CHAPTER - 3

A BRIEF PROFILE OF PERIYAR TIGER RESERVE AND ITS TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

In this chapter we consider the tribal communities of PTR and their current situations. Before we go into their details we shall have a brief account of the physical - geographical area of PTR.

LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE

The Periyar Tiger Reserve is situated on the Western Ghats (9°15’ to 9°40’N latitude and 76°55’ to 76°25’ E longitude). It has a total boundary length of about 220kms, of which the northern and eastern boundary follows the Kerala-Tamil Nadu interstate border along the crest-line for 90 kms. The actual forest area of PTR is 777 Sq.kms which includes Periyar Lake Reserve, Rattendon Valley and Mount Plateau Reserves. The Forest Divisions of Theni, Srivilliputhur Grizzled Giant Squirrel Sanctuary and Tirunelvely abutting the Tiger Reserve on the Tamil Nadu side, fall in Theni, Ramnad and Tirunelvely Districts respectively. On the Kerala Side, it is bordered on the south by Ranni
Division falling in Pathanamthitta District and on the west, by Kottayam Division falling in both Kottayam and Idukki Districts.\(^{27}\)

Periyar Tiger Reserve is surrounded by forests of the neighbouring Divisions. Large estates and uninhabited private lands touch small portions of the inter-state boundary in Theni Division. Only a few settlements in Ranni Division lie on the boundary but a number of habitations and large estates in Kottayam Division fall along the western boundary of the Tiger Reserve. The estates in Tamil Nadu lying close to the border also fall within the ecological boundaries of PTR and deserve special attention.\(^{28}\) Downton Estate or Pachakkanam, sandwiched between PTR and Ranni division, is the only private holding in an extensive stretch of forests and it is a permanent corridor for animal movement. The internal boundaries include Pathanamthitta – Idukki District boundary. There are 2 roads that pass through the Reserve. They are Kumily – Thekkady road and Vallakkadvu-Kakki road.

**GEOLOGY, ROCK AND SOIL**

Rocks are crystalline and of plutonic origin. The underlying rock formation consists mainly of granites. Laterite occurs at the lower


\(^{28}\) Ibid - p.5
reaches of the reserve. In higher altitudes the soil is coarse with large amount of quartz gravel formed from crystalline rock. The soil is acidic in nature\textsuperscript{29}.

Periyar Tiger Reserve has an undulating terrain with a chain of rolling hills and forested valleys, extending towards the west into Mount Plateau at an average elevation of about 1200m. From the edge of the plateau the land falls steeply to the forested traits of Sabarimala Hills in the Pampa River basin. On the northern side of the lake, the hills rise up to the State boundary to fall sharply into the Cumbam Valley except along the north – east where it is narrowly linked with the Highways of Theni Division. From the Highways, the hilly ridge arches around the head of the Varushanad Valley meet the highest peak, Kottamala. South of Kottamala all along the eastern boundary, the thickly forested slopes rise gradually up to the border ending up in a saw – tooth like formation of peaks and passes dropping abruptly towards the plains of Tamil Nadu. A high ridge with prominent peaks separates the upper catchments of Pampa. The lowest elevation is 100m at Pampa Valley, and most of the area lies between 750m-1500m.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid. p.11
RAINFALL PATTERN AND DISTRIBUTION

The Periyar Tiger Reserve receives two Monsoons, South-west monsoon and north-east monsoon. Roughly two thirds of the total rainfall occurs during the South West monsoon between June and September. The north-east monsoons normally occur during October-November. The annual figures vary from a recorded 5000mm near Peermedu on the Western rim of the Reserve to an average of 1700mm at Thekkady. The wettest month is July and the driest is January. Generally the period from December to April is considered as dry season. By mid April the pre-monsoon rains set in. The minimum recorded temperature in PTR is 4°C at Pampa Valley. Thekkady has a rather salubrious climate, the temperature varying between 15°C and 31°C. Generally for the Tiger Reserve, April - May is the hottest and December - January is the coolest. Lowest humidity prevails during the dry months of February - April. The dew formation during December – January keeps the vegetation green and wet. The wind velocity is maximum with the onset of the south west monsoons and on high elevation, wind velocity is stronger.
WATER SOURCES

