Conclusion

The present study has attempted to analyse the livelihood issue of the Paniya tribal community in Wayanad. The analysis is in the context of the legal and constitutional rights conferred on them by various statutes and the Indian Constitution itself that enjoins on the State the responsibility to promote the educational and economic instincts of the Scheduled Tribes, and to protect them from social injustice and from all forms of exploitation. An attempt is also made to quantify their human resource potential. This is particularly relevant in the Indian context. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, one of the greatest of our leaders, himself had highlighted the paramount role of HRD nearly a century ago. While introducing his Elementary Education Bill in the Imperial Legislative Council on the 11th of March 1911 he made his eloquent appeal:

“My Lord, an American legislator, addressing his countrymen more than half a century ago, once said that if he had the Archangel’s trumpet, the blast of which could strike the living of all nations, he would sound it in their ears and say: “Educate your children, educate all your children, educate every one of your children.” (Lakshmanaswamin, Mudaliar, A. (1960)

Now the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009 has been implemented w.e.f. 1 April 2010 to provide free and compulsory education to all children in the 6-14 years age group. The implementation of the Act however leaves much to be desired. Using a number of practical questions, the present study has provided an introduction to an asset accumulation framework. It has explored the asset index conceptual system, as an analytical tool to measure livelihood of Paniyas. A highlight of the study is that the diversity of livelihoods is an important feature of rural survival and that it is often overlooked by the architects of policy. Practical applications of the Sustainable Livelihood framework need to place this diversity high on the policy agenda. The study reveals that policies aimed to achieve more resilient or more sustainable rural livelihoods need to recognise not just the positive attributes of diversity for achieving those ends, but also the distinctions about the differing nature of that diversity between individuals, households, and larger social or economic arenas.

The state policies in India have a long history of addressing the issues of developing ‘backward areas’ by using multiple categorizations. But these policies have achieved only very limited success, as the central focus of the policies has been on ‘mainstreaming’ these areas into the larger processes of economic development instead of addressing the very root cause of their livelihood issues.
In the context of Wayanad, where the information on livelihood of different tribal communities and their development is widely scattered, sustainable Livelihood approach offers a way of organising the various factors and making relationships between them. It facilitates a process of stepping back and looking at the wider issues that affect their livelihood. Taking a broader view of the objectives that characterise Paniyas’ lives, it extends the way for supporting the livelihood progress. In the short term this helps in opening up a wider range of options like agriculture, forest resources and improving water supply, health facilities, sanitation etc. In the long term it helps in policies and programs targeting right to land, support to education sector and above all to help to increase their control over their assets.

**Outcomes of the study**

**Natural assets:** A resource-based focus has also been adopted in the study. The Sustainable Livelihood approach begins with people and the way they manage resources. For identifying the importance of natural resources in the life of these people 150 samples out of 350 were selected from respondents living near and inside the forest. Two hamlets of Thirunelli panchayat are located inside the forest. The hamlets in Thondernadu and Vellamunda panchayat are also no exception. The study identified a decline in access to NTFP and a downfall in traditional income generation activity, i.e. the agricultural labour work. Regarding the NTFP access, this community today has a very low access to this resource. Their access for sustainable use of common resources like forests was found to be abysmally low. Though they are still living near the forest, they have considerably less access to forest resources, and this is highlighted in this study for contemporary policy discourse, especially in the context of implementation of Forest Rights Act 2006. Displaced from their natural forest habitats, their economic and psychological issues are increasing. Land possessed by the community today is minimal, in fact barely sufficient for house construction. Access to water was found mainly through panchayat wells, shared by a number of families. There is also illegal grabbing of land, forest, ponds, rivers and other common property sources resulting in a scenario of weak property rights.

**Social capital:** Family and society represent a major buffer against shocks in the adivasi community. In the study it was found that Paniya community members are working for others to earn their daily bread and that their communication with the outside world is minimal often limited to job seeking and purchases. The interaction especially through media was found to be low. The colourful side of media only has attracted these people. But the researcher has identified a strong bond within the community that had a wider ambit of helping each other. The community is liberal and ready to share thier land, house etc with homeless or landless members of the same community.
**Financial Capital:** Saving habit is virtually absent in this community. But MGNREGP has helped in developing this habit, especially among women. This venture of the central government should be improved for developing the saving habit of the community. All debts were found to be incurred for household purposes. They mainly borrow from relatives or neighbours. When that option is closed they borrow money from the non-tribal money lenders. Cheating from such people is common. A diverse range of options to improve their financial capital is the need of the hour. Even though government has provided free schooling and free treatment facilities the study found that these are not properly utilized by the respondents. This is perhaps an area which needs urgent attention of the authorities.

