Amidst the verdant greens of the thick Kerala forests, a young tribal woman, C.K. Janu leads a sustained movement of the Kerala tribal community to recover their forest lands from the state government. In a long drawn-out struggle, consecutive governments of Kerala have tried to maneuver the issue to suit their political interests, resulting in partial success for Janu and her community. Since the time she started this resistance in 2001, Janu's strategy has been one of engaging in peaceful demonstrations and negotiating with the government authorities from time to time, thus taking up the democratic route to get her community's voice heard.

In her unfinished autobiographical narrative, Mother Forest, she describes the close relationship that the tribals share with the forests. She explains how they have been duped and betrayed by the cunning ploys of various Kerala governments that confiscated their forest lands on various pretexts such as the allotment to plantation corporations like Tata Tea and others, to make wildlife sanctuaries or for various 'tribal-centric' projects as the Sugandhagiri project (Raman 918). Marginalized by the mainstream community for centuries and subjugated by the State for more than thirty years when, ironically, the original Kerala Scheduled Tribes Act restricting transfer and alienation of tribal lands was passed in 1975 to protect the tribal peoples' interests, it has been an uphill struggle for these Adivasis. Possessing no legal document to prove their ownership of the forest lands, they have been rendered landless and homeless in the span of a few years. Living on these forest lands for years, the tribals little know that in the so-called 'civilized' world of 'real' men and women, it is considered mandatory to possess a written record to prove one's ownership of any piece of land.

The tribals of Kerala have lived in close communion with nature for centuries. Forests are an integral part of their existence. All their traditions and customs are linked to the forests. But the relentless march of global capitalism as also the complicity of the ruling elites (here the successive governments of Kerala and multinational corporations) has resulted in the loss of their forest lands. Today, when they look back at the long struggle that they have waged to get their alienated lands back, they feel angered and betrayed by the false promises made to them by the various governments of Kerala since 1975. In a state which has the highest rate of literacy in
India, it is ironical that these people are dying of starvation as thousands of such families have been displaced from their forest lands and rendered homeless. Being deprived of the natural resources of the forests where they “never knew what hunger was”, most of them struggle to survive each day as hunger and starvation stare them in the face (2).

Being both a tribal and a woman, Janu is positioned as a doubly-marginalized subaltern. Nonetheless, through a concerted effort she has made the state government relent to an extent to the demands of her community: out of the total of 2.25 lakh hectares demanded by the Adivasis (5 hectares each for the 45,000 displaced families), the Kerala Government has agreed to give 42,000 hectares to them. It was in 2001 that Janu led a historic struggle of the landless people of Kerala by putting up huts in front of the Secretariat Complex of the Kerala Government in the capital city of Thiruvananthapuram. This agitation continued for about 48 days until the Government signed an agreement with them on 16 October 2001 whereby the above-mentioned decision was reached.

Again, in 2003, protesting against the inaction of the Government in fulfilling the promises made in the agreement, the tribal people led by Janu encroached upon a forest reserve in Muthanga in Wayanad District of Kerala and established a tribal settlement. On 19 February 2003, the police indiscriminately opened fire on the agitating tribals, resulting in the death of one tribal and injuries to hundreds of others, including women and children. Following this incident, Janu was imprisoned for illegally occupying the government forest reserve.

The way in which global capitalism privileges the ownership of property and normalizes the concomitant relationship between private property and profit will be highlighted in this chapter. The link between the ‘ownership of property’ and the subjugation of women that I touched upon in the previous chapter would be dealt with in detail here. As this narrative has been translated from Malayalam into English and has been made accessible to us through an indirect process of transcription and translation, it would be appropriate to focus on the subtleties involved in the procedure. The first part of this chapter, therefore, explores the difficulties and challenges faced by the translator, N. Ravi Shanker in trying to retain the original feel and flavour of Janu’s speech. The next part highlights the close relationship that the Adivasis of Kerala share with the forest who is their nourisher, their guide, their succour — their everything. This harmonious and tranquil communion with nature
has been rudely interrupted by the noises from the civilized world and consequently ‘mother forest’ has been changed into the ‘Departmental Forest’. Thus, in the third part of this chapter, I analyze the transformations that have taken place in tribal society with the advent of global capitalism. An ‘elitist environmentalism’ is witnessed in the confiscation of forest lands by the state government and converting them into wildlife sanctuaries and reserves, thus evicting the tribals who have been the original settlers of these forests. The fourth and last part of this chapter is an evocation of the resistance of the tribal community led by Janu that centralizes the point that the marginalized tribal women, through their active participation in this entire exercise of democratic dissent, constitute a challenge not just to the aggressions of the State but to the entire patriarchal structure of society.

TRANSLECTING A LIFE: OVERCOMING THE COMPLEXITIES INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS

The transcription and translation of Janu’s narrative from Malayalam into English has not been an entirely problem-free process for the people involved. In fact, it has been quite a challenge for N. Ravi Shanker, the translator of this text. He states some of the problems that he faced during the translation of the text in his Translator’s Note at the beginning of the English version. To retain the flavour of Janu’s intonation and the sing-song nature of her speech in the translation, he experimented with various forms of writing. For instance, he tried translating the first few sentences in the following way:

where we all lived there was a time when work just meant pulling out the paddy seedlings, transplanting them in the fields and such/ mostly work related to paddy farming/ plantation work became common much later/ work like manuring coffee manuring pepper although such were simply not there/ most of the toiling we did only in the rice fields/ carrying dung to the fields digging up the soil with spades sowing transplanting weeding watering reaping carrying the sheaves of corn although such. (xi)

The experimentation with form and style, where verbs are pronounced with greater emphasis than nouns, might have helped in retaining some of the lyricism of Janu’s
Malayalam but it would also have amounted to a certain distortion of the English language. To avoid this, Ravi Shanker dropped the above idea and instead, tried to use “the simplest language possible, keeping the flow of the language close to the Malayalam that rolled off Janu’s tongue” (xii). It is to indicate the stresses in Janu’s spoken language, he asserts, that the first letter of every sentence in the first chapter is in the lower case. Thus, no sentence in the first chapter begins with a capital letter. It is not so in the second chapter because he feels that the first one was “closer to Janu’s inner world, while the second was more polemical and belonged to the outer world” (xii).

