Chapter - 1

INTRODUCTION

Post-Independent India has witnessed significant socio-cultural transformations and numerous developmental designs to bring about visible changes in the living standards of all Indian citizens, especially the backward, downtrodden and the aboriginal tribes, who are yet to see the light of the modern day world. The instances of implementation of welfare measures for the tribes have been many, although the output is rarely encouraging. In spite of the planned and well-designed schemes, the tribal folk is believed to have been living under the constant threat to their identity as socio-cultural groups as well as individuals. The social alienation suffered by them for centuries centres around their political and economic maladies and lack of a succinct will on the part of the policy makers to bring these primitive societies to the mainstream of civilised societies. In and through the social processes, Indian planners and lawmakers have involved themselves to evolve a political dynamism to suit the multifarious societies, to bring about uniform standard of law, equality and justice for all the people of India. Taking into account the ground realities in which the tribals are situated, it has not been possible to involve all of them in to the uniformity which the socio-political umbrella provides in this country under the Indian constitution.

The account of contemporary social and political dynamism in India and their appropriate cognition suggest that because of apparent differences in their origin, it may not be possible to put the diversities into a common frame of interpretation. The present account proposes to examine the above position with particular reference to select case studies involving a less known tribe from the South India. The tribe taken up here is of the Paniyan which has been inhabiting in and around Gudaiur Taluk in the Nilgiris of Tamilnadu and
Wynad District of Kerala. Paniyans of Nilgiris are included in the category of primitive tribe by Government of Tamilnadu. Paniyans in this area got freed from the bondage of slavery and started their new life either living in a Government colony specifically made to rehabilitate them or the colonies developed by NGOs. Many of them continued to stay in traditional homestead itself by the help extended initially by the Government agencies. The present study proposes to examine the political dynamics and its impact on the issues of development involving this tribe.

1.1. **BACKGROUND OF THE TRIBE**

Nilgiris, with its natural endowment of green forest and eye-catching scenic beauty has been a museum of tribal societies who have been its inhabitants from time immemorial. The Panian, Paniya, Paniyar or the Paniyan tribe⁴ is concentrated in the south of Nilgiris up to the end of Malabar region in Kerala. The word Paniyan is derived from the Malayalam word *pani*, which means wage, work or labour. This is a tribe who was working as slaves or bonded labourers till recent times. The anecdotes and stories surrounding this tribe provide some hints about the way they lived in the past. As per the unconfirmed reports, especially from the local settlers, Paniyans were earlier living in caves. In the daytime they were never seen. In the night they used to destroy the crops developed by other people in the vicinity. So people, mainly Gounders from Kongunadu⁵ and the surrounding areas caught Paniyans by laying nets and made them their slaves.⁶ In this process, for ages together the whole Paniyan family from the great grandfather to great grand sons remained tied with a particular master. These “slaves” worked hard, day and night in the master’s land, only for their sustenance.

The Paniyans are the inhabitants of Wynad and the adjacent plains of Gudalur from the earlier days. All through, they have been bonded labourers and their services have been sought after by all the landowners of Gudalur and
Wynad, for the purpose of cultivation. Thurston has enumerated this tribe as the inhabitants of Wynad who were traditionally engaged in petty jobs.\(^7\) Gopalan Nair (1911) deals with this tribe stating that they were nomadic people and agrastic slaves who were engaged in criminal activities at times.\(^8\) Previously, the forest land was available in plenty which the tribal people never tried to own for themselves. Since all the forest land was under their disposal, they never had an idea to have their own place for themselves. With the advent of the settlers, the same tribals became the slaves in their own land. For very survival, they became dependent on their masters and had to suffer in the worse conditions like any other slaves. Later on, when large scale non-tribals migrated and occupied the land, the ignorant and innocent Paniyans had to work for them as labourers. In due course of time,\(^9\) the forest has been almost converted to tea and coffee plantations and Paniyans have lost their old habitat and had compromised to live with the present conditions. The nomadic nature of this tribe is yet another reason why Paniyans never tried to own a patch of land for themselves. Traditionally, they never tried to stick to one place. According to tribal practices of shifting cultivation, for a few years they put up a hut in the place in the jungle and made use of the land for the purpose of cultivation and later on, it was left fallow for a few years after shifting to another place. In this process, they used to move about from one place to another. Even after becoming bonded labourers, they continued the same practice of shifting from place to place as they used to escape from one master to another. Giving a few details about this tribe, Professor. A. Aiyappan (1988) states:

The Paniyas were actually agrastic slaves, bought and sold with the land, to which they were attached as slave labourers. Since slavery, in any form, is now an offence, the Paniyas are theoretically free persons; but their freedom is even now limited by hard economic conditions under which they live.\(^{10}\)
Physical Anthropologists view that Paniyans are a type of Western Malids in the larger group of Veddid or Proto-Australoid. The Paniyans also show some amount of similarity with Negritoid Onge of Andaman Islands. As per physical structure, Paniyans are mostly short statured and black complexioned people. The specialty as observed in this tribe is that they are rarely bald.

1.2. Paniyans and Slavery

The conditions in which the Paniyans were living for ages in and around Gudalur would give an idea about the perpetuation of slavery in that area. Before the abolition of Slavery by the British in 1843, the Paniyans were bought and sold at the market places or temple fairs. Buchanan has enumerated some interesting facts about slavery in Kerela, though he has not emphasised on the state of Paniyans as bonded labourers. Under the old system, the Paniyans were owned by their masters (usually called as Pappans) for the agricultural purposes, bought and sold with the land. Once this food-gatherer tribe was enslaved, they were never again being able to recover from slavery. With the advent of the British, and the introduction of the commercial plantation in the hills the scenario of slavery changed. Initially, a few of Paniyans were employed in the plantation activities but later on when planters brought large number of workers, skilled and unskilled, from outside, the Paniyans were reverted back to their old masters.

After Independence, the state of recruitment of labour for the estates was different and the agents, appointed by the estate management, used to get the Paniyans to work in the estates for a pittance amount of wage, much less than the normal wage given to other workers. At times, they used to give a little money as advance and make them work till the amount is repaid as wages. As the innocent Paniyans have no idea about the calculation, most of the times they were taken for a ride and exploited. Because of their ignorance and
illiteracy, the petty traders too cheat them and keep them under perpetual debt by which the cycle of taking advances and getting into bonded slavery continues right under the nose of the Government machinery. Thus, for generations, they have been exploited socially and economically by money lenders, private traders and other commission agents due to insufficient institutional arrangements in the field of credit, marketing and distribution. Because of these laxities on the part of the system as a whole and lack of proper policies there is alienation of land and bonded slavery for these innocent children of the mother nature.¹⁷ Not that there were no attempts from the Governmental and Non-Governmental agencies, but most of the times the projects designed for them do not yield the expected results. There have been a lot of endeavours to elevate the living standards of this tribe in Kerala and Tamilnadu. In 1976, the Kappala Paniya project was formed by the Government of Tamilnadu to redeem a few of these bonded labourers and make them settle down at a few settlements established by the Government. Subsequently, one Kotagiri based NGO called Nilgiri Adivasi Welfare Association (NAWA) took up to rehabilitate these bonded labourers and they have launched a project to habilitate Paniyans at Kayunni near Cherambadi.¹⁸

The independence of the country from the British had no impact on the social life of Paniyans as they continued to depend on the private employers and have been reeling under the pressure of poverty, hunger and deprivation. The Paniyans still remain slaves to the modern democratic and bureaucratic system even though they are free inhabitants of an independent country, which they hardly know.¹⁹

1.3. EXPLORING POLITICAL DYNAMICS.

The reality as understood by the term "politics" defies a precise definition. The term "dynamics of politics" has been used to indicate the driving force instrumental in processing a change or progress in a given
society. The word "dynamics" is used to indicate this changing situation inherent in the process of progressive motion as a desired end in political and social planning and operation. The chief idea is to explain the social situation objectively enunciating an idea of transformation through politicisation process as visible in a tribal society in its changing modes or a political dynamism and churn out the impediments for the proper implementation of the developmental designs. Accordingly, the study is based on a micro level explanation of the ethnographic situation which shows the inner dynamism not efficacious enough to corroborate with the present-day planning and execution.