The artificial Periyar Lake formed in the year 1895 covers an area of 26 Sq.kms, leads to the colonization by Natural vegetation and formation of vayals\(^\text{31}\) and it offers ideal habitat for the rich flora and fauna. There are four major perennial rivers in PTR, viz. Periyar, Mullayar, Pampa and Azhutha. Pampa and Azhutha partially dry up in peak summer. The marshes and streams on the grassy hill tops around the lake also dry up. The water level in the lake fluctuates between a maximum of 46m to the minimum of 32m. A number of bunds, check-dams and artificial pools have been made, which hold water even during peak summer. Water is available throughout the year but deficiency in the north east monsoons or absence of summer rains foster conditions of dryness. Water sources are used by a large number of Pilgrims and it is always polluted due to the seasonal pilgrimage to Sabarimala. Part of the reservoir is utilised for providing boating facilities for tourists. People as well as livestock utilise some of the water resources. The lake meets the water needs of the people of Kumily and the tribals who do fishing in some areas of the Lake.

\(^{31}\) Vayals are marshy grass lands which hold a good number of palatable grasses
VEGETATION

Typical of the Western Ghat’s bio-geographic province to which PTR belongs, the vegetation consists mostly of closed forest, dominated by tropical wet evergreen and most deciduous forests and often includes reed brakes. The following types of vegetation have been identified in the reserve (Chandrashekaran),\textsuperscript{32} are viz Tropical evergreen forests (305 km\textsuperscript{2}) and Tropical Semi evergreen forests 275 km\textsuperscript{2} (74.6%) moist deciduous forests 99 km\textsuperscript{2} (12.7%) grasslands 12 km\textsuperscript{2} (1.5%), Eucalyptus plantations 55 km\textsuperscript{2} (7.1%) and reed brakes of about 5 km\textsuperscript{2} (Asari\textsuperscript{33}). Periyar Lake forms an important aquatic ecosystem, which occupies (3.5%) of the area\textsuperscript{34}.

BIODIVERSITY VALUES

About 5000 of India’s 15,000 species of flowering plants are found in Periyar expanse of Wet Evergreen forests. More than 150 new species and 2 new genera have been described in the last 30 years (Nair and Daniel)\textsuperscript{35}. The floristic richness of the reserve is also unique. More than 50% of the entire flowering plants of Kerala and 149 species listed

\textsuperscript{32} Chandrashekaran,C, Forest Resources of Kerala: A Quantitative Assessment, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala Forest Department, , 1973.
\textsuperscript{33} Asari, P.K.S, Periyar Tiger Reserve Wildlife Management Plan, Trivandrum, Kerala Forest and Wildlife Department, 1987, p.8
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid. p.8
under various threat categories, Orchids with more than 65% are recorded from PTR. Besides the floristic richness, PTR is reported to have many of the rare and endangered species which are seen only in these areas.

In Periyar Tiger Reserve the wealth of vertebrate diversity is very rich. A total of 38 species of fishes, 16 species of Amphibians, 45 species of Reptiles, 315 species of Birds and 62 species of Mammals are recorded in the Reserve. 160 species of Butterflies and 20 species of Spiders are also recorded in the area.

The vayals and marshes covered with grasses and shrubby vegetation, grasslands spread over an area of 54Km. Grasslands are the major food source for herbivores and provide ideal habitat for species like Nilgiri tahr. The Lake with a large number of dead trees sticking out, offers ideal habitat for 2 species of otters, 23 species of water birds and 18 species of fish. The richest repositories of biodiversity are evergreen forests, occupying most of the areas in PTR. The hill forests extending beyond Mlappara upto Chokkampatti – Sundaramala slopes are rich in mammal species both in density and diversity.
HISTORY AND DEMOGRAPHY

Periyar Tiger Reserve was under the Travancore Princely State and now its area is listed in Idukki district under Peermedu Taluk, in Kumily Grama Panchayat.