**Physical assets:** An overwhelmingly large portion of Paniya population live in abject poverty. Their living conditions whether it be food, infrastructure or housing leave much to be desired. Physical remoteness and unfriendly terrain also emerge as the most important factors that hamper development of these people living near forest areas.

**Human capital:** High level of illiteracy and poor access to health services were noticed. The researcher found only one hospital worth the name (viz) District Hospital for bed ridden patients. One of the major findings of the study is that the respondents had no idea about the significance of education. Neither of the parents takes the responsibility of educating the child. The school authorities and voluntary workers were also found to be utter failures in reducing the drop out rate of children. The educational system faces a wide range of challenges like drop outs, lack of responsibility from teachers, language of teaching etc. Illiteracy and ignorance of parents are also responsible for poor performance in the educational sector. As the parents are illiterate they show no interest in sending their wards to school. Use of alcohol, irresponsibility towards household needs, poor health condition, malnutrition, unhygienic surroundings etc are some other issues identified in the study.

Given all of the above, the important question to be addressed is whether the quality of life of Paniyas is improving? Are livelihood trends positive i.e. are they moving out of poverty. Or negative? i.e. is the number of households below the poverty line increasing, is inequality being enhanced and are options for livelihood narrowing? The study finds that quality of life is deteriorating day by day. Households face a dwindling choice of options in relation to their adoption of livelihood strategies. However important coping strategies are adopted at the family level. These include working for very low wages, reduced consumption, borrowing of money from money lenders or friends, migration in search of jobs etc. Perhaps case studies like the following should become an eyeopener for us.
“Nurseries of Pongamia and Jatropha plants were introduced to farmers for increasing their income and to support livelihoods during short period of time especially off-season. The community invested Rs. 30,000 received from the World Bank as part of environmental service payment in Pongamia nursery raising and have used the money for enhancing environmental services and also earning the livelihoods on sustainable basis. In Powerguda village a group of 10 female members, who are engaged for approximately two months (60 days) for raising nursery of Pongamia plants including marketing and transportation assert that the nursery raising of these plants has become the best source of income by selling one plant for Rs. 3.00. They are able to save about Rs. 1200 to Rs. 1500 per member per season. In the village there are two agencies viz., forest protection committee (Van Sanrakshan Samiti) and Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), which are the main buyers for these plants. Furthermore, these plants are planted in the surrounding forest areas and in 3-5 years period the villagers would get additional income through collection of seeds and extracting oil from Pongamia seeds to be sold as bio-diesel. The by product i.e. seed cake would help in improving soil fertility cutting their cost of cultivation and enhancing their incomes through increased agricultural productivity sustainably.”

“One bio-diesel extracting machine was installed in the Powerguda village with the initial cost of Rs. 3,75,000 and women SHG members are engaged to generate additional income by selling bio-diesel at the rate of Rs. 30 per liter. In the process most of the farmers especially women are getting additional employment opportunities (65 days) in the form of collecting and crushing the seeds. Women are collecting the Pongamia seeds from the forest area. Mrs. Jangu Bai stated that the extraction of four kilogram seeds of Pongamia provide at least one kilogram of bio-diesel and about 3 kilogram of seed cake. The cake is used as a good source of nutrient rich organic material for enhancing crop producticity and soil fertility.

In Powerguda village neither male nor female go outside village in search of livelihoods even during summer, which is lean agricultural activities period. They are mainly engaged in different income-generating activities such as extracting oil from Pongamia seeds, collection and selling of non-timber forest produce, nursery raising in addition to agriculture and development activities.

In Kistapur village there is no female migration in any season but approximately 167 male members are migrating seasonally in the months of March, April and May for generating additional income to support their livelihoods.

