Chapter 3

PRAXIS INTERVENTION EXPERIMENT
Praxis Intervention Experiment

An Outline of the Project

The Praxis Intervention project when carried out had seven phases of which three Phases were in the field and four in the classroom covering a duration of six and a half months. There were three kinds of participants in the project: the researcher-adivasi-participants [hereafter RAP], non-adivasi participants [hereafter NAP] and the hamlet resident participants [hereafter HRP]. The RAPs were the elected adivasi representatives of the local administrative bodies of the grama\(^1\) and block\(^2\) panchayats\(^3\) of Attappady and some hamlet residents. There were 35 registered RAPs, of whom 30 were regular. Among the regular RAPs, 15 were elected representatives [hereafter ERAP]. There were 13 women and 17 men took part in the project regularly for the entire course. The RAPs other than elected representatives (hereafter Non-Elected-Researcher-Adivasi-Participants [NERAP]) were manual labourers except

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1. *Grama panchayat* is the village level local body of governance.
2. The "Block" is the second tier of three tiered local bodies of governance namely the *grama*, block and district panchayats.
3. Panchayat is the name of local bodies of governance.
one. One participant was a plus one (11th standard) student. All the participants were advised to select a hamlet for their field location. Each RAP selected a field location (mostly his/her own hamlet). Among the NAPs, there were two kinds of participants: the project undertakers (hereafter Project Undertaking Participants [PUP]) and the external experts [hereafter EE] associated with the project. There were seven PUPs of whom one was an adivasi activist from an adivasi community, two were dalit activists, one was a scholar in woman’s studies, one was a research student of history and anthropology and one was an activist of the Kerala science-literature movement [KSSP]4, and the present researcher.

The project period was from 28th May 2002 to 10th November 2002. The planning for the project had begun in January 2002 and it was consolidated in a workshop called for the purpose on 28th and 29th of January 2002. In the workshop, it was decided that:

1. *Adivasis* of Kerala from the districts of Idukki, Wayanad and the Attappady block of Palakkad

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4 Kerala Sastra Sahithya Parishad.
district would be the participants of the project for the first three years in three batches.

2. Each batch would be from any one area thickly populated with adivasis.

3. Each batch would be undertaking a research for about 4-6 months with intermittent classroom and fieldwork phases.

4. There would be combined annual workshops with the batches completed their research for consequent three years in which all the batches completed would be joining in. The annual workshops could be used to promote state-wide praxis intervention strategies with the adivasis.

5. The RAPs would constitute of Elected Representatives of the panchayats and the "tribal promoters" working as animators under the Tribal Development Department.

6. The RAPs would be independent researchers who would be undertaking research and speaking their mind rather than just remaining participants of 'our' project in which 'our' minds are put through participatory tools or techniques [see appendix 3].

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5 Tribal promoters are the persons appointed by the Tribal Development Department of the GOK to function as a link between the community and the department.
Contrary to the plans the PUPs had, the project could not have the participants from the 'tribal promoters' as there was unwillingness from the tribal development department. As the tribal promoters were not permitted to take part in the project, it was later decided to invite participation from the hamlets. The participants from the hamlets were recommended by the ERAPs. Owing to some unforeseen technical reasons the researcher could complete only one batch of the project.

The project of praxis intervention had phases arranged in tune with the spontaneity of the participant's learning. The learning had elements of discussions, debates, arguments, games, songs, dances, role-plays, writing charts, viewing movies, listening to lectures, fieldwork assignments, self-evaluations, tours etc. The practice of praxis intervention could produce, 127 chart sheets consisting bullet points of classroom discussions or presentations, 27 fieldwork journals, six songs compiled, 21 days of classroom sessions, eight workshops with PUPs and EEs, four workshops with RAPs at field location and six months of fieldwork [See appendix 1-5]. The steps followed in the praxis intervention project are represented in the figure 9.
Figure 1. Praxis Intervention Social Work- Steps Followed.

Fig. 9 Praxis Intervention- Steps Followed
Phase-I: Introducing the **praxis** Intervention

To begin with, the participants\(^6\) arrived for an exercise in which the RAPs would reflect in groups on what they think about their 'adivasiness'. After hours of debates, the participants brought out the following chart, in which what the RAPs felt to be the *adivasiness* is contrasted with the *vandavasiness*\(^8\) [table 15].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adivasi (Tribal)</th>
<th>Vandavasi (Settler, non tribe)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Lacks education</td>
<td>Has high educational qualification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mutual support is less</td>
<td>More mutual support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Does not look after children after the age of 5.</td>
<td>Looks after children until they are fully grown up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Eats conventional food like Ragi Puttu, Cholam, mustard leaves etc.</td>
<td>Eats 'sophisticated' food like rice, idli, dosa, appam and various varieties of food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Lackadaisical.</td>
<td>Alert and prompt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Rituals related to marriage, death, first menstruation are different from that of the <em>vandavasis</em>. Dead are buried only after three days, Marriages are uncommon.</td>
<td>Rituals are different. Marriages are more important than the celebration of first menstruation. Some do not celebrate first menstruation at all. Dead are burnt or buried according to religious norms.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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\(^6\) The word 'participants' here means all the participants present during the event of making decisions. This includes RAPs, PUPs and EEs.

\(^7\) The word 'adivasi' is the local expression for the formal term 'tribal'. The term tribal or tribe is used in government literature.

\(^8\) The word 'vandavasi' is the local expression of the formal term 'settler'. The literal meaning of the term is the people who later settled.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>9. Does not approach Banks for support.</th>
<th>Takes bank loans. And enjoys other services.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Has less money.</td>
<td>Has more money and wealth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Travel less</td>
<td>Travel more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. Belongs to Attappady and nowhere else.</td>
<td>Belongs to some other placed and settled at Attappady.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Unclean</td>
<td>Clean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Does not practice family planning, or birth control</td>
<td>Practices family planning and birth control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. Stays at the fringes or in the of forest</td>
<td>Stays at cities and towns and some settle at tribal area converting that area into a small town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. To marry pay bride price</td>
<td>To marry pay dowry.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table-15 Adivasi Vandavasi Comparison**

The production of chart is a work done by the RAPs after two hours of discussion in small groups. What they reflect on the content of the chart is only secondary to the production of the chart in which they have articulated the differences. It can be observed that in production of this chart the RAPs could cross the limits of conventional thinking about themselves. The RAPs here could draw
the contours of their social space in contrast to that of the vandavasis. Moreover, by doing so they were also engaging in an act of 'identification' i.e., they were drawing out their differences from the vandavasis. They undertake the act of 'identification' by ‘differentiating’ themselves from their ‘other.’ The work has set the opportunity to negotiate further with the identification and differentiation based on conceptual, political, historical, temporal and contextual assumptions. The criteria with which the identification is made are based on their emerging positions in the social space and the signs with which the process is carried out. There is a realisation that the positions they occupy are weakening; the ‘signs’ that decide their position are market compatibility, urge to colonise the future, consumption of ‘elite’ food stuffs, practice of ‘elite’ rituals, becoming ‘employable’ in the ‘elite’ social order and so on. This opens the possibility to think further whether to let their habitus modified by the signs that assumed symbolic superiority or to evaluate the signs themselves. Evaluating the signs themselves that determine their position in the social space is an option to be political.

We can observe that the chart as it is presented has little to express their political will. The chart just describes them: illiterate,
divided, not caring for their children as the vandavasis do, eat crude food, lackadaisical, without a future, ritually backward, not well linked with the institutions of the state, poor agriculturists, have no market sense, economically deprived, locked within a small area of Attappady, unclean, have no sense of family planning and have no social practices of grand marriage functions and so on. While presenting, an RAP was expressing the 'shameful' practice of keeping the dead bodies for three days before the burial for ritual performances and dances. He also pointed out that invariably the rituals are accompanied with arrack. This expresses a sense of 'shame' rather than a will to be political.

Social thinkers have pointed out that shame is a sociological phenomenon occurs only among the socialised and domesticated [Heller 2003: 1016-17]. Shame for Heller is a 'social affect' that has no natural trigger. Shame when internalised becomes guilt, an individualist emotion characterising one's habitus and thus its reproductive schemata [Lynd 1961: 66; Bourdieu 1990: 57]. Guilt is about what one did; shame is about the self, what one is [Lynd 1961: 66]. Some Marxist scholars identified shame as the “hidden injury of the working class” related to the respectability of the class and the
occupational position the working class enjoying in the larger society. [Sennett and Cobb 1973: 80-85]. For Goffman it amounts to 'embarrassment' and 'loss of face' [Goffman 1967]. Shame is understood in the sociological literature as an outcome of threat to social bond one is enjoying [Scheff 2000]. From another perspective, this would be an instance of the 'civilising process' [Elias 1994].

What should be the professional response from the “Social Work” that is recently called “Social Care Work” in addressing the question of socially ingrained shame? No doubt, for a profession of social care it is an important question to be addressed. Can 'shame' be properly attended with the conventional social work categories such as casework, group work or community organisation alone? Is it sufficient to address the sociological and political phenomenon of 'en-shame-ment' with tools and techniques of counselling and other psychological approach alone? What kind of social action could be

9 Meagher and Parton: An idea(1) of care been at the core of social work values, theory, and practice since social work's inception, and we argue that rehabilitating the ideal of care can counterbalance pervasive and corrosive managerialisation. Unless care is relocated at the centre of debates, policies, and practices, what makes social work (and social care more generally) distinctive will be lost [Meagher and Parton 2004: 11]

The University of Wales introduces its social work course as 'social care work'. In England the codes of conduct drafted for social workers is titled as "the Code of Practice for social care workers." [Jordan 2001: 533]
addressing the issue of shame? These were the questions haunting the PUPs hearing the presentations.

The RAPs could also point out that there are some differences between *adivasis'* and *vandavasis* in their understanding of family, community relationships, social stratification, ritual practices, religious beliefs, life motives, and the way in which agriculture, environment, landed properties and education is looked at.

The RAPs also undertook an exercise that takes stock of their present perception of gender relations. The details of group discussion are presented using the chart [table. 16]

It can be noted that man-woman relationship is conceptualised as a relationship of authority, in terms of man's authority over woman. The relationship is also understood from the perspective of the degree of freedom enjoyed. Men are seen freer than women. Viewing from the responsibility angle the participants point out that men are less responsible compared to women. The comparison also brought out the weakening of trust between genders. The decline is seen as an outcome of doubting 'chastity' of their partners and over the sharing of responsibility in maintaining family life.
The chart points out that the women in the *adivasi* community hardly enjoy their gender identity. It also throws light on the presence of discursive as well as performative production and regulatory practices of gender coherence [Butler 1990:24]. Elspeth Probyn’s remark that the self is a doubled entity is pertinent here. She says:

it is involved in the ways we go about our everyday lives, and it puts into motion a mode of theory that problematises the material conditions of those practices. Unlike the chickens which are presumably sexed one way or the other, once and for all, a gendered self is constantly reproduced within the changing mutations of difference. While sex is known, the ways in which it is constantly re-gendered are never fixed or stable. One way of imagining the self is to think of it as a combination of acetate transparencies: layers and layers of lines and directions that are figured together and in depth, only then to be rearranged. 

10 Probyn 1993:1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Man</th>
<th>Woman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Has authority over the family.</td>
<td>Is a member of the family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Enjoys more freedom of movement.</td>
<td>Freedom to move is restricted especially in the night hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Gets a higher wage compared to women.</td>
<td>Gets lower wage compared to men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Only a portion earned of money is spent on family</td>
<td>Every penny earned is spent for the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Less number of boys continue after upper primary education.</td>
<td>More girls study after upper primary education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Does not wear thali</td>
<td>Wears thali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Does not respect women</td>
<td>Does not respect men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Does not conceive and give birth</td>
<td>Conceives and gives birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. After marriage need not go away from own family.</td>
<td>After Marriage has to go with husband.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Doubts the sexual morality of wife.</td>
<td>Doubts the sexual morality of husband.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Has to pay bride price.</td>
<td>Paying Dowry is only very rare.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16. Man woman comparison
The presentation of the charts however provided a ground for the PUPs for provoking questions of social construction of gender identities. There was a nine-month-old child with one participant. In an interactive session, the participants were asked whether the child knows that it was he and he was an adivasi. The participants thought for a moment and one by one came with responses. One response was that the boy is hardly grown up to know that he is a boy and he is an adivasi: but, in due course of his life, he would learn that he was an adivasi boy. It was further probed, whether the boy would become like other adivasi boys had he been given a chance to be grown among other communities. They were also asked what would be the result if a non-adivasi child were grown among adivasis. Their answer was unambiguous: the children will grow up into persons according to the way they were brought up. The discussion went on to the extent of stating as a conclusion, that the adivasiness or vandavasiness has no inherent adivasi or vandavasi nature, rather these identities are constructed by the social, cultural and economic conditions in which one is placed. Through a dialogue, it was brought out how history and arbitrariness of historical trajectory along with the biographical trajectories, the
process of socialisation, habituation, legitimisation and reification construct the content of our consciousness, personhood and identities [Berger and Luckmann 1991].

It had been highlighted that to understand the current social relations it is important to inquire into the historical processes that had led to the developments and changes we witness. Therefore, it was collectively decided to probe into the importance of the 'history' of the present-day practices, beliefs, and other things [Burkitt 1991: 164].

Following the discussion, an eminent historian introduced the idea of history and the means to explore it. He demonstrated the method of probing 'local history' with the participants. He was dialogically inquiring with them into the possible events that led them occupy their present hamlets, the Kurumbas occupied the top hills, the Mudugas the mid-hills, the Irulas the foot hills and the settlers on

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11 For Elias the process with which the present is constituted historically by the chains of reaction of habitus is figuration. By figuration we mean the changing pattern created by the players as a whole - not only by their intellects but by their whole social selves, the totality of their dealings in their relationships with each other. It can be seen that this figuration forms a flexible lattice-work of tensions. The interdependence of the players, which is a prerequisite of their forming a figuration, may be an interdependence of allies or of opponents. [Burkitt 1991: 164]

12 Dr. K.N. Ganesh, Reader in History, University of Calicut, Calicut.
the riverbeds. The questions raised only had hypothetical answers and the participants were encouraged to raise similar questions with the elders in the hamlets to verify their hypothesis. The EE was not actually probing into their history but merely demonstrating how data could be gathered from the field through methods of dialogue. It was emphasised that the dialogue should not be a mechanical survey rather it should be provoking the HRPs and the RAPs themselves to think and imagine the past from the present with critical perspectives. The dialogue should be a tool for inviting people for further participation in the *praxis* intervention. The participants were also introduced that if anything exists in their social practice that should have some historical precedent be it a tumbler, a glass, a table, the gender relations, the settler occupation, their food habits, or their cultivation practices.

The participants enacted role-plays as a rehearsal of their intended fieldwork activity. The role-play was a demonstration, with many subtle comical interludes included. There were three role-plays presented by three sub groups involving everybody in the classroom. They were evaluating each other's performance critically. They were correcting the possible mistakes they could commit in the
field, like acting like a bureaucrat, being mechanical and formal, etc. The subjects to be explored were indicated: the history of hamlet settlements, the traditional pattern of community organisation and the present status of the community, the patterns of agriculture of the past and the present, gender relations of the past to present, and the changes occurred as the settlers and the government machineries arrived. It was also decided that the RAPs would probe into the personal histories of men and women in their hamlet in order to look at the historical changes from the biographical perspectives of individuals by invoking people’s memories of their childhood, ranging over experiences such as teen age, getting into marital relations, work and labour, household activities, child rearing and old age.\(^\text{13}\)

To equip the participants for probing the local history the workshop provided them with information on the pattern of land settlements at Attappady; history of adivasi struggles all over the world with special reference to India and Kerala; developmental history of Attappady as it is documented in various studies; the present demography of Attappady; on the ecological conditions of

\(^{13}\) While gathering the information of personal history, the PUPs told RAPs the need to be confidential about the names of the information providers.
Attappady; the health status of *adivasi* according to the secondary data available; laws prevailing in the country with special reference to the rights and privileges of *adivasis*; the opportunities available within the decentralisation drive of the Kerala government etc.

There were group discussions and presentations on the observations made in the lecture sessions. For example, after the lecture on the history of development at Attappady, there were heated debates on the issue of development failing to restore their well-being. The classroom sessions ended every evening evaluating that day's learning and its contribution to their research. The morning sessions of the day after always had group presentations evaluating the previous day sessions. This gave the organisers an opportunity to correct their mistakes and fill in the gaps. The practice helped the *adivasi* participants gradually to exercise their control over the project and developed a critical consciousness and self-reflexivity.

The first phase of the project could introduce the idea of *praxis* with games, discussions, debates, theoretical analysis, and information and generate a curiosity to undertake a field research. By the end of the first phase, they could fix their field research agenda to explore: the history of land ownership patterns of the past,
and its present status; land use practices from the past to the present history of ooru (hamlet) and that of whatever is present in and around the ooru, the personal history of at least three persons among whom at least one being a woman. There were detailed discussions on the methodology to be adopted in probing the details. It was stressed the probing should not be limited to asking questions rather it should be an invitation to the collective action to be started in the forthcoming phases.

**Phase-II: Exploring the adivasi life-world**

In the second phase of the project, the RAPs undertook fieldwork at their selected hamlets. The RAPs went to the households and told them about the objective of their visit; they sat with the family members discussed every evening on the issues of history, personal life, on myths, shared their family problems, discussed local politics, walked with them to their landed properties, and talked about the community issues. In general, they accompanied the people at the hamlet in exploring the life-situations and its historical trajectory. The HRP:s did not hide their puzzlement and suspicion over the RAP:s interest in knowing their life. They had to face the questions such as, whether they were probing these
questions on behalf of the Government to initiate any new welfare
measures; has the inquirer, or one among them, got new job? any
external agencies want details about them through the participants
in order to meet any of their needs and so on. One participant
recorded an event, typical of the initial contact:

On 5-6-02 I went to Kuravanvankandy ooru, met the
Moopan and told him that I got classes on history of
adivasis of Attapaddy from KILA, Thrissur. When we
were about to start conversation, Masanan and Chelli
the neighbours of the Moopan came next to me and
asked, “what is the matter?” I told them I wanted to
know the history of our ooru. My reply made them very
happy... They became happy because they said
nobody had come so far asking their history. I said,
“Whatever you know of the history of our people
should not be allowed to die; rather it should be
imparted to the future generations.” Chelli agreed to
this. Then I asked, “how did our Kuravankandi
originate?” “Why are you asking this question” asked
Masannan Moopan. I replied to him, “this is for
knowing ooru and to discuss with our people about the
history of our ooru...compare its past with present and
to think about a better future for all...”
The participants also had their own share of puzzlement. When they asked the elders to narrate the history of their hamlet and of their initial settlement, instead of narrating history, some of them narrated the myths about the human origin and mythologies explaining division of people into kulams etc. The RAPs too reproduced these mythical narrations as history. The myths narrated were about formation of different *kulams* (subgroups) among the *adivasis*, about how different *oorus* got their name, justification of community ethics prevalent or wished, the origin of human life in the world and of their deity *Malleswaran* (Shivan) and His wife *Malleswari* (Parvathi) etc. The *Kulam* Myths they have collected appeared to be the justification for ritual status of *kulams* during special occasions, namely who among the *adivasis* should light the torch at the *Malleswara* peak, the justifications of the names of the *kulams* etc. The myths surrounding *kulams* portray the biases of one *Kulam* over the other. There were even myths explaining ill health, early death among *adivasis*, taboos of menstruation, taboos of certain burial practices and so on.