The Periyar Tiger Reserve owes its name to the river Periyar which means ‘big river’ whose catchments form the major portion of the reserve. The History of Periyar Tiger Reserve is related to the construction of Mullaperiyar Dam in 1895\textsuperscript{36}. In 1899 the forests surrounding the dam were declared as reserved forests and in 1934 it became a game sanctuary (Nellikkampetty)\textsuperscript{37}. In 1950 the Periyar Wild Life Sanctuary came into existence which subsequently became the Periyar Tiger Reserve in 1978\textsuperscript{38}. In 1982 the core zone area was declared as a National Park and Project Elephant Reserve was constituted in 1991\textsuperscript{39}. For administrative convenience the area of PTR is divided into Core zone, buffer zone and tourism zone. Out of the total extent of 777 Sq.kms, 377 Sq.kms come under buffer zone and 350 Sq.km core zone and 50 Sq.km tourism zone.

\textsuperscript{36} For details see : V.S. Vijayan, et.al, \textit{Periyar Tiger Reserve; A Reconnaissance Report}, Peechi, Kerala Forest Research Institute, 1979, p.6
\textsuperscript{37} P.D. Stacey, \textit{Wildlife in India, Its conservation and controls}, Ministry of food and agriculture, Department of Agriculture, Government of India.
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Report Periyar Tiger Reserve Fringe Area Study}, School of Social Sciences, MG University, Kottayam, 1999, p.10
The Kumily Panchayat was formed on 26\textsuperscript{th} December 1953. The name Kumily is supposed to be derived from the Malayalam word ‘Kumil’ which means bubble. The slushy and swampy nature of the land found almost everywhere in the Panchayat makes its name meaningful. The Kumily Panchayat is bounded by Pathanamthitta District on the south, and Tamil Nadu on the east, Chakkupallam Panchayat on the north, and Vandiperiyar Panchayat on the west\textsuperscript{40}. It is estimated at a height of 3500 – 4600 feet above from the mean sea level. The geographical area of the Panchayat is 816.73 sq.km, out of which 777sq.km form the Periyar Tiger Reserve. According to the 2001 census the total population of the Panchayat is 34558 in which 17377 are male and 17181 are female, out of which 7084 belonged to the Scheduled Castes and 1862 to the Scheduled Tribes\textsuperscript{41}.

In 1972 Idukki District was formed, which consisted of 4 Taluks namely Devicolam, Thodupuzha, Udumbanchola and Peermedu. Periyar Tiger Reserve is in Peermedu Taluk, which is one among the seven major rural centres in Idukki District\textsuperscript{42}.

\textsuperscript{40} Vikasana Report, Kumily Grama Panchayat, 2002-07, p.9.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid. p.9
\textsuperscript{42} District Hand books of Kerala – Idukki, Department of Public relations, Government of Kerala. 1998, p.45
According to the official records of the Forest Department\textsuperscript{43}, there are about 2, 25,000 people living within 2 km radius of the fringes of PTR. The population density is approximately 750 per Sq km, which is almost the same as the state average and over two and a half times more than the district average of Idukki. The population consists of 2% tribals, 27% Scheduled Castes and the remaining belong to other communities\textsuperscript{44}.

**STAKE HOLDERS**

The Population of PTR consists of a variety of stake holders among whom the tribes constitute the primary group. The other settlers who mainly inhabit on the banks of the rivers Pampa and Periyar include Scheduled Castes, other caste groups and Christians. They range from poor households of labourers and small land holders of agriculturists, who can be considered as stake holders. The Tourism Department, Hindustan News Print Ltd, Private Estates and some hoteliers cover the next category. The Devaswam Board of Travancore, the Ayyappa Pilgrims who visit the Sabarimala Temple and the Forest Department are also some of the major stake holders.

\textsuperscript{43} Project Report - *Financial sustainability: A Study of the Village Eco-Development at Periyar Tiger Reserve*, School of Social Sciences, MG University, Kottayam 2003, p.9

\textsuperscript{44} Project Report, *‘Periyar Tiger Reserve- fringe area study’*, School of Social Sciences, MG University, Kottayam, 1999, p.14
TRIBAL SETTLEMENTS

There are three major tribal settlements in the periphery of the PTR. It was in the turn of the 1950s that the Tribal Communities were trans-located from the habitation sites within the PTR\(^\text{45}\) to the following fringe area sites:

1. Labbakkandam (Near Kumily Situated on the northern edge of the PTR. The settlement occupies in all about 88.4ha, jointly for two tribes: Mannan and Paliya: Mannan 60ha and Paliya 28.4ha).

