Previous chapters have already shown how the absence of critical resources like land, education and social networks - an effect of larger political and economic processes - has constrained the Paniyan community in accessing the development space. Contrarily, how possession of these resources helps people belonging to settler communities to strategise in order to tilt the local power relations in their favour has also been shown. How these strategies enable them to construct livelihoods through increased horizontal level interactions and a sharing of common aspirations in the development space has also been revealed.

Nevertheless, there are strong signs of significant changes occurring in the livelihood practices within the Paniyan community as part of their struggles to survive in an extremely asymmetrical world of power relations. These changes are understood mainly in connection with the emergence of new practices hitherto alien to the livelihood experiences among a random section of Paniyas, but certainly with a potential to create a larger impact. Participation in the social movement for land, undertaking share cropping, increasing seasonal migration, the beginning of self-reliant migration to far away places and participation in the state-sponsored NREG schemes are the major instances of change with a potential to create a new resource base and capabilities for the community. Most of these new practices are neither generated in isolation nor insulated from the broader context of the local-global interpenetrations, but have intended or unintended consequences of contemporary social processes. A new quest for land and increased involvement of civic society and media organizations in the community’s livelihood issues are happening. Expanding social space of market is a pull factor in their respective migratory movements. Even NREGS is a state intervention for giving a ‘human face to globalization’ by ensuring a basic living for those who are becoming insecure in the increasingly globalised economic environment. The following sections discuss these nascent level changes.

In a Quest for Land

Social Movement for land
Burning demand for land among the Paniyas became visible at the end of the ’90s and in the early quarter of this decade. This newly found quest has been spurred on by reasons related to the economic boom and the followed distress in the village. Economic boom created a surge in production activities associated with a hike in the pepper price beyond all levels of imagination. Corresponding competition for local labour created an unprecedented and concomitant hike in labour charges also.

Paniyans in the village also got exposed to the universe of money and the possibility of converting the production on land into money in an easy way. They witnessed an abundance of money that even farmers with tiny pieces of land were making from the production of pepper during this period. Increasing realization of the gravity of the issue of landlessness among Paniyas, especially among the younger generations, had a link to the omnipresence of money experienced during this period. It was in this context a movement for retrieving the alienated lands was kicked off in the region, identified with the general mood among the Paniyas also.

But there was not enough participation in the land movement at this initial stage as the Paniyan had enough work at hand. There was shortage of labour in their village during this period. At the same time, there was also demand for labour in the far away ginger fields in the Kodagu district of Karnataka where farmers from the region and the village were investing the surplus in the leased –in cultivation of ginger with the assistance of Paniyan labour.

But this situation changed once the price came down steeply. An economic distress loomed large over the entire village. Work and wage were both cut down by the farmers drastically. It was thus, by the end of the year 2000 that the Paniyas also faced the worst livelihood crisis without any work or alternative means of livelihood to survive. And the movement for land among the adivasis became very active by this time.

There are two different streams in the movement for land among the adivasis. One stream is led by a woman adiavasi leader C.K.Janu from the region under a state wide organization called Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha (AGMS) with the active support of civic society and media organizations. Other stream is represented by
Adivasi Kshema Samithi which is a feeder organization of CPI(M). These two organisations attracted many Paniyas during this period. By this time a widespread consensus in Kerala society over the pathetic condition of the landlessness of *adivasis* was formed through the intervention of media, civic organizations and prominent personalities. Images of shattered livelihoods and poverty during the times of monsoon season coupled with the economic distress of 2001 were widely telecasted by the new age television channels in an increasingly competitive media environment.

Protests at the wake of the livelihood crisis became very aggressive in the region. *adivasis* comprising largely of Paniyas, were attracted to protest movements in an unprecedented way. AGMS under C.K. Janu’s leadership launched a fresh movement for land by encroaching on Muthanga wildlife forest area in 2003 along with hundreds of *adivasi* families, demanding land and creation of a scheduled area for *adivasis*. Following this, as a response to the movement of AGMS, AKS also started engaging in a separate stream of struggle for land. They encroached over some of the abandoned estates in the region in the same period. The encroachment episode of the movement of AGMS was brutally suppressed by the state force citing environmental reasons and it had a violent end with one *adivasi* and a police man getting killed. In the movement led by AKS, around thousand *adivasis* were arrested and imprisoned, but despite this, the rest of them continued to stay in the encroached coffee estates.

After the tragic end of ‘Muthanga struggle’, nobody from the village is now willing to talk about it openly. There are many Paniya families in the village who had participated in both the movements. Chamayan, 58, from Melekappu settlement is a Paniya *mooppan* who took part in the movement in Muthanga. Chamayan used to go for wage labour earlier but could not continue to work once he became ill. As happens normally farmers stopped calling him for work. With two daughters and an ailing wife at home, he started a new livelihood practice on an experimental basis, viz. rearing of a cow which he got through a Panchayat scheme. However, the experiment did not succeed as he could not market the milk. Meanwhile, he came to know about the movement for land through some members of the settlement who
along with their families, had been part of the encroachers in Mauthanga. Chamayan heard rumors in the environment about land that was being ‘distributed’ in Muthanaga. He joined a group of neighbors and relatives and went to Muthanga forest land where adivasis had already put up a fencing around a vast stretch of land. Each family who joined the struggle got an area allocated to it to work in and to construct its own dwelling hut. Along with a group of members from his settlement, Chamayan started doing preparatory works like clearing his area for cultivation. They got instructions from the leaders and joined in the night classes on different issues related to their life and struggles and also participated in the group recreations. But the happy days did not last long. Although they were aware of some kind of resistance from the police and the forest officials, they were confident that nothing untoward would happen. Besides they were also being guarded by the armed adivasis on the check post and around the encroached land.

There were a series of skirmishes between adivasi volunteers and forest forces and the situation inflamed as the forest caught fire. Chamayan thinks it was a conspiracy of the government that resulted in the forest fire. According to him, it was the forest guards who put fire to the forest although the adivasis were accused of it. Seeing a huge police force around the area, one morning Chamayan back-tracked along with his neighbours to the central area of their occupation. Chamayan explains what happened next:

“ I wanted to come back to my home in the village. I hid with some friends in the interior but in a visible distance. ..We all were terribly afraid. I had no idea about what happened there actually.....By noon, there was a large number of police and nattukar (non–adivasis) outside to chase us down. By evening, the police started attacking us...I ran into the forest and along with some friends we managed to escape from the area. We knew some easy routes through the forest and so, could reach the village late at night and hide inside our huts. Police came to our settlement in the following days in search of Paniyans. We could not go outside the settlement as nattukar were trying to catch us and hand over to the police.. We always escaped into the nearby forest and would return home only in the night....Finally, member (of the
Panchayat) Mohanan came to help us. He helped us to get rid of the police using his influence in the government. He came to the settlement in the night and told us not to flee and assured to give us protection from the police….I will never again go for such a thing in future. We cannot live here without the support of the nattukar. After this incident nobody gave us any job for a long period. Now everybody has started forgetting about this and people have started giving us work again as in the olden days…."

