Chapter 4

Consumption and Exchange: Negotiating with Market and State

In this chapter we trace consumption and production of Mannans and Paliyans. The focus is on how consuming and producing subjects are made through discursive and non-discursive relationships. The chapter has three sections. In the first section, we illustrate the consumption pattern of the communities. In the second section we enquire their livelihood activities. In the final section, we analyse the economic governance of material process into which they have been implicated.

1. Material cultures and everyday consumption practices

Material Cultures: It was mentioned in the chapter 2 that the dwelling place of the communities is in the “fringe” area of forest, given by the forest department. Their kudi consists of diverse types of houses built on the land they possess, although they do not have the right to alienate it. They are leaf thatched, asbestos or concrete roofed. Leaf thatched huts, which are considered by them as their traditional types are rare in the colonies. In majority of cases, such huts are used as kitchens. During the fieldwork, several foundations of houses without or with partially completed superstructures were found. Families expect to finish the construction of tiled or concrete houses with some grant from the government agencies or accumulated savings. Their shift from traditional houses to modern houses marks the change in their notion of dwelling.
Chapter 4

The materials used to build traditional huts - reeds, bamboos, wooden logs and leaf. They collected these materials from the *kadu*. Earlier, families depended on the relatives for additional free (non-wage) labour. Unlike this, for new houses, the building materials and labour purchased from the markets. These include tiles, cement, asbestos, bricks, wood and iron materials, brought either from near by Kumily or from Kambam or Theni in Tamil Nadu. The selection of market depends on differences in the market prices of materials in these places and their personal relation with the traders. Mostly, they purchase materials from the local traders due to their personal relations with them. The personal relation also helps them to get credit when they are in short of money. If they have cash, they may go to the markets of Tamil Nadu, where, they say, the prices are lower than in Kumialy. Wage labourers, skilled or otherwise, engage in the construction of new houses. Construction of new houses requires skilled labour like masonry and carpentry. This is usually not available within the community, and therefore they have to depend on labour market. Moreover, manual labour of the community members is also beginning to be paid, and thus assume commodity form. Families prefer labourers mostly from within the community, especially as helpers, and they are paid.

Spatially also new houses are different from the traditional *kooras*. A traditional *koora* is a single enclosure without any compartments. Activities like cooking, sleeping, warming during the winter, and even receiving the guest are organised within it. When we visit the families, who is dwelling in this type of huts, the conversation takes place though they were continue to engage in routine household activities like cooking. Unlike traditional *kooras*, new houses are spatially compartmentalised. Initially, that is, during 1960’s, their tiled roof and granite wall houses had a veranda, a
drawing room, a bed room and a separate kitchen. Present houses have more bedrooms. Spatial compartmentalisation also means the separation between private and common lives. Activities like cooking and eating have become private activities. When the new houses were introduced, they preferred to cook in the verandah or even in the bed room rather than in the kitchen.¹ Neither had they distinguished the family and community life nor private and common life. Now there is definitely a notion of private life maintained at least among the younger generations. One instance of this is girls contesting the custom of staying in *vannakoora*, during menstruation. Even if they follow the custom, they choose to stay inside the room rather than outside as they do not want others to know of their menstrual circles.

Shift from traditional hut to modern houses is not merely a transition of material and spatial content, but it involves a process. It occurs through a complex process involving discursive and non-discursive relations. After 1947, the nation-state began to implement welfare measures following the Article 46 of the Constitution, which aimed to promote development of the Schedule Tribes (ST) and Scheduled Castes (SC). Government of Kerala established a Ministry of Harijan Welfare and began to introduce various schemes for the development of tribal communities. One such scheme was the creation of “colonies” for the Mannans and Paliyans of Kumily. As part of such schemes, they started to build tile roofed and granite walled houses. The funds for this programme were provided by the Central Government. In the early 1960’s three houses of this kind were reported from the Mannan colony and another three from Paliyan colony (CoI, 1961: 1966). Later, both central and state governments distributed funds for constructing houses through various agencies like Integrated Tribal Development Programme (ITDP), panchayat, housing societies, tribal welfare department
and so on. Besides these government agencies, Non–Governmental Organisation (NGO) like World Vision also build houses for few families.

Community members are not passive receivers of what the agencies are distributing. Earlier, they might have received it even if they did not really want it. Now, majority of them prefer to dwell in the new type of houses and there are definite reasons for this preference. They explain their difficulties to maintain traditional huts due to the restrictions imposed by forest department in collecting forest materials. Some others add that even though old houses give warmth during winter, there are difficulties to thatch and renew it every year. Their preference of new houses is obvious in their action in investing money for building new houses. In 1998, the price of the pepper was comparatively high (between Rs. 72 to 75/ Kilogram) and some of the families got surplus from their cash crops. After getting out of debt trap, most of them invested in building new houses. Next year the market price of the pepper fell by half (Between Rs. 30-35/ Kilogram). Their anticipated surplus was not forthcoming and the house construction remained incomplete. Later they tried to complete the houses either by seeking the grant from the government or by taking credit or by pledging gold, which they bought during the boom period. Most of them seek to concrete houses. This new preference is shaped through their interaction with nattukars; they imitate the architecture of the houses of the latter. Nevertheless, we cannot say their new houses and their display are signs of distinction (Bourdieu, 1984). The possession of new houses and other material cultures like desire for consumer durables are not an expression of relative wealth but treated as long-term investment of the families.
Other material possessions of the families include furniture, consumer items, vessels and implements. All families now use buckets and vessels made of steel or plastic instead of earthen and brass vessels they used earlier. The proportion and composition of such items are different across the families. In some houses there are only mats, but majority of families possess furniture like cot, chair, table, shelves, wardrobes and so on. Electronic gadgets too have found their way into the households. A survey shows 5 per cent of the Mannan households and 11 per cent of the Paliyan households possess television sets, 69 per cent of the Mannan households and 64 per cent of the Paliyan households possess radio and 5 per cent of the Mannans house holds and 10 per cent of the Paliyans households possess tape-recorder (Arun et al., 2001). Majority of families desire to purchase furniture and consumer items after calculation and negotiation. Some families buy these items with the cash surplus they gain from sale of agricultural produces like pepper. However, most of the families depend on credit given by the local traders. Families pay back money in instalment. Though the trader evaluates the re-payment capacity of purchaser, personal acquaintance between the two is necessary for this trade. In certain cases, the buyers fail to remit the instalments and try to avoid the traders. In such instances the trader may resort to such means as meeting their close relatives or chieftain who in turn persuade the buyer to re-pay.