Ravi Shanker explains another perplexing aspect of Janu’s language. Throughout the text, she describes herself or her society in the first person as ‘namma’ which in Malayalam is used for both ‘I’ and ‘We’. To overcome this difficulty, he states, “I had to settle for using ‘I’ or ‘We’, as the context demanded. This is the one compromise I had to make with great reluctance, perhaps sacrificing accuracy for clarity” (xi). The transcriber, Bhaskaran, recorded the entire interview with Janu on tape and also wrote it down (when he and Ravi Shanker went to meet Janu in Wayanad) before giving it over to Ravi Shanker to translate it. Before the book was published, Bhaskaran got Janu’s story printed in an article in a Malayalam daily in her precise language, “as if she were speaking it” (xi). “As a translator”, says Ravi Shanker, “this was a challenge for me” (xi). The final version of the text, “that is a result of fifteen drafts” emerges as a smooth, free-flowing, fluid narrative with few pauses or interjections, lending a lyrical, rhythmic quality to the text that is in harmony with Janu’s speech as also the tribal way of life (xii). After the detailed revisions and minute examinations, the first few lines of the official version read like this:

where we all lived there was a time when work just meant pulling out the paddy seedlings transplanting them in the fields and such. mostly work related to paddy farming. plantation work became common much later. work like manuring Coffee manuring Pepper and such was simply not there. most of the labour we did was only in the rice fields. carrying dung to the fields digging up the soil with spades sowing pulling out the seedlings transplanting them weeding watering reaping carrying the sheaves of corn and such. (1)
The absence of punctuation marks at the appropriate places seems to be conscious so as to not break the rhythm of Janu's speech. Sentences are also deliberately broken and warped to retain the lyrical quality of her language. The uninterrupted outpouring of words like 'transplanting', 'weeding', 'watering', 'reaping' and 'carrying', without any punctuational pauses, express the very verbal nature of Janu's language. The colloquial and conversational slant of her tongue is evident in the following lines:

our people used to just wander about in the festival market in groups. we too. we used to buy glittering butterfly-clips for our hair. also glass bangles. the vendors used to slip the bangles onto our wrists. all these bangles broke when we went to work after the festivals. (17)

The interspersing of particular Malayalam words in the text that have no exact or precise translation in English lends a vernacular flavour to the narrative and articulates a certain tribal aesthetics. For instance, words like 'moopan' (a traditional tribal head who wields power in many clans), 'gaddiga' (a tribal rite related to death) and 'maari' (a tribal goddess with Dravidian roots) are specific to the tribal culture and are used by the translator to provide a sense of the actual tribal vocabulary. The tribals of Kerala are nature-worshippers and their irreverence for the Hindu pantheon of gods and goddesses is reflected in Janu's assertion:

in our community there are no gods and goddesses like among Hindus. never seen or heard of fair fat gods or goddesses in our tradition like in the Calenders. when we were young there used to be a big tree near our hut in Thrissileri and a stone placed underneath it. we used to worship that. our forefathers rested there. (19)

This description makes it quite clear that the tribals believe more in the powers manifested in nature than in mythological Hindu deities. Accenting subtleties of language in translation and highlighting the many undercurrents of text and context that run the length of Janu's narrative, Ravi Shanker renders a persuasive and true-to-life translation.
transplanting them, carrying dung to the fields, digging up the soil with spades, weeding, watering, reaping and carrying sheaves of corn. This, she says, constituted work for them — “work related to paddy farming” (1). Work involving the manufacturing of coffee and pepper came much later.

“Torching the *punam*”2 is Janu’s way of describing the tribal process of shifting agriculture and clearing the forest land for the cultivation of crops (1). The “virgin earth catches fire” and “gives out a strange smell like it is being roasted alive” (1). This setting of the forests on fire for clearing land for cultivation is a practice that is essentially against nature. It is a violent, forcible act that is, incidentally, one of the earliest aggressions of man against nature. In the tribal community, though, it is not entirely a destructive process. Rather it becomes a self-renewing, restoring act because once a chosen area of the forest is burnt down to cultivate crops, it is abandoned after some time so that the forest can grow anew. This returns the land to its original pristine condition and keeps its fertility intact.

Janu describes the onset of the rainy season in the forest — “the hill looks like a woman with her hair shorn, the wild water all blood-red gushing angrily” (2). By invoking this violent, feminist image, Janu sub-consciously voices her resentment against the patriarchies of the society and the State. She explains her peoples’ close bond with the forest:

> in the forests one never knew what hunger was. we would dig up wild tubers and eat them. once we started digging for the roots we kept digging till we got to them. Sometimes for a whole day. (2)

Catching fish and crabs in the stream gushing by, snaring water snakes, looking for water fowls in the thickets of *kaitha*3 and trapping them, then bringing all these home as night fell and cooking the fish and crabs before gulping them down is the way in which Janu describes her life in the forest. Sitting by the dim light of smouldering embers in the hearth for lack of lamps, kerosene or match-sticks, her people munched tobacco and sat listening to the mumble of the forests for hours together. Or they warmed themselves by a pile of burning wood and roasted wild roots in the fire.

Wild animals were scared and shooed away from the high perch of the *erumadaadam*4 by beating on “makeshift drums made of empty tin containers” (3). The “unending forests”, “the sky” and the “approaching monsoon rain” could be seen from afar when sitting on top of these shacks (3). Janu explains that when it rained in...
the forest, the sky and the trees turned an “ugly grey” and the “giant trees all bent down”, so much so that they “became as small as infants” (4). This awesome event makes the tribal people wonder “how the beehives managed to stick to the trees” and “how the bird nests hung on” (4). Remembering how they used to see herds of elephants from the high erumaadam, Janu lets the reader on to a little tribal secret — that when one is trapped in front of an elephant, one should never run uphill as elephants can run uphill very fast. Instead, one should run downhill as they cannot catch you then. “Running downhill makes its tongue hang out,” explains Janu (4). She recalls that nobody from her area went to school then. No one ever came to enroll them in schools. Janu says:

if strangers came we just melted into the forest. would not even go near them. just scampred away. the adults used to frighten us by saying that people in white Dhotis and Shirts ate buffaloes and bulls. so if any stranger appeared on our lands we ran into the forest . . . no one knows the forest like we do. the forest is mother to us. more than a mother because she never abandons us. (5)