Chamayan, however, has had to continue his struggle to rear a cow as he was not preferred for any work because he was known to be an ailing man. He later tried to get some patch of paddy field for doing sharecropping from a nearby Chetty household. All other members from the settlement who participated in the movement, most of who still fear to reveal their identity, came back to the settlement at different times from different corners of the region. They used the houses of relatives and forest as shelters for some days after the event. They all were freed from the case with the help of the Panchayath member, Mohanan.

But most interestingly Mohanan strategically played a double role in the action against the adivasis in Muthanga and protecting those from his own village. He was known in the region as a close aide to a particular minister who took initiative in evicting the adivasis from the area during the period of the then ministry in the state. Under the directions from this minister, it was he who took the frontline role in coordinating the actions against adivasis at the ground level on the day of eviction. His version of the event clearly goes in line with the popular perception of settlers about the adivasis and their movement. In a private talk, he narrated the episode, the role of adivasis and their leaders, in a very derogatory language. The sum and substance of his narrative was that the movement was inspired by the primitive, promiscuous and anarchic instincts of adivasis and their leaders. What he said about the adivasis in his village, especially about those who were in Chamayan’s settlement, was that all of them were very active in the movement but that he had saved them all without getting them caught in any police case so that he could ensure their votes in the next election.
There are some other families, though their numbers are very few in the village, who took part in the struggle organized by AKS too. Madhavan, 27, was among the Paniya who went to Irulam area, about 20 k.m. away from the village, for encroaching into a coffee estate under the guidance of AKS. He is an agricultural labourer and stays with his wife’s family. He is helping his wife’s father as service attached to bride price in cultivating some coffee plants in ten cents of land around their house in Melekappu neighbourhood. When there was no job in the distress period some people from outside came and informed about the coffee estate in Irulam. They explained that he would be able to own some portion of land if he planned to join their struggle for land. Though he had no political belief he accompanied them to occupy the land. The estate was almost a fallow land. He constructed a temporary shed in the estate and occupied around one acre of land and started cultivating some tapioca and banana. But he found it difficult to continue to live in that place after some days as he was short of money and had no edibles with him. He returned to his wife in the village. All the plants in his portion of land were found destroyed by animals like wild elephants and pigs. So he abandoned that area and again came back to the settlement in Irulam area. He believes that he can still claim the same land though there was no legal document for the occupation. Unlike in Muthanaga, government did not take any action against the encroachment in these estates as the encroachment did not come under forest reserve areas and also due to the political strength of CPI (M) which threatened to organise mass resistance against forced eviction.

Though these movements have not made any immediate impact on the situation of Paniyas there is a consensus at all levels to distribute lands to landless adivasis. However, bureaucratic procedures are still going in a snail’s pace. As far as the Paniyas in the village are concerned, there is a newly found confidence to not loose the Promised Land anymore. “We are not like our forefathers who were ignorant and lost their holdings. Now we know how to use it.” This is some kind of standard response among Paniyan, especially among the young generation. This awareness is a major achievement of recent land movements.
However, initial examples of land redistribution in estates like Sugandhagiri in Kalpetta taluk, and one settlement in Pulppalli Panchayat, a coffee plantation under the forest department, referred elsewhere show that land itself cannot provide sustainability to their livelihoods. In Sugandhagiri20[1] where most of the adivasi families including Paniya, Kuruma, Kattunayka who got two acres of land as their share after re-distribution of land among *adivasi* workers find it difficult now to meet the expenses of cultivation. Most of the Paniya families in the plantation now lease out their lands to more capable families mostly belonging to Kuruma community and go out in search of wage labour. It shows the possibility of the emergence of a new class of have-nots among Paniyas. The situation in the second plantation is slightly different as most of them lease out their land to outside settler communities. But there are also a few families as in the case of Seena, an NGO coordinator about whom we have discussed elsewhere, doing intensive cultivation on the land bestowed upon by the *adivasis* committee.

Though there is a greater understanding of the value of land as a useful resource among Paniyas, its actual usage may not be understood in a similar sense. Pursuing agriculture as a stable source of income from the land may not be a viable option for many as they lack proper infrastructure and given the condition of bleak and extremely unstable market regime at large. In such a situation land may have a symbolic value to increase their self esteem and also as an ingredient in a combination of resources.

Motivated by the quest for land, most of the Paniya families in the village cherish dreams about possessing their own land. Some of them have already acquired the ability to manage land by doing sharecropping and cultivating cash crops in their own available patches of land. Many among them are open to admit the mistakes committed by their earlier

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20[1] Sugandhagiri, around fifty kilometers away from village, was a well acclaimed rehabilitation project for *adivasis* created as a society under the control of state department. Under this project *adivasis* from different parts of Wayanad were rehabilitated as workers in the cardamom plantation. By 2000 following a demand from the *adivisi* inmates and their struggle, government distributed the land for the families.
generation by selling the land for throw away prices and local arrack. Mohanan, inmate of Melekappu settlement and an active participant in the land struggle in Muthanga says:

“Our generation will not do such things. Our fathers were ignorant and scared of others. Nobody can cheat us any more. We have seen people outside the village and got enough information about all. Government has no land when we demand...why don’t they see this forest......they had given it to nattukar (settlers). Why don’t they give it to us? If they give us this forest land, we will also clear it and do cultivation as they have done...we can cultivate coffee, pepper and all...”.

**Share cropping**

Share cropping, *pankinedukkal*, was popular among the settlers from very early times of settlement formation as a meaningful source of livelihoods. Paddy was the main crop earlier selected for doing share cropping. Some of them who came to the village without much land under possession but with large number of family members depended on those landed families to get the paddy land for doing cultivation when the land was kept unused by the owners. These families could create surplus from such practices and there are successful examples of those families who could later diversify their resources using this surplus. A fixed quantity of paddy was given as the rent for the land.

Though practice of share cropping came down significantly in the later period, it again got momentum following the economic distress in the region and the strengthening of collective action through SHGs. Women in *ayalkottoms* have been practicing it widely at present for cultivating mainly commercial crops like ginger, yams, and tapioca. It was the inability of farmers to undertake maintenance works on their land due to the fall in prices for commodities that compelled them to give it away to others to do temporary cultivation.

However, as far as Paniyas in the village are concerned, experience of doing share-cropping is a recent phenomenon thanks to the environment of economic stress and the newly found confidence in managing production activities. Expression of this
capability to undertake production process is linked to a change in their realization of own identity not only based on labour but also associated with land.

