CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

Through the foregoing chapters we have made an attempt to trace out the ethnohistory of tribes in Malappuram district of Kerala. Aranadan, Cholanaickan, Kattunayakan, Kuruman, Mala Muthan, Mala Panickan and Paniyan are the Scheduled Tribes in the district. Their cultural aspects and traditions are outlined and a possible explanation to their isolated life is given. The changes in the social, economic, religious and cultural life of these tribals and the causative factors that promote changes are presented. Their past and present are depicted on the basis of the data collected through field work and the earlier ethnographic records.

The study leads us to certain conclusions. First, the tribes in the district and in the surrounding areas are the descendants of the early inhabitants of the land and they had a common ethnic homeland in the past; second, though the tribes in the district do share certain degree of similarity, they do not have common cultural pattern in all aspects of their life; third, two tribes, Cholanaickan and Kattunayakan, are still primitive food gatherers and others are mainly wage labourers; fourth, disappearance of the tribal characteristics and the consequent identity crisis is the most significant feature of the tribal scenario of the district; fifth, many social institutions, customs and traditions exist in the Kerala society, had originated and existed among the tribes from
the ancient period itself; sixth, marginalization of the tribals took place due to the physical subjugation or isolation and the denial of control over capital and its distribution; and, seventh, mobilization of the tribals of the district, Kerala in general, is not possible in the near future.

It is found that the tribes that live in the district are the descendants of the early inhabitants of the land. Once they were the owners of the land. With the advent of people of advanced technology these early inhabitants were enslaved and many of them escaped into the interiors of the forest. Those who took asylum in the remote areas retained some of their traditions through the ages. Like the Nineteenth Century evolutionists, L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer and others used comparative method, for reconstructing the past of Kerala tribes through the use of living tribal people as examples of earlier stages. Following E.B. Tylor, early ethnographers in Kerala developed the ‘concept of survivals’ which became important in the evolutionary reconstruction of past societies. For Tylor, survivals meant vestigial patterns from the past which had lost their functions but had been carried on into a later stage of society by force of habit. Tylor took these survivals to indicate remnants from a past stage and proved that English society had passed through earlier, primitive stages.¹ The cultural traditions and life style of some of the tribal societies of Malappuram district are very similar to that of the cultural life of primitive tribes. According to D.D. Kosambi, the primitive survivals in the

means of production can be used to trace out the pre-historic development in India. He says that the pre-historic people were hunters and food gatherers and they found the thinner marginal jungle as the best localities where they are found today. In the very next food-producing stage, he continues, their cultivation was generally a shifting affair. It is found that the tribals who live in the hills and forests, in the district, continued their life in hunting and food gathering. Even now, the tribes like Cholanaickan and Kattunayakan are hunters and food gatherers. Till very recent times, many tribals of Kerala practiced shifting cultivation or slash-and-burn method and they were culturally pre-neolithic. In the course of time some of the tribes came down to the low lying areas and interacted with the people of the plains. However, most of them have led an isolated life in their traditional habitats without any contact with the outer world.

The survival of ancient tribal customs and traditions among the present tribals indicates that these groups were desocialised in some circumstantial exigencies. As they have been isolated and had no interaction with great tradition for centuries, their socio-cultural ethos remained unchanged. Various forms of worship, rituals, ceremonies, dances and some of the common

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Ibid., p.44.

3 A.Aiyappan regarded these tribes as Stone Age survivals according to the similarity in their socio-economic characteristics to the earliest Stone Age strata of Kerala population. A.Aiyappan, *The Personality of Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1982, pp.123, 124.
observances of the daily life of the present day tribals have its roots in the ancient tribal past.

The religious beliefs and practices of the tribals of the district are very similar to that of the ancient animistic beliefs. They believe that, an immaterial soul \((anima)\) is the principle of life. For animists all spots and places are holy as they are the seeds of spirits. Animals, plants, trees, ponds, rivers, stones, hills or mountains are all abodes of spirits. This belief is still prevalent among the tribals of the district. It is found that many gods and goddesses of these tribes are named after the name of the hills, places, natural objects and natural phenomenon. \textit{Cholanaickan} worhsip \textit{Maladaivam} (jungle god), who is believed to be omnipotent and omnipresnt, \textit{Koolimladaivam} (the god of animals), \textit{Thandanaadudaivam} (god of health and remover of illness like leanness), \textit{Odakolli daivam} (god of health and remover of illness), \textit{Manjaranadu daivam} (god of health and remover of chicken pox), \textit{Cholassan daivam} (god of progeniture), \textit{Arinjanadu daivam} (Protector of forest), \textit{Ole devva} (god of the river) and \textit{Naadu devva} (god of the plain). The \textit{Kattunayakan} give divinity to the hills of their habitats. They also worship

\footnote{Edward B.Tylor argues that as the religion originated as beliefs in soul, animism was the ancient form of religion. As souls were numerous who were worshipped on different occasions in the form of ancestor worship, this created belief in polytheism, which following the processes of cultural evolution, reached at a stage of monotheism, the great belief of civilized people. Edward B.Taylor, \textit{op.cit.}, p.81.}

\footnote{They believe that the deep tanks and pools in the river are the seats of \textit{ole daivam} and they prevent their children to go there.}

\footnote{L.K.A. Iyer called the \textit{Kattunayakan} ‘pure animist.’ For details see L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer, \textit{The Mysore Tribes and Castes}, Vol. I, Delhi, 1988, p. 296.}
Maladaivom (hill god). Along with hills (Malaidaivam) Kurumar also give divinity to some animals like tiger and pig which is evident from their concepts of Pulidaivam (Tiger god) and Pannidaivam (Pig god). Paniyans of the area have given divinity to two huge stones called Tampuratikallu (Stone goddess, White colour) and Tampurankallu (Stone god, Black colour). They are situated near Mundery seed farm in Pothukallu Panchayath. The place is called Thampuratikallu. Till recently the Paniyans in the area were used to go there and perform pujas and offerings.

