealise the tribes and resurrects a "noble savage" are similar.

Just to take one more example–the most important one I feel, connected to the Adivasis: the Forest. It occupies the pride of place among the various attributes associated with the unfallen tribe. The relationship between the Adivasi and the forest is supposed to be an essential one, where one cannot survive without the other. In this

76

notion, the Adivasis' not-yet-lost connection with the forest allows him/her to practice a self-sufficient life style. Only there, can they have a liberated notion of sexuality and therefore not try to put controls over their women-folk. Only in this scheme will children be seen as community responsibilities and hopes, not the burden and private (and therefore obsessive) possessions of nuclear families. This culture is also imagined to possess a community consciousness, which is more sophisticated than the individual rights concept of modernity, where decisions are arrived at on the basis of a limited representational politics. In the imagined life-style of the community-oriented groups, decisions are arrived at on the basis of consensus, and this magically seems to dissolve the violent differences arising out of representational politics, which anyway does not represent all the interests. Moreover, it has the added advantage of not alienating individuals. The monotony of modernity which brings along with it uniformity is also not there in the community existence.

Somehow, it is a Utopia that manages to contain within it all the positive claims of modernity (like democracy and individual growth etc.) without having its negative aspects. How all this is executed in various communities is never studied, but it is a taken-for-granted proposition in these theorists.

One way this is achieved is by studying cultures as isolated. Thus, tribe after tribe are studied as if other groups do not matter in their scheme of things, whereas, the particular tribal identity itself might gain meaning *only* with the interaction and comparison with other groups, both tribal as well as non-tribal. Even a peripheral knowledge of Wayanad, through its history and fieldwork convinces one that this is the condition of Adivasi identity (perhaps any social identity). Though at this stage I am not in a position to generalize, I suspect, this will be the case in most of the other areas as well.

Another problem is that the marginal voices within the community are given scant attention by these theorists. Or, they are dismissed as having been corrupted by the influences of modernity. One of the critiques against communitarian thinking has consistently come from women of marginalized sections. One can perhaps take the questioning coming from the Dalit women's side as symptomatic of the questions that can be raised from within other identiy movements as well. Indira Jalli and Swathi M Margaret, while accepting many precepts of the Dalit movement and the mainstream women's movement, also criticize them for not accepting the Dalit woman's identity as a conceptual and analytical category.[28] These identitarian critiques are completely ignored by the worshippers of non-modernity.

As Sangeeta Kamat who has unleashed a scathing critique against this model of looking at tribes says:

> The ideal of the "tribe" has provided for the production of images of organic cultures and identities, detached from the more differentiated and modern set of political, economic and social relations typified by caste, religion and commerce. Such theorizing predicated as it is on an image rather than an actually existing situation has allowed both for a romance with, and a rejection of, tribals. The modern subject's nostalgia for a "lost" state of freedom, on the one hand, and its censure of the non-modern on the other, coalesce around this image. Thus, debates among Indian anthropologists have tended to operate •within the dualism of tribal as "noble savage" who must be protected from the ravages of modernity and tribals as 'primitive' needing to be urgently assimilated into the State processes of a developing society. As such the binary represents the continuation of colonial thinking in a postcolonial context, where the Colonial/National self battles over the fate of the Exotic other.[29]

It is my contention that the new environmental movements draw mostly from this kind of stereotyping though many of them might be seeing themselves as valorizing, rather than denigrating the tribes. But, this valorizing, again as Kamat points out, loses out on history and does not consider the Adivasis themselves as subjects and agents of history. Guha's problems with Gandhi, if connected to a rejection of Gandhi's "reformative" urge, especially regarding the "degraded sexuality and drinking habits" of

the tribes, does not become pointed because he takes Elwin as representing the alternative. This is the same contradiction that new environmental movements also contain.

The binaries, which have informed the State policy discourse on the tribes, range between protectionism from corrupt modernity to immediate assimilation into the dominant groups. These two are diametrically opposite discourses. The contradiction is evident when theorists are trying to grapple with the situation after years of study also. Thus, Bipan Chandra's analysis of those times rings with this contradiction: "The *preservation* of tribal people's rich social and cultural heritage lay at the heart of the government's policy of tribal *integration*.[30]

The very act of integration was against the preservation motive. But the tribal policy was supposed to contain both. Perhaps, the confusion in the Nehruvian policy of slow assimilation was precisely this--that it tried to bring opposing paradigms in one instance. Chandra says that Nehru rejected both the approaches of isolation and assimilation. The approach of keeping the tribes in the "non-modern purity" as museum pieces to be written about, he thought was an "insult" on them. Moreover, isolation, even if desirable was impossible at this stage. But neither did he want them to be 'engulfed by masses of Indian humanity."[31] But I feel, rather than a rejection of these two approaches, it was a combination of both. As an administrator, he could not be an aesthete and an academician like Elwin. (However much the latter influenced him.)[32] He believed in a principle of slow assimilation of the tribal people into the mainstream. He believed that they would choose the pace.

It is not surprising that given the virulence with which these ideas on the tribes were fought on the intellectual arena of pre-independence India, these two approaches had to pit themselves as the only way to see these communities.

The analysis of the Orientalist discourse on India can provide a useful entry point into the analysis of the binary in which the Adivasis were forced to function in India, i.e. the binary of protection and integration. India was seen by the colonizers either as barbaric or boasting of a better history than Europe. Though there were many schools among the Orientalists, finally what remained were these two opposing camps that defined themselves against each other. Though there was enough valorization of India's past, the **golden-Vedic-past** school also agreed to the corruption that had befallen that great civilization and in effect did not make any attempt to speak against colonization of the land. The valorization of an alien culture was convenient for them who were intellectually questioning their modernity. The breaking of spiritual sources of respite due to modernity in the West is supposed to have opened up the Eastern religions and cultures as alternatives to the jagged Christianity bogged down by the Church.

One of the main sites where the nation was constructed was the Orientalist texts dealing with India. There are many theories about the Orientalist constructions of India. According to the Saidian notion, the Orient was constructed to justify the colonization by the Western civilization.

There are so many connections between how the Orientalists considered India and the nativist scholars are regarding the Adivasis now. The Orientalists had brought into play the "epochal deployment of time" as Tharu and Lalita put it. To quote them:

> The Indologists regarded the three thousand years that followed the Vedic culture age as degeneration. But since the spiritual power of ancient India was also prescribed as the cure for contemporary ills—in a gesture that connected the present directly to this, past-the entire span of India history from the Vedic period until the nineteenth century froze into a single ill.[33]

This is exactly how the tribes have been considered by the neo-primitivists. In fact, Elwin is even compared to an Orientalist by Guha himself. For instance, Guha spells out his mission in writing the biography quite clearly in the very first pages itself.

He places his work in the context of the different kinds of history writing available - the British variety that sees the adventures, and sacrifices and the gallantry of the colonial authorities in the figures of Younghusband or Mountbatten, or the Indian nationalist who sees the triumphant struggle against the White masters. Or yet again, the subalternist historian who is trying to recover the small voice of history obliterated by either schools. Guha thinks all groups sees history as the struggle between the White and the Brown and cannot account for the complexity that he feels persons like Elwin represent. But immediately, the figures he compares with Elwin are Annie Besant and he uses Shiv Viswanathan's term "the other side of Raj" to refer to these figures.[34] Annie Besant is now seen to be an orientalist who was not questioning the caste hierarchies in India at all and her contribution to the history of India's elite is duly acknowledged. It is not as if she is forgotten in nationalist history at all. Yes, Guha does mention in passing that Besant knew only "one kind of India."[35] Elwin is a more complex figure. But it is also clear that his complexity will be seen in the context of Indian nationalist historiography. As Guha himself puts it

> To write about Verrier Elwin is to throw fresh light on men of influence like Gandhi and Nehru, to focus once more on forgotten and oppressed peoples, to travel through all parts of India, to anticipate (by decades) current ideas of religious dialogue and cultural pluralism, to explore the practice of governments colonial and nationalist. In his life, and more so in his work, some of the great debates of the twentieth century find eloquent expression. A book on a man as public and controversial as Elwin shades the difference between self and society, biography and history.[36]

What is the effect of resurrecting a figure like Elwin in today's political milieu in India? What are the debates that are feeding into this? What is the effect of this on tribes themselves? These are questions to be asked.

The connection between the Orientalists of India and the romantic viewing of tribal life is the consideration of the tribes as having been frozen in time-and of existing without any connection with history. Many studies draw direct connection between the

Stone Age and the present existing tribes. For instance, many works on Wayanad will mention that the Edakkal caves are is supposed to be from the Megalithic period and then try to see connections between the present tribes of Wayanad.[37] If they fail to do so, they only blame it on the corruption of the Adivasis rather than rethink the framework of freezing living cultures onto a past time. The famous thesis of Johannas Fabian on the time and the other (also the tide of his book) is relevant here.[38]

The forest, in this scheme of things becomes a space frozen in time and history that Guha chooses to leave without comments. The essential connection between the Adivasi and the forest has been a favourite theme with the new environmental movements. It is portrayed as space, not just of physical sustenance but also of emotional and spiritual sustenance. The crisis in global environmental scenario has led people to search for alternatives for a capital and resource-over use centric mode of living, among other "non-modern" lives. The Adivasi of course comes out as a "natural" choice. But the implications for this mode of thinking on the Adivasis themselves are quite serious.

Perhaps one can say that Elwin represents the complexity of the debate that has centered around Adivasis in India—of autonomy and isolation. There was no way questions of political and social autonomy of the marginalized sections can be asked independently as far as Adivasis were concerned during Elwin's time. They had to be necessarily combined with questions of isolation. Perhaps, during Elwin's times it was also the easiest possible way to deal with questions of autonomy that the Adivasis are raising right now in India. It is unfortunate that the debate got bogged down in their life styles which has to be "preserved" not just for them but for the whole of humanity.

In one way, Guha is absolutely right, that the great debates of the twentieth century were codified in one life. But, the tragedy of Adivasi existence, perhaps anywhere in the world is that these questions come together. As long as questions of

isolation are not articulated politically by the Adivasis themselves, they remain the soul searches of the white anthropologist in search of the exotic other, to valorize, to worship and even love. But, it ceases to see these groups as agents of history and of struggle, even of negotiation. It becomes a requiem for a lost world, a nostalgic and already doomed attempt at preserving the Utopia of humanity's pasts.

Moreover, with the combining of environmental theories and an interest in the indigenous technologies, this becomes a site where the Adivasi has to preserve his/her own life style not just for the sake of "science", but also as a survival mechanism for other mainstream cultures. This in itself might now sound problematic.

But, when one considers the fate of other "sites", which have preserved culture for the sake of others, then the problems related to this viewpoint becomes clear. The dominant caste woman was forced into this role by the nationalists to oppose the white colonialists. She became the repertoire of Indian values and culture.[39] This also gave the dominant caste woman a set of peculiar problems related to "Indian" femininity defined only as motherhood and chaste wifehood.

I wish to end this section with a recounting of a contemporary event in Kerala and how these debates actually impinge on the daily struggles of Adivasis. The Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha had formed as part of the ongoing agitation for land that was articulated by the Kerala Adivasis. For the first time in the history of the Kerala Adivasi a regional/state identity of the Adivasi became possible politically.

One finds the strange phenomenon of both the Adivasis and the non-Adivasis, supporting the issue as well as opposing it, taking recourse to the same rhetoric of the Adivasi's essentialised connection with the forest. C.K. Janu in a personal interview said: "If you make land into a human being, then that human is the Adivasi." Her biography also draws direct connection with the Adivasi and the land. Though there are many

quotations about the land struggle I have chosen a paragraph which draws a symbolic connection between her Adivasi self and the land/earth. I quote from the book:

> When we were young, there was no mirror in our huts. I first saw a mirror when I went to work at Vellamundu, to look after a child. It had a wooden handle. Some parts of it looked fungus-covered. In those parts I could not see my reflection. On returning from Vellamundu, in our hut, on the back wall, a piece of mirror was stuck with dung. A small piece of mirror. We stick seeds for future use like this on the walls of the hut. I do not know who had pressed the mirror piece like a seed on the wall. Because the mirror was a small piece I could now see myself completely in it; only some parts were reflected. Must buy a whole mirror. [40]

The mirror can also be read as an oft-used image for the self is employed here to show a fragmented, still forming individual self. This self is likened to the seeds on the walls of her childhood. It is self, her Adivasi self, connected to land, to the earth, and to the dung where the seeds are stuck.[41]

The non-Adivasis who were expected to support the struggle for land did not actually do so. For instance, Sugathakumari, a famous poet from Kerala had written a number of articles supporting the Adivasi cause.[42] But, when the Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha decided to take over the Muthanga sanctuary as part of the struggle, Sugathakumari was the first to protest, saying the sanctuary was the habitat of the endangered elephants and the Adivasis should give up their rights over forestland. Moreover, the Prakruthi Samrakshana Samithi, the ecologists of Kalpetta has served legal notice to C.K. Janu and others for encroaching on forestland.

These arguments serve to draw attention to the Adivasi-forest connection. The very people who were speaking of such a connection are now opposing the struggles of the Adivasis. Rather than showing that it is a contradiction that has happened without any special reason, we should see it as the expression of an inherent contradiction in the arguments of the ecologists who see the Adivasi a site for their struggles.

It is keeping this context in mind that I would like to analyze a text written in Malayalam which takes up the Adivasi identity as a major point of delineation.

Maveli Mantam

This part of the chapter will examine the text, *Maveli Mantam* in the light of the arguments evolved in the previous section of the chapter. This analysis of the text is also a re-look at the essentialist debates on the connection between the Adivasis and a harmonious life with nature, especially in the context of Kerala of the 1980s.

K J. Baby is known in Kerala for the alternative educational institution for Adivasi children. He is a non-Adivasi activist and thinker who is right now engaged in the running of an experimental school in Nadavayal, Wayanad for Adivasi children. The school is named *Kanavu,* which means "the dream". Teaching stresses the image of the dream, or utopia, a powerful symbol which keeps recurring in his novel also. In a way, Baby's play with reality and fiction (which is the subject to be analyzed in the following section) seems to be continuing in his various identities as a social activist, educationist and creative writer.

Kanavu is also seen as an experiment in preserving the threatened Adivasi culture for the children from these communities. As Baby himself elaborates:

> …I believe strongly that learning of history is not the knowledge of various Kings and monarchs and their numerous attempts at reform, colonization or descriptions of the battles they fought. Nor is it the eternal love story of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz. That can also be history, that is all. Beyond all this, is the understanding of one's own culture and capturing one's destiny.[43]

Thus, cultural revivalism is seen to be an important part of teaching in *Kanavu.* The same revival is seen to be connected to ecological knowledge systems.

Maveli Mantam won the prestigious Kerala Sahitya Akademi award for the best novel in 1984. It was hailed as a bold experiment in the use of language and in Kerala, this was seen to be novel and daring. In a way, in Kerala, it has become a canonical text

as far as the subject of the representations of Adivasis is concerned. These are all, I believe, reasons for taking the text as an important site to see the representation of the Adivasis.

The following trial is a sketchy attempt to introduce the complex text in a capsule form for the non-Malayalee readers. It deals with the Adivasis of Wayanad—especially the Adivasi community enlisted as Adiyas in the Indian Constitutional Schedule. They are also called Ravulas, the name by which the community calls itself.[44] *Maveli Mantam* can safely be characterized as Utopian fiction. It is the mythical search for the land of Maveli which serves as an image for an Adivasi ideal/utopia.

The story behind the myth of Mahabali is circulated in the mainstream society of Kerala. It goes like this:

According to the myth, Mahabali, or Maveli as he is popularly known in Kerala, was an Asura King. His rule was famous as the rule of the just. The Brahmin boy Vamana, an incarnation of Vishnu was sent by the jealous Devas to destroy the Asura King. Vamana asked for three steps of land from the generous Mahabali. Unsuspectingly he complied. With the first step, Vamana measured the whole of the earth, with the next, the heavens. For the third, the just King showed his own head. Vamana sent him to the pathala, or the netherworld. Once a year, Mahabali is supposed to visit his subjects to enquire after their well-being.

This myth is also behind the festival of Onam celebrated in Kerala. The songs behind the festival celebrate the oneness of people, the lack of cunning and dishonesty and the equality mat prevailed among the subjects of Mahabali. It is definitely a theme for Utopian writers.

The time dealt with in the novel revolves around a historical happening--during and after Pazhassi's revolt against the East India Company. This happened in the last part of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. The main incident in

86

the novel is the selling and subsequent escape of a slave Kaippadan from his master's field. He also takes his lover, Ira, with him. Thus, the text serves as an exposition of the oppression unleashed on the Adivasi slaves by the masters and the trials of the slaves to escape this oppression. The novel also progresses through memory and the talks between two old people, Jevaran and his sister, Mutha. Finally, there is a reunion of all the Adivasi characters in the woods, where they exchange ideas of alternatives to the world in which they find themselves.

The text uses the myths of Ravulas to explicate the vision given. The myth of *Maveli Mantam* serves as the central organizing principle of the text. The myth of the Maveli Mantam is analyzed here to see what the non-modern alternative and the role of the Adivasis are in this narrative.

The novel progresses building on certain binaries and trying to find a fictional resolution through their delineations. For the sake of analysis I have divided them into binaries of reality and fiction which I have taken as organizing the whole text. The other sub-binaries come under this main difference which is built. For instance, the difference in language between the language of myths or music and the language of swearing, the state of slavery and the state of escape, the condition of being brutish and the condition of being human, ignorance and knowledge, and factual history versus mythical time—all this are connected to the reality-fiction binary. The central myth of the Utopia creates "our world" as opposed to the reality which is the *thampuran's* (the master's) world. The field where the Adivasis experience servitude and the forest where they experience freedom is also contrasted. The following section tries to get into the text through an analysis of these binaries that shape the text.

Reality and Fiction: The Constant Tension in the Text

One of the main binaries that determine the organization of the text is the binary of reality and fiction. This binary, expresses itself in the form and content of the text.

The text itself provides a theoretical explanation for the presence of the mythical elements in it. The following excerpt from the text proves this.

This happens at a stage in the narrative when a boastful Ravula man, Kakkiri claims that he, in the middle of some commotion between two groups of slave owners, had broken the sacred thread of a Brahmin as well as scratched the skin off his back. But others dismiss his claims, as Kakkiri is known to be an empty windbag, a coward, who was hiding in the woods when the commotion was happening. An argument starts about the truth of the matter. Jevaran, another character, in his old man's wisdom thinks:

> Whether it is truth or fiction, it is great mat Kakkiri felt like saying that. Only when you think like that can you speak like that. Let many such thoughts flower. Let many a thread of the Brahmin break. Let many of their backs break.[45]

This can be read as the claim made by the text too. It also throws light on the interspersed technique of using reality and myth, the form adopted by the text. It is a political choice to intersperse the form of the text with both--history and desire. It is the central idea of Baby's vision of *Maveli Mantam*. Whether it is truth or fiction, let such thoughts flower. It does not matter, so long as the thought itself is there. This play with truth and fiction is there throughout the organization of the text and appears to be a political choice for the author.

The Reality Effect in the Narrative

For instance: the text is very much like an ethnographic text with Adivasi songs almost quoted in full. Baby has given the *Pulappattu*[46] of the Ravulas in various parts of the text. Each time the lay reader encounters difficulty, the text provides footnotes. This makes the novel resemble a collection of folksongs and ethnographic information about the Wayanad Adivasis.

Also, the novel ends with an appendix, a very important part of the text itself. There is a photocopy of an original court order in Malayalam. The judgment of the

Wynad Munsiff court dated 1834, file number 92 is quoted in full. This endorses the pawning of the lower caste labourer, Kaippadan for Rs.8 to Meethale Ayyassami Pattar by Kammath Edechana Achu.

This gives the reader a sense of the times, and the impersonal bureaucratic language of the courts, which so coldly stand by when a human life is "sold" as an unimportant commodity while two people settle their accounts. Baby moreover assures us that this small piece of paper disturbed him enough to write a novel about the incident in the appendix itself.

Moreover, there is an acknowledgement naming his "sources" which many creative writers do not do. It is almost like that of a thesis acknowledgement. The novelist gratefully remembers the people, who have parted with their stories, which has led to the writing of the novel, many of them, Adivasis. They are remembered along with the intellectuals who have helped Baby in conceptualizing his text, in some way acknowledging their equal importance.

The novel has combined various narrative strategies— of academic writing, history writing and folklore (ethnography) writing. It even uses archival research. It can also perhaps be seen as a creative use of language parodying how the Adivasis have figured in the dominant group's writings. It uses all the strategies of the dominant culture, especially its ways of speaking, but uses it for a different purpose.

Reality also comes to the reader not just through the form of the text, but also through its thematic divisions. The terrifying slavery to which the Adivasis are subjected is described in great detail and this evokes the effect of reality. Each part of their lives are delineated in a repetitive way so that the reality of slavery in its everyday form strikes the reader's minds.

The Reality of Work

One such theme is the work done by the slaves. The detailed recounting of all the work done, along with the feelings behind the doing of repulsive work is clearly mentioned in the novel. The work ranges from physical to sexual labour.

When Mutha suspects that Kaippadan is sold off to some other *thampuran*, she speaks about all the work he does, counting them one by one. It is like a ritual chant, but what enters the mind is the repetitive and tedious nature of Kaippadan's work.

In a similar vein, the Adivasi woman's work is recounted by an irate Ira who refuses in her mind to go to work at least the day Kaippadan disappeared. She thinks:

> Let whoever wants clean the yard and the house of the master,
> Let whoever wants wash the dishes.
> Let whoever wants prepare the medicine mix for the master's head and
> the lady's scabs.
> Let whoever wants clean their shit today.
> Let whoever wants pound the grains, make rice, sift it, clean it, wash it,
> cook it, sieve the water out of it and serve it.
> No.
> I can't.
>
> I just can't.[47]

This kind of detailed recounting of work done, is not just to show the amount of unpaid labour, but also the care the slaves actually take to do the master's job and the ingratitude which is their due. It also shows the humiliating circumstances under which the work proceeds. Images of revulsion are always combined with the slave's labour.

For the woman, apart from these jobs, is also included the reproductive labour. The text also mentions it. When Ira warns her friend Champi that the master has whistled in the early hours of the morning to go for work, Champi says:

> If he is making the sound of a male goat, it is to mount one of us. Just go
> to sleep. Otherwise, like me, you also will have to bear the child of the
> master.[48]

The text not only sees the sexual harassment on the Adivasi women as unseen labour. That their wombs are potentially usable, with or without the master raping them

is an understanding the women characters in the novel share. The oath that the three friends, Ira, Jevani and Champi take that they will never bear children is a resistance to this exploitation. They know that if they produce babies they are only increasing the size of the master's fields.

The name of the main character also bears his close connection to work. Kaippadan means, the one with the mark in his hand. It is the mark of labour that the Adivasi characters carry in their hand.

The connection between the myth element and work in the novel is also telling. It is by giving up on the dreams that the Adivasi labours for the master. When Jevaran asks Kaippadan to create his own music, he says-he has no time for all that.

Brutish Masters and Slaves made **Brutes through Labour**

Another way in which the reality of slavery comes into the reader's imagination is through the play between brutishness and humanity. It is also an important technique used to draw the difference between the two worlds--of the master's and the slave's. The efforts of the masters are to constantly reduce the slave into a brute of labour. This happens through constant swear words addressed at the slave which often evoke animal imagery. "You-son-of-a-bitch" and "you-son-of-a-boar" are constantly used to address the labourers. Speaking about Kaippadan's sale the narrative voice says: "Even if he knows what can he, who is brought and sold like *cattle* do? Nothing."[49]

The implications of being considered brutes for the Adivasi women are more severe. Menokki, or the manager, of the new master's fields comes to the shacks of the slaves in the wee hours of the morning. His intention is to see to it that the slaves have intercourse amongst themselves so that the women will soon become pregnant.[50]

But, in contrast to the wishes of the masters, the imagery in the text constantly portrays them as brutish and evoking disgust. It is clear from his name onwards— one of the masters is called "Karadi" which means a "bear". As mentioned earlier, the Adivasi

women speak amongst themselves about the male goat sounds *Ambu thampuran* makes during sexual intercourse with absolute repulsion.

The way the slaves refuse to fit into forced brute identity is by realizing the brutishness of the masters themselves. Also, they are shown not to lose a sense of humour even under dire circumstances. Thus, they notice that the masters are greedy to a suicidal extent. The first reaction of *Karadi Thampuran* when the frightened Ravulas tell him that there are strangers in the wood is to gobble the food, which is already in his mouth, and only then attend to such an important matter.

imagining **the Utopia**

All the above mentioned narrative techniques help the text locate itself in a curious plane—of the too "real", of the historical. Yet, it is also located in the absolutely imaginary fiction of *Maveli Mantam.* The imagined Utopia of the future, the fictionalized and mythical, criss-cross with the present and the past realities/history of the Adivasi existence in Wayanad. The result is the effect of life that has "actually happened", yet which is parallel, imaginary too.

As all Utopias, this is also imagined in the future. Yet, for it to evolve, an understanding of the past as well as the present is important. This is perhaps the reason why the text starts with the fictionalized version of the "actual" or historical figure, Kaippadan.

The inherent connection with history and the evolution of Utopias, or ideals, are dealt with in the text through this mixing of reality and fiction. Only people who know their past/history can resist the oppression of the present. It might be with this idea that Kaippadan, a "real" historical character is resurrected in a fictional form as the main character in the novel. This "reality" of Kaippadan is juxtaposed into the clearly mythical search and escape of both Ira and Kaippadan in search of 'Maveli Mantam' in the text. This fiction, **the** escape and the idea of "Maveli Mantam", can be read as the desire for a

better world, a search for a more dignified and perfect existence from the squalor of the present. This content creates thus the form of a mythical narrative, interspersing with the hard reality of history and the flight of mythical fancy **in** the form of "Maveli Mantam". The woods to which both the lovers escape fleeing oppression and slavery, and where they search for the mythical "Maveli Mantam", serves as a powerful symbol of Utopia.

Thus, for the sake of analysis, we can see that there are two parts to the text. The "reality" bit and the "imagination" bit. The reality bit is the exposition of history as well as the present reality of Adivasi existence in Wayanad. The bitterness of slavery and its day-to-day resistance is a historical reality of the Adivaisi experience. This is clearly explicated in the events as well as the style of the novel, pertaining to the "history" and everyday oppressions of the Adivasis. It should be admitted that the ways in which the rext deals with the oppression of the Adivasis, and some trials of resistance are unique and never dealt with in this way in Malayalam literature. The fictional bit, or "Maveli Mantam" itself, is the search for an alternative to escape the slavery involved in daily existence of the Adivasis.

The Myth Of "Mavelimantu"

The myth of "Mavelimantu" is the central myth of the narrative. This myth holds together the whole structure. These myths are supposed to be ethnographically collected by KJ.Baby himself and therefore carry the stamp of "reality" or research. Unlike the other myths of the Adivasis this myth is one of hope.

In the narrative, Jevaran passes this myth on to his community, represented by Ira and Kaippadan, the rapt listeners of his stories. Also, in the text, it comes as an answer and a counter myth to the hopelessness of *keeyoolokam*. The myth of "Mavelimantu" begins as follows:

Long ago, we also had a golden time. When we were no one's slaves. It was the time of Mavelimantu.

It was a small *manram* who knew how to slash and cultivate the woods. They also knew how to wait and reap the crops. They would irrigate the crops with the river water. They cultivated together, reaped together and lived sharing everything together. *Mavelimantu* was the chief of the *manram*. There was no Adiya or Paniya, neither Kurichiyan or Kuruma, nor Nayar or Nambiar.

All were human beings. No deceit or dishonesty, just ordinary people. When they were existing without any problem like that, three rogues of masters arrived. They went there wearing a man's smile. *Mavelimantu* welcomed them warmly. But, the first chance they got, those three masters stole the earth of the *manram*.

When the chief found this deceit out, he asked for the earth and the *manram* back.

The masters kicked *Mavelimantu* and his blood spluttered on the soil of the *manram*. [51]

This is how the myth understands, the creation of slavery. But more than that, it is a myth about a golden time that the Adivasis or human beings seem to have had and then lost to the greed of the people who finally created masters and slaves.

Along with this is given a myth existing among the Paniyas of Wayanad--the myth of *keeyoolokam*. The Paniyas believe that *keeyoolokam* is the place where they reach after death. This is where they will enter unending slavery without any hope of escape.

Analysing Baby's Utopia

This myth is the best way to get into the idea of what Baby means by his Utopia. The idea of "small" keeps repeating in his narrative. "It was a small *manram.*" The smallness of the *manram* is in its economic organization as well as the number of people who constitute the *manram*.

Perhaps, as Sachidanandan says in the Introduction to the text, it was a kind of "primitive communism" that Baby was envisaging. The idea of Schumacker's *Small is Beautiful* that comes as a questioning of the huge development models before the seventies has clearly influenced him. The origin of private property, which is mythically expressed as the masters stealing the land, is also a sign of Baby's Marxian leanings.

94

Thus, there is a connection drawn between the manageable and small primitive economies and the egalitarian set up which is "naturally" supposed to follow. The connection between self-sufficiency as an economic principle and the lack of differences among the various groups of humans, i.e. an egalitarian social set up, are emphasized in the myth.

But, is there any factual truth about the existence of egalitarianism and "small" economies? The groups, which are propounding the concept of return to a village economy and self-sufficient villages, have close connection with these ideas. In the nineteen eighties, such groups which took up this idea in Kerala were the ecology groups who were deeply influenced by a brand of neo-Gandhism. The unlikely combination of a materialist Marx and a culturalist/spiritualist Gandhi formed an easy marriage among the rhetoric of these groups. They were mostly disgruntled Marxists who had been with the radical left for some time. Influenced by the new social movements, especially the rise of the Green party in Germany, they translated these ideas to read Indian social reality.

K.J. Baby's own personal history is a disenchantment with the left, connection with the radical left in its cultural activities, and then, a dialogue with the ideas of ecology and alternative education, in the form of *Kanavu,* the alternative school he runs for Adivasi children.