Families have priorities in their purchase of material items and even in the case of ‘luxury goods’ (Appadurai, 1986) the focus of acquisition is their material needs rather than as a ‘source of identity’ (Miller, 1987). Second-hand furniture, consumer durables and other material possession of families like knife, axe, sickle, fishing nets etc. are also purchased. Mannans depend on markets at distant places like Kumarakom at Kottayam district or Theni
at Tamil Nadu for purchasing second-hand fishing nets. These they procure availing grants from the state agencies like fisheries department or using agriculture surplus or by raising personal loans. Even if disposable income is low they consume mostly for their basic needs. With no regular income source, majority of families rely on credit.

**Everyday Consumption:** The consumption basket of Mannans and Paliyans has not only diversified over time but is also invariably integrated with market. It has been described that even before their displacement they depended on market for consumables. It was also noted that their economic activities were primarily for self-consumption rather than for exchange. After the displacement and the subsequent enforcement of restriction to enter the conservation space, their *kadu* depended subsistence came to a near end.

It has been observed that none of these tribal households is cultivating any crop, the annual yield of which is sufficient for them for a year. They have to purchase these items from shops before the year is out, as their own agricultural produces will last only for a few months.

(CoL.,1961 vol. vii 1966)

They now depend on market for their everyday consumption items. As they do not keep accounts, precise information on income is difficult to obtain. Generally, traders keep details of credit in a note book, and they give to the purchaser a scrap of paper noting this. Traders are unwilling to disclose their trade details because they make super-profit by charging much higher price than the market prices. The purchasers do not systematically file the scrap papers. Moreover in a family, at a time, different members buy things from different shops; sometimes they buy
things with the money and in other occasions on credit. Therefore, the exact magnitude of income and expenditure is not calculable.

Mostly the credit arrangement serves to bind the purchaser to the trader and the process of their relationship is complex. Although their relationship is essentially an economic one, a fair degree of intimacy and conflict exist between them. As the transactions are often on credit, their bargaining power in influencing the prices is meagre and prices are accepted without scrutiny. “The exorbitant wealth of the traders is achieved by cheating us”, is an oft repeated statement. Not all traders, however, give provisions on credit, even though they know of the possibility of reaping higher profit through this means. Individual families often incur the wrath of the traders on account of default and absconding for extended period. Traders sometimes refuse to give provision to those who are lax in their repayments. Some traders give the provisions in exchange of commodities like forest produce and cash crops. The trader’s may give the provisions in advance and forest produces are supplied subsequently as they are seasonal produces. In due course, most families get indebted to the local traders.

To resolve their dependence to private traders’, eco-development project started provision stores. Members of eco-development committees told that provisions are sold on cheaper price than the local shops. These shops also give goods on credit, but the upper limit of credit and its repayment period were fixed. Majority of families, who bought provisions from here have not paid their credit back. As a consequence, after two years these provision stores were closed. They say “compared to the store, local traders give us credit in more liberal terms. Moreover, as the members of eco-development committee, they are always forced to pay back the credit. How could we pay this if we don’t get money from our crops?” In terms of
utility, they consider provision stores run by eco-development committee and private trader similarly and both remain in the realm of restrictive economy.

In 1960’s at Kumily there were only very few shops but now it is a full-fledged trade centre owing to tourist inflows. There are many provision stores, tea shops, restaurants, lodges, spice shops, antique shops, textile shops, medical shops, bars, taxi and auto rickshaw stand and so on. The dwelling places of Mannans and Paliyans are situated adjacent to the trade centre. The displacement forced them to interact with the new system of economy and they face difficulties to acquire new modes of behaviour warranted by market economy. Studies characterising commodity consumption emphasise, more on identity and symbolic value associated with it (Friedman, 1994). The politics of consumption is about inequality.

In Krishna Iyer’s ethnography (1937, 1939) it has been reported that both sexes were subjected to outside fashion. Now they imitate the fashion around. Old men wear dhotis and shirts and old women wear sari and blouses. Their response to the fashion trends is born out of necessity to participate in the urban life. Their movement through the town cannot be avoided that they want purchase things, visit government offices and to go for movies. Dress-display is a way of obscuring the shabby labour they indulge. For the youngster, wearing fashionable dresses are an expression of changing desires. Young girls wear churidar and nighty, gold and other ornaments, while young men wear baggy pants, jeans, free-style shirts and shoes etc. They imitate ‘local outsiders’ or film heroes. Unlike popular fashion, there is elite fashion which is prevalent among upper middle class and upper class people. They are adherent to popular fashions because of lack of income. So following popular fashion is in a way a negotiation of
working labouring tribes with the mainstream world, which is very much integrated to market. In Kerala there is a fascination for gold. Women borrow gold to attend public functions like wedding (Osella and Osella 2000). Gold is also a special commodity because it is like cash. It can be easily exchanged for cash, for immediate purposes such as payment of hospital fees. Women of the communities jokingly say that our men are more interested in our gold ornaments because they can mortgage it.

