

Abstract of the paper

SHARING AND COLLECTIVE EXISTENCE: TENETS OF LIVELIHOOD PURSUITS AMONG THE MUDUVANS OF ANAMALAI HILLS, SOUTH INDIA

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This paper attempts to throw some light on the social institutions that have been guiding the Muduvans to subsist cohesively as a group within their forest habitat. Muduvans are a forest dwelling Scheduled Tribe of Anamalai hills, the mountain range that cuts across the Tamilnadu and Kerala states in south India. Going by the available ethnographic references, they are basically Vellalas i.e. cultivators from the plains of Madurai, who took refuge in the forests of Anamalai hills during the collapse of Pandyan kingdom at Madurai. In the jungle habitat, they took up shifting cultivation as the primary mode of subsistence and continued it for generations. For the Muduvans, undergoing the cycle of shifting cultivation was and still is a way of life. Their most colourful social institution of dormitory system, festivities, beliefs and practices are interwoven with shifting cultivation. Their dormitory system played a prominent role in the cycle of shifting cultivation, evolving its own mechanisms for effective use of the available manpower and resources in consonance with the climatic conditions and seasons. They say, they had always shared their meal with anybody who visited their settlements, including the neighbouring hunter-gatherers, such as, Kadars, Mala Pulayans and Malasars; they further add that, for this reason, they were also called as Thagappanmarga meaning 'patrons'. About four decades ago, a large portion of the habitat of all these groups was declared Protected Area and as a result, many of them were forced to abandon their traditional subsistence modes of shifting cultivation, hunting and gathering. A number of Kadar, Mala Pulayan and Malasar families ended up as forest and farm labourers and were driven to the fringes of the forests. Whereas the Muduvans living in one particular region, in order to avoid eviction and to continue to live in their ancestral places, negotiated with the Forest Department to take up cardamom cultivation under the tree cover as a primary source of income. Similarly in another area, the remaining Muduvans took up distillation of lemon grass oil as a main source of income. Due to change over to cash crop cultivation, alterations have occurred in the vital functions of their dormitory system which is closely associated with their traditional subsistence mode of shifting cultivation. It has been found that the dormitory system has substantially lost its economic significance in the Muduvan society now. It maintains its relevance mainly as a marker of their cultural identity and as cultural phenomena today. This is the aspect mainly dealt with in this paper. The process, involving adaptation and occupational transition of the Muduvans, is analysed in this paper in terms of 'adaptation', 'subsistence adaptation' and 'negotiation' as employed by Cohen (1968), Ellen (1982) and Norström (1999) respectively.

The Paper

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Cultural patterns of simple societies inhabiting forest habitats worldwide reveal that over centuries, these societies have evolved certain unique social institutions and mechanisms for a collective, cooperative and sustainable living in their forest habitats. The social institutions of simple societies are interwoven with other spheres of their societal life and serve as the marker of their cultural identity. Studies conducted by anthropologists have shown that when simple societies were forced to change to new resource-use practices due to the impact of market economy and globalisation, alterations occurred not only in their traditional livelihood pursuits but in their social institutions as well. Switch over to a monetised economy often resulted in discontinuance of traditional subsistence practices. Vital social institutions of simple societies which are closely linked to and centred around their traditional subsistence activities, lost their economic importance significantly due to shift in occupations. In such situations, they continued to exist mainly as a cultural phenomenon. For instance, the buffaloes and the associated pastoral life constituted the economy as well as the cultural identity for the Todas of the Nilgiris in South India. Studies recently conducted by Walker (1986), Cederlöf and Sutton (forthcoming 2004) and Sathyanarayanan (2003) have shown that pastoralism has almost lost its economic significance among the Todas now due to change to an agrarian economy. However, even with greatly reduced buffalo population, pastoralism still continues to exist in the ritual and religious spheres of the Toda community as a marker of the Toda cultural identity. The rise of strong political movements in recent years among several indigenous societies stand proof of such situations and conditions existing world over. Such identities may function as a resource pool for community-based political mobilization.