Though Paniyans for ages have been bonded labourers, after the abolition Act they came together to form their present status either by the Government support or by the enterprises by the NGOs. At some places they have tried to get united and started living together with their traditional set up rallied to the support of their own clan and tribes with absolute loyalty to the headman. Such examples are the villages where Paniyans live in their own land and each family, apart from wage earning, is engaged in tilling his own land. But the traditional set up is slowly giving way to modernity and traditional leadership is overtaken by the modern and dynamic leaders. Eventually, political dynamism brings about factionalism among the tribe resulting in deterioration of the office of the traditional headman in the society. It is mainly because of the interference of the outside political forces and party polity which disturbs the existing norms of a society. The adoption of modernisation, has mixed results as on the one hand, it makes the tribe understand its rights and privileges and on the other, takes them away from their traditional ways of living in amity which creates the initial tension and ends in creating new leaders and societal set up. This change was not always for the better and in certain aspects it was decidedly for the worse as in the field of song and dance which were shunned in view of their new faith.
On the developmental front, the political upheavals in the country after the British rule and influences of capitalistic democracy have been detrimental to any socialistic pattern of development. By bidding good-bye to many indigenous political units at community and social level, the politicians in power have adopted various western models of development and tried out various ways of their implementation with all eagerness to have instant results. The outcome is not always encouraging as a uniform standard is never sufficient to bring about desired results in a multi-formed society. Most of the times, the policy makers and the planners remained quite unaware of the living conditions of the people who live in inaccessible areas, and developmental designs made by the political agencies hardly met with the desired ends. Most of the tribal communities have become victims of this political mechanism and are subjected to the worst living conditions of poverty, deprivation and death.

This present work is intended to contribute to the knowledge of the Paniyan indigenous political institutions, which are basically on the verge of extinction perhaps due to modernisation. In order to make a detailed study of the traditional Paniyan political unit and the part played by the Paniyan in the modern democratic set up, awareness and development details, one has to deal with the family, settlement life, and of the customary laws and such other related things. These factors are so closely knitted to each other that finally it leads towards the understanding of different political units, their objectives, roles and the like. The customs, laws and ancient cult of even the unlettered ones are full of political meanings and implications. The proverbs and household phrases of the poor, the songs of the labourers, the speech of the laymen are pregnant with intricate meanings from which, the doings and undoing of Paniyans are easily understood.

Today imitation and imposition of the modernity is so common that, it is feared that Paniyans are on the brink of losing their distinctiveness
altogether. So it is high time that a detailed and serious study of 'Paniyan politics' both traditional and modern is undertaken as it is changing very rapidly and the younger generation under the pressure of outside forces tend to be away from the wisdom of their ancestors, so that, valuable customs, traditions and political institutions are all being negligently allowed to slip into oblivion.

1.4. REVIEW OF THE PAST ATTEMPTS

The Indian as well as Western scholars have evinced significant interest on Tribal Studies from the beginning of this century. The past three decades have seen a sprout of research studies and publications on different aspects of tribal studies in India. Most of these studies have been concerned with most important aspects of ethnographic and demographic details of a tribe which was not very well-known or certain developmental issues concerning them. The complexity of the Tribal situation in different parts of the country has forced the Central and State governments to appoint Commissions from time to time to study the issues and make necessary recommendations for their welfare. Some others however tried to study the tribal communities from the perspectives of culture and social change. These are mostly micro studies of specific tribal communities concerning their peculiar habits and behavior. Thurston (1909) has given a detailed account of all the tribes of South India and in that he has touched upon Paniyan habits and customs along with other ethnographic details. Gopalan Nair (1911) and P.K. Nambiar (1964) again dealt with the demographic details of this tribe and also made a study of their state of bonded labourer. The other studies like that of A.A.D. Luiz, P. Hockings and L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer have dealt with the tribe from different angles.

The most important monograph on this topic is authored by A. Aiyappan (1992) which gives detailed analysis of history, state of slavery,
social behavior and the like. The study is based on Aiyappan's empirical data which he collected way back in 1940. However, he concentrated on the Paniyans of Wynad and the report shows the state of this tribe in 1940 and inhabiting in Wynad. The study has been published in 1992 and titled as "Paniyas of Wynad." In one of his articles Aiyappan has expressed his apprehension about the existence of any political institution in Paniyan society. He says:

Considering the extremely simple culture to which the Paniyans have attained, and the lack of differentiation into economic and professional classes it is no wonder that they have no political or legal institution of any but the vaguest nature.  