Removing “green sheaths from the banana stems” to reach the tender banana leaves that were “smooth and white as silk”, Janu and other children would play with them, “pretending to be cloth vendors” (6). Her childhood till this time is happy and carefree, spent in the lap of nature. It is during this time that children from her community are taken away to be enrolled in schools and made to stay in “the Hostel in Maananthavaadi” (6). Janu’s younger sister is also taken away to school at this time. Janu, herself, worked as a maid in the house of a teacher in Vellamunda. She describes the journey that she and her mother took to reach that place:

can’t remember the route we took. had to walk quite a bit. i used to like walking. can remember seeing new forests unfamiliar pathways strange hills and little streams. and fields with strange-looking ridges that did not look like ours. as we walked we could hear the chug chug of a Motor Pump from the fields. and get the sharp smell of a Chemical sprayed on the paddy. (7)

It is a journey where the shift in landscape from the familiar to the new parallels the tremendous change inside Janu. Here, when she is barely eight or nine, she assumes
the responsible role of a baby-sitter, taking care of a “fair-skinned girl” at the teacher’s house (7). This change is reflected in her wondrous observation — “the house was filled with light even at night” (7). She also observes “men wearing Shirts and Dhotis”, “the roar of Vehicles from far away” that was “so unlike the sound from the \textit{chini}^5 (7). Recalling a hornet’s nest that was there in the teacher’s house, Janu reminisces:

\begin{quote}
a hornet’s nest is always strong. one should never crack it. my mother left soon after dumping me there. i grew to like that house. and that baby girl. (8)
\end{quote}

Describing the time that she spent at the teacher’s house, Janu remembers the black-dotted “dress” that the teacher gave to her, the “Glass Tumbler with a flower painted on it” that was kept in the house and the “Bottle of Kerosene which was used to light the Chimminy Lamp” that always stood near the grindstone (8). Memories come rushing forth from Janu’s past to create a mosaic of varied hues — the pain of hunger, the thrill of adventure, the warmth of togetherness, the dread of isolation; life in all its terrible beauty as experienced by Janu in her lifetime is evoked in this autobiographical narrative.

The close proximity of the tribal people to forests makes them live their lives according to the rhythms of nature. The different seasons of the earth correspond to the human seasons. The cycles of birth, growth, decay and death metaphorically parallel the four main seasons of the earth. As Janu explains in her own way:

\begin{quote}
the earth has different smells in different seasons. different in the rains in summer and in chilly weather. the earth gives out its scent only when we work on it. fallow land is like a tree untouched by the wind. (13)
\end{quote}

Nostalgia envelops Janu as she remembers the nights when the people from her community used to “walk back along the ridges of harvested fields carrying the grain received as wages” (15). Although far from the hillocks, the sound of \textit{chini} and \textit{thudl}\textsuperscript{5} would come across and an immense sadness would engulf them. This, she says, was because:
in our community there never was a tradition of protesting when the wages were low. nor in other communities. our people were also not used to going anywhere beyond the fields or the forests. (16)

Janu received no formal education. She learned to read and write through literacy programmes that were held in her area. Due to frequent interruptions in these programmes, Janu ended up self-educating herself. It was during this time that she became involved in political activities such as CPM’s (Communist Party, Marxist) “karshaka thozhilali” work (25). She along with other people from her community would go in lorries to attend the Party rallies. At this time, there was also a lot of migration from the south to their area. Janu expresses her apprehension of the “migrants from the south” who were unlike their landlords as they also worked the land (28). They took the same staple diet as the tribal community. They became closer to their men as they gave them “toddy” and “arrack” to drink (28). Janu explains thus:

the jenmi only took over our lands. but the Migrants took over our men too and made them toil. they would acquire all the good land on the hillsides on flimsy grounds. most of our people had given away lands for a bottle of arrack or some good tobacco or a sari. (28)

RUDE INTERRUPTIONS: ‘MOTHER FOREST’ TURNS INTO THE ‘DEPARTMENTAL FOREST’

‘For whom is it well, for whom is it well? There is no one for whom it is well.’

This plaintive refrain of Igbo tribal women of Nigeria lamenting the loss of their traditional way of life in Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart is echoed by Janu. She expresses her despair and hopelessness when she says that it was felt by the mainstream socie:y that the tribals were “born to toil forever” (35). Barbed wires and fences were used to convert their “Mother Forest” into a “Departmental Forest” (30). The officials of the Forest Department treated it as their personal fiefdom with the land being divided into “fragments” and used for extracting “profit, instead of yield” (30). “Commercial crops” were grown and “paddy fields began to dwindle” (30). Naomi Klein in Fences and Windows asserts that “after the celebrated collapse of the
Berlin Wall, we are surrounded by fences yet again” (xx). Now, the fences and barriers are put up by the process of globalization between people/communities based on who/what is ‘profitable’? This has “bred armies of locked-out people, whose services are no longer needed, whose lifestyles are written off as ‘backward’, whose basic needs go unmet” (xxi). These people/communities are exiled to the “global shadow world” and written “off the map and off the news” (xxi). The tribal community of Kerala, in similar ways, has been rendered to the margins of society.

When their ancestors cleared the woods, burnt the undergrowth and readied the fields for growing paddy, “the jenmi and the migrants of that time would make an appearance” (31). They would befriend their men, giving them arrack or “a small sum of money” and get the lands transferred in their names (31). Possessing no legal document to prove their ownership of these lands, the tribals were forced to give them away and made to “work in those same lands as labourers” at meagre wages (32).

Marx proclaims in his Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 that “under the rule of private property, the interest which an individual has in society is in precisely inverse proportion to the interest society has in him” (23). In plain words, an individual looks to fill his own coffers before thinking about the greater good of society. This self-centered acquisitiveness is the underpinning of global capitalism which then translates into the power wielded through the ‘ownership of property’ as land becomes the most precious ‘resource’ in a globalized world. Chandra Talpade Mohanty underscores the privileging of private property under global capitalism and the patenting and monopolizing of indigenous peoples’ knowledge by the Intellectual Property Rights Agreements of the WTO. She explains that Western science has been accorded the status of an undisputed and unchallenged field of knowledge that is used to justify and defend the neo-imperialistic acts of the west and that there has been a normalizing of the relationship between private property and profit in the globalized world. She writes:

The contrast between Western scientific systems and indigenous epistemologies and systems of medicine is not the only issue here. It is the colonialist and corporate power to define Western science, and the reliance on capitalist values of private property and profit, as the only normative system that results in the exercise of immense power. (2003: 233)
This exercising of power largely takes place over the bodies of the disenfranchised and marginalized women. The tribal indigenous women are among the hardest hit by the machinations of global capitalism. A few facts would be in place to support the above argument — women form 70 percent of the world’s poor and the majority of the world’s refugees. They also comprise almost 80 percent of the displaced persons of the third world. Women own less than one-hundredth of the world’s property but are the worst hit by the effects of war, domestic violence and religious persecution. Women do two-thirds of the world’s work but earn less than one-tenth of its income. (Mohanty 234-5)

