INTRODUCTION
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This thesis introduces and theoretically explores the idea of 'praxis intervention' and tries to support it with the help of a practical experiment carried out with the adivasis (indigenous people, tribes) of Attappady (Kerala, India). It problematises professional social work practice and suggests alternative model of social work drawing lessons from the experiment.

Adivasis are called ‘tribals’ in the government documents'. Attappady is a hilly terrain in the district of Palakkad found between Coimbatore of Tamilnadu in the east and Mannarkad of the Kerala state in the west. (The famous silent valley is located at Attappady). Irulas, Mudugas and Kurumbas are the adivasi communities of Attappady. Attappady has 183 adivasi hamlets of which representatives from 30 hamlets spreading the entire geographical area of Attappady, participated in this research project. The adivasis

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1 The term ‘adivasi’ is used instead of ‘tribal’ or ‘tribe’ this thesis because adivasis of Attappady proudly call themselves ‘adivasis’ as the term means the ‘prime inhabitants’ or ‘indigenous people’ or people who belong to the place from very early times. The term is used in contrast to the term ‘vandavasi’ meaning, people who occupied the adivasi land later. For adivasis the term has political significance. It reminds that the vandavasis are those who came late and settled there or a kind of colonisers. The term ‘tribal’ is not usually preferred as the term is a settler coinage that represents them as ‘primitive’.
are classified in the government documents as 'persistently poor.' Attappady is a hot spot of continuously failing developmentalism and a well-known area for its depleted ecology because of human intervention. The place is also known for 'hunger deaths' (the deaths caused by starvation) and human misery.

The work is primarily methodological, since among its concerns developing a model of praxis intervention theory and practice figures first and foremost. By methodology is meant a system of principles and general ways of organizing and structuring theoretical and practical activity and theory of this system [Spirkin 1983]. It is method adopted in relation to broader logical and theoretical considerations. The research design of the thesis considers the researcher too as a variable [Sjoberg and Nett 1992: 2-5]. Theory is treated in this exercise as the living territory of contemplation on the move. The recognition that the researcher herself/himself has an impact on the research design and outcome brings the ethics in scientific investigation to the central concern [Merton 1957 esp. chapters 2 and 3].

The thesis takes an interdisciplinary approach to social work. The thesis problematises professional social work practice and suggests alternative model of social work drawing lessons from an
experimental 'praxis intervention' research which was undertaken with the adivasis of Attappady. The thesis attempts to develop a model of praxis intervention theory and practice. The praxis model assumes that the prime concern of the social work profession in most of its work situation is to invoke the 'praxis potential' of its 'clientele' and that of the social worker herself/himself. In this thesis, praxis intervention is understood as the method with which human potential to be sensuous (to make sense, to be sensible) is realised in unsettling the settled mentalities, especially where the settled mindsets prevalent in the social world seem to have contributed to their marginality.

The Praxis Intervention Project

The preparation for praxis intervention took four months and the actual project was of the duration of six and a half month. The preparation period included planning, pre-praxis fieldwork and workshops with the experts in the field and consultation with the elected representatives belonging to adivasi communities in the state of Kerala.

The objective of the project was to promote informed action and reflexion on the conditions of the social life around and the
mindsets involved. The project had components of classroom sessions, workshops, fieldwork sessions and documentation.

It was a project of intermittent classroom and fieldwork sessions. Each classroom session was of one week's duration and each fieldwork session was of one month's duration approximately. The classroom sessions and fieldwork phases were arranged intermittently to facilitate fieldwork assessment in the classroom and for horizontal discussion among the participants. The classroom sessions were used for fieldwork guidance as well. Between the classroom sessions and fieldwork sessions there were workshops for planning and discussion. In addition, there were workshops held at the field location to review the field activity and learning. The literate among the participants were encouraged to write field journals. It was an action research project in which the participants were expected to explore their life-world and act on it. The classroom sessions introduced research questions, research methods and provided information for further research.