14 The classification of *Kulam* appears to be similar to the caste groupings.
According to a belief shared among them, the dead become their guardians. The dead are buried with merriment and dances. They are expected to become the Pesadh (spirit) that guards their community. Pesadh, of elders, is the most revered divinity among them. A ritual urn that is maintained in the households of lineages is believed to be representing all the spirits of their elders who had passed away. A master ritual urn, the Pesadh of entire hamlet is kept in a hut called ‘Pesadh koora.’ Lord Malleswaran represents the Pesadh of all the three adivasi groups live at Attappady. The ancestors are believed to be living in the present as Lord Malleswaran. Lord Malleswaran is a living deity for them. According to their belief, as the people die, they also join Malleswaran and continue to live. Lord Malleswaran is represented by a peak\(^1\) [Malleswaran Mudi- Malleswaran Peak] of Western ghats located at Attappady that has a semblance of the hair-tie [Mudi-Kettu] of the Lord Malleswara.

\(^1\) The Malleswaran Peak arousing powerful ‘religious(?)’ emotions among adivasis can be better understood with Durkheim’s explanation given to totemism among the Australian adivasis. Australian adivasis identify themselves with animate or inanimate objects and worship them. They trace their origins mythically to these totemic objects. “The god of the clan, the totemic principle,” Durkheim insisted, “can therefore be nothing else than the clan itself, personified and represented to the imagination under the visible form...” [Durkheim 1995: 236]
Malleswaran is usually the central character of their myths about the origin of humanity on the earth and of their ethical concerns. In their Myths, Malleswaran, equivalent to lord Shivan of the Hindu faith is seen as the well-wisher of the adivasis\textsuperscript{16}. He is presented as kind, compassionate, understanding, listening, teaching, guiding, helping and always visiting them with His pair

\textsuperscript{16} From Durkheimian perspective god is nothing more than society apotheosized. [Durkheim 1995: 236-245]. Durkheim observes that the pre-historic societies do not regard their gods as hostile, malevolent, or fearful in any way whatsoever; on the contrary, their gods are friends and relatives, who inspire a sense of confidence and well-being. Durkheim considers the social construction of God is not an out come of hallucination rather it is based on 'reality'; for however misunderstood, there actually is a real moral power -- society -- to which these beliefs correspond, and from which the worshippers derive their strength. Durkheim observes: The most barbarous and the most fantastic rites and the strangest myths translate some human need, some aspect of life, either individual or social. The reasons with which the faithful justify them may be, and generally are, erroneous; but the true reasons." [Durkheim 1995: 1912: 14-15, 255-262; Jones 1986: 115-155]
Malleswari (Parvathi). They are portrayed as 'ena' (pair) always walking together, similar to the adivasi view of couples. Malleswaran and Malleswari are presented as the most trustworthy and intimate friends and leaders of the adivasis.

One myth narrated an event after a great flood that had destroyed most of the people. After the flood was over, Malleswaran and Malleswari were wandering in the forest searching for the surviving lives. While walking together they noticed smoke from the forest. Malleswaran and Malleswari suspected that there should be some humans there. They walked near the source of the smoke and found a small hut. Standing outside the hut, Malleswaran asked who are all the people living in the hut. The man replied that he and his daughter are inside the hut. Malleswaran requested them to come out, as He wanted to see them. The man replied, "My Lord, I cannot come out because I am naked." Hearing this the Lord Malleswaran torn a part of his attire and asked the man to use the cloth to cover his body. The man came out. He was a very old man. Malleswari told him that she wanted to meet his daughter. To this the old man said, "She cannot come out because she too has no cloth to cover her body." Hearing this Malleswari too torn a part of her attire and
gave it for the woman to come out. Malleswari found that the woman was in fact a young girl. When both of them came out, Malleswaran and Malleswari turned them into young pairs with their magical spell and advised them to live as couple and have children. They also advised the young couple that they should not stay alone and they should always stay in company of other people in a community at least surrounded by ten enas [pairs].

In another myth collected, Malleswaran was once again portrayed as a compassionate person: long ago, there was an acute famine and the adivasis were starving. Malleswaran did not want them to starve. He identified fruit of a tall and slippery tree as edible, and recommended the fruit for eating. The fruit was juicy and tasty. Malleswaran told them to eat the fruit only when it falls. He asked them not to climb the tree because the tree was very tall and its trunk was slippery. Unfortunately, tempted by the taste of the fruit, people wanted to climb and pluck the fruit from the tree. Some of them died in their effort to climb on it. When Malleswaran came to know the incident, He felt sorry for that. He came to the tree, plucked one fruit, and squeezed it with his fingers; from then onwards the fruit was not juicy and it has become inedible. The mathi fruit's
cylindrical star-like shape as if it were squeezed out with fingers, is given as an 'evidence' for the event.

There were several myths collected having the theme that 'greed is dangerous'\textsuperscript{17}. A myth of "Asaka Rock" is an example of such a myth: Long ago, people were honest and bound by neethi (justice), neri (righteousness, honesty), nela (stand point, position, state of affairs) and nyayam (reasonableness, fairness). They always honoured their commitment. As people were righteous, they could communicate with gods. Gods were concerned about the people, about their food, dress and shelter requirements. They had nothing to worry as the gods were with them. Then it was a custom that the adivasis should wear new cloth during the Malleswaran\textsuperscript{18} festival. For the participants of the festival at the foothills of the

\textsuperscript{17} Durkheim in his lectures presented in "pragmatism and sociology" observes that the "myths are groupings of representations aimed at explaining the world, systems of ideas whose function is essentially speculative." He further states "What lies at the root of myths is not a practical need: it is the intellectual need to understand." For Durkheim, in myths "a rationalist mind is present there, perhaps in an unsophisticated form, but nevertheless enough to prove that the need "To understand is universal and essentially human." Myths, for him, "were bodies of truths which were considered to express reality (the universe), and which imposed themselves on men with an obligatory character which was just as marked and as powerful as moral truths." [Durkheim 1983]

\textsuperscript{18} Malleswaran Pandikai (Shivarathri) is the most auspicious of all festivals among the adivasis of Attappady.
Malleswaran mudi\textsuperscript{19} (Malleswaran peak), gods supply garments from a cave, namely the Asaka cave. The garments would be kept there and the devotees could use them for a night on the eve of the festival. After using it for one eve, they should return it to the cave. The people were using this facility for years. As the neethi, neri, nela and nyayam [hereafter 4Ns] declined in the community, once a woman did not return her garments to the cave. As a consequence, it is believed, that the cave was closed by a huge rock namely the “Asaka Rock.” Though Asaka cave was closed, it was not closed forever. With the recovery of neethi, neri, nela and nyayam accompanied by a penance and repentance it could be opened again. For the cave to be opened again a person from the Devena Kulam should perform a ritual for all the adivasis. The ritual should be performed between twilights in the night. According to the myth the Devenan, should sow one bag of grain on the roof of a hut with devotion and reap them within that night and should eat all the grain cooked with meat of a Buffalo\textsuperscript{20} before sunrise. The belief is that

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{19}] Malleswaran mudi is a holy spot for the adivasis. Malleswaran mudi is a peak at the Western Ghats. The adivasis believe that the peak represents Malleswaran’s presence at Attappady. The Mudi is an object of worship among the adivasis.
\item[\textsuperscript{20}] Traditionally, buffalo meat was not a part of their diet.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
with the recovery of the 4Ns the performance of the ritual would not be impossible. The myth indicates the irrecoverable loss the adivasis suffered with the loss of the 4Ns- neethi, neri, nela and nyayam.

Erich Neumann observes that 'the world and the unconscious predominate and form the object of myth' [Neumann 1954: 5]. Myths are rather symbols gathered around the things to be ordered, explained understood and interpreted. Hegel too in his lectures on aesthetics observes:

All mythology is...essentially symbolical. This would be to say that myths, as creations of the human spirit, however bizarre and grotesque they may appear, contain in themselves a meaning for the reason; general thoughts upon the divine nature — in a word, philosophemes.21

Myths for Neumann are representations of 'collective unconscious' that amazingly rises up from the depths of the human psyche in answer to their unconscious questions. The unconscious in Jung's perspective is 'transpersonal - or the archetypes and instincts of the

21 Hegel in Lectures on Aesthetics, Part I, Of the Symbolic Form of Art, WWW.Marxist.org
collective unconscious - as the *deposit of ancestral experience*\(^{22}\).

Distinguishing the unconscious from the conscious, Neumann observes, "It neither attempts nor is able to seize hold of and define its objects in a series of discursive explanations, and reduce them to clarity by logical analysis" [Neumann 1954: 6]. To Neumann, the act of becoming conscious consists in the concentric grouping of symbols around the object, all circumscribing and describing the unknown from many sides. Myths are grasped as, "the symbolic story of the beginning, which speaks to us from the mythology of all ages, is the attempt made by man's childlike, pre-scientific consciousness to master problems and enigmas which are mostly beyond the grasp of even our developed modern consciousness" [Neumann 1954: 6-7]. For Neumann the unconscious is the foundation for consciousness that unfolds historically:

The ascent toward consciousness is the "unnatural" thing in nature; it is specific of the species Man, who on that account has justly styled himself Homo sapiens. The struggle between the specifically human

\(^{22}\) Quoted from Jung in Neumann, 1954: 23.
and the universally natural constitutes the history of man's conscious development.  

It is interesting to observe that the RAPs and HRP s take the myths to be history. In the mythologies presented by the RAPs, the difference between ordinary and extra ordinary is blurred. The time reference given to the myths is always 'long ago.' All these things said and happened 'long ago' is expected to be the guiding principle for the present day life-world. It appears the traditional adivasi worldview places myth where the historical societies place their history. Durkheim while classifying historical consciousness from the mythological unconscious observes that unlike history mythologies are not directed towards the future. For the HRP s, as they are yet to be full-fledged participants of the norms of historical societies we can presume, they blur history with mythology.

24 Durkheim: According to pragmatism, knowledge is essentially a plan of action, and proposes practical ends to be attained. Yet the mythological beliefs encountered in primitive societies are cosmologies, and are directed not towards the future but towards the past and the present. What lies at the root of myths is not a practical need: it is the intellectual need to understand. Basically, therefore, a rationalist mind is present there, perhaps in an unsophisticated form, but nevertheless enough to prove that the need to understand is universal and essentially human. [Durkheim 1983]
Historical societies construct their present on the derived historical consciousness and 'progressively' proceed towards colonising the future. The historical communities thus objectify time and plan towards conquering the future. Similarly, the historical societies find means to spread spatially. Thus we find colonisers expand their territory and as settlers or rulers. The tendency to expand is found in the present social world is explained in terms of globalisation or futurisation. The globalisation is the spatial spread of ideologies and discourses and the futurisation is the project of making investments in the future and constructing the ideology of the future from the present. In this regard, Barthes identifies the ideology that operates from the unconscious of the historical society to conquer time and space expressed 'innocently' or 'naturally' in their everyday life styles itself as mythology\textsuperscript{25}.

For Adivasis, at least till they were exposed to the historical society of the 'mainstream' (which seems to have inherited a sense of history from their colonisers), it seems time meant something different. It is not a 'time' that progresses into future; rather whatever

\textsuperscript{25} Barthes, 1972: 242; Barthes 1975: 14, 40, 131; Cook 2001:154; Kroker 2001:84
exists exists for the present, as there is nothing to be done towards changing its course into an imagined future. However, the time as something left to itself has already become what Ulrich Beck calls a 'zombie category': a category that is dead and still alive. [Beck and Beck 2002:203-4]. The time in the spatially globalised and temporally futurised world has already become a new zombie category, to be born yet alive. That is, despite their institutional participation in the historical time that is already futurised the people remain in the ahistorical past of the mythical time. This event put the NAPs into puzzlement; if they conceive 'time' so differently then the question remains as to whether it would be possible for the NAPs to grasp what the adivasis say and do. That the myths narrated by them have no element of violence or cruelty does not escape the notice of the NAPs. The myths are non-totalising and devoid of self-heroic narrations. It is about food, shelter, dress, community life and a mutual life of non-violence. The myths are about the adivasis themselves. There is no pretension, in adivasi myths, of explaining the ultimate reality, primal being, the perfect originary state of being, primal deity sufficient to itself, authoritarian god, as that can be found in the religious mythologies of the settlers. The human beings
are seen in adivasi myths as engaging in life as it exists. The adivasi myths the RAPs presented do not project a future in the forms of hell or heaven. This should be seen in contrast to the myths orienting its holders’ unconscious towards a future to be consciously built; towards attaining ‘heaven’ or avoiding ‘hell’ or towards totalising everything. The myths of adivasis do not project them towards the virtual future. Instead, the adivasi myths express care, concern, and compassion. The myths also warn its believers of greediness, individuality and un-concern. Malleswaran and Malleswari were portrayed in the myths, as a couple with full of care and concern; they were presented as non-judgemental, righteous, sensible, co-present and compassionate; they are not characterised as omnipotent or omnipresent as it was customary among the settlers.

If it is true that the myths show the unconscious of the people, then the settler myths of authoritarian gods, myths regarding the primal being inclusive of all, the myth of life proceeding towards heaven or hell show settler unconscious, that is immersed into the tendency to futurise, totalise and colonise within which ecological conservation, ena relationships, and a caring companionship could hardly be found.
Probably, guided by the deep-seated ‘unconscious’ inscribed with unconcern, un-care, and the profound motives to totalise, expand and conquer, the settler civilisation that invaded the adivasis brought disillusionment and despair to the adivasis and their physical and social environment. Thus, we find the ena relations are broken and in its place we hear sexual abuse, murder and unnatural deaths among adivasis. The cases registered on the atrocities against Adivasis throw some light on the issue [see appendix 9]. The leadership emerging from formal democratic exercise seemed less self-righteous as the parties that operate from a distant social space from which compassion, care, or sensibility could hardly be expected, program them. What the adivasi myths warn of has emerged as the virtue in the world outside the adivasi mentality. The world outside the adivasi mentality in fact promotes competition, individuality, smartness and a business spirit that looks at every resource to be converted into one or another variety of capital. In order to become ‘developed’ they have to give up the ethos so strongly represented in their myths. The contradiction is so sharp

26 Bijoy 2002; Bijoy, and Raman 2003; Surendranath 2003; Prabhakaran 2000, 2000a
that what is recommended as ‘development,’ seemed such as leading to ill being [see appendix 7].

The *praxis* intervention exercise in the beginning itself put the PUPs in a dilemma, whether to explore further into the deep-seated *adivasi* ethos or to get them trained in the modern habit of placing time as a progressive phenomenon. Despite their poverty of understanding, the NAPs proceeded to expose the difference between history and myth and highlight the importance of exploring history. For NAP’s, people locating themselves in history is a political project. This academic bias and the bias NAPs have inherited from their middle class habit could not open their eyes towards understanding the worldview conveyed by the *adivasi* myths. Nevertheless, there were sound reasons for PUPs to accompany the *adivasi* participants towards exploring their history. In spite of themselves *adivasis* already been subjected to the historical developments. They are located in the historical time that informs who they are and what they are expected to do. The history as it had imploded into their life-world and not their native myth is the reference point that is instrumental in shaping their rationality. Before the settler invasion, it was the myths that handed over values
from their tradition: then, it was the myths that defined who they are and what they should do. History had now already virtually replaced myths, demanding from them a competence to handle the historically emerged life situations. History had already begun its mission of locating their subjecthood. Alternately, there is no way left other than gaining historical competence. Gaining historical competence involves mapping their subjecthood within the historical space: that is, it involves knowing where one is historically located at present. Hence, the PUPs thought that gaining historical competence is inevitable, if one has to overcome the historically imposed poverty. However, the historical competence comes as the whole baggage of instrumental rationality, individuation and rational objectification.

The Oral recollection of history provides particular opportunities to examine the role of memory in reconstituting the past, as a process, which occurs in and through language [Murphy 1986: 157]. The exercise according to the NAPs would provide the opportunity for those who never spoke speak, those who never heard hear, those who had never been heard heard, those never interpreted history interpret and uncover the lived texture and
intimate experience of everyday life. [Thompson 1978: 2,18,158,226]

In this regard, Paul Thompson observes:

the practice [of recollecting memories] brings history into, and out of, the community. It helps the less privileged, and especially the old, towards dignity and self-confidence...Equally, oral history offers a challenge to the accepted myths of history, to the authoritarian judgement inherent in its tradition. It provides a means for a radical transformation of the social meaning of history [Thompson 1978:2]

Oral historians also point out, "For working people to speak for themselves, about their own history, is somehow a political act in itself" [Yeo 1981: 46]. John Murphy, extending the argument points out to make the oral history political it is not sufficient to let them speak rather there should be opportunity for the people to interpret their history. [Murphy 1986: 160]. In narrating history, what becomes pertinent is not keeping a record of the past, but interpreting the present. The practice as John Tosh observes, "has had more to do with the re-creational than the explanatory side of historical enquiry" [Tosh 1991:226]. In this respect Zygmunt Bauman in his critique of oral history points out that the 'remembered history' as the collective
historical memory if not used as 'pool of metaphors and analogies necessary to make sense of the present' by the people who face the history it fails to act upon the social world as an interpretive framework. [Bauman 1982: 2, 27, 28]

Underlining the praxis perspective of history Peter Friedlander notes:

And if there seems to be structure and coherence in history, then there must be structure to praxis. The formal, abstract task of history as a dialectical science sui generis is therefore to formulate a conception of this structure of a specific historical praxis, a praxis which originates within a social personality and in relation to which the "individual" becomes an object of study rather than a presupposition.27

In this regard, Nancy S. Struever points out that perceiving history from praxis perspective is pertinent, as the structuralist understanding of history though maps totalities and coherences showing how a particular system of reciprocal relationship maintains its identity fails to explain the radical discontinuity that characterises

the transition between coherences [Struver 1974:411]. As the life histories constitute themselves not only in the vertical dimension as a temporal connection of the cumulative experiences of an individual but also formed at every moment horizontally at the level of the intersubjectivity of communication common to different subjects it becomes necessary to probe into history that occurred interactionally [Habermas: 1972 155-6].

As the fieldwork was going on as part of follow-up measure, the PUPs also participated in some fieldwork sessions. The RAPs then shared about the initial inhibitions of the hamlet people in responding to the query. This is attributed to their embarrassment when they found something unusual about their fellow members asking questions and probing them as never before. After initial embarrassment, the people started involving in the process. In a workshop arranged at the field location, the RAPs presented the myths they have collected thinking that they had really collected historical information. In the workshop, the difference between myth, and history was discussed and, the RAPs were encouraged to explore historical details of settlement into hamlets, land use patterns, personal history and so on. It was in fact a revealing
experience for them to know that history is something different from myth. As the difference was made between myths and history, they have collected information from their real life. Then onwards they probed into stories of initial settlement of adivasis and the beginning of the settler arrival.

It followed from their narration that the plot of their history thickened with the arrival of vandavasis. The process of history reveals the manner in which the 4Ns (neethi, neri, nela and nyayam) they had drawn from their tradition through myths had gradually been dismantled.