It was the traditional relationship between Chetty community and Paniyas based on mutual trust which enabled the Paniya families to enter the sharecropping of paddy in the wake of acute unemployment followed by the economic distress. More than 90 percent of families are doing share cropping with their neighbouring Chetty families with whom they maintain age old relations. Following the distress Chetty families reduced the labour-intensive agricultural activities especially annual cycle of wet land paddy cultivation from two crops to one. For doing second crop they preferred their Paniya labourers to settlers who are known to do malpractices in order to increase production. Most of the settler share-croppers are infamous for practices like applying salt on the leased land for increasing production, which while giving an immediate result, has long term damaging effects on soil quality.

Sharing of similar world-views is the basis of the trust between Chetty and Paniyan communities. Chetty farmers in the village who normally practice nature -friendly farming by attaching non material values to the soil are certain that none of the Paniyas would misuse their land. They believe that Paniyas are god-fearing and also following similar world views. Chandran, a Paniyan youth from Thazhekappu settlement got around 50 cents of wetland from Raman Chetty in the same neighbourhood. They are well familiar with the mal-practices of settler share croppers. Even Raman Chetty had a bad experience from a settler share cropper from the same village. Chandran strongly rebuffs the attitude of settlers towards the soil and life. “They always worry about what they will get from it (soil), but not about what they can give. That is why they are reluctant to take care of their aged parents. You can see many people in the village like that.” Chandran, drop out from primary school, is one of the very dynamic workers among the Paniyas in the village. He gets regular work in the season and also manages his own cultivation on leased-in land. Raman Chetty gives him seeds and manure besides the land. In return, Chandran has to give half portion of the paddy as his share.
Chandran’s father is one of the few early share croppers among Paniyas in the village. He was from another village where he started doing share cropping even in the late 1980s. It was due to the benevolence of the land owner that he got the opportunity to undertake his own cultivation in a small portion of the land. The land owner was also not very particular about the rent. Hence Chandran’s father is one of the precursors of this practice among Paniyas in the village. He and his wife are now staying with Chandran in his mother’s settlement. Though Chandran had married earlier from Melekappu settlement, he left her after two years as she insisted that he should stay with her father and help him. He refused it as he wanted to continue work with his own father looking after their cultivation. Chandran works for Raman Chetty whenever he has work and also for a few other settler farmers. He always gives priority to Raman Chetty.

Share cropping among Paniya is confined mainly to paddy as they do not have enough resource to buy seeds of other crops like ginger which are very costly. Chetty farmers in the village find it very difficult in doing the risky ginger cultivation. It is as a tradition that they continue the cultivation of paddy even when the cultivation was at a loss. Raman Chetty does not cultivate ginger as he cannot bear any loss now. But Chandran is very much interested in doing the cultivation of ginger provided he manages to get some financial assistance from the Panchayat through Oorukkottam.

The only family among Paniyas in the village doing ginger cultivation as a share crop is found to be of Maya who is member in a general ayalkoottam in kayampathi neighborhood. Her case has been discussed in the section on SHGs. Her family got land from a nearby Chetty household and borrowed some money from the same family for buying the seeds. Her husband as a sthirampanikkaran (permanent worker) and son as a migrant non-agriculture worker support the cultivation. Son returns home whenever there is seasonal work. He has education up to higher secondary level and became the first Paniya in the village who resorted to migration as a livelihood strategy, especially in the non-agricultural sector. He got a job in Thamarassery, an important town in the neighbouring Kozhikode district, as ticket checker in a movie theatre.
Apart from ginger, Maya’s family does paddy cultivation also under share cropping with the same Chetty household. In carrying out the labour-intensive production of these two crops, kinship becomes a useful resource for her family. Besides their immediate family members, they get assistance from the families of two brothers of Maya. Exchange of labour between brothers-in-law (aliyanmar) is a very normal and prevalent practice among Paniyas. One brother belongs to Melekappu settlement in the same village, while the other one is in a different village.

Mohanan who participated actively in the struggle for land in Muthanga is her brother from Melekappu settlement in the village. Though barely literate, he is well informed about all the strategies and practices associated with the commercial agriculture, thanks to the exposure he got through the land movement. That is why he demands that the government should distribute forest to adivasis to cultivate, as the quote given in the earlier section reveals. He is always available to his sister’s family not only providing labour but also for giving advices too. He would say: “nhan avarkku bhuddhi paranhu kodukkum (I tell them’ intelligence’)”.

**Migration: seasonal and self-reliant**

Seasonal migration of Paniya labourers to the neighbouring state of Karnataka for ginger cultivation is not a recent phenomenon followed by distress in the local economy. But migration to other districts of Kerala for doing manual jobs in non-agricultural sector is a completely new practice among Paniyas in the village. As part of this new migratory movement, Paniya youth in the village have also experimented with migration to the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu also for working in a textile factory.

In the local experiences of Paniyas, seasonal migration is understood in relation with their voyage to ginger fields in the neighbouring Karnataka where labour is required only seasonally. Meanwhile in the new practices of labour shift to other districts, Paniyas are found seasonally returning to the village during the occasions of annual village festival, harvesting time, etc. Making of decision to go in search of work and
fixing the time of returning home are found to be one’s own choice. However, a
definite pattern of this type of Paniya migration is yet to be emerged.

**Seasonal Kodagu migration: new paternalism and bondage**

Recent studies have identified that many of the poor workers in the rural areas are
seasonal migrants and moving mainly to other rural areas rather than to urban
centres. They are prepared to migrate even for lower wages as the employment in the
area of origin has become scarce or even unavailable (Hann 2002). Accordingly, too
little is known about this type of migration. But as far as the seasonal migration of
Paniyas for doing ginger cultivation in Karnataka districts is concerned wage
differences and economic stress in the village are not explanatory factors. They have
gone for work even in the times of good work and wages in the village.

*Paniyans* all over Wayanad region have never been known for the labour migration
in recent histories. In contrast to their experience of bonded labour, seasonal
migration or the ‘circulation of the labour’ (as in Standing 1985) was found among
*Paniyans* in the village as a large scale phenomenon in the 1990s. This was a
relatively new phenomenon for Paniyas during this period. Collective movement of
people to a completely distant region was against the tradition of immobility of the
days of *vali system*. This circulation of labour was associated with the ginger
cultivation in the nearby Karnataka state. Number of *Paniyans* from different
settlements in the village started to move to Kodagu, a nearby district in the
Karnataka state along with the farmers from Wayanad for doing Ginger cultivation.

