TRIBAL ECONOMIES AND THEIR EVOLUTION IN WAYANAD
A tribal economy is the projection of a tribal social system. Hence, the tribal economies are the projections of the social system of various tribal communities. As we noted elsewhere, the social scientists of various hues delineated the process of transformation of tribal economies as unilinear and homogeneous. Consequently, they have not adequately examined the dynamism, diversities and the real process of transformation of tribal economies.

To study the economies of tribal and their transformation, it is imperative to trace the historical evolutions of these tribal economies. This will help us to explore whether there exist any relationship between the socio-economic transformation of various tribal communities and the historical evolutions of tribal economies represented by them. As our analysis is focused on tribal communities of Wayanad, it is necessary to explore the evolution of the tribal economies of Wayanad.

The tribal economies of their pristine purity have been everywhere closed, self-sustained subsistence economies. It was the encroachment of plainsmen into once exclusive domain of the tribesmen that sowed the seeds of transformation. This was primarily due to the geographical
features of Wayanad, which contains plenty of valley lands with perennial irrigation from streams and rivers. Wayanad is a continuation of the Deccan plateau and is contiguous to the forest area of Nilgiris of Tamil Nadu and Kodagu of Karnataka.

The ancient history of Wayanad and her people are lost in oblivion. Since there are no annuals or records prepared and preserved, it is nor possible to trace an authentic history of ancient Wayanad. However, certain scholars have made attempts to corroborate other historical sources with local legends and highlighted the theory that in the initial stage of political formation Vedar Rajas (Rajas from hunter tribe) ruled the land of Wayanad. On the basis of their findings it is not incorrect to assume that till the middle of the 12th century Wayanad was inhabited exclusively by hill tribes, Paniyans, Kurichians Kurumans and Adiyans. They were the numerically predominant tribal communities of the region living in separate geographical divisions and ruled by tribal chieftains. These tribes were at the hunting, gathering and slash and burn stage of cultivation. Kurichians and Kurumans led largely a settled life practicing Mattakrishi (slash and burn cultivation or shifting cultivation) on the other hand. Paniyans and Adiyans were largely depended on food collection, hunting and fishing and thus continued their nomadic life and lived in the forest areas of Wayanad, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. However, social stratification and class contradictions had not emerged among these communities and their social relations boarded on primitive communism.\(^1\)
As land was available in plenty each family cultivated that much land which was necessary for meeting their basic needs. Again the cultivating tribal communities in Wayanad, Kurichians and Kurumans, like other tribal communities, were not in the habit of accumulating the property or producing surplus.

The immigration of the Jains from the neighbouring areas of Karnataka made far reaching changes in the methods of cultivation. This early immigration paved the way for the introduction of settled agriculture in Wayanad. The tribal cultivators especially Kurichians and Kurumans imitated the settled agriculture and the methods of cultivation of the Jain immigrants. However, even now, the production was for self-consumption. Frequent immigration from Karnataka also resulted scarcity of easily available fertile land and the prospects of shifting cultivation reduced. Expansion of settled agriculture of the immigrants resulted scarcity of agricultural labourers and consequently the tribals, especially the non-agricultural nomadic tribes were made the agricultural labourers. However, slavery or slave trade was not developed during this period.

The earliest change in otherwise placid tribal society was triggered towards the end of the 17th century, when Wayanad came under the control of Kottayam dynasty. The recognition of an external authority was the first change introduced into the hitherto isolated, primitive tribal society in Wayanad. The tribesmen forced to give gifts and tributes, mainly in the
form of honey and other hill products, to the Rajas' of Kottayam in recognition of the Raja's suzerainty. Though, the gifts and tributes were small or nominal in magnitude, it marked the beginning of the revolutionary changes in the tribal economies. Payment of gifts and tributes necessitated the generation of economic surplus over and above the subsistence. However, those payments were relatively small and once made, the tribals were left free to pursue their own way of life in the forests.

The large-scale immigration from Kottayam\(^7\) into Wayanad during the 17\(^{th}\) and 18\(^{th}\) centuries resulted the spread of settled agriculture in Wayanad.\(^8\) In course of time, the Kottayam rulers became more conscious about the political importance and economic benefits of Wayanad. Hence, the Kottayam rulers divided the land and ascribed the rule to some upper-caste hindus. In this way Pulpadi nair, Thonadan nambiar, Kuppathode nair, Cheekyur nair etc got the authority to control and rule the natives.

