

There are semi-nomadic families, sedentised as part of development project of mid-twentieth century, at a place called Attathodu lying at the forest fringes of PTR. Unlike the colonised, this group enjoys the proximity of relatively healthy forest from where they can collect their food articles by breaching the laws regarding the PTR management. They conduct nomadic circuits into the forest for subsistence gathering and for the collection of minor marketable forest produce as parts of their lively hood strategy (Saji, M, 2001). Such foraging is indispensable for them to continue their life at Atattathodu colony where they have partially cultivable land distributed by the government.

Once again, they could not depend on land alone as the means of survival as they had been combining forest foraging and market for it. Alienation of land to the migrant traders settled in and near their colonies, cheating by the local traders as they were outside the paradigm of profit and loss and many other factors retain them as mere inert objects of profit and rule, while this is so the changing forest regulations increasingly block their access to forest produces. At present they conduct only short-time circular nomadism into forest although they expressed their voluntary preference to return from the colonies and begin a new life inside the forest like the forest nomads. At the same time they know very well that it is only a hope in vain because they have lost that history. They are neither in the forest nor outside it.

While the colonised and semi-nomadic Malampamntaarams were influenced by such developmental projects, the forest nomads were outside the gaze of all these developmental efforts. As the former groups became the objects of these projects, their life became deplorably miserable (Saji, 2002; Menon. V, 1991) They benefit neither from the forest nor from the development projects; the environmental entitlements that they used to enjoy are slashed by the government regulations aimed at economic forest management. This waning of entitlements along with their marginalised

position in the mainland makes them different from their ancestors and the present forest nomads.

Let us now turn our attention to the different responses of the forest nomads to the developments taking place at their surroundings. Broadly we can say that there are few groups resonating with development and mainlanders. There are people in two dwelling sites, out of about fifteen dwelling sites that we have identified, who prefer to dwell at the fringes of the forest but within it. This shows the stratification within the forest nomads and we have to give special attention to this difference.

We came across two partially-settled but nomadic groups at places named Sathram and Kooruthodu, who maintain relatively more contacts either with the mainlanders or with the forest department. They are related to each other through kinship. The members of the former site do not have direct links with the forest department, but they were partially-settled in the forest bordered by a village for the last two years. Few children were persuaded by a teacher of the nearby lower primary school and succeeded to attract them to the classes at least one's in while. Although they were partially-settled, most of the members were continuing the regular nomadic movements in the forest. Here, semi-settled refers to only the dwelling site. The partially-settled were not very certain about their future course of life, but they expressed that they do not wish to change their present dwelling site any more; this was in 1922. In the month of July of 2003 they decided to change their dwelling site away from the forest fringe to the interior forest as they found their life slowly becoming miserable. At present only those among them who want to deliver forest produces and take back market articles visit this old dwelling site and the near by market. These sequences reveal and reaffirm the major propositions and arguments of this paper.

The case of the group at Kooruthodu is slightly different. There is a member of this group, out of about fourteen, who is in the temporary pay rolls

of the forest department. His brother who is married and having children is also aiming to follow his elder's path. Although they in general are slowly getting selectively sedentized, their nomadic circuits continue uninterrupted. They do not engage in cultivation, but their dependence on rice is increasing and their dietary practice is showing tendencies of change from forest produces to market products. The change of dwelling site due to death may take place in this case. Nevertheless, in general, we can state that the overwhelming tendency among them is to remain in the forest with little contacts with the 'outsiders'.

The developmental projects have been oriented only towards those who are sedentary, and, therefore, giving private property was thought to be the surest means to sedentize the forest tribes and nomads and push them onto the path of development.²⁶ But we have learned from the past experiences of semi-nomads of Attathodu and the colonised at Achenkoil that providing land is equal to annihilating their tradition and history. Rather, it is a negative means to sedentize or provide welfare or develop the nomadic communities.²⁷ Either the land sharks hook the non-cultivating tribes for land or they face economic deprivation after cultivating their land. But distribution of land to all the displaced and marginalized tribal communities is extremely important but it alone will not resolve their relatively deprived position because the discontinuities in the practices associated with every day subsistence and life cycles of the resettled, the habitat shift and the force of the land sharks and vendors can put them in a precarious life situation. Transition from one life world to another is filled with problems that cannot be mitigated within several generations under the present day political-economic-judicial set up. If the forest nomads get sedentized in colonies with few acres of partially arable private land provided by the government, how would they continue their forest nomadism; where will they go for most of the forest produces? Their right to be forest nomads should in no way be challenged and their presence is not going to degenerate the naturalness of the forest. If their rights to be forest nomad is challenged it will be similar to the

policy of colonial administration²⁸ in British India to treat the 'nomadic people' as if they were 'criminal tribes' and also as a source of problems for good governance. (see, Nigam Sanjay 1990 and Dilip D'Souza, 2001).

