Chapter 6

Conclusion

The main intention of this study was to have an in-depth enquiry into the expanding spaces of the global and local in the livelihoods of various communities in relation to their developmental aspirations. The basic question addressed was how an adivasi community like Paniyan negotiates between the `local’ (i.e. Local asset endowment and relations of power) and the 'global’ (i.e. the accelerating economic, political and cultural forces they are exposed to) in shaping their livelihood practices vis-à-vis other communities.

Empirical evidences from the present study suggest that globalisation at present has been linked to the local communities through their increased exposure to economic and political dimensions at the level of both discourse and practice. Increased integration of local producers with the international product market through import liberalisation and introduction of state decentralisation are the processes that create the new terrain of the local and global interpenetrations that give rise to new dynamics in the study area. This particular theme has been elaborated in the second chapter on theory and context by connecting macro theories on globalisation with the empirical context of the study area.

The third chapter unravels the global-local interplay in the study area as beginning with the colonial rule. This interplay as a historical process has made changes in livelihood base, practices and the habitus of the communities and their differential nature of access to the development space. The expansion of the local and global in different periods with the mediation of powerful actors has been understood historically from the colonial times to the present. It is argued that the culmination of the global and local at present has resulted in the creation of a development space in the state which is a horizontal space of social interaction with the participation of wide array of communities, but one that excludes the marginalised adivasis like Paniyan. This particular chapter on the creation of a development space and the
negotiation of the emerging space carved out by various communities show the different phases of local and global in terms of changes in the local power relations, linked very much to the shifts in the livelihood bases. It is shown that creation of strong socio-political networks set a strong resource base for the settler communities and the cash crop cultivation enabled them to further the advantageous position in the local arena. These changes had tilted the earlier existing local power relations in favour of the settler communities. The chapter outlined how access to socio-political networks helped these communities to have better claim over the development space in the long run. Collective actions at various levels through these socio-political networks resulted in the creation of capabilities for various communities, and hence better access to the development space and power relations.

Nexus of bureaucrats and local elites including politicians no longer plays the same role in the local arena of governance and development. Since decentralisation ordinary local members of political parties have acquired greater say in the process of selecting beneficiaries under different programmes and they wield their power corresponding to their access to different networks that help negotiate with local leadership of the party and the functionaries of the local self-government. This is more obvious with the increased activities, mainly economic in nature, of self-help groups, which are also becoming an arena of conflicting political interests.

But the case of marginal communities is different as social networks acquired by the members of these communities are very weak. Paniyans in the study village have only a weak network of relations outside the community, more or less in a similar pattern with the situation in the Wayanad region as a whole. But they still have strong intra community networks of kinship and friendships. Many of them still keep traditional labour networks with native Chetty community in the village. These inter community networks and their traditional labour networks have become sources of livelihood opportunities in the context of vulnerability for many Paniyans. But these networks, given their nature of powerlessness, do not enable them to access the development space and enable them to create more powerful political networks. However, there are possibilities and potential for certain livelihood practices mainly linked to new social movement for land, and decentralization and participatory
development, like migration in recent years. In these too, using the same intra community and customary networks are visible. In this critical context, many among the new generation of Paniyans are very much aware of the importance of the significant resources like land, social and political networking, etc which would help them access the development space.

The introductory chapter outlined the entry points into the study with details of research questions, assumptions and methodology and sets out the general theoretical perspective. The second chapter contextualises the larger debate on globalisation and illuminates the significance of the ‘local’ and ‘global’ interface within which the local empirical context in the Western Ghat region of Kerala is sought to be understood with a specific focus on the livelihood practices of *adivasi* Paniyans and other settler communities. The political economy of the synchronic and diachronic dimensions of local and global in this specific context is what gets unravelled through a cultural frame.

Although the present study accepts globalisation as a multidimensional process with tremendous impact on the global and local, this micro level inquiry shows that not all dimensions of the phenomenon are equally relevant in every contexts; instead, global processes are negotiated locally, culturally, and politically also besides economically. These bring to surface certain predominant manifestations of the global and local interpenetrations.

As the context of the present research is directly linked to the economic and political dimensions of globalisation, price fluctuation of agricultural commodities and decentralization of governance assume significance in our analysis. Steep price fluctuations and the crash in prices of most commodities following a boom that drastically changed life styles and world views, a new consumerism, and new senses of identities had to be countered through negotiating the new development space that was getting shaped through processes of political economy. Success of individuals and communities in such negotiations of power and economic benefits help shape their lives, identities and livelihood practices at present.
As far as the region of Wayanad is concerned, origin of global - local interface, though qualitatively different from the current one, dates back to the colonial expansion in the 18th and 19th centuries through the forceful acquisition of the area into a colonial administrative system and by bringing fundamental changes in the relations of production in line with the emerging capitalist demands in the west. Hence the political and economic dimensions became critical in global and local interface in this period too.