2. Vanchivayal: (on the northern edge within the buffer zone of PTR. Here the settlement of the Urali tribe occupies about 39.39ha)

3. Muzhikkal (on the western edge within the buffer zone of PTR. This is a Malayaraya settlement and it occupies about 112 ha)

Altogether there are seven tribal hamlets on the Kerala and Tamil Nadu Sides. They are Mannakudi, Paliyakkudi, Muzhikkal, Attathodu, Kosadi, Vanchivayal and Paliyakkudi (TN)\(^\text{46}\).


\(^{46}\) Of these settlements, Paliyakkudi is on the Tamil Nadu side.
HAMLETS

History of Periyar Tiger Reserve is closely linked with different tribal hamlets situated at Kumily and Vandiperiyar. The Mannans are the earliest inhabitants of Kumily Grama Panchayat followed by Paliyans. In Vandiperiyar Grama Panchayat, there is only one Urali Hamlet named Vanchivayal. The following table shows the number of hamlets at Kumily and Vandiperiyar.

**TABLE – 1- Number of hamlets at Kumily and Vandiperiyar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Grama Panchayat</th>
<th>Mannan Hamlet</th>
<th>Paliya</th>
<th>Urali</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kumily</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vandiperiyar</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Their social and economic life is deeply related to the ecology and nature around them. These tribal Communities engage in activities like fishing and the collection of forest produces such as honey, fuel wood, wax, wild pepper, roots and tubers, dammar and badraksham.
TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

The different tribal Communities of PTR are Mala Araya, Malapandaram, Paliya, Ullada, Mannan and Urali. The numeric strength of the Urali and Ullada tribes are marginal.

MALA ARAYANS

The Mala Arayan tribe is settled in different parts of the PTR fringes. Their main settlements are situated at Thadithode, Moozhikkal and Attathode. Most of them have land holdings above 2 acres. Their principal means of subsistence is cash crops agriculture mainly pepper, coffee and cardamom and the lower income group subsisted on wage labour and biomass extraction. Their literacy rate is high and is found very enterprising.

MALAPANDARAMS

The nomadic Malapandarams constitute the most primitive of all the tribes in terms of the material conditions of existence. They are

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found highly dependent on the PTR resources for their subsistence.\footnote{Ibid, p.4 see ‘Gothrasmriti’, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala Saksharatha Samithy, 1995, p.186.} They live in temporary huts made of wild palm fronds, reeds and bamboo and they move from place to place during rainy season. It is calculated that there are only 44 individuals in a few groups to live within the forests of PTR.

**PALIYANS**


**ULLADAS**

The Ullada tribe\footnote{Project Report, op cit, 1999, p.16,} in the fringes of PTR consists of 68 households and are extremely poor and subsist mainly on wage labour and biomass
extraction. This tribe forages non-timber forest produces (NTFP) such as honey, cinnamon and cardamom, both for consumption and for sale. They are the least populated tribe in PTR.

MANNANS

The Mannan⁵¹ hamlet is situated at Lebbakkandam area of Kumily in 60 Ha. They are the largest tribal group in Periyar East Forest Division and their land holdings vary between 30 cents to one and a half acres. Cultivation of cash crops like pepper, coffee and cardamom, sale of fuel wood, wage labour constitute their main means of subsistence. They depend on the forest primarily for fuel wood, thatching grass, both for their own use and for sale. Some of them supplement their income by practicing fishing in the Periyar Lake.

URALIES

The Urali\textsuperscript{52} settlement at Vanchivayal is surrounded by the Protected Areas of PTR. The main entry point to this area is via Vallakkadavu. Thankamala Estate also offers a passage to this destination. The extent of their land holdings vary from 1 to 3 acres. The marginal farmers supplement their income by wage labour and bio mass extraction. They collect fuel wood and fodder grass solely for household use. They are also enterprising and their literacy rate is very high compared to the other tribes in the study area.