It was about 50 years before the settlers started coming to Attappady. The adivasis could identify the vandavasis just by their white shirts and dhoti. An adivasi woman narrates the incidents of settlers at the beginning of vandavasi arrival:

Then I was a small girl. Whenever we see a man with white dhoti, we make no noise and hide behind trees. This was because our parents taught us the men in white Dhoti are child catchers. We were terribly afraid of them.
Regarding the initial settlements of the outsiders an RAP noted in his field diary:

The settlers who first came here approached the Moopans and begged them to offer some place to sleep. Those days the place was thick with forests and leaches were everywhere... (It is because of leaches (Atta) the outsiders named the place - Attappady). They were not just offered a place to stay, but also raghiputtu (a food item made of ragi). Later they started occupying lands and claimed ownership of the land.

Some RAPs also recounted the memories shared to them:

Long before, we were not staying in one place. We were looking for places to graze, and cultivate sama, ragi, cholam, mustard, and green leaves. We were sowing all the seeds together. Then, we go around the forest searching for honey, tubers, bamboo shoot, and catching animals using traps. Staying at one place was not important. To store food for panja masam (draught season) we dig a pit in the centre of the house and keep them there. The pit will be like a mud pot. On the top of it, we would cover. It will be opened only in the Panja Masam... Kandiyoor is a place where we keep our traps. (Kandi means trap) because animals go this
way. We keep traps and hide here. That is why we call this place Kandiyoor even today...

The RAPs could gather information that displaces the assumption that the ooru moopans were indigenous leaders of adivasis, existing as the authority from time immemorial. The information gathered also showed that all those who are presently called adivasis were in fact settlers of an earlier period. The narration of an adivasi moopan illustrates the recent origin of adivasi settlement:

My grand father came here from Tamilnadu for grazing purpose. Then I was 5-year-old child. We came to Ilachivazhi. Then there were only two houses at Ilachivazhi and there were only four houses at Thazhe Mulli. At Mele Mulli then there were four houses. Then this place was a thick forest. We cleared some land and started cultivation with the seeds we brought from Tamilnadu.

In another field note, there is a narration of ‘adivasi’ settlement at Kandiyoor:

Long before my great grand parents came from Tamilnadu to the place now called Nadukkal. They stayed for some time at Nadukkal. Later they settled at the place now called Kottathara. From Kottathara, we
came here to Kuravan Kandi. Moopil Nair made my grand father a moopan and through him, the jenmi was collecting taxes... ooru moopans were given golden bangles by the Moopil Nair as a sign of his position

A moopan from the melechundappatti during the fieldwork told a participant:

My grandfathers were living at Mysore forests. Fearing British, they come to Attappady via Tamilnadu (Niligiris). When they came the land was already under the control of the Jenmi. Jenmi’s representatives told that they had to pay two anas as Karam [tax] per acre for cultivating there... As the family expanded, the ooru came into existence. Their daughters brought their husbands from neighbouring oorus. Based on the Kulam norms then existing, among our family members, some assumed the positions of mannookkarans, kuruthalas, and vandari’s. The ooru moopan was appointed according to the wishes of the Moopil Nair and his men. Later these positions became hereditary.

An RAP records Mari Moopan’s statement of how his family (belonging to anu moopan kulam) became a moopan:

“...the kariasthan (agent or manager) of Moopil Nair made my grand parent a moopan and my grand
parents were collecting karam (tax) for him...we still continue to enjoy the position...

The observation based on the field data collected shows that the position of ooru moopan is a creation for tax collection by the Moopil Nair. The observation came as a surprise to the participants. Some of the RAPs questioned the veracity of the observations. As the purpose here was not to explore history as it had happened, the facts behind the statements were not verified in this project. However, the observations made here are worthy of serious historical research.

There were also interesting stories about Kulams. Some of the informants claimed that kulams were actually representations of the origins of the place they came from. Raman, a 75-year-old moopan told a participant that his great grandfathers were from 'Devena puram' in Tamilnadu and later they became devana kulam among the adivasis. Another participant remarks in her field journal that Kulams were actually later invented by an adivasi ruler called Kolambi Raja in a meeting convened at Kollan Kadavu for that purpose. In the meeting convened the various kulams such as
Sambava, Anumoopus, Vellakal, Devanan, Kurunakal, Uppuward... and Kuppali were formed among the Irulas based on the original place from where they came or based on the rituals they perform. There were also divisions made within the same Kulams. For example, among the moo pu kulam one group performed annual rituals for their dead and the other group performed their rituals for dead once in three years. Based on their ritual practices they were divided as sub kulams.

There were also some narrations of the life in the past. An RAP recoded the mode of collecting the food. It is represented in the words of a Kurumba woman:

...Mine was a small thatched hut...we were not doing any agriculture those days. We used to collect food from the forest. Later we started the practice of cultivation. On the sunny days, we used to take our little ones to the forest. We dig pits on the earth and put the kids inside the pit with some toys... go for food collecting....

Another field record, in which a participant writes about the memoir of a sad incident told by the grand daughter of nachhi
*moopathi* revealed how precarious the life of *adivasis* have become:

...Nanchi *Moopathi* eloped with her lover. After marriage, they started agriculture. During those days, they used to take their kids to the forest, with them. They keep the kids inside the holes of the trees and sing songs while working, to soothe the kid to sleep.

...One day she put big lumps of firewood in the 'choola' to prepare rice. The “choola” was burning. She went out to the paddy field to work. She had put her third child in the cradle before she went. The fire caught on the cradle, and the kid was dead when Nanchi *Moopathi* returned.

An RAP recorded the beginning of agriculture practice as told by an old *kurumba* woman:

I met an old *Kurumba* couple during my fieldwork. The husband’s name is Chathan, and his wife is Maruthi. Maruthi’s father is Kakki. Maruthi recollecting their experience of growing food crops for the first time, years before, told me that after her marriage as they were finding it difficult to gather food they started cultivating food crops. She said that prior to their experiments with the cultivation of food crops they
were depending on the Noore tuber, bamboo shoot, bamboo rice, honey and other wild fruits for meeting their food requirement. Mango, Jackfruit and jamoon fruits were available. Finding food crops were difficult in the rainy seasons. Rain was heavier those days. They thought it would be better if they too cultivate food crops following some other among themselves. In the beginning, they did not know the methods and techniques of agriculture. They cleared a piece of land and sow Cholam, Ragi, Chama, Thena, Mustard, Thatta Payar (a variety of pea), Ashgaurd and other crops. During heavy rain, the seeds just flood away. Later they tried preparation of land for cultivation using the ‘kotthu’.

An RAP recounts the story told by Ponni Moopathi remembering the hardships in her past:

Today you have food at home. In my young days, we were never certain that we would get food. We were wandering and collecting tubers and roots. When we come back home collecting roots and tubers and fuel wood, it would be already past the afternoon. We boil

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28 Kotthu is a hand tool used to prepare land for sowing on slopes.
the collected food material after coming back home.
This is the daily routine. It was a difficult life.

An RAP, tracing the history of the settler arrival notes:

The first settler in Attappady is Mathechen who lived at Kukkum Pallayam. At first, he came for trade. It is said that Nair came after that for trade. Then a Chetty came ... The nature of the trade was this. They brought head loads of rice, oil, soap etc and exchanged them for the locally available things.

The RAPs also traced the coming of money into their economic life. An RAP viewed that the adivasis living in the forest started using salt very late. Once they started using salt as the people who settled later introduced it, they required money to get salt. The adivasis take honey and other materials and go to Thadakam near Coimbatore to get salt. Later, the adivasis were given money in exchange of the forest products they take to the Tamil traders. Among adivasis, they were not using money in those days. The persons who went to purchase salt for the oorus were later called Uppili Kulam. (Uppu means salt).

29 Chetty and Nair are caste names.
In the words of Nanchan, a hamlet resident, money appeared among them along with the wage labour. He says, "I did not require money until I was 25. It was only after that I started using money."

What Mani, a 70-year old man, says too must be read along with.

In those days, it was difficult to even think of having money. There were enough food grains. Things grown at home were exchanged for articles (like salt, chilly, onion etc.) ....afterwards all necessities were managed through money earned by selling grains or labour. It was not easy to get wages everyday. On those days wood, timber and bamboo from the forest would be cut and taken to the shops in exchange of money.

Their fieldwork gave them a fair account of history of the adivasis. One cannot be sure on the authenticity of the historical data they have collected. However, It is certainly important that they could objectify their history and gain their historical competence. The notes from the field show that they were not only collecting data but also were interpreting and using their hermeneutic skills, throwing away their ingrained biases about their adivasiness and their kulam identities.
Phase III: Collective exploration of the data collected

Field visits always followed faculty workshops wherein the fieldwork details were shared and the planning for the next classroom sessions were made. In the faculty workshops, it was decided that the next classroom phase should accommodate the participants’ sharing of their fieldwork experiences. To make their experience sharing more effective it was decided to break up the classroom sessions into workshops concentrating on specific topics such as workshops on local history, personal history, land use pattern and on deciding the next fieldwork phase. It was decided to allocate the first day for general discussion and the fourth day for providing information for the next fieldwork along with introduction of new themes and the fifth day for the fieldwork planning.

The third phase began with a participant’s metaphorical note:

I can explain my fieldwork experience by an anecdote. There was a box with glass cover placed in the corner of a house that never attracted any body’s notice. Nothing inside the box was visible because dust gathered over year had made it opaque and unattractive. One day, somebody, who knew what was there in the box visited the house and asked the house owner to remove the dust and look what was there in
the box. The house owner accordingly cleaned the surface and looked into the box. What he found in the box was amazing. There were priceless treasures of precious stones and metals. The household could not believe his eyes. He just wondered his status of living in poverty despite having such rare treasures in his house. Praxis intervention is such an experience. We never tried to look into the treasures we own. This exercise helped us to look at ourselves and understand our worth.

The RAP was referring to the adivasi past, before their historicisation, that was rich with natural resources, plenty of food resources, human warmth and congeniality of which he heard from the participants from the hamlet.

The discussion was later guided to be specific. To begin with, the participants required to form sub groups and present their observations on primary socialization of the adivasi children. The point of reference for their presentation on primary socialization was the statement, “our children grow (spontaneously) whereas the vandavasis bring up their children” which figures in the chart they earlier presented [table 15]. The observation made was an example of the participants’ exploration of their own potential for critical
hermeneutics. The *adivasi* children could grow spontaneously as there were no social threats and social expectations from them. *Adivasis* seem to treat children more as biological entities than social entities. The importance menstruation assumes in their collective life may be attributed to this. Girl children's first menstruations were celebrated in the past with the traditional art forms of *koothu* and a community gathering. (These days 16 MM films replaced the traditional performance of art forms.) The expenses are usually borne by the entire community rather than by the girl's parents. RAPs notice the importance given to the first menstruation of the girl children in the following words:

“Girls get menstruated by 15 years of age. They have to sit in the corner of a room in their house for seven days. No males should see them during those days. The girl will not come out... will not take bath. On the seventh day, she takes bath... in the early morning... Then nobody should see her other than the women who go with her for bath... Sister-in-law puts oil...”

“....Sister-in-law will spill the oil three times; afterwards she will be allowed to smear oil on her head... From the first day, up to the eighth day, normally, she is not supposed to smear oil on her head... Later after a bath,
she will be allowed to have food prepared by Guruvan\textsuperscript{30}, along with Sisters-in-law. After the feast is over everybody will give "Mooy" - an amount to the girl's parents for the cheeru\textsuperscript{31} expenses."

“As and when they 'attain their age,' the girls will not disclose the matter to mother and father. They will hide themselves somewhere in the house. Later she will tell the issue to some of her relatives. Parents will inform the morapayyan. He will come and construct a hut near their home and the girl will be there inside the hut... After seven days, the hut will be destroyed and torched; then also she won’t be let to enter the interiors of the house. Till the 45\textsuperscript{th} day she will be staying outside the house, on the thinna (the raised portion of the floor before the entry door) ... those who are well off economically, will conduct a feast one day, between 15\textsuperscript{th} to 30\textsuperscript{th} day after the menstruation...Parents will decide a day for "cheeru," inform it to the moopan and thai maman (maternal uncle). Uncle will bring dress materials, ornaments, bangles, bindi, groundnut, sweets etc., as gifts to the girl. Parents also will buy all these items.”

“On the first menstruation, girls are instructed not to be seen anywhere near the sight of her uncle. Maternal

\textsuperscript{30} A ritual position
\textsuperscript{31} Community gathering for celebrations or mourning.
uncle is usually the first choice ritually prescribed to be the spouse of a girl." [The symbolic mechanism of masculine domination can be observed here.]

It can be observed that the biological events like childbirth, menstruation, and death assumes priority over the social events such as marriage, naming, or initiation ceremonies. Similarly, the basic needs such as food, water, shelter and clothing and others assume priority over the institutions of education, formal religion, 'growing' children etc. The observations made by a participant in their field journals illustrate this:

"Children up to 4-5 years old remain with their mother. The family looks after them. After that age, they grow among everybody in the ooru. Children may not return home even for sleeping to their home. They would stay wherever they please in the neighbourhood. When they are about 10 years old, they go out to the forest and hills, sometimes taking animals for gracing. Throughout the day, the boys and girls remain outside. They do not come back home till it becomes twilight in the evening. They spend all their daytime grazing animals, searching for fruits and tubers, trapping small animals and eating their flesh burnt....After menstruation girls are expected to remain at home. Even after that, the girls go out to the forest to fetch
fuel wood and other needs. However, they return home every evening. In the case of boys sometimes they will not return home for a couple of days and nobody will enquire about their whereabouts."

"There were no marriages. The girls were taken to live with their husbands. Parents decide the partner. Girls are just supposed to just obey them"

"when the boy becomes 15 to 16 years old, he goes to uncle's house for working ("Pennvela") indulges in agriculture, cattle fielding etc. and try to earn good name with the girl's father (i.e., uncle). The girl would be then allowed to live with the boy. There were no formal marriages. The girl's consent did not matter much."

"Even if the girl disliked the boy who came to her father for "Pennvela", she would be forced to live with him, if her father decides to "give her to the boy". In turn if she likes to marry the boy and her father had no interest in him then she would not be allowed to go with him."

"I understood that Marriage was not happening as it happens today. There was no practice of the boy and girl selecting each other. The boy's parents visit the girl's house and decide whether she is suitable to his son. Both the girl's parents and the boy's parents inform their respective ooru moopan on the boy's
parent's visit to the girl's house. Then the girl would be sent to live with the boy. There were no special functions or feast celebrating the occasion.”

“Immediately after childbirth, during the period of a woman’s labour bed [ninety days] it is the responsibility of the husband to look after his wife. Others do not touch her...after seven days of child birth all the cloth used by her would be burnt...It is a difficult time after child birth... it becomes the husband’s sole responsibility to earn for the family’s living and ... the husbands have to cook, wash cloth and do everything. Until seven days over after childbirth, she has to remain outside the house in a pandal. Only after seventh day, she would be coming into the house... only after three months the other relatives come home... until then nobody will drink even a drop of water from there...If they want to see the child they look at the child from a distance...”

According to the participants’ account marriage seems to have emerged later as some among the adivasis found themselves capable of affording it. Obviously elaborate socialising process was absent. Adivasis were less bothered to bring up their children as the vandavasis do. As the socialising process is heavier among the vandavasis, the performance of the children in a variety of aspects
such as being well dressed, having better food etiquette, being
better schooled, married to socially well placed persons and other
things affect their ‘honour’; honour, like shame is a social
phenomenon. For adivasis it is not honour, but 4Ns (neethi, neri,
nela and nyayam) that are of paramount values. Neethi, neri, nela
and nyayam though essential ‘resources’ to lead a community life,
are hardly ‘social capitals’ as the ‘honour’ is. Looking from the
adivasi point of view the heavy social content and the capitals that
frill the vandavasi sociality gives the impression that the vandavasis
are more socially bonded than the adivasis. The heavy social
content among the vandavasis also indicates acute individuation,
which itself is another ‘social capital’. Traditionally among adivasis,
being individuated had been considered as a liability to the
community life.

The participants also noted that in course of time significant
changes occurred in marital relationships. In the past, it was
generally the boys who had to equip themselves to get a girl as a
partner; the boys were expected to please the girls’ parents for
letting them to live together. On the contrary, these days, it is
observed that generally the boys choose their respective partners
and live together. It is also observed that these days there are rare incidents of boys demanding dowry from the girl's parents. However, only the educated boys hailing from the families that had acquired 'honour,' demand dowry.

In the 'ahistorical' past, when there were apparently no documented title deeds, both the couple work on the piece of land allocated by the _ooru moopan_ (hamlet chieftain); there was no sense of ownership over the land. An RAP notes:

"Primarily no one has private land... they lived in the forest since they didn't like to live by possessing it.... Land was then no one's private property, they moved without restrictions of any kind... in those days the _adivasis_ just had to seek the permission of the _moopan_ to cultivate at the place of one's preference...."

"There was no practice of giving land to any body. They just go and settle somewhere. The land and house in which parents are living usually goes to those who take care of them till their death"

"They had no knowledge of registering land or owning it. Outsiders introduced the system and using the nitigrites of the system they have taken away community lands and made them as their individual properties"
“Land was used only for the purpose of agriculture. The ownership was not an issue in the past. Only with the coming of Outsiders and the government, land has been treated as a possession.”

With the introduction of title deed documents, the girls practically lost control over their lands especially after marriage. This happens because after marriage she stays with her husband. This prevents her to be in charge of the land legally belongs to her. As law prevents the lands belonging to the adivasis from being sold to the vandavasis, she cannot even sell her land that easily. As one RAP notes as she was informed by a HRP:

Nowadays land goes to men only. If at all there are no men in a family then the land property will be that of women.

Another significant practice emerged in due course of their historicisation is that of thali tying at the time of marriage (Tying thali constitute part of the event). This practice some observed is an imitation of vandavasi practice. However, some participants observed thali-tying practice was present though it is from a different

Thali is a ‘holy’ twine tied to the woman’s neck during marriage indicating the woman is tied to the man in marriage.
sense than that of the *vandavasis*. *Thali* tying appears to be symbolically representing the *ena* bond between the couples rather than the social obligation of the women to men. The practice of tying *thali* even after the death of the woman on her corpse among the *adivasis* may be signifying this. *Thali* tying does not simply appear as the woman being tied to their men, rather the woman’s inclusion into the man’s family or *ooru*. In sum, *thali* tying among *adivasis* represents the woman being included into the man’s family and community rather than an abstract social institution demanding woman’s social obligation to the man she lives together with.

Regarding this, some participants remarked:

“Tying *thali* was not a practice in those days. Only those who formally marry were tied *thali* by the elders of the boy’s *ooru*. Others who go to live with their husbands do not wear *thali*. _Thali_ was tied in these cases only after death.”