These statistics are a pointer towards the present situation of women in the world. Globalization has not only led to the ‘feminization of poverty’ but also hijacked the public spaces of democratic activism, leaving little room for engagement in socially relevant deliberations. Responsible citizenship is replaced by crass consumerism. Money has assumed ‘capital’ proportions. The distance between people who take decisions and those who suffer their consequences has increased enormously. Opaqueness and lack of accountability have permeated the workings of those at the helm of global affairs. In this context, Bauman proclaims:

With the state-maintained defenses against existential tremors progressively dismantled, and the arrangements for collective self-defense, like trade unions and other instruments for collective bargaining, following suit under the pressure of market competition that erodes the solidarity of the weak, it is left to the individuals to seek, find and practice individual solutions to socially produced troubles - and to do all that by individual, solitary actions, equipped with tools and resources blatantly inadequate to the task. (Demons of an Open Society 5)

The structural adjustment programmes of the World Bank and IMF that are forced upon the third world countries in return for loans given to the latter have had disastrous consequences for the poor, especially for women and children. “To qualify for loans,” explain Ehrenreich and Hochschild, “governments are usually required to devalue their currencies, which turns the hard currencies of rich countries into gold and the soft currencies of poor countries into straw. Structural adjustment programmes also call for cuts in support for ‘noncompetitive industries,’ and for the
reduction of public services such as health care and food subsidies for the poor. Citizens of poor countries, women as well as men, thus have a strong incentive to seek work in more fortunate parts of the world” (8). And these ‘fortunate parts’ of the world are the affluent countries of the west that have not only attracted highly-qualified professional workforce from around the world, resulting in ‘brain drain’ for the parent countries but also given rise to a parallel yet more disturbing trend — the importation of love and care in the form of nannies, maids and domestic workers, resulting in ‘care drain’ for the countries left behind. The fact that half of the world’s migrants today are women points to the growing ‘feminization of migration’. According to statistics, out of the 792,000 legal household workers in the United States, 40 percent were born abroad and out of Filipino migrants, 70 percent are women (Hochschild 16). These women leave their own children behind in their parent countries in the care of their grandmothers, aunts or other relatives. The plight of these children is more than miserable. According to a survey conducted by Manila’s Scalabrini Migration Center in 1996, when compared to their classmates, the children of migrant workers fell ill more frequently; they were more likely to express anger, confusion, and apathy and they performed particularly poorly in school. Other studies of this population show a rise in delinquency and child suicide (Hochschild 22).

Transportation of capital, labour, goods and services across international boundaries in this era of free trade makes a commodity of everything and this includes the migrant worker too. The latter becomes a commodity that can be used and abused at the hands of his/her employers to get the maximum benefit out of his/her services. Illegal manipulation of women migrant workers makes them the unsuspecting victims of modern-day slavery, trafficking and domestic worker abuse.10

In the global-capitalist system, poor third world women have been relegated a position at the bottom of the economic ladder. Throughout its unrelenting march, capitalism has largely kept women out of mainstream economics, undervaluing and even devaluing their work. Measuring economic productivity in terms of the GNP or Gross National Product, women’s labour or work done in the household has been assumed to be of no value to the national economy. In fact, it is not considered ‘work’ at all; it is merely a filial duty and a social obligation. In India, women (except middle class working women) have not been considered as productive workers by planning commissions; it was as recently as 1993 that an attempt was
made to redefine work in women’s context (Menon 15). Taking the ‘productivity’ argument further, Dietrich asserts that it is a common assumption that only wage labour creates values and the invisible subsistence production of women is either neglected or overlooked. This concept of ‘productivity’ also ignores the fact that the labour of nature can only be sustained if human labour is organized in harmony with nature. She portends that the industrial-capitalist concept of dominating and controlling nature would come to its end “with terrible convulsions of ecological disaster and lethal fights over dwindling resources”, making it extremely urgent for the women’s movements as well as the working class struggles around the world to incorporate the survival issues of women and nature and to “orient themselves towards the poorest and most exploited sections like Adivasis, Dalits and the workers of the unorganized sector” (Dietrich, qtd. in Menon 83).

The dangerously lop-sided sex-ratio in some Asian countries such as India, points towards the declining status of girls and women in these societies. The primary causes behind this appalling trend are the rampant practices of female foeticide and infanticide which in turn are attributed largely to the patriarchal nature of society and the obsession for a male child. According to the 2011 census, the country’s sex ratio of girls to boys in the age-group of 0-6 years plummeted down to 914 girls for every 1000 boys, down from a ratio of 927 to 1000 boys in 2001. Estimations of the number of missing girls over the past century due to female foeticide and infanticide in India stand at an appalling 50 million. Moreover, statistics provided by India’s Central Bureau of Investigation state that in 2009, about 90 percent of trafficking took place within the country and that there were some 3 million prostitutes, of which about 40 percent were children

The capitalist privileging of the ‘ownership of property’ is an underlying motif in this deteriorating status of women in society. Though groundbreaking changes were carried out in the Indian inheritance laws in 2005 in the favour of women so that daughters could have an equal share in the paternal property, it has been discovered that many women have not been exercising this right and have not claimed their rightful share in their ancestral property. This is partly due to ignorance of the laws and partly because of societal and filial pressures. As land becomes an even more scarce ‘resource’ in the global-capitalist economy, the situation of women, especially those belonging to the lower strata, becomes more precarious. Their dependence on men increases as survival on their own becomes more and more difficult owing to the
subsistence economy of women being replaced by the profit-based economy of men. This, in turn, has strengthened patriarchy. Women are not considered as indispensable as men, leading to a highly skewed sex-ratio in some societies. The old forms of exploitation are supplemented by new ones. Robert Biel tries to explain this trend by asserting that “an attempt to ‘empower’ women (which means developing their initiative enough to make it easier to exploit them) has been grafted on top of basically unchanged relationships” (135).