Many scholars have theoretically debunked the return to the self-sufficient village, B.R. Ambedkar being the foremost among them. For instance, Surinder S. Jodhka says that while Gandhi firmly believed in the idea of the self-sufficient village, Ambedkar, firmly from a dalit perspective, on the other hand, found the city a more liberating space than the exclusionary village. The egalitarianism, which was a claim of the more micro spaces like the village, turns out to be a complete myth as far as the Dalits were concerned.[52]

But, is there any truth about the self-sufficient and therefore more egalitarian tribal groups–groups imagined to be prior to the advent of caste system and therefore of village communities? This "Rousseauan" myth also has been debunked. For instance, see the *Invention of the 'Primitive,* where Kuper argues that the imaginary primitive was invented so as to correspondingly contrast to all the qualities that characterized modern Europe.[53] Since modern Europe was based on capitalist system based on private property and since it was characterized by class society, theorists like Morgan who played an important role in the invention of the primitive, imagined the primitive society to be characterized by just the opposite attributes - primitive communism with no private property and egalitarian social organization. More than reality, it was the necessity to create the "other" of the capitalist modernity that prompted the invention of the primitive.

Baby is working on the same myth. He is inventing a primitive utopia. But, what about his claim that fiction need not be real, but the imagination itself might lead to reality, and therefore, it has a legitimacy to exist. This claim is quite legitimate. At one level, he can also be seen as speaking about the political implications of representations. Yet, it is important to analyze Baby's Utopia to know its various strands. While imagination need not prove its legitimacy by its connection to "truth", it definitely will have to prove legitimacy by the reflection of whom it is going to help.

The myth of Mahabali is a purana myth of the Hindus. This is the myth behind the Onam festival. In the curious way in which the majority community's festivals becomes national festivals, Onam has come to symbolize Malayalee identity and Kerala state has adopted this harvest festival as its state festival. The way this myth of the Vamana pushing the just king to the netherworld is interpreted is as the coming of the Aryans and the colonization of the non-Aryans. Baby is using this myth of the dominant culture, to rework it, allegedly to represent the history and interests of Adivasis.

In ways that is very "literary", Baby is interpreting it in universal ways–of oppression of the just and innocent. But, the way in which Onam is celebrated in Kerala, as a harvest festival with feudal roots is forgotten in this mythical recreation of the story. The festival was an opportunity where feudal relations were reasserted in the past. The landlord would get presents of agricultural product from his tenants and this would be the ritual way of asserting his dominance and the subservience of the tenants. In return, he would bestow his ritual blessings on the lower caste tenants. The Dalit castes did not get any special treatment during Onam. In fact the saying "Even if Onam comes or a boy is born, Koran still gets his gruel in a leaf bowl" symbolizes the unchanged situation of the agricultural slaves.

The Adivasis of Wayand were agrestic slaves. It would have been interesting to read what they think about the myth of Onam. The masters imagining a Utopia "all were one", "where divisions did not exist", yet at the same time, in practice asserting the feudal divisions in its practice....what would it have meant for the slaves themselves?[54]

I argue that it is in this central myth that the text deconstructs itself. The alliances that are thrown upon as alternatives to the Adivasis seem to be pulling the argument of oppression down. This will be elaborated more in the next pages.

The alternatives to slavery come as the mythical or Utopian part of the novel. The alternatives to oppression are given as three fictional choices to the main characters, who run away into the woods to escape slavery. This comes at the end of the narrative. They are recounted by various narrators when there is a reunion of all the Adivasis in the woods with the runaways. The following are the stories:

1. Chikkannan's Story-The fleeing Ira and Kaippadan meet a runaway slave who has joined the British plantations. He invites them over to work in the fields. But, they refuse. For this is not their "Maveli Mantam".

2. **Kakkiri's Story**--Ira and **Kaippadan** meet **Komban** Mooppan, an outlaw who roams the forest and who has a band of robbers who focus on the feudal lords. He invites them to join him. But both refuse since this is not the vision they have of "Maveli **Mantam**".

3. **Chamayan's Story**--They meet **Chami**, the upper caste medicine man in the forest, who cures **Kaippadan's** illness. Then they also see **Chirutayi** and her husband, **Kelappan** who are both roaming the woods. The couples decide to be together. Chirutayi gives birth to twin boys. They suspect they have reached "Maveli Mantam".

These three alternatives have to be analyzed in detail to understand the Utopian vision of **K.J.** Baby.

In the first alternative, **Kariyan,** the runaway slave who joins the plantations as a labourer comes as the main character. The invitation by Kariyan is to lose their Adivasi identity and join the proletariat, without caste/tribal identities or oppressions. The changes he **describes** are all the transformations of a feudal economy into a capitalist one. According to Kariyan the pleasures of working for the White plantation owner are the **following:** You work according to the ringing of the bell, there is no unlimited labour, you are paid in rupees, and you can buy anything with money. Most importantly, you don't have to follow caste rules in wearing clothes and they don't consider the workers as mere animals.

But this alternative is rejected by Ira and Kaippadan without much discussion. This is because they see the burnt forests and also place Kariyan as a parodic character who is a coward.

It is true that the capitalist labour would have been exploitative for the Adivasis. But, even to arm themselves against the feudal economy, the narrative does not allow

this alternative. This is because of the ecological vision of the text, which places British colonization as a worse evil than feudal exploitation.

The second alternative which comes in the form of Kakkiri's story speaks about the politics of outlaws. Komban Moopan reminds one of the forest brigand Veerappan, who also, like Moopan sports a hanging moustache. He is a Robinhood-like character who is the saviour of the poor and the oppressor of the rich. He steals from the latter to distribute to the poor.

This alternative, to be a kind of Robinhood, is also rejected by both Ira and Kaippadan, and therefore by the narrative. The reasons for rejection are not clearly mentioned in the text. What we understand is that this life will not provide them with the decision-making capacities, and that is what they need in their "Maveli Mantarn".

In many ways, this section does acknowledge the connection between crime and poverty and the subversive potential of criminal gangs. But, it is also rejected in that it is not a perfect solution to the problems of the Adivasis.

The third alternative as explicated in the story told by Chamayan requires more elaboration. The couple first encounters Charni, a medicine man who himself has run away from the master's house. He is already introduced to the readers as the more benign face of the master's house. Chirutayi, and her whole family are already seen to be kind. Chirutayi's family has been fighting the British. Her grandfather leaves her with her uncle who has deserted the family and has come to stay with his relatives. Chirutayi undergoes untold miseries in the house and the slaves develop a deep intimacy with her. She later runs away from the home and joins a Kurichia warrior of the chieftain Pazhassi, who is hiding in the woods.

Pazhassi is a historical character. He led an armed revolt against East India Company between the years 1800-1805. He was killed in battle. Many Kurichia and

Kuruma Adivasis, along with Nair chieftains of Wayanad, were involved in this resistance against the British.

In the fantasy, what is reconstructed is the reunion of the Adivasis with this supposedly benign part of the master's culture. It is also significant that Baby chooses the setting of Pazhassi's struggle to explicate these relations. Though there is a mention that Pazhassi's struggle against the British did not give anything to the Adivasis, the narrative also describes the doomed fight in quite romantic terms.[55] Chirutayi's grandfather is talked of as a man with flowing white beard like the clouds.[56] The imagery of nature is reserved in the text only for positive portrayals. He is the man who is valiantly fighting the British even in his old age.

Pazhassi's struggle has been variously seen as the valiant struggle of the indigenous populations against the British colonizers as well as the struggle of the losing feudal stystem against a new form of power. The participation of Kurichia and Kuruma Adivasis have given it the colour of a tribal revolt against the British. While it does have those qualities, there is also the criticism that the tribes who were into agricultural slavery were not affected by all this and only the peasant tribes were part of it. O.K. Johnny dismisses the revolt as the old system which was resisting any modernization and warns against people who are trying to revive Pazhassi's history now.[5] K.K.N. Kurup does not take Johnny's stand. But he also reads Pazhassi's revolt as the revolt of the traditional society. (He reads traditional society itself in positive terms).,[8] Margaret Frenz also sees the figure Pazhassi as following the *raja dharma* or the King's ethics, a value of traditional society.[5']

Thus, we see that the scholars are varied in their assessment of Pazhassi struggles. But, from what is given in the text, we see that Baby did see the possibility of the struggle against the British being of use for the Adivasis.

But, I feel that in many ways this is quite an impossibility. The revolt of Pazhassi's traditional society, no one claims, was for the uplift of the agrestic slave communities. It was to keep the traditional society alive, and this society considered ritual slavery as an important part of its social organisation. The fight was for the preservation of Pazhassi's rule over the British suzerainty. Here, the Ravula and Paniya communities were not, to my knowledge, involved.

In this condition, it is also strange that Baby's *Maveli Mantam* is a desire for an alliance with one part of the oppressor's group and not another group, with whom the Adivasis would be having at least a non-committal relation. The rejection of an alliance with the British colonizers and the outlaws and criminals are quite justified. But, they are not, when one considers the final alliance which is projected in the text. Strangely, the immediate oppressors, like the upper caste woman and the Kurichia man[60] are seen to be their comrades.

This is where we have to go back to the central myth of the *Maveli Mantam*. As mentioned earlier, the myth of the Onam, a Utopia created by the oppressors themselves is used as a myth of the Adivasis. Can this be the liberating utopia for the Adivasi? This is a question we have to ask.

These questions become urgent because of the context of the new social movements, especially the ecology movement which is raising the alliance between all the oppressed groups and a more sane use of the environment. While the professed aims are laudable, what is actually happening is an obliterating of Adivasi history and struggle and a romantic revival of an imagined traditional society.

Ramachandra Guha's revival of Elwin and his idea of the tribe and K.J. Baby's efforts to write an Adivasi novel are both important. The portrayal of slavery and its oppressions in K.J. Baby assume such poignancy, which one can safely say, Malayalam literature has not seen. But, it is precisely in showing the agential Adivasi that the text

seems to be advocating a return to a non-existent past. The means of achieving this utopia is even more problematic. It is by advocating an alliance with the traditional society which the Adivasis might have to oppose to break loose from their state of slavery. Thus, the text is replete with the contradictions that the ecology movement which has found an articulation in Kerala also shares.

Guha shares this contradiction with Baby. He has chosen a very relevant topic, the construction of tribal identity, and has also chosen an important figure to work with— Verrier Elwin. But, the hagiographic way in which the biography proceeds, leaving the interpretation apparently open, but actually closing it for the reader by almost sharing the voice of Elwin, makes his work problematic. This works as an essentialist revival of tribal culture, which Elwin advocated. The combination of isolation of the tribes and their autonomy in Elwin's writings makes it problematic to revive him at this stage.

Both the texts raise the questions of the complexity of the outsider speaking for any issue. While the personal motives of sincerity are not doubted about both the writers, their works also expose the difficulty of speaking for others, or, the impossibility rather.

The theoretical framework that I have employed draws from the critique of the mainstream environmental movement by the groups standing for social justice. Manus, for instance, argues that the mainstream environmental movements should listen to the critiques that are coming from the various social movements. He takes the critiques by the Native American, Black and women's movements of the mainstream environmental movement. This kind of study, I feel, is a useful starting point to speak about meaningful alliances rather than one concern overshadowing every other concern and possible allies finding themselves in wrong camps. [61]

Notes

[1] These ideas, especially on the anti-modernity debates, have evolved through constant discussions with the Rethinking English Studies Project group and P.Thirumal.

[2] Bhaskaran, 2002: Publisher's note by Ravi, D.C. (Translation mine).

[3] For instance see Guha, R, 1990; Guha, R 1991; Gadgil and Guha, R 1993; Rangarajan, 2002 gives a good summary of all the debates so far. Also see Guha, S, 1996; Guha, S, 2002; Guha, S, 1999. Rangarajan and Sumit Guha have a different take on Ecology from Gadgil and Guha. The main difference, I feel, is the way they have both dealt with British colonization. For the Malayalam debates on ecology, see the little magazine *Padhabhedam* published by Padhabhedam group, Thrissur.

[4] Nandy, 1992, ix.

[5] Gro Harlem Bruntland quoted in Weeratunge, 2000, 249.

[6] Utopias have been imagined in the Western culture at various points. The romantics imagined a Utopia connected to the myth of the noble savage which has direct connections with the twentieth century imaginings of the ecologically noble savage. The construction of the "organic community" by certain modernists like F.R.Leavis can also be seen as paving a base for the late twentieth century.

"The University of Chicago Press had advertised the book thus.

[8] Guha, R 1999, Also Guha, R 1996, 2375-2389.

[9] Guha, R 1999, x.

[10] Heredia, 2002, 5174.

[11] Agarwal, 1986, 376.

[12] "Take his [Guha's] book — his biography of Vender Elwin. It's competent and cleanly written. But our political differences begin with his choice of subject - personally, I think we've had enough, come on, enough stories about white men, however interesting they are, and their adventures in the heart of darkness. As a subject for a biography, frankly, I am much more interested in Kosi Elwin, his Gond wife." Roy, 2001, 5.

[13] Conrad, 1983. In this novel, Conrad speaks of the journey of his white protagonist into Africa, the colonized continent. It is an excruciatingly painful self search where he discovers to his horror, his own cruelties and lacks. The colonized never appear in any powerful way, except as mute sites on which the White man's self journey is inscribed. Anthropology has been long blamed as a discipline of gazers, the powerful field worker looking on the mute objects of her/his enquiry.

[14] Guha, 1999, 127.

[15] Moreover, the index of Guha's book does not have an entry for laipal Singh.

[16] Guha, 1999,277.

[17] Guha, 1996, 2376.

[8] Guha, 1996, 2378.

[19] Guha, 1996, 2380.

[20] For instance, Nandy, 1980.

[21] To draw an analogy from the nationalist movement, Sudipta Kaviraj speaks about the discomfort that the elites in this country had with modernity. While they were the main consumers and benefited most from modernity, the upper castes of this country had, at the same time, an ambivalent relation with it. This might also be because the very modernity which gave them a lot of benefits also meant loss of power and hurt to the sense of their self worth, since it came along with colonisation. For the uppercastes, the white masters were to be emulated as well as despised precisely because of this ambivalent relation with modernity.

In the late 20th century, with the rise of the new social movements, there is a growing interest in Ecology as well as identities. There are many diverse theoretical strands which have interacted with this. The essentialist schools of the post-modernist strand have gone back to a pure non-modern position (theoretically of course!), drawing their sustenance from the cultural primitivists of the romantic times in Europe. Many of the ecological arguments which keep going back to a lost Eden before modernity, and which keep invoking the tribes as a lost world, have this very air about it. Kaviraj, 1992, 1-40.

[22] **Savarkar tried** this in a different way. Gandhi had differences with that brand of nationalism and Hindu assertion.

[23] A White woman who also shared his interest in missionary work. Her name was Mary Gillet.

[24] Swati Margaret speaks about the effects of a similar stereotype working on Dalit women. I feel the same argument can be safely extended to include the Adivasi woman as well. Margaret, 2001.

[25] It is an allegation because this goes against the theory of objectivity of the anthropologist.

[26] Guha, 1999, 130-131.

[27] Quoted in Guha, 1999, 291-292.

[28] Jalli, 1997. Margaret, 2001. Also see Alisamma Women's Collective, 2002: 45.

[29] Kamat, 2001, 31.

[30] Chandra,1999, 107. Emphasis mine

[31] Quoted in Chandra, 1999, 107-8.

[32] If one can believe Guha, even Elwin changed his stand after the compulsions of the administrator took over.

[33] Tharu and Lalita, 1993, 50.

[34] Guha, 1999, viii.

[35] Guha, 1999, ix.

[36] Guha, 1999, x.

[37] For instance see Rajagopalan, 1999. Here he tries to draw connection between the Edakkal cave drawings and contemporary communities living in Wayanad.

[18] There is a discussion of how Fabian's thesis on time is useful to look at the dominant group's construction of the tribe in this dissertation. Fabian,1983.

[19] Apart from the effects of this on the dominant caste woman on which there are any number of books by the feminist scholars in India, there are critiques of this position from the Dalit woman's perspective as well. One of the critiques is that the dominant caste woman was built as a site through the "invisibilising" and brutalizing of the Dalit woman. Personal Communication with Indira Jalli.

[40] Janu, 2003, 21 (Translation as given in the magazine *The Dalit*)

[41] Chitra Panikkar makes this interesting point that the demand for land by the adivasis constructing themselves as children of nature is strategic essentialism from the Adivasi point of view. There is a construction of them as children of nature or forest and when a demand is made for forest land it uses the same essentialist arguments as political strategy. See Panikkar, 2002.

[42] For instance see Sugathakumari, 1998: 42-47. Also in the same collection "Attappadi Dairy."47-53.

[43] Mamballi, , 2002, 7 (Translation mine).

[44] I have used the term 'Ravula' to avoid the connotations of slavery which 'Adiya' carries.

[45] Baby., 1999 (a), 176. (All translations from this text are mine)

[46] The *Pulappattu* describes the story of Melorachan and Keeyorathi, the mythical ancestors of the Ravula community. In the story, Melorachan and Keeyorithi plan to escape from Karippur Kotta where they are slaves to Pakkathappan.

[47] "Baby, 1999 (a) , 41.

[48] Baby, 1999 (a), 42

[19] Baby, 1999 (a), 51. (Emphasis mine)

[50] The word used is "Chavittuka", literally meaning "stamp", but which is used for the forcible intercourse of domestic animals for reproduction. Baby, 1999 (a):38-39.

[51] Baby, 1999 (a), 21.

[52] Jodhka, 2002, 3343-3352.

[53] Chapter 2 deals with these ideas in detail.

[54] It is curious to note that the Adivasis from all over Kerala had reached Trivandrum to protest against the starvation deaths happening in Adivasi villages and went without food on Onam day to mark their protest against the apathy of the Government and the mainstream culture which was busy celebrating the tourist week in 2001.

[55] Kaippadan is the son of Chotta, a Paniyan, who had run away fearing the East India Company and the Pazhassi soldiers. This shows that the Adivasi was only caught between the fights of two powerful forces and never got anything out of this fight. Both groups were harassing him/her.

[56] Baby,1999 (a), 57.

[57] Johnny, 1995, 73.

[58] He says that the traditional society was characterized by certain values like keeping a word if given even to the enemy etc. Kurup, 1999, 137-139

[59] Frenz, 2003, 141.

[60] In Wayanad Kunchia community also maintains strict untouchability rules with Paniyas and Ravulas. They were integrated into a feudal economy with (he Nairs and Nambiars.

[61] Manus, 1996.

Chapter-5

Self-Constructions of the Adivasis and Interaction with Dominant Groups

> They stole our land, our earth, everything...they turned around to see what was left. Then they stole our bodies.[1]

While the previous chapters focused on the construction of the Adivasis by the dominant this chapter focuses on the various ways in which Adivasi identity is constructed by the subjects themselves.[2] More than claiming to be an authentic elaboration of Adivasi identity, this chapter is a conjecture from a dominant caste woman's perspective about what it is. This section of the work draws heavily from the fieldwork done in Wayanad during 1999-2000.

Methodology

This chapter has looked at different kinds of data. I had visited Wayanad district many times before the sustained stay between March to July, 1999. Three places had been chosen for my stay. The first month was spent at Kalpetta. the capital of the district. This time was used to collect administrative information about the district from the Kalpetta civil station. The interviews with some people belonging to the Kurichia community were also conducted during this time.[3] The next month was used to collect the data in Thirunelli, a temple town near Mananthavady. The main interviews used in the dissertation, which were collected during the time are those of Malla, Ravula woman in Thirunelli, Lakshmikutty, *Anganwadi* worker and activist and Shankaranarayan Sharma, former priest of the Thirunelli temple. This area being a more Hindu dominated area was chosen due to the presence of the ancient temple.[5] The next month was taken up in Pulpally near Sultan Battery. This is a settler town, dominated by Christian population.[6]

The place where I was put up during the stay turned out to be crucial for the collection of data. In Kalpetta a ladies hostel was chosen for staying. In Thirunelli, contacts with a local activist Lakshmikutty working amongst the tribal women led me to

the upper caste houses. I was put up at Mr. Radhakrishnan's place. He was a person connected with the temple and belonged to the Brahmin community. In Pulpally, the place chosen was as a paying guest in Ms. Mary's house. She belonged to the migrant farming community.

Thus, at both Thirunelli and Pulpally, the places chosen for staying were with the locally dominant groups. This has definitely coloured the data that I received in the field. The perception of the tribes about a person staying in this place directly influenced what information they divulged to me. Repeatedly, the first question when I would be introduced to someone would be: "Where are you staying?" Almost in the same breath, the next question will be about the my community—if the listener belongs to the dominant groups. Adivasis took some more time to ask this all important question. (Or, they just took my community for granted due to a number of markers including the place chosen for staying).

I also used the opportunity of staying in Wayanad to go through the materials collected by various Non-governmental Organizations which were working among Adivasis. This includes Solidarity and Fedina. The support given by Uravu, a collective working for finding alternatives to the use of wood through bamboo products was important.

The Identity of the Field Researcher

The research of "studying the other" opens up quite a range of problems. The interaction of the identity of the researcher and the identity of the groups "under study", throws up questions of power necessarily. Many people have dealt with these questions. For instance, Linda Alcoff in her lucidly argued work confronts the question of speaking for others. She speaks about the Catch-22 situation of others speaking for subaltern groups. Any kind of research opens up questions on identity. But, the immediacy of the situation opens up before research that involves fieldwork.

In this context, it might be useful to recall the work done by Dhareswar and Srivatsan. The subject they chose, the group known in the police vocabulary as rowdysheeters, threw open a variety of questions regarding their research. The police had some way to place these people, as researchers involved in a study. But, not the rowdy sheeters who were the main subjects of their study. I feel, my experience is best captured in the words of the above mentioned researchers, though many of my "subjects" were more aware of what could be done with research data than the subjects of Dhareswar's and Srivatsan's research. According to them:

> No such "public transcript" existed for our "interview" with men and women, some of whom had no slottable identities and for whom scholars studying crime and criminality was not a negotiable slot, even if they understood what that meant, as some of them obviously could and did. We, of course, did want to elicit narratives about the "rowdy" figure from them; But we were really in no position to offer them a narrative--both plausible and politically scrupulous--about what we wanted from them and why.[7]

My own identity, as a researcher, rooted in a University in Hyderabad, as a person belonging to one of the dominant communities in Kerala, and as a woman....and many other factors were interacting with the subjects in the field. Many of the Adivasis, especially the unemployed and educated Adivasi men, resented the presence of the woman researcher from the dominant community collecting data about them. They recounted the experience of some White researchers taking the photographs of Adivasi women who were bathing and then later, by chance they discovered that it was printed in an airlines magazine. The fear of the outsider might also take proportions that I was not able to relate at all, (especially when I turned out to be the villain in the piece). In Thirunelli, for the first few days, the Ravula woman would not even look up to me, because someone had warned them that I would steal their children.

Many of the people I interviewed asked me what use this would be to them. I really did not have a clear answer. But, I did try to engage them with the school text

books that their children studied where Adivasi history was absent, or distorted and tried convincing them that perhaps studies like mine might, in future lead to a different perception about the Adivasis. Needless to say, all this sounded quite hollow to my own ears. Yet, either because of their politeness and therefore trying to save me from the discomfiture they found me in, many of them sympathetically nodded their heads! Perhaps all these expences do force me to recount why I have to deal with my own identity in this chapter.

The Relevance of this Chapter

This takes us to questions of self-construction of the Adivasi identity. It is necessary to deal with the self-construction of Adivasi people while one talks about the dominant culture constructing the Adivasi identity due to the following reasons. It is well known that any subaltern identity has to necessarily contend with the stereotyping constructions by the dominant culture. It has to either incorporate or resist it always. Whatever the mode of interaction, we can safely say that any subaltern identity always has to negotiate with the dominant constructions.

But, it is not enough to say that any subaltern identity will passively take up what the dominant groups make out of them. Very often, it is a complex process of acculturation and resistance that goes on in the construction of subaltern identity. Like any identity, none of the subaltern groups are absolute victims or grand revolutionaries.

It is not just that the subaltern identity is changed by the construction and interaction with the dominant group's identity. The fact that is less accepted is that the dominant culture is also necessarily affected by the self-constructions of the subaltern identities. This chapter actually does not deal with this important phenomenon. It remains thus, an unfinished project.

Thus, when reading the following pages, one should keep in mind that what is happening is a two-way traffic. But, not even for a moment one should doubt that this

give and take happens in an equal way-for the odds are weighed heavily against the subaltern identity. Yet, their agency has to be understood in even the dominant culture's constructions of the very same identity.

Identity and its Nature

Any identity, (as already mentioned in the "Introduction"), should be seen as fragmented and plural. So too the Adivasi identity. The same person, in his or her single action embodies complexity of the identity. Interactions with other Adivasis, between genders within the same Adivasi groups, generational differences, negotiations which end up sometimes as direct questioning of the upper castes'/dominant groups' constructions, sometimes meek acceptances but which when analyzed further reveal burning ember like community angers, survival strategies of various kinds .. .all were strewn around in the field and the narratives. I was myself very often seen as an intruder to be thrown out with silences, angry looks, sometimes politically questioning my presence in the field and the relevance of doing research on Adivasis by an outsider who will "collect data and disappear."[8] But most of my subjects were the "innocent subjects of research" who had no idea who I was nor how I would use this data.

Universalizing and Particularizing: Theoretical Implications

The following case studies, which have been used do not claim to have universal resonance to all the so-called indigenous people of the world, nor all of Indian Adivasis. Yet, I would like to point to the building of the Wayanad Adivasi identity, however fragmented and qualified it is. The particular expenences of these individual lives should not be seen only as rare and isolated incidents in any individual's life. They are Adivasi lives, and Wayanad Adivasi lives. Some kind of attempt at generalization, with the reservations above mentioned, has to be made to make sense of these lives.

The justification is that particular lives are not isolated experiences. Narratives have a general theoretical value as well. Feminist literary criticism has proved beyond

110

doubt that the personal is a political project as well. Thus, the focus on these personal incidents (or, if they are about political organizations, the personal rendering of it that the section has used) should not be read as meaningless and isolated incidents that might happen to any human being.

As much as possible, the identity of the listener and the interpreter also has been brought in, (though not always quite successful in this difficult theoretical task).

This kind of theorizing also lends us a kind of glimpse into the everyday life and existence of the group we are looking at. This is important because this is the way the narrators have wanted us to see them. Also, this perspective is very often lost in the flood of data that can be collected from the "public" sources. It is also done with the express understanding that it is important to theorize the "private" and the "experiential" in all narratives. This does not of course mean that the "public" is to be avoided in understanding.[9]

Agency, Power

Connecting to the discussions that happened in the earlier chapters — till now the Adivasi identity had been seen as a passive field to be moulded by the dominant groups. The construction of the tribe as primitive had finally led to the administrative category of the Scheduled Tribes. A version of the same construction is visible in the ecological noble savage which is expressed as an important intellectual stream in the All India level as well as the specific situation of Kerala.

This chapter, which examines the Adivasi identity as the self construction of the communities involved sees it not as passive site where dominant group's fears and fantasies (very often of oneself) are written over. The agency of the subaltern groups concerned are visible in the constructions. Yet, the dominant communities' constructions about the Adivasi groups have also been dealt with while the self gets made.

Before we proceed any further, I would like to digress a bit and speak about the theoretical problems pertaining to the concept of agency. In some way, the chapter is about resistance and agency of the communities in question. The question that immediately confronts us would be "What can be seen as agential activities?" and "What is resistance to a structure of power?" These questions require serious elaboration.

Many believe that we do have a sophisticated theorizing on the structure of power, but the theorization on resistance is inadequate. Any grand narrative of resistance will only consider the rhetoric of Revolution to be a serious questioning of the existing power structure. The articulation of dissent will be read as political only if the mobilization leads towards State power and the changing of it.

With the feminist theorization of the personal as political, we have reached another dimension of resistance- When power itself is theorized as not just State power, but a micro level articulation of it, the resistance to it should also be seen as including forms which will not be seen as resistance in a grand theory of revolution. Every day life then becomes a site of resistance and struggle. Many of the subaltern groups are resisting power structures in this way. It is possible to read agency and resistance precisely because the theorization of the structure of power itself has been seen to be more complex than just State power.

But, the valorization of everyday resistances and the complete giving up of public mass resistances are also problematic. In the Marxian analysis, the times are such that the global forces of capital are quite concentrated and at the same time, they are also manifested at the micro level. While the present consumer market is global in nature, it is also taking care to cater to a local audience through specialized advertisements that hide its alienating capitalist content. At the same time, the third world nation States have almost abandoned their welfare responsibilities. Non-governmental organizations are more and more invested with the huge task of welfare policies of nations. They often

have the rhetoric of anti-State but very often are not engaged in any direct conflict with any organized powers.[10] Thus, very often they help in justifying the withdrawing of the State from welfare measures.

Another problem with the valorization of everyday resistances (as they are called) is that theoretical difference of various kinds of resistances (from mass movement to isolated incidents of every day resistance) will be the obliterated.

At the same time, in the theorization of power, everyday resistances are valorized to almost replace any talk of organized, mass resistances. This is seen to be a dangerous trend in postmodern politics, especially for third world countries where Nation States are forced into accepting certain welfare measures also due to the demands of subaltern groups in the respective countries.

The Alienation of Adivasi Land: Recurring Narratives

In the context of Kerala, and Wayanad in particular, the valorization of **everyday** struggles might actually have a negative political impact as well. Right now, the Adivasis of Kerala have already politically mobilized to lend an All Kerala Adivasi identity. The Dalit groups are also organizing in solidarity to this identity to some extent. The struggle for the restoration of alienated Adivasi land that finally culminated in the demand for the distribution of land to landless Adivasi families has reached a boiling point at this stage. The leaders of the struggle C.K. Janu and Geethanandan were both arrested and recently released on bail.