In this paper, an attempt is made to examine this particular issue which is taking place among a forest dwelling community called Muduvans, who lives in the Anamalai hills of Tamil Nadu and Kerala States in Southern India. The Muduvans are Shifting Cultivators by tradition. For the Muduvans, undergoing the cycle of shifting cultivation was a way of life. A unique social institution of Bachelor-halls or Dormitory system characterizes the Muduvan society. This colourful social institution of dormitory system is interwoven with their shifting cultivation cycle. Their dormitory system played a prominent role in the cycle of shifting cultivation, evolving its own mechanisms for effective use of the available manpower and resources in consonance with the climatic conditions and seasons. For generations, the Muduvans primarily subsisted as shifting cultivators. About four decades ago, a large portion of the living area of the Muduvans falling in Tamilnadu and Kerala States was declared as a Protected Area (PA). For instance, the continuous stretch of forests of the Valparai and Udumalpet taluks in the Coimbatore district of Tamilnadu wherein the Muduvan, Hill Pulayan, Kadar, Malasar and Eravallan settlements are located, were declared as Anamalai Wildlife Sanctuary. Later on, it was renamed as Indira Gandhi Wildlife

Sanctuary. In 1984, the adjoining forest areas falling in the Idukki district of Kerala were declared respectively as Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary and Eravikulam National Park. Due to declaration of these forest tracts as Protected Areas, and due to the ban imposed on hunting and shifting cultivation, these forest dwelling tribal communities who were living in these areas as hunter-gatherers and shifting cultivators for several generations, were therefore forced to abandon their traditional subsistence modes of shifting cultivation, hunting and gathering. Some of them were relocated to the outskirts of the PAs and they took up wage labour in agriculture and forestry. Some of them who wanted to continue within the forest habitat, found some alternative ways of survival within the forests, e.g. cash crop cultivation. In order to avoid eviction and to continue to live in their ancestral places, the Muduvans, living in one particular region, negotiated with the Forest Department to take up cardamom cultivation under the tree cover as a primary source of income. Similarly in another area, the remaining Muduvans took up distillation of lemon grass oil as a main source of income. Due to change over to cash crop cultivation, alterations have occurred in the vital functions of their dormitory system which is closely associated with their traditional subsistence mode of shifting cultivation. It has been found that the dormitory system has substantially lost its economic significance in the Muduvan society in the recent decades. Now it maintains its relevance mainly as a marker of their cultural identity and as cultural phenomena. This is the aspect mainly dealt in this paper.

Before proceeding further, let me make a small clarification about the identity and term of reference of a few forest communities that I discuss in this paper. I have chosen to adhere to the Government of India categorization in referring to some of the forest dwelling communities in the Anamalai hills. Though generally the terms 'Adivasi' and 'indigenous community' are more appropriate than the term 'Tribe' to refer to the forest dwelling communities in India, I use the term 'tribe' and 'tribal community' in this paper to refer to the Muduvan and a few other neighbouring groups because they are listed so by the Government of India i.e. as 'Scheduled Tribe'. In the light of the fact that there is a growing demand from several communities in Tamilnadu and other States, to accord Scheduled Tribe status to them (in fact some of them have even deliberately started changing their original community names and started obtaining Community Certificates in the names of Scheduled Tribes), I think, it has become necessary for us to stick to the Government classification now, to denote the original community as a (Scheduled) tribe, so that, that particular community's originality, placement and continuance in the list of Scheduled Tribes is supported. It also needs to be mentioned here that the nomenclature Muduvar, Muduvan, and Muthuvan (found in the lists of Census of India) represent one and the same community while the Mudugar constitute altogether a different community. All the three entries Mudugar, Muthuvan, and Muduvan are categorized as Scheduled Tribe and they enjoy the constitutional benefits of being a Scheduled Tribe. The Attappadi valley in the Palghat district of Kerala is the habitat of the Mudugar and they are located far away from the Muduvans who live predominantly in the Cardamom hills and Anamalai hills of Idukki district. A confusion exists in this regard in the Census of India records. According to the 1981 Census, the Mudugar and Muduvan are listed together with a population of 696 in Tamil Nadu while the Muthuvan are separately enumerated with a population of 311. In Kerala, the entries Muthuvan, Muduvan and Mudugar are put together with a population of 11,213 in the 1981 Census. So, the exact population of neither Mudugar nor the Muduvan could be obtained from the Census of India records. This anomaly still continues to exist in the Census of India records.