Owing to the intermittent rivalry among the Natturajas (local chieftains), there was again a large-scale immigration of plainsmen from Kottayam into Wayanad and consequently a considerable expansion of settled agriculture in Wayanad. The political hegemony of Kottayam dynasty and the socio-economic supremacy of the upper caste Hindu aristocrats further helped the immigrants to confiscate the fertile land cultivated by the tribal communities and also to enslave the food gathering tribal communities. Consequent upon these developments, tribals had no other alternative but to
withdraw from the fertile lands and to proceed towards less fertile interior forest areas.

During the Kottayam dynastic rule, a drastic change occurred the socio-economic structure of the tribals of Wayanad. The forests in which the tribals like Kurichians and Kurumans cultivated ragi (Eleusine Coracana) and groped for wild tubers, game and other minor forest products gradually became alienated from them. However, the nomadic tribals engaged in hunting, fishing and collection etc became agricultural slave-labourers of the land owners. During the middle of the 18th century the remaining land became the property of the Devaswam (Property of the Hindu temples). The high social status and the ownership of landed property on the one hand and the political relation with rulers on the other hand helped major nair Tharawads to annex some of the Devaswam land to their property. As they were the ooralas (Managers) of devaswam lands, it was easy for them to annex the temple land. The expansion of permanent paddy cultivation for landlords and temples resulted in a proportionate increase in the incidence of slavery in Wayanad. In this context it is necessary to examine how and when the differentiation among the tribals, which helped the changes in the tribal economies, appeared in Wayanad.

In 1760s Wayanad witnessed the Mysurian invasions. With a view to resist the surging advance of Tippu Sulthan, Pazassi, the ruler of Kottayam mobilized a tribal army recruiting the able bodied persons from
Kurichia and Kuruma communities. The tribal soldiers thus recruited were allowed to possess and to cultivate land in return for their military services they rendered. This kind of possession right for military service was a monopoly of the nair soldiers in Malabar during this period. However, these kinds of rights to possess and cultivate land created tribal landholders and thus sowed the seeds of differentiation among the tribals.\(^\text{10}\)

After capturing Malabar, Tipu Sultah, the ruler of Mysore introduced a new revenue system. As Wayanad was a part of Malabar, the same revenue system was another factor, which contributed the expansion of agriculture in Wayanad during the last quarter of the 18\(^{th}\) century. The main feature of this new land revenue system was direct payment of land revenue by the cultivators. This system not only provided additional incentive for extension of cultivation but also encouraged more and more plainsmen to immigrate from the neighbouring regions of Karnataka and Tamilnadu to Wayanad.\(^\text{11}\)

During this period, the land was relatively plenty; labour was the major constraint for agricultural development. Since the early immigrants had already enslaved the existing nomadic tribal communities and made them the property of the individual landlords, further agricultural extension necessitated new source of labour supply. Chetties and Gowdans from Tamilnadu and Karnataka who migrated to Wayanad in large numbers with the intention of purchasing land, therefore carried with them a large
retinue of Paniyans and Adiyans from Karnataka and Nilagiri forest areas of Tamilnadu lying contiguous to the forest areas of Wayanad.\textsuperscript{12}

The tribals of Wayanad under the leadership of Pazassiraja of Kottayam waged guerrilla warfare against the British from 1792-1805.\textsuperscript{13} Though Pazassi was defeated and subsequently died in 1805, the tribals who were granted land by him continued to serve as peasants and other tribals remained as slaves. Subsequently to the suppression of Pazassi rebellion, Wayanad brought under strict surveillance of the British and the Kurichians and Kurumas who served as the military men of Pazassi were subjected to untold miseries and injustices at the helm of the British. They were left to languish in enforced poverty and the revenue officials and military men made their life a veritable hell. They were not allowed to have a commercial connection with the coast for three years since 1805.

After the suppression of the Pazassi insurrection, the British brought Wayanad under their strict surveillance, which subjected the Kurichians to untold abuses and misery. Many of them were seized, reduced to slavery and made to serve officials and Englishmen. But what brought havoc to their simple, rustic life was the new revenue settlement made by the principal collector of Malabar, Thomas Warden \textsuperscript{14} It was not the enhanced rate of revenue, heavy and arbitrary though it was, which caused discontent of the Kurichians, but the mode of its collection. They were to pay the revenue in cash rather than in the traditional mode of kind.
Defaulters were cruelly treated—properties seized, tenants forcibly evicted from lands, personal effects distraint, privacy of houses molested, and the like. In fact, it was not the revenue or its strict collector, but the arbitrariness of the rack-renting revenue officials that drove the tribals from destitution and desperation to mad fury.