SCHEDULED CASTES

There are eleven colonies of Scheduled castes in the Periyar Tiger Reserve fringes which contain seven exclusive SC colonies and four mixed colonies, either with tribals or with other castes or communities\textsuperscript{53}. The exclusive tribal colonies are Ceylon colony, Sathram Colony, Kuttikkayam, Mattupetti, Ceylon Mount, Kisumum and Plakkathadam. Mixed colonies are Moolakkayam, Kombukuthy, Kumily Gandhi Nagar


and Kuzhimavu. In Kombukuthy colony, we find both tribes and other castes. The agriculturists with small land holdings and unskilled work force constitute the SC exclusive colonies. All of them depend on forests for firewood and fodder, but their dependency on forest is less compared to others in the study area.

**NON-TRIBALS - MIGRANT SETTLERS**

One of the significant stakeholders of the PTR is the migrant settlers. The migration of the ‘mainstream’ Tamilians and Malayalies into the PTR area happened in the early and mid 20\textsuperscript{th} century. It was due to many reasons: The construction of the Mullaperiyar dam, rehabilitation of the landless under the ‘Grow more food scheme’, the conversion of forest land into Eucalyptus plantation, the practice of leasing out cardamom, construction of Kottayam-Kumily Road, resettlement of Sri Lankan repatriates, land grants to ex-servicemen, rehabilitation of the landless in the forest area, the practice of annual extraction of reeds and bamboos and the development of tourism industry\textsuperscript{54}. For their livelihood the tribal communities depended on the forest in the past and with the entrance of migrant settlers they depend on the settlers. Now almost all the settlers in the forest area are

\textsuperscript{54} Report - *Periyar Tiger Reserve, 1999* op.cit p. 23.
practising cash crop culture as the main means of subsistence. The crop includes rubber, pepper, cocoa, turmeric and ginger. Manual labour constitutes the most important subsistence base. Cattle keeping are used to be another important source of their livelihood. No group from them subsists on food from the forest and no group identifies themselves as exclusively biomass based\textsuperscript{55}.

About 30 settlements of non-tribals, evenly distributed along the fringes were created by the Government as part of the ‘grow more food’ programmes\textsuperscript{56}. There are also unauthorized immigrants infiltrated during the turn of the sixties. The settlements include lands of ex-service men, staff colonies, graziers’ settlements and households of encroachers. Since the settlers are part of the main dominant society, their outlook and aspirations are also similar to that of the dominant society. The economic status and social set up of the settlers also vary. However, they all depended on forest resources for supplementing their income.

**OTHER HABITATIONS**

There are twenty two big estates of tea and cardamom situated along the fringes in Tamil Nadu side, such as Mavadi, Vattathotti, Brook Bond (Manalar Sreenivasa) Vakikkad, Sabarigiri, Vasantha,

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid p.24.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.p.11
Vellimala, Aruna, Kottamala, Suriyankallu, Kulirati, Pachaiyar, Attokkaki, Nagarayar, Kurattivituti, Deviyar, Periyakavu, Udumputheri, Elatheri, Kalaketti and Chempakavally. The workers of these estates numbering about 10,000 families are settled in reserve fringes and also are dependants on forests for fuel wood and fodder\textsuperscript{57}.

In Kerala side also there are five major private estates. They are Mullayar, Plakkad, Wallardie, Thankamala and Mount. There are two cardamom estates owned by Kerala Forest Development Corporation in Gavi and Pamba, which situate within 5 Sq km of the reserve. There is also a private owned estate called Pachakkanam or Downton estate with an extent of 208.5ha in the reserve fringes between Ranni Forest Division and Periyar Tiger Reserve. The workmen in all these estates are negatively dependent on the forest resources. It is estimated that 57\% of the fringe area dwellers depend on Periyar Tiger Reserve for fuel wood, 28\% for thatching grass 13\% for non-timber forest produces, 1\% for poaching and 1\% on miscellaneous exploitations\textsuperscript{58}.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid. p.11-12
\textsuperscript{58} Project Report, \textit{Financial sustainability – A study of the village Eco development at Periyar Tiger Reserve}, School of Social Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, 2003, p.9.
THE FOREST DEPARTMENT