“In the olden days, when girls and boys attain their age, they choose their partners and they settle together. There was no practice of tying *thali*. There was no gathering of relatives. Neither there were any feasts. They were just starting to live together. It was not elopement. The parents of both sides were giving
their consent. About 50 years before, there was a little change in the practice. There were elopements. Girls were eloping with boys. Girls were attracted to the boys who were good singers, dancers, drumbeaters, and players of other instruments. About 40 years back, the custom of marrying ‘Morapayyan’\(^{33}\) was the practice. Sons and daughters of the uncles were ‘Morapayyans’ and ‘Morapennus.’ The marriage between them was fixed even when they were children and rituals of marriage were introduced. When the girl attained her age\(^{34}\) she was married to her uncle’s son in the presence of moopans from seven Kulams. Earlier we were tying only ‘keera pasi’ later it was replaced by thali. Thali is a twine dipped in turmeric paste with a piece of turmeric tied on it. The moopans of seven kulams\(^{35}\) were tying the thali across the girl’s neck. It was not the boy who was tying the thali. About 30 years before, the boys had to do Penvela. During Penvela, the girl’s parent judges whether the boys were capable of taking care of their daughters. If they were convinced, they would give their daughter to the boy in marriage. Boys with the ploughing, hunting, and food gathering skills were preferred. The parents were

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\(^{33}\) Morapayyan means the default boy. If nobody else is preferred, the Morapayyan will be marrying the morapennu. Morapennu is the default girl.

\(^{34}\) The beginning of menstruation is called age attainment.

\(^{35}\) Kulam is the subsection of the tribal community.
deciding the matrimonial choice of their daughters. Sometimes the girls elope with the boys before formally given to the boys. It was called 'Kalavu.' It was since the last 20 years, we find girls frequently elope with boys. Parents allow this to happen. This happens when parents do not take effort to get their sons and daughters married in time. It is only from the past ten years, we see, that they elope, but do not always sustain their married life. They develop problems of doubt, disbelief, suspicion and quarrel with each other and find it difficult to run a happy married life."

Some participants observed that thali tying was there, but it was not necessary to tie thali at the time of marriage:

"Thali has come to symbolise marriage only recently, the adivasis were not used to the concept of tying thali at the time of marriage. Instead, they were tying thali at the time of giving birth to a child, or at menopause, if this does not happen... after death, on the way to graveyard. They tie thali on the dead body of the woman... This is part of old tradition... it is being practised in some oorus even now."

An incident reported by an RAP gives an account of a man tying kola kola (thali) to his wife in order to qualify her to participate in the death ritual of his father:
To perform a death ritual, it requires at least two volunteers closely related to the dead. The dead man whose ritual I was attending had a son and a daughter in law. The son and the daughter in law were living together as it is the common practice here. Since, the son and the daughter in law are the most related to the dead they were supposed to perform the ritual. As the couple was not formally married, the daughter in law was not wearing Kola Kola (thali)...to facilitate her participation in the ritual the moopans present there asked the son to tie kola kola to his wife.... Only after the performance of the kola kola tying ritual, the girl was allowed to participate in the death ritual. The body was buried following the death ritual.

It was observed that, with the advancement of time, the traditional patterns of settlement of marital disputes also waned. One of the participants writes in this regard in his field diary:

When a marriage had gone bad, if it were informed to the ooru moopan\textsuperscript{36}, he would guide the kuruthala to

\textsuperscript{36} The Division of labour among moopans: Kuruthala is responsible for information of death, cheeru and decisions of the ooru moopan (hamlet head); Vandari is responsible for measurements, collecting tax and distribution of the yield from the community agriculture; Mannookaran is responsible for Bhoomi Pooya (earth worship), identification of cultivable land, sowing, harvesting the first crop; ooru Moopan is responsible for the overall governance, allocation of lands for cultivation, decides on land tax and its collection; informing Kuruthala his decisions; participates in cheerus.
manage the issue in secrecy; if *kuruthala* could not solve the problem, the matter comes to *vandari*; if the *vandari* fails, *moopan* would tell *mannookaran* to solve the problem. *Mannookarans* were respected in the *oorus*; even these days they are respected. Their words are usually observed with reverence. If that could not be solved at that level, *ooru moopan* sends his wife to solve the problem. *ooru moopan*’s wife would talk to the women in the family to explore the issue and solve it. If the problem was not solved even then, the *ooru moopan* interferes. If the problem was not solved still, it was publicised; everybody in the *ooru* would be called for a meeting and the matter would be discussed in public. If the issue was not being settled still, the *ooru* would even assume the authority to punish; and in the extreme cases, they would decide to excommunicate the erred person. There existed a similar method of solving the problem when problems arise between husbands and wives belonging to the different *oorus*. The *ooru moopans* of the respective *oorus* will meet only if it is not solved at the levels of the *vandari* and *mannookarans* of the respective *oorus*. As *moopans* have no control over the residents of a hamlet, these days, there is no mechanism to settle disputes between couples.
The family life of the past, and the present was brought under the
critical gaze. Some participants pointed out that in the past the
family life was much more sincere and peaceful as there were
stronger affinity among the family members as they were living and
working together.

A participant quoting Kuppan Moopan's observation notices:

"There were no conflicts with their women in those
days. They were listening to each other. Today, men
expect women to obey them, and women do not obey
them. They suspect each other and fight with each
other. There is no mutual respect"

Another participant points out:

In those days, we do not see men and women walking
separate after deciding to live together. Even today,
our old couples always walk together. They always
consult with each other. They get up early in the
morning, cook food together, and go to work together
and come back together. The young couples are not
such enas

In contrast, the present day gender relationship is depicted as
a life full of suspicion and mistrust. Stories narrated by the
participants explain the extent to which the marital relationships have worsened. An unmarried participant girl writes:

The last death that occurred in our ooru is that of Karumi. Her husband, Palani, killed Karumi. Karumi was alleged of having an illicit relationship with other men.... I do not know that whether this allegation had any truth in it. It was usual that he was beating his wife... the incident had shocked me. It is risky to trust even one’s husband...

Another participant reports a murder and a suicide recently happened in his hamlet:

Ponnan and Ponni were husband and wife staying at Padavayal. Ponni was pregnant. They had a daughter of four years old. Thursdays are chantha (weekly Market) days for the people at Padavayal. On that day, everybody goes to chantha. On chantha days, nobody remains at home. Usually on chantha day, people visit their relatives. Ponnan did not go to chantha on the pretext of headache. His mother took his daughter to her relative’s home ... that night, Ponni and Ponnan were alone at their home. Ponnan thrust a towel in her mouth cutting her throat to death... and he killed himself hanging.
One participant reporting his brother’s suicide observes in his field diary:

My brother is just 25 years old. He mixed poison with arrack and consumed it to kill himself. He was living with his wife in a separate house here at Chindakki. They were not living happily. They were always fighting. The reason for the fight was that his wife was alleging that he had developed an illicit relationship with another woman... he was taken to hospital. He died there at the hospital. My sister-in-law then married to another man recently.

There were stories of husbands deserting their pregnant wives and wives deserting husbands, grownup children abusing their helpless parents; adivasis joining with the settlers harassing their brothers and sisters and settlers harassing adivasis and so on. Some of the participants pointed out that all these things happen because these days family members hardly work together. Each one goes searching for one’s own job, but returns home fully drunk. Usually the men come home drunk and quarrel with their wives. The wives earn and look after their children.
In a critically oriented discussion, it was remarked that the common space among the family members is shrinking. The major factor that was maintaining the family affinity in the past was the collective labour of the family members; the family members were working together to make a living. Presently, as the collective or family agriculture practices had almost ended, family members rarely work together. They work for the settlers individually. The changes brought in their social life made the members of the family economically independent as every adult could earn an income, however meagre, to meet their minimal needs. The economic independence, especially when their income is meagre, let the individuals remain aloof from one another, holding on to their individual income. Neither in the past, nor in the present, the social pressures such as being responsible to one's family, maintaining 'family honour' keeping one's family 'renowned' were operating on the adivasi individuals. The economic independence of the individuals in the absence of social pressures and without rigid familial norms, had contributed to the reduction of the shared space among the family members. Rather, sometimes it has created shared spaces in the work places. The family members staying
under one roof having private spaces in the absence of institutionalised family norms had in fact aggravated dissimilarities, suspicions and disputes among the individuals. As, the mothers are expected to take care of their children, the women were the worst hit as they have to struggle for their own and their children's survival. Husband deserting wife and coming back is not a rare experience among the adivasi women. The following narration given in the classroom as it was told to an RAP by an HRP woman, pictures the plight of the adivasi women:

I was a housemaid at a vandavasi house even as a child of 10. We had no food at home; therefore, I had to work as a housemaid. Later I started going for work outside. I used to get Rs. 35 a day. Of that, I would get nothing as my share. My parents would take all that I earn. I got married when I was 18. Today I am 28 years old. ... My husband deserted me when I was pregnant. My days of pregnancy were the days of hunger... I delivered at my parents' house. It was a stillbirth. After months, my husband returned. By that time, he was ill. I conceived again and gave birth to my son ...later two children were born. My husband's illness became severe by that time. We took him to hospital and the doctor said he was affected by
Tuberculosis. As he was ill, he could not go out to work. I had to manage everything from earning to cooking. As we feel hungry, sometimes we live by eating mustard leaves.

The participants could think over the fractured marital relationships prevalent among them. A story narrated by a participant as he heard from his fieldwork captures the fragile marital bond, as it exists today:

I am given in marriage to my husband's family when I was barely 16 years old. There was no marriage ceremony. I was taken to my husband's house. I saw him for the first time at his house. It was like that. Then there was no marriage. Girls were just taken to the boy's house. Parents decide the partner. We just had to obey them. ... Then, my husband was 23 years old. We were happy. I became pregnant after eight months of living together with him. I gave birth to a boy at home. ... later I gave birth to three other children. When I was eight months pregnant of my fourth child my husband just absconded from our ooru, without informing me about his whereabouts. Nobody knew where he went. Usually it should be the husband who should look after his wife during pregnancy and after Childbirth.... My husband's mother was too old to
maintain the family and me, especially when I could not earn. She also had to take the burden of my three children. Amidst these difficulties, I gave birth to my fourth child. My mother-in-law could not toil further to meet our both ends needs. She felt sorry for her unviability in looking after my children and me. She asked whether I could go back to my house until my husband reappeared. My parents were informed. They came and took me with them. Six months later, my husband came back. Knowing that he had come back, I went to his house the next day. My mother-in-law was angry with him. She felt sorry for her son’s behaviour. She told that he does not deserve my love. She also said that it is foolish to come to him, as he had been too cruel to me. To her and to me, he promised that he would never leave me. As it is the custom that we should live as a separate family after childbirth, he said that he would settle a house at Chindakki. This is because, at Chindakki, finding a job was comparatively easier. We came here, and he became a regular worker in the farm. ... Later we settled at Chindakki with children.... Years passed. The children grew up. ... My second child studied up to the 10th standard. My children got married.... Now my husband has left me once again. He got his retirement benefit Rs. 45,000/- with that money, he went to his home and now living with his brother... He accuses me that I used black
magic against him. I know that now he has another woman. I am now alone, and I have just five goats.

The unfair family relationships as it exists are further illustrated by one participant's life experience:

My father died when my mother was having me in her womb. As my father demised, she had to go to her parents, to give birth to me leaving behind our home. For nine months, my house was left unoccupied. Using this occasion, my paternal uncle, who was settled nearby, taken away everything he found useful from there. When my widowed mother returned to our house, she found it was empty. Everything including grain, utensils, etc., were taken away. When we returned, none of my relatives from my father's side were kind enough to inquire our well-being. When asked why they did they emptied the house my uncle told that he had taken away everything because they belonged to his demised brother. He justified his action saying that my mother could have no claim over the things he left during his death, as it was not her earnings. Despite hostility from my father's relatives, my mother stayed there, as she thought that was only proper. My mother stayed there and struggled for our survival. It was not easy for her to survive. When everybody had men at their home to prepare land for
shift-and-burn\textsuperscript{37} cultivation, we had none on our side. In fact, according to the practice existing in the community, men help women in distress and widows in clearing the forest for cultivation. Whoever came to help us were stopped from helping us. Without somebody supporting, it was impossible to make a living. As my mother could not live there, leaving everything behind, she left my father’s place and settled near her parent’s house.

The story of Masani, an adivasi woman worked as a house cleaner, as her son told it to one participant, sketches the torn life of adivasis:

My father’s name is Maniyan, and my mother is Masani. I have a younger brother and a younger sister. We were living at Nakkupathy Pirivu…. A Malayali family lured my parents to work for them. Driven by hunger, my mother agreed to work as a house cleaner at the Malayali household.

She was doing every work from looking after their cattle to washing and cleaning at the Malayali household. For her work she was just paid two rupees a day, and stale food. My father was working as a

\textsuperscript{37} Prior to 1950 it is a common practice that the forestland was cleared by slashing burning plants over a small area, and cultivating food crops. The land will be used for three years and the cultivation would be shifted to another location. This practice is called "shift-burn-agriculture."
firewood cutter. They could manage to bring home stale food from the Malayali household and about ½ kilo of rice every day.

At times, she had even to ‘steal’ stale food from the cattle bowl meant to be given to the cattle to feed us. ... My father died when he was 25. Then I was seven years old, my sister was five years old and my brother was just three years old. ... After his death, we had no means to live. My mother somehow managed to bring us food. She was with us for about a year....

Living in an unbearable poverty, she obliged to run away with a Malayali man leaving us at abeyance. As she left, we had nobody to look after us and we grew by ourselves begging, wandering and sometimes working for the settlers. My brother was taken by my uncle as his servant; my sister was taken as a housemaid at Calicut and I became a hotel boy at Coimbatore...

After working many years, we came back one by one to our ooru. My sister came back first and we brothers followed. As the Malayali deserted my mother, she too came back to us, but as she had left us at abeyance we did not allow her to stay with us...She was wandering here in the streets for a few days and went back to the Malayali. One day, we got the information that the Malayali had beaten up our mother to death.
When we went to the Malayali's house, we saw that our mother was tied and strangled to death...we brought her body and buried at our ooru...

The story of Masani depicts multiple dimensions of adivasi life in its relation to the settler sociality. The new social reality that imposed servitude on the entire family within an unsafe socialisation in the making had taken its hard turn on the family.

Not everybody agreed that the life of women is deteriorating only today. Some participants observed that even in the past the women were sufferers:

"Women were slaves during early periods.... those days women used to work hard both in houses and forests. Nowadays there is change in attitudes. Women have positions in government bodies. These days adivasi women can become panchayat members representing even the vandavasis. This could not be even imagined in the past."

"Earlier men were getting property... No property to women... but nowadays both men and women gets land property..."
Some had pointed out with the arrival of vandavasis there were more restriction on women:

During our childhood, we were not allowed to go to schools. If girls get out of the house they were told, the vandavasis will take them away. So, they were confined in the houses looking after the younger ones.

The narrations suggest that the social life of adivasis is undergoing a change of which the individuals or the community has no control. Individualisation process that has currently spread its effects the world over has made deep impact on the adivasi life-world. It has withered away the community and family bonds among them. There was no historical necessity for the adivasis to go under the rigorous socialisation as the settler communities and other religious/historical communities had. While the rigorous socialisation could mitigate the effect of individualisation among the settlers, its absence made adivasis vulnerable and unrepairable with the later ‘development’ efforts that could hardly look beyond economic criteria. The settler society in this context took the role of both as an actual and effective agent of change in the life of the adivasis. Despite the fact that the change has only brought the adivasi
suffering and dismantlement, the exposure (to the settler ethos) has destined them to look at the settler society as the model to be emulated.

The discussion on the changes occurred in their family life is followed by the discussion on the emergence of labour relations among the adivasis. The participants after discussing in groups came out with an observation: The idea of money was unknown to the traditional community. Money when it was introduced had only ritual significance. Money emerged as the medium for bride price. Working for others to earn money was unknown to them. They were working for themselves under the guide ship of ‘mannookaran’, the ritual head of agricultural practices in the traditional social system. Mannookaran identified the lands suitable for shift and burn cultivation. The ooru moopan accordingly allocated the lands to be cultivated to the families in the ooru. The ooru moopan in return collected tax in kind to be handed over to the Jenmi, the landlord. Adivasis were practicing rain fed cultivation. They cultivated varieties of maize, pulses and leafy vegetables. There was a practice of sowing 13 varieties of crops together and harvesting them throughout the year. Under the British rule, they worked as labourers
in cutting trees in 1940s. Moopil Nair, the Jenmi, used their labour extensively to cut trees in the 1960’s before he had to hand over the land under his control to the government. In the late 50’s the settlers occupied lands, mostly in the riverbeds. As the adivasis preferred to stay in the slopes, there was no clash with the settlers. Settlers from Tamilnadu and Kerala brought new crops such as onion, new vegetables, coconut, new varieties of paddy, plantain, banana, sugarcane, groundnut, cotton and other crops. The Tamil settlers introduced irrigated agriculture. The Malayali settlers brought with them new crops like arecanut, coconut, new varieties of paddy, pepper, cardamom and other horticultural crops. Initially settlers brought their labourers with them and later adivasis became their labourers. Among adivasis, Irulas first became labourers followed by the Mudugas, but Kurumbas restrained themselves from becoming other’s labourers till date. The traditional system of adivasis working collectively under the leadership of mannookaran gradually collapsed as the shift and burn cultivation was banned by the government. Since, the settlers already occupied the riverbeds, the adivasis, were given title deeds by the government to ‘own’ lands on the slopes. As slopes are hardly re-usable under frequent cultivation,
the lands belonging to *adivasis* became unusable and infertile because of soil erosion. This had led them depending on the *vandavasis* for labour and livelihood. The *adivasis* becoming labourers had altered their daily life cycle and food habits. Hotels emerged at Attappady to accommodate the food requirement of the labourers. Hotels introduced, new food items like *parotta*, tea and beef. Rice was known to them earlier. They were traditionally cultivating rain fed varieties of rice. Rice was not a major food item. Rather they were more familiar with varieties of millets, maize and *ragi* as their staple food. Millets, maize and *ragi* required pounding. Compared to millets, cooking rice was easier and rice gradually emerged as their major staple food. In the process, men and women were introduced to arrack, consumption of which was unknown to them. Later they also learnt to distil arrack at their hamlets. There were practices of bonded labour, under which the entire family was expected to work for a settler family for a sum of Rs. 1000-3000 a year. Later, the system of bonded labour was abolished by law. Presently, the *adivasis* hardly practise any agriculture in their land, as the land does not yield. Further, the increased number of wild bores and frequent crop destruction by elephants prevented them
from undertaking agriculture. As the cumulative effect of all, that had historically happened to them the *adivasis* became impoverished. The recognition of their impoverishment followed by government sponsored development activities and the presence of non-governmental organisations working towards ‘development’.

Later, they undertook a critical over view of their history of agriculture practices and came out with observations: Traditionally, *neethi, neri, nela* and *nyayam* were considered to be integral to the practice of agriculture. It was believed that the *4Ns* of the *adivasi* community had direct link to the agricultural yield. It was believed that *Mannookaran’s* ritual purity and personal conduct are decisive factors in a better agricultural yield. Hence, the *mannookaran* to preserve his ritual purity avoided attending death rituals. With the *vandavasis* practicing agriculture with no reverence to the *4Ns*, and yet having better yields gradually broke *adivasi* faith in the relation between the *4Ns* and the agricultural yield. Practicing agriculture for commercial purpose was unknown to the *adivasis*. Cultivation was always for consumption and for saving the grains for the lean seasons. As the granaries were full, there was no fear of hunger. Further, unlike today, the rivers at Attappady were full of fishes in the
past. The *adivasis* were free to trap wild bores and deer for their meat requirement. Deer meet was part of their rituals. There were specific places where traps to catch animals were kept. Kuravan kandi was one such place. *Kandi* means trap. These days the forest laws prevent them from trapping wild animals. The results of these developments were non-availability of food, starvation, malnutrition and loss of health.