Worship of nature and natural objects, serpents and ancestoral spirits are the other primitive religious practices prevalent among the tribals of Malappurm district. Aranadans believe that the Sun is the supreme god and the Creator. They call the Sun as Pakal Muthappan (grandfather of day-time) and the Moon as Irava Muthappan (grandfatgher of night) and believe that stars are the children of Sun. They start their day facing east and invoking Sun for luck. Tree-worship is also prevalent. The origin of tree-worship in India can be traced back to the Indus Valley. In one of the sealings from Harappa, a tree enclosed by a railing is found. Almost all tribals of the district consider the plants like tulasi (ocimum sanctum) and pipal (ficus religiosa) tree as

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pious and many of them have a *tulasithara* in front of their huts where they offer *poojas* and perform *Vilakkuthelikkal* (lighting the lamp) regularly. The tribes like *Aranadan, Mala Muthan* and *Mala Panickan* consider Punna tree (*malampunna- Calophyllum inophyllum*) as pious and its leaves are widely used in the life cycle rituals and ceremonies especially in the burial practices. This reverence towards trees obviously had roots in the naturalistic beliefs of earlier times. It is believed that from the very ancient period the tribals had highest reverence towards trees which provided them food and shelter and probably this reverence may be the origin of tree-worship.\\(^{11}\) Sepent- worship was another primitive custom which prevailed in the world in ancient time.\\(^{12}\) The belief in the serpents may have been originated from the tedious work of clearing the dense forests flooded with poisonous snakes in the early period. It is evident that *Cholanaickar* of Punchakolly and Chungathara ranges worship Serpent gods to ensure their safety while roaming in the forest.

Most of the tribals have strong belief in the ancestor spirit which is called *paina* among *Mala Muthans* and *Paniyans*, *peyi* among *Kattunayakans*, *nilalu* among *Cholanaickar* and *pretham* among *Aranadans* and *Mala Panickar*. They found their ancestor as their founding fathers and they are eulogized through burial rites, ritual offerings, folk tradition etc. They believe that the evil spirit is the cause of illness. Black magic is practiced as remedy.

\(^{12}\) It is suggested that its origin came from the Lower Euphrates among the people of Turanian. James Fergusson, *Tree and Serpent Worship*, Delhi, 1971, reprint, p.15
It is performed by a shaman\textsuperscript{13} or komaram or oracle or teyyam dancer. It is these functionaries who act as intermediaries between clansmen and ancestors. Daivam kotuthi (Giving to god) or aandaruthi is an annual celebration observed by all tribes in the name of their ancestors every year.

The worship of Mother Goddess\textsuperscript{14} is more significant among the tribes under study. The concept of forest goddess (Kattu Bagavati, Kattilamma etc,) is found prevalent among them. She is supposed to take rest for three months from the first of Makaram (January\textsuperscript{15}), on the expiry of which period the agriculturists disturb her (by beginning the ploughing and sowing operations) on the advent of the south-west Monsoon. Uchal is the name given to the period of three days when she is said to menstruate. During this period granaries and all receptacles of grain are shut up and they were confined to their huts. During this period paddy is not sold and no implement of husbandry is touched. The worship of Kali and Bhadrankali also have their origin from the worship of Mother Goddess.

It is found that all tribals of the district worship various goddesses and they also have the concept of Mother Goddess. Aranadans worship deities named Thampuratti (Mother deity) and Malachi Daivom (Hill goddess). They

\\textsuperscript{13} The term shaman refers to a man or woman who serves a society as a part time religious practitioner. He is believed to have some supernatural powers to cause illness and death and to cure illness. Usually the shaman is possessed by a spirit, but sometimes he ritually commands a spirit helper. This is the ideology of Shamanism, another primitive form of religion. Elman R. Service, Profiles in Ethnology, New York, 1978, pp.212-217

\\textsuperscript{14} The cult of Mother Goddess had prevailed in India in remote antiquity. See A.K.Sur, Dynamics and Synthesis in Hindu Culture, Culcutta, 1973, pp.1-14
also offer visit to Chembanthitta temple at Karulai, dedicated to Goddess Bhagavathi, regularly. Important Goddesses of Cholanaickar are Vilakkatampurati or Koolitampurati (the Idol of lamp, the mother Goddess and deity of dawn and light), and Thalai daivam (goddess of rain). Cholanaickar do not have an established temple. Moreover it is said that there is a separate holy place in the hill of Karulai range near Mancheeri, where they regularly perform rituals to appease their gods and goddesses. The supreme goddess of Kattunayakans is Odithi. The goddess Mariamma is believed to be the curer of small pox. They have also belief in Bhadrakali. Abba, the daiva festival of Kattunayakans is observed in the harvest season to appease their gods and goddesses. This may be considered as fertility cult. Kurumar also have belief in Kali goddess. Both Mala Panickan and Mala Muthan worship goddess Bagavati. It is said that till recently they observe uchal. The goddesses of Paniyans are Thampuratty or Kuli (chief deity), Mariamma (goddess of Rain), Kattu Bagavati (goddess of forest), Kaattilamma, Kali and Bagavati.

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15 This is observed during the harvest seasons. They make a doll with ragi flour and assign a supernatural power to the doll. They also use rice (achiri), coconut (tenginukkay), banana (bala banni), sand wick (udu bathi) and camphor (duppa) for rituals.