The Forest Department is an important stakeholder, which exerts impact on the PTR in the process of managing the protection and conservation of the forests. It’s managerial and surveillance infrastructures do affect the eco-system in their own ways. There are two major jeep roads, (Thekkady-Mullakkudy and Thekkady-Mangaladevi) and several trek-paths right across the core of PTR. There are four rest houses (strictly meant for official purposes) at Edapalayam, Manakkavala, Mullakkudy and Thannikkudy, three inspection bungalows (one at Anavachal, and two at Sabarimala) and Five dormitories at Vallakkadavu, Thekkady, Mullakudy, Vellimala and Sabarimala in the study area.

TOURISM

Tourism, managed both by the Department of Forest and Kerala Tourism Development Corporation, is an important stakeholder of PTR. In Kerala, Idukki district possesses the largest area under forest and have five protected areas or wildlife sanctuaries\(^{59}\) and one of the major protected areas in the district is the Periyar Tiger Reserve. The Sanctuary is divided into three zones: (1) Wilderness zone: (core zone –

35 km$^2$). The maximum animal activity is taking place in this core area. (2) Satellite Zone (Buffer Zone – 427 km$^2$). The Buffer zone includes Sabarimala and Pamba Valley where there is only minimum animal activity. The Buffer zone inhabitants are also easily provoked and these animals are the main prey of human beings. (3) Tourist Zone: (50km$^2$) Tourists are permitted in this zone. The water spread area between the boat landing and Mullaperiyar Dam form the major portion of tourist zone. The animals are very much exposed to human in this zone.

The Periyar Lake and its surrounding wilderness have been attracting both domestic as well as foreign tourists and almost doubling the number year after year. Now around four lakhs of people visit the tourist zone$^{60}$ of the PTR in a year. Tourism activities are centred at Thekkady and Kumily. Thekkady is an internationally known destination for tourism activities and Kumily is one of the major spice marketing townships in Kerala. Viewing the wildlife around the reservoir during the boat ride and the scenic beauty on the lakeshore grasslands are the major attractions of tourism in PTR. The tourist flow in Thekkady has been steadily increasing year after year. From the available data, a total of 53857 foreign tourists and 473927 Indian

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$^{60}$ There is tripartite division of The Wildlife Sanctuary of PTR into: The Core, the Buffer and the Tourist, in the Context of ecological meanings and measures. It indicates how human interference within a Reserve acquires legitimacy by demarcating zones of human activity.
tourists have visited Thekkady in 2008 and 5517 foreign tourists and 3760 Indian tourists have visited Vallakkadavu in the same year. It is estimated that the Tourists spend about Rs.34 crores annually for their visit to the Reserve.

PILGRIMAGE TOURISM

Sabarimala, the most visited pilgrimage site and Pampa, the most sacred river are in the Reserve, a globally renowned tourism destination, is an important stake holder of the PTR. Sabarimala and its surrounding forest form part of PTR and this pilgrimage centre is the seat of the deity known as Ayyappa. The Ayyappa temple of Sabarimala is situated at 471M above mean sea level in the dense jungles forming the southernmost portion of the Periyar Tiger Reserve and constitutes the largest sacred landscape in the world. It is located in Perinadu village of Ranni Taluk in Pathanamthitta District.

The unique feature of the temple of Sabarimala and its surroundings is that although they are within the protected area,
Sabarimala has developed into a small township. Such a development is mainly because of the temple that attracts millions of people every year, which is a purely religious situation.

The conservation of the PTR and the temple of Sabarimala confronts socio-economic, political, religious, ethical, and sentimental issues common to the contemporary society.

The most striking feature of Sabarimala is the phenomenal rise in the number of Pilgrim visitors and the arrival of people to engage in Pilgrim related activities. According to the survey report of Ward and Connor\textsuperscript{66} it was estimated that about 15000 pilgrims visited Sabarimala during Makaravilakku season during the second half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. During the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, it was estimated that, about 100000 pilgrims arrived there\textsuperscript{67}. We have a rough estimate about the number from the Travancore State Manual\textsuperscript{68}. This shows that there has been a phenomenal increase in the pilgrim inflow during the second quarter of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Between 2005 -2008 there is a tremendous increase in the number of pilgrims arrived here. Today this number has increased to five million. Pilgrimage to Sabarimala does not take place

\textsuperscript{66} Ward and Connor, “Geographical and Statistical memoir of the survey of Travancore and Cochin States” vols.4, Madras, 1893.