The British used many of the existing structures of power relations by incorporating the local elites in order to bring in the changes that could serve their own interests. British capital was drawn to Wayanad in order to nurture an economy based on plantation crops which became instrumental in shaping a new socio-cultural space. This was the primary stage in the evolution of a global –local interface in the area. Main feature of this phase was the complete autonomy of the British in exploiting the resources in the absence of local capabilities and agencies in order to negotiate or resist the changes.

Another phase started in the last decades of colonial rule which marked the inflow of the cultivators from the plains, mainly Christian population, in large numbers from the southern parts of Kerala, motivated by the new thrust in the cultivation of cash crops for international market. In the initial stage, the move had patronage from both the colonial as well as national governments in view of the strengthening of a national economy. Nation-state and its political agencies started mediating the local and global by this stage of independence, but through local power centres and functionaries.

**Development space: culmination of global and local at present**

The formation of a development space in the village, understood as the outcome of the long term historical changes, formed the thrust of another chapter. This public space developed over a period and is one that is accessed by individuals, but on the basis of their collective aspirations for development and also individual capabilities to negotiate the system and their vulnerabilities. This process has enabled many settler communities, including those historically known as ‘backward’ to emerge as
active players in the making of such a development space. But the Paniyans have been excluded from taking an active role in the process and accessing the development space.

In the case of Wayand first phase of local–global interpenetration starts with the introduction of plantation sector with the inflow of global capital absorbing the local resources. This is also one stage in a development order completely dictated by colonial regime. System of governance and economy were at par with the imperial interests of the period. The second phase of local–global interface is linked to the processes of nation building under the sovereign command of post independent governments under which development was a nationalist project, but strongly embedded globally.

Immigration of settlers marks the beginning of development in modern guise in the village. Their entry into the area clearly made a shift from wetland paddy cultivation to the cultivation of plantation crops on the basis of new developmental aspirations they hold. They were the people from south Kerala with good understanding of commercial cropping, monetary value of land, modern education, health care practices etc. Collective action, both political and social, of settler communities laid out the infrastructure of development in the village in the formative period of new settlement for a better living with regard to better connectivity, health and education. New settler leadership emerged in the process of making a democratic state by transferring power from upper caste Nair and some of their local Chetty subordinates in the colonial times to the elites among settler groups in the post-independence period. This was also the beginning of a process of vertical reciprocal relations in traditional kind which was prevalent among the native communities in the village to a more horizontal reciprocal relation among the individuals.

There was a complete exclusion of Paniyan community in the village from accessing this development space. Absence of critical resources like land and education and their inability to aspire for acquiring those resources marginalised them from getting to play an active role in this new process of the making of development under state and collective action. Whether it is because of the absence of these resources that
they were excluded from development or because they were excluded that they had a lack of resources is a tricky and inconclusive question.

There are contradictory perceptions among the people especially among settlers and *adivasis* themselves on this question. According to the general perception among the settlers in the village, this inability is intrinsic to the community whose members are considered as lazy, passive and over pampered by the state. Interestingly, there are two types of perception prevalent among the Paniyans. Many among them criticise the state for its failure to provide them land and accuse settlers for alienating their traditional habitat. This perception is not based on their understanding of modern development; instead, its focus is more on their alienation from resources. But younger generation of Paniyans has started now to criticise their forefathers for lacking ‘consciousness’ about their progress. Going by the rules of the ownership pattern of private property now they now imagine that all the land now occupied by settlers once belonged to them including even forest which they lost due to the ignorance or lack of “consciousness” (by which they mean lack of education) of the community.

In the strong system of vertical reciprocity between Chetty and Paniyan communities labour was the sole livelihood base for Paniyans maintaining their daily subsistence. They were not very much aware about the land as a livelihood base even in that system. A shift in the livelihood base from wetland cultivation to cash crop plantation cultivation marked also a shift in the local power relations. Settler strategies to control the Paniyan labour was also part of underlying power struggles at the local. Though settlers became the vanguard of modern development in the village, in the process instead of breaking the structure of vertical reciprocity, they transformed it into the new livelihood system of cash crop cultivation. They used various manipulative strategies to maintain the Paniyan community as a cheap source of labour without making much damage to their understating based on vertical reciprocity even in a newly developed market scenario in the village.

The disconnect between Paniyans and the creation of development infrastructure was mainly due to the absence of organized leadership and collective action, and the
resources like land, education and political networks which were found to be critical in transforming the developmental infrastructure into individual resources for others. Failure of the state and collective action, which legitimized the new life worlds of settlers, and the settler strategies to extract Paniyan labour into extremely competent production process not only hindered Paniyans to break the closed and monotonous cycle of livelihood practices, but also pushed them into the position of marginality which became the major disposition of their *habitus* in the period of centralized development.