The dissertation does not directly deal with the urgency of this situation at all. But the land issue in central to proving a context for the understanding of the Kerala Adivasi, especially the Wayanad Adivasi. It is also strongly felt that the Adivasi identity should not be discussed without understanding the relation of the Adivasi to the land, whether it is the cultivated land or the forest.[11]

The context of discussion about land should also necessarily take to the times before British colonization. I do not agree with the framework that the problems of Adivasis and the land happened along with British colonization. It might be true as far as Native Americans and Australian aboriginal population is concerned. A generalization is not possible to be drawn as far as the whole of India is concerned also. But, as far as Wayanad is concerned, this is the most common way in which the Adivasi problems are discussed. For instance, see the introduction of the first historic Adivasi Sangamam in the words of one of the organizers himself:

> October 12, 1992 saw the commemoration of the quincentennial of the discovery of the "New World" by Christopher Columbus. The grandeur with which mankind was to be reminded of that event in 1492 .. .was scuttled by widespread opposition to it.
>
> In the remote town of Mananthavady, in the Wayanad district of the southern Indian state of Kerala, about 1500 adivasis representing over 35 adivasi organizations and movements from 11 states converged for the "Adivasi Sangamam"--a confluence of their expressions of self--assertion. Not that the adivasis chose this day only to oppose the invasion led by Columbus. This day marks an important victory in their own struggle against their oppressors. In commemoration of their 12 October 1802 capture of the British fort at Panamaram, and as an occasion for resurgence of their identity, the first ever *Adivasi Sangamam* was held from 12 to 19 October 1992.[12]

A connected way of seeing the land alienation of Adivasis is by seeing alienation of land as a result of local modernity. In Wayanad, local modernity also means the alienation from forest land through the bureaucratisation of forest land through the Forest Department. Moreover, the focus is either on the British or on the Christian migration that happened between 1930s and 1970s:

> First, the Adivasis lost their soil and forest. Eating fruits and roots, hunting and doing slash and burn cultivation, the Adivasis used to exist in peace. From them resources were taken away one by one. Extinction of whole tribes also created starvation. Slash and burn cultivation became impossible. When the Adivasi lands were encroached upon by the migrants and boundaries drawn, their nomadic life was also cut from the roots. Dried up from its life giving water and forests, like the sterile

hillocks where the top soil has been washed away, became the Adivasis' remaining property.[13]

In spite of not being clear about history, this quotation from a popular Malayalam magazine echoes this stand. It is almost as if the Adivasis who were living in communion with nature were forcibly overthrown by a villainous modernity.

Whatever the history, the following is the truth about Adivasi existence in Wayanad:

Table:
Land Ownership Structure of Adivasis in Wayanad District[14]

Land Ownership (in areas)	No: of Households	Percentage
Above 1.00	2600	12.02
> 0.5-1	3522	16.28
>0.2-0.5	2000	9.25
Below 0.2	4702	21.75
Landless	8798	40.70
Total	21622	100.00

Perhaps it is important to revive all the struggles which happened in the past. For, in the wake of complete lack of confidence and cynicism, it is important not to loose sight of all resistances that the Adivasis have against any authority figures. The British have also been one of the oppressors of the Adivasi.

But, as mentioned before, the history of Wayanad proves beyond doubt that the alienation of land and the Adivasi was not only a colonial situation. To only see the establishment of the bureaucracy, especially the forest dept. as the originator of all Adivasi problems is a misconception. (While one agrees to the problems which the state occupation of forest lands have created for the communities whose lives have depended mainly on forest areas for habitation and livelihoods.) Also, the problems of Adivasi land is only attributed to the Christian migrants. All this gives the impression that all was well before some "outsiders" came to Wayanad.

Any cursory reading of history of Wayanad will prove the existence of agrestic slavery the traces of which continued even till the 1960s. K. Panoor in his strongly wntten work on Wayanad Adivasis speaks about the existence of bonded labour which was ritually sanctioned in Valliyoorkavu, the *Bhagavati* temple in Wayanad. In his words:

> In Valliyoorkavu near Mananthavady, the festival begins on *meenam* 1st. During the course of the 14 day festival, the Wayanad Paniyars, both men as well as women arrive at Valliyoorkavu. The landlords of Wayanad also arrive on the same day. Every landlord will search for slaves to work his fields for a year, i.e. till the next Valliyoorkavu festival. They purchase them as if buying cattle from a bazaar. Later with the help of intermediaries, the landlords decide the price of each slave.[15]

The same author years later mentions that this revelation created a sensation in the state of Kerala and fed into the debates on land reforms in Kerala.[16] Also, he says earlier, Paniyas had to keep a pollution distance of 40 feet from the Brahmins.[1] These are all continuations of the situation of what existed in the pre-colonial times of which we do have colonial references.

In K.J. Baby's research that appears in the text *Maveli Mantam* as an appendix, it is mentioned that a slave was pawned to settle accounts by two parties.[18] In the system in 1834, Baby thinks that the master owned the slave's whole life (*janmam*). He conjectures that the Valliyoorkavu system of entering into a ritual contract with the masters would have emerged eventually because it gave the masters also a chance to change the slave.

Even if it was not slavery in its classical form, a kind of bonded labour sanctioned by custom did exist in Wayanad till recently. There are many local words to prove this. The money paid to purchase the labour of an Adivasi during the festival is called *Valliyoorkavu Fanam*. Also the local name for bonded labour is *Kundal Pani*. Yet, another local word which describes the labour of Wayanad Adivasis is *Vallippani*. Here, the payment was not through currency, but through paddy. A. Ayyappan says that a man was given around 2 litres of rice and a woman, one litre after a day's labour.[19]

For a colonial reference of the situation in Wayanad we can refer to Gopalan Nair's 1911 text. It mentions Adiyans and Paniyans, along with Pulayans (who are now a caste) as "predial slaves".[20]

This system of slavery was in fact, a land related problem. Thus, the alienation of tribal land cannot and should not be just read as having happened with British colonization, then the subsequent migration of the Christian settlers etc. This long digression, I hope proves that the land issue should be seen in the context of the history of slavery with which the Wayanad Adivasi is still battling and perhaps living.

The Adivasi Identity: Problems of a Unitary Imagination

The following sections mostly look at the everyday lives of Adivasis of Wayanad. It is not that there is 'one single Adivasi' identity that was available in the literature that was read, nor in the field. It was a complex process of construction that was happening. Sometimes Adivasi pasts, that too, remote and mythical pasts used to interact with contemporary identities shaping them. At other times, contemporary events would give new meaning to dead and buried identities. Even when I attempt to put the complexity encountered in categories, I am aware of what is being missed out more than what is being included.

For the sake of convenience, I have divided the following sections into three major parts. These are not watertight compartments. But, they can be seen as interacting with each other. In fact, what we can see in all these constructions is the play of power and various reactions to it.

The section is divided into:

1. The negotiating Adivasi
2. The wronged Adivasi
3. The resisting Adivasi.

In section 1, I have dealt with different forms of religion, especially in its dynamic form in transition, available in the field. I do not propose to draw large conclusions with the examples given below. But, I wish to see them as part of various changes that are happening in Wayanad, and the change of identities recorded in such micro detail will definitely be useful to place the situation in a better light. I have used two instances of conversion, that of Malla's into a belief of Christ and that of Koorie's into a belief in Amritanandamayi. Apart from this I have also dealt with the phenomenon of Vaishnava Kurichias, a religious sect among the Kurichias.

In section 2, I wish to draw attention to a recurring image of the Adivasis-that of the wronged community. This is proved with the help of two kinds of narratives of stealing. One, which connects the idea of stealing of gods which I prove with the help of the origin myths of Thirunelli temple. The next is the idea of stealing of bodies which appears in the phenomenon of unwed mothers in Adivasi areas. Both project the image of the Adivasi as wronged, and perhaps this kind of self-perception leads to the reading of the situation as oppressive.

Section 3 deals with the political movements where the image of a resisting Adivasi is found. I have taken a movement that happened in the 70s and perhaps can be seen as the forerunner of today's Adivasi mass mobilizations. Through the life stories of two members of the Sangham, one woman and one man, I attempt to draw some conclusions about participation in mass movements for any Adivasi and draw attention to the gender angle operating in mass mobilizations. Translations of the oral communications are all mine and have not been mentioned separately.

1. The Negotiating Adivasi

This selection is included due to the following reasons:

Religion, especially tribal religion has been of immense interest to anthropologists from the beginning of the discipline. This was because of a reading of the tribe as

"primitive". Tribal religions have been seen as simpler and more to do with nature worship. Mostly, they have been seen as static.

After my experiences in the field, I would wish to argue for religious movements, among the subaltern as a possible ideological site of negotiation with, if not resistance against, the system. Religion is not just the "opium of the masses." I would want to posit religion as an area, which is dynamic. It is anything but static and unchanging.

The theorization coming from the Post-Marxists who perceive religion, among other branches of culture as one of the ideological State apparatus. It is seen to prevent the masses from taking agitational steps and is an appeasing agent in revolutions. Women and weaker sections of the society are seen to be particularly susceptible to its influences.

But, religion has also been theorized as a site of resistance. In India, the Bhakti movement has been seen as a subaltern movement of resistance. It has been seen as voicing the devotional needs of ordinary people, the exponents almost all of them belonging to non-Brahmin and very often "untouchable" castes.[21]

It is this framework which I follow while I look at some of the data collected in the field from Wayanad. I am indebted to David Hardiman and his theorization of the Devi movement in Gujarat in the beginning of this century for an understanding of tribal religious movements.[22] Along with Hardiman, I have also followed G. Aloysius' study that sees religion as an emancipatory identity in his analysis of the Buddhist movement among the Dalit groups of Tamilnadu under the leadership of Iyothee Thass.[23] Also importantly, I have used Sanal Mohan's works on the religious movement among Dalit Christians in South Travancore in the early part of this century.[24]

Hardiman has seen the Devi movement as simultaneously speaking to an upper caste Hindu/Parsee, moneylender/landlord elite as well as taking on nationalistic characters of anti-British resistance. Aloysius sees the neo-Buddhist movement under

119

Iyothee Thass as lower caste resistance against the cultural and religious domination of the upper castes.

The religious changes that were observed in Wayanad can be seen as resistance to the various power centres that are operating in the area. Yet, they should also be simultaneously analyzed to know what the specific effects of particular religious manifestations are among the Adivasis.

This theorization is in contrast to the kind of work done before, especially by people like M.N. Srinivas who see the changes in subaltern societies only as a hollow imitation of a "higher culture".[25] His concepts of sanskritisation misses out on the situation that is making the subaltern cultures "imitate" other cultures. Moreover, it completely elides over the effect of this so-called imitation. When subaltern groups try to copy certain rituals of the dominant groups, they change the ritual that would have acquired meaning only because of exclusion, very often exclusion of these very subaltern groups. So, when they imitate, at one level it can be read as the acceptance of the dominant cultural ideologies. On another level, since it is also an effort to enter spaces, including ritual spaces hitherto shut to the subaltern, it is also resistance.

This section on religion is one on the phenomenon of "conversion". I am using the word with caution, since none of the examples I give are of official "conversion" from one religion to another, but a change of faith. Now, when the right wing is targeting people who choose to convert officially, I feel there should be a distinction that is made with the official recording of one's religion. This section takes three case studies to look into the phenomenon of changing belief systems. The first two case studies are dealt with under the subheading "Conversion and its Politics". The third case study on conversion is dealt with under the heading "Vaishnava Kurichiar".

Conversion and its Politics

This is a time when conversion, especially conversion into Christianity or Islam evokes many responses from the dominant Hindu community. The "commonsensical" way in which conversions of the subalterns have been viewed is as follows:

1. In India, conversions mostly happen from Hindu religion to other religions, especially Christianity and Islam. Now, with the assertion of Buddhism by the Dalit groups, this religion has also acquired some visibility.

2. Only the lower castes or tribals convert en masse.

3. They convert for money.

4. They are led astray by foreign forces, either Western or Middle Eastern.

5. They are like a passive flock of sheep and cannot think for themselves. So, others make use of the situation to increase their numbers.

6. Leads to secessionist activities.

7. Breaks the unity of the country.

The recent debate on conversion[26] has invoked the source of these ideas to the extreme Hindu right wing ideology. But as M.V. Nadkarni proves in his article, the Gandhian way of thinking also shared crucial similarities on this head with the Hindu right wing of this country.[27]

The other way would be the liberal humanist way of seeing conversions. The constitution of India does enjoin the right to convert according to the conscience of any individual. It conceives the individual as capable of taking spiritual decisions and having the freedom to follow it.

The debate about individual and community as binary opposites has been a favourite among political scientists. Poststructuralist analysis has been used by a variety of theorists to prove that the emerged individual, unconnected to kinship and community ties is actually gendered, "raced/casted" and favouring a particular sexual

orientation—to name just a few tags which are usually hidden. Subaltern identities cannot usually "hide" these identities in a situation of oppression. As far as the debate on religious conversions are concerned, only the dominant caste identity can actually afford this rhetoric of conversion due to change of individual conscience. The others will necessarily be "seen" to be converting because they are "lured" by extra-spiritual matters. The thesis takes the position that spiritual conversions, whether they use the rhetoric of individual change of conscience or not, always will be determined by material circumstances. This holds true for the subaltern as well as the dominant.

In this scheme, conversions can be seen, especially if executed by the subaltern groups, as a statement against the existing social order. We have many examples for this country's history. Aloysius' work that I have referred to speaks about the conversions of Dalits into Buddhism in the latter part of the nineteenth century in Tamilnadu.[28] We have the example of Ambedkar himself who converted to Buddhism and his famous statement that he will not die a Hindu given a choice.

In this section, I wish to examine the changes that are happening in individual perception of religion in Adivasi areas of Wayanad. As mentioned earlier, I do not claim to make sweeping statements on the whole area. These examples should be taken as pointers to read contemporary societies, especially Adivasi societies in India.

The three examples of conversions that I am examining are all varied. *In no case has formal conversion to another religion happened.* Yet, the interviewed subjects have all perceived a change in their religious attitudes. This, I perceive to be conversion.

These people have been chosen for specific reasons. Malla, a Ravula woman had started worshipping Christ recently. Koorie, again a Ravula woman had started believing in Amritanandamayi, a god woman from the south of Kerala. Kelu on the other hand is a Kurichia man who claims to be divinely ordained to start a new religious movement.

The group calls itself *Vaishnavas*, though popularly (and perhaps slightly derogatorily) called *Bhasmakurichias* by other fellow Kurichias.

1 (a) Christ 'Our Man': Malla's Negotiations with Christianity

Malla's conversion happens at a time of great personal crisis for her. Her daughter underwent a serious gynaecological problem. She suffered constant pain in the abdomen after she was treated by a local quack. At this point, her husband also leaves her.

It is at this time that Malla goes to a meditation camp conducted by the neighbouing missionaries. She comes back with a calendar of Christ and installs the picture in her small one-room house. She is also wearing a locket with a picture of Madonna with Christ.

Her anger against the Hindu upper caste group is clear by the statement that the local Hindu populations had driven away the missionaries when they came to Thirunelli. She thinks that along with the missionaries any chance of Adivasis acquiring some education and cultural capital were lost.

It is clear that Malla thinks of this conversion as a statement against the local culture. Thirunelli is a temple town with the cultural capital possessed by the upper caste Hindus. Marars, Nambishans and Tulu Brahmins are the locally powerful groups.

What I found significant about Malla is the peacefully co-existing way in which different spiritual universes exist in her life. In another context, she claimed Krishna the Hindu god to be "our man", that is a Ravula boy.[29] In the same breath this epithet "our man", was used to describe Christ also.

The existence of plural divinities in Malla's scheme of things point to the practical way in which she was seeing religion. Can these statements be seen as Malla being appropriated by the dominant groups, or is she trying to appropriate the dominant groups? Perhaps the same action embodies both meanings.

Along with these gods, existed Malla's own world of Adivasi gods. She used to get possessed by their family god Kalappan. Kalappan's statue that Malla showed me looked like a Brahmin's representation. He had the ponytail and sacred thread on his body. Malla assured me that whichever family keeps Kalappan had to forgo meat and drinks and it was a difficult task.

She did not find it contradictory to have all the gods existing together. In fact she did not like the way her daughter Mutha was ashamed of and kept denigrating Adivasi gods. For Malla, belief was also a practical buisiness. "No need to antagonize anyone," she said.

For Mutha, who belongs to another generation, it might have been important to say that there is no use worshipping their gods. As she says: "It is not that I disbelieve. But worshipping Adivasi gods does not seem to work anything for me. That is why."[30] In a significant sentence, Chundeli, a Ravula man from Thirunelli, had also said: "Our gods are powerless these days."[31]

In a certainty of powerlessness, of people and of their gods, the Adivasis are going for a change of the rituals they had practised. Very often, as in Malla's case, conversion is not a wholehearted affair. It is an addition to an already existing belief system. Into her pantheon of various gods, mostly Adivasi, and some Hindu, she also added Christ. She does not follow the logic of conversion—that one leaves a religion to take on another.

In this way, it comes more as a negotiation rather than a direct resistance to the domination of upper caste Hindus, though her anger against this group is also evident. The alternative cannot be Adivasi religion, or a search of those roots (which itself might be based on the acceptance of subordination of the Adivasi in an ascriptive society). The god Kalappan's representation points to such an interpretation. This also points to the problems of reviving the "authentic" Adivasi gods that many NGOs are advocating as a

trial to keep the Adivasi culture. It might also mean the ritual status of subordination to the dominant culture and not the search for the authentic Adivasi roots.[32]

Though Malla's relation with the gods is quite personal, it is also some kind of community association that she makes with the gods of her choice at the moment. Thus, both Krishna and Christ becomes "our men" the word "our" usually used to signify the Ravular identity.[33]

Though Malla herself might be reading her change of faith as a personal matter, the context in which the change of belief happens is not just the personal crisis in her life. It is also the anger she feels towards the dominant communities around her. Also, she associates Christianity with some human consideration that she and people like her might get. Thus, while it is a negotiation with a trial to cope with personal tragedies, her conversion also has elements of resistance to the system.

1 (b) Koorie's Experience

The motive, which made Koorie of Payyambilli become an Amritanandamayi's devotee, is completely different.[34] Unlike Malla, she sees the motive as social, rather than just personal.

Koorie is a woman with a political background. She has been part of Adivasi Swayam Seva Sangham which functioned in the early 70s in Wayanad. Mary, a Christian settler from Pulpally, who was not used to respecting Adivasis talked about Koorie with respect. She told me how respected Koorie was among the Adivasis in the area. She said that both men as well as women came to Koorie for advice. In fact, she had been seen as a leader of Adivasis even by the non-Adivasis.

Yet, when I saw Koorie, she was an old woman, still forced to work in the settler's fields for Rs.60 per day. She had serious health problems. Her colony was dying with diseases, drinks and internal conflicts. She, along with some other women, had tried to initiate a movement against drinking in the area. The government had brought in

prohibition of alcoholic drinks. Yet, men used to take the jeep to the border of Karnataka and drink and come home. The women decided to protest in a mass way against this drainage of health and wealth. They together stopped the jeep and deflated the tyre. But, the men were too clever. They managed to sabotage the movement by hiring other jeeps. This, she said was her last involvement in public affairs.

Koorie, unlike her public image, did not believe that her own community took her seriously. She kept on complaining that no one listened to her now. She had her own theory about why the Adivasi community was in the state that it was. She had come to believe strongly that it was because of individual bad habits. Drinking, a social evil in Adivasi areas, was experienced by her and many other women as the most important evil besetting individual lives.[35]

Amritanandamayi in this context comes as offering a very clear alternative to her. "Amma" who would advice people to control their greed and avarice, becomes an icon for Koorie. This is how she describes her becoming a disciple of Amritanandamayi. She came to her in her dream:

> I was sleeping one night. Suddenly, it was as if my room was filled with a sweet incense fragrance. I was frightened. There was this lady, with long hair all loose saying: "You have seen me."

This vision turned out to be Amritanandamayi. Koorie said she later found this out. She feels her conversion is a social activity. She wears her guru's locket and believes that all the Adivasis should believe in "Amma" (as Amritanandamayi is popularly known). To the question "Why should they do so?" Koorie replied that Amma knew the correct way of leading life. She would tell everyone to give up bad habits, especially drinking. She believed that drinking and internal conflicts were tearing at the very fabric of Adivasi life.

It is significant that Malla would find in Christ a relief whereas Koorie would look to Amritanandamayi for support. I strongly feel the areas in which they both find

themselves, are responsible for choosing these respective icons. Comparing Malla's and Koorie's experiences might be useful at this stage. Thirunelli is a predominantly upper caste, Hindu area. As mentioned earlier, the upper castes who are basically related to temple activities, like Marars and Nambisans, are very visible. They own the land. All this makes Malla go to a religion that is dominant yet is different from her immediate oppressors. In fact, it is a religion that is perceived as a threat by the upper caste Hindus in the area.

Quite the opposite is Koorie's case. Her immediate neighbours are Christian settlers. She goes for daily wage labour to their fields or plantations. The church is seen to be oppressive by her. She had many stories about how the church using Adivasis was getting funds from abroad, but none of the Adivasis benefitted by any of their activities. Amritanandamayi becomes an important icon for her because she herself belongs to one of the Dalit communities in Kerala. Yet, she had become a symbol for the middle classes of the state. She is seen to provide the unquestioning love of the mother in the complex world of hatreds and failures. The symbols she uses are all Hindu. Koorie might have found identification with the Dalit woman who was also representing the middle class Hindus of the state, a leader who will offer herself as a model at the same time provide solace too.

1 (c) Vaishnava Kurichians:[36]

Another instance of conversion that is studied here is the advent of a new religious sect among Kurichiars of Wayanad in the late 70s. This section has four subsections. I wish to include them under the subheadings "Rejection of Tradition or Redefining of It?", "The Face of Modernity", "Gender and Modernity" and "Sanskritisation and Adivasis." Though I am using the word Adivasi here, I think the conclusions are about groups like Kurichias who have a history of land holdings and were peasant communities. Though there is no standardized name to describe the sect, I

prefer to call them Vaishnava Kurichiars, the name by which they identify themselves.[3] Apart from the above-mentioned name, they have been variedly described as Bhasma Kurichiars and Swami Kurichiars also, both used derogatorily by the other Kurichias who subtly suggested that they could be used as specimens to be studied. The word Bhasma means holy ash, which was derogatorily used. It probably signified the smearing of the body by the people belonging to the sect with sandalwood paste. Swami referred to the saffron clothes the men in the sect wore which made them resemble "swamis" or saints.

The sect seems to have emerged in the latter part of the 70s, existed as a collective movement for 6-7 years and then slowly died out, now with only a few members still adhering to its initial precepts. But, the movement was one of the main factors that articulated the need for partition of one of the main houses (Tharawads)— Palliyara. In that way, the emergence of the sect also marks the major changes in the private and the kinship patterns of the Kunchia community. This calls for a serious re-look at their precepts, though the other members of the community itself seem to be taking them as extremists who were also dismissed with a sarcastic laughter.

The new sect marked their difference with the other members of the community by inventing various ritual markers for themselves. The way they describe themselves is as believers in One God, who is Vishnu. The men wore *kalabham*[38] sacred thread and saffron clothes. They did not cover their torso. They also refrained from eating non-vegetarian food, changed the rituals of marriage into something similar to what is happening among Nairs in contemporary Kerala, stopped taking alcoholic drinks or any kinds of intoxicants. Their value system stressed on considering everyone equally and speaking the truth always.

This part of the dissertation attempts to examine how the advent of this new sect among Kurichiars marked change in the Adivasi community.[39]

The connections that the new movement made with a variety of social factors are interesting. I am trying to argue that the emergence of this new trend also coincided with the other "modernizing" efforts of the Kurichia community. The complex interrelations where made between the breaking up of the matrilineal joint family, the rule of the older (male) family heads, coming of the patrilineal family, education and a discourse on equality. The interviews taken from Attachira Kelu, the founder of the sect, Kelappan a follower, Kumba, his mother and talks with some non-believers of the sect who belonged to Kurichia community are the main source for this part.

Kelappan, a Vaishnava believer speaks about the destruction of an earlier powerful Kurichia clandom. He says, perhaps ironically, that it was "tradition" which led to the slow decay of an earlier glory. By tradition what he must have meant is the customs of the joint family which did not recognize individual needs at all. Speaking of earlier days, he says: "I feel like crying. We could not even eat what we liked, since everything would be decided by these elders." The new faith was thus a revolt against the rule of the Pittans and tradition. Quite ironically for the right wing that is reinventing a Hindu tradition for everyone, including the Adivasi, here is an example of the Adivasi using the Hindu symbols as "new", and as something that revolts against his tradition. The new faith symbolized change rather than tradition, though it apparently looks as if it is a 'revival' of sorts.

The powerlessness and irrelevance of tradition is symbolized by the lack of power of Adivasi gods in "these time." As Attachira Kelu, introduced as the founder of the new sect claims: " Many Kurichains still believe in Malakkari. But it is of no use. That god's power is in the ebb now. New illnesses won't be cured by Malakkari."[40]

So there is a clear distinction that is made with the earlier times and there is a rejection of "tradition" of sorts. When one knows that, the other discourses that are brought in connection are that of education and the justification of the nuclear family (as

129

opposed to the feudal, joint family) one understands that connection with modernity clearly. " In the past, we did not dare to speak our thoughts, because we were uneducated. But now we can question the elders and speak our minds," says Kelappan. Similarly, with regard to the preference for a nuclear family to the matrilineal one, Kelappan says: "Mother is only an excuse, but in reality, we are our father's blood, don't you agree?"

Along with a rejection of a certain kind of tradition, there is a clear attempt to unite the community, to use the new faith as a platform for that. As Kelu, the Guru ruefully comments: "We thought this [the new sect] would unite the community. So, we started it. It didn't work."

This clearly proves that it was an assertion of community identity that was attempted along with modernization. This community identity, I suspect, was asserted in the context of the more powerful groups in the locality, especially the upper castes. As Kelu says again: "First I tried to cure the illness of higher caste people. But then, I thought: This is not the correct way. Perhaps one should try this in one's own community."

1 (c) i: Rejection of Tradition? Or Redefining of It?

Though the new religion comes as a rejection of (Adivasi) tradition, it is surely not a complete rejection of the old. In fact, it is a redeployment of what is perceived as tradition. Kelu describing the difficulties of being a stringent Vaishnavaite says that many people left the sect because they could not obey elders or worship their own fathers. It is contradictory since this is the same group that has talked against the rule of the Pittans. Yet, it makes sense when one remembers that it is a transition from the matrilineal family where the oldest member was respected, but not necessarily one's own father.

The change of allegiance from Adivasi gods to Brahminical deities dramatically embodies this contradiction about tradition. Malakkari or any other Adivasi god is not rejected outright. In fact, they are redefined and reused. In this scheme of things, Malakkari becomes an Upadevata, or sub god. He is worshipped as the Kirata avatar of Shiva who is seen to be the "original" god.

Like tradition, change itself is perceived as both negative and positive. The reasons to bring in change are ironically to contend with the confusions created by modernity itself. As Kelappan says:

> There were 148 joint families. Now only 52 remain. The whole of Kurichia clan is becoming extinct.

1 (c) ii: The Face of Modernity

But, the gods are changing and their faces reveal a whole lot of lessons about how the changes are happening. The rhetoric of the new religion and new gods contain these basic percepts of modern liberalism, i.e. Universalism and equality. Kelu the founder of the sect, while speaking about a vision/dream that led to the forming of the new sect says:

> My father's garden has 3 and 1/2 acres. That person who appeared in my dream asked me. "How many plants do you have in your garden?" And I said: "How can I say?" Then the voice said again: "So too there is no end to this diversity. But the higher form of all this is One."

Along with the universalizing of 'One' against a diversity of gods, the new sect also has deployed an emancipatory rhetoric of equality which many groups have used in modernity. I remember the slogan, "One caste, one religion, one god for man" raised by Sri Narayana Guru in South Kerala. The Vaishanava Kurichains also stressed the equality of all before god in a similar way. In many ways, this movement was a caste reform movement that addressed questions of gender, modernity and community.

Yet, both precepts rest on shaky grounds if questioned. The "One" god, whom the community aspires, is actually part of a whole pantheon of gods. So too, the

131

realization that there are limits to equality and inclusion. Kelappan recounts his sister's marriage to a Thiya man.[41] He says the marriage happened in opposition to the family. Since he was acutely aware of the contradiction in his own argument, he felt compelled to say that he had nothing against inter-caste marriages and everyone was equal before god. In spite of that, he kept on repeating that his sister married against the family's wishes. Similarly, Kelu, while talking about his followers does make a distinction between his Hindu upper caste, Muslim and Christian followers: "They [Muslims and Christians] only come to cure illnesses. They don't remain to be believers. Too many problems for them, like the church etc."

1 (c) iii: Gender and Modernity

Clearly one area which the new trend attempted to redefine was gender relations. As mentioned earlier, there was a clear attempt at delegitimizing one form of patriarchy. based on matrilineal succession laws.[42] The change into nuclear families was what was aspired. When Kelappan says: "We are our father's blood, " what he also meant was the change into a new kind of patriarchy. This must have had varied meanings for different women. I conjecture that there must have been a generational difference in the women's reactions. Many older women were complaining that they felt destitute in their old age in the transition stage. Earlier, they could legitimately go back to their natal families when the husband died. Now they are abandoned when they become old. Younger women found it easier to work in nuclear families, since work was less taxing. Many of the new generation of Kurichia women who had been studying in colleges expressed their desire to get married to men of their choice.

As mentioned earlier, the rhetoric of the Vaishnavites was one of equality. This also included some form of discourse on gender equality, though it was clearly limited to worship. Earlier, it was prohibited to allow women entry into the family shrines. But, they believed that the women could worship inside the shrine. But it should be

remembered that the upper caste women could always worship inside the temple and perhaps it could also be an emulation of this that was happening.

The supporting of new marriage rituals was also happening in the frame of equality discourse for women. Kelappan pictures the earlier marriage customs as terribly anti-women. But surprisingly his pro-women statements are all for dressing up and ornamentation of the female body: "Earlier, women had to leave for their husband's house only with the dress they wore. Now, according to our capacity, we entrust the girl with gold and cash." This is a new definition of matriliny, which is rejected because it is anti-women, and a supporting of the infamous dowry system as empowering women more. So, it is not even an attempt at equity, but a rhetoric of it that is deployed here.

But, when questioned, the first precepts to go would be precepts of gender equity itself. The menses taboos are still followed in Kelappan's house. He is apologetic about it but says he has to make some concessions for the women.