The capitalist exploitation of women has not only led to increased misery for many of them but it has also provoked resistance from many pockets of the world. To quell this threat (as pointed out in the previous chapter also), global capitalism has ingeniously co-opted the feminist challenge in its heightened discourse on empowerment and emancipation of women. The attempt at co-option began in the 1970s when international institutions like the United Nations inaugurated a UN Women’s Decade from 1975 to 1985. Bringing women into the monetary economy was seen as a way of increasing consumption to boost capitalist development. It was only in the industrialized countries of the North that women became ‘economically’ active, that is, their work came to be recognized by the mainstream remunerated employment statistics. The percentage of women who were officially employed rose noticeably in the industrialized countries between 1970 and 1990 — from 38 percent to 50 percent (Biel 134). But, in the South, women employed in the formal economic sphere stagnated or declined (Biel 134-5). The increasing under-development of women was due to their “enforced but asymmetric participation” in the development process that resulted in their bearing the costs but exclusion from the benefits at the same time (Shiva 1988: 2). In India, government programmes aimed at ‘empowering’ women are only ways to primarily educate them about family planning and population control, resulting in “a distinct shift from ‘struggle’ to ‘development’ in the agenda of women’s organizations” (Menon 20).

In its relentless march, global capitalism does not care about ecological consequences, and if it does, it is only to prevent the developing third world countries from reaching the advanced level of development that the industrialized countries of the west have attained. Environmentalism has been more a way of holding back the developing countries and less a genuine effort to stop ecological damage. It has proved to be an effective method for “limiting the South’s ambitions” (Biel 141).
Eviction of tribal communities from their forest lands to convert the latter into wildlife sanctuaries is also a part of this elitist environmentalism. N. Ravi Shanker writes in his Translator’s Note, “A day before the police action to evacuate tribals from the forest tract they had forcibly occupied under Janu’s leadership, a statement signed by several cultural and environment activists was published in the newspapers, demanding that the government act to oust the tribals from the forest area, a sanctuary for wild life. I am sure they hung their heads in shame later, seeing the police in action” (x).

A common argument given out by politicians and government officials in the third world (as in the state of Kerala) is that the population of the tribals has increased manifold over the years which puts immense burden on the State’s resources. This is then given out as the main reason behind the starvation, hunger and increasing impoverishment of these people. It is also pronounced as the primary cause behind their displacement and dislocation. The tribals are forced to migrate to urban areas in search of employment because their increased numbers can no longer survive only on the finite forest resources. As a parallel to this, it is commonly observed that the increase in world population is unevenly spread; it is concentrated more in the developing countries. The latter are blamed by the developed world for this explosion in population leading to the depletion and deterioration of natural resources. The developing countries are like the tribals; they are easy scapegoats for the west’s ‘affirmative’ actions. The former are seen by the latter as chaotic, unmanageable ‘areas of darkness’ that are fast moving towards their own destruction. These charges certainly do not hold much weight because maximum utilization of resources is in areas with the lowest population, that is, the industrialized west, which accounts for 85 percent of world’s energy consumption. Conversely, the rise in population can also be seen as a result of the plunder of these natural resources as the poor measure their economic strength in the number of productive workers or earning members they have in the family (Biel 142). The difficult situation in the developing countries is, therefore, an outcome of all these factors put together. Burgeoning populations, massive ecological damage, enormous social churning and warped cultural ethics are problems that can be traced to the decisions taken in the comfortable confines of the IMF and World Bank offices.
In such a scenario of increasing inequity and declining social responsibility, Janu has assumed the role of a law-abiding citizen by taking the democratic route to voice her community’s resentment against the authorities. Engaging in peaceful demonstrations, she has given her people a voice they can call their own. Speaking on behalf of her people, she declares self-assuredly:

In the vastness of the fields, our people act as sentinels in the night. Day or night, our people never lose touch with the earth or the crops standing on them. As the owner of the land sleeps, our people forego sleep and busy themselves in diverting the water, checking it with little mud banks and standing guard over the crops. (43)

Janu recounts the time when she and her community started becoming aware of the complicity between “the Party, the jenmi and the estate owners” who had all “grown to merge into a single giant tree” (35). She relates how, being a member of the Party, it had become increasingly difficult for her to work for the betterment of her people who had become “mere voters to win elections” (35). Her disillusionment with the Party grew even more when she got to know about the Party workers exploiting women from her community by offering them a “pinch of tobacco or a stone necklace or some food” (35). Janu says:

I began to realize that whenever we highlighted our problems the decisions were always against us, and that a lower committee, which was bound to implement the decisions of the upper committee, could never function freely. I also had the feeling that the Party, which lusted after nothing but power, saw the people of our community as mere exhibition pieces. (37)

The concept of ‘negative globality’ or a genuine subaltern consciousness that I touched upon in the previous chapter can be further explicated through this narrative of Janu’s. It is only when the tribal community sees no hope of getting justice from the State that it undertakes the revolutionary path. It even puts at stake its communal safety and security to protest against the injustices perpetrated by those wielding
power. This subaltern consciousness is born out of the knowledge of having remained in the darkness of oppression for years, of having borne the yoke of slavish labour and having endured alienation at the hands of mainstream society. It is heightened on being distanced from their (the tribal community’s) natural home, their ‘Mother Forest’ and becomes effective when it takes on the form of collective democratic dissent. This last aspect is of utmost significance because the resistance of the tribal community led by Janu is certainly more potent as it is a unified effort. And here Janu deserves credit as she has been successful in the mass mobilization of a community where the men are alcohol-addicts and have little contribution either as breadwinners or as responsible members of their families, thus making it difficult for the tribal community to come together as a cohesive force.

It is largely the women, asserts Janu, who toil in the fields and also carry their communal customs forward. Explaining this unique position of women in the tribal society, she says:

What happens among our women is not what happens in civil society. In our case, unity in everything originates from our women. They have something in common that shelters us from meaninglessly adopting the ways of civil society. They have enough resilience in them to stand for what they feel is right even though they may have to suffer a lot for it. It is among our women that our traditions and the way we dress live on even now. Theirs is a resolve that is hardened by the wind and the rain of the forest and in the face of other difficulties. (53)

The women take up more responsibilities than men in tribal society. They work in the fields — digging, sowing, preparing the fields and also taking care of their children. “But men,” says Janu “are not like that”; they are addicted to alcohol, waste their time “wandering about in the forest” or “squatting on shop verandahs” and in filling up umpteenth number of forms and applications (46). All this has made them lose their lands easily. “But this has not happened through women. Our community can surely grow only through the togetherness of women,” asserts Janu (47).