The participants brought to discussion the traditional practice of collective agriculture among the *adivasis*. The collective agriculture practice was called *kambalam* or *rarukambalam*. *Rarukambalam* refers to the whole festivity of cultivating *ragi* and millets where the young and older womenfolk together sing and dance to make the labour less burdensome. For this work (*rarukambalam*) nobody is given wages.

A participant reporting on the practice of *kambalam* among the *Irulas* as he learnt from an 85 years old man recounted:

In those days, the forest was so dense that the earth had never felt the heat or light of the Sun. Even in those days, not everyone was equal. Some had more grains than the others. Some were managing hundreds
of people in clearing forest and undertaking cultivation and some others were not. Some were not part of the collective agriculture practice. Those who were not part of the collective practice of kambalam would usually suffer in the rainy season and would go to those who have grain to help them. In those days, there was no system of credit. If one has grain, they share with the other, but with a condition, that they would have to join in the next kambalam. If they do not oblige, then they will not be supported when they face shortage of grain.

The person, who coordinates kambalam, would be taking the lion’s share of the yield.

The narration continued:

When kambalam was the general practice, a person called Kunju-muhammad came here. He could manage engaging about 2000 people in his agriculture activities. Unlike the people who organise kambalam, he gave wages. People were happy, as they need not wait until harvest to get their share. He employed the adivasis as his labourers. He was cultivating tapioca in

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38 Kambalam is a collective agricultural practice found among Irulas and probably among Mudugas too. According to the field notes submitted, becoming part of kambalam is voluntary and the participants would share among themselves the yield. The unique thing about kambalam is that it is accompanied with songs and dances. The kambalam team consists of singers, dancers, and jesters to cheer those who prepare land for sowing or those who harvest crops. The singers, jesters and dancers were also given a share of the harvest.
acres of land. ...he was generous enough to share the yield with the adivasis. He was even giving wage to the people who trapped rats to prevent his crop from the rat attack. ... One had to produce the tail of the rat for proof. Since, rats were cooked and eaten by the adivasis, they enjoyed this proposal and caught them enthusiastically. Then there were Kokko Paattan and Minukki Paatti. Kunji Mohammad was attracted towards Minukki Patti and he was living with her. Minukki Patti was kind to the adivasis. For one-day labour, he was giving one padi (an unit of measurement) of ragi. Later, with the influence of Minukki Patti, the labour was paid in two padis of ragi. Kunju-muhammad also fell trees from the forest. To transport them to Mannarkad in those days, there were no proper roads. With the help of the adivasis and others, he cut a road to Mannarkad and transported them to Mannarkad. It is during this time the first teashop came. The first teashop was set up at Kakku Padi. That shop later became a provisional store. People started buying things in exchange of money from then onwards.

39 Paattan is Grand Father, Paatti is Grand Mother. The words is used for referring ancestors too.
The anecdote presented here traces the gradual shift of adivasis from collective farmers to agricultural labourers. They also critically looked at the changes the new agricultural practices brought to their cultural practices. A participant brought an interesting observation on the consequence of cotton cultivation, as it was narrated to him by a person called Lacchi Moopan at his hamlet:

To cultivate, our traditional crops we never needed money. All that needed was willingness to work. With the introduction of the Cotton cultivation, money becomes important in agriculture. Traders introduced the cotton cultivation here. The adivasis were given credit by the cotton dealers. Earlier we never used to give credit or get credit. They gave seeds, fertilizers and pesticide as credit to be repaid after the harvest. They take the cotton and give us the balance money. Sometimes instead of money, they gave us cloths.... They have also given us the reason for wearing new cloths. They introduced the Ayyappan Vilakku festival, which coincided with the harvest of cotton... Then it became a routine to buy new clothes for Ayyappan Vilakku festival...
Later the cotton cultivation was not profitable and the traders stopped giving credit. However, the Ayyappan Vilakkku festival continues…

The narration while elaborating the emergence of new practices in agriculture among adivasis, also illustrates how new gods emerge out of new economic realities. Another narration as told by a Muduga\textsuperscript{40} Moopan to an RAP illustrates, the historical origin of the faith in Malleswaran as a deity and the ritual status accorded to Mudugas in the performance of rituals at the Malleswaran mudi:

Earlier there were only the Muduga and the Kurumba people in Attapaddy. They were dwelling in the forests. The Irulas came later from Tamilnadu. They were believers in various gods. The Mudugas and the Kurumbas didn't have much faith in personal gods. They were worshiping their ancestors. The Irulas started worshiping their gods at Attapaddy (keeping stones under big trees)… In the beginning, they didn't know the way to the Malleswara Mudi. They sought the Muduga's help to light the holy lamp there on Shivarathris. So they hired the Mudugas for lighting

\textsuperscript{40} The participants also learnt that the Mudugas were so called by the later settlers as they were carrying their children on their back (Mudhuku) in a bag-like device bag-like device around the forest
the holy lamp on the *Malleswaran Mudi* [Malleswaran peak]. For that, they were giving the *Mudugas* 1¼ *panam* wrapped in a yellow cloth. Later it became a ritual that the *Mudugas* should light the Holy Lamp on the top of the *Malleswaran mudi*. Then Attappady was under the control of the King Zamurin. The King Zamurin was a believer of the lord *Malleswaran* (Shiva).

When the narration was presented in the classroom, the classroom was divided on the issue as many of the RAPs disagreed and claimed that the faith in *Malleswaran* is a time immemorial practice.

In another narration reflecting on how a deity ‘*Ganapathy*’ became the *ooru* deity a participant narrated the following story from her life experience:

In our *ooru*, there is a *Ganapathy* temple. Earlier it was not there. A few years before roughly when I was 12, the children of my age made a mischief. We were more interested in playing... than going to school. We played make crude models of temples. Thus, one day all the children of the *ooru* made a model temple on the roadside. Then we brought pebbles from a nearly stream and fixed them as the idol. Then we placed an old photograph of Lord *Ganapathy*. We used to
perform the poojas there... However, our playfulness sow the seeds of serious thought in our elders who never thought of making a temple. They began thinking of making a temple there. Now there is a Ganapathy temple. I think the most of the things that become part of our habit or beliefs have some trivial start like this. Nevertheless, once we start believing it however illogical or trivial it is we cling on to them.41

Through their research and their group discussion on their research findings, the adivasi participants located themselves in the history. They have done the exercise collectively for the first time in their life. It helped them to find their present life situation within a historical trajectory of which they had little control. They organised their findings and presented them neatly in the classroom. There were

41 The present researcher was informed that in a Kurumba ooru it is a usual practice to worship the odd-looking stones collected by children and playfully kept at the bottom of trees. In most of the cases the ooru is not ignorant that it was the children who begun the worship playfully. In this case Neumann's observation that some tribes consider the state of childhood proximate to the state of divinity should be seriously considered. Neumann observes: The original knowledge of one who is still enfolded in the perfect state is very evident in the psychology of the child. For this reason many primitive peoples treat children with particular marks of respect. In the child the great images and archetypes of the collective unconscious are living reality, and very close to him; indeed, many of his sayings and reactions, questions and answers, dreams and images, express this knowledge which still derives from his prenatal existence. It is transpersonal experience not personally acquired, a possession acquired from "over there." Such knowledge is rightly regarded as ancestral knowledge, and the child as a reborn forebear [Neumann 1954:23].
historians and other social scientists present in the classroom. Their presentation evoked awe inspiration and surprise among the learned audience. The social scientists also actively participated in the discussion asking for more clarity in their presentation. One eminent historian present there remarked, “I have come here expecting ignorant adivasis listening history from me, rather they taught me history well researched.”

As the part of the project the specialists in health and environment had delivered their lectures to them in preparation for their next phase of fieldwork. The lectures concentrated on providing basic facts regarding the health status of the adivasis and the environmental status of Attappady. There were some lectures delivered on making use of the decentralisation initiatives of the Kerala government. They were also motivated to undertake action projects alongside their research as they have already established a good relation with the people in the hamlet.

It was the fifth day of the third phase. A participant, M, took leave from the classroom session on the second day of the phase.

42 The statement was made by Prof. Raghava Varrior, an eminent historian from Kerala.
because his wife is about to deliver a baby. On the fifth day, the classroom debates continued without any drop in enthusiasm. Everywhere in the hall there were chart papers hanging. As the four walls of the classroom were not sufficient, charts with their group discussion inscribed were hung on twines knotted across the classroom. One of the participants in an emotionally charged moment said:

this classroom is divine as we have with us the representation of the world in which our ancestors lived. If we are sensible, we can feel their spirit being present here. We have invoked their spiritual power as we were discussing the times they lived. For us they are our God. We will also soon become the spirit. As we revere them, our future generation would revere us. However, now we should reflect whether we are really worthy of our future generations’ reverence. Are we not corrupt? Have we not given up our Neethi...?

The discussion was ethically charged. Everybody was involved in the discussion. After a while, they were discussing the futility of development and the damage it has done to their self-respect. They were discussing their inability to demand quality when anything is given to them free by the government officials. They were referring
to the weak structures of the houses the government built for them. While this discussion was going on the participant, M who took leave entered the classroom, and commented reacting to the discussion then going on, that nobody is sincere about them, and if the roofs of their houses collapse because of the weak structures they just die and nobody bothers. Hearing this, the entire classroom in a chorus spontaneously said "WE ADIVASIS NEVER DIE." Not just the NAPs but M too was stunned by this response. One still feels the sound of the chorus in one's ears.

At the end of the phase of the classroom session, there was an appeal from the participants that what they have learnt from their fieldwork and from the classroom sessions should be given to their people. There was a suggestion that at the end of every classroom phase, they should write a song consolidating their learning, and they should design dance steps too for their song. On the fourth day itself, they came with the song. They composed two songs collectively and they were much eager to present them before the classroom with dance. The songs were written on chart papers. The first group consisted of the elected representatives and the second one the persons nominated by the elected representatives. The
content of the songs was on the history of the *adivasis* since the coming of the settlers. The songs were capturing the aspects of pre-settler occupation of Attappady: the rule of *Jenmi*, the beginning of agriculture, the beginning of settler agriculture, their being turned into the labourers of the settlers, the coming of money economy, deforestation, deprivation and drying up of their water resources, decline in their nutritional consumption, illness affecting them, the demise of *neethi*, the onset of party politics, presence of dishonesty and corruption everywhere, and the need to restore food security, and resistance to corruption, their dream of the future etc. The elected representatives had written in their chart "Elected Representatives" appearing to claim the authorship of the song. (See appendix 8) The claim of authorship by the elected representatives did not go well with the others. They resisted the claim on the authorship of the song, whose ideas had come from all the participants’ fieldwork. They decided to boycott the song. There was a debate on the ethics of claiming ownership of ideas that had been collectively generated by all. Later, the elected representatives removed their name from the chart pleading an apology for their
mistake. Only after a settlement reached, both the groups combined presented their songs with dances.

The final session of the third phase was set-aside for making decision on the research activities to be carried out in the next fieldwork phase. The participants decided that the next phase of fieldwork should concentrate on the issues of health. The research agenda for the next phase was fixed upon as follows:

1. Understanding health issues, tracing the interconnectedness of food nutrition, water quality and other such issues.
2. Intensifying the studies already taken up.
3. Improving the dialogue possibilities with the people in the selected hamlets for praxis intervention and gradually taking in them as partners in the reflexive process and social action.
4. Study of the ecological degradation/improvement in the past four decades.

**Phase IV: The Beginning of Collective Action**

The fourth phase is marked with the beginning of field level activity. There was a project at Attappady namely Attappady Hill Area Development Society [AHADS]. It is a multi million project, aimed at restoring the ecological fertility of Attappady. The project for some reason distanced itself from the institutions of the local
governance. There were no healthy communication existed between the local governments and the project management. The project had its field level micro units. People associated with it gained as the project gave daily wage employment through its micro units. While the researchers of the praxis undertaking their field research, they observed that the persons from the AHADS project were removing shrubs, herbs, creepers and climbers including small bushes on the hilly landscapes of Pudur. When the researchers asked the micro units of AHADS the logic behind clearing off the hills of the plants, they could not give a proper answer. For them, it was only an employment opportunity. Later the researchers learnt that the plants were removed to plant new trees in order to raise forests. The answer was not appealing to the RAPs, since the knowledge they gained from their research and their lived experience was that those hilly areas were suitable only for the shorter plants already existing there. They felt removing them would only increase soil erosion. As summers are hot here, trees planted there would have only little survival possibility. Besides, their research had revealed to them that most of the shrubs, herbs, creepers, climbers, bushes and thorny plants grew over there were believed to be plants having medicinal
values. These plants were also giving abode to the birds, reptiles, insects and small animals. Some of the plants were ideal for honeybees to have their hives. Pointing these things, they wanted to stop the plant clearing activity. The local officials of AHADS were not willing to stop the activity. The people involved in the clearing activity did not want the activity stopped, as it gives employment to them. Some of the researchers involved in the protest against clearing the plants were elected representatives. They had a problem in intervening as it would result in antagonizing a few who were seeking employment through this activity. However, they decided to resist the activity as it appeared to them an activity detrimental to the ecology, soil health and other living beings living over there. The ERAPs from Pudur panchayat subsequently passed a resolution in their panchayat against clearing the plants and stopped the activity for a temporary period. Later, when verified with ecologists, one was told that the insightful activity of the participants was in fact justifiable in terms of the knowledge available about the conservation of the eco-system.

The *praxis* intervention project had brought obvious changes in the participants' behaviour. In some cases, extreme changes were
observed. There was a participant called J\(^{43}\). He was an elected representative too. People observed obvious changes in his behaviour. He had stopped drinking and started attending his official works. Earlier, he never used to comment on anything while attending public meetings whereas he had become sharp in his comments. A government doctor residing at Pudur expressed surprise over the changes happening to J. It appeared that he had taken things to an extreme; he was advocating to everyone that they should return to the traditional *adivasi* life style. He has rather himself started practicing the traditional *adivasi* life style as he learnt from his fieldwork. He stopped eating rice; instead, he consumed only the traditional *adivasi* food. He was not practicing agriculture for years as he was in active party politics and later became a panchayat member. He re-started agriculture practice, claiming that he would set an example for the others. His parents complained that some “evil spirit” possessed him bringing changes in his behaviour. His parents visited the doctor and enquired whether he had gone mad. For the local doctor there appeared nothing abnormal. Later

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\(^{43}\) The real name of the participant is not given here.
his parents took him to people who claim to drive away evil spirits. J was reporting all the things happening around him with a smile.

During the follow-up field visit to Pudur, the PUPs stopped at a hotel for Lunch. The hotel owner came out of his cash counter and showed his respect folding his hands for minutes. The hotel owner came down to them and said, “You have done a great service to us.” He further continued:

We never expected the people to be transformed by training programmes. Our J has become entirely changed person. We never saw him in his senses before. He was always drunk. He has given up drinking. Whenever there is meeting, J never uttered a word even though he is our elected member. These days he could talk intelligent things... All our people are indebted to your service...”

As for the PUPs, they were quite unsure as to whether to take the changes happening in J as an extreme ‘identity’ position or an instance of meaningful transformation. However, J, along with other researchers had mobilised many young men and women to practice in rain fed agriculture to ensure their food security and health.
The researchers suspected that arrack consumption and poor food intake among the adivasis are the reasons for their poor health. At many field locations the participants advocated rain fed agricultural practice and spoke against arrack distillation, consumption and selling. A participant from the nakkupathy ooru called a general meeting of the hamlet resident and explained that the hamlet should be made arrack free. In the meeting, it was decided to ban arrack selling in the hamlet. They collectively filed a complaint against the sellers at the local police station with 51 signatories. Based on the complaint, the police conducted a raid. Arrack selling was thus successfully stopped at Nakkupathy. Unfortunately, the person who was making a livelihood selling arrack attempted self-immolation. However, his life was saved as he was taken to the Palakkad Hospital and given medical treatment.

In another incident, a participant from Chindakki, called a general meeting of the hamlet people and discussed all that he learnt from the classroom. He initiated three-fold action for recovering health status of the people. First, he gave a call for action against the arrack menace, second, he initiated action towards food production and agriculture and third he mobilised people to clean the
water source of the hamlet and fixed an announcement board requesting the vehicle owners not to clean their vehicle in their water source. His threefold action met with a good success as a collective force was formed against alcohol selling, everybody in the hamlet came forward for cultivation and the vehicles drivers listened to the community's request and stopped cleaning their vehicles there at their drinking water source.

At Oothukuzhi, another participant intervened to solve the water issue. Water problem was acute in OothuKuzhy. There is a public water supply system at OothuKuzhy, but that was not properly functioning. The participant met the water supply line repairers and told them of the difficulties. They immediately came and corrected the problem.

There are two wells in the OothuKuzhy Ooru, of which one was out of use as the colour of water has turned black. Later, they found the water in the other well also had some problem. The ooru people noticed that there were frogs earlier, but later all of them died for some unknown reason. Instead, there were worms in the water. The water by its colour appeared dirty. Later the water was tested in a laboratory and found to be not potable. The researcher
sat with the hamlet people and enquired what might be the possible cause of the water being spoilt. They suspected that it was because of the excess of pesticides used for the cotton cultivation in the land just above the well. The pesticides and fertilizers used there might have spoilt their water.

The fourth phase could witness participants bringing out their learning into visible action. They were also seen sharing their learning with the other people at their hamlet and probing with the people in the hamlet and thus multiplying their learning.

**Phase V: Deepening the Learning**

The participants returned to the classroom phase after their fieldwork. The participants were proud that they were researchers. They thought that they have conducted a meaningful research on themselves. They acknowledged during the presentation hours that they could discover that Attappady was greener and more fertile in the past than it is, at present. From their research they could state that the rainfall had been better in the past and their uravus and rivers were with full of waters; and it had dried up only with the arrival of the ‘settlers’ and the ‘development.’ They have associated the ‘development’ with the deforestation, land alienation, party
politics, drying up of their water resources, depletion of traditional food resources, and the introduction of labour-hood commencing with the settlement of the outsiders at Attappady. They were confident that their findings were correct and authentic as their elders who lived through the changes informed it to them. They were confident of their findings also because the responses they got from one corner of Attappady matched with that of the other. In one of the Classroom sessions, N, a resource person, was listening to the presentations carefully and said that what they were stating need not be accepted as the undisputed truth as they do not produce sufficient evidence substantiating their findings. They were obviously dissatisfied with N’s comment and tried to defend that, what they stated were facts they have collected from the field. N told them that despite their reporting what was said to them by their informants it may be in danger of being misrepresented, therefore need further investigations. To prove his point, he asked them about sunrise, i.e., where they think the sun rises. They answered it rises in the east. N challenged them saying, it is only apparent that the sun rises in the east, as a matter of fact the sun does not rise at all. The sun appearing as rising in the east is an illusion caused by the earth’s
going around the sun; similarly, it is important to realise that what
they were finding out may be the seeming truths and it requires
scientific inquiry to prove the actuality of their findings. They were
quite shattered as they were challenged at the things they believed
to be unquestionable truths. Then N discussed with them how to
look for evidences for what they were claiming.