Though, history of ginger cultivation in Waynad dates back to colonial period, large-
scale cultivation of ginger in the Kodagu region of Karnataka state was started in the
1990s by the farmers from Wayanad. Actually settler farmers played a major role in
the expansion of this cultivation in Wayanad. Two different reasons can be pointed
out regarding the expansion of ginger cultivation to Kodagu region by Wayanad
farmers. Gradual decrease in the productivity of the soil made the farmers to explore
the new fertile soil, where they would get bumper crop. In the major part of the
1990s, farmers got highest price for other plantation crops especially for coffee and
pepper. This stimulated farmers to experiment by investing boldly in ginger
cultivation ignoring the risk factors involved in the cultivation of ginger. Hence, the fertile soil of the surplus land in Kodagu region became the new destination of Wayanad farmers. They took land in lease from the proprietors in Kodagu for either fixed amount or produce. It was the marginal and small scale farmers who thus experimented with ginger in Kodagu soil. Some of them became incredibly rich and some others had committed suicide. Sooner, large scale farmers and business persons took over the control of ginger cultivation from the small scale farmers. Now ginger cultivation has become the enterprise of rich business groups who can make big investments. They don’t really burn their fingers in the times of price fall as they can afford to keep the ginger under the soil till the next rise in the price which happens most probably in the immediate off season.

Kodagu migration of farmers started in the 90s became significant livelihood practice over the years among Paniyas, especially for young generation in the village. This is the first time they moved collectively from their own locality to another area. Even in the period of price boom they were attracted to travel to Kodagu for cultivation. Ginger cultivators would spend money to entertain them in Kodagu. Manipulative strategies adopted by settlers in initial period of settlement formation were often used in facilitating the seasonal movement of Paniyas. They were given good money as advance and on the fields locally brewed liquor was served on demand. Once they reached the spot it would be really difficult to come back. During the period of price boom many of them migrated partially for fun. But in the following period of distress many of them were compelled to go for work as they received a good amount of advance.

There are observations of similar experiences in other parts of the country for using advances and complex payment arrangements as mechanisms to control a fluid labour force. As Breman (1996) noted, debt is often an ‘instrument of coercion’ producing a new form of agrarian labour bondage or neo bondage differing from agrarian bondage in being less personalized, more contractual and magnetized and lacking elements of patronage and protection of earlier forms of clientship.
Prasad, a 30 year old Paniyan youth from Madaparambu settlement had gone to Kodagu in three consecutive years for doing ginger cultivation. In his first trip in 1996, he went to Kodagu along with some other friends and relatives in the settlement. He gives the following testimony.

“it was a chettan (Christian) owner who is an advocate by profession who had the cultivation in Kodagu. He was not from our village. Our friends in the settlement who belong to his place informed us. They were usually doing his work in the village. We, around 12 people from this colony, decided to go as we had no job here at that time. They came here with a vehicle to take us. His contractor distributed a small amount as an advance to meet the expenditure on the way. I did not feel any problem, as our group comprised of only our relatives and friends. I was sure that I cannot stay alone without our people from the village. We constructed small huts to stay. We prepared food for ourselves. We were too scared of to go outside the work place. Local people in that area were also employed for some small work. They were not equally skilled and so got lesser wages. Their type of shovel was not suitable for ginger cultivation…. I stayed there continuously for one month. Some of us visited the houses two or three times in the middle. Wages were distributed only when we returned to our native place. They feared that we would leave that place once they gave us full amount. We worked 3 months a year during different seasons. I had gone three consecutive years, but each time for different muthalalis (capitalists)”.

Parsad is also one among those young people who could complete higher secondary education. His parents were attached labourers with a Chetty household. After the death of his father, he stopped studying and started to work for the same household.

Share-cropper Chandran from Thazhekappu settlement is one Paniya worker who admitted that he has personally achieved by learning various things from the seasonal migration to Karnataka districts. What he said was that he could understand differences between the people in different regions and different types of agricultural
practices etc. According to him, this kind of migration to other places for doing work increases the understanding of the world. He says:

“even people are very different from those in our place. We always fear Kodaganmar (local people of Coorg). Even our modalalimar (reference is to ginger cultivators) show fear and respect to those people. Though our modalalimar often behave badly to us they don’t show it to those kodaganmar. In the work sites we all keep quiet in our shelters and nobody makes any quarrel or speak in loud voice... Even in those villages, there are people like us, Paniyans. But they are adimapnikkar (slave labourers) to those kodaganmar as our Paniyan forefathers once were. Our muthalalimar cannot take people for work from those villages. All those workers are under the custody of different land owners in those villages…”

Chandran has undertaken seasonal migration four years in various districts in Karnataka state along with others from his own settlement. Through these journeys he has tried to understand the differences in social settings and power relations in Kodagu in comparison to his own village and its history.

Paniyan women who make such migratory movements for seasonal work are fewer in number compared to their male counterparts in the village. Most of these women who have the experience of the seasonal migration are married and usually they accompany their husbands to fields. Normally Paniyan men do not encourage their wives to work there as they have to work under scorching sun the whole day. On the part of middlemen and cultivators taking women labourers to neighbouring states, this has become risky nowadays as there were frequent reports of alleged sexual abuse of Paniya women in the ginger fields of Karnataka. Following this, police identification of workers has become mandatory in the last three years. Those who take workers from the village should report to the local police station with a photograph and address.

Bella from Kayampathi settlement has been accompanying her husband Kariyan for four years to Kodagu region for doing ginger cultivation. Besides seasonal migration they also do share cropping of paddy with a Chetty land owner in Kariyan’s
settled in neighboring village. In Kudgu they are working for a Muslim merchant in Bathery town who used to lease-in vast area of ginger fields. Initially they were contacted by a middleman appointed by the owner. There are two – three middlemen who organise the required labour and supervise the work in the field. Bella has a good opinion about this particular owner. But she has mixed feelings about the middlemen.

“There are good and bad people. Our muthalali (investor) is a good person. We can’t say anything about others. There are bad persons among mesris (supervisors). Some of them behave badly in the field. They even beat us sometimes. But they all behave well with us as our muthalali likes us. After seeing our work during the first year he told us to come every time for his work. He visits the fields very rarely. He is very generous and wants to make workers happy. After the initial year I was assigned to cook for workers. We all live in temporary sheds on the corner of fields. We make food three times for all workers. Owner wants us to make Biriyani weekly once…we get the same wage in the village for working in Kodagu also. Besides we can ask for some help from muthlali if there is an urgent need of money. We will continue to work for him.”

But contrary to the cases of these workers with mobility, there are people like Gulikan, another worker from the same colony representing immobile nature of their traditional identity, who has never migrated to any other area outside his small locality where he was working since his childhood days. He has never gone to school. His father had deserted them when he was a small child. Mother always took him to the work places. He started grazing the cows for their Chetty landowner when he was ten years old. Since then, he has been working in the same area. He is also getting works at the households of that Chetty and other settlers. Now he is 42 and father of two children.