In fact, it is not the case at present as far the Paniyans are concerned. In the context of present day living, each individual is subjected to the political dimension of the state he is living in, directly or indirectly which determines his rights and duties and opens up the possibility of participation in the system. In a democratic set up like India, this aspect of political participation is mutual as far as the people who are governed and the Government is concerned. This is also the case with the Paniyans even though they have not relished the fruits of democracy and made their participation meaningful in the political set up of the country.

In an attempt to evolve an interdisciplinary approach it is important here to mention a few academic endeavours where the politics, social change and development are synthesised in a tribal context. As far Political Anthropology is concerned, the works of E.E. Evans Pritchard (1940) and George Balandier (1972) are very pioneering works. The Politics and Social Change of F.G. Bailey is significant in the sense that apart from dealing with the politics in the tribal context, Bailey charts out a methodology for other researchers in the field. The study by P.K. Bhoumick "Rural and Tribal Development Practices in India" has been a landmark addition to the
developmental Anthropology. The accounts given by Deogankar (1992) and S.C. Dube (1990) serve as definite models for analysis of developmental issues concerning tribal societies.

N.K. Gupta (1963) and Oddvar Hollup (1994) have contributed significantly to the understanding of bonded labourers in the tea estates and analyse the problems confronted by the workers in those areas. *Tribal Development and its Administration in India* by L.P. Vidyarthi (1981) tries to get a general picture of the synthesis of Politics and development in Tribal world and contributes to the understanding of the political processes involved in the developmental issues. *Ethnic Minorities in the Process of Development* by Jagannath Pathy examines the multiplicity of forces responsible for ethnic dynamics and their impacts on developmental ethos. A recent publication edited by Vidyut Joshi (1998) *Tribal Situation in India: Issues on Development* is a collection of a few essays which throws much light to the issue of tribes, the apathetic attitude of the policy makers and the possible ways to rectify the problems. *The Tribal Situation in India* edited by K.Suresh Singh brings out the research scenario on tribal studies in a single volume. Needless to say that it is one of the most important works which deals with topics like tribal ethnography, politics, development and the like based on empirical data. One more work worth mentioning in this regard is *Continuity and Change in Tribal Society* edited by Mrinal Miri which is a valuable supplement to the tribal studies. The collected articles deal with the problems of equity, equality and elite formation in the tribal societies and enlist the suggestion for a sustainable development of tribes in India.

Excepting the monograph of Professor A. Aiyappan on the Paniyans, none of the scholars to my knowledge, deals with this tribe with a major emphasis or thrust area of his research work. Though a few piecemeal treatments are available on different aspects of the Paniyans of Wynad, none
deals with the political aspect of this tribe at a micro level. As far as the Paniyans are concerned, the scenario in Wynad and the adjacent Gudalur (of Tamilnadu) are almost the same since there is no geographical barrier between both the Paniyan habitats. The specialty of this study is that it attempts to highlight the Paniyan situation in Gudalur at the backdrop of Tamilnadu politics.

1.5. Objectives of the Study

The aim of the thesis is to record the changing scenario of the Paniyans who have interesting indigenous political institutions for their society. This study aims at recording that system before it disappears completely. All changes are not necessarily for the better and this researcher is of the view that there are many things in the old Paniyan method of administration which could and should be retained and used in the new administrative set up of Paniyan settlements. In the present empirical and exploratory study, an attempt has been made to investigate the socio-political organisations among the Paniyans. The study also depicts their ethnographic situation which prevents them from having the basic understanding of the political situation of the state they live in and explains their non-participation in the system. This results in their absolute indifference to the state machinery, even though they are supposed to be the beneficiaries of the various schemes made by the Government for their welfare. Further, this study attempts to probe into the politicisation process and examine its impact on the development of the Paniyans.

The main objectives of this study may be specified as follows:
1. To study the Paniyan ethnography at the back drop of tribal situation in Tamilnadu and developmental designs meant for them.
2. To analyse the role of political organisation as a social control mechanism.
3. To study the Paniyan participation in the modern political set up.
4. To evaluate the major political elements traditionally inherent in this society and their leadership pattern.

5. To evaluate the impact of the welfare programmes provided by Governmental and Non-Governmental agencies.

1.6. **The Perspective: Political and Developmental**

An overview of the problems discussed here would reveal that there are three distinct perspectives in the very approach to the study of the Paniyan political dynamism and the constraints faced in the developmental processes.