The participants had a group discussion on their fieldwork
experience and opined that the major issue they confront among
adivasis is their health. They observed the health of the people fast
deteriorate because of poor food intake; poor quality of drinking
water available; high consumption of alcohol and women not well
cared for during pregnancy and after the childbirth. An RAP field-
working at Kujur emphatically pointed referring to the worsening
health condition of the people and their increased dependence on
hospitals, “If you want to see anybody at Kunjur, just go to the Agali
Government Hospital. You can find them there. Such is the health
condition of the people here.” The statement sums up the health
situation of the adivasis.
The participant narrating what was told to him at a meeting with the people at Kunjur:

None of us is healthier than our parents or grandparents. The main reason for this is that we do not eat as they were eating and second we do not work, so much as, they were working. Our parents were having food grain storage at their homes. Moreover, they could also get the meat of deer, wild bore, fish and they could find plenty of wild fruits, leafy vegetables, tubers and honey. Arrack was unknown to them. The hamlet itself was inside the forest. There were huge trees in the hamlet itself. Water availability was not a problem. There was plenty of water in the uravus (sub surface water flow that springs out). Plenty of land was available and kotthukadu\textsuperscript{44} cultivation was possible. If a piece of land did not yield, they were shifting to another piece of land. Today, there is not even a trace of forest existing here. We do not have water, we do not have food grains at home, nor do we get a regular wage. Everything has changed fast just before our eyes.

\textsuperscript{44} Shifting cultivation on the slope of the hills. The forestland newly cleared for cultivation was called \textit{pudukadu}. The forest burnt for cultivation was called \textit{Karikkadu}. The land that is processed with \textit{kotthu} instrument in the second year of cultivation in it is called \textit{Kotthukadu}. Plain land prepared for agriculture is called ‘\textit{Airkadu}’ or \textit{Vadikadu}. \textit{Airkadu} means the ploughable land.
There are plenty of references in their field records expressing people’s concern on deterioration of their health condition such as early deaths, child mortality, tuberculosis, poor vision, rheumatoid and other diseases incapacitating their mobility, high prevalence of psoriasis and ‘smoke disease’ [a disease caused by excessive smoking resulting in their fingers decaying and dropping], fatigue, anaemic complaints, skin diseases, frequent headaches, stomach ailments and so on. The participants narrated the stories of ill-health they gathered from the field and expressed their concern.

The women, they pointed out, in the adivasi communities suffer lack of care during their pregnancy and childbirth. The pregnant women, generally, are not fed with nutritious food. Their food intake becomes poorer during their pregnancy days, as their income comes down with the woman’s earning is reduced. During pregnancy, according to the adivasi custom the women remain with their husband. It is the convention that the parents do not visit the couple’s house until the 90 days after childbirth. In the crucial period that requires care, protection, and better nutritional food the women remain starving as they could only depend on their spouses’ income.
It is also observed that the traditional food is now considered to be representing backwardness. The *adivasi* traditional food is considered less prestigious in the households that have children educated at the residential tribal schools. The children get accustomed to the *vandavasi* food habits in their hostel life and expect similar food at home. They refuse to eat the *adivasi* food and parents are supposed to buy rice and vegetable available at the market to feed their family. This puts pressure on them to earn money by selling their labour. It also discouraged them in cultivating traditional agriculture crops. As they go out to work for others, the parents too get accustomed to the *vandavasi* food items like 'parotta' and tea. As the husband and the wife go out in search of work, often no food is prepared at home. Everybody in the household ends up eating outside. Once used to the *vandavasi* food women also find it difficult to cook the *adivasi* food because, to make food out of traditional grains like *ragi*, required pounding the grains; whereas cooking the rice is easier. For all these reasons, the quality of the food intake has come down which in turn affected their health. The observations made remind us of Bourdieu's analysis of taste in *Distinction*. Bourdieu remarks that the desire to have the food that is
symbolically given a prestigious status could be associated with particular *habitus* and position in the social field [Bourdieu 1984]. The whole purpose of *Distinction* is to counter the view that the judgements of taste are disinterested and free of the influence of the *habitus* and the struggles of the social field [Sayer 2002]. The symbolic value associated with certain food in fact overrides the real worth of the food in terms of their nutrition or in terms of their cost of production.

One reason they point out for their starvation and poor food intake was deteriorating neighbourhood relations. People in the *neighbourhood used to be more considerate than they are at present. Food grains were shared among them. A participant reports what had been informed to him by the hamlet people:

"Deer, Wild bores were available in plenty. We were not using guns to catch them. We use traps made of bamboo and coir...Once we get these animals, we take them to *ooru moopan*. *Moopan* share them to every family. Today, if anybody catches them, they keep it secret; they just share with their neighbours. They even sell them to settlers. They get Rs. 50 for a Kilo..."
“Hunger was not a problem during summer as there would be plenty of mango and jackfruit. Only a few had these trees. Those who have them share it with others.”

The instances quoted here are instances in which modernisation has left a community half way into social crisis. The deterioration of neighbourhood and the disintegration of community life is only a symptom of a larger social mechanism in operation. Though the ‘social resource’ of the community got depleted, it was not replaced by any workable social system. The ‘social resource’ here means the resourcefulness of the social relations such as trustworthiness, mutual support, community care, mutual concern, a feeling of warmth in being social and having a dependable community relationship. Individualisation, the invention of the historical process alien to the adivasis, through their engagement with the settlers and the outside social world in general replaced their communitarian life style. Individualisation without the effective social system (with its public institutions or orientation towards such institutions) leads to general negligence. Mutual co-operation, though it was a practice prior to the invasion of modernity into their
life, was not institutionalised among them and hence with the onset of modernity their social resources could be flooded away.

The system of credit was unknown to them. Those who have, share their grain with others who do not have them. It was not expected that those who had taken grain should treat it as a credit and return it. These days, it is not necessary the neighbours help one another even if it is known that there is hunger and starvation at the next door. Unlike in the past, if the neighbour is found starving, as there is the possibility of them approaching for credit, even normal social relations are suspended with them. The poorer they become the thinner becomes the community bond as it becomes economically unviable to maintain good relationships. With the gradual depletion of the social resource, their health condition has come at stake. Another argument put forward was, it was not food alone but the socially shattered status of the community as a whole that contributed to their ill health. The underlying theme of their discussion was that a community that has been psychologically pushed to depression, despite the provision of food material, would remain ill.
A participant stated in his presentation:

One thing I have clearly understood is that the health issue is not just an issue of giving medicine for diseases. I understood from the *praxis* that, problem of health is problem of nutrition, problem of agriculture practices, problem of mental status, problem of arrack menace... It is often stated that if there are more hospitals, and more beds in the hospitals, it shows better health facility available. It is good to have the health facilities, but it signals the status of ill health if the beds in the hospitals are always full. We can say that we are healthy only if hospitals find it difficult to get patients. ...

The participants could travel a long way from the taken for granted assumption that health has something to do with medical institutions to linking their health situation to the history of disempowerment, land alienation, decline of agriculture, drying up of *uravus*, consumption of ground water from the bore well, pollution of their water sources, growing alcoholism and so on. A better living for most of them is to live healthily with adequate food and to have trustworthy people around. They understand that Attappady has sufficient resources to keep people healthy with adequate food. With
the inflow of settlers trustworthiness had gone resulted in the deprivation of food, nutrition and consequently the loss of health.

On the contrary, the scholars, bureaucrats, the local bodies of governance, and the ‘world organisations’ link their health situation to “health insurance” ‘cleanliness’°”° “poor access to health care,” “management of dispensaries and primary health centres,” “sanitation,”°° practice of indigenous medicine, commercial health infrastructure and the ‘public-private partnership’ of medical infrastructure.°°

There was also a discussion of why people consume so much of arrack than the previous generations. One reason they found was its availability. Ironically, its availability has been increased after the government ban on arrack,°° toddy, and other forms of liquor at

47 World bank too equates health to medical infrastructure and recommends cut in the government expenditure on health and promote corporatization (or ‘public private partnership’) of health infrastructure.[Alternative committee of International Forum on Globalisation, 2002: 7-9; World Development Report, 2003; Centre for Democracy and Governance, 2000: 13]
48 There exists a ban of liquor on any sort from local toddy to imported liquor at Attappady. A few kilometres away except arrack, all other forms of liquor are available. The claimed objective of ban on arrack was to save the tribal families from liquor menace. According to the participants of the programme,
Attappady. As it is more profitable than many other forms of labour, many are involved in the production of arrack. As it is over produced, the sellers keep their business live by supplying them at the households. This has increased the consumption. Even children are addicted to alcohol. It is not an unusual sight at Attappady that children about ten years old swacked by arrack. About this, the participants note:

"Arrack was never a menace as it is today. Today arrack reaches every household and hence even women and children drink. One need not go to the shop to buy them. This is the consequence of arrack ban at Attappady by the government. Earlier the moopans were not seen in drunken status. Now arrack reaches the moopan's house. Moopans too drink and fight in the streets; hence, they have lost respect and thereby control. After drinking, men and women fight at every home. Today, arrack has been so much habituated so that without it people do not even dance at death rituals. This has made the rituals less genuine. More over, because of arrack, people die contrary to the objective, local arrack production and smuggling of arrack into Attappady became more profitable and hence the consumption of arrack has increased many a fold."
young and hence they are struggling to live alone. As everybody has become indifferent to everybody else everybody suffers. They decided to handle the arrack menace collectively."

“In my ooru, I have called a meeting to discuss on the arrack menace, there was a discussion on why at all we drink, for that the people said they drink for various reasons such as 1. to get rid of fatigue, 2. to get rid of ill feelings and depression of their family issues 3. to get courage and talk at the face of the others 4. to get rid of body pains and also because 5. it had become a habit.”

“It is a place of ganja⁴⁹, arrack and sexual exploitation. About eight children are regular ganja users here. Even children drink arrack. We can always see men and women fighting with each other. There is no peace in families.”

“Arrack came only during late 1970’s. In 1970s we learnt to make arrack out of Velam Patta.”

“Today, throughout the day people drink arrack. Above half of the ooru is addicted to arrack; arrack is distilled here at the ooru itself. The moopan, who should question this, himself distils arrack. Since many make arrack, there is competition among the people in

⁴⁹ A narcotic plant.
selling them at the lowest price, with the highest intoxication."

"Today, in almost half of the households people distil arrack. Even children of seven smoke beedies and drink arrack"

"If Adivasis learn to live without the arrack, and if they get proper environment to study and learn and live, adivasis would be definitely having a better life than the vandavasis"

"Arrack was distilled and sold here in plenty. One day some members of a political party, with the help of ooru members destroyed all the tools utensils used for arrack distillation and stopped arrack menace. However, it is the same party men, who were instrumental in stopping arrack, produce arrack and sell them. Their party people know it. Nevertheless, when their party people do it they do not question it. This is how politics work in my ooru. ... there should be politics, but, people should not be made scapegoats of party politics"

"... women were not much introduced to liquor when there were arrack shops in the ooruses. Arrack prohibition had been casual to the serving of arrack directly at the households, which introduces even the
small children to drinking habit. Even little ones drink arrack.”

The participants shared their experience of their struggle to make their hamlets alcohol free. An incident reported by a participant shows his perseverance and continued effort to bring an end to the arrack business at his hamlet:

I am the president of Iswarya Club. There is another youth club functioning here. Its name is Thapasya. Both the clubs joined to gather to call for action against arrack menace. The sellers of arrack were told not to sell arrack at the ooru. The sellers did not heed to our request. To catch hold of the liqueur seller red-handed, I gave ten rupees to a person instructing him to buy arrack. When he was buying, we went there and destroyed one litter of arrack. We searched for further arrack and found ½ litter. We poured the arrack on the road and warned them to stop the business at the ooru. We have given complaints at the police station and excise officials. Though the police came and taken the sample of arrack to the police station, no action was followed; the arrack business was going on as usual. We complained against the police inaction to the Superintendent of Police. After that, the police came and taken the woman responsible for that to the police
station, she was warned and sent back to the ooru.
Now the arrack menace is under control.

The participants have observed that other than arrack a major problem affecting their lives is poor food consumption. The poor food consumption is not an isolated issue. It is linked to the fact that the adivasis are not having food grains in their granaries. Their granaries were empty, for their lands were unused. Their lands were unused because their lands are usually in the slopes and it does not yield. Even if it yields, the animals like wild bore, or elephants destroy their crop. A participant during the discussion of the present day poor land utilisation pointed out:

...Maize was there right from the beginning. Pandi, ragi and millet came latter. Earlier, many adivasis lived inside the forest...we were not cultivating in the same land for years. We were cultivating in a land only for two to three consecutive years. Then we search for new land. We fell trees, cleared land and converted the land into a kotthukadu. Our agriculture was rain fed....later the forest department and the government became the owner of the forestland and restricted the shifting cultivation.... The lands in the slope are not
suitable for permanent cultivation. As we were prevented from seeking new lands for cultivation, the traditional agriculture practice came to a halt. As the possibility of growing food crops dwindled, we were left with the only choice of working in the settler's land as the labourers. ... We had to go out in search of work.... Earlier, there were no hotels in Attappady...hotels came here only after we became labourers... With the coming of hotels, we were introduced tea, parotta\textsuperscript{50} and beef. ....We did not know the value of land and its documentation procedures. Making use of this ignorance the settlers cheated and taken away our land.

One participant observed that people do not work on their land expecting it to yield rather they want immediate money they earn from their labour:

Adivasis who once lived a simple and collective life now are suffering from starvation, poverty and suicidal tendencies. Ragi and millet have to be cultivated like earlier times for their survival. Each and everyone should be prepared for this. The inhabitants of my ooru say that they are getting prepared for this.

\textsuperscript{50} A staple food item made of refined wheat.
Nowadays people are not willing to put in hard work. They do not think of working in the land and cultivating. Working in the field takes long time in yielding returns. People want money immediately at hand. Working as a wage labourer gives them money to be spent for the immediate purposes. Once they get their wages, it is just squandered away. They are not bothered about the coming generations. If this continues, our family and the inhabitants of Attappady will die soon. There is no water. Although educated they cannot find jobs. If this continues, they will die without any kind of existence.

A participant observed that it is not the presence of wild elephants that pose problem for their agriculture, as the elephants were always there. Elephants have their own fixed path to travel. When fences block their path, they take different routes and it results in destruction of crops. Individual property owners, especially the settlers fence their landed property; the AHADS project also fenced the land at various places without giving due consideration of the elephant paths. A participant expressed the issue:

The Wild elephants were always there. In the past, they had enough food and water in the forest. Their path was not broken. These days, individual farmers,
mainly the vandavasis' fence their land. The AHADS project people also build fences everywhere. The elephants have less food in the forest and their traditional paths are fenced. Therefore, they take different routes. They destroy our crops when they pass through our field. It is a tradition here that we do not curse elephants even though they destroy our crop. We call them Raja. They trouble us only when we trouble them. To sum up, we are unable to cultivate as some others trouble the elephants.

Some participants countered the observation made by some others that the adivasis think only of the immediate present and they were unwilling to work hard. A participant pointed out:

The adivasis were hard workers; we were slashing and burning, hunting... Nowadays we are not willing to work hard.... Today, work means earn money for survival... what is that we can aspire? We cannot work in our land because it does not yield.... All that we can do is work for others. Per month, we get about ten works. ... With this, nothing more can be earned or saved... When the present is just a hand-to-mouth

51 Outside settlers.
52 Attappady Hills Area Development Society, Attappady.
53 Raja means King.
survival, it is not easy for us to save for the future. When we are busily involved with hardships of survival, we can think only more about the present.... This is the reason why the wages we get from labour is squandered away ... education is not a guarantee for jobs... our water sources are drying up... our land does not yield... This being our condition, I do not know how long we will be on the earth.

The agriculture of the past is contrasted with that of the present by most of the participants. Field notes also contain sufficient references about the condition of the present day practice of agriculture and the nature of difficulties they had to face while carrying out that practice. A participant observes:

Twenty years back whatever was cultivated on this land gave very good yield. Now it is time of chemical fertilizers. There is a reason for that. With the coming of the migrants, chemical fertilizers began to be used in plenty. When they spray fertilizers and pesticides in their land pest would move to land that has not applied the same. Then, we have no other choice but to use the same in our land also. Certainly, the intensive use of fertilizers became a common practice here only by the last 15 years.
To guide the participants to undertake their ventures of agriculture practices there was a session with an expert in agriculture science. In that session the agricultural practices that could be suitable for them was discussed. The difference between high input commercial agriculture and low input traditional subsistence agriculture was highlighted in the session and the suitability of low input sustainable practice of agriculture was discussed in detail. It was suggested in the discussion that Attappady is a draught prone area and hence it is better suited for low input agriculture. Further, it was insisted that the traditional crops grown with low irrigation input could be preferred for their higher nutritional value. It was pointed out that another important aspect to be considered in choosing an agriculture practice is the nature and texture of soil and the slope of the land. It was emphasised that any agriculture practice that would accelerate soil erosion has to be suspended at Attappady, as that would make the land infertile in the long run. The participants were also introduced to the practices of research that they could participatorily carry on.

Following the discussions, there were classroom sessions on legal aspects of women's rights over their property, and there was a session further deepening their research in tracking the adivasi
history. After a dialogical session on history, the participants were introduced to the ecological history of Attappady.

An eminent ecologist delivered the lecture on the ecological history of Attapady\textsuperscript{54}. In his presentation, aided by slide shows, about 350 of them, the EE traced the gradual ecological destruction of Attappady in the past 30 years. There were pictures of dense forests in the locations where today one finds barren land. There were pictures showing trees capturing moist from the air and passing it to soil; pictures depicting forests being set on fire to clear of the lands; pictures showing drying up of the catchments areas of rivers; pictures of a river (\textit{varagar}) that was running live till recent times and has become dried up completely; pictures of extinct species of fishes in the river \textit{BHAVANI}; pictures capturing the traditional agriculture practices of the \textit{adivasis}; pictures showing sites destroyed by development projects and their construction activities and so on. The participants thoroughly engaged in the discussion followed. They could well engage in the discussion, because most of the places shown in the picture were familiar to them. More over they could see what the hamlet people were telling

\textsuperscript{54} Dr. Sathish Chandran Nair.
them regarding greenery that existed until the recent past. The session continued the whole day and the day after. The presentation brought out the futility and shallowness of 'development' thinking and practice.

There were also presentations made by resource persons who believed strongly in the efficacy and value of development projects. However the arguments from the 'developmentalist' perspectives did not appeal to the participants. It was felt that the development projects were mostly projects of raising concrete structures. The participants thought that the development projects just achieve their target of spending the allotted money rather than aim at the well-being of the adivasis.