“I have never gone any other places for work. I have never liked that idea. If they give me job here, I can do. Otherwise, I will freely sit in my home... Our
people are all over the Waynad. Then how can we go to other places? We will never go in search of jobs.”

Gulikan is a person representing a different generation of Paniyas. Life, relations and livelihoods, everything he owes belongs to this small piece of land within this village.

It is a fact that seasonal migrants in the village are mostly unmarried youth who have the flexibility in moving out unlike a person like Gulikan. But even the young generation is found commonly maintaining a tradition of not going out, even within their village, in search of work as a traditional marker of their identity inherited probably from the old valli system in which they had been brought for work by Chetty elders in each family. Most of the Paniyan respondents admit the fact, as Gulikan described, that they never go to others in search of work. Generally, stiramapanikkar (permanent workers) among them get their usual works. Rest of the workers get works on demand from the employers in the same neighbourhood. Normally settler farmers put their demand to a regular worker and tell him to bring the sufficient number of workers to finish the work as early as possible. They get work outside the village mainly through their relatives, especially aliyanmar (brothers-in-law) or sometimes through friends. For doing major works like ginger cultivation in Kodagu or regular works in the local plantations of large holders there are middle men who come in search of them with vehicles and take them to the spot.

Nowadays there are persons like Mohanan from Melekappu settlement, the man who has been quoted in earlier section as an active participant in land movement emerging as a middleman among Paniyas by identifying the requirement outside the village through other settler middlemen in the town. They gather workers from their own settlement and from other settlements through kin-networks and supply the labourers to the middlemen in town. He is very much proud of his job as a mesri (supervisor). He bought a new mobile phone in connection with his new job and it is found always tied with a jute string attached to his waist. “I have to expect calls any time,” he says proudly. Among Paniyas it has become a symbol increased mobility, because mobile phones in the village is now found mostly among the group of
migrant workers. By showing it off always in front of the young people in his settlement, he has got the nick name ‘Mobile Mohanan’. But for him most of his actions are messages to the young Paniyas as to how a modern Paniya should live and survive in this world.

**Self reliant - migration**

In recent years there is a new trend of migration which is largely voluntary and self-reliant, found among the young Paniyas in the village. There is a difference in the pattern of their movement depending on gender. Young unskilled men move in groups to other rich districts like Kottayam and Erankulam for doing jobs in hotels and company canteens, whereas a few girls are found individually moving out as domestic helps to neighboring districts like Kozhikode and Kannur. Unlike in the seasonal migration for ginger cultivation, they go independently to these places with the help of the information collected from the settler friends who are also working in similar jobs.

A group of 10 to 20 men in the age group between 15 and 25 years from Tazhekappu, Melekappu and Ariyakkottu settlements close to the village first started this migratory movement of men on a semi-permanent basis. These men split further into three-four smaller groups in making their movement. In the case of female migrants there are around 10 girls in the age range between 19-26 years from the same settlements who have done work as domestic help for different periods in the past three to four years. After the initial wave of migratory movement, except three girls, the rest are back in the village, mainly for chances of marriage. Normally, no Paniya young man would show any interest in marrying those girls who work in far-away places.

The background of this newly found migration from these settlements is strongly connected to the changes in the village economy in recent years due to the distress following the economic boom. This made an indirect effect on Paniyas through the changes in nearby settler households. Many households in the village belonging to settler communities faced a steep slump in their standard of living following the distress. For some if it was a burst of a temporary bubble, for many others this
became devastating to their normal graph of living and long term planning. It was in this context that many people started seeking strategies to move out of the village in search of job which was not there earlier.

Though extreme economic changes have brought about troubles and desperations for most of the people in the village, as an unintended effect it has also resulted in levelling the field of social interaction to an extent among a section of young Paniyas and settlers. The neighbourhoods from where Paniya youth took the initiative to move out are the ones where such changes manifested in their social relations. In the case of this same neighbourhood some of the erstwhile rich Chetty families have already become poor over a period. Young people from these houses find the Paniya youngster from their nearby settlements as more trustworthy friends. For them Paniya youth is more up-to-date and exposed to the contemporary culture of life’s better ways. Young Paniyas are found more influential within these neighbourhoods than these Chetty youngsters.

There is also a shift in the attitude of a section a younger generation belonging to settler communities as well. This shift is also a result of the increased economic interaction during and after the period of economic boom. There are some shops in a tri-junction of Thazekappu, Mundakutti and Areekod neighborhoods where people from settler, Chetty and Paniyan communities assemble. These shops were started during the time of economic boom by a settler and his sons and as Paniyas as their main consumers. With the smooth inflow of income Paniyas also spent good amount of money in these shops for buying day to day condiments. They got things on credit too. Shop owners arranged a television set for public viewing to attract the customers, especially Paniyas to their shops. There is practice of Paniyan women and children coming to the shop for watching popular soap operas during the day time. This created a new environment for their social interactions.

The direct connection between many settler and Paniyan youth happened in relation to the habit of group consumption of alcohol. Period of economic boom had increased the habit of going to liquor shops, bar and hotels among the local people irrespective of the communities. Even many among them started the habit at the age
of 15. Increased demand for labour and price for commodities enabled the Paniya and settler youth to access the hard cash according to their personal desires. But once the economic chances for spending lavishly became bleak they turned to other options.

Apart from an obvious choice to drop the habit of frequent drinking, there were two other options in front of the local youth to continue it. First option was to go for a system of shared drinking. Earlier if the practice was ‘sponsoring the day’ by an individual consumer within a small group, now the situation turned to going for an open collection within the neighbourhood for buying a bottle for the day. This practice resulted in the intermixing of the groups of settlers and Paniyas. Paniyan youth also got included in the sharing group.

Second option was to depend on a person who is brewing illicit liquor in the locality. There is a person living close to one of the settlements who actually built his house encroaching into some portion of land belonging to that Paniya settlement. He is a later migrant who reached in the place only in the late 1980s. He is a share cropper and wife, a wage labourer. As a part time job he is now brewing liquor with the support of some of the Paniyas and settler men in the neighbourhood. He sells the liquor in very concealed ways and there are frequent customers belonging to both Paniya and settler communities. They depend on this person mainly because of a fall in the income so that they are no more frequent visitors of the local bar.