While talking to the women directly, one understands how ironic it is to talk of choice as far as women are concerned. First of all, methodologically there was a problem. There was no independent access to women's opinions as the men felt compelled to be always present whenever the interviews were happening. (In spite of both the researchers who were present at the time being women.) The forces that finally led to a religious conversion, which were working on these women, were completely different from those that were working on the men. Kumba, a convert to the new religion, speaks of her conversion: "When our men move, do we have an existence of our own? We also move with them."[43]

Also, the perception of a settler about the gender roles among Kurichias is worth quoting here. A Young Christian settler from Pulpally said this while comparing Paniyars and Kurichias: "Do you know that their women control the Paniyars? The men have to

pay a price to get a woman and the woman determined how they lived. Kurichias are different. There men, controlled women. They are more forward (sic)."[44]

1 (c) iv: Sanskritisation and Adivasis

This phenomenon of the Swami Kurichiars apparently fits into the phenomenon called "sanskritisation". While acknowledging the important contribution that M.N. Srinivas has done in describing the Indian Social process, especially the Adivasi society, in seeing it as dynamic, I also feel his description of the phenomenon is unfortunately exclusionary. M.B. Emeneau in his Preface tells us that Srinivas uses the term "sanskritisation" for the first time in his essay "Religion and Society among the Coorgs." Srinivas defines sanskritisation as follows:

> Sankritisation is the process by which a "low" Hindu caste or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently, "twice-born" caste. Generally such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community.[45]

He does not answer the questions as to why certain groups find it easier to get into structures that are identifiable as "Hindu" and savarna. Nor does he bother to say why other groups are getting into "Westernization". The upward mobility, which is very often in terms of sheer material benefits that are so necessary for the survival of subaltern groups are also there as a backdrop of so-called sanskritisation phenomenon. Hardiman locates his problems with M.N. Srinivas in his characteristic style:

> .. .this view represents Indian society as something like a very sluggish game of snakes and ladders. The game is entered in a state of impurity and a gradual advance is made over the generations towards the goal of Brahminical purity.[46]

Hardiman's main critique is that Srinivas emphasizes "purification" rather than the threat to the existing social structure through these acts. While agreeing with him, I also feel that the option of "sanskritisation" that was available to some Kurichiars at that

time in history, is very much connected to the hierarchy within Adivasi communities itself. The Kurichiars have considered themselves closer to upper castes historically. They are landed Adivasis (compared to Paniyar and Ravular groups). They also possessed ritual power in the local situation. They call themselves *malanamboothiris*.[47] They have origin myths about themselves as Nairs who have come from the plains and who had to stay back in Wayanad.[48] Many Kurichia families still practice untouchability with the "lower" tribes and castes in Wayanad.

If one accepts the argument that the Vaishnava movement in the history of Kurichia community was an articulation of modernity, then one also has to take into account all these local factors while analyzing the reasons for this particular way of articulation. This might also give us leads to similar processes that are happening in other parts of the country. Any analysis of the right wing, especially the RSS and BJP (as its political expression) gaining ground in tribal belts all over the country, also has to take into account local histories and identities. While for the right wing when it is an upper caste articulation, it is a going back into a pristine culture of the Hindus, its expression among the subaltern groups is very often a search for modernity.

It is the particular identity of the Kurichiars that is seen in the articulation that uses Brahminical rituals. Their own self-perception of being closer to the upper castes is visible in this particular movement. This can work as a dividing point between an articulation of a unified Adivasi identity, since it also means that this identity is built by asserting a difference with the so-called lower tribal identities. Yet, it is also an assertion of the right to be considered on par with the upper castes and therefore is clearly a rebellious statement also. The imitation of the Hindu culture takes on a parodic shape because it takes disparate signs from the culture and has no clear referent in the imitated culture which hides within it subversive politics of Adivasi identity. As Hardiman interprets the Devi movement, one can perhaps see the Vaishnava Kurichairs also as

taking upper caste symbols and values of "purity" which was till then used to subjugate them. This value was taken and democratized so as to deprive it of its power of domination.

Can we say a movement failed? According to the Vaishnavaites themselves, theirs is a failed movement. But, if we also realize that the goals were not just the assertion of the austerities and personal changes, but also structural changes that were sought to be achieved within the community, then Vaishnavites have not failed. The feudal families of the Kurichiars are breaking up into nuclear families with the head being the father. All the major families are bogged with litigations among its members. One of the major leaders of the BJP in Kerala is Palliyara Raman who might also be a product of the efforts of Vaishnavites.[49] This allows the community some bargaining power as far as politics is concerned.

The way in which Adivasi Hinduisation process is being theorized usually falls into two categories. Either that it is a natural phenomenon, or else, that they are coaxed into accepting some Hindu rituals.[50] Both are problematic positions. The first can also be seen to emerge from a nationalistic sense of seeing all of India as Hindu and Adivasis as naturally Hindu. The other position, which is usually from the Marxian leanings, sees the Adivasis as without any agency of their own.

Smitha Kothari writing about develpement projects that have displaced millions also speaks about tribal gods:

> The gods and goddesses of these vanishing communities, silently and invisibly facing threats of extinction–they require protection in addition to devotion. Gods are also dying.[51]

But what this section has argued is not that the gods are dying, but they are changing. The gods, like the Adivasis themselves are trying to survive and negotiate (as they have done) with the circumstances in which they find themselves.

talks about the Raj Gond movement which tried to Hinduize the Gond tribe in
Maharashtra. He quotes Elwin:

> Song and dance, the only distinctive elements of Gond culture,
> have been driven from our district. Chicken and pigs are the only tax-
> free animals. The Gonds have been compelled in the name of religion
> and government to kill them off-a very serious economic loss.
> The poor Gond has often to yoke his cows (who are past giving
> milk) to the plough. Now he is not allowed to do so...
> Liquor is the only tonic available to the malaria-ridden Gond. It
> is one wanning and cheering thing in his nakedness. Now this is taken
> from him and nothing put in its place.
> One of the most attractive features of the Gond was the decent
> way he treated his women, and his refusal to regard any human being as
> untouchable. He has now been forced to adopt the Hindu attitude in
> these matters.[52]

This is one interpretation of sanskritisation that is given. The effect of
Hinduisation is seen to be a fall from the tribal ethos which is seen to be more free,
liberating etc. But, the compulsion of the tribes themselves to do this, the utter
powerlessness they find themselves and then the relative power into which the dominant
culture takes them, however constraining it is, is not seen.

Yet to idealize these movements among the tribes and see "only" resistance in
them is quite problematic, especially now, when the Hinduisation of tribal identity is
happening on an All India basis and systematic work is going on in India for this purpose
from the extreme right wing which is all Hindu. The tragic result of this is visible in the
recent happenings in Gujarat where the Hinduised tribes turn against Muslims and their
own converted Christian relatives.

A.M. Shah's article in *EPW* quotes the surprise that most social scientists felt at
the recent carnage in Gujarat and the role of the Adivasis in it. He coldly concludes that
it is because most of the Social Scientists have refused to conduct systematic field
research in the area and not even read relevant material on the subject. He claims his

statements emanate from his fieldwork conducted in Gujarat in the fifties. He attacks the treatment of tribes as a separate category (unlike the Dalits) from Hindu. From pre-colonial sources he finds that these groups did not have a word to distinguish them as Adivasi (or the aborigines) in pre-colonial India (again unlike Dalits who were referred to as *antyaja, achhut, asprushya* and *chandala.*) Therefore he feels they are Hindus and there should be no surprise that they did side with the Hindus against the Muslims.[53]

He does have a point that the tribes were not separated from the plains people by insurmountable barriers, and they were never isolated from the "general" public. But, if pre-colonial history is the main source of Hindu idenity creation then what Shah speaks about has a point. But, then it does not actually explain the participation of so many Dalits also in the Gujarat massacre. (According to his logic the Dalits were not part of pre-colonial Hindu identity.) Facts, which are discussed in detail in Chapter 2 point towards the construction of Hindu identity itself in the colonial times.

I do not see the Hinduisation of the tribes as a "natural" result of their being part of "Hindu" culture. It is definitely the result of many social factors, including systematic political and social work of the right wing which has targeted tribal areas in particular. The right wing considers the conversion ceremonies (called 'sudhi" or re-conversion) to be a coming back to the root faith and is actively involved in Adivasi areas.[54] Moreover, it is suspected that the Kurichyas with their claims towards more ritual power among the Wayanad tribes might be more susceptible to the "lures" of Hinduisation, in comparison to an Adiya or a Paniyar. The study among Vaishanva Kurichiyas proves that it is not just a claim to a higher ritual status that was being voiced by them. But this claim was based on a rejection of 1. Their own immediate past symbolized by the "rule of the *pittans.*" 2. Differences with so-called "lower" castes (which will definitely include other ritually lower tribes like Paniyar and Adiya) 3. Keeping old traditions, including debilitating ones like ritual purity during periods etc. New rituals that were interacting

with the market economy (like dowry) were introduced. As far as women were concerned, it was not seen to be wise to change completely.

Thus, this part concludes that the claim for a different ritual status which was marked in the form of Brahminisation was 1. a claim to more relative power with the outside world; 2. using the traditions of a "high culture" to claim a modernity within the community; 3. built on maintaining differences with the so-called "lower" castes and tribes around; 4. maintaining and asserting a lower status accorded to women and re-forging the patriarchy in modern ways to suit the Kerala situation.

2. The "Wronged" Adivasi:

Many of the Adivasis, in the course of their conversations with me during the field study expressed anguish and pain at the way the dominant culture had and continues to treat their lives. The treatment meted out to their gods should be seen in this context. Religion was an especially touchy matter with most of the Adivasis I spoke to. Very often, I felt that the subject of the gods was used to speak a complex story of alienation, subjugation and perhaps, resistance as well. The earlier section on land rights and the current section, in that sense, interact with each other. Perhaps the issue of land can be said to give a context for understanding the narratives collected in the field.[55]

A very significant image, which kept on repeating in the narratives about gods, was the story of "stealing". These were either the memories of stealing that happened in quite recent history, or the narratives recounted stories of loss in mythic times. Moreover, it is not an individual experience that is recounted. It is the collective experience of the Adivasis.

Definitely, what is referred to could be the history of dispossession and subjugation. K J Baby also mentions this history of stealing, in a reworking of the origin myth of the Wayanad Adivasis in his novel *Maveli Mantam*.[56]

Thus, the idea is to project the image of the "wronged" Adivasi. With the idea of stealing, there was also the projection of the injustice that had happened to a community.

Along with the idea of stealing comes the idea of the thief. This is where the "outsider" occupies an important position. It is very often this 'outsider' who has stolen from the Adivasi. Perhaps this construction is one way by which the idea of the wronged Adivasi (and from there the idea of the resisting Adivasis) is built.[57]

This idea, of fear and distrust for the outsiders, find expression in many myths and folklore of the Adivasis. For instance, the famous "Wayanadan Pattu", the folk song of Kurichiars expresses their fear of the outsiders. The song speaks about fearing people who are outsiders much more than cruel animals like tiger. The song also contains the metaphor of the outsiders stealing--the theft in this instance is of Kurichia children with the help of black magic so as to take them away from the clan.[58]

The relationship with the lower rung of Adivasis (especially Paniyars) to the idea of stealing is quite a complex one. Historically there is a public image about them as thieves and robbers. For instance, K.J. Baby recounts a local myth about the image of Paniyars as thieves:

> One such story about the Paniyars is that there was a group of Paniyar thieves operating near Mananthavady. They used to attack the small boats coming down the Mananthavady river and run away with the travelers' possessions.[59]

The idea of the Adivasis as thieves has come down to us from history. We find references to these stereotypes in colonial history writing. For instance:

> In moral turpitude they [Paniyars] stand high. They are professional burglars, waylay and rob travelers and do not hesitate to commit the gravest crimes and yet they are excellent field labourers.[60]

Apart from being portrayed as thieves, Paniyars have also been portrayed as natural betrayers. They are believed to have betrayed the Pazhassi Raja who was waging

a heroic battle against British occupation in Wayanad. I quote K. J. Baby who reads from a post-colonial cultural history perspective of Kerala:

> The story is connected to Pazhassi. The following is a quotation from *Kerathinte Samskarika Charithram (The Cultural History of ˘Keralam)*. "Thus Baber made all the necessary moves to trap Pazhassi in his hideout and to destroy him, like a rat smoked out of its hole. He had won over many Paniyas with bribes to inform him of the enemy's moves. On 30th November 1805 three Paniyas informed Baber of Pazhassi's hideout"[61]

He proves beyond doubt that the history writer's intention was to deliberately vilify the Paniyas. He proves this by quoting from the original letter of T.H. Baber, Sub-Collector that William Logan quotes in *Malabar Manual* In the letter, Baber writes about the bribes and assurances that he had to give the local elites who set Paniyas to look for Pazhassi. Given the fact that Paniyas are still slaves even in 1834, we can be sure that they cannot decide anything for themselves, let alone who to side with during a revolt.[62]

The same image persists even now when Mary, a Christian settler in Pulpally assured me during the fieldwork that the Paniyas steal "whatever they can."[63]

Historical Betrayals

Yet, what the Adivasis experience is diametrically opposite to this image about them. In that way, the narratives are not just interacting, they are counteracting with the public image about the Adivasis.

The Adivasis experience is that the others have stolen from them. They also have collective memories of others betraying them. Some of this has come down to us through histories on Wayanad itself.

The beginning of Kottayam Raja's rule, which can also be read as the beginning of feudal system in Wayanad is cloaked in narratives of the betrayal of Adivasis. O.K. Johnny, trying to write a history from the perspective of the Adivasis says that Kurumars believe they ruled over Wayanad at one point. They also believed that the princess of the Veda king (who was ruling over Wayanad) was made to marry some Nambiar by the

Kottayam and Kurumbranad rulers who captured Wayanad. The war that followed this saw the genocide of the **Kurumas** and the Veda king lost the kingdom.[64]

There is another story of betrayal connected to a Paniya chief and the British in the popular lore. It is the myth connected to the tree where a giant iron chain is wound near Lakkidi (called Lakkidi Kotta) where the ghat roads from Kozhikode end and the Wayanad plateau begins. The Adivasis do a yearly *puja* in this place.

O.K. Johnny quotes this popular lore, which is known as Kannthandan's myth.

The Wayanad lore is that the spirit of a Paniya who showed the way to an Englishman from Calicut is bound here. To get the credit of discovering the way to Wayanad, the Englishman apparently murdered the Paniya who was his guide. Later, when the ghost of the Paniyan started troubling the wayfarers, the locals bound him magically to the tree.[65]

This myth definitely recognizes the oppression the lowest rung of Adivasis faced with the British, and the sacrifice they had to give for the "furthering of knowledge" of the Whites. The memory of this betrayal, ironically, is a popular tourist site in Lakkidi, Wayanad right now and stands as a symbol of the continuing colonial relations.

To repeat, the Adivasi narratives of stealing are not just creating a history of their own, but also countering an already existing history of the dominant communities about them. To resist, it is necessary to first estabEsh the history of oppression. In this scheme, the stones of stealing and betrayal function to assert the wronged Adivasi identity.

Most of the examples I have recounted are those that belong to the Paniya community. (Though significantly, one story of the loss of a Kingdom is attributed to the Kurumars.) It is not that we can generalize and say that all the Adivasis of Wayanad have been historically portrayed as thieves and betrayers. Maybe the position of Paniyas in the lowest rung of the social ladder and the stories about them as thieves do have a clear connection. The stories of loss of a Kingdom cannot be that of Paniyas nor

Ravulas for they never had a Kingdom to loose. They, in fact, had only their freedom to lose.[66]

2 (a) Stealing of Gods

Many Adivasis expressed ideas related to the stealing of their gods by the upper castes. Vella, a Ravula woman from Thirunelli expressed these sentiments when she said that the government officials had scant respect for "our gods" and threw the sacred idols of the Adivasis into the Kaligai River.[67] I later found out from an upper caste woman that Vella might be referring to the *"Sudhikalasam"* [68] which happened in the neighboring temple to Thirunelli.[69] (Or rather, Vella's version is circulated as *"Sudhikalasam"* among the upper castes.) Unlike many other stories, this was perceivable history that Vella was referring to.

Parallel to this experience, of being wronged, the Adivasis also share the experience of the pervasive feeling of being in exile. This is ironic, since the identity that is felt is that of the "indigene" or Adivasi. Instead of feeling at-home, almost all the Adivasis kept on speaking about "home" as exile.

For instance, Mutha a young Ravula woman from Thirunelli said with regret "We do not have a place of our own. We are from this very place."[70] This was repeated by Chinnu, another Ravula woman who coldly and cynically put it thus: "We are from *nowhere.* We are from right here--this very place."[71] These sentiments find expression in the public sphere when the Adivasi-Dalit Samara Samiti demanding land for the landless Adivasis described them as "people who have been rendered exiles in their own land." The form of protest that the Adivasis chose during the protest also has connection with the exiled-in-one's-own-land-feeling. They erected refugee camps in front of the state secretariat to draw attention to the starvation deaths among the Adivasis.[72]

This feeling of exile should be understood in the context of the peculiar history of Wayanad where except the Adivasis, almost everyone traces their history to some

other place. None of the migrants, the Wayandan Chettis, Jains, Nairs, Brahmins, or the recent migrants, the Christian settlers felt alienation in the land. Even while there are narratives of the hardships they suffered in the difficult terrain, the migrants proudly kept their kinship ties with the "native land" and felt comfortable in the new adopted land. But not so, the Adivasis, who claimed to be from the same place.[73] Chinnu's statement quoted above sounded contradictory to my ears. But later I understood that it was the pervasive feeling of alienation within one's own place that was driving many Adivasis to speak thus.

Even when resistance happens, one of the first slogans that is raised is connected to the claiming of the space. This is reflected in the song that K.J. Baby had written and which seemed to be quite popular among the Adivasis also. This song is popularized by the team at the Kanavu school.[74] The refrain of the song is: "This Land, My house--is Wayanad." This song reflects their assertion of claiming the land as their own.[75]

The stories that are collected in the following pages are about the shrine at Thirunelli. These are primarily origin myths, but I have also used some stories that are connected to the temple. They are analyzed keeping in mind the identity of the speakers. I have given the source in the text itself, since I feel, the source is part of the way the texts have been constructed. Also, I have tried to retain the full quotation connected to the temple, rather than the myth alone. All the above discussion about memories of loss and exile would help us to create a context for interpreting the stories.

"History" of Thirunelli Temple

There have been many references to the temple at Thirunelli in historical sources. As M.G. Shashibhooshan conjectures:

> It must be during the time of the Mahodayapuram Perumackans who ruled Kerala from Kodungalloor that Thirunelli temple was constructed and became famous. The Brahmagiri foothills, which the Adivasis in north Malabar consider sacred, must have been chosen for the building of the temple in the 9th century A.D. It must have been the traders

dealing with the forest and hill produce hailing from Kodagu, (ruled by the Kongucheras) and Wayanad (ruled by the next generation of Kongucheras of Purakizhinadu) who must have developed the temple. The rulers of Purakizhinadu, who were subordinate to the Mahodayapuram royal family, as well as their relatives of Kurumbranadu used to be generous towards the development of Thirunelli.[76]

In the above cited work, apart from the historical "origins" of the temple, the author also points to other facts, especially about the *pattayas* connected to the temple. He points to the copper plate that was made on the thirty-seventh year of rule by Bhaskara Ravi Varman. It talks about earmarking a particular piece of land so that the rituals in Thirunelli temple continued without any problem. Another crucial copper plate, which is relevant to the present dissertation is supposed to be written during the forty-sixth (?) year of the same ruler and instituted by Godavarma Adikal and the followers of Purakizhinadu. In Shashibhooshan's words:

> If the eldest member of the old branch of Purakizhinadu comes for a temple visit, one thousand *nazhi* of rice should be spent. If the local feudal families [8], who were given the responsibility of the temple failed to participate in the function, they were supposed to hand over all their property to the temple. [79]

This clearly points to the origin and sustenance of the temple in a feudal economy that would have functioned by demanding ritual obeisance from a variety of people. The Adivasis would definitely have figured in the last rung of this arrangement, with the temple representing the power of the rulers.

Story 1

> Tirunelli temple (literally the temple having the sacred *nelli* tree) lies in a valley of the mountains to the south of the Brahmagiri peak. It is known by three different names, viz, (1) Tirunelli temple (2) Amalaka temple and (3) Sidha temple. It is believed to have been dedicated by Brahma to Vishnu known as Deva Devesan and Tirunelli Perumal. The mythological origin of the temple is as follows.
>
> Once upon a time when Brahma was enjoying one of his periodical peregrinations, he happened to be delighted beyond measure with this place with a grove of most beautiful trees and plants, of flowers and foliage among which stood a *nelli* tree (*Phyllanthus emblica*), on which was seen the image of Vishnu with four hands bedecked with numerous fine jewels. The image immediately vanished from sight. Being

145

overtaken with grief and surprised at this sudden disappearance, Brahma engaged himself in deep contemplation, when the image reappeared and he heard the following words uttered by an invisible being: "The image that thou hast seen is that of Vishnu, the excellence of this place draws and keeps him here." Convinced of these divine utterances, Brahma made a temple, consecrated Vishnu therein and entrusted its keeping to two pious Brahmins of the Amalaka village. The Brahma ordained that visits to, and prayers at, the temple would remove the sins committed though they were for generations, and secure paradise, and that the performance of prayers and ceremonies would lead to the translation of the spirits of the departed, who have not obtained salvation, to the "Pithurloka" (regions of blissful spirits) wherein to enjoy eternal happiness. This blessing, pronounced by the Brahma, is believed in by Hindus, and pilgrimages are therefore undertaken to the shrine.

(William Logan.*Malabar Manual: Vol II*. Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Gazetteers

Department, 2000: cccxxvi-cccxxvii.)

Story 2

Brahmadeva departed but visits the temple every night to worship Vishnu. The *puja* (worship) in every shrine closes ordinarily at about 9 to 10 P.M. and in this shrine, where the ordinary puja is done five times, from morning till 10 P.M. the priest prepares for a sixth puja before leaving the place. On opening the doors the next morning he finds that all the materials for the puja have been utilized during the night. It was Brahmadeva who performed the sixth puja and this has been going on everyday and will go on forever. The priest before entering the temple in the morning swears thrice that he will not divulge what he sees there on opening the door, and no priest dare give out the secret at the risk of being bitten by cobras emanating from the shrine.

(Rau Bahadur C. Gopalan Nair. *Malabar Series: Wynad: Its Peoples and Traditions*. Madras:

Higginbothams, 1911: 117.)

Story 3

Long ago, Thirunelli was known as Amalakagramam. Amalakam means gooseberry (*nelli*). Amalaka temple is called Thirunelli temple. The word *nelli* also means that which bears the gunas. Among trees, the gooseberry tree, and among fruits, the gooseberry have important positions. Gooseberry is supposed to queE the three *doshas*[80] and is supposed to have medicinal properties. There is also a belief mat if you circumambulate a gooseberry tree the curse of the *kali*[81] will be over. Gooseberry tree's bark does not dissolve in water. It can also purify the water. Due to this property, the wells are given a base of gooseberry wood. In a similar way, the temple also purifies the minds of the devotees and keeps them firmly entrenched in the great belief of god. Like this, if you interpret the word Thirunelli you will get many meanings.

(Source: *Thirunelli Mahatmyam*. Thirunelli Devaswom: 5- Translation mine).

Story 4

The history of the temple goes back to the *Krita Yuga*, the first of all *Yugas*. This is the place where Brahma worshipped Vishnu. Parasurama came here after he killed his mother Renuka to do oblations. He was thus absolved of all sins. After that, the temple became famous for doing oblations to ancestors.

The origin of the temple is as follows: Three *rishis* came from outside. They came crossing the Kodagu hills. When they saw the *panchateertha*[32] they kept the three gooseberries *(nellies)* they were carrying so that they could take a bath. The gooseberries disappeared and seeing the miracle, they decided to install the idols of Shiva and Vishnu here. So, it became Thirunelli.

(Source: Shankaranarayana Sharma, Brahmin, and ex-chief priest of Thirunelli temple.

Translation mine.)

Story 5

Three Brahmins were travelling through a dense forest. They were tired and hungry. They wondered what to do. Behold! A gooseberry tree. They ate gooseberries. All their hunger, thirst and exhaustion vanished. Satiated, they slept on the bank of a river. In a dream, they realized that the gooseberries were a divine boon from Mahavishnu and Paramashiva. It is believed that these gods were protectors of anyone who traveled through those woods. The Brahmins, who realized the divinity of *nellis* named the place Thirunelli. There are many such stones that connect the origin of Thirunelli with gooseberries.

(Source: Ilayathu, Kunhikkuttan. *Keralathinte Pradhana Kshetrangaliloote*. Thrissur: H & C,

2002: 137-138. Translation mine.)

Story 6

Once, to worship the Thirunelli Perumal, an old Adivasi man reached the temple from very far away. Since he belonged to a lower caste, he was not allowed to go in and worship. When he tried to steal a glimpse of the deity, the huge *balikkallu*[33] came in his way. The old man prayed with all his heart. The stone made way for the devotee, to snatch a glimpse of the idol.

(Source: P.K. Kunhikrishnan Nair. "Malamadkkukalil Oru Theerthadanam." *Discover*

Wayanad: The Green Paradise. Kalpetta: District Tourism Promotion Council, 1995:

89.Translation mine.)

Story 7

There was an Adiya boy who was a cowherd. In the herd, there was a white cow. The master discovered that the white cow had not been yielding milk. Suspecting the cowherd, the master would get annoyed

and used to beat him thoroughly. The helpless kid decided to find out
what the truth was. One day, he hid and watched the cow. After some
time, he saw a small child running towards it. He saw him drinking the
milk straight from the cow's udder. The cowherd tried to catch the child.
But the little thief was faster than him. Amazing him further, he ran into
the nearby *nelli* tree and disappeared. The boy who was drinking milk was
Lord Krishna and the place became Thirunelli, the land of the sacred *nelli*.
The nelli tree was there till recently. But, the *devaswam*[84]   cut the tree off.

(Source: Lakshmikutty, upper caste woman and activist who works for Adivasi issues,

Thirunelli. Translation mine.)

Story 8

The story of the *rishis* is wrong. Yes, they were the ones who came from
outside. They were the ones who took our land. What actually happened
is this.   A *Vaishya* kid used to look after the cattle.   Everyday, he
discovered one particular cow didn't yield milk. He caught an Adiya kid
drinking the milk one day. That kid was Peruman. Thirunelli Perumal
was an Adiya. Krishna was our man. They [Malayalakkar] claim him to
be theirs now.

(Source: Malla, Ravula woman, Thirunelli. Translation mine.)

Reading the Stories

The juxtaposing of these stories itself is interpreting them. Yet, I venture to state

the obvious once again[85].

I feel there are three main perspectives emerging in the stories. The first six

stories happen in the general matrix of a particular discourse. Diametrically at the other

end of this spectrum is the Adivasi counter-narrative, which is represented by Malla's

interventions. Connecting these two perspectives, acting almost like a bridge, which

draws from both ends is Lakhmikutty's narrative. It has elements of the first group as

well as the Adivasi perspectives.

Let us start the analysis from the tail end, i.e. from story 8. Malla's rendering of

the story does not have an independent existence in the matrix of these narratives. It is

interacting with all the other narratives, but especially with Sharma's and Lakshmikutty's

narratives. This is not just because Malla has no access to the historical material or

mythological material available in print. It is also because of my active agency. Malla •was told about the existence of these particular versions by me.

Only later did I realize that Malla had not actually told a whole story. She had just added what she thought was necessary to both the stories. She was obviously disturbed when I recounted Shankaranarayana Sharma's version of the origin of Thirunelli temple. She kept repeating, *they* were the ones who came from outside, interrupting my rendering of Shankaranarayan Sharma's account. It was found that Malla was attempting an interpretation when she kept saying that the *rishis* came from outside. The *"rishis"* in Sharma's story were interpreted to be *Malayalakkar*, the term the Thirunelli Adivasis use to describe the non-Adivasis in the area.

This re-rendering of a Brahmin myth assumes multiple meanings when one considers the time when she speaks. Wayanad was already awakened to the fact about the loss of Adivasi land. In Malla's own personal history, she had once been to Trivandrum to fight for the land issue.[86]

But it is significant that she claimed Krishna to be her god. Also, the word used to describe the main deity of Thirunelli is *Perumal.*[87] The elders of Ravulas are called *peruman.* As Malla described the story, she said: "Perumal was our man."

There is an image of stealing which does occur in the story. There is a thief in the story who is loved and loved for his stealing. There are other thieves who are derided too. The loved one is the boy thief, who is alternatively Perumal, Krishna and who is also an "Adiya." In Malla's narrative, if the Adiya steals, it is because he is a small boy, who is playfully indulging in the mischief. Not only that, he is doing it as part of a divine mission as well.

But there is a stealing which is loathsome. That is the stealing of gods, a worldview itself. It is expressed in the sentence: "Krishna was our man. They

(*Malayalakkar*) claim him to be theirs now." Here, the theft is not of material things, but of a concept, and a divine one at that.

Her interaction with Lakshmikutty's story is not quite that of rejection. It is a kind of add-on that Malla wishes to perform over this narrative. But, the interventions are crucial and also mean a sea change in the central vision of the story.

The significant difference with Lakshmikutty's narrative is that Malla refuses to bring in the element of slavery into the narrative world. The slavery, or at least forms of which are still visible in her own community. It is a Vaishya boy, not an Adiya boy who looks after the cattle. There is no master and slave. The Adiya boy is somehow in the forest. I am still not sure whether one can interpret this to mean that the Ravulas were in the forest and free. The Adiya boy has to drink milk from the cow that is not his. But, he is not bothered by the immorality of stealing. Everything is justified in the playfulness of boys-will-be-boys.

What was most important was that the god turns out to be Adiya in her story. This is claiming of their own history by the subalterns. In reality, Malla's story, where the Adiya god disappears into the *nelli* tree, does come closer to history. For, in the history of the temple, it is precisely the Adiya community that has actually disappeared. The fact that Malla found it necessary to recount a counter story to me also shows how the subalterns have to write their histories against the grain of dominant narratives about themselves.