Formation of political parties and expansion of representative democracy along with the emergence of strong interests groups at the local characterised the social arena of interaction among the communities in this phase in Wayanad also. Power relations among and within the communities took new turns and local power structures also underwent remarkable changes during the period. Local empowerment in terms of the upward mobility of erstwhile disadvantaged communities in certain historical circumstances is also realised in congruence with the development of physical infrastructure for creating an access to public education and health.

**Social networks, capability and politics of decentralisation**

Local communities have been increasingly exposed to new structures and agents of decentralization and participatory development since the latter half of the 1990s. It has increased the number of organizational forms in the village and the spectrum of horizontal interactions among the individuals. Local Panchayat, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Non Governmental Organizations which are patronized mainly by community organizations like Church, SNDP etc in the case of this village have started playing important role in the creation of a new social space of development. Meanwhile the local emerges as a new terrain of power relations with increased financial and administrative power to local leaders which is differentially negotiated by settler, Chetty and *adivasi* communities.

But, both the Panchayat and NGOs have not yet been successful in taking up a facilitative role in ensuring the participation of Paniyans in the process of enhancing their resources. Till now, these two powerful agents of change in the local
livelihoods had influence on them only as external forces. Some of the members within the community try to engage and respond to these changes purely on the basis of their internal livelihood dynamics, i.e. whether they are sthirampanikkar or not, do they own land or not, etc. Like in the case of other settler communities, creation of a horizontal space of social interactions has not helped Paniyans to get equal claims over various resources, especially social and political networks outside the community. Visible and invisible barriers, historically constructed and inherited, stop them from accessing these resources freely within a highly asymmetrical field of power relations.

Contrary to this, most of the other communities have established and accessed a wide network of social relations in the context of decentralisation. A new generation of leaders from the village has emerged in the process, using their power to influence various networks and using them as potential resources. Individuals have also attained power through these networks, accelerated through the SHG movement, to serve their own interests and making political choices. It makes patron –client relationship within the political arena fluid and the power dimensions more horizontal.

**New livelihood practices and the development space: understanding a Paniyan pathway**

Even in the absence of critical resources for sustaining stable livelihoods and the resultant inability of Paniyans to access the development space, there are signs of changes in their livelihood practices. 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 state sponsored NREG schemes are some of the livelihood responses of Paniyans to the increasing interpenetrations of the local and global.

Internal networks of kinship and friendships and the trust derived from the old customary relationship with Chetty community are becoming useful resources in many of these new livelihood practices. Broadly, these new practices are also linked to the intergenerational shifts in the world views and the consciousness of Paniyans.
in the context of accelerating changes. These changes would be expected to have the potential to create a new resource base and capabilities for a section of the community.

Deepening the spheres of state, civil society and market players in recent years have been visibly making certain impacts by drawing active responses from some sections of Paniyans. Price boom in the 1990s and the following price fall have created a level playing field among the poor settlers and a section of Paniyans mainly belonging to the categories of share croppers, permanent workers (sthirampanikkar) and those better educated. Many of the Paniyans have started falling upon the state provisions including welfare schemes, but delivery of these involves shades of corruption and irregularities. NREG is a state sponsored scheme creating a common labour space which is found having a remarkable impact among many among them.

Political parties and their feeder organisations are more responsive in recent years on the livelihood issues of Paniyans as result of the increased interventions of civil society organisations including media in the movement for land.

Though large scale NGOs have been proved not so successful in making any major impact in the lives and livelihoods of Paniyans, many youth at present use the space provided by these organisations in a practical way. However, the formation of adivasi organisations like AGMS, was significant in putting up a strong demand for land in recent years. Increased intervention of political parties, especially, organisations like AKS supported by CPI (M) is an impact of NGO interventions in the adivasi life. AKS is found systematically working to recapture the space occupied by the NGOs and re-assert their existing influences by intervening into the state programmes and development strategies. Movement for land, led by both AGMS and AKS was the first kind of collective action in which they took part in contemporary times. However, participation of Paniyans in this movement was largely on the basis of individual aspirations for ‘promised’ land.

Empirical evidences from the present study suggest that intensified interlinking of the local and global at present has created a certain manoeuvring space for Paniyans through their individual agency. However, absence of socio-political networks as a
decisive resource – which was achieved by others as part of collective action at local
for building a development infrastructure over the years- in order to influence the
local power structures has been not yet been resolved even in this interface. But it
has been found that Paniyans, as individuals, are increasingly expanding their
manoeuvring space by engaging actively with the actors of state, civil society and
market, though it doesn’t bring capabilities to the community as a whole. This
expanding space seems to be instrumental in creating a section of Paniyans with a
certain amount of capabilities in negotiating the development space which is also a
field of uneven power relations. However, emergence of an empowered section of
Paniyans with a potential to challenge the local power relations is also possibly going
to lead a process of differentiation within the community in the coming years.