The case of Powerguda where community is involved in diversified livelihoods approach using value addition to existing natural resources and development of natural resources for sustainable development, it is an excellent example of collective action and empowerment in a bid to overcome poverty. Other development activities have provided sufficient employment and income generating opportunities for the rural poor to escape poverty and not to migrate in desperation because of sustainable use of NRs such as forest’s produce and value addition through capacity building and collective action” (Livelihoods Analysis in Powerguda and Kistapur Micro-watersheds in Southern India).
Summary of chapters

The first chapter titled ‘Development, Ecology and Livelihood Security: A Theoretical Perspective’ analyses the concept of development during the pre and post colonial era and how the indigenous people were alienated from forest, which is their home land. The state is a crucial actor in the development process of any nation. The nature of the state is analyzed thoroughly to know how it disempowered the adivasis. The effect of globalization and liberalization policies adopted by the government were also discussed. Globalization has indeed created opportunities for some people but it has also introduced new risks, if not threats, for many others. Markets exclude people as consumers or buyers if they do not have any incomes, or sufficient incomes, which can be translated into purchasing power. Adivasi people are excluded from the consumption of goods and services which are sold in the market. This conceptualization and how it created poverty for the rural poor is analyzed in the chapter. The chapter further discusses the livelihood of the poor grass roots actors and considers a sustainable livelihood approach.

The second chapter ‘The Adivasi Question in India’ within a broad context looks at a people-centred development approach for analysing the economy of poverty. The chapter focusses on the issues of tribals in India and the crucial question as to whether the state has succeeded in providing ‘quality of life’ for her children. Using the development approach in India as a case in point, the chapter describes the multi-faceted link between state and tribals. Some issues analyzed for the purposes of illustration include: forest policy, agricultural policy, educational policy, Panchayati Raj institutions and other broader socio-political contexts of national development. The chapter highlights the fact that land alienation, forced displacement, food insecurity, unemployment etc continue to be the main issues of tribes even after independence. The study argues that the problems faced by tribes during the colonial period in the form of loss of control over land and other resources due to alienation of land to non-tribes and the state-sponsored displacement projects has continued unabated in the post-independence period also.

The third chapter ‘Kerala’s Development Approach and Adivasis’ attempts to analyze the development issues of adivasis in Kerala. It highlights the fact that one of the drawbacks in tribal policies of the state has been the lack of integrated, cohesive and analytical approaches towards the existential problem of tribal communities. While economic development and development in some social sectors have played a major role in improving the quality of life of non-tribal people, the ground reality is that adivasis in Kerala are largely ignored. With reference to Kerala’s development approach, the study argues that the cause of conflicts involving tribal communities in Kerala is the misplaced development strategy adopted by the state. Though the government has introduced many development programmes for the tribes in Kerala, this paradigm swing in policy has not helped in reducing illiteracy, unemployment, hunger and utter destitution of these people.
The fourth chapter provides an account of the hill district, Wayanad and the adivasi issue therein. A detailed discussion of adivasi communities in Wayanad and their livelihood is given. Their struggle for survival and denial of livelihood has resulted in the formation of many adivasi organizations in Wayanad. A discussion of these different adivasi movements is also made. The effect of settler communities, the colonialists and feudalism as a whole on the process of deforestation is analysed. The impact of such consequences of degradation of ecology and how it affected the livelihood of adivasis in Wayanad, especially the weaker landless communities among them are dealt with. The shift from food to cash crops and from indigenous to hybrid seeds are sharply examined.

The fifth chapter examines the socio-economic life of the most downtrodden Paniyas in Wayanad. Their demographic and other indicators are highlighted. The major focus of this chapter is to gain a micro level understanding of the various dimensions of livelihood among the Paniyas in Wayanad. A systematic and scientific approach undertaken for the study is discussed. The approach adopted for the study is partly supplemented with secondary data and partly with primary data. Methodological facts are described. The area selected for the study and its political importance are gone into. The chapter also gives a description on the fourteen hamlets selected for the study.

The sixth chapter is the analytical part. The study of livelihood focusses on five core activities namely Natural, Human, Social, Physical and Financial assets possessed by the sample households. It covers mainly two aspects viz., socio-economic profile of the people and assets possessed to ensure quality of life.

The seventh chapter discusses the human asset, namely education and health which are of paramount importance, especially in the context of the Kerala Model of Development. Health status of the respondents has been assessed pertaining to frequency of occurrence of various diseases, visits to hospitals, type of treatment preferred, hygienic condition, use of liquor, pan and cigar etc. Education has been analysed vis-à-vis the linguistic and economic factors, motivation from the parents, home environment, physical difficulty to access school and so on.