The way in which Shankaranarayana Sharma could tell his story without any reference to Adivasis and the way Malla has to constantly deal with Sharma's narrative shows that the fight throws up great odds to Malla and her people. She had to completely reject Sharma's narrative angrily and take in some aspects of Lakshmikutty's narrative but rewrite it significantly. These show the different processes involved in negotiating with dominant histories while writing subaltern histories.

Now to go to the first matrix of six stories. As mentioned before they all belong to the same paradigm. Story one, quoted in William Logan is clearly garnered from upper caste informants. Apart from showing the nexus between colonials and upper castes, this story also shows the implications of using textual sources (which Logan would have preferred) over oral narratives. This would naturally leave out any Adivasi perspective. The gods under discussion (Brahma as well as Vishnu) are both Aryan in origin. Thus, the narrative clearly shows the players to be these groups, who, through the representation of Aryan gods bestow upon themselves the quality of sacredness. It can be read as symbolically showing two sections of the upper castes, represented by Brahma and Vishnu. Here, the upper caste forces are shown as complementary groups represented by Brahma worshipping Vishnu, with no conflict between any groups shown. Apart from the representation of the gods, the action of entrustment of the temple to "two pious Brahmins" signifies the direct connection of the temple to the community of Brahmins. Significantly, the myth is completely silent about the local population here.

In Gopalan Nair's rendering, the voice of a believer is not quite hidden. The emphasis with which he speaks about the miracle of Brahma conducting the sixth puja: "...and this has been going on everyday and will go on for ever" is the voice of the professed objective collector of stories. What I found significant in this rendering is the swearing into secrecy, which the priests of the temple have to enter into. Yet, it is not quite a secret that it is Brahma who comes every night for a *puja*. I feel there is a mythical silence that the priests have to respect for the system (of which the temple is a part of) to go on. There is one secret which the Brahmin trustees of the temple would know and which, if divulged will shake the foundations of the values which protect the shrine. This I think might also be connected to the Adivasi origins of the temple, if one can take Malla's version seriously.

The *Thirunelli   Mahatmyam*   on the other hand, focuses on the contemporary. This is a modern justification using a comparatively more "scientific" discourse. Ayurveda, in spite of its traditional Ezhava[88] practitioners, cannot escape the brand of Brahminism in its theory. Thus, it is a curious mixture of Brahminism cloaked in a traditional medical discourse that is given in those pages. But, it is also significant that the temple trust did find it necessary to justify the belief through a hagiography of the gooseberry and could not take the reader to just "believe" the gods blindly. It is a materialistic justification for needs that are primarily in the spiritual realm. The narrative speaks about this greatness in terms of Ayurveda and its philosophy of well being. What I see as the significant word in this narrative is "purity". In the caste context of India, purity also has connotations of not being "polluted" by racial mixing. Thus, though the narrative is one of health and well being, the subtext guiding it appears to be of caste hierarchy, and the importance of Thirunelli in this.

Very significantly, the figure of an Adivasi does make an appearance in the later part of the same text (i.e. *Thirunelli Mahatmyam*).   He comes as an old man who is a devotee of the Thirunelli god. This is another version of *Story 6.* Due to caste rules, he cannot enter the temple and worship his god. According to the story, the *balikkallu* moves and the Adivasi devotee could get a glimpse of the god. In this "purified" atmosphere of the temple with its mythologies of the sacred gooseberry, the Adivasi has to stand outside. The Thirunelli god in the story does not think it is criminal to keep his devotee from him. In fact, the god does not divinely interfere with the structure that keeps his devotee standing outside for a vision of the god. On the contrary, when there is a suspicion that the Adivasi in his ardent devotion might enter forcibly, the god makes a cosmetic change where the structure of the system is not disturbed drastically. Thus, the Adivasi devotee can see the god from far (so that he need not enter inside) and that is the only change that is made.

This "accommodation" frames an important part of the dominant caste's narrative about Adivasis and the temple. The counter narratives of the Adivasis themselves are almost diametrically reacting to this "generosity" myth of the dominant group.

The story of Shankaranarayan Sharma did not have even one reference to Adivasis.[89] His origin myth of the temple existed in the realm of abstract Hindu *puranas* and myths. The fact that the three *nellis*, which the *rishis* had kept on the bank of a pond, disappeared is not a really amazing act of miracle. Yet, this did not deter him from presenting it thus. The agency of building the temple by the three *rishis* was more important in his narrative than the act of disappearance. It was only a chance that gave the rishis an opportunity to build the temple.

Parasurama is known as the advocate of Brahmin supremacy.[90] It was his violence on the *Kshatriyas* that gave the ultimate domination to the Brahmins. Simultaneously, it also inaugurated the replacement of a matrilineal culture with a patrilineal one, for Parasurama kills off his mother suspecting her fidelity to his father. The control over women's sexuality, a clear marker of almost all patriarchal cultures is enacted in this myth as matricide. Along with this should also be read the version of the myth which sees Parasurama as responsible for the formation of Kerala. The story goes that Parasurama throws his axe into the Arabian Sea and the Sea recedes till the point his axe reaches. He distributes this land to Brahmin families and this becomes Kerala. The Malayalee Brahmins are patrilineal unlike the Nairs of Kerala. They used to hold ritual power and this taking over of the Brahmins is seen in the myth. The woman who is subjugated in the myth is Renuka, Parasurama's mother. The Adivasis are significantly absent.

Thirunelli, according to the local myth, is the place where Parasurama washes all his sins away. His sins, as mentioned above, are the genocide of a community (which

was vying for power), and matricide. The place thus exists as a justification for these sins.

It is also the arrogance of the dominant culture that is reflected in this silence. These stories are told without the subalterns even being mentioned. The group, which created this origin myth of Thirunelli, wouldn't have found any use of including the Ravulars or any other group existing around the temple.

Unlike the priest of the temple, Lakshmikutty was able to tell the story of the origin myth in another way. Since I introduced myself as a researcher, she decided to share this story, which she claims an old Ravula man had recounted to her. Lakshmikutty had the chance of being with the Adivasis not just as an *Anganwadi* teacher, but also as a social worker who was conscious of their issues. She also had a certain standing among the Adivasi population.

This story reflects the feudal power relations that are still prevalent in the area. The master in the story is obviously not an Adivasi. Since his caste is not mentioned, we can assume that he belongs to one of the upper castes (The way in which the stories are told). The cowherd's caste is mentioned as Adiya. The power relation between them is quite clear. The master owns the cows and has the right to beat up the child.

The god, who is Krishna, worshipped by the upper castes, for some reason decides to play this prank with the kid. From the child's perspective, it is not a prank anymore, since he is getting beaten for the playfulness of the god. It is this element that disappears in Malla's re-rendering when the context of slavery is taken off and the cowherd sees an Adiya kid drinking the milk. In that situation, playfulness is possible, but not in Lakshmikutty's narrative, though she pretends it is possible.

Unlike in the earlier stories where the *nelli* appears as the site of purity, in both these stories, the *nelli* is a place where the god disappeared. The dark god Krishna, though he is the upper caste's god, is chosen to be Thirunelli's god in the story.

154

In this story, the Adivasi has a crucial role to play. The cowherd is the only character who sees the god disappear. But, the temple, which is finally built, is not one for Krishna, the God who disappeared into the *nelli* tree, but for Vishnu and Shiva.

Intertwined Histories: Dominant and Subaltern

The mythologies of both groups actually speak about the intertwined ways in which both their histories have been written. This is proved beautifully by a sheer accident of the fieldwork. It was at Thirunelli that I chanced upon the pattern available in the stories of the origin myth. Later, I went collecting the published versions of the same myth, trying to read the stories according to the interpretation that emerged in the held itself. These stories, I feel, interact with each other, proving the intertwined nature of both dominant as well as subaltern histories.

In fact, here a methodological digression is in place. This analysis does not see all the stories as similarly placed. The identity of the narrator does give each story its primacy and importance. Thus, politically, Malla's narrative has to be seen as the perspective from which to analyse other stories. For, her narrative is actually dealing with all the versions (or at least the majority of the available paradigms). Her own position as an Adivasi woman and the history of the Adivasi community in Thirunelli will force us to give primacy to her rendering of the myth.

Thus, even in interpreting, no claim is given for objectively stating the different stories, giving each equal importance. Rather, the interaction of one story with the other, and the present context of being Adivasi in Wayanad is given primacy of interpretation.

2 (b) Stealing of Women's Bodies

Thirunelli is a place where a researcher cannot escape the discourse on sexuality. In fact, it was also initially one of the reasons for choosing Thirunelli, to study the relation between Adivasis and non-Adivasis in the context of large-scale sexual harassment that was reported from the area.

The statistics collected are appalling. According to the report by a Non-governmental Organization, there are 169 unwed mothers in Thirunelli with about 5 abortions being reported every week. There are 4 quacks in the area whose occupation is conducting illegal abortions. The charge varies from Rs. 500 to Rs. 2000. In 1992, 117 girls were sexually abused and discarded in Ward 1 of Thirunelli Panchayat alone. In Thirunelli police station alone there are 169 complaints by unwed mothers.[91]

But, the difficulties faced in the field, made me choose another "safer" topic. It just didn't sound right to ask the Adivasis about their private life, though they were all there to be seen by the whole world. The very ease with which others seemed to be delving into their private world cautioned me against myself. The wealth of "data" available on the field was not "used" as a deliberate measure. I didn't know finally how I would present all the complex stories of seductions and betrayals that I would put before an academic audience to be presented. Hence in the final analysis, this section is about that failed project.[92]

Still, I feel, it is important to mention the problem of "unwed mothers" in Adivasi areas in Kerala. There are reports coming in from Attappady, another Adivasi area as well, about the large-scale exploitation of Adivasi women by non-Adivasi men. Not only that the problem is recognized officially and dealt with in government documents.

For instance, a young upper caste man in Thirunelli expressed his hurt masculine pride when he talked against the woman (she also belongs to the upper caste) activist who was also responsible for bringing out mis exploitation into the public gaze. He said he is ashamed now and is not in a position to reveal that he is from Thirunelli to someone outside.

Rather than dealing with the Adivasi reactions to this phenomenon, I would like to record through the dominant group's narratives about the phenomenon, (and through

156

that construct the Adivasi reaction). I have tried to look at the various responses available to women's sexuality in general and Adivasi women's sexuality in particular.

Everyday conversation with the non-Adivasi population was replete with references to Adivasi women and their sexuality. For some reason, all of them assumed that I am there to do research on the phenomenon of unwed mothers. This is also because I was introduced by the local activist who worked among Adivasi groups, especially the unwed mothers. There was open hostility from some quarters.

All the conversations would somehow veer into the topic of unwed motherhood among Adivasi women. The media image of Thirunelli seemed to have made the non-\divasis quite defensive. But, rather than feeling guilty about exploitation, they were reacting to the image of Thirunelli as a land of "loose women". For instance a young man in Thirunelli, working for the left party commented: "I want you to write this. These women, instead of being encouraged by the government (by allotting them money to build houses and buy goats) should be given a small punishment. For, they have done something wrong." He was significantly silent about the men who had committed the same "wrong" action.[93]

The situation in Thirunelli needs elaboration. The phenomenon of "unwed mothers" is not a result of prostitution as many would have us believe (though there are individual cases of Ravula women being forced into prostitution). The predominant drama is one of seduction and conditional consent from the Adivasi woman. Some amount of money might be exchanged in the beginning. Sometimes it can be a rape that leads to continued sexual relations later. Very often, the seducer moves from one woman to another. Not even one case of marriage was recorded among the Adivasis and non-Adivasis. The upper caste public generally viewed these women as "loose and available".

The story recounted by Lakshmikutty, the non-Adivasi activist throws light on the grey area between consent and rape, lack of money from the Adivasi woman's point of view and the easy availability of them from the upper caste man's position. Many of the seducers were connected to the temple jobs. According to Lakshmikutty, once the arch seducer of the area, a young man associated with the temple, gave an Adivasi girl Rs. 100 to get her friend to an isolated area. His obvious plan was either to seduce the woman or to rape her. The girl took the money, but instead of betraying her friend, she confessed the whole thing not just to her, but to Lakshmikutty as well. So, instead of the Adivasi girl, Lakshmikutty went there to embarrass the seducer. This story was recounted with the mirth of victorious women's guffaws. But, most of the stories did not end in this fashion.

The reactions of the Adivasis themselves to the situation were somewhat different. Many of the people I talked to thought it was a shame on the community. Adivasi men especially, felt the women were "whoring" themselves. There was a case of a Ravula woman abandoned by her husband (who belonged to the same community) because he suspected her fidelity. Another Ravula woman, respectably married, felt hatred towards these women. "I have advised her [one of the unwed mothers] many times. One of our community persons was ready to marry her also. But she just does not listen" was her complaint. There was anger from men's side, very often expressed in physically violent terms. One woman, who was also an unwed mother, had to face a violent brother who came and shouted at her and at Lakhmikutty brandishing a big knife when I was present.

The main difference which I felt with the Adivasi women and people belonging to other communities was that, the Adivasi women considered the non-Adivasi who was the parent of the child, "her man." In spite of the anger that they felt towards the woman caught in the relationship, this also showed some understanding. Lakshmikutty

assured me that the community was now ostracizing the "fallen women". But, it looked as if these women could still go for work and participate in some of the rituals and celebrations of the community.

There were contradicting statements made by Lakshmikutty. She also assured me that the "value" of the Adiya woman increases with association with an upper caste man.

But, definitely there were psychological effects of being a single mother and the child of a single mother. This has not been studied properly, nor did I feel equipped to deal with the sensitive situation. One Adivasi woman who was known for her quarrelsome nature was indulgently understood by her neighbours as: "She is like that. After all, she grew up without a father."

Lakshmikutty's own point of view, as she made me believe, was that of a sympathetic outsider. She found the problem of unwed mothers as important as health, education and alchoholism. (Significantly she did not mention land as an important problem area.) According to her, Adivasi women at Thirunelli were not "loose". Hailing from the same village and one of the main persons responsible for the media attention on Thirunelli, she found it important to absolve her area of bad reputation it seems to have fallen into. She apparently took the side of the Adivasi women in opposition to the upper caste males. As she cynically put it: "All the children in Thirunelli have fathers at night. They just miraculously disappear by day!"

But, it was also clear that she felt acutely for the upper caste wives of the seducers. "What will these young women do?" she asked in anguish. She was also bothered about the upper caste women not getting any men from outside the village for marriage alliances because of the bad reputation. This situation has to end for all the parties concerned. She was firmly for genetic testing to determine the paternity of the child and deciding that if the tests turned out to be positive, then the men should pay for the upkeep of the children.

The similarity with Lakshmikutty and the upper caste men was that both were bothered about the reputation of the village. But Lakshmikutty wanted the men from her community to take responsibility, whereas the young men wanted Lakshmikutty and people like me to take the responsibility for bringing this out into the open. Lakshmikutty suggested such strange measures as punishing the Adivasi women to put the fear in them so that they will not be tempted to go after non-Adivasi men.

The perspective in which the activists hailing from Adivasi community (and some activists who support them) sees this problem as more complex. I have quoted C.K. Jami's words already. She sees the exploitation of Adivasi women in the complex matrix of the stealing of Adivasi land, and then connects it with the loss of self-respect.

This is where the idea of stealing comes into play. She speaks about the problem of unwed mothers in the context of the stolen land. It is quite clear that in her mind, she associates the stolen land and the stolen women's bodies together. In her words:

> Finally they are saying, DNA test should be conducted and paternity should be proved. They are also saying that if it is conclusively proved men only the men will take responsibility. I am saying, this is the greatest betrayal in the world. In this situation on earth, no woman can actually roll out the names of men who have not "co-operated" with her. This is one more way to punish these women again.
> Interviewer. By re-writing the results?
> Janu: By re-writing the results, Yes. Or, they need not even send the samples of the man the woman has pointed out and finally say: "the results have failed". The fact is, the man is the father if the woman says so. DNA test will be one more hiding place for these criminals. Doesn't the Adivasi woman's word hold any value? They don't even consider her a human being. That is why her words do not hold any value.[94]

To conclude, it is not the question of stealing of land and gods that is happening. Along with these are stolen worldviews, bodies, labour (with its double meaning) and self-respect of both men and women of the community.

For the sake of contrast, (which is perhaps a cruel one) one can perhaps look at the article in a popular women's magazine that speaks about the joys of Adivasi women who had the good fortune to marry non-Adivasi men! These rare cases of "happy

married life" are isolated from the sea of evidence available and put up to humiliate a community. The Adivasi women are made to say that they are quite glad that they chose non-Adivasi men instead of Adivasis who drink and act irresponsible towards their wives. In one of the women's words: "I-f I am alive, I will not give my daughter's hand in marriage to an Adivasi." [95]

This section dealt with the stones of Thirunelli temple myths and the role of the Adivasis in this. Either by their silence or by directly denying any role for the Adivasis, the myths of the dominant groups perpetuated the power structure in which the temple exists. But, the narratives of the Adivasis countered this. It did not accept the narratives of their obliteration, nor did it accept the narratives of generosity of the upper castes. In fact, it clearly showed the picture of the "wronged Adivasi".

The unwed mothers also express a similar problem of stealing which the Adivasis experience as far as land and their life visions are concerned. To sum up, this section has dealt with the idea of the "wronged Adivasi". The stories of stealing which the Adivasis recounted in the field and which can also be gleaned through historical data, all happen in a context where the Adivasis are portrayed as betrayers and thieves by the dominant culture. In that way, these stories have the character of counter-narratives.

3: The Resisting Adivasi

Unlike religion, political movements are seen to be agential acts by the oppressed. There are certain facts that we cannot forget while dealing with protest movements of the subalterns. The first fact being the history of forgetfulness as far as subaltern political movements are concerned. Many of them have been wiped out completely from public memory. Very often, groups, which have been involved so centrally in protest movements in the past themselves, have to recall a fragmented and forgotten history of Adivasi movements. If there was no organized protest expressed in the form of physical violence from the side of the oppressed, the movement itself has been

relegated to a very unimportant side issue by the mainstream media. Leaders who have led movements are not there in mainstream histories at all. It is the excitement and terrible feeling of injustice that confronts anyone trying to reconstruct the narrative of Adivasi political movements in Wayanad.

Just to give a small example of how forgetful mainstream histories are about Adivasi movements: Fedina, a Non Governmental Organisation has collected the names of around 18 Adivasi organizations that have emerged during the period between 1952 and 1998.[96] Yet, none of them, except perhaps Adivasi Aikya Vedi to a small extent, have any existence in the public memory of Kerala.

Land has been a major source of concern for most of the organizations. A survey conducted by Fedina claims to have identified around 4027 landless Adivasis in Sulthan's Battery, a small town in Wayanad. They claim the actual number might be something around 5000.[97] The figures all over Wayanad are yet to be taken. The way in which political movements are theorized is how the oppressed come together and demand a space in the public. This is seen to be the only political action possible. While understanding the significance and the preciousness of protest and agency in political groups, the difficulties of mobilization and the cracks within those organizing also should be studied more seriously.

Land has always been a touchy issue with many of the indigenous groups in the world. The Wayanad Adivasi is no different. Right now, Kerala has suddenly woken up to the existence of the Adivasi. Till now, this figure appeared as a flash and disappeared even faster in the media. Now, everyday, the Adivasi activist C.K. Janu appears in the news section. Also, her biography is published in a leading Malayalam magazine. Apart from these, the media is also filled with negative portrayals that are the obvious byproduct of a threatened mainstream culture. In many of the comedy shows, the

Adivasis appear as comic characters—to be subjugated by the laughter, which comes out of the threatened power position of the dominant culture.

The movement led by **Adivasi-Dalit** Samara Samiti was also centred on land. It had won a victory, however symbolic, in the sense that it forced the Chief Minister of Kerala to the negotiating table and made him promise to distribute land to the landless Adivasis of the state. The fact is that the distribution has not yet happened and the Chief Minister has already gone back on his word. But, that is a later story.

The history collected from the field proved that the struggle under Adivasi Dalit Samara Samiti has a history dating back to at least the fifties. I could not trace the history before the 50s. Wayanad had witnessed a spurt of Adivasi organizations from early 50s to the present. Very little work has been done in the area of documenting tribal struggles. Material if any, is scattered in magazine reports and newspaper articles.

Among the retrieved histories of dead and forgotten Adivasi movements, I find the history of Adivasi Swayam Seva Sangham (Sangham henceforth) very interesting. I have not been able to trace any written source for this organization. Most of my knowledge is based on interviews with three erstwhile activists of the Sangham, Koone alias Lakshmi of Payyambilli, CM. Yogi of Mananthavadi and Madhavan of Fedina. Interview with the Adivasi activist Sivaraman (State Bank of India) has also helped. While Madhavan provided a much needed framework and factual information about the existence and activities of the Sangham, Koorie and Yogi talked more in a personal narrative mode of what it meant for individuals to be Adivasi activists.

More than this being a detailed history of the Sangham activities, what I plan to do is to contrast the narratives of a woman and a man—who worked in the Sangham. The different compulsions that forced individuals to enter the same group activity and the different compulsions that beset their lives are examined. This is to give some insight into the gender angle in the issue of political movements.

163

According to Madhavan, the Sangham started functioning around 69-70. The leaders were from all the communities of Adivasis (except one non-Adivasi person). As Yogi mentions, though the name was Adivasi Swayam Seva Sangham, it had nothing to do with Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh. According to him, the organization believed in helping oneself, the Adivasis should help each other was to be the philosophy. The problems raised by the theorists of identity politics in the late 80s and 90s, especially of leadership and authenticity of voices in protest movements, had already been raised by the Sangham in the 60s.

The Sangham must have drawn its life breath from the Naxalite movement also. It was one of the first unified Adivasi organizations, though Madhavan recalled organizations that were strictly community based like Kuruma Samudaya Samiti that had been functioning in the 50s.

The Sangham had taken up alienation of land cases in a major way. Madhavan could recall many victories in land struggles that he identified by the name of the place. Kuppadi, Vannathara, Meppadi, Thrikkaippatta etc. are struggles that he recounted as victories.

The most important struggle that he remembers is the St. Mary's college land grabbing incident and the struggle for land. The church that had grabbed land had to face protest by the Adivasis. They also used the students against the Adivasis.

The Sangham also took up sexual harassment cases in which Adivasi women were involved in a major way. He recounted a case in Alamtatta where a Paniyar woman was seduced and made pregnant by a certain Menon who was an estate supervisor. He was finally forced to part with one acre as compensation for the woman who had become pregnant. This was also recounted as "victory".

Along with this, another question that the Sangham took up in a major way was *kundel pani* or bonded labour in Wayanad.

By the early 70s, the short-lived Sangham had disintegrated. Madhavan blames the political parties for its disintergration. All the important leaders were wooed by various political parties and grabbed. A meeting in Meenangadi that he claims was attended by more than 10,000 Adivasis was the last of the activities of the Sangham. Each political party split the Sangham into various splinter groups of their interests. By 73, the Sangham was dead.

I wish to analyze the narratives of two of the activists of the Sangham, Koorie and Yogi. Apart from giving different perspectives of women and men in political movements, these narratives show how both of them negotiated questions of modernity and identity within and outside the movement.

Both Koorie and Yogi used the personal narrative mode to speak about the Sangham and their involvement in it. Both of them it should be noted did not place the Sangham as centrally important in their present lives. (In spite my announcing that, the purpose of visit was to know more about the Sangham, especially their involvement in it). Their participation in the Sangham activities were recounted along with many other narratives contending for equal space in their narratives.

Many of Yogi's stories were of success in the non-tribal world and had reserved mostly stories of glory for the interview session.

Koorie's narrative also contained certain success points. Her influence over her neighbours (including male neighbours) in settling disputes and her efforts towards getting the sanction from the Government to build 12 houses at Payyambilli that finally bore fruit were all success stories. But, in her narratives, her Adivasi neighbours appear as major players, whose approval she seeks or dismissal she fears.

Yogi's narrative started off with a professed intention of linearity. "I was born in a place called Cheroor where slavery existed till I was around 16." He started his narrative in this fashion. Yet it could not keep the intended linearity, i.e. begin with birth

165

and progress towards one definite climax of glory or crisis. There were many points towards which his narrative flowed. His own role in the Sangham, his dabbling in electoral politics, his being the interpreter for a university professor studying Adivasi culture, his being invited to represent Adivasis in one sitting in the legislative assembly...these and many other incidents jostle for attention in his life narrative. The story of the Sangham is enmeshed in all these other stories. It also made me aware that the way politics is perceived is also not in any linear way in which I asked questions about the Sangham activities. For Yogi there were many incidents that happened in his life, which he would claim, are political.

The successes ranged from capturing of land from the land grabbers to laughing at a non-Adivasi minister who spoke in a language that he could not understand. His narrative was interspersed with humour.[98]

Fighting for a Place in Modernity

Education, or his efforts to secure school education, runs as the primary signifier in the first part of Yogi's narrative of his negotiations with modernity. His struggle to study and the impossibility and final abandonment of studies at the 3rd standard can be read as his struggle to remain in control (at least to a certain extent) of the situation in which he found himself. The repeated humiliations from his upper caste classmates (among whom he was isolated and segregated through seating arrangements) were faced by him on a consistent basis. As he says: "I used to sit down on the floor so that the other boys will not get polluted." He was bogged down by feelings of inferiority generated due to the lack of good clothes and notebooks. Moreover, the class would pick on him for each and everything. His only response to continued harassment was silence since he wanted to remain in the school and even a small retaliation meant dismissal from the system.

In spite of this situation when he managed to pass the 1ˢᵗ Standard his envious classmates used to taunt him: "Why don't you go back to your fields? Anyway, there are no jobs for you people." Otherwise they would devise jokes with him as the butt. Like someone would steal and eat the teacher's lunch and the whole class would put the blame on Yogi who would finally be caught and beaten.

His breaking of silence also marked his eviction from school. It was not just because of a personal injury that he became violent with his classmate. It was against the injustice of a system that left him and people like him bereft of any support and others who could take away whatever little they had with such abandon. One day, during the monsoons one of his classmates in a fit of anger broke Yogi's umbrella. Yogi knew it was impossible for him to continue studies without an umbrella and he knew he could never afford to buy another one. He ran to the school ground to see that the bamboo umbrella was completely unusable. "I felt I was bloating with anger." He recounts. He rushed towards one of the laughing boys and beat him up terribly.

Education figures as an important metaphor in his narrative. It is the image of empowerment and success. Though Yogi had to give up this mechanism to survive, it was left to his younger brother to succeed (relatively and with heavy prices, though). His brother's life also figured in a major way in Yogi's narratives. When his brother was in class X, the daughter of the Tamil Brahmin Ishwarayyar, who "owned" Yogi's family in the past, fell in love with him. She started wooing him with letters. They eloped and came to Yogi's house for asylum. But, the girl was abducted by her parents and sent off to an orphanage in Kannur. The young lovers were once again reunited with the efforts of Yogi and others and are successfully married now.

At both instances of transgression from the given order of things, one where Yogi beats up his harasser and the other where his brother pursues his "forbidden" desire—the prices paid are heavy. In the first instance, Yogi destroyed any chance of his

167

having a relatively dignified and secure existence in future and had to abandon school altogether. In the second instance, the family is evicted from Cheroor, where they used to stay, because the whole family was boycotted by the landlords and not called for work.

Education, or at least, her own education is not one of the main metaphors for modernity in Koorie's narrative. This is surprising since she has studied up to Std. V. (It is quite an achievement considering her generation. She must be around 60.) She could not continue, "not because I was lazy, but the convent which was the only option for me would not take a harijan "child then." Yet, she does not dwell too much on the injustice of it. Modernity, and her efforts at negotiating with it, is mostly through her trials to get her daughter educated. In fact, in her narrative, the tribal welfare hostel where she had admitted her eldest daughter Kumari and where her younger daughter Nalini was also illegally lodged (Koorie was working since there was no one to take up that responsibility, her husband having left her already). Koorie joining the self-employement scheme by the government to study sewing and her Sangham activities are intricately connected. Her life as an activist was made possible due to two factors-her three year old baby in the tribal hostel and the government self employment scheme, both of which allowed her to go to Mananthavady without rousing the Payyambilli people's suspicion about her activism.

Unlike Yogi, Koorie found it necessary to justify her own action of joining the Sangham activities. In Yogi's version, the preamble of personal humiliations and the eviction of the family from Cherror served as self explanatory in the need for the Adivasis to organize themselves. But Koorie had to constantly assert that she joined the activities because her brothers were there and they had also asked her. Yet, her own conviction about the issues is also important in her narrative, though enmeshed in the justification that she was within the family: "I was personally convinced when Yogi *ettan* told that we Adivasis had no other option but to struggle." She also mentions another

cousin Gulikan who was with Yogi who convinced her to join the Sangham activities. She took efforts to show that she was in good hands, within the family itself.

Yet, she was keeping off this crucial information from the closest member in the family–her mother. Her mother's figure comes as an important reference in her narrative about the Sangham. This clearly points to the differing compulsions that women face compared to men who enter political activity. Koorie's narrative is mostly about how she used her child's presence in Mananthavady and her sewing classes to keep her mother from knowing about her participating in Sangham activities. Through the Sangham, she knew, she was clearly transgressing the spaces that the family had assigned for her.

Her subsequent withdrawal from Sangham activities is also because of her mother. The stories which her neighbors, who were Christian settlers who felt threatened by her Adivasi politics spread about her, made her mother lose her peace of mind. The neighbours had spread the story that "Koorie had become a harlot in Mananthavady." Her mother developed some serious illness after this and died. She had taken a promise in her deathbed from Koorie that she will not continue her Sangham activities. Koorie went through a phase of guilt that finally led to her retirement from Sangham activities.

Yogi was also disillusioned with the Sangham. But it had more to do with betrayals by fellow comrades. The final incident that led to his quitting the activities was as follows: He had volunteered to go on a satyagraha without food for certain demands.[101] When the struggle was withdrawn, he was admitted in the hospital but none of his friends turned up to enquire. There was no way he could pay the hospital bill for a surgery that was required. The condition was so bad that he did not have money to reach home taking a bus. The lesson he learned from this harrowing experience is a material one: "I need a job which will at least sustain my day-to-day living."