(a) The present empirical situation of the Paniyans as an essential tool for explicating the social reality is to be taken up to establish its relations with other political and developmental factors. Only that ethnographic reality which efficiently relates and incorporates the developmental dimensions and their challenges are to be investigated properly.

(b) Politics as an inevitable wing of any society and is a lead factor for the promotion or obstruction of any socio-developmental designs, is to be analysed as applicable in case of a tribal framework. This perspective also gives the researcher an idea of distribution of power and leadership for a smooth running of any society. The schemes of development always get anointed by the politics and political will of the society and the present study may explicate socio-political paradigm of the Paniyan society.

(c) The paradigmatic relation between development as a significant phenomenon and political behavior of the society at the micro level is to be observed in the case of Paniyans who are in a transitional phase. The situatedness of a tribe like Paniyan may not accept all the amenities that the modern developmental ethos could contemplate of. Hence, certain compromises are to be incorporated in the schemes itself which will be effectively appropriate to the holistic growth and development of tribes. In this sense, this study may be considered politico-developmental.
1.7. Interdisciplinary Research - A Perspectival Need

In approaching a topic involving different social dimensions and touching upon the boundaries of various disciplines, it is significant to come out of a particular research design and interact with other frameworks for proper understanding and analysis. This study gives us a sample of interaction with various disciplines of social sciences like Politics, Economics, Sociology and Anthropology. Without such an approach, it may not be possible to investigate into all aspects of a society like Panjians. It is not a question of complexity of analysis which matters here, rather it is complementary of sister disciplines to evolve a better analysis and theorisation. Corroborating this idea, Professor Brown, in his elaborate Preface to African Political Systems states:

In the study of the simpler societies, the anthropologist finds the concepts and theories of political philosophers or economists are unserviceable or insufficient. They have been elaborated in reference to societies of a limited number of types. In their place, the social anthropologist has to make for himself theories and concepts which will be universally applicable to all human societies and guided by these, carry out his work of observation and comparison.24

Thus any approach to return to such macro and micro studies, with some thought and planning, different disciplines can be made use of to support and strengthen each other. Correlates and generalisations derives from macro studies may be examined in depth in micro studies to find out if they are the outcome of real interactions or only the accidental juxtapositions of unrelated events. Professor M.N. Srinivas advocates such an approach and pleads for the idea that the students, apart from getting good knowledge in research methodology and statistics, should also study at least one of the allied subjects like economics, political science and history. Without such an exercise and groundwork, he feels that the very talk about interdisciplinary research which is both fashionable and attracting is a waste of time.25
1.8. **Sources and Method of Inquiry**

The present researcher while writing about Paniyans of Nilgiris tries to reflect on field based empirical data which she collected during her field visits to the Paniyan lands several times. The reasons for not getting the exact data at one instance are many. There is no authentic source for obtaining the history of the Paniyans. The records of births and death of Paniyans are very rare as they lack any modern exposure. Traditions, history, culture and literature have been preserved orally, which younger generations can not picture out mostly and hence most of the time I had to depend upon the data I gathered from the elderly Paniyan folks.

Initially, an interview schedule had been developed and tested for its validity among a few households. Based on the experience gained from the pilot study, it was decided not to use schedule as it did not fit to the tribal situation like Paniyans. The researcher tried to collect census data from each household of the settlements taken up for this research purpose. In addition, other methods such as informal interviews and non-participant observation have been carried out among some of the key-informants to explore information relating to their day to day activities, their reaction towards Government welfare schemes, elected representatives, electoral as well as their decision making process. The case studies of various crimes and punishments from a few members of the sample have been collected to understand their participation in the police system and judiciary. Apart from that, data relating to the last Panchayat election was collected to see the participation and reaction of Paniyans to the electoral process and other related themes. While collecting data relating to Paniyans in various aspects the researcher has taken special care to see the development in social, economical, educational, health and various other fields to a great extent. Gradually no elder Paniyan whom this researcher happened to meet was spared. Information thus collected was
compared, checked and rechecked till it gave some satisfaction with its validity.