16 The Mother Goddess is worshipped as goddess of fertility also. The belief in a goddess of fertility as a manifestation of the Mother Goddess is found in the Indus Civilization. According to John Marshall, “...the cult of the Earth or Mother Goddess is evidenced by a remarkable oblong sealing from Harappa on which a nude female figure is depicted upside down with legs apart and with a plant issuing from her womb.” John Marshall, ed., Mohanjodaro and the Indus Civilization, Vol. 1, reprint, Delhi, 1973, p.52.
The worship of Mother Goddess indicates that these tribes are the descendants of early inhabitants of the land. The worship of the mother goddess is traced to the pre-Aryan cultures. Before the advent of Indo-Aryans speakers the Dravidian were the inhabitants of the land. Their goddesses were different from Indo-Aryan goddesses such as Saraswathi, Lakshmi, and Parvathi. With the spread of great tradition of Hinduism, the religious ideology and mode of worship of indigenous communities began to change. Modern Hinduism is a mixture of pre-Aryan and Indo-Aryan practices moulded into a way of life, and Ramayana and Mahabharatha became the common heritage of the community. It is only possible to conjecture in the findings of archaeologists and the religious practices of aboriginals what the religion prevalent in India in pre-Aryan times was.

The survival of traces of megalithism among the tribal people enables us to call them as the inheritors of the megalithic builders of Kerala. In the case of Kerala, the earliest historical evidence of human habitation available is of the megalithic builders. That is, the descendants of these early farming communities of Kerala are the present day tribals and this is evident from their surviving cultural traits. K.J. John argues that megalithic traces survive among the tribals and non tribal people in the forms of the ancestor worship, the practice of offerings to the ancestors and burial practices like the peculiar

kind of grave digging with a side chamber and deposition, construction of stone circles or making burial marks with stones over the graves.\textsuperscript{19} He continues “The continuity of those aspects of megalithic culture centered on the cult of the dead is manifested in the surviving ghost worship and ritualistic ghost dances of the little communities of Malabar and in the burial customs of tribes in isolated areas in the Sahyadri ranges.”\textsuperscript{20} It is found that all tribes of the district have great ancestors as their founding fathers and they are eulogized through burial rites, rituals, offerings, folk tradition etc. Construction of stone circles or making burial marks with stones over the graves is another peculiarity of megalithic burial practices. The erection of huge stones as in the past is not found among the tribes of Nilambur valley. At the same time, the practice of marking burial sites with one or two stones or to put a heap of stones over the grave is followed by many tribes in the area. The Cholanaickar of Karulai erect two small stones, one each on the head and foot portions to mark the site. But they have no habit of erecting huge stones like probably due to their nomadic nature of life and deforestation over the years. Deposition of belongings or dearest possessions of the deceased in the grave along with the dead body is another feature of the megalithic culture.\textsuperscript{21} This practice is widespread among all tribes in the district. Belongings being buried include clothes, ornaments, betel box,

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.,p.487.
knives, sickle, digging sickles, axes, bows and arrows, pottery, earthen pots, ornaments, coins etc. They are the grave goods of these tribals. The practice of deposition of various objects and belongings of the deceased with the dead presupposes a firm belief in the continuance of life or a virtual break-down of unhealthy morbid attachments among survivors.

The similarities in cultural traits and physical appearances of the tribes under study with that of the tribes inhabit in the adjacent areas suggest a common ethnic homeland to them. The tribal pocket of Nilambur comes under the tribal belt comprises of Nilgiris, Coorg, Waynad, Attapady, Parambikkulam, Cardamom Hills, and Anamalai Hills of Tamil Nadu. The above mentioned ancient cultural practices of the tribes in Malappuram district are also found in prevalence among the other tribals in the belt. The megalithic rudiments like the erection of burial stones and stone circles are still evident among them. The Mala Arayans of Travancore even today erect miniature dolmens for the dead.\(^{22}\) They are reported to have been erecting it when a man dies an unnatural death.\(^ {23}\) The Kururmbas of Attapadi today worship menhir type idols in their shrines, which may have been the relics of their funeral memorials of the past.\(^ {24}\) The Kader of Erumappara who were resettled from Parambikulam some 30 or 40 years ago have stone circles

around three graves of their most respected ancestors. The erection of
dolmens and urn burial practices are still followed by the tribals in Waynad,
Coorg and Nilgiris. At the same time, no tribes in the belt do not practice
cremation, which clearly indicates that they are not Hindus, but are the
followers of megalithic builders. The survival of these customs among the
primitive tribes who inhabit in the Western Ghats lends support to the theory
that there might have been a movement of Megalithic Iron Age people
throughout the area.

Most of these tribals were hunters and food gatherers in the remote
past or recent past. The hunter-gathering habit of ancient tribals is still
prevalent among the Cholaniackan, Kattunayakan and Kattu Paniyan in the
Nilambur Valley. Like wise, most of the tribals in Waynad, Nilgiris, Attapady
and Anamali Hills in Tamil Nadu are hunters and food gatherers and who live
on what nature provide them. It is also evident that, till the very recent time,
many tribals in the region practiced punam or slah and burn cultivation, the
ancient mode of cultivation. In addition, these tribals have belief in spirit of
deceased ancestors who are to be propitiated on all auspicious occasions for
the well-being of the living, for the rich agricultural products and other
prosperity in life.