Economic constraints and subsequent dilemma of the subjects are apparent in the long-term expenditure strategies for healthcare and education. Kumialy is served by two private Allopathic health care centres, a government primary health centre, and Ayurveda and Homeopathic health care centres. NGOs also organise health camps, mass blood testing for malaria and STD, monitoring water supplies, hygiene of the locals and so on. Most members of the communities rely on free government health care centres. In the private health care centre, both the consultation and medicine is to be prised. Better health care facilities are available at Kottayam Medical College, which is about 100 kilometres away from Kumily. Complicated cases of diseases are referred by doctors of the primary health care centre to medical college. NGO health workers are the main agents among the communities, thus integrating them into the modern health care system. Some of these NGOs share the notion of colonial notion that the poor health of the tribal communities is due to the “primitive” lifestyle. A health worker told me that the system of marriage between relatives leads to many physical disabilities among their offspring.

Mannans and Paliyans now spend substantial money for health care. A survey shows that Mannan spends an average of 14 per cent and Paliyans 8.4 per cent of their annual income mostly for health care. During Krishna
Iyer’s survey (1937, 1939) all of them depended on their community healers like *vathi* of Mannans. As per the 1961 census, their expenditure on health care was meagre even though they depended on modern health care. It was also reported that they did not depend on hospital for women’s delivery; it was attended by elder women within the communities. Now majority of deliveries occur in modern hospitals. Even though they resort to modern health care, their attitude towards health care is ambivalent. They do not share the explanation given by the health worker for their poor health. They have an opinion that the discontinuities in the dietary practices cause them contagious to diseases. “We are eating the things that are available in the market. All these are poisonous. That is why we are being ill”. They also have the opinion that these new illness are beyond the power of their traditional healers.

With all such dislikes they depend on modern health care system. Daily wage workers rely on loan or credit for the family member’s health care.

> We spent Rs. 2000 for my child’s disease in Kumily hospital. They referred to the Kottayam medical college for the operation. For this we have to spend Rs 5000. From where shall I get this money? I am already indebted due to the earlier treatment.

There are moments of despair because of the feeling that the future is out of their control

> I have no land apart from the hut. Now I get a job as a tribal guide. I am getting Rs. 3500 per month. But for my wife’s delivery I take a credit of Rs. 20000 from a money lender, and its interest is Rs. 200 per month. I have the pain in my stomach, which needs a treatment. How can I meet my expenses along with repaying the loan?
Recently two anthropologists argued the privileged place of education as a site of cultural capital, which can later be traded (Osella and Osella, 2005). Since mid-nineteenth century ‘Western’ education, particularly English medium, has been seen as the key to achievement of economic success. Dominant religious communities like Syrian Christians had the privileged access to missionary schools and could find employment and do business. At the turn of the century, two most powerful caste organisations in the State, NSS and SNDP, were given priority to run schools and colleges (Jeffrey, 1993). Education was also a matter of popular demand of lower caste movements (Sanal Mohan, 2005). Though there were instances of opening schools for tribal communities in the colonial period, only in the post-independent period did education become a major scheme for their “development”. Post-Independent nation-state objectified the “backwardness” of tribal communities as synonymous to lack of education.

In the colonies there is a kindergarten (anganavady) and a Girijan lower primary school run by the state. Besides this, in Kumily, there is a Government higher secondary school, many private English medium schools, government primary schools, and technical training centres like Poly-Technique and B. Ed. centre. Scheduled Tribe students are provided free uniform, books and mid-day-meals by the government; this attracts majority of them to government schools. High cost of private education – tuition fees, better clothes, supplementary text-books and note books and high examination fees – makes it a luxury unaffordable for them. Educational opportunities are not equal to all sections of people. Those who do attend extra tuition, for which extra money need to be paid, end up as failures or obtain very low grades, especially at the level of SSLC. Higher and technical education in Kerala is expensive. Capitation fees, huge tuition
fees, cost of books, tour-charges, vehicle transportation charge etc. makes it unreachable for large section of population. The reservation of seats for the ST students may help them to gain admission in institutions of higher studies and technical education run by the government. Nevertheless, they often fail in their performance.

Compulsion to compete with students who are trained in the English-medium schools - who avail home tuitions – put them in disadvantageous position leading to low performance in the class room also. Majority of Mannan and Paliyan children fail in the final school examination. Generally, parents remain in the forest for fishing or employment and they are not yet sufficiently oriented in the matters of modern education and thus less equipped to orient their children. Children, however, are under pressure like any lower-class and middle-class students of Kerala. Such performance and position of Tribal students has direct bearing of formation of their individual identities.

2. Livelihood practices

**Land and cultivation:** Today Mannans and Paliyans talk more about their cultivation for the market rather than for self-consumption as they fear that they have lost the divine blessings and therefore they lost ‘power’ which enabled to reap the fecundity of the soil.

After we settled here our agricultural crops were being destroyed by wild animals. When we were staying in the forest there was no disturbance from the animals; even if we were cultivating far away from the kudi it was not touched by any animals because of our power. We got god’s protection. Now there is no protection and adivasis lost the truth and power. We are now cultivating what is useless for our life.
Through such narrative, the tribal folk conceive their experience of how exchange value supplants use value. It is the unknown forces that determine this. During the conversation they claimed that in the past they had a lot of power. This power helped them to influence and make decisions on what they wanted to be. It was acquired through their interaction with the deities and ancestors. These deities and ancestors were always present in their life; it was an integral part of their being. They reciprocate by conducting rituals, rites and offerings on various occasions of life. Now there is an alteration in their relationship. These forces are being alienated from their social and economic lives. They are not the part of organising the production anymore in the same extent as they were. Alienation or estrangement from the product of their labour and spatial and social division between production and consumption occurred through the cultivation of cash crops.