The rebellion broke out apparently suddenly on 25th, March 1812. It speaks much for the unity of the tribals that they kept all their preparations a closely guarded secret until the rebellion began under the leadership of their chieftain Rama Namby. It is true that some disaffected Nairs and Tiyyas, mostly employed in the revenue and police establishments, knew about the preparatory work, but they too out of hatred towards British kept hidden and later actually gave the leadership to the tribals hoping to create a general uprising against the company administration. Kurichiya priests declared the rebellion to be sanctified by the blessings of tribal gods. A Number of Kurichian have been employed by the East India Company as Kolkars (Policemen), but when the rebellion started, all except four, left the service and joined their kinsmen. Thus, on the whole, the rebellion had the characteristics of a mass uprising, though restricted in one locality.

With in a short period the rebellion spread in the whole of Wayanad. The Kurichias took possession of all-important passes leading to Wayanad and cut supplies and reinforcements to the ambushed British
troops in the valley. Armed Kurichia bands roamed about the region and occasionally descended to the plains, terrorizing those inhabitants who did not actively support them. In course of time other tribals especially the Kurumans joined in the rebellion. Chetties of Wayanad provided all material help to the revolters. Traditionally agricultural labourers like Paniyans and Adiyans worked as secret agents to the rebels. The magnitude of the insurrection is revealed by the fact that Thomas Baber, Sub-collector of the division, has to frantically requisition troops from Malabar, Canara and Mysore as the local British regiment was insufficient to deal with the uprising. British administration ceased to function in the Wayanad area for a few days at least.

Despite the serious proportions of the rebellion, tribal heroism with tribal weapons was powerless before the sophisticated military machine of the English Company. Early in April, British troops from Mysore and Kannur moved into the jungles from different direction, combed out the guerilla bands of the tribes and suppressed them. Terror-stricken groups voluntarily surrendered, pledged fealty and betrayed the hide-outs of others. By the beginning of May 1812, the revolt was completely crushed and quiet returned to Wayanad. However, the British did not adopt a cruel and vindictive attitude towards the tribals after the rebellion. Instead, they became aware of the need for lessening the rigors of the revenue administration that occasioned such uprisings. Eventhough the revolt was completely crushed by the British, this was the first peasant revolt against
the British rule, indeed the first of all in the British India. From our analysis we can infer that even though the revolt confined to a limited area in Wayanad, it was truly a mass uprising due to economic grievances and official high handedness. In the sense it was the earliest peasant movements in the history of Indian resistance to British power.

The British hegemony over Wayanad introduced new rights in property in favour of a dominant class of landed gentry. The emergence of a class of landowners with dominium or property status adversely affected the interest of the tribals in the forests and waste lands. The policy of the British government at the commencement of the last century was the allow all lands to become absolute private property. This policy helped to create feudal supporting class to the Britisher's on the one hand and helped to accumulate revenue without any obligations. Thus the dominium status of the Pattadars or landholders consisting of the rights likes Jus utendi (right to use), Jus fruendi (right to enjoy fruits), Jus abutendi (right to sell or consume), Jus prohibendi (right to possess exclusively) and Jus transmittendi (right to transfer to a heir) denied the pre-colonial rights enjoyed in land by the inferior tenants and these tribals. It is not the argument that these tribals had a comfortable living during the pre-colonial period. Even though these tribals had not integrated with peasant class, they enjoyed certain privileges in the forests. For instance Kurichian and Kurumas collected forest produce and engaged in agricultural operations in the forest lands. The landed gentry from nair community who controlled
the social relations of tribals through the tribal headmen did not resist or circumscribe the privileges of the tribals. However, each landlord was eager to increase the number of slaves in his possession for using them for agricultural operations.

By the beginning of the 19th century, the number of the slaves far out numbered the peasants among them. This was due to the multi-layer tenure system prevailed in Malabar. With the bifurcation of the tribals into peasants and slaves and consequent disparities in their socio-economic status, the tribal economies witnessed the changes in the productive forces and production relations.