To supplement the primary data gathered, secondary data from various libraries, institutions such as schools, hospitals, Post office, Village administrative office, Government project office, Non-Governmental Organisations, Panchayat office, Block office, Tahasildar office and Police station were collected. Details of Land holdings, demographic particulars, educational status, occupational aspects etc., were also gathered. Observations on family life, social life and life at work site were made. Interviews were held with social workers belonging to Paniyan tribe, other neighbouring and non-tribals of the area and officers working in the tribal development departments. The study, apart from dealing with Political dynamism, probes into the details regarding the settlement of disputes by the Paniyans both at their family and societal level, the part played by the Paniyan men and women in the subsistence economy, the problem they face in getting education and the like.

1.9. Selecting this Tribe and the Sample Design

In selecting Paniyan tribe for my research study, I considered certain aspects of this tribe to be very important. Firstly, this tribe is still primitive and secondly hardly any work has been carried out (especially in Tamilnadu) by the researchers. Thirdly, my intention has been also directed to probe into the living conditions of this previous slave tribe in the present day world which is of some interest to the social scientists.

Hence, I thought a holistic approach to the study of this tribe will bring about certain unknown things and make us aware as to how to handle tribal situation in general and the Paniyan situation in particular to improve their lot. Since Erumad village of Gudalur Taluk has a concentration of the Paniyan population, I selected the village for my study. This part of Gudalur Taluk is well connected by motorable road which in turn helps the people to have an
easy accessibility to the village. This study focuses on the traditional as well as modern political organizations of the Paniyans, who are engaged in wage labour and other related activities. The number of Paniyan settlements in Erumad village, of Gudalur is estimated to be twenty two. After the initial survey of the area, the settlements have been sampled randomly for the study, which later on was divided into three different groups. (A) Government Paniyan Colony. (B) NGO promoted Paniyan colony and(C) Traditional Paniyan colony, where people hold small patch of land, which they have either inherited or it has been allotted by the government. In NGO colony, the Paniyans work as wage labourers in the tea estates promoted by them to rehabilitate Paniyans. In Government Paniyan colony, people do not own any land but work as labourers in the tea estate promoted and developed by the Government of Tamilnadu. In order to have different types of variables, I have taken two Government Paniyan colonies, Two NGO based Paniyan colonies and four more traditional Paniyan settlements for this research work. In Traditional settlements, Paniyans own small patches of land in which they grow crops apart from working for other farm owners for wage. I decided to take up three variables in selecting the settlements like Government based, NGO based, and traditional settlements. I found in whole of Erumad village, there are only two Paniyan Government colonies consisting of 49 households together. As far as NGO based settlement is concerned, it was noticed that, there are only two Paniyan colonies coming under this category, which consist of about 46 households. As the number of households invariably in traditional land owning settlement is very less, I intended to take up as many settlements, which will almost equalize the number of households in NGO and Government based settlements, which I could get in 4 settlements. Different types of settlements were chosen to see the difference of life style, economic condition, acculturation process, awareness among the community, participation in politics and the like.
The Erumad village comes under the Cherambadi Panchayat union in Gudalur taluk of Nilgiris. Before approaching the tribe, this researcher did have a little apprehension whether the Paniyan tribe will co-operate with a research endeavour like this or not. It was because an active member of a particular NGO at Gudalur reported this researcher that the tribal people were not cooperating with the researchers by then. But to my utter surprise, the first man I approached in the bus stop after alighting was a Paniyan, who got me contacts with other Paniyans in his settlement as well as Paniyans living in surrounding areas. His answers were very specific. This gave me an idea about the behaviour of the Paniyans and it was just the contrary of what my NGO friend told me. While talking to the person, I noticed many people who were present in the settlement, especially old people, children and some of women surrounded and glanced at me with muse and suspicion about my arrival there. From their look, I could infer that they enjoyed strangers coming to their settlement. All of them replied very politely to my queries. I told my purpose of coming to the settlement and visiting them and made it very clear that I could not promise anything for them. They too readily accepted to co-operate with me in my mission. They expressed their grief and agony by saying that many people like me visited and promised many things to them and disappeared. My interpreter, who had a little exposure with the tribes, cautioned me not to take out any notes and photographing items in the initial days before establishing very good rapport with the tribe. But within a few days I became very friendly with them. In this particular settlement, as it is a part of the Government Paniyan project, the people are immuned to the presence of the Government officials and thus I did not have any problem encountering them and in subsequent data collection.