A portion of the data for this paper is extracted from my Ph.D. Thesis on the Muduvans, for which the data-collection was done from October 1988 to July 1989 (with periodical updating up to 1998), through in-depth fieldwork in five Muduvan settlements, namely Sankarankudi, Paramankadavu, Milagutharai, Karumutti and Kadambarai located in different parts of the Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary in Tamilnadu and the adjoining Idukki district of Kerala. Periodical updates of the data in these settlements continued till June 2003. A socio-economic survey of all the Muduvan settlements falling in the Idukki district was taken up during the last two years at different intervals. Data obtained through this survey is also furnished here for a broader understanding on the Muduvan occupational transition. These updates have proved to be very useful to understand the trend of change in the entire Muduvan habitat. Moreover, when the period of observation is extended for a longer period, obviously, the picture of the life-style of a community becomes much more clearer.

ADAPTATION, SUBSISTENCE ADAPTATION AND NEGOTIATION

Primarily an ethnographic description, and a sort of functional analysis of the Muduvan dormitory system, is attempted in this paper to understand how it is integrated with the Muduvans, their livelihood strategies and worldview. An effort is also made to understand the original migration and historical settling of the Muduvan society in the jungle habitat in the olden days in terms of **adaptation** and **subsistence adaptation** as employed by Cohen (1968) and Ellen (1982) respectively. With reference to their occupational shift to cash crop cultivation and continued existence in their original habitat, i.e. in the recently declared Protected Areas, the process involving constant dialogue and interaction with the Forest Department and other agencies of the State, is analysed in terms of negotiation as employed by Norström (1999) and adjusted to the requirements of the present analysis.

During the last fifty years or so, the studies pertaining to traditional societies shifting from one pattern of resource-use to another in their respective environmental contexts, under changing conditions, were taken up in a cultural-ecological framework developed by Steward. Being a widely discussed approach in anthropology, cultural-ecology is characterized by a concern with adaptation. In general, cultural ecologists have tended to emphasize technology and economy in their analysis of cultural adaptation, because it is in these aspects of culture that the differences among cultures, as well as, the differences over time within a culture are most apparent (Kaplan and Manners, 1972:75-76). Viewing the process of economic change of a community from a historical perspective, both from its own history and also in relation to the history of the region, gives a better understanding of the transition of communities under the impact of external contacts and influences. According to Cohen (1968:3), a population's adaptation is the relationship to its habitat. The concept of adaptation is historical: when we say a population is adapting we mean that it is altering its relationship to its habitat in order to make that habitat a more fit place to live, or to make itself more fit to live in that milieu. Thus, when it is said that a human group is adapted to its habitat, it means that it has achieved, and maintains, a viable relationship with its habitat. The achievement of this type of viable relationship always results from modifications in the habitat through changes in the group's energy systems and its organisations of social relations over a long period of time; it is never achieved in one generation. At this point, it is important to mention what Roy (1982:241-246) calls 'subsistence adaptation', which is a discussion of relevance here. Adaptation may often be seen as a means of maintaining conditions of existence in the face of change. Subsistence adaptations, such as the use of new crops or the development of new strains, are the result of individual practice, although this may

be predicated by collective knowledge and be practised by many individuals in a population who exchange information concerning it. If an adaptation spreads from one individual to all members of a population it becomes characteristic of that population. In this sense it is legitimate to describe the population as adapting. Similarly, if individuals in a population cooperate with the intention of maintaining their collective conditions of existence or extending them, this too may be described as population adaptation.

The whole process involving the original migration of the Muduvans from the Tamil speaking Madurai plains to their present forest habitat of Anamalai and Cardamom hills in the historical past, their subsequent settling down in the harsh conditions of the jungle habitat, finding out suitable livelihood pursuits gradually and evolving appropriate strategies for collective subsistence in life-threatening conditions in course of time, is understood in this paper in terms of what Cohen (1968) called as **adaptation** and Ellen (1982) termed as **subsistence adaptation**. As these aspects have been explained in simple terms in the paragraphs written above and match the context of the Muduvans, I do not dwell into it further.