After Michael Taussig (1984), I consider their reflection of their own loss of power as the abstraction of their experience of the process of commodification and commodity fetishism. Inheriting ideas from Aristotle and Marx about the distinction between use-value and exchange-value Michael Taussig historicized the introduction of commodity production in South America and the resistance of it by local peasants. Taussig says in both reciprocity exchange and commodity exchange there is fetishism - in the former, in association with magic and rituals, and in the latter, fetishism of commodity itself. While in the former the association is personal or organic, in the latter impersonal forces like market decide it.

The practice of the modern market system strives to deny this metaphysics of persons and things reflected in social exchange and to replace the type of fetishism indicated by Mauss with the commodity fetishism of capitalism as interpreted by Marx. The former type of fetishism derives
from the antiquated notion of reciprocity, the metaphysical depths of which are suggested by Mauss and the keynote of which lies in the unity felt to exist between persons and the things that they produce and exchange. The latter type of fetishism, commodity fetishism, derives from the alienation between persons and the things that they produce and exchange. Codified in law as much in everyday practice, this alienation results in the phenomenology of the commodity as a self-enclosed entity, dominant over its creators, autonomous, and live with its own power. (Taussig, 1980.124)

It is this compelling association with impersonal forces being conceived as the loss of power.

Majority of families now cultivate cash crops. According to an informal estimate, out of the total area of land under cultivation, around 70 per cent of crops are cash crops. Pepper is the major cash crop. Coffee and cardamom are other cash crops they cultivate. This shift to cash crops occurs over time. At the time of 1961 census, that is two decades after their displacement from the core of the forest, though cultivation was minimal, mostly it was food crops like paddy, ragi and tapioca. They consumed the greater share of the products. “The rate of consumption of crop produces viz. Paddy, ragi and tapioca of Mannan are 85.51 per cent, 100 percent and 92 per cent respectively of the gross produces. For Paliyans, the figures of consumption of these crop produces are not much different from that of the gross production” (CoI.1961 vol. vii 1966 p.133). Only a few families sold their products and that too was a meagre quantity.

Marketing of crops produce is being done in the village itself. Only Mannans have sold some paddy and tapioca, and that too in negligibly small quantities. One Mannan household who has some cardamom cultivation is reported to have sold 40 lb. of cardamom for Rs.400 while just another has sold a few pounds of pepper. (CoI 1961 vol. vii 1966 p.133)
Their shift to cash crop had also been influenced by non-economic logic. Rather than thinking about the possibility of profit, initially they were influenced by the cultivators of adjacent plots. They imitated some of the nattukars, who were closely associated with them. “Some of our elders like Kani perumal, Panchaman kamakshi, Manimel thevan, Perumal thevan did have a close relation with Thevan Moopan and Pappachan. These elders were the first to plant pepper among us”. Later, these crops became widespread because unlike food crops wild animals would not destroy the cash crops like pepper, cardamom and coffee. In a micro plan prepared in the context of Eco-development project, it has been reported that around 40 percent of land possessed by Paliyans were being uncultivated. In the village survey of 1961 it has been reported that majority of families were not cultivating in ones their own land. All these because of the problem they faced from the wild animals.

The fact that the shift to cash crop was a forced choice does not mean that the notion is alien to them; rather they participated and performed in the cash crop cultivation. It has been that in the first decades of the 20th century few families cultivated cardamom cultivation. This was not at the cost of the food crop cultivation. Unlike this, majority of the families are not now cultivating food crops. Moreover, food crop cultivation in the smaller holding of land cannot meet their necessities. It cannot support any level of their subsistence but cash crops may help them to earn some cash and support their economic necessities. While asks in the midst of Kerala Adivasi’s struggle for the land, what would you do if you get the land? Majority of them responded that they would cultivate pepper or cardamom.
It was pointed out that there is inequality between families in the areas of land possessed by them. This is reflected in their differences in income from the cash crops and its spending in monitory terms. We collected information about the income earned by 200 families in 2001 (125 Mannans and 75 Paliyans) from cultivating of cash crops. Out of this 70 per cent of them earning annual income below Rs.10,000; (10 per cent of families have no income under this head and around 35 per cent earn Rs.5000 and below). With this money majority of them could only repay the credit, availed from money lenders or from local traders. Before the introduction of eco-development project most families depended on local money lenders for credit for the maintenance of crops, harvest, and celebration of festival and meeting hospital expenses. They also bought goods on credit from the local traders for their daily consumption. After the eco-development, most of these credits have been distributed by the committees. Whatever be the agency the amount received from the crop is generally lower than their annual credit, and the families remain in debt. Medium sized holders of land have some control in their priority in the expenditure. A family earning an annual income between Rs10, 000 and Rs25, 000 from cultivation are credit worthy and their expenditure pattern is more or less regular and predictable. These medium sized landholders invest the surplus money for consumer durables like television, tape recorder, furniture and gold. Large holders of land, though few, are distinct in their organization of economic activities. They are not dependent on moneylenders and are in a position to exchange the commodity at the market price. There is also a priority in their expenditure pattern - whether to buy gold ornaments for the daughter’s marriage or to construct new house and so on.
With respect to the possession of land, is there any notion of inequality? The ideological differences between rich and poor within communities are diluted by defining all of them as poor in contrast to the rich outsiders, who controlled agribusiness, other business enterprises and money lending. There is thus little articulation of distinction within communities in terms of extent of land holding. Does it mean that they do not consider land in terms of economic value?