Such increased interactions between the youth among settlers and Paniyas in this neighborhood helped Paniya to gather new information regarding the possibilities of work outside village, in the far away towns. In the wake of price fall and the corresponding crisis, a number of settlers from these neighbourhoods had migrated to Tirupur and Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu. These are the centres of garment industry in south India which absorbs thousands of unskilled and semiskilled rural labourers who are pushed out from the distressed local economy. Around 12 people from our study area had moved to these cities in search of jobs in the cloth mills. But all have come back giving up their jobs after spending one to two months due to the precarious working condition there. It was in this connection that a group of Paniya young men from the same neighbourhood went to Tirupur with the guiding inputs from the settler forerunners.
Following the instructions of settler group, this six member group of Paniya took the train from Kozhikode to Tirupur. They met the settler group at the workplace and got job in sewing section where they were shown to do just inserting the garment material in the correct position in the sewing machine. Though initial settler group returned to village from the factory due to reportedly bad working condition, Paniya workers continued working there. However a mistake made by one of them in the work resulted in the damage of the machine, destroying a whole set of needles. They were asked to leave the factory without disbursing the wage for the period they worked. Manager told them that even the salary of all of them would not be sufficient to repair the damage. They came back to the village without any grief because this journey gave them new experiences of working in an alien place and the courage to do it again. This was the first time experience of Paniyas in whole village in long distance migration for doing non-agricultural work.

Though there is a broader background for the Paniya migratory movement associated with the economic changes within the village, the inspiration for making such an experiment was drawn from the individual experience of a Paniya youngster in Thazekappu settlement. Biju is the first person who migrated to far away town from the whole village for doing a job for a monthly salary. Biju is one of the two children of his mother. His father is no more. His mother was an attached labour with a settler household in the neighbourhood. She has two sisters and their families in the nearby houses. Her mother is also staying with them. Though they all have separate kitchen under separate households they share food and there is a feeling of belongingness among all the members in these extended families. Biju is the elder boy of all the families. He got support from all the members in his growing up. He took enthusiasm in studying and he passed plus two examination from the higher secondary school in the village. When he completed education up to plus two level he was invited by a local NGO focusing on informal education among adivasis to join the group as an instructor. He worked in that NGO for almost two years and travelled to many villages in the area and stayed in the settlements of other adivasi communities like Kuruman, Kurichiyan etc.

After this stint in the NGO, Biju wanted to do a job other than agricultural work which would enable him to earn some money. Somebody informed his friends in the settlement about the vacancies in the newly started bar attached hotel in the village town. Along with some of his friends in the settlements in the neighbourhoods they approached the management and got the jobs. He got the job as an attendant in the bar and others as helpers in the kitchen. After the worst experiences in that hotel they all quit the jobs. “ It was
difficult to continue in that job. Most of those who came to the hotel were known people. Even otherwise, people from this area could easily identify us as Paniyas. When these people started to use commanding language I decided to leave. My friends were also fed up with the treatment of supervisors. … Normally our people want to work in our own group so that we can speak openly and share things. So we left that hotel”. This is how Biju explained his experience in the hotel in village.

After a few weeks someone in the neighbourhood talked about a hotel in Kozhikode, in the nearby district. Through this settler contact he got a job in the hotel in Kozhikode as a waiter. He continued in the hotel for about five months. During this time he met a person who was working as a supervisor in a canteen for a Nationalised Bank run by a private agency in Thiruvananthapuram. He asked Biju to come and work in the canteen in Thiruvananthapuram. Biju happily accepted the invitation and joined for the work.

“I am happy here because as the place is far away from my village, there is no chance of meeting any known people in this town. I don’t speak our language at all with other friends here so they don’t know anything about my background. Nobody in the canteen knows that I am a Paniyan”.

It was Biju who became the inspiration for the young Paniyas in the surrounding neighbourhoods of Thazekaapu to move out of the region in search of jobs. From the same Thazekappu settlement there is another person, Kuttan, with more or less similar mobility pattern as that of Biju. Kuttan learned up to higher secondary level and joined the same NGO as a volunteer. He also attended some training programme conducted by tribal development department in Kozhikode. But moving through the similar route, Kuttan reached a hospital canteen in Kozhikode. He worked there for almost one year. Besides his work as waiter and a supervisor occasionally he even got the opportunity to sit in the cash counter. But due to the severe illness of his father he had to discontinue his work in the canteen and come back to the village.

Inspired by the experiences of Biju and Kuttan, a new group of Paniyas, including those who had gone to Tirupur garment factory, started exploring the possibilities to get jobs especially in hotels. Educational standard of the group members are between secondary and primary levels. Presently they are working in a canteen in a tyre company in Kottayam. Most of them do not seem to have any formal commitment with the employers in the destination. They come back to the village whenever they
want to come. Village festivals, marriages, cropping seasons, all are still found to be important for the Paniya migrant workers.

As far as the female migrants among Paniyas are concerned, settlers are found to be the major source of information with regard to the availability of domestic work far away from the village. A settler woman who had worked as a domestic help in the neighbouring districts is instrumental in connecting the placement agencies and Paniya girls in the village. There are many such well connected agencies in different regions in the state who trace the available female workers from regions like Wayanad to send them to different parts of the state, especially for Non-Resident Indian families in different districts. Settler women normally go to southern districts where a lot of households are left with old parents staying alone when people generally go to western countries. All the Paniya girls from the village migrated to neighbouring districts of Kannur and Kozhikode as they do not want to go beyond that distance and all these places are also connected by straight buses from the village.

However, except three, all other girls who had moved out for this job did not continue their work for more than one year in the destination homes. Most of them do not want to continue for long with this job as it would topple their marriage chances back at home. But some others found the job or the environment uncomfortable.

Bindu, 24 years old, from Areekod settlement is the first girl who migrated to the neighbouring Kannur district and worked for the longest period. She got information about this job through the above mentioned Chechi (settler lady addressed as elder sister). She told her about a vacancy in a rich Muslim family in Kannur and connected her with an agency in Kannur. She is currently working with the family of a doctor and comfortable in continuing the work. In the village she is staying with her brother’s family along with their mother. Her brother has two children and her father is no more. She got education up to upper primary level and used to go for agriculture work along with her brother and his wife.
Every year she visits the village three–four times during the festival occasions in the village as well as in the community. She gets salary of all the months together when she returns home. She now gets Rs.1500 per month besides food, dress and accommodation. Her brother takes care of her income and spends it for family expenses. Because of the same reason he doesn’t show much interest in her return. She left the village when she was 19 years old and has been working with that family now for almost five years. According to the community standard she has crossed her `marriageable’’ age.

However, experiences of working and the exposure have made a lot of changes in Bindu as well as in other girls too. Most of them are now able to cook all the major food items found in the local hotels. When Bindu is in the settlement all her cousins from neighbouring settlement also would start coming to her home bringing different items, mainly non–vegetarian stuffs like meat and fish for getting it prepared by her in the similar flavour as they taste it in the local hotels. Bindu is known as a good cook in their neighbourhoods with her long experience in a Muslim family as many popular Muslim dishes like Biriyani is a craze among the people.

