Abstract

The main intention of this study is 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 Paniya 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. This leads to a direct question of the formation of capabilities, agency and corresponding livelihood practices for the community.

Important manifestations of the increased interplay of the global and the local are understood as 1) Extreme instability of the prices of agricultural commodities as a result of increased integration of Wayanad economy into global one which is causing livelihood vulnerabilities for all communities including Paniyas 2) State decentralization (as a global discourse) with a focus on participatory local development and the increased role of globally networked NGOs in development actions 3) the social and political movements based on new imagination of indigenous (i.e. adivasi or tribal) identity. 4) Increased penetration of media into the everyday life in the region, especially with the emergence of electronic media. It has been a constant catalyst behind various governmental actions.

Hence the study has the following major research objectives:

I. To explore the livelihood practices of Paniyas as interlinked with the livelihoods of others in the study village within different regimes of development in a historical perspective;

II. To investigate the role of decentralized governance and participatory development in the local livelihoods mediated by the governmental and non-governmental organizations with focus on Paniyas;

III. To examine the livelihood responses within the Paniya community to the changes in labour and product markets, seasonal migration and social movement in the present context,

IV. To analyse the differential capabilities and agencies of communities like Paniyas and others at present in negotiating the local and global in relation to their livelihood practices

Empirical evidences from the present study suggest that intensified interlinking of the local and global at present has created a certain manoeuvring space for Paniyas through their individual agency. However, absence of socio-political networks as a decisive resource – which was achieved by other community as part of collective action at local for building a development infrastructure over the years and it helped them to access a development space at present as the horizontal level of social interactions- in order to influence the local power structures has been not yet been resolved even in this interface. But it has been found that Paniyas, 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 Paniyas 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 Paniyas 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.