Families of both communities enter into different modes of land transactions. One mode of transaction is between close relatives. This takes place mostly when a family needs money to meet hospital expenses or marriage of children. The process is as follows. The needy approaches relatives and asks for the money. At the time of receiving money, the receiver shows their willingness to give land to the relative. In this transaction between relatives the sum of money lent does not have any relation with the market value of the land. It may be higher or lower. They think more in terms of how to save land from being alienated to outsiders. It acts like a traditional mutual aid practised between relatives. Another interesting aspect in this transaction is that they do not conceive it as a sale of land. By virtue of relation they honourably request money from relatives. The land may come back to the borrower after the repayment of the credit. Another mode of transaction of land is the mortgage of land either between relatives or with non-relatives. If someone requires money they express their willingness to mortgage their land. The amount and areas of land are calculated before the transaction. In this transaction, the possessor of land selects the person to whom he should mortgage land, not necessarily on the basis of their kinship relation as in the previous case. Land is returned to the owner, when they clear the debt. Another mode of transaction of land is
the sale of land. Since there is a restriction to sell land to non-tribes they sell land only to other members of the community or to other tribes. In this transaction, both the seller and buyer calculate its market value. All these transactions have been prompted by their economic circumstances.

**Labour:** Wage labour is another major source of family income. They work for the forest department, hotels, private farms, cardamom estates and shops. A watcher employed by the forest department gets wage of Rs.100 per day for 20 days a month. This is available regularly for 30 to 40 males of the communities. Employment as tribal trackers and tourist guides are regularly available for more than 30 youths through eco development project. A labourer in the cardamom estates and private farms earns a wage of Rs.150 per day, but possibility of getting such job is irregular. Labour power is also expended within the settlement for cultivation of crops and harvesting. Cultivators pay daily wage of Rs.100 for males and Rs.70 for females.

According to Marx, the transition to the capitalist mode of production may be considered as complete, only when the use of ‘direct force’ and ‘coercive force’ are limited to exceptional occasions. He envisioned that in capitalism, a new set of habits and traditions replace the direct and coercive forces rendering these traditions and habits as natural.

It is not enough that the conditions of labour are concentrated in a mass, in the shape of capital, as the one pole society, while at the other are grouped masses of men who have nothing to sell but their labour power. Neither is it enough that they are compelled to sell it voluntarily. The advance of capitalist production develops a working class, which by education, tradition, habit, looks upon the conditions of that mode of production as self-evident laws of nature. (Marx, 1967 I: 737).
To get employed in the forest department is their dream. It demands no skill other than what they have. They secure these jobs through the network process. An unemployed youth accompanies and helps their ‘successful’ friends or relatives already employed in the Department without any remuneration with the expectation that they will also once become ‘successful’ 9. They are fond of working in the forest department because it does not engender displacement – both physical and social. They could remain in the premises of kudi in their own style without any major self-refashioning or depersonalisation. Moreover, they feel that the officials value their acquaintance with and sensitivity to forest. They says “Officers like adivasis; we could do whatever difficult task they assigned in the forest”. Being socialised mostly in their own cultural traditions without having any major re-fashioning of behaviour through the secondary socialisation in the school or any other institution, majority of them expect cordial personal relations with the forest officials. At the same time, often they talk in despair about the disenchantment and impersonal relations of their employers and superiors. The aspiration towards personal relations can be seen in their overemphasis of personal conversations with the bosses. Workers often prefer to remain in the paternalistic-style of working relations rather than change their jobs to earn higher wages.

Does this mean that these workers perceive work as it is in the kinship-based society? These labourers continue to work even with dissatisfaction in the impersonal atmosphere. The resentment on work under impersonal ‘superiors’ and on low wages owes to their fear of being unemployment. On many occasions unemployed youth stand along with the forest officials against the interest of the elders of the community because of their hope in getting institutional support for getting an employment. That is, there is
trade off between working in the Department and presence in the community services. Their aspiration towards more human relation at the work place is expressed only in the form of nostalgia and helplessness rather in any form of revolt. Associated with the Adivasi agitation, Mannans and Paliyans demanded land from the PTR adjacent to their settlement. Forest officials nevertheless succeeded to dissuade them from their demand by threatening that the benefits like employment given by Eco-Development Project will be withdrawn.

When unemployment prevails, getting a job is seen as a privilege. Only those who feel impersonal relations and alienation unbearable leave their occupation and join with the army of the unemployed. Unemployment is intensely feared because of economic deprivation accompanied by social stigmatisation. Despite the negligible amount of wage, hope for an assured future is important in an unstable condition. This is especially so because dependence on relatives to meet the necessities is considered as an unwelcome practice.

Unemployment leads to disorganisation of lives and attitudes. Such situation does not enable a male from fulfilling the socially required economic functions and it might affect their responsibility as a husband or as a father. His authority within family and honour within group depends on the employment status. The needs of the families are met by fathers, brothers, and sons and sometimes even by wives. In a family, if a wife supplies the basic necessities by going for work outside the kudi, then she is not honoured and it is degrading to the husband. Most of the economically dependent husbands do not reveal that they are unemployed and dependent on their wives. And some of the members of community states ‘There are men among us who do not do any work, and their wives are tired of doing
work all the time. Women are not getting time to look after the children’s education. Men should do some work’. A wife states ‘If I could have preferred an educated man as my husband, my life would have been happy’. Another woman states that men are lazy, ‘Those nattukars who married and stayed here will also start to drink alcohol and would not do any work’. Being employed has become normalised and a means for upward social mobility. Being unemployed has been identified as a situation of helplessness; that may be the reason that prompts the unemployed to withdraw from the social visibility.