In this context it is worthwhile to examine the land tenure systems that prevailed in Wayanad during this period. Highest tenure system was what has came to be known as Jenmam. Jenman means complete ownership over a property. Three kinds of Jenman prevailed in Wayanad during this period, namely Tarawad Jennam (Jenmam owned by heirs of predominant families), Janmam acquired by purchase from Tarawad Jennies and government Jenmam. As we noted elsewhere, namboodiri Brahmins acquired Jenmam rights in Malabar. The government Jenmam lands were formed by the British to overcome the claims of Jenmam rights of Nilamboor Raja over a large area of land in Wayanad. Most of these Jenmam lands were given in turn leased out on Kanam tenure to the persons belong to the next highest castes. Viz. Nairs and Nambiars. Kanam
was the second category of land tenure system prevailed in Wayanad during this period. Kanam was a deed executed by Jenmies (Owners of Jenmam rights) who got money from rich persons and instead of repaying the money with interest, the lands were given to them with the right to enjoy the income from such land. The Kanam deed common in Wayanad was that kind of Kanam, which gave a right over a property very similar to Jenmam, rights. Some of the Kanamdars (owners who got land as Kanam) further leased their land under verumpattam (simple rent) tenancy to low caste hindus like Thiyyas and also Muslims. Some of the members of Kurichiya and Kuruma communities also acquired land on verumpattam tenure system. Verumpattakkaran got wet land from a Janmi or a Kanamdar and the tenure was a simple lease used only for paddy fields. In some areas in Wayanad as elsewhere in other parts of Malabar, another land tenure system prevailed next to Kanam known as Kuzikanam. Kuzikanam was tenure on freshly reclaimed lands. Its holder Kuzikanakkarani enjoyed the whole of it’s produce for a certain period (Probably not exceeding twelve years). As a result of this kind of land tenure systems based on caste hierarchy, a significant areas of land became private property of the major Hindu temples of Wayanad, where the temples were managed by upper caste hindus. In course of time, the ooralas (the managers of the temples) became the defacto owners of the temple lands. However, the tribals had a number of traditional rights and privileges in this temple lands. The different tribal communities residing in
the forest areas enjoyed a variety of traditional user rights for collection of minor forest produce and the right to game animals, food gathering, extraction of bamboo reeds and firewood. As corollary to these user rights, the tribals had a number of corresponding obligations to the temples especially during the festival days. These tribals also did the agricultural operations in these temple lands. However, the ooralas as defecto owners, leased out the temple lands as their private property to individual immigrants. Consequently, the tribal communities lost their traditional user rights forever. In this way, land became the private property of the higher castes and Hindu temples. In this way the non-tribal immigrants confiscated the tribal and on the one hand and their rights and privileges upon the temple lands. The tribals had no potentiality and caliber to withstand as they belonged the poorest sections of the society both economically and socially.

As we examined the nature of the agricultural labour, none of the members of the higher castes or the owners of landed property engaged themselves directly in strenuous manual works needed in the agricultural operations. Communities still lower in social and caste hierarchy did such manual works. As Kurichians and Kurumans were traditionally preoccupied with self-cultivation, the bulk of landless tribal communities like Paniyans and Adiyans did manual work in Wayanad. Further, expansion of cultivation resulted in the dearth of agristic serfs in the hilly regions. General scarcity of farmlands came to be reflected in the practice of setting
arrears of rent through the sale of agricultural serfs. This developed slave trade and extensive market for such labourers. Slaves used to be sold either along with land to which they were attached or separately from it. They could also be mortgaged or hired out.\textsuperscript{28}

At this juncture it is necessary to examine the various systems of transference of slaves in Wayanad. This will help us to analyse the magnitude of slavery in Wayanad. There were three known systems of transference of slaves such as Jenmam, Kanam and Verumpattam.\textsuperscript{29} Under the Jenmam slave system, the full value of the slaves was paid and the slaves were transferred to the new master. The second system of transferring the slaves was Kanam. Under this system, the owners of the slaves on receipt of a loan of money, usually two-thirds of the value of the slave and a small quantity of paddy, transfer the ownership of the slave to a new master. The owner might also resume his property in the form of slaves when he repay the borrowed money, usually without interest. The third system transferring the slave was by Verumpattam or rent. Under verumpattam system, the owner of the slaves lease out the slaves to a new master for a short period. This system was based on a rent and on certain conditions. The temporary master looked after the slaves with minimum subsistence.