ETHNOGRAPHIC REFERENCES AND COLONIAL FOREST RECORDS

Detailed ethnographic references on the Muduvans by Conner (1834), Aiya (1894), Nicholson (1887), Francis (1902), Aiyar (1903) and Thurston (1909) strongly suggest that the Muduvans are basically Vellalas i.e. cultivators from the plains of Madurai, who took refuge in the forests of Anamalai hills during the collapse of Pandyan kingdom at Madurai. It was mentioned by Conner (1834) that probably they accompanied some of the Madura Princes to the Travancore hills and the approximate time of the exodus from Madura was possibly at the time when the Pandyan Rajas (Kings) entered the South, or more probably when the Telugu Naickens took possession of Bodinayakanur in the fourteenth century. About the social status of the Muduvans, Conner wrote:

“Secluded amongst the Chenganad and Neeramungalum Hills, and nominally dependent on the Pagodas bearing those names, the Moodavenmars have not been corrupted by an intercourse with the plain. They rank high in point of precedency, were originally Vellalars, tradition representing them as having accompanied some of the Madura Princes to those Hills. They are somewhat more civilized than the other Hill tribes; at least the comparative regard they show their women would induce such a belief”(1834:1-3).

The Report on the Census of Travancore, 1891, prepared by Aiya (1894) mentioned the population of the Muduvan as 1077. In Volume XV of the Census of India, 1901 on Madras, the Muduvan were spelt and enumerated as Mudugar and Muduvar, and their population was recorded by Francis (1902) as 1754, mentioning them as hill cultivators in Coimbatore, Malabar and Madura. It is to be noted here that the confusion created by Census of India with regard to wrongly enumerating Mudugar and Muduvan as a single tribe, seems to have occurred in 1901 Census itself and the same has not been rectified yet in the Census records, in spite of the comments made on this issue by Luiz (1962) and Mathur (1977).

In Volume XXVI of the Census of India, 1901 on Travancore, Aiyar (1903) enumerated the population of the Muduvan (spelt as Mutuvan in his enumeration) as 808 souls on the whole, of whom 413 were found in the Cardamom Hills, 212 in Muvattupuzha and 183 in Todupuzha (of the present Idukki district in Kerala). He also made a brief ethnographic account on the tribes Mannan, Urali, and Muduvan

in his report, particularly the legends of these three tribes claiming more or less a similar origin. The Mannan and Urali live close to the Muduvan in Idukki district. The account of Aiyar on the Muduvan is worth mentioning here because his accounts were often repeated by several authors who wrote on the Muduvan at later periods, with some more additions and elaboration. Aiyar wrote that the Mutuvans, according to tradition were immigrants from the kingdom of Madura. The general belief was that they were driven to hills in the latter part of the 18th century by the Mahommedan invaders. When they left Madura they carried with them (on their back or *Mutuku*) the Goddess Minakshi and brought the image to Neriya Mangalam. Hence they say they were called Mutuvans, i.e. those who carried something on their back. The language that they speak had no connection with Malayalam but was a corruption of Tamil having a peculiar intonation. They were held in great respect by all other classes of hill-men, which was indicative of a noble ancestry however remote.

Thurston (1909) speculated about the Muduvan that they were driven to the hills by the Muhammadan invaders in the later part of the eighteenth century and when they arrived on the hills, they found a small tribe in possession, with whom they subsequently intermarried, this tribe having affinities with the west coast, while the new arrivals were connected with the east. The tribe settled on the northern and western portion of the Cardamom Hills and the High Range of Travancore, known as the Kannan Devan Hills and Anamalai hills.

With regard to the patronage the Muduvan enjoyed from the erstwhile kings of the region, Menon (1996) mentions that the Poonjar Chieftains, whose family claimed descent from the Pandyan kingdom, had treated the Muduvan as vassals, even though they resided in the hilly forests of the territory. With regard to the etymology of the name Muduvan, Iyer (1939) mentioned that when they came to the High Ranges of Travancore from Madurai via Bodinayakanur, they carried their children on their backs, up the ghats, and hence came to be known as Muduvan, which literally means, 'those who carried something on their back' (locally, the term *Mutugu* means back). Another version is that, when they left Madura, they carried with them the image of the goddess Meenakshi on their backs and brought the image to Neriya Mangalam. According to a legend prevalent among the Muduvans living in the settlements where the present study has been made, they carried only Kannagi (a divine lady known for chastity of woman who forms the principal character in the Tamil epic Silappadikaram) on their back, when she proceeded towards the hills after destroying Madurai i.e. after putting it to the flames. The elderly among the Muduvan often pronounce Kannagi as Karnakai. They strongly believe that Karnakai and goddess Meenakshi represent one and the same deity. After they all reached these jungles, before she disappeared, Kannagi blessed them to live in peace and harmony with each other and lead a cohesive life. This legend strongly prevails among all the Muduvans even today, irrespective of their living areas.