Dressing is another area in which this kind of migration made drastic changes. Though new generation of Paniya men and women have already changed the traditional dressing pattern to modern dresses like pants and shirts for men and Churidar and Saree for women, some of them including Bindu have used Jeans, Midi and top mostly during their to and fro journeys. Bindu normally changes her dress the moment she steps into the village to ordinary Churidar if she is in other fashionable outfits. She feels shy in wearing such urbanised attire in the village. She thinks she may face sarcastic comments from others in the village if she is seen wearing them. The girls who discontinued their work are also reluctant to present themselves in public in fashionable ways, though they have used this.

As far as the migrant young Paniyas are concerned a marked difference from others is the dressing pattern and hair style. They use ready made pants and shirts or tops bought mostly from the street vendors or low cost shops. Cheap garments in a variety of styles produced for mass consumption are available with these vendors and shops.
These young Paniyans are also very careful about getting their hair dressed in contemporary style from the shops in the towns. Normally people in these settlements do it themselves as there are some skilled persons available for doing the job. Interestingly, this fashion wave is not confined to migrant labourers alone, but also found among a section of younger generation who is studying in schools and getting financial assistance under government schemes.

Use of mobile phones among the young workers in these settlements is a recent thing but having a material effect on their livelihood options apart from its symbolic significance through a loud statement of fashion. There was regular contact between the migrant group and the rest of the youth in the settlement during their stay in the canteen. Those who stayed back in the canteen would often talk to the workers who had come back to the village and inform them about the situation in the workplace. They would also be informed if they have to return immediately or the canteen manager needs more people. Mobile phone is also used in the neighbourhood constantly exhibiting it as a tool to have symbolic dominance over their Chetty counterparts and to connect with the settler counterparts.

By presenting themselves in a fashionable style the young Paniyas are trying to send a strong message of their social presence in equal terms. There is a new-found assertiveness among them. This assertiveness has even led to a physical confrontation between settlers and this group of young Paniya during a festival night in the local temple. There was casualty and people from both sides were got admitted to the hospitals. Though tension broke out sporadically at the festival venue, there were pent up feelings and hostilities behind it. As a normal practice the festival committee is constituted by significant faces in the locality without any representation of Paniyas. The committee members are in charge of the peaceful organisation of the festival every year. Some of the young Paniyas had a strong feeling against some of the committee members who harassed them publicly in former times. So they planned to react if something happens again like that and all the migrant workers came back to the village for the festival.
here was a strict control of using illicit liquor on the temple vicinity this time according to a decision of the festival committee keeping in mind their bad experiences in the previous years. In the early night some of the committee members questioned two of the Paniyan group members in front of a sizeable gathering including women for allegedly taking liquor in the temple premises. Two young committee members belonging to well-to-do settler families in the locality had some unresolved issue with the Paniyan youngsters from these neighbourhoods. Hence the public abuse irritated them and they collectively took a decision to react. They waited for the two committee members on their way to home in the midnight and beat them up in the narrow pathway by the temple. This led to a midnight fight between Paniyan young group and festival committee members. Around 20 persons from both sides were hospitalised for treatment. Settler members of the temple committee said that the ‘arrogance’ of Paniyan young men in the neighbouring settlements caused this unwanted conflict. But the young men from these settlements were adamant and gave a warning that they would react in future too if there is any harassment and public abuse on the part of the festival committee.

Pattern of Paniyan mobility and changes in livelihoods

Emerging self-reliant migration of young Paniya workers in these neighbourhoods is qualitatively different from the existing pattern of labour mobility. Even within the free labour market Paniya agricultural labourers usually do not go independently outside their neighbourhoods in search of jobs. If they do not get work in their own locality they idly spend time within the settlement, unless there is a demand from the localities where they have some kinship ties.
According to this pattern, a Paniya male labourer can make movements to three different locations as shown in the figure. A Paniya male labour is free to stay either with his own father that is his own locality or in his wife’s locality. Generally they are treated as the members of same locality and allowed to work in the region along with brothers in law. Staying in sister’s residence is also not uncommon. According to the availability of work a Paniyan has three options to stay and work.

But seasonal migration for ginger cultivation brought new distant localities in their work related movements. However it did not help them to establish any work related connections and any chances of enhancing their skills. In this movement too, they again turn back to networks of kinship and friendship as a source of support and in their seasonal trips to distant localities in Karnataka state most of them accompany their friends and relatives either from own settlement or from brothers -in-law’s settlements. In the destination localities they are not supposed to work beyond their own groups of friends and relatives and do only familiar works on the agricultural fields.

In the third pattern of self reliant migration in the village, Paniya workers move to distant localities within the state in small groups prepared to do non agricultural
works in mixed group of workers. Within this pattern too most of the workers make their livelihood voyage possible through their own group of friends and relatives within the community. However there are exceptions of two persons from Thazhekapp neighbourhoods who have plus two level education and exposure to external networks of NGO. It is found that in this pattern, they are free from the clutches of middlemen and the ‘neo-bondage’ created by the advance payment.

In the case of female workers, mobility is highly restricted by practice in their locality of living. They do wage labour either in their own neighbourhood and/or the neighbourhoods of husbands. In the case of seasonal migration women workers do not go independently, but accompany their spouses. Children are the major reason for the work related immobility of Paniya women. Many Paniya women do not work for 2-3 years after their delivery. Even if they work after this initial period, most of them bring their babies to the field or they go home and take care of their babies whenever they feel so. Even in the new pattern of migration to neighbouring districts only the women under marriage age are showing interest. In contrast to their male counterparts female workers go independently for doing the job of domestic helper, mainly due to the nature of work.

However, the community is the strong platform for making their journeys in search of work. Personalized relations and networks of kinship and fraternity still play a definite role in their day-to-day livelihood activities. Male members are found moving mainly in their own group pining for their emotional security in the group. Duration of stay for the female workers in the destination place is determined according to the prevalent standards within the community in relation to their marriage age.

**Reinventing the labour: NREG and Paniyan**

Paniyas in the village have recently found a new arena of labour and livelihood facilitated by a state sponsored job scheme, NREGS, with a potential to change their labour profile in long run. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) is a nation-wide job guarantee scheme enacted by central government in 2005. It provides a legal guarantee for one hundred days of employment in every
financial year to adult members of any rural household willing to do unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage. Larger idea behind this scheme was to give a ‘human face to economic reforms and globlisation’ by redistributing the state fund to create employment opportunities at the local levels.

The scheme is widely known as ‘Panchayat pani’ (work of Panchyath) in the village as the implementation of the scheme is the duty of the local Panchayat by identifying the works and providing the logistics. The term carries a connotation of formal government job which is also attractive to many Paniyas. Panchayat is undertaking the work in cooperation with the Kudumbasree organisation in the village.