Apart from agricultural operations, slave labour was also used for gold mining in Wayanad. Gold mining had been a source of revenue for
the early rajas of Malabar. As the gold mining was highly risky, free labour was not readily available for this mining operation. After Wayanad came under the control of British East India Company, the Golden Rock Gold mining Company came into possession of the mines along with tribal slaves attached to them.

The various developments cited above resulted in the emergence of differentiation among the tribals. As a result of which some tribal communities continued as peasants while a large numbers consisting other tribal communities like Paniyans, Adiyans, etc continued to remain as slaves.

There was, however, a decline in the slave trade in Wayanad during the second half of the 19th century largely due to the introduction of plantations and the increasing monetization that resulted in raising land values encouraged landed gentry to dispose of their land for raising plantations. Further, the temple managers, who worked as the defacto owners of the temple land, also sold the temple lands as if as their private property. This resulted gradual reduction in the areas of cultivable land under the possession of landlords and temple managers would have made the maintenance of slaves an unprofitable proposition. Consequently, a large number of slaves were thus set free. It is not the argument that the landlords and the temple managers completely disbanded the slaves in their possession. However, they kept the required size of slaves for their paddy
cultivations and other manual works. Hence, the residuary elements of slavery continued even after independence. According to a survey conducted by the state Bureau of Economics and Statistics in 1965, twelve percent of the Paniya population were bonded labourers. A more comprehensive survey of tribals in the state conducted by Bureau of Economics and Statistics in 1976-77 revealed the prevalence of slavery among the tribal communities like Paniyans and Adiyans.

The introduction of plantations especially by the British joint stock companies and other British individual planters helped to the growth of productive forces and to change the relations of production. The slaves hitherto attached to the landed property of the landlords were disbanded and subsequently came to be employed in the plantations as hired labourers on daily wages. This began the proletarianisation of tribals from the middle of the 19th century. However, the objective conditions necessary for the emergence and development of capitalist farming were not developed in the tribal economies of Wayanad during this period. On the other hand, even the feudal mode of production was not fully unfolded in the tribal economies. It's unfolding was impeded by pre-feudal fetters that continued to persist in various forms. Consequently neither non-tribal immigrants nor the cultivating tribal communities altered their mode of cultivation. They continued to cultivate the food crops instead of plantation crops. In short the penetration of plantation capital in Wayanad made a marginal impact on the pre-capitalist mode of production of the tribal
cultivating communities. In course of time the non-tribal immigrants also introduced plantations in Wayanad. However, certain social institutions of the agricultural tribal communities especially that of Kurichias prevented them to initiate the introduction of plantations. Further, the plantations also required vast areas of dry land. Lack of extensive land also would have prevented them to alter the mode of cultivation. On the other hand, the disbanded slaves from non-cultivating communities like Paniyans and Adiyans had no other alternative than to bow their head before the planters for employment. As we noted the 20th century witnessed large-scale immigration from Travancore and Cochin states. Hence the tempo of proletarianisation was accelerated during the last four decades of the 20th century following large-scale immigration of plainsmen from Travancore and Cochin States into Wayanad. As the immigrants were not capable of keeping large-scale slaves who were attached to the land purchased from the landlords, these new immigrants purchased land from the Jenmies and this led the emancipation of more tribal slaves.

It should be noted in this context that, landowners sold not only the land being cultivated for them by slaves, but also the land hitherto cultivated by the tribals. This kind of transaction was quite possible in the absence of any land survey and land records. Further, the tribals woefully lacked the material and human requisites needed to withstand the land poachers. Nor were the tribals in a position to assert their rights and claims on their land. The tribals had no other choice but to surrender as they were
powerless against the newcomers who were economically powerful and politically influential. In this way the bulk of the land holdings of the cultivating tribal communities got alienated from them. At the same time, the non-agricultural tribal communities who depended upon the user rights and customary privileges also lost them when the managers of the temples sold out temple lands.

The process of land alienation was detrimental to the tribals and the mechanism of dispossession took mainly three forms at this stage.\(^{35}\)

1. Non-tribal immigrants advanced loans to the tribals on security of land at exorbitant rate of interest. Being unproductive consumption loans taken during the lean months, the tribals could hardly find sources to repay the loans and the accumulated interest there on. Consequently, they pledged land and passed into the possession of the non-tribal creditors.