The subsequent Census of India records of 1911 (Volume XXIII: Travancore) and 1921 (Volume XXV: Travancore) does not contain any updated account on the Muduvan. Whereas, in the Census of India, 1931 (Volume XXVIII: Travancore) prepared by Pillai, a brief ethnographic account on Muduvan was furnished with some additional details. Pillai (1932:399-400) wrote on the Muduvan that their villages had no permanency owing to the system of shifting cultivation they followed. Their huts were small, rectangular and one-roomed with a single door in front. Their only furniture was a mat or two, woven out of reeds. The fire, which occupied the corner of the hut, represented 'that most precious luxury, the sum total of their creature comforts'. All the unmarried males above ten years of age were confined to the

'Bachelor-hall' at night. The unmarried girls slept in a separate hut under the care of an elderly woman. Muduvan's economic condition was better than that of the other hill tribes.

The Foresters of the colonial government had identified the Anamalai hill ranges falling in the Coimbatore and Idukki districts as one of the most important areas of abundant forest resources in South India. The felling of trees and supply of timber for railway and ship-building purposes were the main activities carried out by the Foresters in those days in this region, besides helping European planters to develop tea, coffee and pepper plantations. There has been active felling of trees and development of plantations in Anamalai hills for more than one hundred years. All through these years, the traditional livelihood pursuits e.g. shifting cultivation and associated activities, of tribal populations inhabiting the forests of the Anamalai hill ranges namely, Muduvan, Malasar, Kadar and others, have been constantly affected due to the commercial forestry activities. They were often forced to take up the forest labour required for the purpose and all these were very clearly mentioned in various manuals and reports. For instance, in the Third Report on Forest Operations in Anamalai Range (compiled in the volume 'The Forests and Gardens of South India'), Cleghorn, the Conservator of Forests, observed that wood was sold to the Bombay Government for naval purposes in 1859-60 from the Anamalai forests. Again some more timber was sold to the agents of the Madras and Great Southern of India Railway Cos by felling various kinds of valuable indigenous trees, including teak and blackwood. Owing to the extreme difficulty of obtaining axe men and sawyers, a Malasar farm was vacated and all Malasars living there were brought under instruction in sawing and carpentry (1861:75). In the Manual of the Coimbatore District in the Presidency of Madras, Nicholson (1887) made a general description of the tribes living in the hills of the district and also the significance of the flora and fauna of the forests of the Anamalai hill ranges.

COLLECTIVE SUBSISTENCE AND THE MUDUVAN DORMITORY SYSTEM

In the following paragraphs an ethnographic description on the dormitory system of the Muduvan is provided for a clearer understanding of its role in their collective existence and in the shifting cultivation cycle.

It is a well known fact that collective subsistence is characteristic of societies that practice shifting cultivation. Sharing was a strong principle underlying such collective subsistence. As noted by several anthropologists, shifting cultivation is a way of life among the communities living in jungle habitat and hilly tracts. Until recently it has remained as the primary mode of subsistence among the Muduvans. When the Muduvans narrate their own history, they say that, when they migrated to these hills in the historical past, they took up cultivation in the jungles right from the beginning since they had a prior agricultural know-how being Vellalas, a dominant cultivating caste of the plains. For generations, they continued to live by it. The dormitory system, which seemed to have evolved on its own among the Muduvans during the course of their settling down in the jungle habitat, played a prominent role in the cycle of shifting cultivation, and evolved its own mechanisms for effective use of the available manpower and resources in consonance with the climatic conditions and seasons.

Bachelor-halls or dormitories have been found to exist among several tribal communities in India. In South India, it has not been reported to exist among any of the tribes, except among the Muduvan and Urali (Iyer, 1939). The most colourful and significant feature of the communal life of the Muduvan is their dormitory system. As already mentioned, separate dormitories exist for boys and girls in every settlement.

Children, both male and female, after attaining the age of nine or ten years, become member of dormitories and start sleeping in their respective dormitories in the night times.