Koorie's retirement from the Sangham was connected to her mother's death and the promise her mother had elicited from her in her deathbed. She also found it difficult to face the suspicions on her reputations that working in the Sangham had earned for her.

If one takes the Sangham experiment to be an important space that the Wayanad Adivasis had tried to carve for themselves, the way Yogi and Koorie, both important persons in the organization related to it, were different. Though convinced of the general principle that led the movement, Koorie's experience of it was shaped by her family, both her mother's attitude and the presence of her male relatives in the Sangham. Yogi never mentioned his family in connection with the movement. I later learnt that his wife who never came out into the front room where the interview was happening, but who kept interrupting his conversation from inside the house (and whom he was silencing as an irritant)[102] had also actively participated in the Sangham activities. The person disappears in his narrative once the activities of the Sangham begins and reappears only in a crisis stage of his leaving the Sangham activities. In Koorie's narrative, the personhood never disappeared.

Both Yogi's and Koorie's narratives have to placed within the changes that were and are happening in Adivasi society. Through Sangham activities both Koorie and Yogi were negotiating with modernity and these should be seen as their efforts to carve out a space for their community.

To conclude—this chapter looked at the various instances of self-construction of Adivasi identity that I had encountered in the field. I have also used some of the material available in the printed form, especially historical material on Wayanad. After arguing for seeing the Wayanad Adivasi identity in the context of the land struggle happening right now, the chapter looked at the various strategies Adivasis were adopting to survive in a power ridden world.

Notes

[1] Janu, Personal Interview, 1999.

[2] I am indebted to V.J. Varghese for reading through the first draft of this chapter and offering major suggestions.

[3] Please refer to the section on Vaishnava Kurichias included in this chapter.

[4] Pre-primary school.

[5] Refer to the section on Malla's conversion, stories on Thirunelli temple, and Yogi's interview used in this chapter.

[6] Refer to Koorie's narrative used in this chapter.

[7] Dhareswar and Srivatsan, 1996. 211.

[8] Talk with Adivasi women in Payyambilli.

[9] Ilaiah, 1996. Ilaiah uses his own autobiographical narrative to prove that the B.C.s and Dalits need not feel a part of Hindu community at all. Conventional Social Sciences would attack him in the name of 'Objectivity'. But, I feel it throws up possibilities that are very positive for any theorist wishing to take identities seriously- Feminists, Dalit activists /theorists etc. The everyday is an important site of understanding the various forms of resistance and oppression that structures any life.

[10] Ideas like presenting a combined force of resistance to the global forces where the NGOs join hands with the organized left are quite common in anti-globalization rhetoric. The recently concluded Asian Social Forum in Hyderabad called for such a unity. So too, the resistance against the right wing is also supposed to emerge from this kind of a unity. For this idea see Ananth. 2003: 10.

[11] To repeat, not the essentialised rhetoric of the connection of the nature=Adivasi dyad, but the history of the alienation of land, whether cultivable or forest.

[12] Cheria et al, 1997, 1.

[13] Sidharthan, C.G, 1999,20. (Translation mine)

[14] Sreekumar, T.T and Govindan Parayil, 2002, 287-309.
For the legal aspects of the Adivasi land situation in Kerala please refer to Viswanath, 1997, 2016; Bijoy., 1999, 1329-1335; Bharadwaj, 1998; Cheria, et al.1997; Girija, 2001, 3; Chandnka , 2001.

[15] *Meenam* is the month of March. Panoor., 1994, 116.

[16] Panoor., 1992, 59.

[17] Panoor, 1994, 115.

[18] Baby, 1999 (a) ; also Baby, 1993: 14-15.

[19] Quoted in Mehta and P.K. Devan, 1995, 135-136.

[20] Nair, 1911, Chapter VI index.

[21] For instance see Sangari, 1990, 1537-1552. Yet, as Veena Naregal points out the movement also need not be unnecessarily eulogized because" ...despite their wide following and influence on the popular imagination, these medieval devotional texts did not enunciate any explicit challenge to existing structures of authority and…did not result in a radical alteration of the structure of state-society relations or the place of religious knowledge within it." Naregal, 2001,19.

[22] Hardiman, 1996, 196-231.

[23] Aloysius, 1998.

[24] Mohan, 1998 and Mohan, 2001.

[25] Srinivas, 1972, 6.

[26] Especially after the Jayalalithaa Government in Tamilnadu enacted the Prohibition of Forcible Conversions Ordinance in October, 2002. Also Pastor Cooper, an American missionary who was assaulted at Kilimanoor by the right wing was asked to leave since he addressed religious meetings while he was on a tourist visa. The statements of the right wing almost justified the attack on the missionary. These are just two of many related incidents.

[27] Nadkarni, 2003, 227-235. Nadkarni shares the Gandhian perspective and argues against conversions in the article.

[28] Aloysius, 1998.

[29] See Story 8 in the section Thirunelli Temple Myths in the same chapter.

[30] Talk with Mutha, Thirunelli, 1999.

[31] Talk with Chundeli, Thirunelli, 1999.

[32] Accepting that this is sometimes also a political platform to wage a struggle against the appropriation by a Brahminic brand of Hinduism, one has to be still wary of reviving "authentic" pre-modem forms. I agree with C.K. Janu in her attitude towards this kind of revival where she is suspicious of "performing" for the pleasure of the mainstream society the Adivasis' authentic culture. She says, these customs should remain in a "natural" way, with the changes that are appropriate. But, if "we" artificially try to do that then "we" are actually doing it for the mainstream society. Bhaskaran, 2002, 59.

[33] The word "Ravular" literally means "our people." For more discussion on the way the "I" keeps interchanging into the "we" in the Adivasi narrative of C.K. Janu's autobiography, refer to: Panikkar, 2002. Incidentally, C.K. Janu belongs to the Ravular community.

[34] God woman from Kerala, popularly known as "amma" or mother. She hails from a dalit community, perhaps one of the few women of the community who has achieved such a stature.

[35] There were innumerable discussions about the evils of drinking by many people, especially Adivasi and non-Adivasi women. Lakshmikutty, who belonged to the upper caste and who was a pre-primary school teacher was complaining about one of her students coming to the class drunk with arrack and creating a problem for others. But, the feeling against drinking was most felt by Adivasi women. The impatience of Adivasi women towards their men's alcoholism was evident when C.K. Janu, in a personal interview burst out. "Don't say they [Adivasi men] are drinking because they have uncontrollable misery and anger. Don't we women also have all that?" Janu, Personal interview, 1999.

[36] The fieldwork and discussion for this part was done along with Bindulakshmi P.

[37] They kept changing their self-description. For instance, Kelappan, one of the Vaishnava Kurichiars insisted on naming the religion, "Uthama Dharma" or the "Religion of Goodness." Also, Vishnu was not the only god worshipped. As Kelu, the guru admitted, they worshipped any "Hindu gods."

[38] Sandal wood paste mixed with turmeric

[39] There have been instances where other communities have taken up symbols that are peculiar to the "higher castes" as a resistance measure. One instance is described by Hardiman in *Subaltern Studies* where Adivasis were exhorted by the Devi Salahbai to give up drinking, eating meat, change some of their personal habits and to boycott money lenders. Hardiman, 1987 and Hardiman,, 1996, 196-231.

[40] A Kurichia God.

[41] A Backward Caste in Malabar.

[42] The usual way in which Kurichia women are described includes Kumaran Vayaleri's retrieval of the earlier representations of courageous women. In his book he speaks about the ballads of Kurichias which depict many a woman character like Puthan Veetil Muthachiamma, Pathcam Kachenyile Kunjammathu, Shalum Manikkotte Kunji Theyi, Kanakamanikotta Kumba, Poomalakkotta Kunjammini and others.

[43] Talk with Kumba, 1999.

[44] Talk with Francis, a settler in Pulpally.

[45] Srinivas, 1972, 6.

[46] Hardiman, 1996, 212-213.

[47] Brahmins of the hills.

[48] There is an opinion that Kurichas were brought from Travancore to defeat the Veda King by Kottayam and Kurumbranad Kings. Vayaleri, 1996, 17.

[49] Attachira Kelu admitted that he believed in the philosophy of BJP rather than any other political party.

[50] See Patel, 1999, 186-213.

[51] Kothari, 1993, 24.

[52] Elwin quoted by Guha, 1999, 107-108.

[53] Shah, 2003: 95-98.

[54] "If somebody decides to come back to one's own roots, one's own identity, then what more joy can one expect? The other name for roots is *dharma,* or culture. So, without doubt, with all the strength that we can muster, we encourage this." RSS on "re-conversion in Adivasi areas. See "Chila Chodyangalum Marupatikalum." Kochi: Ayodhya Printers, Pamphlet.

[55] C.KJanu, the key figure in the land rights movement had mentioned that the land which was used as a burial ground by the Adivasis was also encroached by the outsiders. This shows the utter disrespect that the outsiders have towards Adivasi life and even death. Gods cannot be treated differently. Janu. Personal Interview, 1999. Later, she mentions about this incident in her biography. See Bhaskaran, 2002, 47-48.

[56] Refer to the previous Chapter.

[57] The Malayalees are called "Malayalakkar" by the Thirunelli Adivasis. This is one word to signify outsiderhood. Quite a strange word, which speaks volumes about the easy congruence that the regional identity assumes in terms of language.

[58] Chirakkal, 1979, 150-160.

[59] Baby (b), 1993, 20.

[60] Nair, 1911, 104. The author was the deputy collector of Malabar during the early part of the twentieth century.

[61] Baby (b), 1993, 19.

[62] Baby (b), 1993, 19-20.

[63] Talk with Mary, Pulpally, 1999.

[64] Johnny, 1988, 63. Johnny also gives the story that talk of the violence of the Kurumars who irrationally attacked the Prince of Kumbala, and paid the price for this. He has quoted it from Mackenzie Manuscripts. I have tried to paraphrase O.K. Johnny as follows:
The Prince of Kumbala who had come for a visit to the Thirunelli shrine was captured by the Veda King ruling Wayanad at that time and made him a captive. He was imprisoned in Veliyambam Kotta. The Veda King asked him to marry their princess. The Kumbala prince agreed to the wedding if the marriage was conducted according to the Kshatriya rituals. This included a tapping signal at the time of marriage. This was used by the Kottayam and Kurumbranad armies who were lying in ambush near the temple to attack the wedding party. Since he had given his word of honour, the prince gallantly made the Veda princess marry a certain Nambiar who was also made the caretaker of Veliyambam Kotta, where he had been imprisoned.

[65] Johnny, 2001, 117.

[66] See reference to *Pulappattu* in the previous chapter which recounts the mythical beginning of slavery for the Ravulas.

[67] Talk with Vella, Thirunelli, 1999. Kaligai is the name used by the Ravulas. It is known as "Papanashini" in the Brahminical vocabulary connected to the temple. Slightly sanskritised name of the Adivasi version is "Kalindi". This is a branch of the famous "Kabani" river which joins "Kaveri" to flow to the Bay of Bengal.

[68] Ritual purification.

[69] Talk with Lakshmikutty, Thirunelli, 1999.

[70] Talk with Mutha, Thirunelli, 1999.

[71] Talk with Chinnu, Manthanam Kunnu colony, Thirunelli, 1999.(Emphasis mine).

[72] Adivasi-Dalit Samara Samiti, 2001.

[73] Though one can never be sure of the history of migrations as far as communities are concerned. What is meant is the *construction* of them as "Adivasis", or indigenous people.

[74] Refer to the previous chapter on Kanavu school.

[75] Though I have quoted the cassette reference, I suspect the song was popularized by KJ. Baby himself in the Thirunelli area where I heard it sung by the Adivasis. Baby, *Kanavu Ganangal.*

[76] Sashibhooshan, 1995, 85- 87.

[77] Almost a litre.

[78] The word used is "Samantha." Margaret Frennz explains the word thus:
Many Nairs who had taken on the functions in local institutions or a higher position, no longer referred to themselves as Nayar but as Samantha. Samantha had originally been a title that the king bestowed upon Nayars of outstanding merit.

See Fren2, 2003.

[79] Shashibhooshan, 1995: 86. He acknowledges the translation of the copper plates by V.R. Parameshwaran Pillai.

[80] In Ayurveda all ailments are supposed to emanate due to the three *doshas.*

[81] Kali is believed to be the last avatar of Vishnu. Alternately, the word also signifies time of evil and malevolence.

[82] A pond near the Thirunelli shrine, famous for its sacredness among the devotees.

[83] Sacrificial stone

[84] Temple Trust.

[85] During my research, I also discovered a similar methodology used by Aju Narayanan. He had juxtaposed five different narratives about the worship of *Karumatikuttan,* in Aleppey with the identities of the informants forming the text of the narrative. He had also used conventional historical narratives along with lay people's narratives not prioritizing one over the other. This I feel is clearly treating the oral narrative as history and vice versa and admitting to the constructed and narrated nature of both texts.
Narayanan, 1999, 181-194.

[86] I did not clearly understand from her narrative which movement she was part of. She claims to have met C.K. Janu. Since the interview happened before the historic resistance movement in 2001, the reader can be sure that Malla is referring perhaps to some movement before this.

[87] The upper castes as well as Adivasis use the word.

[88] A backward caste in Kerala.

[89] Another version of the same story, perhaps a more elaborate one, is found in the *Thirunelli Mahatmyam* also. See *Thirunelli Mahatmyam,* p: 7.

[90] This interpretation is given in Vaner, 1990: 62.

[91] Solidarity Documents, 1999.

[92] The names of all informants have been changed in this section.

[93] Even in Pulpally, everyday conversation did veer round to the sexual morality of the tribes, especially Paniya who formed a majority in the area. Francis, the son of a settler asked whether I knew whether Paniyas were controlled by their women. He said the men had to pay a price for getting the women and she determined how they are to live. Kurichias were different. There the men controlled the women. According to Francis, they were "more forward."

[94] Janu, personal interview, 1999. Also see Bijoy, Solidarity Documents, Unpublished Paper. Bijoy argues that the problem of unwed mothers in Adivasi areas should be read in the context of the alienation of land.

[95] Abraham, 2001: 60.

[96] See Appendix I

[97] Interview with the director of Fedina, an NGO in Wayanad.

[98] This is an incident that Yogi narrated as part of his experiences in Kerala state Assembly. "So many fat men came with their large paunches and started gorging various items. Kalan and I were the only Adivasi members there. We all had mikes in front of us so that anyone could speak. One of the MLAs started his speech in English that I could not follow. I decided I would not sit quiet. I started chanting the choicest abuses in Adiya language. No one understood, except Kalan. He was embarrassed and remained quiet. The speaker asked what I meant. I said that was exactly what I was asking! Then no one dared to speak in any other language but Malayalam."

[99] The word *harijan* is used to describe the past of Adivasi existence very often. This collapsing of categories by the Adivasis themselves speak volumes about the classificatory system which does not consider the complexities of the situation. The sharp division between Adivasis and Dalits very often merge.

[100] Brother.

[101] What the struggle was, was not clarified in the interview.

[102] In the confusion, I also ignored the woman trying to speak.

Chapter — 6

Conclusion

The dissertation examined the construction of tribal identity by the dominant culture. The examination of the dominant culture made one aware of the predominant stereotyping of the tribe as primitive. This made me examine the literature available on the subject and led to a reading of the Western debates on the construction of the primitive—especially the academic construction of this concept. Chapter 1 of the dissertation set the context of doing research on Adivasis. This chapter defined the terms and concepts used in the work and also drew attention to the limitations of this study.

Seeing the concept "tribe" as a post-colonial construct also made one look to the West to see what their dominant stereotype about the primitive was. The second chapter, which examined this concept did it through two major sections—the examination of the barbaric primitive and the concept of noble savage. It was found that the notions that gave rise to these stereotypes were racist in nature. The chapter concluded that the fear of the "other" and the trials at appropriation that simultaneously happen, are both connected to the fear of oneself. The primitive was a site for the White culture to examine itself.

It was these notions that would have interacted with the dominant indigenous notions of the tribe and helped construct the Indian Adivasi, and its administrative form, the Scheduled Tribe. Drawing its difference with the American Indian and Australian aboriginal identity, the Indian tribal identity was seen to have constructed itself as distinct from an indigenous category–caste. The method of examination was the early colonial reports. The construction of India as essentially Hindu, the Hindu as caste based and tribe as distinct from caste were examined in this chapter. This chapter revealed the orientalist constructions behind the dominant construction of the Adivasi identity.

The next chapter examined a manifestation of these ideas in contemporary Kerala. Taking an important spokesperson for Wayanad Adivasis K.J. Baby and comparing him with Ramachandra Guha, an environmental historian and theorist on Adivasi identity, the thesis had reexamined the noble savage myth in its contemporary expression. The effect of using Adivasis as a site was examined through this. It was

concluded that the use of Adivasis as a site by the new social movements might be to refuse to see the Adivasi as agential and as the maker of history.

The last chapter primarily based on fieldwork experiences tries to imagine the self-construction of the Wayanad Adivasis. Running throughout is the common theme of modernity and the varied negotiations of the Adivasis with it. By examining religion, especially conversions or change of belief systems the thesis was attempting to read how the modern Adivasi negotiates with the changing circumstances around her/him. The perception of the Adivasis that they have been wronged in history had also been examined in this chapter. This perception, which was all-pervasive in Wayanad, I conclude was happening in the context of the land struggle. This had to battle with the existing stereotypes of the Adivasis as betrayers and thieves to create a counter myth. The political movements showed the history of today's land struggle and the easy way in which subaltern political movements are forgotten. It also pointed to the gendered way in which each person in the same movement reacts to situations.

1. Though one cannot presume to draw clear conclusions from a study of this nature, I feel I can venture to state some of the tentative ones. They are:

2. There is no single dominant construction of Adivasi identity. .

3. They are varied and span different times. The dominant western notions of the construction of the primitive is crucial in understanding any post-colonial tribal identity. So too the construction of the national identities and the place of the tribe in these identities. This means a variety of dominant constructions are constantly interacting with contemporary tribal identities and very often, we have to examine the past for an understanding of contemporary identities.

4. Contemporary dominant constructions of Adivasi identity, especially the apparently positive ones, need close re examination. When closely examined they often reveal racist western roots. The reinvention of the noble savage by ecology movements is a case in point.

5. Self construction of the Adivasis is affected by the dominant constructions. They often talk back to one or the other dominant construction of themselves. Quite often there are attempts at subversion embedded in these talking back also. In many way, one can safely say the primitivity is a constant negotiation with modernity.

Future of Adivasi Studies

No thesis comes to a full stop in asking questions or has the complete and final answers. While writing these chapters I kept asking myself what if I had gone another way and not this? So, a short note on what could be the ways that an examination in the similar area might yield in future.

One of the major flaws of the thesis, which I have also indicated in chapter 1, is the neglect of the post-colonial national scene. I did not follow the trajectory of the administrative category called "tribe" to its present status. The story of the tribe in India ends in this study with its birth. It could have been interesting to take it forward.

The criticism that I raised against Ramachandra Guha. That he did not examine Jaipal Singh as an important figure in the Indian Adivasi movement can be raised against me also. I feel this is another area that requires urgent attention from academicians.

In Kerala, the still unfolding struggles of the Adivasis for land require urgent documentation. That is also an area that I did not feel competent to enter since the dynamic quality of the present prevented me from analyzing it. The figure of C.K. Janu who is leading the movement also requires careful and serious study. The fact that I have not analyzed her biography with the respect that is due to it remains a flaw in this work.

While documenting the history of political struggles in Wayanad, I came across a wealth of oral narratives available in people's recorded memories of them. These also require a more systematic investigation.

Note on the Appendix

Appendix I gives a list of the political movements among the Adivasis of Wayanad. \ppendix II and III and IV include three interviews. The excerpts of the interviews in vlalayalam have been transcribed from the tape-recorded conversation. Some of these excerpts vave been reproduced in the fifth chapter.

Appendix-1

Adivasi organizations that emerged in Wayanad during the period 1952-1998.

1. Kuruma Samudaya Samiti

2. Wayanad Adivasi Swayam Seva Sangham

3. Bharatiya Adhakrita League

4. Kerala Harijan Samajam

5. Kerala Girijana Sangham

6. Cheengen Colony Association

7. Wayanad Adivasi Sangham

8. Cheengeri Welfare Association

9. Cheengeri Colony Samrakshana Samiti

10. Paniyar Mekhala Samajam

11. Girijana Mahila Samajam

12. Vana Vasi Samajam

13. Adivasi Vikas Parishat

14. Adivasi Aikya Samiti

15. Kuruma Samrakshana Samiti

16. Adivasi Vikasana Samiti

17. Adivasi Federation

18. Adivasi Vikasana Pravarthaka Samiti.

Source: (Fedina, Sulthan's Battery and Personal communication with Madhavan,

Adivasi political activist).

APPENDIX - II.

INTERVIEW WITH C.K. JANU, JUNE, 1999.

ബിനു: എങ്ങനെയാണ് ആദിവാസികൾക്ക് ഈ
ഭൂമിയൊക്കെ നഷ്ടമായത്?

ജാനു: വളരെ ചെറിയ പൈസക്ക് വരെ ഭൂമി
കൈമാറ്റം നടന്നിട്ടുണ്ട്. ചെറിയ പൈസ
എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞാൽ, പത്ത് രൂപ,
ഉരുപത് രൂപ. അതുകൊണ്ടാണ്
ചാൽകടന്ന് വാരം. പലവരാം ഒരു
വാങ്ങികൊടുത്തിട്ട് അതിന് നന്ദ്ര
പൈസ ആമിന് പറയുന്നവരാണ്
ഇങ്ങനെ പലതിരിയിവാണ് ഭൂമി
നഷ്ടപ്പെടുന്ന.

൧൮൦

വിനു: പറ്റിക്കപ്പെട്ടു എന്നർത്ഥം.

ജ്ഞാന: അതെ. പിന്നെ എനിക്ക് ഒരു സെന്റ്

മാത്രം മതി എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞ് ഒളരന്

വിറ്റിച്ചുതന്നത്. ഒരു സെന്റ് വളവാണ്

അയാൾക്ക് ക്ലാർക്ക് വരികവക്കാം.

പാലെ...* പിടിച്ചത് ഒളരൻ...

പിന്നെ, എന്തെങ്കിലും പേരിട്ട് കൂടി

എഴുതിയെടുത്തത് "നിങ്ങൾക്കെന്ത

ഡോണ്, അതുകിട്ട ലക്കാപി എന്ന

ഒരു പറഞ്ഞ്, മുഴുവനുറിൽ കുറ്റിടി-

പ്പിച്ച് വാങ്ങു റിതിയുണ്ട് അപ്പോ,

ഒരെ ഒരു റിതിയല്ല നില്ക.

* NOT CLEAR.

181

ബിന്ദു: ന്യായമായ വില കൊടുത്തിട്ടില്ല എന്നാണ്

... പറഞ്ഞു വരുന്നത്?

ജിനു: ഉവൻ ഒരു കുട്ടിയും ന്യായമായ വിലകൊടു

ത്തിനത്. നിലവിലുള്ള ഒരു വിലയും കൊടുത്തി

ട്ടില്ല. ഉവൻ ഉള്ളമായ ഇരുപത്തിരണ്ട് രൂപ,

മുന്ന് രൂപ ഓരോ കൊടുത്തിട്ട് ഉപരിരം രൂപ

നാലരിരം രൂപ, എന്നൊക്കെ ആകി വെക്കാൻ

എഴുതില്ലല്ലും – മൂന്ന ആളുകള്ക്ക് പണമ, നമുടെ

ആളുകള്ക്ക് അതക്കം മിട്ടിപ്പിടുക്കാവില്ല.

ബിന്ദു: * പഠിപ്പ്?

ഉള്ളാഴുള്ള ചെറിൽ സുല്ലാ കഴിഞ്ഞൊക്കെ

എക്കാവിൽക്കും. എഴുത്തും വായനയും അറിയാം.

*NOT CLEAR

൧൮൮

എടുക്കാനും കൂടിയും കാറുന്നു. ആരുള്ള

ആരുക്കു്, ഈ ന്യൂച്ചനെ പഠുക്കുന്ന വര്...

എന്റെ തല്ലാലില്ല ആരുക്കു് തന്നെ നേരെ

പഠിപ്പിട്ടില്ല.

തിന്നു: ഇന്നുവെടത്തി പഠിച്ചിട്ടുവോ?

ഇന്നു: ഉദ്ദ, ഞാന് പഠിച്ചിട്ടില്ല.

തിന്നു: അദ്ദേഹം കെതെ കുറിയില്ലേ?

ഇന്നു: ഞാ...

തിന്നു: സാക്ഷരത ക്ലാസ്സ് വഴിയാണോ?

ഇന്നു: എന്റെ കാര്യം പറകകയാണെങ്കില്, എന്റെ

വീട്ടില് എന്റെ അനിയന്റെ കൂടിയ ചെര്ത്തി-

ട്ടുവയിരുന്നു. അയ്യാ, അവന് പഠിക്കുമ്പോ

എഴുത്തും, വായിക്കുന്ന പഠിച്ച. പിന്നെ ഒരു

183

വരം കഴിഞ്ഞെടുടെ ഉള്ള സാമൂഹ്യ ഇംഗ്ലീഷ്
പോയി.

ബിന്ദു: എങ്ങനെയാണ് വാഷ്ട്രിയം കൈവശിച്ച്
താന്ക്കൂറും വന്നത്?

ക്രാന: രാഷ്ട്രിയമിട്ടു, പൊറ്റൊവ ഉള്ള തികനെഴുതി
പഞ്ചായത്ത് എന്ന് പറയുമ്പോ (ഞ്ഞാന ഊറ്റ്
തികണേഷി പഞ്ചായത്തിലാണ്, എന്നെ വീട്
ഉള്ളിലെറിലിലാണ്)...

ബിന്ദു: ഉള്ളിലെറിലിൻ ദൂരിക്കുമോ?

ക്രാന: അവിടെ, നമ്മെട കൂട്ടനെ വീതം
ദൂരിക്കുഫ്. എല്ലാവർക്കും അങ്ങനെ ദൂരിക്കും. ചില
ആഴുകൾക്ക് കാഴ്ചഫ്. ബെഖെന ഉദായിക്കുന്നത
ഒട, അങ്ങനെ തുട്ടിപ്പറിച്ച് പോയി. ഉഞ്ഞാ,

184

കാട്ടാളന്മാരുടെ പടയെ ഏകന്‍ ഭൂമി തട്ടിപ്പിച്ച്

പോയിട്ടല്‍ - രാമുണ്ണ്. ഉപ്പ്വ കവര്‍ക്ക് ഭൂമിയില്ല.

പെറമ്പോക്ക്, പുഴക്കരത്താണ് വീട് വച്ച് താമസിക്ക-

ന്ന്. മഴപ്പുരുമ്പാ ഇവിടത്തെ കൂടിലേക്ക് കവരെ

വപ്പു. വെള്ളം ഏറങ്ങിപ്പോകമ്പാ കവര് വീണ്ടും

താഴെ പോയി താമസിക്കും. അങ്ങനെയുള്ളവരാന്

ഉള്‍നാട്ടത്ത് ഉതപ്പാ ഉള്ളത്.

തീന്തു: സമരത്തില്‍ എല്ലാ വിഭാഗവും പങ്കെടുക്കിന്നാ?

ഇമ: ങ്ങാ. എല്ലാ വിഭാഗവും പങ്കെടുക്കിന്നു. അത്

ഉദ ഏറിയില്‍, കീങ്കനെല്ലില്‍, സമരം

നടങ്ങ വരാനെക്കി... ഉദ ഏറിയില്‍ കൂടതല്‍

രാമുദ് ഏന്ന് പറയുന്ന ആളുകളാ ഉള്ളത്.

ആളുകൊയ് ഇവിടെ സമരത്തില്‍ അവരാധിരിക്കു.

185

കൂടപ്പ് : ഉണ്ടാ, കീവിഞ്ഞാല് പറഞ്ഞതനെങ്കി,

അങ്ങോട്ടൊക്കെ പണിയാ ഉള്ളത്. അപ്പൊ

ആ സമയത്ത് കൂടപ്പ് പണിയാലിരിക്കും.

ഉണ്ടാ ഇത് പ്രത്യേകം കൂടപ്പ് കായ്ക്കാക്കവാ

ഉള്ളത്. അതിനെടേല് പണിയും, കറിയ്ക്കും,

അടിയ്ക്കും... എല്ലാം ഉണ്ടാരുന്നു, ആദിച്ച്.

ചോദ്യ: പ്രത്യേകം ഇല്ലേ? പല വിധങ്ങളുണ്ടാവ്വോ?

ഉത്തരം: ആദ്യകാലങ്ങളിലൊക്കെ അന്ന് പലതരം വായ്ട്ട്

ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നു. ഉണ്ടാ ഉണ്ടാ അത്തരത്തെ കുറച്ച്

കാണത്തില്ലെ.

ചോദ്യ: പ്രത്യേകം ഒണ്ണാണെന്ന് മനസ്സിലായതെങ്ങനെ?

ഉത്തരം: എടുക്കവും നമ്മള് ഉണ്ടാക്കെടുക്കുന്ന രീതിയില്
ഉണ്ടാക്കെടുക്കും. പക്ഷെ, കുറച്ച് നേരത്തില്ലും,

186

അങ്ങനെയാണ് പ്രേമം എന്ന് ഉറപ്പിക്കുന്ന-

വരുണ്ട്. കരിച്ചുതും, കൂട്ടും, അടിയതും, പണിയതും

എല്ലാം നില്ക്കുന്നത് ഒരേ സ്ഥാനപ്പെടിയിൽ തന്നെ

ആണ്. അപ്പോ തിരിച്ച് വിത്ര്യസം ആകിയാലും.

അവർക്ക് തന്നെ കുഴപ്പിട്ട് വരാം എന്ന പ്രേമം

ഉണ്ട്. ഇ കൂടുന്നാളും എന്ന് പറയുന്നത്

നുണപ്പിരാണ്. കറ്റ് ആളുകൾക്കു ഉണ്ട്.

അവൻ ഒറ്റപ്പെട്ട് നിന്നാൽ അവർക്ക് ഒന്നൊ

പെരുന്നാരിക്കും. പിന്നെ ആവഴി കളഞ്ഞാം

കണ്ണിനും, കണ്ണിനേ. ഒരു പ്രേമത്തുട്ട്.