2. The tribal people in many cases leased land to the non-tribals for varying periods. In course of the implementation of land reform laws whose claims to be tenants were accepted and thus they obtained ownership of such lands.

3. Immigrants acquired tribal land also through fraudulent methods and sheer force. Though some tribals resorted to legal methods, they failed in the absence of documentary evidence.
In Wayanad the land alienation was mainly affected the Kurichias and Kurumas as they were traditionally cultivators. However, even in the thick of these developments, a minority of the tribal communities like Kurichias and Kurumas were able to guard landed property. But majority of them are no more than marginal farmers. In this changed circumstances, no wonder that a sizeable number among these tribals were forced to take up unconventional works on nominal wages. On the other hand, the bulk of the remaining tribals especially numerically predominant communities like Paniyans and Adiyans were constrained to toil as labour at deplorable low wages.

In this context it can be noticed that the extent of availability of land to tribals is reflected in the magnitude of their dependence on agriculture wage labour and the wage rate in their case. In Wayanad, we can observe the difference between the wage rate of tribal farm labourers and non-tribal farm labourers. There is no evidence to establish that the labour productivity of farm labourers is different among tribal and non-tribal. It seems to us that the difference in wage rate can be explained in terms of the poor bargaining power and lack of organizational capacity of the tribal farm labourers. Again, the immigrant labourers compete out the tribal agricultural labourers from the field. Further, from time immemorial, tribals have been living in the forests. Collection of forest products and hunting were the two traditional means of livelihood for them. However, 'The Forest Reservation Policy' of the government minimized the
traditional employment opportunities of collection of forest produce. The
government policy of auctioning the forest products curtailed the
employment opportunities of the tribals. Consequent upon the
nationalization of forest in 1974, the collection of minor forest produce was
entrusted to the private contractors who employed non-tribals for this
purpose. However, due to strong protest from the philanthropist and feeble
murmuring of the tribals against this government policy, the government
ceased the practice of entrusting collection of forest products to private
contractors. The right to collect forest product is exclusively assigned to
the scheduled tribe and scheduled caste Development Federation from
1978. However, the co-operative set up for the collection of forest
products has failed to eliminate the exploitation of the middlemen and
private contractors. Though the forest department of Kerala has exempted
the co-operative societies engaged in the collection of forest products from
paying of royalty and lease rent, the private contractors through their agents
are getting the benefits of this provision. Again, the government was more
merciful towards birds and animals than the tribals when hunting was
banned in the state on the basis of nationalization of forests in 1974. Here
also the government failed to recognize the peculiar nature, tradition and
age-old connections of the tribals with hunting and so considered tribals
and non-tribals as a homogenous group.

Even though the bonded labour system is abolished and
consequently, the tribal labourers are free, the non-availability of either
land or sufficient and alternative employment opportunities have compelled
the tribal labourers to turn again to the non-tribal employers for their
subsistence. Formerly, the landlords preferred the attached labour system.
But in the changed circumstances the tribals prefer to remain attached to the
employers. In the land surplus labour scarce days it was beneficial for the
landlords to keep the tribals as bonded labourers. But in the labour surplus
land scarce circumstances, it is the interest and necessity of the tribals not
to leave their employer. Hence, the change in the scenario has benefited
the non-tribal employer tremendously. The employer is now free from all
obligations to provide subsistence while being assured at the same time of
an elastic supply of labour at a wage-rate almost unilaterally fixed by him.
Here, contrary to the expectations of law makers, the abolition of bonded
labour system not emancipated the tribals. The non-tribal land owners, the
newly developed merchant class, contractors and construction companies
etc got all the benefits of the old system at a reduced cost.

At this juncture, it is imperative to examine the impact of land
reforms on tribal communities and also to examine the changes in
economic structure of tribal economies. Kerala is one of the few states
where land reforms have some meaningful results. But the land allotted to
the Kudikidappukar (hut dwellers) was only ten cents. In fact, the tribal
cultivators should have been provided more land for cultivation. Here also
the government adopted a homogeneous attitude towards both tribals and
non-tribals. The government failed to enact the protective discrimination
policies towards the tribals. Again, the land reform act failed to give proper classification of tribal agrarian relations. For instance, if a tribal has entrusted his tiny farmland to a moneylender or any other person, it can be misinterpreted as landlord-tenant relationship. In such cases, a tribal is considered as landlord and the moneylender as a tenant. In this way the provisions of the land reform act helped to grab the tribal land. The tribal plaintiff has been asked by the courts to produce in support of his titles on the land under dispute. The poor tribal who is illiterate and ignorant about the necessity of maintaining land records invariably failed to produce the same. Consequently, the tribal forced to work in the same land as agricultural labours.