The same is the case with the Kattadu Government colony and Paniyan Rehabilitation farm (PRF colony, Kayummi) established by the NGO called
Nilgiri Adivasi Welfare Association (NAWA) having its headquarters at Kotagiri. The traditional settlements like Onnimula and Kollanvayal, which are neighbouring settlements to the village Erumad, have got the accessibility of Government representatives and others as approaching the settlements is not very difficult. These Paniyans who have little exposure, do not hesitate to interact with any strangers coming into the settlement. Moreover the news of arrival of a new person in their settlement spreads so quickly that Paniyans, those who are in near by vicinities come over to interact with the stranger.

On the other hand, this researcher noticed that the people from the other settlements where a few of them own lands are comparatively less exposed to the outside world. In Manalvayal, during the field visit, different ways were tried out to establish some rapport with the people. The tribals in that settlement were suspicious about the presence of outsiders and when approached they chased away their children into their home and never responded. In the following days, the data collection was done in different ways and through various other sources. For this, this researcher had to visit the institutions like primary and secondary schools, health centers etc., where it was possible to collect recent data, especially census of the settlement from the Government records. After collecting the census data, it was checked up with their neighbours, the settlers, who have encroached upon Paniyan lands and settled there. The checked data were cross checked by going to the families and by then the Paniyans cooperated with the researcher as by then they were convinced about the fact that the whole exercise was not going to be detrimental to their interests. Though Onimulla and Kollanvayal and Mooyilnoola are three traditional settlements like Manalvayal, interaction with people there is a bit easier as these settlements are well connected with the Erumad village and situated within a radius of two kilometers. Manalvayal traditional settlement is 6 kilometers away from the Erumad village and
moreover, in this settlement, households are not lying in one or two rows. These are scatteringly situated in a high level which leads to the paddy field. For the above mentioned reason, the Government officials found it difficult to survey and look in to problems faced by the Paniyans here and the welfare schemes have not reached these places. On the whole, Paniyans are not an aggressive type like other tribes and quite friendly and hospitable lot to the outsiders. But the past memories and present situation of suppression do not permit them to have normal interaction with others.

1.10. **STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS**

The thesis comprises of seven chapters. Each chapter further consists of several sub-headings. The chapters are as follows:-

The Introduction outlines the research problem and gives the historical background of the Paniyan tribe. It also clarifies the objectives of the thesis and deals with the methodology adopted for the research investigation.

Chapter Two offers the socio-cultural context of the Paniyans with the details of Paniyan settlements taken up for this study. It discusses the identity of the tribe along with the demographic details and specific religious and cultural ethos.

Chapter Three deals with the organisation of clan, lineage, family and other social organisations. It discusses the eroding nature of the clan and its distribution in each of these settlements. This chapter also throws light on the settlement organisations.

Chapter Four discusses Paniyan polity and governance, traditional and modern. Since it is a tribe consisting of agrestic labourers distributed in different places, mostly as bonded labourers, earlier there was no visible political organisation among them. Nevertheless, they had their way of choosing the leader and maintaining the order in their society. In the advent of
colony life and implementation of governmental programmes to uplift the tribe from their earlier state of being, their political life is no more the same as it was earlier. Because of the democratic set up, there is a visible change in the leadership pattern and problems of adjustment with modernity. This chapter also deals with the participation of the Paniyans in the elections and their political awareness.

Chapter Five deals with the developmental activities initiated by the Cherangode Panchayat of the Gudalur Taluk and the ways of their execution. The response of Paniyans to the developmental issues like housing and rehabilitation, health, sanitation and education are taken up for discussion. It also shows the indispensable link between politics and development. This chapter also examines the tribal participation in local politics and new leadership pattern emerging in this area.

Chapter Six enumerates the constraints of development. In spite of the several schemes evolved by the Government and NGOs to raise the living standards of the Paniyans, most of them have not achieved their expected goals. Lack of general awareness and the exploitation of the caste settlers are among the factors responsible for inadequate implementation of the developmental schemes. On the part of the Government too, there is lack of ground knowledge of Paniyan reality and their needs. The constraints along with case studies are taken up in this chapter.