As far as the languages of these tribals are concerned, their dialects are
the admixture of Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam and Tulu suggesting a common

Ibid.
linguistic homeland for the tribals connecting Nilambur, Attapady, waynad, Nilgiri, Coorg and Tamil Nadu. Many tribes of Malappuram district like Aranadans, Paniyans, Kattunayakan, Kuruman etc. are also found in other district of Kerala and in the adjacent states. They also speak the same language with regional variations. Speaking about the physical appearances of these tribals, they share the common features of the Proto-Australoids. The Proto-Australoids noted for their long head, wavy hair, black colour, flat nose, dark skin and tall body. Due to the movement of the people in pre-historic and historic times, the original inhabitants dispersed into different regions where they got isolated as the result of geographical and historical reasons. There they developed independent cultural life. Historically, they are the refugees who took shelter in the jungles and in the course of centuries, lost their cultural paraphernalia and degenerated into their present state of cultural poverty. The present inhabitants in this tribal region can rightly claim the descendancy of the early inhabitants. Probably they were Dravidian speakers with Australoid physical features.

The ethnographic profile of the tribes of the district shows that though the all tribes of the district possess certain degree of similarity they do not have common cultural pattern in all aspects of their life. Each community has their own distinctive tradition, history and culture. All the tribals do not share common socio-economic and cultural characteristics. The characteristics of

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26 M. Sreenathan, Dravidian Tribes and Languages, Kuppam, 2008, pp.35-60.
primitive way of life, habitation in remote and less accessible hilly areas, nomadic habits, etc. are not applicable to all tribes of the district. Many live in hilly tracts and forests, though some have been living with the non-tribals in the plains for centuries. The latter have become a part of the rural social hierarchy working as cultivators or agricultural labourers. At the same time, non-tribal households are also found in the midst of tribal settlements. They belong to shop-keepers, money lenders or cultivators. Those who live amidst the modernized heterogeneous communities have undergone a cultural metamorphosis over the years. Cholanaickan and Kattunayakan are the primitive tribal groups in the district and continue to retain their tribal characteristics. The process of acculturation seems to be very slow among them. They are hunting and gathering groups. Cholanaickan live in rock shelters (alais). It may be concluded that the different tribes in the district varied with ecology and tradition.

The area of habitation plays great role in moulding the life pattern of the tribals. According to the area of habitation the whole tribes of the district can be divided into three categories. First category is the tribes who live in the villages or countryside. All these tribes are living in the houses built by government as a part of rehabilitation. Paniyan, Aranadan, Kuruman, and Mala Panickan are the dominant part of this group. Paniyans are the largest single Scheduled Tribe of these groups. Most of their settlements or colonies are found along the fringes of paddy field where they laboured in the past.
This group has lost most their tribal characteristics and has become a part of
the modernized heterogeneous communities. Most of them are wage labourers.
Their dress and ornaments, house hold articles are completely of modern
types. Most of their houses are electrified and have modern amenities as
radio, television, telephone etc. These groups are “assimilated tribes”\(^\text{27}\) whose
culture has been completely assimilated by some other culture. The crucial
problem of this group is social as they lost their tribal identity and we may
call them ‘semi-tribals.’ Second category includes the tribes who live in the
entrances or boundaries of the forests. This group is the largest. They are
between the ‘devil and sea’. They are not fully integrated with the
mainstream. Most of the tribes of the district except Cholanaickan and
Kattunayakan come under this category. This category of tribes is “adaptive
tribes”\(^\text{28}\) whose culture is gradually adapting the modes of some other
cultures. Third category is the tribes who live in the interiors of the forest.
Two dominant groups of this category are Cholanaickan and Kuttunayakan.
This category includes Cholanaickan, Kattunayakan, Mala Muthan and Kattu
Paniyan. Cholanaickan, Kuttunayakan, and Kattu Paniyan are ‘primitive food
gathering tribes’ while Mala Muthans are under the influence of modernism.
All the tribes of the district have their own dialects which are the admixture of
Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil and Tulu languages. They use their dialects only

\(^{27}\) D.N.Majumdar classified Indian tribes into two groups, assimilated tribes and
adaptive tribes, on the basis of cultural change. D.N. Majumdar, \textit{The Affairs of a Tribe:

\(^{28}\) \textit{Ibid.}
to speak among themselves; with non-tribals they speak Malayalam. Their dialect has no script and is very difficult to grasp. Their younger generation use Malayalam and the medium of instruction in schools and communication is also Malayalam. Consequently, the present young tribal generation is unaware of their traditional language and thus the tribal dialect is under the threat of vanishing.

The most significant feature of the tribal scenario of Malappuram district is the disappearance of tribal characteristics and the consequent identity crisis. In the past, as reported, the tribes were simply hunters and food gatherers. Forest has been their traditional homeland. Each group had its own territory in which its members hunt animals and collect forest produces. Such a territory was often quiet extensive because the food gatherers hunts and collect only what they require. The forest dwellers found wild-growing fruits in trees and edible roots and tubers in the jungle to supplement their food. The forest also provided them necessary timber and bamboos for house building and for the manufacture of various implements. They also collected honey, medicinal herbs and other minor forest produces which they could sell or barter in the weekly markets or exchange centres. They hunted in the jungle and fished in the rivers that flow through their habitat and could supplement their vegetarian diet with meat and fish. Shifting cultivation was an integral part of the tribal economy. The tribes which preferred shifting cultivation deliberately chose for their habitats hilly forest areas of the plains of broad
river valleys to the plough cultivations. More over the shifting cultivators always lived alone with forest and found leisure to get away from the full routine of monotonous farm work through hunting or fishing or the collection of jungle produce. They required no cattle for ploughing and were thus less tied down to their homesteads and stables.