We have already examined how the tribal economies witnessed the historical transition from primitive mode of production into semi-feudal mode of production with the remnant of the pre-feudal mode of production during the pre-colonial period. Further, we have traced how the emergence of productive forces and the origin of the relations of production in the primitive tribal economy resulted differentiation in tribal society. Our analysis also revealed how some tribal communities became slaves and others became owners of landed property. As we noted elsewhere the early immigration of non-tribal resulted the enslavement of tribals and introduction of plantations resulted the proletarianisation of tribals. However, the objective conditions necessary for the emergence and development of capitalist farming were not developed in the initial periods
of plantations. Hence, even during the post-plantation period both free labour and the bonded labour co-existed in the tribal economies. In this context, we can presume that the unfolding of capitalist farming was impeded by certain constraints like communal ownership of landed property, matrilineal law of inheritance, joint family system, etc. This does not mean that the tribal economies have been stagnant. Even though these kinds of constraints have existed in different parts of India in varying degrees under different historical circumstances, these factors failed to protect the traditional property relations from disintegration. Matrilineal law of inheritance and joint family system were existed in Kerala among the nairs who controlled the polity and society of Kerala for a long period. But they did not prevented the development of productive forces and changes in the relations of production. Again, the communal ownership of land existed in the pre-british period in Punjab, but it did not prevent the development of differentiation of the peasantry.

On the eve of the British colonization the tribal economies have entered a stage when pre-feudal and feudal relations of production were evident. Advent of the East India Company paved the way for the introduction of plantations in Wayanad. The commercialisation of agriculture and the penetration of market changed the relations of production. Semi-feudal and semi-colonial production relations developed during this period. Consequently, side by side with colonial market penetration the incipient capitalism emerged in the tribal economies.
Proletarianisation, decline of enslavement etc can be considered as an effect of the emergence of incipient capitalism. This incipient capitalism helped the growth of productive forces and also to change the relations of production. However, it did not completely do away with the baggage of pre-feudal and semi feudal relations of production. As we have examined earlier certain tribal social and cultural institutions prevented the smooth development of capitalist mode of production.

In the post independence period apart from the large scale immigration of non-tribals from central Kerala, the tribal welfare programmes introduced by the state also changed the tribal economies. In the changed circumstances, the cultivating tribal communities like Kurichians and Kurumans also adopted commercial cropping and developed agricultural technology. They have started the application of machines for agricultural operations both for production and marketing. Instead of depending upon the traditional and age-old employment the new generation seek new employment. Joint family system, matrilineal systems of inheritance, the institution of headmen, the customary hunting etc have vanished from tribal societies. Traditional cultivating communities among the tribals are shifted from the cultivation of food crops to the cultivation of cash crops even in the paddy fields. There is a transformation among them from being semi-feudal land holder in the direction of semi-capitalist land owners. Agricultural labourers among them prefer unconventional employment like construction activities in the urban areas, working as
porter etc. However, such transformation has only been partial and most typically the agricultural labourers is neither purely agricultural labourers of the feudal mode production nor the agricultural proletariat of the capitalist mode of production. One may actually find the existence of element of both pre- capitalists and capitalist relationships in one and the same person. Again, among the cultivating communities, we can observe the emergence of a new elite group who got comparatively better benefits of the tribal development programmes than their counterparts. Hence, the socio-economic development is speedier than others. The members of the non- cultivating communities also prefer unconventional jobs like road construction, building construction etc. However, the labourers from non-tribals compete out them from these kinds of employments and hence their socio-economic conditions are deplorable. It shows the rate of oppression and exploitation has been increasing in proportionate to the growth of productive forces. From our analysis we can infer that in the unevenly developed productive forces and relations of production are concerned it is inevitable that the stronger forces and relations of production would seek to dominate and overwhelm the areas with relatively backward socio-economic formation and to draw sustenance from this backwardness.