Chapter Seven critically evaluates the contribution made in this study and outlines certain suggestions for the policy makers to look into before designing the developmental schemes for the Paniyans.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The word Tribe is used for a 'socially cohesive unit associated with a territory, the members of which regard themselves as politically autonomous. (Mitchel, 1979:232) Often a tribe possesses a distinct dialect and distinct cultural traits. The term primitive tribe was often used by Western Anthropologists to denote a primary aggregate of peoples living in a primitive or barbarous conditions under a headman or a chief (Encyclopedia of Social Sciences Vol.15). Various Anthropologists define Tribe as a people at earlier stage of evolution of society. This gave a sort of moral tone that the tribal are yet to develop and become civilised. It is because of this that they were also known as primitive barbarous or aboriginal people. This sort of moralistic overtone was later on reduced by using the terms like pre-state society, pre-literate society or a simple society. All these terms with evolutionary approach indicate that the tribal are backward in comparison to other advanced groups. In this direction, Tribal development means a transformation from pre-state to a state society, from simple to complex society and the like. (Refer Tribal Situation In India Issues In Development, Ed. by Vidyut Joshi, Rawat Publication, New Delhi, 1998)

2. The Government of India has a special Ministry for Tribal Development and numerous Non- Governmental agencies work for the betterment of the Tribes by the aid received from Government and International agencies.

3. The terms like Panian, Paniya, Paniyan, Paniyar are used to denote this tribe which is different from Pallians staying in Kolli Hills and a few other places. As per Government records, it is one of the six primitive tribes living in the forests of Nilgiris. They have been declared primitive as they have very low social status and use old methods of livelihood. In this thesis the word Paniyan is used as it is found to be phonetically nearer to the way the term is used to denote this tribe.

4. In his Prefatory note to his book The Paniyas of Wynad, Professor A.Aiyappan has expressed his apprehension whether Paniyans can be treated as a tribe as there is no sociological case for treating them as a tribe. Dr. Hutton, in the 1931 census, followed Baines (Census Report of 1891) but substituted the term "primitive tribes" for "forest tribes." It may be recorded here that it was G.S. Ghurye who did not accept the category of "tribe" for forest tribes. Ghurye, G.S., The Aboriginals-"so-called"-and their Future, Gokhle Institute, Pune, 1963. p.7

5. Kongumadu is the area which at present includes Erode, Coimbatore and the nearby areas. In earlier days it was covered with thick forests and till the period of Tipu Sultan, the area was not developed properly.

8. C.Gopalan Nair (1911.104).

9. With the advent of the British, the idea of planting tea and coffee in and around Nilgiris was mooted and they cleared large areas of forests for plantation purposes. In early 18th century, this was taken up more rigorously and local tribes were employed for this purpose.


11. Thurston says that an average Paniyan is short in stature well built with dark face and broad nose. The physical features have led to erroneous contention that they are supposed to be of African origin. Nothing definite is known about their origin, but stories to the effect that the frightened Paniyans used to call out "ippir" and "ippir" which refer to Ippimala or Kaperi in the African region about which the Paniyans themselves are ignorant. Thurston, 1909. Another version about the origin of Paniyans is that they belong to Ippimala hill, which no one in Wynad would locate and is said to be somewhere near the Tamaracherry
Ghat, and they lived like savage tribes in caves and thick forests, destroying paddy crops in the night and were caught by nets and domesticated to attend to the errands of land owners. (Gopalan Nair, Census of India, 1961)

12. Aiyappan and Thurston have recorded their findings to this effect. But in my field study, I have come across a few persons who are bald. Aiyappan has also checked up a few sample of Blood to find out that majority of them have 'A' blood group.

13. Buchanan (1807:866-872)

14. For details of Slavery and the tribals of Nilgiris, refer Thurston, Ethnographic Notes in South India, p. 441-463


16. Professor Aiyappan records the existence of a slave market at Manontoddy in Wynad way back in 1940. In the month of April the Patnas gather in a Temple precincts where the exchange of labourers took place.

17. A similar picture is presented by Oddvar Hollup on Tamil Plantation workers in Srilanka. For details refer Bonded Labour, p.138.

18. The Non-Governmental Organisation called Nilgiri Adivasi Welfare Association is having its head quarters in Kotagiri and they have taken up the Kayunni Paniyan Rehabilitation farm for the upliftment of Paniyan Tribe.


20. Aiyappan gives some references to Gudalur Paniyans, though he has not made any special attempt to study them separately. Since Gudalur is adjacent to Wynad, the ethnographic details would not be visibly different.

21. Tribal Culture and Tribal Welfare, p 103