Lack of regular job means not only the non availability of wage but also absence of a life with integrity. Time looses its worth; a man without work, loaf around the premises of kudi; goes to the town with friends, have a tea or smoke tobacco and if possible manage to have a drink. Time is confronted as a repetitive moments of boredom and curse. Following the advice of a relative or a friend, unemployed youths wait at the premises of institutions, for getting some or other work. Looking for work becomes a whole time activity. However, getting a job depends very much on luck and chance. ‘Without any sense of destination, youths are roaming around’. Life is attendant with uncertainty. They react only as a last resort at the stage of dare poverty. Even the work at the Department is at times considered as a make shift arrangement without any permanence. They search for regular employment as forest guide, forest trackers, hotel boys and farm workers. Due to their unskilled nature and inability to adapt with the market possibilities they withdraw from the competition of the labour market. The contradiction is that, although they feel misfit in the labour market, their life style and their needs are conditioned by the dictions of the urban world. Perhaps, this is why they experience the sense of ‘misfit’
A kinship-based society expects all its members to engage in material processes according to their ability. At the same time, there was no notion of productive activity, and therefore had no situation of experiencing unemployment. They treated work as a part of community living. Contribution of individuals was not evaluated in terms of the produces they collected or cultivated. At present, engaging in work, even for a minute income, is considered as the right choice for oneself and also for the family. ‘I am happy now. I can feed my wife and children. I also give money to my mother in order to buy medicines’, it is an epithet invariably heard from those who got employment recently. Pressure to go for fishing or firewood collection at the early ages is due to the destitution of family.

Community or family members may not blame the unemployed. Nevertheless, the relatives expect the unemployed to do something rather than idling. Usefulness is perceived in terms of gaining monetary income. A distinction between work as a productive activity and a duty to fulfil the obligation towards the family and community takes place. Economic activity in a kinship-based society is always charged with a plurality of unquantifiable and irreducible functions, among which the economic function is never isolated and constituted as such. In the case of wage labourers and cash crop cultivators (sub-proletariat), the expectation of the individual and family never exclude self-interest and calculation. Here doing something without any income is considered as ‘useless’. Work in this context means only those works that brings money. So any wage labourer or fishermen who are at the margins of market system forced them to become prudent for the future of oneself and the family.
Mannan and Paliyan youths are forcefully drawn into the world of competition for jobs. Majority of them have neither higher education nor technical training. Their education qualifies them only for a low grade job in government and private sectors. Boys and girls are not in a social position to stand the competition of the labour market and fail to get even the low grade jobs. Young males are forced to support their family from an early age and as a consequence stop attending school. Even if they continue education, they do not link it with future employment. Even during their school education, they are available for any jobs with other reserve of job seekers. As mentioned earlier, women do not generally prefer to go for jobs outside the settlement. Women engage in the household work or collect forest produces for self-consumption.

With the urbanisation of Kumily, it began to attract migrant labourers from different parts of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Such migration of relatively cheaper labour consequented severe competition among the job seekers in the locality. In majority of the cases the individuals do not have any options to choose the desired job but the work chooses them. Employment is a chance – a man may become a worker or remain unemployed, irrespective of their labour power.

The entry of Mannan and Paliyan into the labour market may be traced to the colonial period onwards. They were drawn into various spheres of colonial forest production and conservation. Forest management, rising of plantations, conservation of game sanctuaries, construction of dam etc necessitated the specialised knowledge about the forests which the Mannans and Paliyans had. Labour participation had increased after they were settled in the periphery of PTR. Village survey of 1961 Census shows that wage was their major source of income; impossibility to continue
cultivation because of destruction their crop by the wild animals forced them to depend on labour market for their subsistence.

The most important occupation of the tribes here is ordinary unskilled labour ... They generally prefer outside labour because of the easiness and immediate monetary benefit of it, many other reasons apart .... a good majority of the working Mannans are labourers. The average daily wages is reported to be Rs. 2. Some of the Mannans are reported to be working in the nearby estates, on wage rates of Rs.1 (for male) and 75p. (for female) a day, but the unique advantage of this is that apart from its regularity, rice, provisions, vegetables etc are supplied to the workers at cheaper rates. – Like the Mannans, Paliyas also prefer to go for outside labour (CoI1961.vol.vii, 1966: 135)

We have already noted that no family subsists exclusively on income from cultivation. Mannan and Paliyan lack social networks with people who have institutional support; institutions which are strong enough to provide permanent employment. Those who work in government institutions like forest department and private institutions like hotels and private farms use their personal connections to get jobs for their close relatives and friends. Traditional kinship ties encourage and demand mutual aid. Those who are empowered to help others are de-honoured, if they do not use their opportunity to support kin and affine relatives to gain job. This is expected as a duty of any other member of the community and everybody expects it from the empowered other. This interest of mutual aid prevails even in the case of economic investment. If some of them invest in a petty shop or a poultry farm, they think in terms of how this would provide an employment or a source of income for their close relatives.

**Forest resources:** In this sub-section I discuss about the forest dependence of the communities, especially for earning subsistence income marketable surplus. This is followed by how “conservation” and “development”
projects like eco-development conceive and address their forest dependence and economic situation. Majority of families visit the forest for collecting firewood, yams, fruits, honey and fishing for self-consumption. The restrictions of the conservation space make some families refraining from foraging into the forest. Their market dependence forces them to depend on forest when they confront the situation of unemployment. Collecting the produces from the forest has an advantage; they can do this without competition with members of other local communities. More than 50 Mannan families catch fish for sale in the market. They mainly stay and fish at two sites, Anchuruli and Nellikampatti. A fishing unit comprises of one or two men - they are either relatives or friends or an entire family. As they travel in the lake on a bamboo raft at night, they tie the fishing nets at different points. Next morning they untie the net and collect the trapped fish. They carry the catch to the market and sell to the local trader. They have permanent connectivity with the trader. In turn, the trader gives credit for purchasing nets and to meet the necessities.

Common impression about the fishing activities of Mannans is that they are traditional fishermen. However, the technology of fishing and the attitude towards it have significantly changed over time. Present fishing - its organisation and technology - is very different from the past. A study shows that Mannans and Paliyans together caught 32007 kg of fish in the year 1997-98. (Arun et al, 2001). After their colonisation at the fringes of forest, some of them started to market fish to local nattukars. Nattukars were forbidden to engage in fishing in the lake, thus they were forced to depend on them.
The Mannans here are said to be deft in fishing, a skill which is almost profecticious for them, it is said. Local people allure the Mannans here, with promises of hand-some remuneration to fish furtively in the lake for them. This has become lucrative and flourishing enterprise for some of the local people, who go almost unnoticed and unhindered by the authorities. (COI 1961. vol.vii. 1966: 134)

Nattukars equip Mannans with fishing implements in return to fish, as non-tribes are not allowed to fish in the reservoir. This personal exchange has altered in due course with the increasing demand for fish in the local market. Increasing number of hotels, restaurants and migrant settlers substantially hiked the demand for fish in the local market. There is a sustained relationship between these traders and fishers through market forces.