പക്ഷെ, ഒരു പടിവിവരെ മിന്നക്കാൻ വരും.

കാര്യംക്ക ഉരിടക്കാൻ ... ഉരിടനിയ്ക്കി അവരു

ഒരു രക്ഷയും ഉണ്ട്. അപ്പൊ അതിന് വേണ്ടി

അവറ് തയ്യാറാവും. അങ്ങനെ തയ്യാറായതിന്റെ
ഫലമായിട്ടാണ് ഉവിടെ ടവി ഉണ്ടാകുന്ന വിവിപ്പടു-
ക്കുന്നത്.

വിനു: ഉത് ആരുടെ ടവിയാണ് വിവിച്ചുതന്നത്?

ഗുരു: എനിക്കറിയില്ല ആ വ്യക്തിയെ. ക്ഷേത്രിന്
പറയുന്ന ഒരു ഇന്റർവിടവായിക്കുന്ന കാര്യം
ഈ ടവി. പക്ഷെ അവരു ഇതിനെ ഉവിടെ
ഉള്ള ആൾക്കു. അവരു ബാഗൂൾ കാരനാണ്.
മലയൂഗിയാണ്. പക്ഷെ, എങ്ങനെ അവർക്ക്
ഉവിടെ സൂളം കിട്ടി എന്നതാണ്. പിന്നെ,
അവിഉടെ ആഗ്ര ബന്ധുക്കളോടെ ഈ
പരിസരത്തൊകെ കാണിടാനായി തന്നെ. അവരു
പരിയിരിന്ന് ഉവിത്തൂൾ ടവിയാണ് ഇത്.

188

നൂറ്റിപ്പതിനെട്ട് ഏക്കൻ ഭൂമിയാണ്. അവൻ കൃഷി-
കാലങ്ങളിൽ കൃഷിചെയ്താൻ ഫലമിട്ടു. കടപ്പ തടിക്കു
വിറ്റു. ഏഴുവത്തിരഴ്‌ത് കയാളുടെ കൈയിൽ
നിന്ന് പിടിച്ചെടുത്തു. മൂപ്പതിങ്ങൾ വർഷം.

കഴിഞ്ഞിട്ട് ഇത് ഫോറസ്റ്റ് അലള എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞിട്ട്
വിധി വന്നു. കോടതി കയാളുടെതിണ്ണത്ത് പറഞ്ഞി-
ട്ടില്ല. പക്ഷെ, ഫോറസ്റ്റ് അലള എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞിട്ട്.
തടിഞ്ഞു: എന്തുകൊണ്ടാണാണ ഇത് ഭൂമി പിടി-
ച്ചെടുക്കന്നത്?

ജനം: ഇത് പിടിച്ചെടുക്കാൻ ഏഴുവത്തിരഴ്‌ത്
കുടുംബങ്ങളോ ഉപയിക്കാന്നത്. ഊന്നരിൽ മിച്ചം.

ആളുതത്: പരിസരത്തുള്ള ആളുകൾ. അപ്പതി-
രൾ കുടുംബങ്ങൾ സ്ഥിര തദ്ദേശ്യക്കാരാണ്.

ഞാൻ മറുപടി പറഞ്ഞിരുന്നു.

ചോദ്യം: ഏതിൽ നിയമം ആദിവാസികൾക്ക് വളരെ
അനുകൂലമാണെന്നതാണ്?

ഉത്തരം: ഏതിൽ നിയമം ആദിവാസികൾക്ക്
അനുകൂലമല്ല നിയമമല്ല. കുടിയേറ്റക്കാർക്ക്
വരദാനം നൽകുന്ന ഒന്നായിട്ടാണ് അത്
വന്നിട്ടുള്ളത്. കഥകളത്തിൽ പറഞ്ഞാൽ
കുടുതലാൾക്ക് ക്ഷമ നിൽക്കുക എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞ
പോലെ. കൊലപാതകിയെ നിയമത്തിന്
പക്ഷം . . .

ചോദ്യം: എന്തുകൊണ്ട് കൊടുക്കുക, അല്ലേ?

ഉത്തരം: അതെ.

ചോദ്യം: കുടിയേറ്റ കഥകളെ വിശദമാക്കിയിട്ട്.

190

ആണെട്ടാ ചരിത്രം ചെയ്ത? അവൻ വന്നു, അവൻ

സ്വർണ്ണം വിളയിച്ചു, എന്ന മട്ടിൽ?

ജ്ഞാന: യഥാർത്ഥത്തിൽ പറഞ്ഞാൽ അവൻ

ഇവിടെ സ്വർണ്ണമൊന്നും വിളയിച്ചിട്ടില്ല. ഈ

കിണറ്റിന്റെ കുത്തവാടുക്കും, കപ്പലും, ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്ന

സാധനങ്ങളൊക്കെ നമ്മുടെ കൂട്ടർ ഉണ്ടാക്കി-

യതാണ്. അവരിങ്ങനെ വന്നു, അവരുടെ

അധ്വാനത്തിന്റെ നിലിൽ ഓരോം കൂലി എന്ന

മട്ടിൽ ഓരോ സാധനം കൊടുത്തു എന്ന് മാത്ര.

ഉണ്ടു. വെറുതിച്ചത് വേണ്ട. നമ്മുടെ കൂട്ടത്തും.

പാര്, പൊറമേ ചിത്രീകരിക്കുന്നത് അങ്ങനെയല്ല.

ചിന്ത: വീട്ടിൽ ആരൊക്കെയുണ്ട്?

ജ്ഞാന: ഉണ്ടു. അമ്മയും, ഒരനുജനും, ആങ്ങളയൻ

ഭാഗ്യം ഉണ്ടോ ഉണ്ട്. ഞങ്ങൾ അന്ന് പറഞ്ഞ
ഉണ്ടത്.

ബിന്ദു: മാർക്സിസ്റ്റ് പാർട്ടിയിൽ പണിയെടുത്തിട്ടില്ലേ?

ജ്ഞാന: പാർട്ടി അണികളുടെ തന്നിഷ്ടവും സ്വാർഥതയും
തിന് വേണ്ടി ആളുകളെ സംഘടിപ്പിക്കുന്നു
എന്ന നില വന്നപ്പോൾ, നമുക്ക് സാരല്യമില്ല
എന്ന് നായര് പറഞ്ഞു.

ബിന്ദു: കുറെ കാലം വർക്ക് ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ടോ?

ജ്ഞാന: ഞാൻ ചെറുതായപ്പോ, അമ്മ വഴു
നാൽ മുതൽ ഈ മാർക്സിസ്റ്റ് പാർട്ടിയുടെ കൂടെയാ
എന്ന നിലയിലാൾ കുന്നു. പിന്നെ, കാര്യങ്ങളുടെ
ഞൊടിവഴി സമയത്ത് അതിന് വേണ്ടി ഒരു
പാട് വർക്ക് ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ട്. എന്നെപ്പറ്റി ഗുരു

തൊട്ടാണ് ഞാൻ പാർട്ടിയിലെ സജീവ പ്രവർത്ത-
നത്തിൽ നിന്ന് പുറകോട്ട് പോകുന്നത്. അതിന്
മുമ്പോടെ അതിൽ തന്നെയാണ്. ഇവിടെ, ആ മ്യൂ-
സിക്കാലങ്ങളിൽ ഈ കിടങ്ങെക്കി ഉദ്യാനത്തെക്ക
കളി കൂറുള്ള സ്ഥലങ്ങളാണ്, അടിഭഗെ
നിലനിറ്റിരുന്നു. ആ സ്ഥലത്തെക്ക നമ്മുടെ
ആളുകൾക്ക് വിദ്യുച്ഛസം ഉള്ളത്തുകൊണ്ട്
കളിൽ തെച്ചുന്നവരാണ്. അല്ലെ, അവർക്ക്
വേണ്ടി സമരംഗത്തേക്ക് ഒരു പത്ത് നൂറു
കുടിക്കാരും എന്ന പറഞ്ഞ് വേണ്ടി രംഗ
വന്നത് – ആരും വന്നത് വർഗ്ഗീസാക്കുന്നു – ഇന്നു
വർഗ്ഗീസിനെ കോടം വന്നത് മാർക്സിസ്റ്റ് പട്ടി-
ക്കാന്. ആ ഒരു രീതിയിലാണ് നമ്മുടെ പ്രവ

193

മാർക്സിസ്റ്റ് പാർട്ടിന്ന ആതുകളായി മാറുന്നത്.

ബിന്ദു: വർഗ്ഗിനെ ഉപ്പിടുക്കൊക്കെ വന്നിട്ടുണ്ടോ? വല്ല..?

ജ്ഞാനം: ഈ തിരുനമ്പി കാട്ടിലാണ് വർഗ്ഗിനെ
കൊന്നത്. അണ്ണാനും എലിക്കറിയില്ല, ചെറുമ-
ഉപിക്കണം. നമ്മുടെ ആതുകൾക്ക് ഇരിക്ക്
സേഖിയുന്ന സമ്പാവനെ ചൊല്ലാതെ അവർക്ക്
എത്തനകില്ലും ഉണ്ണമക്കു. വേണ എന്ത് സാരം
ചൊല്ലിട്ടും കുറ്റ്റില്ല. ആ ഒരു വരത്തക്ക്
പണ്ഡിത ആയി രാത്രത്തക്ക് വരുന്നത്
നരിക്കം കമ്മ്യൂണിസ്റ്റ് പാർട്ടി ആയിരുന്നു. ആ
ഒരു "രു" വട്ടിട്ട്, തെയ്പിലാട്ടികളുമായി ഓരോത്തം
ആൾത്തിരും കമ്മ്യൂണിസ്റ്റ് പാർട്ടിയിൽ അംഗമായി.
അങ്ങനെ, നമ്മുടെ അച്ഛനും അമ്മയും ഒക്കെ

194

അതിന്റെ ആളുകളായി. നമ്മൾ ആ പാർട്ടിട്

നിക്കണ്ട് പ്രശ്നമ്പ്രണമായി. ആ സ്വഭാവരീതം-

ശരിച്ച് നമ്മും അതിന്റെ ആളുകളായി.

നമ്മൾ പിന്നിട്, പിന്നിട് ഉവര് അവരുടെ

സ്വാർത്ഥതക്ക് വേണ്ടിട്ടും നിക്കണ എന്ന് അറിഞ്ഞെ-

യ്യ വിട്ടു.

ഹിന്ദു: അതിട് ചീയ്ക്കവാൻ ആരും തന്നെ

നിങ്ങളുടെ കൂട്ടത്തിൽ പെട്ട ആളുകൾ

ആയല്ലോ?

ജന: ഉള്ളവ. ഉള്ളയും ഉണ്ട്. ഉള്ളയും ഉ0

പോക്കിട് സ്ല്ലൂസാ മരിറ്റി എടുത്ത നാകിലേൽ

ഓരൾ പോലും ഇല്ല.

ഹിന്ദു: ആരിലാരി?

ഒരു ആദിവാസികളിലും ഉണ്ട്. ഉണ്ടാ, ഉണ്ടെന്നെ

ഈ വിശ്വജില്, താഴുകില്, പണ്ഡിതനില്...

അങ്ങനെയങ്ങനെ ചെറിയ, ചെറിയ സ്ഥലങ്ങളില്

ഉണ്ട്. എന്നെയെന്നെ വേദിയലേക്ക് പോവാന്

ഒരു ആദിവാസി ഉണ്ട്. ആദിവാസി എന്ന് മാത്രം,

ദളിത വിഭാഗം എന്ന് പറയുന്ന ഒരുവര്

പോലും ഉണ്ട്. ഉണ്ടാ ദളിതരായിട്ടുള്ളവര്,

പലവിഭാഗം പോവുന്നവര് വിദ്യാഭ്യാസപരമായിട്ട്

കുറച്ച് ഉയര്ന്ന നില്ക്കുന്നവരാണ്. അങ്ങനെയുള്ളവര്

പോലും ഉണ്ട്. അവര്, ഒറിജിനല് സവര്ണ്ണര്

മാത്രം അധിനകത്തുള്ളതു ഈ പോലിട്ട് മൃഗ-

വില്. ജാതിവ്യവസ്ഥയിലും അതിനുള്ളും നിലനിന്ന

പോരുന്ന ആളുകള് മാത്രം അധിനകത്തുള്ള.

ഇവിടത്തെ കടിമെന്ന കാടൻ പറയുന്ന,

"ഞങ്ങൾ പോനാകി, സ്വർക്കാകി, വിമ്പ്ലകി

എന്നൊക്കെ... ഏതെങ്കിലും ഒരു കൈകൊട്ട്

പിടിച്ച് അയ്യാനിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടോ? ചോദ്യിട്ടു. കത

ചോക്കത് ഫോറത്ത്തിൽ നമ്മുടെ ആൾക്കൂട്ടം

കടിമത്തം ഹരിക്കും നിലനിന്നിരുന്ന പ്രത്യേ-

മത്തു ഈ തിരണ്ടി പറയാവത്? നമ്മു

ഉറ്റു. മുഖ്യമായി പറിയാച്ചുന്, ചില

സ്ഥലങ്ങളിൽ കടിമത്തം നിലനില്ക്കാമാണ്.

ഈ തിരണ്ടിയില്ല വര്ഗ്ഗവ്വന ഉദിച്ചി

പ്രതിയുടെ സമ്പം നോക്കിചു, വലില

ഇന്നി അവളക്കു, മിന്ന. കടിച്ച് പാരു ക, അതി

പൂറുക... തൈവക്കുന്ന. ആു മതിവനേ

1,197

നെൽന് ഉത്തമ പണിയാണ്. ഉവർക്ക് അറിയില്ല.

ഇത് അടിമത്തം തന്നെയാണ്.

വിനു: ഈ കാലത്ത് അവർ എങ്ങനെയാണ്

ഉത്തരം പണിക്ക് നിൽക്കുന്നത്?

ഇനു: നികത്തലിന്റെ സാവകാശം പറ്റിട്ട് ..

കിടരാ, എങ്ങാനത്തിന്റെ സ്ഥിതി വല്ലാത്ത് കേരാ

ഉണ്ട്ട് കണക്കിട് ഉഴതുക, അല്ലെങ്കിൽ കൈവിട്-

ട് പോവുക. നികത്തലിട് കൂടുതൽ ഉണ്ടിക്കേണ്ട-

മത് ഹരിക്കും കൂടാതെ ചെയ്യുക. എടുക്കും കൊടുത്തിട്ട്

കൈ നിറുത്തിട്ടും ഉള്ളത് കണക്കുമാ, താലംഗിക-

ത്തിനു പോലും വഴുകി, എന്നിട്ട് കൈവക

ഒരു കിലോ അരി കൊടുക്കുന്ന ഒരു രീതിയ്ക്.

അങ്ങനെ അസിസ്സിത്തായ അവവർ

198

എന്തിനാണ് കിനാങ്ങളിൽ?

വിനു: ആദിവാസി വിഭാഗങ്ങൾ ഉള്ള സ്ത്രീകളെ ഒറ്റപ്പെടുത്താറുണ്ടോ?

ജിനു: ചിലരൊക്കെ ഒറ്റപ്പെടുത്താറുണ്ട്. ആദ്യം ആദ്യം കണ്ടപ്പോൾ അവർക്ക് എല്ലാവരികയും. എല്ലാവരും പോയി പറഞ്ഞൊക്കെ കാണും. പിന്നീട് മെല്ലെ ഇത് ആവർത്തിക്കുമ്പോൾ, അങ്ങനെ മെല്ലുന്നത് തെറ്റാണ് എന്നൊക്കെ പറഞ്ഞ് കഴിയുമ്പോൾ അതിനൊരു മാറ്റം നിന്നിരുന്നു. പിന്നെ അവരെ കൊണ്ട് മെല്ലിച്ചു.

വിനു: സത്യത്തിൽ പലയ ഒരു ആനിനെ ശിക്ഷ അനുഭവിക്കുന്നത്.

ജിനു: അതെ, എന്നും അതിനാണ് പറയുന്നത്

199

നിലനിർത്തുന്നത്. ഈ പ്രശ്നങ്ങളൊക്കെ

കോടതിവഴി, നിയമം വഴി കൈകെ പരിഹരിക്കൻ

പറ്റുന്നതാണ്. പക്ഷെ, അത് പരിഹരിക്കില്ല.

അതിന് ഒരു വരം. ഞാനൊടപ്പെട്ടിട്ടുള്ള കാ

കേസുകളിലെ ആളുകളോട് പറഞ്ഞിടുണ്ട്: "ഞാൻ

ഒന്നേ പറയൂ ഉണി. ഞങ്ങൂ വിശ്വസിപ്പൂ, ഞങ്ങളെ

ഉപദ്രവിക്കരുത്. എല്ലാം തകരും. ഏതുനാളും.

ഒരു കുട്ടി ജനിക്കൂ. ജനിച്ച കുട്ടിനെ ഞങ്ങൂ

കൊല്ലൻ തയ്യാറു. എങ്ങനെയെങ്കിലും കടമ്പെട്ട്

ഞങ്ങൂ വളർത്തിക്കൊണ്ടും. ഉണി മോൾ

ഉത്തരം ഒരു രീതി വേണ ഒരു കുട്ടിക്ക് ഉണി

മോൾ ഇങ്ങനെ ഒരു ഉപദ്രവം പറിച്ച. അതിനെ

അതുകൊണ്ട് മറുകൊരാവിട്ട് നിലിക്കണം."

ആ എഴുകയ്മാന നിശ്ചിയ്ച്ചത് തന്നെ ഉറ്റു

എഴുകയ്വൻ ഉറ്റകയ്യും. അവിടെ ഒരു പരിധി

വരെയ്ക്കിലും ഉത നിർത്തൻ സാധിക്കും. 1989-ൽ

Atrocities Act പ്രകാരം 2-3 തികലെ എഴില

നിശ്ചിയ്ച്ചൽ, പിന്നെ എഴുകയ്വൻ അതെ കയ്തികില

ഉമ്മ സാധാരണവിൽ, ഒരു സ്ഥലത്ത് ഉണ്ടയ്മ-

ആ പ്രുമയി കഴിന്ന്നാൽ, അവിടെനെ നെതെകയ്തു

വരുമ്പു അവകാര നെക്കില്ലെ ഒരു 6000-

7000 രുപ കൊടുത്തായ് പ്രകും തിന്നു. ഉരി

9000/ കൊടകന്ട് സ്വന്തവായ്ക അയ്തത് പ്യെയും

എഴ്ത പ്രകും എഴ്നി ചേയ്യും. അയ്ഷ, ഉതിനത്ത

വഴി നെതുവിലകന്ന, നിയമയ്മലകന്ന, വക്ലിയ-

ക്തിന്കം, ഗരന്കുമ്മ ഒക്ക ഉന്ന് അന്നയ്ഷ്ത്.

ഉങ്ങണമുള്ള സ്വഭാവത്തിവണ വർഗ്ഗീസ്

വാക്കൽ ഹെ സ്ഥിരത മെയ്യൻ നാൻ ആമേലാ-

ട്ടിലും ഹോങ്ങന്ന്.

തിരു: ഹെെ ഉണ്ണാര തലവിരിച്ചും നടക്ക-

2|മിരുന്നി?

ഇന്ന: കേട്ടിട്ടില്ല.

തിരു: മുരിയുടെ എകൂത്തിന്നു, സ്ത്രീയുടെ മുഖ-

ത്തിന്നു ഒക്കെ സ്വഭാവമോ, അല്ലേ?

ഇന്ന: ആദ്യം വെള്ള നമുടെ മണ്ണ് ഒട്ട,

മുരി ഒട്ട, എല്ലാം ഒട്ടു. എന്നിട്ട് തിരിഞ്ഞ്

നോക്കി, വല്ലതും ബാക്കിയുണ്ടോ എന്ന്. എന്നിട്ട്

നമുടെ ഹരിണങ്ങളും ഒട്ട.

തിരു: വാസ്തവമായി ഉണ്ണാര വന്നിട്ടുള്ള ഉണ്ട്

203

നേരിട്ടുകൂടെയോ? അവരെ ഇതിനെ എന്തേ-
യാണ് ഭയമാനം?

ഉത്തം: അവരെയും ഭയമാനത്, ആശിവാസികളെയും
ഭയിന്നെ കൊട്ടിയാണെവാരത്, ഉത്തരം ഒരു ക്യാമ്പയ്ൻ
നടത്തിട്ട് ആവശ്യമില്ല, അതോതല്യൻ ഭയമാനത്.
ഉവിടെ നടക്കുന്നത് അവകിലാ ഉദ്യോഗവർക്ക്
അവികിലാ കൊടുക്കുകയാണ്. അസിഗവിതെയെ
തന്നോവാരുന്നം ഉരം എടത്താല്, ഉ9ഖി അവര്
ലസ്റിന് എയന്തിള് പുഗിരിക്കേണ്ടത് DNA test
നടത്തണം, ഉ9 കുട്ടികളുടെ വിളുവും തെളിളി-
ക്കണം, എന്നാല് ഉത്തമ ഉവര് ഉത്തരവിള്യ-
ക്കേണ്ട എന്നുടക്കി... ത്തിന് പറയുന്നത്, അവര്
തന്നെ ലോകത്തില് എറ്റവും വലിയ വരതയലാന്.

23 DNA Test എന്ന് പറയുന്നത്. മാഷേ, ഈ

ഭൂമിയിൽ ഏതെ സ്ത്രീ ആയിരുന്നാലും, ഒരു സ്ത്രീ

അവരവാട്ട് സമരിക്കുന്ന ഒരു എടുത്താനയും

ഞാൻ പറയില്ല.

ശിഷ്യ: ലോകത്തിന്റെ സ്ഥിതി എന്ന് പറയാൻ പറ്റില്ല?

ഗുരു: അതെ. ഫലമത്തിൽ ഈ സ്ത്രീ പറയുന്ന

ആളുകൾ കുറവാണി. അതിലും വലിയൊരു തെറ്റിവ്

ഈ ലോകത്തിൽ ഉണ്ട്. ഈ DNA Test ഒരു

മറിക്കും ഈ സ്ത്രീകളെ വിലിക്കാൻ വേണ്ടി

ഉണ്ടാക്കിയ കാര്യമാ.

ശിഷ്യ: അവരെ സ്ഥലികളാം എന്നാണെല്ലാ

ആളുകൾ അത് പറയുന്നത്?

ഗുരു: എന്നിട്ട് ഈ DNA കട്ടിൽ വിട്ടും

തെളിഞ്ഞാൽ ആ കുട്ടിന, അവളുടെ, ആ സ്ത്രീടെ
ക്കി അവൻ ഏറെടുക്കും. ഉടുങ്കി, അവൾക്ക്
ജീവിക്കാള്ള ഒരു ഉപാധികൊടുക്കും. - ന്യ്ങ്ങ്
കേൾക്കാൻ അതിൽ പറയുന്നത്. മലർത്തത്തിൽ
ഉാ DNA ടെസ്റ്റ് ഡിയു. സ്ത്രീടെ ഡികിഡ്ഡ
ബവ്ബവ്ല്ക്കാന്.

വിന്ദു: അത്, ബ്ലാക്ഡ്ഡവർക്ക് എന്ന്, യ്ങ്ങ്ന
സ്തനമാകിയു. ഡതി എഴുതികടൽ രചച്ച്ഡ?

തുണ: ഡതി എഴുതികടൽ ഡടുല്ല, അത് ഡ-
ഡ,ഉാ സ്ത്രീ പറയുന്ന അങ്ങ്ങ്ഡു തന്ന
രക്തം എ്ടുത്ത കൊ്ല്ല്ങ്ണ്ലു, ഡഡ ന്യ്ങ്ങ്
കിയും ഓഡ്ഡു, ഡഡ്മ്യ്ഉ്ല്ല്വന കൊ്ടുഡ്ല്യി
ഉാ കുട്ടിക്ക് രക്തം എ്ടുത്ത്ട് ഉട്ട്ഡ്ല്

പറഞ്ഞത് തിരിഞ്ഞിട്ടു പോകും. ഉറപ്പാക്കാനും

ഒഴിയാൻ ഒരു വഴി മാ ഉപദേശിച്ചുകൊടുത്തത്

ഡോക്ടം ഉം DNA ടെസ്റ്റ്.

ഭീരു: എന്ന മാമച്ചു, ഒരു സ്ത്രീയെ വച്ചിട്ട്

ഒരു വിലകുറച്ചു.

ഡ്രാമ: അത്, ഒരു വിലയും ഉമ്മ. ഈ സ്ത്രീ

പറയുന്നതിന്റെ അപ്പുറത്തേക്ക്, എന്ന് പാരു-

കയ്യാണെങ്കി, ലോകത്തില് മറ്റൊരു തെളിവും

ഉമ്മ. അതാണ് മഹാസത്യം പറയുന്നത്. അതു

അറിഞ്ഞിരിക്കാൻ കഴിയാത്ത ഈ സുഖത്തില്

ഉറ്റ് എന്തെങ്കിലുണ്ടെന്ന് ഭയം? അതിവര സ്ത്രീയെ

ഉപദ്രവിച്ച് പോലും അറിഞ്ഞിരിക്കാൻ വരുന്ന

തല്ലിയിട്ടിരുന്ന് നമ്മ ക്കാന്ന് പറിയും.

207

ഉമ്മിണിവിട്ട് അസ്കിരിക്കുന്നതെടുക്കി, അവരും
വരിന വില്ക്കുംപുവരിന്നും. അപ്പോ, പറിക
പറഞ്ഞു, ആദിവസിയോയെചിൽ പലസ്ഥത്തിൽ
നടക്കുന്ന ഒരു സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യപ്രമാണ്.

ആദിവസിപ്രത്തൃങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നന്നെ അന്തരും
ഒരു സ്വാരവും വരാക്കും. ഒരു സ്വതന്ത്ര
സ്വാര. അത് ഈ പാടത്തുള്ള എളമടും
മുട്ടമാവിട്ടിരിക്കണം. അപ്പോ, ഇട്ടു-
ത്തിട് രണ്ട നടക്കൂ. ഒരോ മുട്ടംയടനം,
ഒരോ തുടിയിടനം. അന് ഒരു വളത്തി-
ക്കൊന്ന വക്കവളി നടക്കും, കാരൃ മുറിക്കനം
നിക്കൊടുത്തിരവരും. വിള്ളും ഉതിര..

൨൦൮

APPENDIX – III
INTERVIEW WITH KELAPPAN (CK) June, 1999.

Conducted along with Bindulakshmi P. (BL)

BL: ഉങ്ങൾ എന്ത് അതിലൊന്നും വിശ്വസിക്കുന്നില്ലേ?

K: അത് എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞാൽ, ഞങ്ങളുടെ പറയു-
ന്നിട് പല ഉതവല തങ്ങനെ ചെയ്യുകയിൽ ഒരു
നേട്ടങ്ങളും ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നില്ല. അപ്പ അതിന്
തങ്ങൾ ഒരു മറും വരുത്ത്യാണ്. അന്ന്
തങ്കത് അതിൽ വിശ്വസിക്കുവോ അതത്തൽ
ഒരു കടപാടം, അതുക്കി ഉള്ളവും വാപ്പതൽ
... ഉന്ന് പയ്യോദിക്കുള്ള എടക്കത്തിരിക്കുന്ന
ഏല പഴിക്കും ഉണ്ട് തങ്ങളും ഉടഴൽ.

. . .

Another Voice: അങ്ങനെയാണ് ഉന്. പല തങ്ങ

148 തറവാട് ഉപയോഗിക്കണം. അന്ന് കിട്ടുന്ന സമ്പാദ്യം

ഒന്നേ ഉപയോഗിക്കണം. ഉങ്ങനെ വില്പന വരുത്തി

തരാത്തത് സ്വാധീനിക്കുക. ഉപ്പ ഞാങ്ങനെ 52

തവ്വല ഉണ്ണ്. കനക സമ്പ്ര പോയി.

B: എങ്ങനെയ നടപ്പത്?

K: ഉദാ പറമ്പ്ക്കടിപ്പന്നത്തിൽ ഉണ്ണ് ഉദാ

വിലപ്പന്ന്മൂന്ന് തരുന്നത   നതർത്തണ്ടകായിരിക്കണം.

അപ്പ ഉതിന ഒരു പിറം വരന്ന്നതിന ഒവിട്

തരന്ന്നത്ഭ്യന്തരം ഹതിയ രീതി കൊടുക്കണം. അതിനെ

ഉത്തമവർഗം എന്ന് പറയുന്നത്.

B: എന്ത്?

K: ഉത്തമവർഗം. അതിന ഇതിരില്ന്ന് പടിയ്യ.

ക്ലാസ്സി, ചവ, ലഗരി പദാർത്ഥങ്ങൾ കനക

210

ഞങ്ങൾ ഇപ്പോൾ വഴിച്ചുകൊഴിരിക്കുന്നത്

B: ആരാണ് തുടങ്ങിവത്?

K. ഞങ്ങളുടെ ഉള്ള എന്ന പറയുന്ന ഒരു പേരു-
എന്ന ഒരുയ്ക്കാരൻ. എന്നെ പ്രാപിക്ക് അവൻ
ഉള്ളതെ തരപ്പെടുത്തി എടുക്കാവാനു. പറഞ്ഞു: 'നാൻ
ഉം ഈഗ്രാമം അറിഞ്ഞിരിക്കണതാകിൽ ഒരു
ന്യായപ്പുടൻ ആടന്നുമകയി മരം ഉരി. കാര്യ ഈ.
ഞങ്ങൾ എങ്ങയതം ഒരരിഞ്ഞ് കൂപിടുന്നു. പള്ളിയ
ക്ഷേത്രത്തിൽ ഞങ്ങളുടെ പ്രവർത്തിക്കന് പഴിയു.
ഞങ്ങളുടെ പുരതിൽ ഭിതി വന്നുപ്പൂ, ഞങ്ങൾ
ത്രികൂടകം സഹായിന്റെകൂടത് ചെയ്തപോട്ടു.
അപ്പ, അവൻ ഞങ്ങൾ ഉള്ളതെ പെയ്ക
നെരിക്കു എന്ന പറഞ്ഞു. സത്യനിതി വഴി-

൨൧൨

മലയാള കയ്യെഴുത്ത് ...