But now majority of the tribes have been deprived of their traditional way of life and sources of subsistence. The very basis of their economy has been destroyed by an abrupt prohibition of use of forest and its produce. Without sufficient preparation they have to face radical changes and to cop up with the new pattern of life. Due to the lack of adequate knowledge on the modern techniques and cultivation, the crops produced by them are meagre. Soil erosion, lack of adequate fields and irrigation facilities etc. further accelerated their problem. The subsistence of tribals is supplemented by forest produces and by hunting. As the large portion of the forest has been declared reserved forest, all their traditional rights have been deprived. Thus the jungle does not yield them the important subsidiary substance as it did in the past. Now their economy is based on wage labour and forests. Due to the unauthorized alienation of tribal land and deprivation of tribal of forestry rights, the tribal economy has been seriously deteriorated.

Many have lost their tribal character to a large extent owing to their large scale contact with non-tribal groups, though they are commonly kept at
a distance. But some have retained their nomadic and hunting habits and hesitate to give up their traditional way of life and identity. They have confined themselves to the forest and continue to live in predominantly tribal areas. Among them, their ancient mode of life still exists with minimum external influence than in the environment of a settled population. Though they are short in number they have no sufficient cultivable land due to the increasing deforestation and strict control over the forest by the forest department. The hunter-gathering societies are diminutive and wage labour is becoming their primary means of livelihood. *Cholonaickan* and *Kattunayakan* are the diminutive hunter gathering groups in the district.

Religion is an integral part of tribal life and plays a vital role in their socio-economic life. The traditional tribal beliefs are vanishing and most of the tribals claim that they are Hindus. Hindu deities and pantheons are worshipped and offerings are made. Religion controls their life pattern and individuality. One of the major reasons of the isolated life or anti-modern life patterns is religion. They assert that if they leave their traditional homeland, their gods and goddesses will be infuriated and they will fall sick. They believe that their traditional homeland is the seat of their pantheons. Tribal religion is clearly not as easily definable as Islam or Christianity and more over many tribal cults and practices are very similar to Hindu practices and thus, in modern times, it is difficult to discern tribal elements. They believe in ancestral spirit and their practices are reinforced by their illiteracy and
poverty. This may be one of the reasons for the unsanitary conditions and unhygienic practices. They believe that the diseases may be cured by magic spells and sorcery. The diseases caused due to the wrath of their deities and evil spirits are believed to be cured only by magical method. Therefore, sorcerer has always a great role in the day to day life of the tribals.

Monogamy is the common form of marriage in the present day tribal society. But cases of polygamy are also reported. Endogamous tribal rules are in gradual vanishing. The major reasons are disparity of sex ratio, unavoidable external contacts, ignorance of the new generation about the tribal traditions etc. The important phases in the life cycle of the tribals of the district are birth, puberty, marriage and death. The rites and rituals connected with each of these phase are observed very carefully. They are also very careful to observe Daivomkotuthi or Adiyanthiram every year. Paniyans observe Daivomkotothi regularly. All the tribes in the district bury their dead and no event of cremation is reported. But they are different in methods and rites. All tribes of the district except two, ie Aranadan and Paniyan, believe in life after death which is very extensively related to their burial practices.

Many social institutions, customs and traditions exist in Kerala society had originated and existed among the tribes from the ancient period itself. Matrilineal system (Marumakkathayam) is one of them that deserve special mention. There are various views regarding the origin of Marumakkathayam
in Kerala. According to Prof. Elamkulam, Marumakkathayam emerged in Kerala as the product of the compelling socio-economic forces caused by the Chera-Chola war in the 11th century A.D. He argues that the war brought about fundamental changes in the social structure of the people. Nayars went to war on a large scale. At this time the Nambudiris were being entrenched in authority. They contracted alliances with Nayar women and the matrilineal system came into being. The political and religious dominance of Nambutiris, their rise to economic ascendancy as the landlords of Kerala and the introduction of compulsory military training leading to the formation of suicide squads or chavers during the war. This was the compelling circumstances which lead to the switch over from the patrilineal to matrilineal system of inheritance in Kerala.

K.P. Padmanabha Menon says that patrilineal system was followed by the matrilineal system in Kerala and it is of recent origin due to some special circumstances. Among the Nayars, the major share of a man’s self earned property is bequeathed to his children and the latter performed the funeral rites for their father. He argues that if Nayars were Marumakkathayees from the beginning, their children would not have performed these rites for their dead fathers. In no society did the practice exist of person having no right to the property performing funeral rites for a departed soul. So till the 14th century the system of inheritance in Kerala was

patrilineal. He continues that none of the foreign travelers who visited Kerala before the 14th century has stated anything about this system of inheritance. If they had felt anything strange about the customs of the people they would have recorded them.\textsuperscript{32}

The present study reveals that matrilineal system (\textit{Marumakkathayam}) is an integral part of tribal culture. In a matrilineal society, the kinship, descent and inheritance are traced in the female line.\textsuperscript{33} But in the case of tribals, as there was no property concept among them, the property inheritance is less important. At the same time, many elements closely related to matrilineal system are prevalent among these tribes. The traditional celebration of girls’ first menstruation (\textit{Thirandukalyanam}) is a great joyful event in her life and her family. The celebration with rich arrangements, music and dance in the esteemed presence of their socio-religious heads and all tribes of the district and the great feast served to the gathering create a pride and self respect to the girl. The celebration proclaims that she has reached the full reproducing capability of her sex. \textit{Thalikettukalyanam} has been observed among the tribes who follow matrilineal system. The respected and prominent position of the maternal uncle is also closely related with the