The historical transition from pre-capitalist mode of production into semi feudal and semi-capitalist mode of production and consequent oppressive and exploitative socio-economic conditions accumulated overtime have been a fertile breeding ground for tribal unrest and agitations
in Wayanad. Many tribal insurgencies were directly related to land, revenue collection, tenure system and other kinds of exploitation of the non-tribal settlers and against the excesses and atrocities of the government and the ruling class. But most of them were ruthlessly suppressed by government or failed to gain the magnitude of a movement due to lack of organizational leadership, lack of proper aims and also the inherent discrepancies between the various tribal communities and interest. Yet a number of tribal revolts took place. As we examined elsewhere, notable among these series of agitations was the Kurichiya revolt of 1812. The participation of the tribes in the freedom movement was absolutely absent.

From 1963 onwards, various organizations affiliated to various political parties started to take up issues related to the tribals. However, an agitation that assumed the nature of a movement in which a good number of tribals involved was the Naxalite movement of 1968. Adiyans and Paniyans who belonged to the bottom of socio-economic hierarchy, hence the most exploited, participated in the armed uprising. This movement was largely confined to the Thirunelly village in Wayanad and was led by non-tribal leaders. Initially, the agitation started with conduct of dharna and satyagraha in front of the house of landlords demanding higher wages and abolition of bonded labour system among the Paniyan and Adiya communities. Finally, the revolt was suppressed, following violence and murder of a landlord. The matter to be noted about movement is that though short lived, most of these struggles focused on land
alienation, tax policies and oppressive labour relations. These movements failed to get momentum because the interest of different tribal communities varied according to the nature of the problem. Consequently, tribal movement failed to generate the general support of all the tribal communities.

At this juncture it is worthwhile to trace the impact of new economic policies upon the tribal economies. A review of how far and how much the new economic reforms affected the various economies of the tribals represented by various tribal communities will provide us a new insight and a new dimension of our analysis. The new economic policies have not created any new opportunities for tribals. The arguments provided by World Bank experts, that the untapped rural human capital and material resources be exploited and utilized through international market- still remained a myth. The concept of human development index as developed to the social life showed that the policies benefited only metropolitan capitalist groups. As they control the international market they also acquired the benefits of the economic reforms. The tribals being economically poor and powerless and socially backward cannot influence the market forces. On the other hand, the new economic policies adversely affected the tribals both the cultivating communities and the agricultural labourers. At the same the consequences of these reforms are differently affected the various tribal communities. The introduction of new economic policies resulted in the fall of price of agricultural commodities. The cultivating communities are not able to purchase the consumption goods.
Though the fall in the price of agricultural products is a common phenomenon, the worst affected groups are the cultivating communities like Kurichians as their economy is depending upon agriculture. The fall in the price of agriculture commodities prevented tribal and non-tribal landowners making investment and providing agricultural employment. Consequent upon the reduction of employment opportunities for the tribal communities like Paniyans and Adiyans who are basically agricultural labourers, they are facing malnutrition and even famine. After the introduction of economic reforms the government has curtailed the subsidy rate of food grains distributing through public distribution centres and the tribal communities are not able to purchase the food grains from public distribution centres. The recent malnutrition problem among the tribals of Wayanad and starvation death reported from the tribal belt of Wayanad exposed the consequences of new economic policies.\(^{41}\) Again, corollary to the new economic policies the state government has reduced the plan and non-plan expenditure on tribal health and medical aid. The various developments cited in connection with the new economic policies created the life of tribals most deplorable.

From our foregoing analysis we can infer that the evolutions of the tribal economies in Wayanad have been neither homogeneous nor unilinear. We can also infer that the historical evolution of various tribal communities played a vital role with other factors for their existing socio-economic transformation.
References


6. Ibid P.20-22

7. Kottayam was a small peti Kingdom in North Malabar ruled by Pazhassi Rajas.

8. Balakrishnan E.P. OP. cited P.23


17. Ibrahim, Hari Kumar and Balakrishnan Op.. cited 51


19. Ibid.


22. Ibid

23. Ibid

24. Ibid
25. Ibid


27. Kurup K.K. OP. cited P.20

28. Ibid


30. Balakrishnan E.P. OP.cited P.25

31. Ibid


35. Kurup K.K. N. OP. cited P.28


37. Nair, Sukumaran Dr. Tribal Economy in Transition OP.cited P.32.
38. Ibid.


40. Mathur PRG OP.Cited P. 199-200

41. K.K.N. Kurup, Madhyamam Weckely.