The PUPs felt they were not successful in bringing the participant round to appreciating gender issues. A few examples would suffice to show the failure. Initially there was a lecture on gender relations in the classroom. In that lecture, it was mentioned that women should not think that any of the activities humans perform should be regarded as gendered. An example cited was, men climb trees so also can women; woman cook so also can men; women bring water for household purposes so also can men and so
on. There were suggestions that discrimination against women should be resisted; women need not always be obliging and so on. These remarks apparently made no impact on *adivasi* women participants. Nevertheless, upon this their visit to Attappady for fieldworks the PUPs knew why. What they witnessed was the sight of a woman RAP fast climbing a tree in front of their eyes with no sense of hesitation to pluck some fruits for them. Expecting the woman to be docile is not as acute among *adivasis* as it is among the ‘mainstream.’ The PUPs have now come around to appreciate that there is a sense of non-difference between men and women of their present concern. The classroom lectures on gender relations seemed misfired because of its mainstream biases and poor understanding of the *adivasi* gender issues. Perhaps, different set of parameters needs to be considered. Problems certainly there were in gender relations among the *adivasis* but that did not come to light with the prevailing methodology. To accompany the woman participants in helping them to care themselves, the PUPs required a deeper understanding. The lectures delivered presumed that there would be heavy socialising content among the *adivasis* pertaining to their gender relations as it is the case with the ‘mainstream’. The
results of the fieldwork disagree with the premise. It appeared that
the issue to be addressed is not dismantling the patriarchic
socialisation content and its banes; rather it is the individualisation
breeding indifference in the absence of strong institutions of
socialisation. The appropriate approach the PUPs felt would be
focusing on rebuilding social resources towards trans-gendering
indicated in their mythical narrations of *ena*. The PUPs regretted that
the realisation came late as the project had already passed half way
through. The PUPs felt there should be an exclusive praxis
intervention project on gender relations among *adivasis*. To handle
the gender issue sensibly, two women resource\(^{55}\) persons were
invited to stay with them and learn their issues. The resource
persons stayed with them during their classroom sessions and found
that the trans-gendering phenomenon is more suitable than the
narrow gender politics with a mainstream middle class bias. The
politics of trans-gendering, the PUPs felt, is the politics of care
characterised by attention, alertness, caution, judicious self
reflexivity, self patrol, self defence, accompaniment and
reinstatement of sensibilities [Ahmed 2005: 18,19]. Most of the

\(^{55}\) Ms. P.V. Shobha and Adv. Vijayamma
discussion on gender held outside the classroom at a personal level. In the classroom only certain aspects of the obvious gender bias came up for discussion. In general, the message on gender relation delivered was that the historical trajectories and biographical trajectories one has gone through might have consolidated some perceptions on one's own gender or that of the other. The NAPs as resource persons might have been subjected to the process of internalising the gender perceptions that were prevalent among the vandavasis. All the thoughts sedimented on gender relations should be reflexively reconsidered. What is important is not one gender struggling against the other or any of one group consolidating their own gender bias rather one has to throw away the settled gender identities and look for humane relationships with one another. The message delivered amid towards diluting gender identities. This message obviously appealed to the minds of the participants. The reference to gender relations as it appeared in their field diary reveals the impact of the approach:

"Earlier, I never used to do the household jobs. I was expecting the women in my family, should do these jobs. Now I do not expect women alone to do the entire household works. Now, I do several of the household
works. This change happened because of my learning from the project.”

“...The difference, between men and women, is only in their body. It is only a sexual difference. One can give birth to a child and the other cannot. Other than this difference, they are just human beings like men. Unfortunately, the misunderstanding of this difference creates problems between them. It culminates in a situation the women have no freedom for mobility and no decisive role in decision-making. At the same time, men have more freedom, better status in the society, more opportunities, and more power. With this, the men dominate women, and they think the women are their property.”

“...The training had helped me to understand my family members and my wife better. Now a days, I do not get angry with my wife. These days I help her in her family work, I look after my children.”

A woman participant writes: I do not respect men more than I respect women. From the praxis intervention project, I learnt that many differences between men and women are just creations of our imagination.... We should understand that whether it is man or women, they are just ‘fellow beings.’
The final day of the fifth phase had group discussions regarding their forthcoming fieldwork phase. They decided after the discussion to deepen the field actions they have already started. They also decided to explore ecological issues, undertaking experiments in agriculture, explore new opportunities in agriculture and food cultivation, deepen their understanding on the women's social life and labour life, and to explore what people think about 'development'.

The fieldwork conducted on the fourth phase and the classroom discussion of the fifth phase had helped the participants to come in terms with the issues affecting their health. They could relate that the unfriendly social set up, ecological degradation, poor quality of drinking water available, decline of their agricultural practices, excessive consumption of arrack, and their overall poverty condition, provides a fertile ground for ill health. This realisation is different from the attitude of treating ill health as bad luck or as something that can be handled by consumption of tablets or with the establishment of hospitals. This realisation did not merely make them more informed but went long way through their psyche by informing their action such as expanding their area of cultivation,
preserving their water sources, and also starting their struggle
against the arrack menace.

Phase VI: Deepening the Social Action

When they entered the sixth phase of the project, the
participants had to face a difficult situation. Of the 15 elected
representatives took part in the project 12 belonged tom the political
party coalition that was ruling the state. The government of Kerala
for some reason decided to divert the River Bhavani that runs
through the adivasi concentrated eastern Attappady to Tamilnadu
westward. The participants had the circular issued by the
government to divert the river westward towards Mannarkad of
Palakkad district in the pretext of supplying water for irrigation
purpose. The circular issued by the irrigation department, instead of
mentioning the name of the river to be diverted, made an indefinite
remark about ‘the diversion of a stream near Mukkali forest office’.
As the only stream present there was the river Bhavani, the
participants could make out that it was a plan to divert the river.
There were suspicions in the minds of the people that contrary to
what was stated as the intention of the diversification of the river i.e.,
for the irrigation purpose, it may turn out to be part of a plan to
develop infrastructure at the public expense for a private hydel power company to be set up in the future. The Eastern Attappady was already facing severe draught and drying up of uravus, whereas the area towards which the water is planned to be diverted is already blessed with water sufficient for irrigating fields. The RAPs brought a copy of the circular to a meeting held at the fieldwork workshop at Attappady. They felt that it would make the eastern Attappady drier. They decided they should study more about it. As they demanded, another workshop was held at Attappady with the participation of ecologists and geographers analysing the implications of the circular. By that time, as the government unusually speeded up the project work of digging canals for the diversion, it became visible that it was the BHAVANI river that is going to be diverted. The participants resolved to register their protest. In order to show their protest, first they printed a notice collectively raising their voice against the project and distributed copies everywhere in Attapaddy. For the local people this came as a surprise for, the people belonging to the ruling party coalition were coming up against a government project. The panchayats of Agali and Pudur passed resolution against the diversion of the river. The eastern Attappady
shares its border with Tamilnadu and the people speak Tamil. It also had settlers from Tamilnadu. The farmers of this place too joined the struggle initiated by the praxis participants. Unfortunately, the media and political parties interpreted this as a 'Tamil' struggle favouring Tamilnadu. The supporters of the project belonging to the ruling party coalition unleashed statements of hatred against the Tamilnadu government and the Tamil minority living at Attappady and spread Malayali chauvinism everywhere. With the messages of Malayali chauvinism spread, there were uneasy tensions at Attappady. The Participants had to give up their struggle as they were pressurised to do so by their respective parties. The participants (belonging to the ruling coalition party) however remained unhappy over the diversion. The incident showed them how powerless even the elected representatives could be in solving the real issues affecting their people. The incident hurt the non-politician participants of the project, as they felt internally disturbed about the behaviour and performance of the politician participants of the ruling coalition. It came as a relief to all when the Supreme Court intervened and stopped the state government from diverting the river westward.
As part of field visit, the PUPs went to various locations where the praxis intervention actions were initiated. Everywhere they went they could witness people busy with their newly begun agriculture activities. One could witness people engaging in traditional agriculture practice of cultivating 13 different varieties of millets, pulses, and leafy vegetables. Participants who kept usually silent during the sessions were now turned to be most successful in motivating people at their hamlet into cultivation. There was a woman participant who kept quiet in the classroom and was unassuming. The PUPs thought that she might be equally silent in her fieldwork too. For some reason she did not turn up for the fieldwork workshop held at Attappady. The PUPs decided to undertake their field visit to her location along with the RAPs present there. She was there at her home. She told them that she could not come because of some personal commitments. She accompanied them to her field location. The PUPs were surprised to see that she could motivate the entire hamlet to engage in the cultivation of rain-fed traditional crops such as *ragi*, *cholam* and some leguminous food crop. It was surprising because, in the classroom she never reported that she was successful in motivating her people in cultivating food
crops. She also said that she never strained herself in motivating the people around her to cultivate them. Rather what she was doing was just talking to the people casually the importance of having food storage at home, as she has learnt from the classroom discussions. She also set a model by cultivating them. She was just having discussions and dialogues with them, what she was saying appealed to their reason. Somehow, the information spread from mouth-to-mouth that it would be good if they have the food grains stored at their households. The modest, mild, yet effective social care work of the participant is typical of the praxis intervention one witnesses in the field locations. It had an impact not only in the hamlets where the fieldwork was done but also in the neighbouring hamlets. Even the elected representatives who had given up cultivation due to their full-time political career had started cultivation.

For the PUPs, it was distressing to know that the political parties could dare to spread communal tensions for achieving their (party) political ends. However, for the RAPs the incident was a revelation in the sense that it exposed the weakness of the party based formal politics especially when it comes to address the real issues of the people. However, the incident was a moment of
realising that their genuine concerns are of little value to the formal political systems. Nevertheless, the fieldwork proved to be hopeful as one could see that the concern for nutrition and health coming out of the participant's research had been given a serious listening and motivated collective action.

Phase VII: Reflexion and Evaluation

After the fieldwork, the participants returned once again to engage in the classroom sessions. It was already six months since the project started. The participants have come to share their experience in the fieldwork. Further fieldwork had reinforced their learning in the earlier phases. This time they have spent most of their time in explaining to the hamlet people what they have learnt from their research.

In the earlier phase N's comment that they should be more careful in their studies and report because it is easily possible that their bias towards one or against other could lead them to arrive at wrong conclusions. N was pleading with them that they should not be compromising on collecting supporting evidences for their statements. This time when they came to the classroom after their fieldwork, the participant, who argued the most with N that their
study was based on facts came to the classroom with photographs meant to substantiate his statements. He informed the classroom with the newly found evidence that the soil erosion has increased as the shrubs and bushy plants of the hill slopes were removed. He had taken the photograph of a slope cleared off by the AHADS before and after rainfall and the muddy water of the river beneath the slope after a rainfall to show the evidence for what he found. Similarly, to prove the point that the people of a family living in the forest cultivating for themselves traditional crops are better-off nutritionally, he presented the case study of a family of five members, where four work as labourers with no food crop cultivation for themselves are less secured and starving than a neighbouring family of six members all involved in their own agriculture practice and food grain at their home. He systematically presented the income, expenditure and asset in these two families and stated the adivasis who work for others as labourers go downtown daily in search of labour but often come home empty handed not finding any work. He was also producing the evidence, even in case of finding work, they end up spending more money on travel, food and arrack compared to the neighbouring family that concentrates on producing their own food.
He was also citing the narrations of the family members as evidences that those who mostly work as family for their own food security are leading more peaceful familial life than the family that was reluctant to work on their own land. This incident demonstrated two things: one, with how much seriousness the research participants took the classroom lectures and discussions; two, responsible research is an attitude, which many people are capable of having without much formal training in academics.

During their fieldwork, they verified the working time and kind of works women and men do. It was obvious from their field study that the women were working more than the men as they have the burden of looking after the family including the younger ones and go out to work as labourers. The result of the study was on the expected line, but it could help them to drive away the taken for granted biases that, men work more and harder than women do. Besides, they also realised that most of the families survive with the money earned by women, even though, the women are paid only Rs. 40-60 a day whereas men’s wage is about Rs. 80-120. They compared the work pattern of today’s adivasi women with that of a few years before and found out that as time went on the workloads
of women only increased. They have observed that earlier the division of labour between women and men was not as sharp as it is today. Both men and women were sharing household jobs as well as food gathering and cultivation. They also observed that even in the past women were more burdened with work than men were.

Their presentations were followed by a dialogical session reinforcing the *trans-gendering* argument. The participants were told that they should be careful not to be frozen into the ideas of identities such as gender identity or *adivasi* identity and struggle forward against all the life situations forced on them historically.

The participants were introduced to the idea of social space, the space within which they have to find their way forward with a proper awareness of the field within which they were operating and their position within the space. It was also explained how people symbolically construct their position within the social space.

The next day started with a presentation on informing about various central and state government agencies and projects with their objectives and about the means to make use of the opportunities offered by them. Following the lecture session there
was a group discussion on how they could make use of the learning from the Praxis intervention in improving decentralised planning initiatives. The participants said that they had a wonderful opportunity to understand the decentralised planning and they have already started using the vision and confidence they have gained from the programme. They said that this time the development report produced by them would be of a better quality than that of the previous year. They requested that one of the faculty to visit them to perfect their planning process. They said that they would bring to the notice of the government that whenever any assistance is given to agriculture it is only for the mainstream crops and not the one they cultivate. Tools and implements supplied by the government are of the type usable only in the mainland and not useful on the hilly slopes. The participants made their voice heard at the appropriate centres, and they met with an initial success of gaining the government’s attention. The Government order issued later in fact reflected their concerns. The government order regarding ‘tribal development’ issued on May 31st 2003 had thus observed:

4.1 The following development priorities are to be followed while preparing the plan:
(i) Putting to optimum use the existing land in the possession of tribals preferably through organic agriculture giving priority to locally relevant crops as decided by the tribal farmers... [GOK, 2003:3]

The document also recognized the:

Importance to understanding of the development situation by the tribal people themselves through a process of analysis, reflection and action to come out of the existing plight, realized in a framework for participatory planning from the grassroots. [GOK 2003: 4]

Their observation on the formal party politics was most revealing. Formal politics has been seen by the participants, including those who are part of political parties, as the major reason for the breaking up of the community life. They pointed out that with the advent of party politics, the 'neethi' of community came to naught. Formal politics with the 'development' is seen as an outsider agenda thrust on them.

There was a debate in the classroom between the politician and the non-politician participants, in which the non-politician members challenged the morality of the politicians. For that, a representative from the politicians replied as follows:
You people accuse us because you do not know what happens in the party politics. In politics, we have less freedom to do anything. We are like the bonded labourers of the party we are representing. We do not have much freedom. Discriminating the adivasis is more in the politics than it is anywhere. The party never listens to us, but they always want us to listen to them. All that we are doing is according to the direction of the party persons senior to us. We are directed to speak certain things and not something else. We can speak only what we are told while approaching the voters. Only the hands, which we hold, and the body that walks are ours; the voice is somebody else’s. After winning the elections, we have to carry out what is taught to us by the party. We are always reminded that it is with the party label we have won and expected to be loyal to it. With the adivasis, more loyalty is expected. It is in their service we divide oorus on party line. We have no voice.

A newly elected member said,

When I first stood for the election, during the campaign I could see “people.” I thought I could do something good for the “people.” I won, and even became the president of a Panchayat. After winning, I could never see “people”; I could see
only individuals coming for their jobs done. "people" vanishing after the election is a new experience and a surprise for me.

The unhappiness of the politicians as well as the non-politicians over the formal politics irrespective of their party affiliation was obvious, in the classroom discussions. The party politics in fact operating as 'de-politicising machine' little relevant to the 'life politics' of the people has been resented in their discussion. It is well understood by the participating politicians and the other participants that the formal party politics is a vocational activity centrally managed.

The argument posed in fact holds us back to think whether the formal politics has any politics of the people it claims to represent. As Marx and, later Weber noticed, politics in its formal system of party politics could only produce a political bureaucracy and a self serving political class guarding itself by guarding the statues quo [Marx 1977; Weber 1994b; Heller 1991: 331]. The practical circumstance under which the formal politics is located, in other words the habitat of formal politics, seems to have a

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56 The concept of habitat is explained by Bauman as a 'complex system', a term derived from mathematics which suggests firstly, that the system is unpredictable and secondly, that it is not controlled by forces outside of the control of the human agents that operate with it. There are no goal setting,
compulsion to be "un-utopian" and playing its "life Politics" of immediacy with less scope for the people concerned to imagine and build their own world accordingly. It appears, in that strange world not everybody's habitat is equally uncertain, chaotic, ambivalent and non-determinable. While the formal politics seen from the context of the marginalized people and their formally elected representatives is uncertain, chaotic and ambivalent, the very formal politics is used as a structurating tool that conditions the lives of the people from a far away political space. From the remote controlling centres, whether they are persons or institutions, (institutions like economic and commercial systems, institutions of governance and administration, organised bodies like multinational corporations, persons or abstract ideologies - like the ideologies of neo-liberalism) the structuring institutions' habitat stands on a firmer ground than the structured institutions or persons.

managing or co-ordinating institutions within the complex system; this makes constraint fall to an absolute minimum. Therefore, the human agents or any other element cannot be discussed by reference to its functionality or dysfunctionalit; and no one agency can determine the activity of any other agent. Although, Bauman explains that: " ..the postmodern eye (that is, the modern eye liberated from modern fears and inhibitions) views difference with zest and glee: difference is beautiful and no less good for that." [Bauman 2002 :354].
There were also discussions on 'development' at Attappady. The participants in fact had a good opportunity to witness the 'development' effort by the government in the instance of diverting the east flowing river westward. Some of the observations they got from their fieldwork on development were:

"I asked nanchi moopathi to tell me what is progress. Without hesitating she answered, 'Progress came through ration shops. It came through the free ration of wheat. We saw wheat for the first time through ration shops. Progress is using aluminium vassals, plastic items and so on. Progress was brought here by the Kurumba Girijan society"

"With settlers 'development' also came. It has come through the introduction of political parties."

"Our community cannot be developed by the government or any others. Only we can help ourselves"

"Development Projects are not for betterment of life situation; they are there to spend money allotted for certain purposes."

"Development is not just hospitals, schools and roads. It is something to do with the well-being of the people, health, practical knowledge, freedom of movement."
The development projects at Attapady were doing something else which is not relevant to the well-being of the people."

"Development was first brought to Pudur by Muthu Gounder as he cut the Moolakombu road to take away timber from the forest....and also through the construction of the Chavadiyoor Bridge, which was also constructed for timber transportation."

"The 'development' had entered Jellippara with the widening of the Kakku Palayam Jellippara footpath into a road."

The quotations commenting development presented here is neither said nor written sarcastically. It is the casual representation of the 'development' by the people in the hamlets. The 'development' is sensed as something that comes from outside along with settlers, government institutions and with the market.

A participant critically analyses in his field journal:

"The 'development' came through the introduction of money. It is not just the 'development,' but also our land alienation could be linked to the onset of money economy... It was only after the intervention of the government the need for money has come...now all the forms of cultivation have declined and only the
wage labour remains...we had to lease out our land for money ... Since money has become the medium of exchange all necessities were managed through money earned by selling grains... It was not easy to get wages everyday. In those days wood, timber, bamboo from the forest were cut and taken to the shops in exchange for money...To overcome contingencies we had to sell cattle we were growing...money thus got was spent for buying food and liquor..."

With the narration of the experience of a ginger cultivator, Kakki, a participant tries to explicate the ways in which the 'development projects' disturbed them:

The government gave everyone a loan to cultivate ginger the next year. I had a quintal of ginger seeds with me. I got 2.5 quintals of Ginger seeds from the agriculture department. ... I sow 3.5 quintal of ginger... Since, the ginger seeds I got from the department were of very poor quality, the yield was also very poor ... It is not just yield, something happened to my land so that Ginger does not grow there any more even with better seeds...This is what happens if we depend on the government.