\textsuperscript{32} Friar Jordanus, who visited Quilon in 1324 A.D, was the first foreign traveller to record the practice of matriliny among the kings of Kerala. “In this India never do the legitimate sons of great kings or princes or barons inherit the goods of their parents, but only the sons of their sisters.” \textit{Mirabilia Descripta} quoted by K. P.Pathmanabha Menon, \textit{op.cit.}, p.282. It has been argued that the Alupas of South Canara followed matrilineal system up to the close of the 13th Century and the \textit{aliyasanthana} system (matrilineal system) was legally recognised

matrilineal tradition. Cross-cousin marriage - marriage between children of brother and sister- is another institution common to all tribes of the district. Among Mala Panickan, Paniyans the marriage negotiations are initiated by the relatives of girl and bride-price is given to the maternal uncle. Among the Mala Muthans and Mala Panickans, nephew has dominant role in the burial practices. He is the chief mourner and after the burial the illom is closed by him. He protects the members of the family of the deceased for seven days in his own house. On the seventh day, the nephew opens the closed illom and Chemmi distributes the household articles of the deceased among the family members and property\(^{34}\) to his sister and their sons. The concepts of tharavadu, illom and observation of pollution etc. are also found wide following among the tribes like Mala Muthan and Mala Panickan of the district. These basic features of matrilineal system are still prevalent among these tribes. This is not because of any out side influence as they have been isolated in hills and forest for centuries and have their own rigid rules while dealing with outsiders. So it could be assumed that, matrilineal system was tribal in origin and it received a new impetus during the later years. It is evident that in the early decades of 20\(^{th}\) Century the Marumakkathayam system of inheritance was strictly followed among the aboriginal tribes in the hills of Waynad and other places.\(^{35}\)

\(^{34}\) Here property means the illom, and other earnings and belongings of the deceased not buried along with the dead body. The concept of land property is of recent origin among these tribes.

\(^{35}\) Innes, Gazetteer of the Malabar and Anjengo Districts, Madrass, 1908, pp.25-27
Speaking on the marginalisation of the tribals, it may be concluded that the marginalisation of the tribals was the net-result of the physical subjugation or isolation and denial of ownership over resources and its distribution. It is found that the unique geographical setting of the district is the basic reason of the tribal isolation in the district. The district surrounded by high hills and mountains with dense forest, laterite hills and long river system that made the region an area of isolation and to certain extend free from external impacts. The land forms, soil, climate, vegetation, flora and fauna, water etc act as the geographic environment in moulding up the tribal culture in the district. The non-tribal intrusion into tribal habitats in circumstantial exigencies compelled the tribals to take shelter in solitude or to be subjugated. Advent of Brahmins was the initial stage of this process. It was followed by a chaotic political situation in which power was rested in the hands of Brahminical institutions. The processes of marginalization reached its zenith in all means during the British colonial period. The British land revenue and forest polices opened a new form of marginalisation of these tribals. The commercialisation of agriculture in the form of plantations transformed the tribals as landless wage labourers. The colonial penetration into the area was in the form of plantations which was also favoured by the geography of the area. Thus it could be concluded that the large scale migration of non tribals resulted in the physical subjugation or isolation of the tribals and altered the pattern of land holding, land-use, labour opportunities and control over local resources. It is
also found that the age-long tribal culture and tradition form another barrier which also arrests them in the hills and forests. Self respect and trust are the integral part of their culture. They consider that their culture and tradition as superior, therefore, they are eager to be closed to their own culture. This cultural ethnocentrism detains them in a state of isolation. Their age-long isolation from the rest of the society curtailed their chances to be technologically developed. So their culture still represents a primitive level technology, arrested in its development mainly as a result of ecological factors of isolation, of some series of historical accidents, and also perhaps because of some traditional barriers.

Independent India has been implementing a plethora of development programmes but the problems of tribals still remain unsolved. The constitution provides framework for the socio-economic development of the tribals. Article 46 of the constitution required both the central and state governments to prevent the exploitation of tribals and promote their development. Though such a policy is progressive, the government response towards the marginalisation of tribals is not changed. On the contrary, tribal communities are systematically displaced in the name of industrial projects, big dams, mining operations etc. The exploitation of forest officials, money lenders, intermediaries etc made their life move from bad to worse. The interference of political parties also accelerates the deprivation of the tribals from their lands and forests.
Tribal question is a burning question of the nation. The problems that these tribals face may hinder the all round development of the nation. As these tribals are the weakest and the most marginalised section of the society how can tribal mobility be realized is a matter of debate. India, Kerala in general, witnessed a lot of social reform movements in the 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries. These movements played a great role in mobilizing the depressed classes in Kerala. It is notable that the tribals of Malappuram district, Kerala in general, are not part of any social reform movements. It is a question why such a movement could not emerge from the tribals or why the social reformers or political leaders did not take the care of tribals on a prime consideration.

The reformers like Narayana Guru, Ayyankali, Poykayil Yohannan, Pampady John Joseph, Ramaswami Naickar etc resorted to the eradication of the prevalent social evils and succeeded in promoting social mobility of many downtrodden communities. The leaders of these movements were very much bothered about their own communities and tried to formulate a sense of dignity and identity among their followers. These movements were primarily against casteism and denial of human rights. It was possible among these communities because they had lived among the heterogeneous and developed communities, got incorporated with the ‘public sphere’ and were highly aware of their own status. So the emergence of leaders was purely spontaneous without any outside compulsion. But the matter of tribals is just reverse. They
are social rejects, not as a result of casteism, untouchability etc. but because of isolation and marginalisation. The age-long isolation from the rest of the society is the basic reason for the tribal backwardness. They have no chance to mingle with the advanced societies and hence, no ambition to be mobilized. They have been exploited not by upper castes but by all the non-tribals like \textit{janmis}, contractors, officials etc. So they have to fight against all these groups but it is not possible as they are socially stigmatized, economically deprived, educationally backward, geographically isolated, demographically dispersed and politically disunited. Moreover, the tribals of Kerala are very few in number and are scattered all over the state which has made it impossible for them to fight for the improvement in their socio-economic life as has been done by their counter-parts in Northern and North-Eastern India.