Unmarried boys, male divorcees, widowers, lone male members and male visitors (including kinsmen from other settlements who are on a casual visit) have to sleep only in the boys' dormitory of the settlement during the night times. During the daytime, all those who sleep in the dormitories (both boys' as well as girls') work for the benefit of the household to which they belong. The boys' dormitory i.e. *Saavadi Voodu*, is relatively bigger in size and situated at the entrance of the settlement itself. Unknown persons, traders, etc., who visit the settlement are immediately accommodated in the boys' dormitory and are generally not encouraged to enter into the family dwelling-area. The girls' dormitory has two compartments. In the first compartment, unmarried girls and woman (widows, female divorcees and guests) who are free from pollution sleep. Whereas the other compartment is meant for women under pollution, i.e. menstruating women or those who have delivered child. Unmarried girls are termed as *Kumari Makkalu*.

The boys' dormitory is a rectangular shaped single compartment shed, constructed by unmarried boys of the settlement. Sometimes, other men of the settlement help them to construct it. There is a fire-pit called *Theepodi* at the centre of the boys' dormitory, in which fire is maintained throughout the night to give them warmth and also to keep the wild animals away. Everyday, before sunset, the junior members of the dormitory collect firewood from all the households of the settlement for using the firewood in the dormitory. They are also supposed to clean-up the dormitory and keep drinking water in a vessel, before the senior members of the dormitory arrive. All these activities are regularly performed in both the boys' as well as girls' dormitories.

The eldest unmarried male member of the boys' dormitory is termed as *Veli ilandaari*. Members of both the dormitories in a settlement, including widows, widowers, male and female divorcees who sleep in respective dormitories, function under the *Veli ilandari* during certain occasions and tasks that are taken up in the interests of the settlement as a whole. While taking up certain difficult tasks in the shifting cultivation cycle, members of the dormitories in a settlement play a vital role. Similarly, the duties pertaining to the celebration of their annual religious festivity called *Thai Nombi*, in the month of January-February, are attended to by the members of both the dormitories under the leadership of *Veli ilandaari* i.e. the eldest or senior most unmarried man of the settlement. On the occasion of *Thai Nombi*, members of boys' dormitory make the purchases to prepare feast, cook food and serve it to the kinsmen and guests, arrange shelter for all visitors, assist the priest in sacrifices of fowls, and entertain the entire gathering by dance and music during the whole week of celebration.

A significant feature of the Muduvan society is the practice of **collective eating and sharing** of food known as *Koodi thinnuthu*. Everyday while having food, this practice is necessarily followed by the members of the dormitories in a settlement. Both in the morning and evening (which are the only times when the Muduvan eat during the day), the bachelors of same sex and age combine into small arbitrary groups among themselves. As groups they visit the individual households of the settlement and eat a little in every household by sharing the food kept in a plate. It is customary among the Muduvan to always cook some food extra, to offer to the bachelors who visit every household in the settlement during the mealtime. Even if there are only three households in a settlement, this practice of collective eating or sharing the food is always followed. That way, the unmarried boys and girls are generally considered to be belonging to the community (or settlement) as a whole, than belonging to individual families. If there are guests from other settlements, on account of a festivity or ceremony or even on a casual visit also, the same practice of

sharing the food is followed by joining with them, by instantly forming into groups of respective age-grades.

In front of the boys' dormitory, or inside it, every day, almost all the men of the settlement assemble informally. It is a regular habit of the Muduvan men that, after having their night-meal around seven o'clock in the evening, they come to the boys' dormitory with their radio-transistors. Sometimes, with their babies tied on their back and with small children also, men come to the boys' dormitory. Sitting around the fire-pit inside the dormitory, slowly, they start discussing about what they did in their fields that day, interesting events of the day, etc. They listen to the radio-news, cinema songs and the announcements made on price of commodities especially cardamom, lemon-grass oil, etc and share their views. Often elderly men narrate their past experiences related to hunting expeditions; they also make the young ones aware of their myths, legends, stories related to deities, etc., while spending time in the boys' dormitory. Similar activities take place in the girls' dormitory as well.