Validation of hypotheses

In the earlier chapters the researcher had attempted to assess the livelihood assets possessed by the Paniyas. Four hypotheses were formulated for the study for testing on the basis of both primary and secondary data. The validation of these hypotheses is as follows. The first hypothesis states that - *The livelihood of Paniyas is highly insecure as a result of environmental degradation.* This study has focussed on an analysis of the impact of forest polices and immigrants in the land of adivasis. The third
and fourth chapters discussed these aspects in detail. The conversion of forest areas to cash crops and cheating by migrants has resulted in the alienation of adivasis in their mother land. Along with that, chapter six assessed the natural assets possessed by the respondents. From the sample surveyed we found twenty seven percent households landless. Fifty seven percent owned only less than ten cents of land. Also the distribution of land by the government in the study area was found to be very poor. Out of the 150 samples from inside the reserve forest and from the fringes, only 28 percent where found collecting non-timber forest products for sale. Though forest plays a very significant role in the life of tribes, the study found only few people interested in collecting materials from forest. Eighty two percent of the respondents said that they had to spend lot of time for collection. The reasons raised mainly are depletion of forest resources. Many of the products in demand for example herbal medicines have depleted. Based on the facts and arguments made above, the first hypothesis is validated.

The second hypothesis says: “The State involvement through development schemes has not helped in improving the predicament of Paniyas”. In the third and fourth chapters it was found that government has introduced so many development programs for the tribes in Kerala. The programs introduced include literacy programs, health improvement measures, decentralization etc. But the analysis in this study has shown that these developmental programs have not helped in improving the quality of life of adivasis. The basic issue among these is no doubt that pertaining to land. The tribals depend on land for their identity, existence, security and livelihood. The root cause of all human right violations perpetuated on them can be traced to land alienation. Development of tribals cannot be divorced from land issues. In post-independent Kerala, large-scale alienation of tribal lands took place mainly due to the immigration of plainsmen to the hill areas, displacement for projects etc. The study has discussed in detail how the successive governments, both L.D.F. and U.D.F. failed in finding a remedy for the above issue. Tribal lands are rich in hydrologic, forest and other resources. And it easily makes them the most attractive sites to locate development projects of various kinds. For multinational companies looking for investment opportunities, these areas are fast becoming favourite destinations. Illegal acquisition of land by private sector companies and how it affected the life of adivasis are discussed in detail in chapter three. Analysis of democratic decentralization highlights the lack of technical, administrative and financial know-how of the local bodies as a major bottleneck which has resulted in their ineffectiveness on solving tribal issues. Chapter six discussed in detail the physical assets possessed by the respondents. By assessing the physical assets like roads, transport, electricity, water and community assets as well as individually generated goods like vehicles, machinery, productive tools etc it can be said that the state sponsored developmental plans provided for these people have not benefited them. The analysis of these factors
(see table 6.8, 6.9 and 6.10) also strengthens these findings. Based on all the above arguments, the second hypothesis is validated.

The third hypothesis says: “Through various measures the settler community has socially and economically marginalized the Paniyas”. From the fourth chapter it is clear that the demographic outline of Wayanad has changed due to the migration of non-tribals to tribal areas. The settlers through various measures alienated the tribals from their land. A detailed discussion of the above phenomenon was done in chapters three and four. The settlers also have changed the subsistence mode of their cultivation to money oriented intensive cash crop cultivation. This had a negative impact on the life of adivasis. Lack of modern technology and ignorance has resulted in making these people poorer, turning them into mere unskilled agricultural serfs. By analysing the land possessed by the adivasis in the sixth chapter it is also clear that many of the respondents have no land today (For the details see table 6.4 and 6.5). Assessment of the social assets like gram sabha participation, political participation, kudumbasree programs show that all were found unsuccessful in the hamlets under study. More over the most crucial aspect is liquor consumption among the adivasis. All the liquor shops are owned by the non tribals and illegal liquor brewing is also done by the non-tribals and tribals are exploited (For details see chapter 7). From all these facts it can be argued that the third hypothesis is validated.