The community organizations like ‘Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam’ (SNDPY)\textsuperscript{36}, ‘Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham’ (SJPS)\textsuperscript{37}, ‘Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha’ (PRDS)\textsuperscript{38}, and ‘Travancore Cherumar Maha Sabha’ (TCMS)\textsuperscript{39} played a crucial role in organising and mobilizing the respective communities. Unfortunately, no tribal organization in Kerala could

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{36} Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam’ (SNDPY) was founded by Sre Narayana Guru in 1903 to uplift the Ezhzhavas of Kerala.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham’ (SJPS) was founded by Ayyankali in 1907 for the upliftment of the Pulayas.
\item \textsuperscript{38} Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha (PRDS) was founded in 1909 by Poikayil Yohannan, a Paraya convert, to uplift the Paraya community. For details see K.T. Rejikumar, \textit{Poikayil Sreekumara Guru Charithraruparekhayil}, Mal, Kottayam, 2005.
\item \textsuperscript{39} Travancore Cherumar Maha Sabha’ (TCMS) was founded in 1921 by Pambady John Joseph, a Pulaya convert, to mobilise the Pulayas. For details see T.H.P. Chentharassery, \textit{Pampady John Jooseph}, Thiruvalla, 1989.
\end{itemize}
succeed in bringing all the *adivasis* of Kerala under a single banner. It is a difficult task to unite all the tribals in Kerala under a single head because each tribe follows their own culture and tradition. More over, the preference for group living, which is still predominant among them, prevents them to break the kinship ties. Thus, the solidarity among the tribals all over Kerala still remains unrealized. Even all the tribes of Waynad do not accept the leadership of C.K. Janu and M. Geethanandhan, the big figures of Kerala tribals in recent years. It could be suggested that, region-wise or tribe-wise unification programme will be better than state-wide one. It is evident that, even an outside reformer could mobilise these social neglects. The activities of Rev. Armand Jean Marie Jauffrineau of Paris Foreign Missions deserve special mention in this regard. The Kurichias of Waynad were organised and mobilized under Jauffrineau, who laboured for the evangelization of these tribes from 1909 to 1923. He laid foundation of the settlement at Kaniambetta and engaged to find the lands necessary for cultivation, to get the jungle cleared and build temporary houses for them. When the Moplah Rebellion started in 1921 he gathered all the men who were excellent archers, divided them into four companies and drew up a plan of defence. These measures of

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40 The tribal organisations such as ‘Wynad Adivasi Swayam Sevak Sangh’-WASSS (1963), ‘Kerala Girvarga Sangam’ (1973), Kerala Adivasi Samajam’ (1973), etc. are the best example but recently vanished. Also the existing organisations viz. ‘Rashtriya Mahasaba’, Adivasi Kshema Samthi’, ‘Vanavasi Sangam’, Adivasi Federation’ etc. have not yet been succeeded in uniting all the tribes of the state.

Jauffrineau paved way for the social mobility of the Kurichias in the later years. Unfortunately, this kind of reformers did not come forward to gather and organise the tribals of Malappuram district, Kerala in general so far. Moreover, no political parties cared to organise them and bring them to the mainstream. Even the Congress Socialists in the first half of the twentieth Century, who were busy in organising the peasants and workers on class basis, never cared for the tribals. After independence, till recently, no political party took the cause of the tribals of Kerala seriously as they are unable to become a vote bank. But in the case of Waynad, the tribals constitute 17% of the total population of the district and therefore they have a profound influence in determining the fate of political parties in the election. Realizing this fact, in Waynad, many political parties began to interfere in the tribal affairs and took initiative to organize them in recent years.

The only possible way through which the tribal mobility can be promoted is by imparting education. Needle less to say that education is an agent of socialization, a channel of mobilization and an instrument of social change. It is not desirable to account education merely as a means of livelihood but it should be perceived as a powerful weapon to liberate the tribals from ignorance and to strengthen their self confidence to fight against humiliation and exploitation. The educated group can act as a ‘creative minority’\(^{42}\) having a deciding voice in determining the path of mobility. The

\(^{42}\) Arnold Joseph Toynbee coined the term ‘Creative minority’. He describes the pivotal role of this group in the growth and development of a civilization. For details see
present day tribal scenario needs the emergence of such a group and articulation and modification according to the demands of the changing society. They have to play a dynamic role in enabling the tribals to have access to modern advancements. They have to spur the tribals into organized action to challenge the social discrimination, to mitigate their age-long deprivation and to inspire them to fight for social justice and privileges. They can have effective influence upon the course of tribals. This can be possible as they keep themselves abreast of the various schemes and plans launched by the Government for the upliftment of the tribals. They know what their community need. They turn out to be the viable unit of guidance and direction for their unschooled brethren.

As a pivot of the community, the core group can act as carriers of stimuli and communicators of new ideas. Being ahead of the rest of the community, they slowly act as torch bearers to guide their masses in embracing the new changes. As catalysts and sustainers in different types of organizations they should set the tone and determine the direction of changes. They can act as a link between the supplicants of the community members and the administrators. This creative minority within the tribal group should ensure socio-political unity among the tribals. Since they are minority, they have to shoulder a heavier burden of responsibility in the affairs and betterment of their own community. They can represent in the villages,

Panchayaths and legislative assembly and to raise serious issues pertaining to land, housing, education, employment, agriculture etc. Such a group can provide charismatic leadership to the various associative activities and collective striving aimed at achieving the community goals.