Marginalization of forest people begins when they are displaced from their forest and implicated into the mainstream. So far they are in the forest they do not experience marginal position; it takes place only when they are colonised among the sedentrists even if the latter people do not exploit them. This is what the history of the sedeterization of nomads in India and particularly the Malampantaarams—except the forest nomads—teaches us. This situation compels us to be prudently pessimistic about the future of the forest nomads in relation to the ongoing development projects (irrespective of differences between the centralised and the de-centralised projects).

There is a serious juridico-political question that needs to be addressed. As the tracts of these forest nomads are in the Protected Area, juridically they are not permitted to be there and they have no entitlements over the produces therein. After the forest was declared as a PA, government had to curtail the environmental entitlements of several tribal communities like Mannan, Mala Arayan, Paliyan, Urali, Ulladan etc. who have been living at the forest fringes. The forest nomads are still dwelling in the PA because they are 'little known'.²⁹ As they are known by now and if they are resettled outside the forest, the consequences that they will have to face are anticipatable and our understanding of sedentrization of nomads does not allow us to maintain any optimistic view about the consequences. The interstice between development and the forest nomadism have been favourable to the forest nomads. The developmentalists and forest managers should not fail to understand the complexity of the difference between tribal land question and right to the forest produces of the nomadic and the nomadic and the sedentrising groups. Right to be nomadic is epically different from the right to settle in one's own landed property.

Notes

- 1 In this journal itself several articles and notes have appeared during the last two years.
- 2 It was one of the Princely States of British Colonial expand in India.
- 3 The information presented in this paper is collected during the years 2002 and 2003 through extensive field visits inside and at the outskirts of Periyar Tiger Reserve/Wild Life Sanctuary.
- 4 The existing anthropological and ethnographic accounts of Malampantaram unanimously state that Malampantarams dwell only in the forested hills which spread between north of Shencottah and south of Periyar Lake. But the Census of India reports their presence in the flat lands of Alleppy and in Trichur districts also (Census of India, 1961, Vol. VII). These districts lie far away from the Malampantaaram tract. What is surprising is that I have not come across any anthropological work which observed this inconsistency arising from this mutually contradictory reports of Demography and Anthropology. This is an issue that needs to be explored separately.
- 5 For details, see, Raju. S, 2002.
- 6 For different representations of them as a tribe, see, Nagam Aiya. V, Vol. II, 1906, 1999:417 and *Census of India, Travancore*, 1931:396; L.A.Krishna Iyer, 1941, Vol. III :76.

In such representations, Malampandaarams' tribal status is taken for granted without leaving any room for scepticism and they are foisted with the attributes such as 'most primitive', 'primitive of the primitive', 'aboriginal', 'nomadic' etc.

Even now they are non-self-reflectively considered as a tribe (Menon. V, 1991; Saji. M, 2002).
- 7 I use the term 'need' not in the sense the marginalists and economists in general use it. It not only refers to the so called basic needs but culturally and individually constituted needs as well. For details, see, Godelier. M, 1978.
- 8 Following Gardner, Morris, 1986 characterises them as "personalistic" and having individualistic ethos.
- 9 In Morris, 1986, while referring to the pattern of kinship, he does not suggest that there is no social structure or "that they live in a state of virtual anomie..." (136).
- 10 One wide definition is the following: "Human territorial behaviour is a cognitive and behaviourally flexible system which aims at optimising the individual's and hence often also a group's access to temporarily or

permanently localised resources, which satisfy either basic and universal or culture-specific needs and wants, or both, while simultaneously minimising the probability of conflicts over them. " (Casimir. M.J and Rao. A, 1992:20)