Main season for fishing is monsoon (May to August), and the lean season is winter to spring seasons (February to May). Though fish is available in the months between November to February, the harvesting of pepper and the consequent availability of surplus enable them from not depending on fishing and collection of forest produces. There is instability in the flow of income from fishing, especially during the lean season.

In these days I am fishing the whole day and night. Yesterday I get only 5kg of fish this week and I need at least Rs 500 in a week for buying daily provisions. My wife needs Rs 200 for the medicines. Now, I am indebted for Rs10000. No possibility of another job. Wage work! It may not be regular, may be, 5 to 10 days in a month. How could I depend on this?

Mannans and Paliyans collect firewood, honey, Telli and Vayana bark for selling them in the market. About half of Paliyan families collect firewood and sell it in the market. It started after their settlement in the colony at the fringe area. Census of India, 1961, reported that “most of the Paliyan women (i.e. over 97 percent ) collect firewood as their principal occupation, while only a little over 15 per cent of working men have collection of firewood or
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forest produces as their principal occupation” (1966. vol. vii 131). It is now the sole income of a few families of Palians. Both males and females collect firewood from the forest about 5km away from their settlement. They leave to the forest before noon for firewood collection and carry a bundle or two to sell them to local hotels, lodges and residents.

Collecting cardamom, Telli, Vayana and honey is altogether different from fishing and fire-wood collection. They are collected mainly by males from the deep forest before eco-development project. It was done by stationing in the forest for three to five days and shifting encampments. Its collection has a long history. Since colonial period it was collected by them for the forest contractors. Forest department demarcated the areas to each contractor who had exclusive right to collect these produces. They exchanged money or provisions to them for their produces. When the forest of this region came under special protection as sanctuary, collection of forest produces got banned. At the same time communities continue their collection. Economic necessities prompt them to continue collection for sale. Their personal relation with the local traders makes them susceptible to the market persuasions of them to increase collection. Generally the traders give advance payment; later this is settled against the produce supplied. They usually earn between Rs.1000 and Rs.2000 with a single conduct of collection. They conduct it four to five times in a year; but the number of such activities vary substantially among them. It depends on both economic and demographic characteristics of the families. After the introduction of eco-development project their collection of forest produces has substantially diminished.

Due to long process of interaction with the market and welfare measures and schemes introduced by colonial and post-colonial state, spatial and
social relations of production and consumption get separated. Tribal communities are now depending on market for durable materials and everyday consumption items. Preference is given mostly to the utility of products purchased from the market and exchangeable produces collected from the forest. Though there are ambivalences and dilemmas in their participation about the commodity production and consumption, their participation of them have become inevitable to the extent that no reversal to their old nexus with the forest is possible. Lack of intimacy with economic activities and things is articulated by the communities in their everyday life. Economic activities, especially production, are attuned more by the concerns of “acquisition” and not for the “dissipation of useful wealth” (Bataille 1989b: 68). Agencies of modernity like state and NGOs strive to constitute them as rational subjects, so that they become the *Homo Economicus* of the market economy. Welfare and development projects link tribal communities with national or global processes of wealth creation that entail a new relationship between resources and marginal tribal communities. Eco-development project is a clear instance of displaying how modality of governance constitute ‘economy’ as its object, and in turn making it as a domain of regulatory practices or as Bataille identifies it as ‘restrictive economy’.

3. Governance of economic life

Drawing Foucault’s notion of governmentality (1979), we treat Eco-development project as a complex process of negotiation and persuasion in the assemblage of loose and mobile network that brings persons, organisations, objectives into an alignment. The conception and activities of the project is an outcome of nexus of global institution such as World-Bank, nation-state, three-tier panchayat and forest department. As a domain
of regulatory practices, the economy of the communities has been conceptualised as “a set of processes and relations as an economy which is amenable to management” (Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose, 1993). For the analysis, we adopt Bruno Latours’s notion of ‘action at a distance’ also (Latour, 1987: 219). By this he suggests a complex mechanism through which it becomes possible to link calculation at one place with action at another, not through the direct imposition of a form of conduct by force, but through a delicate affiliation of loose assemblage of agents and agencies into a functioning network. Conceptualising so, as Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose (1993) states, “alliance formed not only because one agent is dependent upon another for funds, legitimacy or some other resources which can be used for persuasion or compulsion, but also because one actor comes to convince another that their problems or goals are intrinsically linked, that their interests are consonant, that each can solve their difficulties or achieve their ends by joining forces or working along the same lines” (1993: 84).

The project’s strategy “aims to conserve biodiversity by addressing both the impact of local people on the protected areas and the impact of the protected areas on local people” (DWB, 1996:3). The “conceptual apparatus” (Ferguson, 1990) identifies the problem of people as a technical and governable one,

The project would operate in a setting where the previous establishment of PAs and changes in forest use have already significantly and negatively affected the livelihoods of tribal groups living in and around the PAs. The establishment of PAs has also negatively affected other disadvantaged group. These groups include women (who for example, harvest most of the non-timber forest products) and poor and landless households in the vicinity of the PAs. In this setting, the project would engage in participatory decisions on behaviour change to benefit conservation and to help offset past negative impacts of PAs on people. Finding from the
participatory rural appraisal conducted by teams of state forestry officials and local NGOs identified specific potential impacts that the project could have on tribals, women and other disadvantaged groups (DWB, 1996:32).