The fourth hypothesis states that “The Paniyas’ livelihood is now in a highly insecure situation”. The main elements of livelihood asset based approach - social, human, physical, financial and natural assets - were critically examined in chapters six and seven. The said analysis validates the above hypothesis. In particular, the findings as regards natural assets show a decline in access to NTFP and a downfall in traditional income generation activity, i.e. the agricultural labour work. Their access to sustainable use of common resources like forests was found very low. Despite the fact that they are living near forests, they have reasonably less access to forest resources. Displaced from their natural forest habitats, their economic and psychological issues are increasing. Land possessed by the community is minimal, barely sufficient for house construction. The study found that Paniya community’s social capital is minimal. Their contact with the outside world is limited to job seeking and purchases. Financial Capital like saving habit is virtually absent in this community. But MGNREGP has helped in developing the saving habit, especially among women. Cheatings from money-lenders are common. Physical remoteness also emerges as the most important factor, which is significantly higher for people living near forest areas. An overwhelmingly large portion of Paniya population lives in severe poverty with no improvements in living conditions with respect to food, infrastructure and housing. Their educational and health studies also leaves much to be desired. The fourth hypothesis is thus validated from all the above facts.
Major suggestions

1. Micro-credit initiatives have a lot of potential to make a difference to the livelihood of Paniyas. They should be institutionalised.

2. Effective public investment to tackle the underlying causes of ill-health, inadequate access to clean water, poor public health services and in effective health care regulation is a must.

3. There is a need to identify sub areas and groups which continue to suffer marked exclusion and neglect to facilitate a more focussed implementation of positive discrimination policies.

4. Emphasis should be given on investing in greater financial and other resources for the educational development of this community. At the primary level education must be imparted in their mother tongue. Later they should be taught the general language spoken in the state as well.

5. Development and environmental protection are two sides of the same coin. Comprehension of the surrounding environment and fine tuning of environmental conservation and augmentation policies to attain a sustainable development is the need of the hour.

6. Community managed watershed development, forestry programmes need to be encouraged.

7. A comprehensive food security legislation which addresses the persisting problems of hunger, malnourishment and an ailing PDS policy has to be worked out by the government.

8. Efficient use of by products to enhance incomes from agriculture need to be further explored and strengthened.

9. The dietary deficiencies of Paniyas can only be addressed through a sound nutrition education strategy specially targeted at women and children.

10. Multi-sectoral linkages at government level need to be recognized particularly to support the importance of traditional foods on a wider base.

11. Indigenous knowledge of Paniyas on food-based biodiversity and food processing should be recognized.

12. MGNREGP has to be popularised among the Paniyas and Panchayat should ensure that job opportunities to tribal communities under this program do not remain on paper.

13. Kudumbasree units have to be set up exclusively for the Paniyas near the hamlets where they live.

14. Selling of illicit liquor and use of other intoxicants should be strictly handled by the police and state. Conscientisation programmes as regards the ill effects of liquor, pan etc. should be held under the auspices of the government and local authorities.
Limitations of the study

The study is done on the basis of visits to the sampled locations and interactions with sampled beneficiaries. There is not much literature available on an asset based study, related to the Paniyas. As the people are illiterate and ignorant, the researcher also experienced difficulty in getting authentic data related to their age, age of marriage, age of children etc. Often we had to depend on tribal promoters. But the framework used in this study is simple enough for it to be further built upon. It also needs special mention that some gender issues like physical and mental harassment of women, unwed motherhood among Paniyas etc are very important and cannot be neglected. But these issues are touched only in the periphery in the present study. They need a thorough scientific research rather than a mere mention. Hence for further studies it is suggested that these aspects be covered with.

The study of development, ecology and livelihood security of Paniyas is too challenging to be confined to the pages of this work. Many of the studies on development were found to focus only on the developmental programs of the government. But the present study has attempted to analyse development as that which provides quality to life. For the adivasis this sustainable quality to life is also connected with the environment in which they are living. Hence equal importance was also given to the ecology which they are depending upon. Thus theoretically and empirically the researcher has tried to examine the sustainable livelihood of the most downtrodden community in Wayanad. Perhaps it is time to amplify long marginalized voices and awakened to realization that only through the establishment of a democratic reconciliatory and tribal friendly grassroots tradition could one create a more equitable, just society and world order. Only thus can the immensely sad and shameful story of the indigenous people be rewritten. This task, of course, needs the support of others prepared to open their eyes, hearts and minds.

References


Livelihoods Analysis in Powreguda and Kistapur Micro-watersheds in Souther India, ICRISAT, Andhra Pradesh, India.