Apart from the assurance of 100 days’ work for each family a year, there are some procedural features which make it important for Paniyas. There is a muster roll and putting their name in the muster roll every morning of the working days creates an image of a formal system of labour relations. They draw their wage after a specific period of work in bulk amount from a nationalized bank through their accounts. They are working in mixed groups of workers. Finally, they are supposed to do mainly non-agricultural public works like the construction of trenches, roads, public well, dams etc which expose them to new areas of labour.

Though most of the families have got registered in the scheme under the initiatives of Kudumbasree, not all the registered families are appearing for the work. This is mainly because the differences in actual wage, practice of getting wages on daily basis in other private works, reluctance to stop working for the private owners in their own neighborhoods when both the works come simultaneously, etc. However, those who did the work under the scheme have good opinion and want to continue to work. Another impact of work among Paniyas in the village is the newly found interest in attending the gramasabha as it is the forum for taking decisions regarding future work and the evaluation of works being done. Moreover, many Paniyas feel that they don’t need any more work under modalalis (settler owners) as they get job from the government.
Table 5. Participation of workers according to communities and sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Settlers</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chetty</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paniya</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Panchayat Muster roll (2007-08)

Majority of a mixed work group is comprised of female members belonging to settler households. Male members from these households, though they have registered in the scheme, do not appear for the work as they feel there is a disparity in wages between male and female workers as they get more wage for their ‘greater work’ as is the standard practice in the village. So most of them manage their own cultivation and if available go outside for private work instead of coming for Panchayat pani. Most of them do not like the supervision of Kudumabasree members. In the village, first work undertaken by the Panchayath was the construction of trenches on forest borders to prevent the attack of wild elephants. It required hard labour and experience in the work.

There are also ‘helpless’ marginal farmers like Ramanan and his friends from the Kolarattu Kunnu neighbourhood who were compelled to go for wage labour in this scheme due to personal reasons. Describing the situation in the work groups they are united in complaining against their female counterparts,

“they are humiliating us ….because they are majority in number.. they enjoy full freedom and tell us that if you don’t want to continue in this work group you can leave. Panchayath also supports them. We told the panchayath to form a different work group for us so that we will be able to finish work soon. But they don’t allow us to work separately. They said that law was against it….so
we suffer. They say that equal wage for equal work. But we know that they are women. Their make up is like that. They cannot do the kind of work being done by us, men….We do all those difficult work. It is due to utter helplessness that we come for this work”.

There are three other male workers --John, Gopalakrishnan and Gopi belonging to settler community in such work group in the village. Among Paniyas female workers took initiatives to take part in the job scheme as the work is available in their neighbourhoods. Though participation rate of Paniya male workers is very low there is no apparent feeling of apathy among them towards the scheme. They don’t share the concerns of other male workers of settler communities on the equal wage for men and women in the scheme.

Unlike the dissent of male workers of settler communities on gender-neutral wage policy, there was protest from Paniyas over the functioning of work group dominated by settler workers. In the case of this village the composition of mixed group of workers including settlers, Chettys and adivasis has brought about certain conflicts too on the work sites in the initial stages of the scheme. Conflict was mainly between Paniyas and settler workers due to the division of work and the quality of delivery among the members. One work group in the village took more time to finish their amount of work due to the lethargy of some workers. Some of the settler members accused Paniyas for “not properly doing their work”. It became a big embarrassment for the Paniya workers in the group. They protested openly and disagreed to receive the implements for work in the next schedule from Kudumabasree supervisors. They complained that it was the ‘new labourers’ belonging to marginal farmers’ households who did not work properly as they did not have the habit of wage labour. They wanted to prove their point by forming an exclusive group of Paniya workers and to show how they could work. Panchayath allowed them to do so and they formed a new group by gathering Paniyas from various other groups. This incident became instrumental in increasing the internal cohesion of Paniya workers in the group.
The Paniyan group under the leadership of Velayudhan from Ariyakkottu settlement successfully used this chance to prove their efficiency in doing hard work on soil and rock. They were around 20 Paniyas from different settlements in the nearby neighbourhoods. Majority of them were women workers. They helped each other in completing the work even carrying out the work of absentees. Male workers helped the female workers when they had difficulty in doing certain works like removing the soil from the trench when it is deep by throwing it out over the level of head. They completed their work before five days to the stipulated period. Panchayath engineer and overseer certified the quality of the work done by this Paniya group of workers. This was one of the rarest occasions they had ever come across in the village by openly proving their competence in doing work in competition with settlers.

At the personal level, for most of the workers it was the first time in their life that they got the wages as a bulk amount for their free labour. Velayudhan’s wife bought a gold ear-ring for their daughter for the first time in their life after getting the first installment of wages. After getting around Rs.1500/- as wage for the work in the first schedule Chamayan from Thazhekappu settlement, whose son is a migrant labour, made a shopping at Bathery town and bought a watch and jeans for his son who was to leave the settlement in the following week. Rest of the money was spent by him for buying condiments for the household for celebrating the forthcoming Onam festival.

Santha from Areekod settlement appreciated the government for giving their wage together as it will help them save the money. She felt that but for that, her husband would have spend it all on his daily consumption of liquor. What she did was to collect the whole amount from her husband on the day of its disbursal and gave him Rs. 300 for spending according to his wish. The rest of the money was spent in the immediate days for different household purposes. Some of them did not withdraw the whole amount from the account; for the first time in their life, they saved some amount in a bank account.
For Paniyans these are some of the changes, though small but significant, that happened with their participation in the NREGS. Whether these positive changes would last is yet to be seen. NREG scheme has created a ‘new’ labouring segment among the settler and Chetty community who otherwise don’t go outside their households for wage labour. Association of Paniyas with these groups of people as equal participants and their relative superiority in doing the work has increased their enthusiasm in further participating in the work. But it is yet to see what kind of impact will be brought in for Paniyas in their long term livelihood practices.

**Conclusion**

Even in the absence of critical resources for sustaining stable livelihoods and the resultant inability of Paniyas to access the development space, there are signs of changes in their livelihood practices at the contemporary interface of the local and global. Participation in the social movement for land, undertaking share cropping, increasing seasonal migration and the beginning of self –reliant migration to far away places and participation of Paniyan workers in the state-sponsored NREG schemes are some of the livelihood responses of Paniyas to the increasing interpenetrations of the local and global. These responses are manifested mainly in two basic domains of their livelihood base - land and labour.

Internal networks of kinship and friendship of the community and the trust found in the traditional relationship between Chetty and Paniyan are playing supportive role in their responses and corresponding formation of new livelihood practices. These responses are also linked to the intergenerational shifts in the worldviews and the consciousness of Paniyas. This is first time in the history of the community that there are responses within to engage the global and local interface by undertaking new strategies and practices in a collective manner. These changes are expected to have the potential to create a new resource base and capabilities at least for a section of the community.