It is assumed that there are technical and standardised solutions for the problems of the people, especially the problems faced by the marginalised.

The project’s human beneficiaries, tribal peoples and forest fringe villagers, belong to the poorest sections of society. Tribal development concerns are central to the project. They are addressed in an integral fashion under the rubric of social impact, participation and equity, rather than as a subsidiary tribal development plan or component. The project also incorporates specific measures to safeguard the interests of the landless and women, through participation in village committees, employment preference, and ongoing social assessment review and other monitoring (DWB 1996: i)

The Project in its most concrete and visible unfolding, discursively and increasingly induct the communities of PTR into the mainstream and market logics.

In the case of Mannans, income often fluctuates dramatically, with 60% of the population being seasonally poor. Fishing provides their primary source of income, supplemented by cultivating pepper, collecting honey and resin and working for wages at nearby estates. Paliyan tribals sell fuel wood and honey and work in forestry operations, in addition to farming. Mannan tribals experience seasonal poverty due to an inability to manage large amounts of cash influxes from cash crop sales. Coordinated efforts are clearly required to address this problem and help integration into the larger economy. Given increasing restrictions on access to forest resources, alternative livelihoods for traditional forest-dwellers will need to be both culturally sensitive and economically feasible (DWB 1996: 96).

The project introduced modern thought processes such as classification, accounting and measurement of their economic life and how to operationalise them. It brought together a whole ensemble of procedural behaviours based on analysis, reflections, calculations and tactics. The events and phenomena to
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which governance are to be applied were documented and preserved as information – in the form of written reports, drawing, pictures, numbers, charts, statistics, surveys. It enumerated number of families, classified the families on the basis of income, and measured their dependence on forest for the resources and indebtedness. Such information has become a benchmark for comparative purpose and evaluation.

Reception of these newly introduced thought processes and scientific practices was not without hesitation. The project attempted to congregate Mannans and Paliyans on the podium of Eco-Development with a mutual understanding that their nature of livelihood practices will get improved. Participation of the entire community became the jargon. Still, initially, community members were reluctant to participate in the project due to the long standing conflict between the forest department and communities, and the communities’ suspicion that the project’s aim is to terminate their relation with forest. On this basis they resisted to participate in the project. Many of them made statements that resonate with the following:

Before the introduction of eco-development project we had faced lot of problems from the forest officers. They had not allowed us to live; they burned our fishing nets that we bought with the loans. Some of us were in jail. We didn't have any assurance that whether some of us would return home in the night.

Frequent and personal interactions between the project implementers from the Forest Department and community members convinced the latter about the “benefits” accruable from the project. The conflicting relationship between them has waned and a more cordial association got established. “Now we don’t have any enmity with the forest officials. We are getting market price for our products. This is an extra-income apart from what we are receiving from sale of fire-wood. Apart from this we are getting
provisions for cheap price; some of us get employment also”. This statement mirrors the extent of subjectification of the communities through the discourse of development and governance.

Community members have stopped to collect *telli, vayna* and cardamom from the forest, and they say “those who came and settled from outside do not know how to peel the bark from the trees. Result is the death of tree”. And those who transgress the rules are punished by the eco- development committees. At the same time, majority also have the opinion that they should be allowed to collect cardamom, otherwise, they say, it will be perished and become ‘wasteful’. Moreover, consonant with the objectives of project, communities came with their own initiatives of enterprises. For instance, a group of younger Mannans came with an idea of marketing “tribes” way of life. Tourists can visit their hamlet and “enjoy” the life for a fixed amount. Forest officers accepted the idea and told Mannan youths that tourist’s will be more interested in the traditional culture of “tribes”. So the youths, by consulting the elders, collected their traditional implements, medical herbs and roots and also painted the images of the traditional way of life. As a commodity, Mannans and Paliyans “retrieve” their traditional music and dances and performs it to the tourists at various hotels and restaurants. An alternative possibility also got realised, instead of labouring for wage it became possible to participate for the benefit of conservation and personal prosperity.

The picture that emerges from the discussions of this chapter is that, over time the market-remote communities became positioned in a self-effecting manner within economies and fields of state governance. Both the modern notions of ‘consumption’ and ‘production’ became centripetal forces in their experience of selfhood as well as one’s relations with others.
See COI 1961; 1966 similar observations are also made by people outside the hamlet.

The amount of each agency varies from Rs.25,000 to Rs. 75,000, dependent on difference in schemes.

This shows market price of the commodities are dependent on the world market, and the variations in the prices are beyond their control.

Some of the items they purchase for their everyday consumption are rice, tapioca, wheat, vegetables, coconut, coconut oil, chilies, small and larger onion, sugar, salt, coffee powder, tea dust, salt, dhal, green gram, black gram, Spicer, soap, paste, washing powder,

Report on the administration of the education department for the year 1940, pp 57-59.

There are instances of suicide by a Mannan girl due to her failure in the SSLC exam.

Marx explains how in the capitalist mode of production social relationships between people are reconstituted as relationships between things. Process of commodification mean people are obliged to become consumers and purchase products they and others have made in the work place.

Table 2. Holding of land by the households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Below 0.5 acre</th>
<th>0.5-1 acre</th>
<th>1.5-2 acre</th>
<th>2 acre and above</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mannan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paliyan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey (2003)

This practice of patronage for the employment came under severe criticism from the community members itself. For instance, in the context of recruitment of tribal truckers and tribal guides, eco-development committees put another objective order - income differentiation. Workers have been selected for these jobs from the lower income families. If there is any deviation from this order community members have complained of patronage of eco-development committees. They complained that ‘jobs and works are getting to those who are close to the officers and eco-development committees and not those who are poor’

Following Bourdieu (1979) ‘sub-proletarians’ are those who supplement wage income with income accrued form small holding.