She makes a significant point when she relates how she used to catch beetles on ginglī flowers when she was young. This beetle which is “dark looking” can survive in a box for many days without food and “it never stops humming, which is
but a sad hum” (54). “The ginglli flower beetle”, expounds Janu, “cannot argue with a microphone that makes a great noise” (54). This little recount is meaningful as the marginalized tribal is like the dark ginglli beetle who tries to shout to make himself heard by the authorities but his outcry is drowned by the noises from the civilized world. Having lived close to nature all her life, Janu is prudent enough to realize that one ginglli beetle humming alone will not awaken the authorities; there has to be a whole assemblage of such beetles to assume a hum loud enough to stir the apathetic system. Zimmerman highlights the consequences of unresolved social conflicts within modern democratic states in this era of globalization:

Currently, neoliberal and controlled democratization without a resolution of basic social conflicts leads to new social movements, as well as new modes of citizenship and resistance as legitimate activities within civil society. The results are conflicts and threatened breakdowns that the state can only resolve by force or by further concessions, which begin to erode its reason for being and its legitimacy. (Subaltern Studies Reader 112)

The resistance of the tribal community, which is one of the most peripheral and marginalized communities in the country, threatens not only to erode the legality of the State but also makes its democratic essentials seem mere rhetoric as they are already compromised to a great extent by the State’s own power politics. The democratic nature of the tribal resistance discredits the State even more. The latter’s neoliberal obligations to capitalist organizations and multinational corporations, forcing it to structurally adjust its economy, theoretically go against its sovereign as well as democratic fundamentals. As the middle and upper classes reap the benefits of liberalization policies, the tribal poor are further pushed towards the margins, making them the worst sufferers of capitalist development.

Janu is discerning enough to gauge that it was in the interests of the State to keep the Adivasis as impoverished and ignorant of their rights as possible. For, as she avers, “It became one of the needs of the Party to keep this community poor, starved and incapable of resistance” (40). She declares that “projects are designed, in our name, for people in surrounding areas with land, homes and skies of their own” (50). The tribal people are made to live in government-built colonies where there are no “proper courtyards to enjoy the breeze and open or closed spaces for people to relieve
themselves. The roads have been turned into public toilets. That is how we got to be called an unclean people,” says Janu (50). This ideology of lack of hygiene and cleanliness of the tribal people has been constructed and cleverly propagated by the State and the elite of the society to keep the tribals forever marginalized, downtrodden and lacking in self-worth. It allows the State and the upper crust of the society to freely criticize and condemn the tribal community as being uncivilized, uncouth and unhygienic. This ideology of (un)hygiene gives the former an upper hand over the latter; it is a stratagem whereby the tribals are made to feel inferior and inadequate. As Janu explains, “Without drinking water or a place to relieve themselves, the image of a group of unclean people was slowly being created” (48). Their illiteracy is further exploited to condemn them to a life of toil and servility. Janu well understands the insidious goings-on behind the scene. She reveals the real agenda of the State:

But civil society and parties looking for power had to cook up projects apparently for our people, but actually to fulfill the needs of civil society, siphoning off all that money and transforming our people into good-for-nothings. (47)

The ideology of (un)hygiene helps in furthering this agenda. This is because it creates feelings of inferiority and unworthiness in the Adivasis who are then easily excluded from mainstream society on the pretext of their being unclean and unhygienic, hence being uncivil. Given their illiteracy and lack of awareness of the ways of the civilized world, this further smoothens the way for their eviction from the rich and fertile forest lands which are demarked by the authorities to be converted into wildlife sanctuaries to preserve precious flora and fauna. The cycle moves viciously. Being forced out of their lands, the tribals are condemned to work as wage labourers on these very lands. But in the current global economy, land is not worked upon by many landowners as agriculture is not considered a very ‘profitable’ venture. So the tribals are left without land and without work. Earlier, when they had their land to themselves, they grew “thina$, chaama, kachil$ and chena$ that constituted their staple food but now they are forced to buy basic food items from the market (52). Thus, the cycle of poverty, hunger, starvation and death sets in, leaving the tribals further weakened and marginalized.
The pain and anguish of these people, the wretchedness and misery of their existence compelled Janu to pick up cudgels on their behalf and fight for her community’s rights. Leading the homeless Adivasis in a protest movement and occupying places in Mananthavaadi, Vellamunda, Chiniyeru and Kundara in Munnar, were actions deliberately taken to attract attention to the tribals’ cause. In all these cases, the Kerala Government used force to disperse them and forbade them from ‘illegally’ occupying government territory. As Janu asserts, “These were not just land encroachments. They were life and death struggles for our basic right to live and die where we were born” (54). This articulation of agency by Janu is then a critique of Gayatri Spivak’s rhetorical question – ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ as it is a voicing of resistance by the subaltern itself. It is even more significant as Janu is a doubly-marginalized subaltern; she is a woman and a tribal. Ania Loomba also takes Spivak to task when she criticizes her “insistence on subaltern silence” that is “disquieting for those who are engaged in precisely the task of recovering such voices” (218). This insistence, asserts Loomba, “can be linked to Spivak’s curious detachment...from the specificities of post-colonial politics” (218).

A similarity with Janu’s struggle to recover the forest lands of her community can be seen in the recent protest movements in India: the resistance of the local farmers, fishermen and tribals of Jagatsinghpur district of Orissa against the proposed setting up of $12 billion steel plant by the South Korean multi-national steel giant POSCO (Pohang Iron and Steel Company) which will take away their land and livelihood besides being devastating for the local environment and ecology; the Dongria Kondh tribe of Niyamgiri hills of Orissa trying desperately to prevent Vedanta’s aluminium refinery and bauxite mining project from taking shape; the forcible acquiring of tribal land by Videocon group in Jangir Champa, a small district in central Chhattisgarh, where it plans to set up thirty-six thermal power plants (the largest cluster of power projects anywhere in the country); the failed Tata Nano project in Singur in West Bengal that was resisted by local farmers. There are many such proposed projects on the anvil in India which are facing resistance from local communities and activists.