\textsuperscript{67} Nagam Aiya, “Travancore State Manual” Vol.3,Trivandrum, Govt. Of Kerala,1906 p.598

\textsuperscript{68} Velu Pillai T K, “Travancore State Manual” Vol.1, 1940, Vol.1, p.621
throughout the year, but it is restricted to a fixed number of days. The Temple is open for 133 days in a year. The season falls in the period between the middle of November to the middle of January and short spell of Pilgrimage for about a week each of Malayalam calendar months and in the month of April (Vishu) and August (Onam). The density of the pilgrim population in Sabarimala is higher than that of the visitors arrived in any of the world’s similar places of worship. During the peak season, on an average, about 70000 people congregate everyday at Sannidhanam – its coverage is little above 50 acres. The management of the pilgrimage becomes a real problem during the peak season.

The major contributing factors that influence such a phenomenal increase in the flow of pilgrims are innumerable: (1) the opening of the Vadaserikara, Chalakayam Road. (2) The publicity related to Sabarimala temple through media and the belief in the Ayyappa Cult has attracted a large number of devotees from the neighbouring States. Such popularisation of the pilgrimage transformed the activity from the status of pilgrimage to that of pilgrim tourism. Therefore Poomkavanam has become a site of intensive and extensive material production that threatens the ecological conservation.
Pilgrimage to Sabarimala Temple necessitates the pilgrims to trek a distance varying between 4 and 22 KMs depending upon the routes they choose across the forest in the PTR. With the increase in the human inflow and changed nature of pilgrimage, several developmental activities are being carried out in Poomkavanam.

A considerable amount of money flows into Kerala during the Makaravilakku season is a major source of income to the state and to the local people in the fringe areas and particularly to Kumily Town and its surrounding areas where there is a tremendous increase in the number of hotels with communication, restaurant and entertainment facilities. There are 2 inspection Bungalows at Sabarimala and one dormitory at Pampa to provide facilities to pilgrims.

**OTHER AGENCIES**

The Government agencies functioning in PTR are the officials of Travancore Devaswom Board, Tourism Department, Kerala State Electricity Board, Irrigation and Public Works Departments, District Administration and District, Block and Village Panchayats. The non-

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69 The Pampa-Sannidhanam road is an opening into the Reserve and People after their religious visit to Sabarimala, often visit-PTR and do enjoy its scenic beauty and the rich variety of flora and fauna, enables the growth of tourism in the area, the livelihood of hundreds of people depending on tourism in Periyar.

governmental organisation groups are Peermedu Development Society, Malanadu Development society, Anakkara Vikasana Samiti and SAI Mission. These agencies are also included in the list of stakeholders.

To put it in a nutshell, Periyar Tiger Reserve plays a key role in maintaining the regional connectivity that ensures seasonal migration, dispersal and genetic flow of large and medium sized mammals and birds and also supports the different tribal communities to subsist on the biomass of Periyar Tiger Reserve.

In this chapter we have discussed about the physical geographical features. It was done to situate the region, and to emphasise the ecological significance, followed by a brief account of the resource base of the area. In the specific context of PTR, with the coming of various new programmes introduced by the government, the tribals became the stakeholders in the new programmes, instead of the earlier projects that viewed tribals as target population.

PTR is a well known bio-geographical Zone, the first Ecodevelopment Project implementation centre in Kerala and the most attractive tourist centre which is inhabited by different tribal communities.
In the following two chapters we trace the history and traditions of Mannan and Urali of PTR. The Uralies are located inside the forest and the Mannans are located in the peripheral areas. In order to identify the traditional type of settlements the researcher has chosen the Urali hamlet at Vanchivayal and to understand the changes occurring as a result of the increased interaction with the non-tribals the Mannan hamlet at Kumily has chosen for the study.