The adivasi participants selected one hamlet each for their fieldwork. The adivasi researchers, and through them hamlet residents were guided to explore the realities of their life-world and
reflexively carry out action on their material condition, mind-sets with its external social coordinates. The research was guided by a team of participants with an academic or professional background in social work, sociology, anthropology, history, economics, gender studies, agriculture science, environmental science, philosophy and other related fields. Some of the participants of the project team were themselves activists. Among adivasis there were 30 regular participants, of whom 15 were elected representatives of the local bodies. Of all, 13 were women. The research team had the project undertakers, adivasi participants and external experts. They explored jointly the history of adivasis, the adivasi life-world, gender relation among adivasis, and the adivasi mythologies. They also explored their relationship with the mainstream population settled there at Attappady, health condition, nutrition and other issues step-by-step. 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 research on their life-world in fact resulted in collective action for
maintaining better nutritional status, better water availability and against alcohol menace.

The practice of praxis intervention could produce, 127 chart sheets consisting bullet points of classroom discussions or presentations, 27 fieldwork journals, six songs compiled, 30 evaluation sheets, 21 days of classroom sessions, six months of fieldwork, eight workshops among the project undertakers and external experts and four workshops with the adivasi participants at the field location.

**Methods adopted in organising data**

The project could generate documents in the forms of chart sheets, fieldwork journals, songs, evaluation sheets and the workshop proceedings, everything totalling about 1000 pages. There were also 30 hours of audio recordings of the project. Most of the documents were in the adivasi and Malayalam language. They were translated into English with a conscious attempt to keep their meaning intact. The statements in the document were separately catalogued. Later on they were arranged chronologically and based on their subject matter. The project undertakers held six workshops posterior to the project and
discussed their understanding of the documents at hand. The excerpts from the catalogued documents are used as the qualitative data, informing of the internal transformation that the project could achieve within a short span of time.

**Thesis Organisation**

The thesis is broadly divided into four parts. Each part is presented as a chapter. The first part presents a theoretical argument. The second introduces Attappady and its people, the third reflexively interprets the *praxis* intervention exercise and the fourth problematises the theory and practice of social work and locates *praxis* intervention within the varieties of social work schema.

The first chapter of the thesis discusses the theoretical aspects of *praxis*, *praxis* intervention, and the basic premise of the *praxis* intervention project. The chapter provides a theoretical model of *praxis* intervention. In this chapter ‘routine *praxis*’ is differentiated from the ‘creative’ or ‘transformative *praxis*’ and the theoretical possibility of unsettling the marginalizing mentality with ‘creative *praxis*’ is discussed.

The second chapter familiarises Attappady and the *adivasi* communities living there. The location of Attappady, its geographical
features, its ecological condition, the changing demographic pattern, the cultural practices of adivasis, socio economic conditions of adivasis and the development profile of Attappady are described in the chapter. The chapter also shares some information collected as a part of pre praxis survey at Attappady.

The third chapter provides a reflexive account of the praxis intervention experiment. It contains relevant sections of the praxis intervention fieldwork reports and classroom accounts of the project. The data generated in the field, the classroom discussions and the contents of the participants' field journals are discussed in this chapter. The chapter traces out the method by which the 'transformative praxis potential' of the participants invoked by the project. The chapter also attempts theoretical interpretation of the data collected from the field. Here, an example is set in integrating social theory with the social work practice. Towards the end of the chapter, the researcher critically looks back into the biases (academic biases and biases emerging from the personal coordinates like the gender or class habitus of the researcher) that misinform him in his social work practice.
The fourth chapter provides a critique of the professional social work practice. The chapter places *praxis* intervention within the contemporary social work thoughts. The chapter critically looks at various definitions given to the social work practice. The discussion of the definitions is followed by an exploration of social work concerns and its mode of practices. The critique of social work practice from the social work field and also from the social sciences is explored in a section. The chapter also provides an alternative perspective of social work and places *praxis* intervention among the alternative perspectives available. The feasibility and limitations of *praxis* intervention are discussed in it. The chapter ends with a discussion on the methodological relevance of *praxis* intervention both in social work and social sciences.