The birth of such a group can be realized only through imparting them education and proper leadership training. But the attitude of many tribals towards education is not encouraging. Most of the tribal boys and girls study up to primary level and then begin to dropout. The large proportion of wastage and dropout can be explained in terms of the use of the children by their families for economic purposes. The parents expect immediate earnings from their children and have no patience to wait up to the time when their children become graduates and to attain job after a long duration of study. And most of the tribal youth have the responsibility to look after their family members where their parents do nothing for the family and spend all their earnings of the day for the consumption of alcohol. Those tribals who perform most of the tribal celebrations and festivals regularly in the occasion of birth, marriage, death, and the annual celebration, Adiyanthiram or Daivomkotuthi or Aandaruthi, require huge financial involvements.

Development programmes have forced the tribals to depend on others instead of making them self-sufficient. This is because of most of the tribals have a feeling that it is the duty of the government to provide them the
required material comforts and financial assistance even for medical treatment for fever and headache. It is to be realized that self-sufficiency cannot be promoted only through rehabilitation and colonization, but adequate fertile lands are to be distributed for each family not only for constructing huts but also for cultivation and required facilities should be provided. Moreover they should be trained in making huts and in adopting modern agriculture practices.

While striving for the mobility of the tribals due emphasis has to be given to their traditional values and historical experiences. Mobilization cannot be possible only through reservations in academic institutions, services and legislations. But the ‘resource mobilization’ is also to be ensured. Traditionally, forest has been their homeland and they found it as the main source of subsistence. So bringing them out of forests and rehabilitating in the colonies is just like ‘bringing the fish out of water’. The rights over land and forest have to be re-instated and restrictions and regulations to collect forest produces have to be removed. Through resource mobilization, the tribals can attain self-sufficiency and gradually it will lead to the accumulation of ‘economic capital’. A uniform policy for tribals of all zones may better be abandoned. The tribals of the region have their own problems and have their own ethno-historical continuity and they cannot be subjected to a blanket policy of all India level. For example, the Adiyan and Paniyan were agrestic slaves in the past and later became bonded labourers. Even, though they were agrestic slaves, they could live under the Janmis depending them and
fulfilling all their needs and requirements. Though they were bonded labourers their needs were satisfied and their problems were solved because they get enough food from landlord. The present generation of these groups were born and brought up in this historical experience and have not yet been nourished any quality of self-sufficiency. The problem of these less developed tribal communities of the state used to be taken up in an urgent priority basis. In view of their unique socio-economic and educational as well as other specific problems, community based schemes and programmes should be prepared. Instead of present colony system separate houses should be built for each family and the theory of ‘one tribal family for ten no-tribal families’ should be adopted. This will pave the way for the large scale contact with the heterogeneous communities having different cultural ways of life. Automatically a tendency to cope-up with them will be evolved. Segregation never leads them to progress and advancement. Any kind of development of such preliterate societies would not be practicable so long as the contact with them is not established. So assimilating tribals could be suggested instead of keeping them in isolation in their habitats in inaccessible hills and forests. But at the same time, assimilation to the broad social matrix without solving their own problems from inside and on the basis of their own life and culture is not a desirable one.

It could be suggested that the schemes for tribal development have to be prepared by social anthropologists in collaboration with other social experts. People’s participation in planning and implementation of the
programmes is also to be ensured. The tribal welfare department should give up its policy of planning from the top. Moreover, to watch results of schemes, social anthropologists should play the role of a social physician who not only diagnoses and prescribes remedies but also follow up the treatment. Moreover, they also have to draw a consciousness among the tribals for a better world to live, instilling an urge within them to realize this consciousness as a fact of life and to drive them in the cultivation of an action-oriented psychology, that is, they can make their own destinies.

If we accept the dictums ‘No Narayana Guru No Ezhavas’, ‘No Ayyankali No Pulayas’, ‘No Ambedkar No Mahars’ etc., we can conclude that the social mobility of the tribals of Kerala will not be realized in the near future. This is because of the possibility for the emergence of such dynamic leaders, who emerged spontaneously for the upliftment of the respective communities, is absent among the tribals of Kerala. The only possible solution, it might be concluded, is that all the educated tribals of Kerala should be organized with a common aim irrespective of community, sex, region, and above all politics and religion. This group should be creative and objective in their thought and action. They should be trained in tribal history as Poikayil Yohannan and Pampadi John Joseph used Paraya and Pulaya history for the development of the Dalit identity.\footnote{Poikayil Yohannan and Pampadi John Joseph resorted in tracing out the history of their respective communities and succeeded in creating Pulaya -Paraya identity respectively. For details see Poikayil Yohannan, “Once Upon a Time in Keralam” in Paul Chirakkode, ed., \textit{Dlit Poems: a Study}, Kottayam, 1992; V.V Swami and E.V Anil ed., \textit{Poikayil Appachante Pattukal (1905-1939)}, Mal, Kottayam, 2006; K.T.Rejikumar, \textit{op.cit.}, and T.H.P. Chentharassery, \textit{op.cit.}} Over and above, this
organized movement should have an action plan for social transformation infusing the tribals with an identity. If such a ‘creative minority’ is successfully organized, the platform for tribal mobility in Kerala is also being prepared. The attainment of this mobility would depend upon the capacity of this group for rousing popular enthusiasm and the support they might receive from the depressed tribals. In the absence of a bond between this group and the masses, the aspirations and the interests of the tribals will tend to be ignored.