Human rights activist Binayak Sen criticizes the widespread policy of expropriation of natural and common property resources by the Indian State. In an acceptance speech given by him in South Korea on receiving the Gwangju Prize for Human Rights (published as an article, “The Not-So-Shining India”), he speaks about
the sequestration and privatization of the common property resources — the forests, 
the rivers and the land upon which the tribals of India have always depended for 
survival. He states:

> The doctrine of eminent domain vests ultimate ownership of all land and natural resources in the state. Under cover of eminent domain, vast tracts of land, forest and water reserves are being handed over to the Indian affiliates of international finance capital....It is well recognized now that the tsunami-like flow of capital around the world is a source of tremendous tragedy for many communities around the world which do not fit into the ideologically straitjacketed confines of the ‘market economy’. (9)

Janu, in Kerala, has led a sustained movement in which tribal men, women, children and even the old have participated. As the movement gathered momentum over time, it became a struggle not just for the retrieval of the community’s forest lands but also a fight for its cultural identity that has been threatened by the tribals’ eviction from their natural home. Not being followers of any particular religion, they revere and respect nature which is the source of not only their livelihood but their very identity. Janu’s means of resistance are not bloody or violent but constitute of peaceful demonstrations and sit-in strikes. She knows it well enough that India being a democratic country, peaceful protest is the most appropriate means of voicing resistance. The condition of the tribal community of Kerala and so of the subaltern situated anywhere in the world is aptly expressed by Janu in her narrative:

> in those days we were afraid of almost everything. the backs of our people seem to be so bent because they have been terrified of so many things for generations. when our people speak they don’t raise their eyes and that must be because they are so scared. (13)

Arundhati Roy in her book, *An Ordinary Person’s Guide To Empire*, writes about the crushing of non-violent resistance movements around the world and asserts that by not respecting and honouring such struggles, we would, by default, “privilege those who turn to violent means” (7). By not giving peaceful change a chance, violent change would become inevitable. “That violence”, she states, “will be (and already is) random, ugly, and unpredictable” (7). In a hard-hitting letter to the Kerala Chief
Minister, A.K. Antony (written in 2003) after the Muthanga incident (mentioned in the beginning of this chapter) she writes:

The Muthanga atrocity will go down in Kerala’s history as a government’s attempt to decimate an extraordinary and historical struggle for justice by the poorest, most oppressed community in Kerala. It will go down in history because, unlike most ‘struggles’ in Kerala, it is not a petty, cynical fight between political parties jokeying for power. It is the real fight of the truly powerless against the powerful. It is the stuff of which myths are made. (63)

Tracing the origins of the ideology of global capitalism, historian William Appleman Williams refers to the pragmatic idealism of former American President Woodrow Wilson as the “imperialism of idealism” (qtd. in Smith 74). As an overtly harmless ideology, this ‘neo-imperialistic idealism’ or more accurately, the discourse of globalization has been used successfully by the Western powers to control the “discourse of global power” in a way that has rendered “territorial acquisition . . . secondary if not irrelevant” (Smith 74). It was immediately after World War II that the then President of America, Frederick Roosevelt, pressed upon the powers of the world that there had to be a world body or organization through which all disputes, territorial or otherwise, between various countries be settled without resorting to direct warfare. The latter, he averred, had already made almost every nation of the world pay dearly, leaving no corner of the globe untouched; the millions of lives destroyed and scarred forever and properties damaged by the two world wars was a stark reminder of that. All this, he confidently assured the world, could be avoided through the creation of this organization that came into existence in 1945 and eventually came to be known as the United Nations. It was decided that only those countries who were permanent members of the Security Council of the United Nations would have veto power. Started as an organization with the goal of ushering in world peace, the credibility of the United Nations has been severely compromised by America’s dictates in recent times, the latter holding its strings by virtue of being its biggest funding nation. The United Nations is now a ‘global’ organization that willingly or unwillingly gives legal sanction to American neo-imperialistic designs. Such kind of a wielding of global hegemonic influence through organizations like the UN as also financial institutions like the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO has been
couched in 'idealistic' euphemisms like striving for a 'global world order', 'one world system', 'world peace' and the like. As Neil Smith writes:

In Wilson’s hands, American globalism represented an Enlightenment universalism which would, in its wildest dreams, take the world beyond geography. It was literally utopian — aspatial. (Endgame of Globalization 75)

But the irony of the contemporary world situation is that even though this ‘Enlightenment universalism’ was propounded to be “aspatial” and to some extent, it has proved to be so, considering the trespassing of the sovereignties of many third world nations, it has largely had a very spatial, tangible impact on the lives of third world peoples. Janu’s autobiographical narrative makes this evident. The ‘neo-imperialistic idealism’ of the west or the discourse of globalization is certainly a form of undemocratic governance even though it is ‘democracy’ that is cited by countries like the US and UK as the justification for some of the wars of the twenty-first century. It is “democracy that is the first principle that corporate globalization sacrifices”, asserts Shiva (Globalization’s New Wars ix). The current global economy which is a “permanent war economy” has robbed millions around the world of land, food and water even in peace-time (Shiva viii). Its instruments of war are “coercive free trade treaties”, “technologies of production based on violence and control, such as toxics, genetic engineering and nano-technologies” (Shiva vii). This global economy which is destructive and life-effacing is possible only by virtue of immense complicity between the ruling elites within and beyond national boundaries. Explains Janu:

Nearly all the rare chola forests in Idukki have been destroyed with the tacit approval of the forest department. About 15 tourist resorts have been sanctioned in the ecologically fragile area near Anayirankal Dam in blatant violation of existing rules and norms. The forest department also did not raise objections when over 5,000 acres of pristine forest land at Mankulam were handed over to 200-odd non-tribal families during the LDF government’s reign. The department also did precious little to protect the rare nilgiri tahr at the Eravikulam National Park. And in Mathikettani, ganja was cultivated openly with the approval of the forest authorities. (qtd. in Mukundan Menon)
The nature of the resistance of the tribal community led by Janu highlights the irony of the situation. While the democratically elected Kerala Government uses undemocratic means to suppress the agitations, the peaceful demonstrations of the Adivasis are thoroughly democratic in nature and intent. In an interview with Subhash Gatade, Janu states:

In the initial years our activities were limited to dialogues and meetings at the local level. We worked hard to motivate our fellow beings about the ill treatment faced by the community. Then we formed a forum at the taluk level. Gradually our ideas became widespread among our community and in the year 2002 we formed the AGMS (Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha) at the state level.

The structure of the Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha consists of Oorusabhas at the grassroots level which stand as the decision-making body of each tribe at the local level. There are thirty-six types of tribes in Kerala and each has its own rituals and practices. The representatives of the Oorusabhas constitute the state presidium of the AGMS. This forum frames the policies and decisions of the AGMS. This organization is thus democratically constituted and uses non-violent means such as demonstrations and sit-in strikes to voice its protests against the state government. Regarding the financial help required to run the organization, Janu says, “Whatever amount we collect to run our cases and to organize our strikes and agitations are raised from within our community. The Scheduled Tribe employees and officers from the community are the main benefactors of our movement” (Interview, Subhash Gatade).