- 11 Another forest nomadic group in Kerala is Cholanaikkan, but they maintain territorial behaviour. (Bhanu. B. A, 1992)
- 12 What is routinely collected and bought to the market are the items such as honey and *thelly* (Cananum Strictum, resia of *Boswellia thurifera*) and they are collected whenever there is no rain; *Payanam* flower (flower of *Veteria Indica*) is collected and plucked during the months of December and January; *Nellikka* (fruit of *Phyllanthus Emblica*), *Kattumanjal* (wild turmeric), *Kutampuli* (tamarind) and ginger are collected during the months of August and September. They also collect cardamom, cinnamon, etc. In short, the items that enter into their everyday consumption are not normally marketed with the exception of honey.
- 13 Commodities bought from the market are tobacco, candle, torch, knife, match box, cloth, *beedi* and eatables such as rice, salt, coffee, sugar, oil, chilly powder etc. The list may be longer, for sure; whatever it may be, their market dependence emanates mainly from the consumption of tobacco and rice. A rough estimate tells us that seventy-five percentage of their expenditure is on these two items.
- 14 Those who have their dwelling sites near plantations practise this type of marketing. Prevalence of this has been noticed from the early twentieth century itself and it is still continuing. Here also the seller does not take into account of either exchange value or use value; it is left to conjecture.
- 15 Their consumption baskets are filled with the items listed here. The list is long: pith of *Caryota urens*, and *Arenga Wightii*; dug-out roots and tubers such as wild *Dioscorea Alata* or Small Yam, *Curcuma Augustifolia*, *Meezhekizhangu*, *Chaakezhangu*, *Paayakezhangu* (different roots) etc; extracted consumables such as toddy from palm and honey; collected seeds from bamboo; angled fishes such as *Chettavala*, *Vaazhaanil*, *Kooranl*, *Arakan*, *Katti*, *Mooshi*, *Chaare*, etc; hunted birds such as *Kattukozhi* (Wild Fowl) and *Nellukuruvi*; animals hunted out with hunting dogs such as *Kooran* (Mouse deer), *utumpe* (Monitor lizard) jungle squirrel etc; a rarely hunted big mammal, namely, the *Mlavu* (Samber Deer), which is suggestively called *Villu Mrugam*; *Aama* (Tortoise) caught from ponds and rivers.
- 16 For details, see, Ganesh, K.N, 1990, Nair. S, 1993.
- 17 To avoid beating around the bush, let me quote the lexical meaning of band. Band organisation is typical of HUNTING AND GATHERING Societies. The band is a small group of some 50-300 persons, defined by its simplicity and

flexibility of structure, the absence of a formal leadership role, and the absence of significant social stratification. These characteristics are generally related by anthropologists to the absence of significant property relationships or the impossibility of concentration of control over resources or productive relationships. (Dictionary of Anthropology, Macmillan, P. 21).

- 18 When I employ the term patrilocality, its latter part 'locality' does not refer to any fixed location of parent. It refers only the location of the dwelling site of the father and in the case of matrilocality it refers to the transitory location of the mother.
- 19 The economic anthropologists like Godelier and Marsel Mause etc retain the traces of the economic rationality in their reinterpretation of non-commodity exchange. For a critical interrogation of their ideas, see, Baudrillard, 1975:69-84.
- 20 I agree with one of the suggestions of Brian Morris, which he made in a personal communication, that this is an issue to be explored.
- 21 During my interactions with them, I repeatedly inferred that they know that they are getting cheated when viewed from my perspective, but they articulate it with an indecipherable smile and overtly state that this does not bother them much.
- 22 This term can refer to a wide range of traders who were alien to this part of the world, such as, Roman traders, Chinese traders, Arab traders, violent traders from Portugal and Dutch, colonising traders from Britain. It can also refer to the traders belonging to the groups such as *Anchuvannam* and *Manigramam*, Syrian Christian, Muslim, *Chettiar*, *Marwadi* etc.
- 23 I define the concept 'developmentalism' as the faith/belief/certainty in 'development' as the surest means to personal/social mobility and freedom. For details, see, Raju, 2003.
- 24 Under this project people of a dwelling site which is located closer to the PTR boundary (at a place known as Sathram) were persuaded to participate in the project as stake holders; but even this received no response from them. (Raju, S, 2002)
- 25 Forest plantation begun in these areas by 1867 and by 1908, about 1789.09 acres were planted with teak. Velupillai. T. K, 1940, 1996, Vol. III:256.
- 26 In Travancore, forest dwelling communities were brought under the fold of forest management by the government since 1893 through passing Forest Regulations and Rules.
- 27 Moreover, it is also true that landless situation is a critical problem among the tribal communities in Kerala. (Economic and Political Weekly, 2003:921)

Today land to the tribal communities has surfaced as irresolvable issue among the mainstream political discourse in Kerala.

- 28 The British government of India “denotified” several nomads as “criminal tribes” through an enactment of “Criminal Tribes Act of 1871” and over time various amendments were made to it to rope in more and more tribal groups. After the formation of Government of India, in 1959, this Act was re-titled, with minor modifications, as “Habitual Offender’s Act”. Sedentization was the main objective of the government.
- 29 For details see, letter No. Eco.4539/2000, Office of the Field Director, Periyar Tiger Reserve, Kottayam, dt 29-06-2001.

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