BL: ...?

K: ...

"ഉം കളിക്കുവാൻ"

ഒന്നു കഴിയാൻ കഴിയില്ല. അത് വരാൻ പോകുന്ന

നഷ്ടം മാത്രമേ കഴിയൂ... അതിന് ഏത്

കാലത്ത് ആരാണൊരാൾ പറിച്ച്. ഉണ്ടോ, നിഷ്ണാതന്മാരെ

വയ്യാൻ പറ്റ്? അത്ര വില്ലിലൊന്ന് ഉണ്ടോ വരാൻ

പോകുന്ന നഷ്ടം മാത്രമേ ഇത് കഴിയാൻ പറ്റ്.

B: ഏതു കാലമായി ഉം മറ്റും വന്ന്ട്?

K: അത്ര പത്ത്-പതിനെട്ട് കൊല്ലമായി.

BL: ഏതിൽ വിലയിൽ എന്തൊക്കെ മറ്റുമുണ്ട്

വന്നത്?

K: അതൊക്കെ വിട്ട് ഉള്ളൻ പടിയ. എന്തൊക്കെ.

ഉം പറ്റിക്കരിലും മല, കീറി, വരി പാടാം-

അത് ഒന്നു കഴിയാൻ പറ്റില്ല. കിണ, ഉള്ള,

വരാന... ഒന്നു പറ്റില്ല.

B: മത്സ്യബന്ധനം മഴക്കാലം പാടില്ലേ?

K: പാടില്ല. നമ്മുടെ അതിലേക്ക് എന്താണ്
എല്ലാവരി കാര്യങ്ങൾ ചെയ്യുന്നില്ലേ? അതേ രീതിയൽ
ഞങ്ങളും പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നത്. നിങ്ങളുടെ വീട്ടിൽ
വന്നാൽ, ഒരു നിലവിളക്ക് കത്തിച്ചു തന്നാൽ
പ്രാർത്ഥന ചെയ്യുന്ന കാര്യരീതി ഞങ്ങളും
ചെയ്യുന്നതും.

B: വിവാഹത്തിലെ ചടങ്ങുകൾ എങ്ങനെയാണ്?
ഞങ്ങളിനും പുതിയ രീതി. സാധാരണ രീതിയിൽ
മന്ധപ്പ വഴങ്ങ കെട്ടിട്ട്, സ്വർണ്ണം, മാല ഒക്കെ
കൊടുക്കിട്ട്. ആ കുട്ടിയെ നല്ല നെലയിൽ ആ
ദൈവിക ചടങ്ങോടെ ഞങ്ങൾ ഏൽപ്പിച്ച്
കൊടുക്ക്യാണ്... കുട്ടിയെ വന്ന ഞങ്ങൾക്ക് അറിയില്ല.

വേണം എന്ന് പറയുമ്പോൾ... അങ്ങോട്ട് ഉള്ളവ-
രണം നടുവിലിൽ കൊടുക്കും.

B: ഇതിവിടെ ക്യാമ്പം നടത്തിട്ടില്ല, അല്ലേ?

K: ഉള്ളൂ. അത് ഇതുവരെ നടത്തിട്ടില്ല. എന്നാൽ
അതൊരു പെങ്ങളിലൂടെ ഉദ്യാത്തനമൊഴി
ക്യാമ്പം കഴിപ്പിരികുന്നത്... എതിർക്കുന്ന ഉള്ള.
ഒരൊരു ക്യാമ്പത്തിനിണ്ടാം പോയിട്ടു.

B: അത് ആരാണ് നടത്തികൊടുക്കണ്?

K: RSS ഒന്നൊക്കും BJP ക്കൊക്ക. ആര്മക്കില്ല?
അവർ.

B: ആരാണ് ക്യാമ്പം കഴിചത്? നാഴുള്ള ബികേസൻ.
തീയത് എന്ന് പറയുന്നവർ. അവൻ ഉടിൽ X-Ray
എടുക്കുന്ന ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥനാണ്.

216

കരിച്ചുംരണ്ണ, നാമംരണ്ണ, തന്ധ്യംരണ്ണ തങ്ങൾ-
കിട. തങ്ങളിലൂ റിവ്യസിംന്ത് തങ്ങളെതംമന്ത്.
നാമെത, കരിച്ചുന്ത, പനിമെണാ ഉട. നറ്ഗ്വ.
ഊട്ടുരമെടുന്ത്.

DL: നിംടപ്പകി അഴ്ഗ്ലംമന്തിന് എന്രിപ്പിടും?

K: ഉട. തങ്ങളിലെ മെമെങ്ങെട്ടിലെ, നറ്ഗ്വ
ഊട്ടുരിപ്പിലംമെങ്ങുന്?

Not clear.

വെന്ത് തങ്ങളൂ്ട കിറിമെട മടുന്നുമ്യംന്
തങ്ങൾ കാമെമന്ത് ഉഠ=, വിദ്യസ്വവ. വംമന്തിന
ലംമ്ട അഴ്ഗെമന്ത മടുമെവ തന്നിമന്ത് വംഴ്ന്വ.
അഴ്ഗെമന്ത മെമെടെട്ടു? വിദ്യസ്യവ ഉമെമിലമ്ല്യിട
തങ്ങൾ അരിഗുന്ത, മെമ ക്ര ക്രിമെമെബിലെ

അമ്മ. അമ്മ നമ്മെ കരിപ്പുകെട ഇടീൽ, അവരെ
കൂടണവാൻ ഞങ്ങൾ കൂടംബ. വനമ,
അവ ഒരു നിമിത്തം മാത്രമാണ്. മലന്ന-
ത്തിൽ നമ്മൾ അടുക്കണ രക്തമാണ്, എന്ന
പറയുന്നു?

INTERVIEW WITH KELU(K), June, 1999.
(with Bindalakshmi P)

കേളു:(K) കിരിതമൂർത്തിയൻ. നിദ്ദെൻ കിരിത-

വേല, കൂടാത്ത വേല.

B.L. അതാണ് ഉദ്ദേനിരി?

K: അതെ, കരിച്ചുരൂടെ ഇയനെങ്ങളം.

B.L: നിങ്ങ അതിൽ വിശ്വിക്കാമോയ?

K: വിശ്വിക്കണമെങ്ങോ? അതിൽ ഉണ്ടെന്ന എർത്ത
തിലാൻ ഞങ്ങ വിശ്വിക്കാത.

ബി: എങ്ങനെയാണ് വിശ്വസം വന്നത്?

K: · · · ഒരു വിശ്വസം അതിനൂടനെ
ധ്യനത്തിലിരിക്കമ്പൊ ഒരുത്ത വന്നിട്ടുണ്ടന
വന്നൂ. ഉത്, എഴാൻ കുട്ടനൻ നോടം
3½ ഴുക്ക് ഉണ്ട്. ധ്യനത്തിൽ വന്ന

ഒരാൾ ചോദിക്കുമാറ്: "എന്ത ചെയ്യേണ്ട
ഉദ്ധാരത്തിൻ?" എന്നവനോ, "പറയുന്ന-
തൂല." അപ്പൻ പിന്നി പറഞ്ഞു: 'ഉതിന്റെ,
മേരെടിങ്കെ സഹിപ്പങ്ങത്ത് വൃഷൻ തിരൻ
പോവുനിട്ട. പറവ, ഉതിന്റെഴേളം ഉടി
ഓന്നിത്ത്." എന്ന്. ഓന്നാനെന്ന് പറഞ്ഞാൽ
എനിക്ക് ഉന്നപ്പിവേഴെ തെരടുന്ന?
അന്നരം പറഞ്ഞു, ഉദ്ധ എല്ലാം
വിഭ്യത്തിൻ്റ സനനഞ്ഞെടുമാത്ത്. ആദ്യം
ഉചർന്ന ജ്ഞാതിയിലെ ആൾക്കാരെഴത്ത് എടി
മൂത്ത. പിന്നിട് തന്നി, "ഉതള്ള ഹരിഷല
വഴി. ആദ്യം നമുക്ക ആൾക്കാരെ താങ്കൽ",
എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞ സനനം സുദ്ധായത്തിൽ

തുടങ്ങി. പല മാറ്റങ്ങൾ കൊണ്ടുവരാൻ ഒരാ

ഉദ്ദേശിക്കാൻ തുടങ്ങി. ഇതുതന്നെ ദിനവും

ഒരെ തരത്തിൽ കഴിഞ്ഞിട്ടു വേണം. വിന്നെ

പിന്നെ തരിൽ തുടങ്ങിയിരുന്നവനും, സത്യ-

സന്ധത വേണം എന്നിരുന്ന ആ ഇരു

ഉപേക്ഷിക്കു. സ്വന്തം വീട്ടിൽ മതവിദ്യാഭ്യാസ

ത്തെ അന്യസരിക്കാൻ ആയില്ല, കൽപ്പന്നത്തേ അത്രയും

തൊട്ട് വരികാൻ ആയില്ല. അതുകൊണ്ട വന്ന-

തൊഴി ആ അവസ്ഥയും ഒഴിഞ്ഞ പോയി.

B: ഏത് കൂടെവരാൻ ഉള്ളു?

K: ആ വരികയോ? ആ തിരിയുപോയി.

ഇനിയ രണ്ടാമത് ഉയർന്ന ജാതിവരെ

അറിഞ്ഞ് സരിപിച്ച് നിൽക്കലാണ്.

പ്രത്യേകിച്ച നിയന്ത്രണം. ഹതിയ ഒരു മതം
രൂപികരിക്കുകയാക്കി, ആരുക്വിന്‍ കേലോ
സംഘടിപ്പിക്കേണ്ട? പിന്നെ, ഒരു കന്‍
കൊടുക്കേണ്ട? നൈഷ്ഠ്യസ്വരണാ മറ്റ്.?
ഭൂതൂതുകാര്യിന് വിശ്വസിക്കിന്‍ ആ വ വന്ന്?
കപല കരിച്ചുകു ഉലകാരി തുടങ്ങിയ ദൈവ
കൂളില്‍ വിശ്വസിക്കുന്നവനന്ന്. പരെ, അതില്‍
കാര്യില്ല. ദൈവത്തിന്ന ഹക്തി ഒയല്ല്
വരികയാണ്. ഉള്ള അരുവങ്ങളാന്ന
ഉള്ളന്‍ ആര്‍ല്ല.

ഭൂതൂത് സമ്മദായക്യാന്‍ ഉള്ള അറ്യം.
ആഥന്‍ വരുന്ന്?
K: നിയന്‍വരാണ്. ക്രിസ്ത്യാനികള്‍, മുള്ളിം

ഒരെ വന്നാൽ, അവരവം വരുന്നിരിക്കും.

പറയൂ, അവരുടെ ആ ചുറ്റാട് വിട്ടിട്ട് വരികയാണോ?

B: ഇങ്ങനെയൂണ്ണൂ ആ വിശ്വസ്ലമുണ്ടെങ്കി

ഉണ്ടെങ്കിലും വരും എന്ന് വിചാരിക്കാമോ?

K: അതിനാൽ, അവരുടെ ഒരെ തമ്മിൽ

ധാർക്കോടെ ഒരിയില്ലാതെ പറഞ്ഞായിരി-

ക്കുകയാണ്. ഉതിരൂടെ ഓരു ധാര കൂട്ടികം

എന്ന വ്യസ്ഥയിലാണ് ഇത് കൊടുക്കുന്നത്.

അതിരലൂ, വരിയുണിട്ട. ആ കൊടുക്കും

നിന്നി.

Select Bibliography

Abraham, Ajit. "Ee Thanalil Njangal Surakshitar." ("We are Safe in this Shade.") *Vanitha.* Oct - 1-14, 2001: 60- 63.

Adivasi-Dalit Samara Samiti. "Krishi Bhoomiyum Thozhilum Nalki Pattini Maranam Thatayuka." ("Prevent Starvation Deaths by Giving Land and Work.") Open Letter to the Chief Minister. August, 2001.

Agarwal, Anil. *The State of India's Environment 1984-85: The Second Citizen's Report.* Delhi: Centre for Science and Environment, 1986.

Alisamma Women's Collective. "Different Sisters." *The Dalit.* March-April, 2002: 45.

Aloysius, G. *Religion as Emancipatory Identity. A Buddhist Movement among the Tamils under Colonialism.* New Delhi: New Age International, 1998.

Ananth, V. Krishna . "A New Role for NGOs." *The Hindu.* January 23, 2003: 10.

Baby K.J. *Nadugadhika.* Shirly M. Joseph. Trans. Banglaore: Visthar, 1993.

— (a). *Maveli Mantam.* Thrissur: Current Books, 1999.

— . *Kanavu Ganangal.* (Audio Cassette). Nadavayal: Kanavu.

--- (b). *Nadugadhika.* Nadavayal: Gadhika Publications,1999.

Battacharya, Neeladri. "Introduction." *Studies in History.* 14. 2,1999:165-171.

Bhagat, R B. "Role of Census in Racial and Ethnic Construction." *Economic and Political Weekly.* XXXVIIL8, 2003: 686-692.

Bharadwaj, Reshma. "New Social Movements and Empowerment: A Case Study of the Tribal Movements in Wynad." Unpublished Paper, 1998.

Bhaskaran. *Janu: C.K Januvinte Jeevitha Katha. (Janu: C.K Janu's Life Story.)* Kottayam: D.C. Books, 2002.

Bijoy C.R. "Adivasis Betrayed: Adivasi Land Rights in Kerala." *Economic and 'Political Weekly.* XXXIV.22, 1999: 1329-1335.

—. "Adivasis Betrayed: Adivasi Land Rights in Kerala." Solidarity Documents, Unpublished Paper .

Census of India. *Report.* 1872.

Census of India (Bombay Report), 1881.

Census of India. *Report.* 1881.

Census of India. *Report.* 1891.

Census of India. *Report.* 1901.

Chandra, Bipan et al. *India after Independence.* New Delhi: Viking, 1999.

Chandrika C.S. "Starvation Deaths of Adivasis in Kerala." Unpublished Paper, 2001.

Cheria, Anita et al. Eds. *A Search For Justice: A Citizens Report on the Adivasi Experience in South India.* Bangalore: St. Paul's Publications, 1997.

"Chila Chodyangalum Marupatikalum." ("Some Questions and Answers") Kochi: Ayodhya Printers, Pamphlet.

Chirakkal, T. Balakrishnan Nair. Comp. "Wayanadan Pattu" ("The Wayanad Song") in *Kerala Bhasha Ganangal (Nadan Pattukal).* Vol. 1. *The Regional Songs of Kerala: (Folk. Songs).* Vol- 1. Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Academy, 1979: 150-160.

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness.* Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1983.

Darwin, Charles. *On the Origin of Species.* New York: Mentor, 1958.

Devy, G.N. (Ed.) *Painted Words: An Anthology of Tribal Literature.* New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2002.

Dhareswar, Vivek and R. Srivatsan. " 'Rowdy Sheeters': An Essay on Subalternity and Politics." *Subaltern Studies DC: Writings on South Asian History and Society:* Eds. Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakrabarty. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996. 201- 232.

Dozier, Edward P. "The Concepts of "Primitive" and "Native" in Anthropology." *Current Anthropology: A Supplement to Anthropology Today.* Ed. Willairn Thomas L Jr. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1956.

Ellingson, Ter. *The Myth of the Noble Savage.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

Engels, Frederick. "Origin of Family, Private Property and State." In *Karl Marx and Frederick Engles: Selected Works.* Vol. 3. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976, 191-316.

Englund, Harri and James Leach. "Ethnography and the Metanarratives of Modernity." *Current Anthropology.* 41. 2, 2000: 225-248.

Fabian, Johannes. *Time and the Other. How Anthropology Makes its Object.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.

Frenz, Margaret. *From Contact to Conquest: Transition to British Rule in Malabar. 1790-1895.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Gadgil, Madhav and Ramachandra Guha. *This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India.* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Ghosh, Kaushik. "A Market for Abonginality: Primitivisrn and Race Classification in the Indentured Labour Market of Colonial India." Eds. Gautarn Bhadra et al. *Subaltern Studies III: Writings on South Asian History and Society. X: Writings on South Asian History and Society.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999, 8-49.

Girija. "Adivasikalkkayi Oru Ottayal Porali." ("A One-Man Soldier for the Adivasis.") *Keraleeyam.* 3. 3,2001:3.

Guha, Ramachandra. "Forestry and Social protest in British Kaurnaun, c.1893-1921.*Subaltern Studies III: Writings on South Asian History and Society.:* Ed. Ranajith Guha. New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1985: 54-100.

—. "An Early Environmental Debate: The Making of the 1878 Forest Act" *The Indian Economic and Social History Review.* 27. 1, 1990: 65-84.

—. *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya.* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991.

—. "Savaging the Civilised: Verrier Elwin and the Tribal Question in Late Colonial India." *Economic and Political Weekly.* Special Number, 1996: 2375-2389.

—. *Savaging the Civilized: Verrier Elwin, His Tribals and India.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Guha, Ranajit. "The Small Voice of History." *Subaltern Studies HI: Writings on South Asian History and Society. DC: Studies on South Asian History and Society.* Eds. Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakravarthy. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997, 1-12.

Guha, Sumit. "Forest Polities and Agrarian Empires: the Khandesh Bhils,c. 1700-1850." *The Indian Economic and Social History Review.* 33. 2,1996: 133-153.

Environment And Ethnicity In India: 1200-1991. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

—. "Lower Strata, Older Races and Aboriginal People" *The Journal of Asian Studies.* 57. 2, 1998: 423-441

—. "Claims on the Commons: Political Power and Natural Resources in Pre-Colonial India." *The Indian Economic and Social History Review.* 39. 2 & 3, 2002: 181-196.

Hardiman, David. *The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India.* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987.

—. "Adivasi Assertion in South Gujarat The Devi Movement of 1922-3." Ed. Ranajit Guha. *Subaltern Studies III: Writings in South Asian History and Culture.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996, 196-231.

Heredia, Rudolph C. "Interrogating Integration: The Counter-Cultural Tribal Other." *Economic and Political Weekly.* XXXVIII.52,2002: 5174-5178.

Ilaiah, Kancha. *Why I am Not a Hindu? A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture and Political Economy.* Calcutta: Samya, 1996.

Ilayathu, Kunhikkuttan.*Keralathinte Pradhana Kshetrangaliloote. (Through the Main Temples of Kerala.)* Thrissur H & C, 2002.

Inden, Ronald. "Orientalist Constructions of India." *Modern Asian Studies.* 20.3,1986: 401-446.

Jalli, Indira. *Study of Sexual Violence: A Case of Rape against Dalit Women.* Unpublished M.Phil Dissertation. University of Hyderabad, 1997.

Janu, C.K. "When the Lost Soil Beckoned." as told to Bhaskaran. *The Dalit.* March-April, 2003: 19-21.

' . "When the Lost Soil Beckoned: Life Sketch Narrated by C.K. Janu." Usha Menon Trans. *Samyukta.* IL2, 2002: 127-143.

Jodhka, Surinder S. "Nation and Village: Images of Rural India in Gandhi, Nehru and Ambedkar." *Economic and Political Weekly.* XXXVII .32,2002 : 3343-3352.

Johnny, O.K. *Wayandinte Samskarika Bhoomika. (The Social Background of Wayanad)* Sultan's Battery: Modern Books, 1988.

—. "Wayanadu: Oru Mukhakkurippu." ("Wayanad: A Preface") *Discover Wayanad: The Green Paradise.* Kalpetta: District Tourism Promotion Council, 1995, 71-73.

—. *Wayanad Rekhakal: Pradeshika Charithram. {Wayanad Documents: Regional History.)* Calicut Pappiyon, 2001.

Kahn, Joel S. "Anthropology and Modernity." *Current Anthropology.* 42. 5,2001.

Kamat, Sangeeta. "Anthropology and Global Capital: Rediscovering the Noble Savage." *Cultural Dynamics.* 13. 1,2001:29-51.

Kaviraj, Sudipta. "The Imaginary Institution of India." *Subaltern Studies III: Writinos on South Asian History and Society.* Eds. Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey. New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1992, 1-40.

Kothari, Smitha. *Theorizing Culture, Nature and Democracy in India.* Delhi: Lokayan, 1993.

Krishnakumar, R. "The Muthanga Misadventure." *Frontline.* March 28, 2003: 42-44.

Kuper, Adam. *The Invention of the Primitive: Transformations of an Illusion.* London: Routledge, 1988.

Kurup, K.K.N. *Pazhassi SamarangaL (The Pazhassi Revolts).* Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Bhasha Institute, 1999.

Lively, Adam. *Masks: Blackness, Race and Imagination.* London: Vintage, 1999.

Logan, William. *Malabar Manual:* Vol II. Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Gazetteers Department, 2000.

Lyell, Charles. *Principles of Geology.* London: John Murray, 1853.

Mamballi, Suresh. Interview with K.J. Baby. "Kanavu-Kanavoorunnorormma" ("Kanavu-A Memory Wrapped in Kindness") *Indian Voice,* March-April, 2002: 6-9.

Manus, Peter M. "The Owl, The Indian, The Feminist, and the Brother: Environmentalism Encounters the Social Justice Movements." *Environmental Affairs Law Review.* 23. 2,1996.

Marcus, George E and Michael M.J. Fischer. *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

Margaret, Swathi M. *"Writing Dalit Feminist Discourse through Translation: Translating Select African American Short Stories into Telugu."* Unpublished M.Phil Dissertation. University of Hyderabad, 2001.

McGrane, B. *Beyond Anthropology: Society and the Other.* New York: Columbia University Press. 1989.

Mehta, Vishwas and P.K. Devan. "Nurungukal." ("Titbits.") *Discover Wayanad: The Green Paradise.* Kalpetta: District Tourism Promotion Council, 1995: 135-136.

Mohan, Sanal. "Religion, Social Space and Identities: Construction of Boundary in Colonial Kerala." Unpublished Paper. Lucknow: *Conference of Subaltern Historians,* January 3-5, 1998.

—. "Theorizing History in the Context of social Movements: Challenges to the Reigning Paradigms of History." Unpublished Paper. Madras: *Seminar on Alternative Historiographies.* Dept of Christian Studies, March 15-16, 2001.

Nadkarni, M.V. "Ethics and Relevance of Conversions: A Critical Assessment of Religious and Social Dimensions in a Gandhian Perspective." *Economic and Political Weekly.* XXXVIII.3, 2003: 227-235.

Nair, Gopalan C. Rau Bahadur. *Malabar Series: Wynad: Its Peoples and Traditions.* Madras: Higginbothams, 1911.

Nandy, Ashis. *At the Edge of Psychology: Essays in Politics and Culture.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980.

—. *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism.* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Narayanan, Aju. "Karumatikuttan." *500 Varshathe Keralam: Chila Arivatayalangal.* Eds. SkariaSkana et al. Kottayam: Current Books, 1999, 181-194.

Naregal, Veena. *Language Politics, Elites and the Public Sphere: Western India Under Colonisation.* New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001.

Omvedt, Gail. "Unfair Label." *The Hindu.* 13. 2- 2000, 10.

P.K. Kunhikrishnan Nair. "Malamadkkukalil Oru Theerthadanam." ("A Pilgrimage in the Hills"). *Discover Wayanad: The Green Paradise.* Kalpetta: District Tourism Promotion Council, 1995.

Panikkar, Chitra. "Articulating an Identity: The Autobiographical 'We'".Paper presented at the International Seminar.*Identities: Local and Global* Forum for Contemporary Theory. Shillong, December, 2002.

Panoor. K.*Keralathile America. (The America in Kerala)* Kottayam: National Book Trust, 1992.

—. *Keralathik Africa. (The Africa in Kerala.)* Kottayam: National Book Trust, 1994.

Parasher-Sen, Aloka. "Of Tribes, Hunters and Barbarians: Forest Dwellers in the Mauryan Period."*Studies in History.* 14. 2, 1999: **173-191.**

Patel, Arjun. "Hinduisation of Adivasis: A Case Study from South Gujarat." In Michael S.M. *Dalits in Modern India: Vision and Values.* New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, **1999, 186-213.**

Pickering, Michael. *Stereotyping.* The Politics of Representation. London: Palgrave. 2001.

Prakash, Virendra. "Nailing a Lie Floated by Missionaries" available online. http://ww.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/9089/Crusades/vp3/html, 14-04-**2003.**

Radhakrishna, Meena. "In Search of a Gene for History." *The Hindu.* Sunday, 11 March, **2001, 1.**

Rajagopalan, C.R. "Aboriginal Aesthetics." Vijayakumar Menon Trans. Unpublished **Paper, 1999.**

Rangarajan, Mahesh. "Polity, Ecology and Landscape: New Writings on South Asia's Past."*Studies in History.* 18. 1,2002: 135-147.

Rao, Mohan. "'Scientific' Racism: A Tangled Skein." *Economic and Political Weekly.* XXXVII 8, 2003: 697-699.

Redford, Kent H. "The Ecologically Noble Savage." *Cultural Survival Quarterly.* 15. 1, 1991: 46-48.

Rosaldo, Renato. *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1989.

Rousseau, Jean-Jaques. *The Social Contract and Discourses.* G.D. H. Cole Trans. New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1950.

Roy, Arundhati. "Scimitars in the Sun." Interview with N. Ram. Frontline. Jan 19, 2001, 4-18.

—. "You Have Blood on Your Hands." *Frontline.* March 28, 2003: 45.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient.* London: Penguin Books, 1978.

Sangari, Kumkum. "Mirabai and the Spiritual Economy of Bhakti." *Economic and Political Weekly.* 25, 27 & 28. 1990: 1537-1552.

Sashibhooshan, M.G. "Thirunelli Kshetram." ("Thirunelli Temple") *In Discover Wayanad: The Green Paradise.* Kalpetta: District Tourism Promotion Council, 1995, 85-87.

Shah, A. M. "The Tribes-So Called- of Gujarat In the Perspective of Time." *Economic and Political Weekly.* XXXVIL2,2003: 95-98.

Sidharthan, C.G. "Paranna Bhoomiyile Manushyar." ("People on the Wide Earth.") *Mathrubhoomi Azhchappathippu.* June 20-26, 1999: 20-23.

Singh, K.S. "Caste into Tribe: A Colonial Paradigm (?)" *From Tribe to Caste.* Ed. Dev Nathan. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, 1997. 31-45.

Singh, Raajan. "The Adivasis of Central and South India." Eds. Nicholas Cohn and Raajan Singh. *Indigenous Peoples of Asia: Many Peoples, One Struggle.* Bangkok: Asia Indigenous People's Pact, 1996, 61-81.

Skaria, Ajay. "Shades of Wilderness: Tribe, Caste, and Gender in Western India." *The journal of Asian Studies.* 56.3 1997: 726-745.

— . *Hybrid Histories: Forests, Frontiers and Wildness in Western India.* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Solidarity Documents. "The Brutalisation of Adivasi Women in Kerala: Another Face of Destructive Development" Unpublished ,1999.

Sreekumar, T.T and Govindan Parayil. "Democracy, Development and New Forms of Social Movements: A Case Study of Indigenous People's Struggles in Kerala." *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics.* 45. 2,2002:287-309.

Snnivas, M.N. *Social Change in Modern India.* Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1972.

Srivastava, S.C. *Indian Census in Perspective.* New Delhi: Office of the Registrar General, Ministry of Home Affairs, 1971.

Stocking Jr, George W. *Victorian Anthropology.* New York: The Free Press, 1987.

Sugathakumari. *Kavu Theendalle. (Do not Defile the Sacred Groves)* Kottayam: D.C. Books, 1998.

Sundar, Nandini. *Subalterns and Sovereigns: An Anthropological History of Bastar (1854-1996).* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997.

—. "Caste as Census Category: Implications for Sociology." *Current Sociology.* 48.3, 2000: 111-127.

Thapar, Romila, "The Image of the Barbarian in Early India." *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations.* Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1978, 152-193.

Tharu, Susie and K. Lalita. Eds. *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present.* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Tharu, Susie.

&Plenary Session. *Indian Association of Women's Studies Conference.* Hyderabad. 1999.

Thekaekara, Mari Marcel. "What Really Happened? An Account of the Sequence of Events in Muthanga Forest on February 19." *Frontline.* March 28, 2003:46-48.

Thirunelli Mahatmyam. Thirunelli Devaswom, Year and Place of Publication not given.

Thuston, Edgar. *Castes and Tribes of Southern India.* Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1975. First Published, 1909.

Tylor, Edward B. *Primitive Culture.* London: J.Murray, 1891.

Varier, Raghava M R. *Keraleeyatha: Charithramanangal. (The Essense of Kerala: Historical Dimensions)* Shukapuram: Vallathol Vidyapeedham, 1990.

Vayaleri, Kumaran. *Kurichyarude Jeevithavum Samskaravum. (The Life and Culture of Kurichiars.)* Kottayam: Current Books, 1996.

Verma, R. C. *Indian Tribes Through the Ages.* New Delhi: Publications Division, Government of India, 1990.

Vidyarthi L.P. and E.K.Rai. *Tribal Culture in India.* New Delhi: Concept Publishing, 1976.

Viswanath C.K. "Adivasis: Protesting Land Alienation." *Economic and Political Weekly.* XXXII.32, 1997: 2016.

Viswanathan, Gauri. *Masks of Conquest: Literary Studies and British Rule in India.* London: Faber and Faber, 1989.

Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language. New York: Portland House, 1989.

Weeratunge, Nireka. "Nature, Harmony and the Kaliyugaya: Global/Local Discources
on the Human-Environment Relationship." *Current Anthropology.*   41. 2, 2000:
249-268.

Wiercinski, Mateusz.   "Some Problems in the Demography of the Tribal Populations in
India." *Mankind Quarterly.* 36. 3-4, 1996: 261-270.

Wilmsen, Edwin.   *Land Filled With Flies: A Political Economy Of The Kalahari.*   Chicago:
University of Chicago Press, 1989.

Xaxa, Virginius. "Transformation of Tribes in India: Terms of Discourse." *Economic and
Political Weekly.* XXXIV. 24, 1999(a):1519-1524.

—. "Tribes as Indigenous People of India." *Economic and Political Weekly.* XXXIV. 51,
1999(b): 3289-3595.