A participant reflecting her 'development' experience with an anganwadi (Pre-nursery childcare centre) writes:
I went to the *anganwadi* as part of my fieldwork. There were 15 children...the teacher said, “We were giving eggs to the children three months before. Now the scheme is stopped. Later there was a scheme to provide milk. However, that scheme is not useful for the children here. Milk is only for the children below three years old. Here there are no children below three years old...I thought it is better there are no children below three years. If there were children below three, they would be getting milk; whereas the older children would not be getting it. How can we do this?

She narrates another development experience in the following words:

Today some doctors and other staff came here to the *ooru*. There were two doctors and seven other staff. They examined the people free of cost. They gave free medicines. They had brought used cloth to be distributed. There were some good cloths. There were completely useless and torn cloths too. I felt sorry... our people just laugh at the cloth distributed. Why do these people come here with torn cloths? They should not insult us with these ‘services’...

In their studies, they took care to be self-critical. They were critical of their past agricultural practices as these were not without
the elements of exploitation. For example, they could notice the exploitative side of *kambalam*. They were not just self-critical, they were also critical of the lack of *neethi* and *neri* in the modern agriculture practices. When they were asked to study agriculture practices, they were careful enough to incorporate, the aspects of food, nutrition, ecological balance, health and their relatedness. The participants could look at things in its complexity. This was a surprise for the PUPs. The PUPs' surprise over the capability the RAPs evinced for perceiving things in its complexity was due to the former's prejudice about the latter's calibre. They could relate degradation of ecology, decline of traditional agriculture, impoverishment of their nutrition, their new status of labour, its impact on familial relationship, the decline of local community governance all in a single networked mutually reinforcing factors of impoverishment.

For the PUPs it was a new learning, as they could now see that the *adivasi* way of doing agriculture is not “less advanced” rather it is a practice that was followed with a deep-seated ethical character that constituted their *habitus*. The talks with the research participants, their presentations and fieldwork reports had the extra
ordinary effect of a reversed praxis intervention for the PUPs; for this removed some of the latter's biases evidently. The adivasi conceptions of time, space, land, water, natural resources and work are far divergent from that of the mainstream. The important lesson for the PUPs was that the adivasis have their own understandings of things. PUPs seemed to overlook what the adivasis have. PUPs had no inkling about whether the adivasis were consciously or intentionally practising neethi or not. Before the praxis intervention, PUPs maintained that the adivasis are less advanced because the latter is ignorant. The Praxis intervention revealed to PUPs that they were on the contrary ignorant of the logics of the adivasis’ thoughts and actions. Had their sense of neethi not been with understanding or discerning, there would not have been the mythologies referring to them. However, the logic of their practice, which they have culturally imbibed and preserved through mythologies, is ruthlessly destroyed by the mainstream that implodes into their life with no choices left.

On the final day of the project, the participants sit together to evaluate the project. In that meeting the participants made the following observations:
"Praxis intervention is a process of developing our critical ability, trying to understand things in a new perspective, and we becoming aware of ourselves and our surroundings..."

"In this training, everything was upside down. Usually the trainers teach us. Here, we were doing research and teaching our teachers."

"It is always the case somebody from outside teaches us on what we should do. They are so confident that we do not know anything. This is for the first time I have witnessed a training programme that was based on the information and knowledge collected by the adivasis from the adivasis is used to train the adivasis."

"The praxis intervention project helped me to learn our history, social formation, life of the adivasi individuals, issues concerning ownership and use of land, law, institutions, and the meaning of living socially... not only my self but also my family members are happy because I have become more considerate person than before... I have no formal education. Here I learnt a lot. Now I do not feel that I have no education... Praxis Intervention is not teaching, it is learning, action, and becoming oneself a thinker... I enjoyed my fieldwork. I did not do my fieldwork alone. Many people at my ooru were with me..."
"I did not know what the praxis is. I could understand only after the first phase that it is a training programme with research and action content. From this, I could understand the resourcefulness and competence of our people. It is already too late that only now we understand that our people too are resourceful and wise. We should start using these resources. It is better to use the wisdom and abilities we have rather than to lose everything we have at out hand by trying to catch up with the settlers... This experience is very much helpful in transforming my own life... I did not even know the simple thing, that we will not go hungry if we cultivate food crops... It is with the praxis intervention training, I could start thinking in this direction...I think that we should re-create the cordiality and togetherness of the adivasi life ... We should love our people...these days when I meet people, words just flow from my mouth...

"Even though I am an adivasi, as I am brought up among the settlers I never showed interest in knowing my community. I did not even know my native language. I did not know our songs, our dances or our history. I thought the adivasis are of an inferior kind of people. With this opportunity I could closely mix with my people... in the classroom there were many opportunities to dance, sing and talk on our people,
their history...this has changed me a lot. Within the six months I have learnt that I should be proud of being an adivasi...I have learnt something about our history; heard many stories of our past. I could contrast our past with our present... I could influence the ooru people to cultivate food crops. Many of us cultivate our traditional crops once again. With this, we have a small hope for survival...”

“Before the start of the praxis intervention, three persons from Kila met me. I took them to oorus to conduct surveys. I was invited for a training programme in which the elected representative from Idukki, Wyanad and Attappady took part... At every stage, we were consulted of the training programme. Finally, Attappady was selected by consensus during a workshop of all elected representatives of the three districts. Never before I attended any training was organised with such seriousness.... In this training programme, we are not instructed to do this or that... Rather we are exposed to a new philosophy... we are trained in thinking, understanding, and acting based on our understanding... for me this training is like a dream becoming reality... I had received other trainings too. In 1992, I took part in a training programme organised by The Socio Religious Centre, Calicut. It was a weeklong training programme. I could learn from that
programme that we should claim our “benefits from the Government welfare Programmes,” “rights” etc. They taught the procedures of claiming these rights and benefits. Now I understood that claiming these rights and benefits alone are not sufficient... The life of the adivasi has become as dry as the rivers here... The minds of the adivasis too are drying up. Not just the rivers and uravus, but also the minds of the adivasis have to be revitalised... I had felt and learnt this only through the fieldwork and classroom reflection of this training... I was longing for this kind of knowledge. I had many unanswered questions in my mind. This training has helped me to find answers for such long-standing questions... I do not think that working with the adivasi community with the learning we had here is easy. There are stakes in the society. They are very strong. They will oppose any action that comes against their stakes. The politics is functioning based on the vote bank system. Politicians of all hues will oppose a genuine work. I also belong to a party. There is limit to my actions too. I cannot come out of my party. If I do so, it will be difficult for me to survive. This is my mental struggle... I am from a family that has undergone many a tragedies and difficulties. As I got an opportunity to do fieldwork among our people, I could understand they too have their personal tragedies and difficulties. This has made me aware
that I should do something to end these miseries....From this project, I have understood that I should not just remain a people’s representative alone, but I should work as a representative of the adivasis too. My responsibility lies in speaking for the adivasi’s, whose interests are hardly represented anywhere... I learnt the importance of a life of freedom with no place for greed.”

“With this experience, I have got the fire and commitment… I think it should be spread everywhere.”

At the end of the praxis intervention project, an evaluation sheet was distributed, in that a woman participant had written the following with a subtitle: “Please read.” Her reflexive account throws light on the unintended ways in which a praxis intervention practice helped in solving personal problems:

In my life, ... I had never been happy. I could know of my life through the praxis intervention project. I did not even know to which group of tribe I belong. As I am from another community, the people in my locality maintained a distance. They treated me as an ignorant person. To them, I am an ignorant woman; I did not know anything about the Kurumba community. Second, I am living with my husband for the last five years. I could not conceive for these many years. I
wanted to consult a doctor so that I can get treatment for our infertility problem. My husband was not willing to come to a doctor. He was afraid to consult a doctor. Somehow, I managed in taking him to the Bethany hospital at Anakatti. The people in the hospital said to treat us we have to pay Rs 5,000/- the amount, which we never had. As I was not bearing a child, my mother-in-law was disappointed with me. I was always scolded and insulted. My husband was kind. He never blamed me for my inability to conceive. I decided to commit suicide if it becomes impossible for me to conceive. Then, I got the letter from KILA inviting me to the training programme. As I thought that going out might help me to relive my tension, I decided to take part in the training.

God never helps directly; He helps us only through people. This is what I believe. The same has happened to my life. There was a session on health at KILA. You have invited the Local doctor, Dr. Prabhu Das, who is the medical officer, the government dispensary, Pudur, to lecture us. When you came to Pudur for field visit, I was also there. You have introduced all of us to the Doctor. In fact, he was also remembering us. He was a kind person. I told him my problem of childlessness. He advised me to come to

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57 Anakkatty is a place in the Attappady Block bordering Tamilnadu.
the primary health centre at Pudur with my husband. I felt happy. I took my husband to him. He gave us medicines. Now I am pregnant. I am so happy, that I do not find means to express my happiness. Not only that you have asked all of us to study about men, women, children, land, history, culture, rituals, myths, environment, man woman relations and everything about ourselves. That was a great blessing. All the sudden the world has become different to me. Now it happened that I know more about my community than most of the people there. My husband was helping me in my fieldwork. My mother-in-law is happy about me these days for two reasons. One reason is that I am pregnant and second I know a lot about the community. In addition, the entire ooru is good to me as I am working for them, organising them, and talking to them on their own welfare. I never expected things would workout in such a way. Today, my life is completely changed. My life is changed upside down.

By the time the praxis intervention project ended, the participant researchers could realise that there is essentially nothing innate about their adivasiness. According to the data they have collected from their elders who could tell them what they have learnt from their ancestors they are migrants from Tamilnadu and
Karnataka and called the *adivasis* only because they were the earlier settlers. According to them, their culture has become different from that of the mainstream Tamilnadu, Karnataka or Kerala only because of long years of seclusion from them. It was not difficult for them to understand that over a period their views about everything were changing. They learnt that their idea of marital relationship, community life, family life, celibacy, food, agriculture, religion, god, work, money, wealth, time, space, dress, education, politics etc., are going under drastic changes for the last few decades. This realisation has helped them to de-essentialise their identity. In the classroom, once they asked,

> Who in the world are not the *adivasis*? We did not come to this world earlier than any other communities neither anybody among humans came earlier to us. In a sense, everybody is an *adivasi*. Nobody came to the world in the middle or in the end.

To ask such questions they should have gone deep under reflections.

It was the penultimate day of the *praxis* intervention programme. By eight o clock in the evening, the project ended. They were learning together for six months. They all were attached to one
another and they were very much fond of the faculty who were guiding them in their learning and research. It was told that the valedictory session of the project would be the next day. They were finding it difficult to accept that the project had ended. One among them had announced that, that night they were going to have 'cultural' programmes. They went for their dinner; most of them had a bath and came fresh to the hall by nine o'clock in the evening. They occupied the podium. They arranged the chairs so that they can have enough space for dancing. The stage protruding into the class, the podium, the table, their pens, white board markers and everything has become their musical instrument. Jose Peter, a resource person of the project, also joined the team that played music. They started singing songs, beginning with film songs, and then the adivasi songs. The adivasi songs are always accompanied with dances. By the end of the project, they had written six songs based on their field learning. All the six songs and their traditional songs were sung with dance. All of them were dancing. As the time went, the speed and rhythm of their dances got accelerated. It was already midnight, but there was no sign of them stopping the song. The songs and dances were in the full swing. They were not getting
tired. The tireless involvement and spontaneity of their song, dance and their enthusiasm did not allow us to stop the dance though it was already past midnight. Surprised over their persistence in dancing so long, a PUP wanted to announce that everybody should go to sleep. Seeing at their enthusiasm, the PUP gave up that idea. The songs and dances were continuing with no sign of their merriment ending. The PUP called an RAP and asked why was that they were not getting tired. The RAP said that they dance because they were sad. This was also unlike that one would expect from the vandavasi. The NAP added that they were sad because the project was coming to an end. Though the PUP was at a loss to understand how people could sing and dance when they are sad, he respected the participant's sentiments and their involvement with one another and the project. The NAP was asked how could one ask them at this point of time to go to their room and take rest? He said he can help and then vanished into the dancing participants. He initiated a new song for dance, which later he informed was the song they sing at the end of their community dancing. The dance ended, as the lead person coming out of the circle ritually, pointing out programme was ended. The programme came to end by one o clock post-midnight.
The next day was the final day of the project. They were all in a meditative and gloomy mood. They were evaluating the project one by one. Everyone was crying. It was deeply touching the PUPs. They also could not hide their emotions. All the participants including the PUPs were burst into tears overwhelmed by the charge of emotions. It was a great surprise to hear, until the end of the fourth phase that the RAPs were suspicious about the intention of KILAs as well as the PUPs running a programme that is sincerely meant for their well-being. The PUPs never had a clue that most of them were suspecting the intentions behind the project. Some said that they were suspecting that, it was an effort to take away valuable information from them and sell it for money; and others were suspecting that The PUPs were trying to know more about them to exercise more governmental control over them and so on. They were confessing that because they were suspecting the intentions of the organisers they had only partly revealing the information they had collected though they had used this opportunity to work with their own people. Some confessed that had they know that the organisers were so much sincere they would have better involved in the project. Some of them expressed the financial difficulties they
had to go under as they were spending their time for fieldwork and classroom sessions giving up their chance to earn for their family. Of course, a small honorarium was allocated for them to undertake their fieldwork. At every end of the course work, they used to receive the honorarium. As it was the last phase, there was no provision to provide them with honorarium within the amount budgeted. It was deeply hurting the organisers to send them empty-handed, to their families as the participants were attending the programme for six days in the last phase giving up their earnings as wages. Many of them came to the programme taking credit from their friends and relatives thinking that they would get the honorarium from the project. While confessing, they were blaming themselves for expecting money to work for themselves among their community. They were making it clear because of financial difficulties they could not work with the people as they were working previously during the praxis intervention project, even though it was a worthy endeavour to be carried on. The PUPs were overwhelmed with their commitment and truthfulness amidst their monitory poverty.

The PUPs started the exercise thinking that, they were sufficiently equipped to ‘train’ the adivasis. Moment after moment in
their involvement with RAPs, the PUPs could realise that they are ill equipped and over dominated by their own biases. Their biases were dominating them even when they were willing to give them up. For example, The PUPs could observe that the adivasis unlike the usual ‘mainstream’ participants always expressed themselves with songs, dances and other cultural expressions. They hardly noticed the importance of the songs and dances in their life despite they could see its overwhelming presence in their everyday classroom experience with them. Until the end of the project, they have never asked them to explore its significance in their life. All that the PUPs had in their mind was health, education, environment, economy, history, land use, development, gender, decentralisation and other things. They were pushing them to study something about education but nothing was coming forward from their field study. They gave the least importance to agriculture that had dominated their fieldwork, while the RAPs could convince their people the importance of food grain storage and in this front, the RAPs could make practical improvement. The PUPs were expecting them to report what they were doing in the field; but though they did not report everything they were fully immersed in working with the hamlet people. It came as a
surprise to the PUPs that the people were overwhelmingly practising food grain cultivation as they could notice the change only when they visited RAPS field locations. The persons who appeared less active in the classroom sessions were actually more active in their fieldwork.

The PUPs were trying to ‘teach’ them gender justice and gender politics. Though the RAPs heard everything the PUPs had to say patiently they were coming up with the importance of looking at gender beyond identity politics. The RAPs were teaching the PUPs the importance of being ‘enas.’ They were also aware that ‘ena’ culture is vanishing. Within the ena perspective, the pairs are not individuated into two persons. However, the ena relationship by now has become a ‘zombie category.’ The PUPs were telling them how important the land right for women is for the gender empowerment. The RAPs were coming back with field understanding, how alienating property rights are especially in the case of gender relations. The PUPs were talking about the importance of labour and labour rights. The RAPs were teaching the PUPs back with data from the field how alienating the experience of labour is. Yet, they resign to their labourer status, as there are no other choices left. The
PUPs were telling them the decentralisation initiative could be an opportunity to express their collective action; the RAPs were informing the PUPs that it was just yet another mechanical practice having no spirit of the community life.

In the classroom discussions on preserving water resources, the PUPs and EEs always had the rivers in their mind. River assumes importance as a water resource as the middle class culture informed them so. However, for the adivasis the uravu is more significant water resource than the river. For some reasons the earlier generations had shown interest in settling down around the uravus rather than on the riverbeds. When the HRPs and RAPs were talking of the depleting water resources, they were actually talking about the depletion of uravus, around which their hamlets are located. Only towards the end of the project the PUPs learnt that uravus are considered as a purer water resource than the rivers. Adivasis were never a community that practised irrigated agriculture. For them, water is mainly meant for drinking. Hence, uravus were more of a significant source of water than the rivers. When uravus dries up the entire hamlet face the problem of acute drinking water shortage that could only be poorly replaced by the bore-wells and
hand pumps. As the PUPs and EEs were dominated by their cultural bias of considering only the rivers as water resource, they were less effective in discussing water resources. RAPs were speaking but the PUPs were hearing only what were familiar to them. These are a few of the instances the PUPs could recognise where their cultural biases were overpowering them. There could be many such biases that they could never notice.

For PUPs, the ecology and environment are simply the landscapes, water flows, soil fertility, and trees and so on. This is how they were trained to view the environment culturally. They could understand after many interactions that adivasis are not looking at the environment as the PUPs were looking at them. For the adivasis, especially for the elderly among them, the environment does not seem to be a physical, geological or topological object alone; it has something to do with their existence and self-definition. A participants' observation gives a glimpse of their worldview:

There was plenty of water in the rivers. There was plenty of food and everything we needed though there were no modern amenities. Water, food, forest, community life, and everything were our wealth, (sothu) Just within 30-35 years, though the modern
amenities were introduced, but the wealth (sothu) has been eroded by ‘development.’

It is an extension of themselves. When the PUPs speak of the environment as something physical, it does not appeal the RAPs. Still the ‘zombie ideals’ dominate their mind. Their songs and dances also incorporate the environment as the part of their existence. This feeling of the environment guides the way in which they use their land resources. The incident of J resisting the clearance of plant over the surface of hilly landscapes looking from the perspectives of honeybees, birds, insects and humans is an indicator of a different mind-set.

The PUPs never doubted that the RAPs were suspicious of the PUPs’ intention of running the project. It is only during the final evaluation session almost all the RAPs were saying that only from the fourth month of the project they started trusting the PUPs intentions. The mainstream bias that the adivasis are naïve unsuspecting is in fact misplaced. They were judicious in trusting the mainstream. They are even judicious in not resisting the extremely violent mainstream and the state despite they have less agreement with what is being done to them. It was a new knowledge that they were alert fully
cautious about the project undertakers and their intentions. Being cautious and not giving, even a clue that they are cautious is something came as the greatest of all surprises to the PUPs.

From our experience it can be said that the *praxis* intervention is an action research as well as its reverse: a research action. It is a research action as it involves the interpretation of one's own life-world; it is an action research as it involves research into action i.e., research leading to action: knowledgeable action. The fieldwork has instantiated both. The research action and the action research in *praxis* intervention help the participants in take care of themselves. The *praxis* intervention action instantiated here is not a full-fledged case of *praxis* intervention but only a test case.