P. Sivakami, a Dalit woman writer, criticizes the Dalit patriarchy as also the directionless Dalit movement in contemporary Tamil society in her novel, The Grip of Change. In this fictitious account, she captures the lesser seen side of Dalit patriarchy through the characterization of Kathamathu, an overbearing patriarch, who engages in corruption and polygamy. He marries twice and keeps Thangam, a Dalit widow, as his mistress in the house. Thangam, who is bruised and battered, having been beaten up by the relatives of her upper-caste lover, arrives at Kathamathu’s house pleading for help. She is given shelter and food at his place but with a price. And that is to physically yield to his sexual desires. The same body through which she is oppressed and subjugated also grants her the power to gain ascendancy in Kathamathu’s house.
and gives her dominance over his other two wives. Through this novel, Sivakami has highlighted how caste politics and Dalit patriarchy are played out upon a Dalit woman’s body. While contemporary Dalit feminism primarily addresses the victimization of Dalit women, it also acknowledges that the ‘Dalit woman’ is not a homogeneous category. Homogeneity and the Western feminist notion of the oppression of women as a group that produces the image of a subjugated, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound “average third world woman”, is criticized by Chandra Talpade Mohanty as being essentialist and reductive (Third World Women 56). Rather, the ‘third world woman’ as also the ‘Dalit woman’ is a multiple, heterogeneous, even contradictory grouping that is formed within “hierarchical, multiple, changing and structural power relations of caste, class and ethnicity” (Rege, in Guru 61). The recognition of this fact whereby the subject of Dalit feminists’ liberation project must also then be the subject of every other emancipatory project requires a sharp focus on the processes by which gender, race, class, caste and sexuality construct each other. A Dalit feminist standpoint has to then recognize the “histories and preferred social relations and utopias of all the struggling mankind” and work in conjunction, rather than in isolation, with the other third world feminisms to assume greater potency and vigour (Rege, in Guru 62). The Dalit situation is not dissimilar to that of the marginalized tribal and by coming together both these communities can achieve more impetus in their struggles for justice and egalitarianism.

There are certain similarities as well as differences between Janu’s struggle to get the alienated lands of the tribal community back from the Kerala government and Rigoberta Menchu’s fight against the severe repression of the Indian community at the hands of the Guatamalan military government. Whereas in Janu’s case, the fight is against a democratically elected government, Menchu’s is against a military dictatorship backed by the American Government. The circumstances in both cases are politically, economically and culturally specific and particular to both women. Janu lives in a state which is comparatively peaceful (that is, it is ruled only by governments who are there by virtue of a legal democratic electoral process) while Menchu lives in a country that is torn by civil strife orchestrated by the military oligarchy (that is, when her autobiographical narrative was published). Though geographically distanced and contextually dissimilar, the means of resistance that both women use are surprisingly similar. They narrate their personal stories and experiences to their sympathizers (Janu uses her mother-tongue, Malayalam and
Menchu uses Spanish that has been consciously learnt) which are further translated into English to reach a wider audience. In this process, they use the power of ‘words’ to fight against the injustice meted out to their communities. The potency of the published word helps in getting them support from different parts of the globe and takes their struggles beyond their geographical boundaries. Their local activism thus takes on a global visage and has the ability to make their specific, context-bound struggles into a comprehensive global activism that encompasses various civilizational idioms. This is the “grassroots globalization” (outlined in the previous chapter) that has the potential of challenging and subverting the different power structures of the world.

End Notes

1 Subsequent page numbers of Mother Forest are given parenthetically in this chapter.
2 Punam means a forest in the tribal Adiyar community of Kerala.
3 Kaitha is a plant with thorny leaves that grows luxuriously along the banks of streams and canals in Kerala. It is a part of the romantic psyche of Kerala. The thickets of Kaitha are said to teem with snakes.
4 Erumaadam or Machan is a high wooden platform from which hunters took aim; farmers used it to guard their crop from wild animals.
5 Chini is a reed instrument with limited musical capacity.
6 Thudi is a tribal drum of very simple design.
7 Karshaka thozhilali is an agricultural labourer.
8 Jenmi is a feudal landlord.
9 Arrack is an alcoholic drink distilled from vegetable and fruit sources. Various Governments in Kerala had banned indigenous production of any kind of alcohol, making the tribal people depend on outsiders for arrack. This is another instance of State action against the tribal people.
10 Each year thousands of domestic workers enter the United States on special visas issued by the U.S. State Department. These visas are issued to foreign nationals, diplomats, officials of international agencies and sometimes to U.S. citizens with permanent residency abroad so they can “import” domestic help (Zarembka, in Ehrenreich 145). While those domestic workers who are on A-3 and G-5 visas (issued to household employees of diplomats and officials of international agencies like the World Bank, IMF and the United Nations) are registered with the State Department and have the option of legally transferring to another employer, the ones who are on B-1 visas (a business category that allows foreign nationals and American citizens with permanent residency abroad the option of bringing household employees with them when they visit America) are not on the State Department’s records and are left with little or no alternative if they are “enslaved or abused” (Zarembka, in Ehrenreich 145). Moreover, there is another visa program that is beset with heavy racist and classist implications. An ‘au pair program’ (which means ‘an equal’ in French) that mainly recruits young, middle-class women
from Europe, ostensibly for 'cultural and educational exchange' on J-1 visas is, in fact, a nanny recruitment programme that provides the best protection and facilities to white women domestic workers. On the other hand, women of colour are only given the A-3, G-5 or B-1 visas that offer no such protection or safety net to these women.

11 Data compiled for 2008 by the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) showed that there were 8,172 reported dowry deaths in the country, and for the same year, there were 81,344 cases of cruelty towards women by husbands and relatives. The actual numbers would be much higher since many cases go unreported. Also, NCRB statistics state that more than 53 cases of rape are recorded every day. In 2009, a total of 21,397 rape cases were reported countrywide. This, given the fact that for one reported case of rape, about 70 cases go unreported. (The Tribune 29 June 2011: 11).

12 Gingli is an oilseed.

13 Thina and Chaama are kinds of millet.

14 Kachil is yam.

15 Chena is elephant yam.

16 In a report published by the New Indian Express in Kochi on 03/07/2010, a government study found out that groundwater levels in Pudussery grama panchayat, Palakkad, where Pepsico has its unit have fallen alarmingly. Also, the effluents drained out by the company, both liquid and solid waste, were found to be polluting the groundwater. India Green File 271 (2010). Incidentally, Palakkad District of Kerala is home to the second largest population of tribals.