REDUCING RISK BY COLLECTIVE WORK

I will now move on to present the ethnographic aspects of the indigenous mechanisms that are embedded in the Muduvan dormitory system, which play a significant role in the shifting-cultivation cycle. First, let me take up the initial phase of the shifting cultivation cycle. During the slashing operations, i.e. when cutting down the bushes and small vegetation, three significant events take place which express the 'collectivism' underlying the Muduvan communal life. These are

(1) *Veli ilandhari pattam vilikkaradu* (Bestowing *Veli ilandhari* title to the senior-most or eldest unmarried male in the settlement), (2) *Koi velli potradu* (Feasting the members of *Saavadi voodu* i. e., boys' dormitory, in reciprocation of the labour or service taken from them) and (3) *Thandal therattaradu* i. e., collection of fixed number of firewood from the households of the settlement by the members of the boys' dormitory on the first day of slashing.

(1) *Veli ilandhari pattam vilikkaradu* (Bestowing *veli ilandhari* title to the eldest unmarried male).

The *Veli ilandhari*, i.e. the eldest unmarried male of a settlement, functions as the leader of members of boys' dormitory in that settlement. The role of this function is significant mainly during the annual *Thai Nombi* festivity and at the time of clearing of patches for the shifting cultivation cycle. The widowers in a settlement, who sleep in the boys' dormitory, also have to assist the *Veli ilandari* during these two occasions, even though they are elders in relation to him. To symbolise his status, the *Veli ilandhari* wears a golden ring i.e., *patta modiram* (*pattam* means title and *modiram* means ring) as long as he remains a bachelor. When he gets married, the title of *Veli ilandhari* is passed on to the next eldest unmarried male member of the boys' dormitory, by way of offering the *patta modiram* to him. This event takes place one or two days ahead of the slashing operations in a settlement. All the members of the boys' dormitory and men of the settlement assemble in the boys' dormitory. The *Kaanikkaaran* i.e., the headman of the settlement collects the *patta modiram* from the outgoing *Veli ilandari* and gives it to the new *Veli ilandari*, in the presence of all male members of the settlement. This event, taking place at the time of slashing operations (*Kaadu vettu*), signifies the key role being played by the *Veli ilandari* and his battalion in the cultivation cycle.

(2) *Koi velli potradu* (Feasting the members of boys' dormitory)

This literally means “feasting the members of boys' dormitory in reciprocity of the service or labour rendered by them in the slashing operations”. As perceived by the Muduvan, their institution of dormitory, particularly the boys’ dormitory called *Saavadi Voodu* is so vital to the functioning as well as for the sustenance of their community in these forests. A lot of hardship and danger are involved while performing any activity in the jungle habitat. By undertaking it collectively, the hardship gets reduced. The unmarried boys, that way, essentially comprise the readily available work force to undertake hard tasks collectively.

In the past, when shifting cultivation was the only source of livelihood, they cultivated comparatively large patches. At that time, even small families required more hands. During the slashing and burning activities, when a family was unable to accomplish these jobs before the first rainfall, it always sought the help of the *Ilandhari* i.e., unmarried boys of that settlement. All the *Ilandhari* under the leadership of *Veli ilandhari* would jointly perform slashing of the vegetation. After drying and burning of the vegetation, again they would involve in levelling of the patch for that family. That way, small families, who were unable to finish up slashing operations before the first-rainfall, were helped. In reciprocity, the family that received the help of the *Ilandhars*’ would offer them rice, a fowl, tea-leave and little jaggery after the harvest. On receiving it, the members of the boys’ dormitory would make a feast in the riverbank under the leadership of the *Veli ilandari*. This is known as *Koi velli potradu*. It is a mechanism that operates for individual families to be successful in their cultivation cycle, particularly to accomplish the tasks in time so that the sequence of all families involving in similar activities at any one time is maintained. No family in a settlement is that way allowed to be unsuccessful or be devoid of opportunities. Even today, due to illness or other reasons, when some families are unable to perform slashing, burning and levelling of their patches before the first rainfall (which usually occurs during last week of March or first week of April) *Koi velli potradu* is sought for.

(3) *Thandal therattaradu* (Collection of fire-wood from households)

In any Muduvan settlement, when a family starts the slashing activity, it is customary for the members of the boys' dormitory to collect a fixed number of firewood (a few more than the regular collection) from that family on the first day of that family's involvement in it. The number of fire-wood to be collected i.e., *thandal*, from that household is decided by the *Veli ilandhari* of the settlement . Usually the junior members of the boys’ dormitory would go and collect the firewood from that household. The firewood thus collected is used for keeping the boys’ dormitory warm during the night times. The act of collecting a fixed number of firewood is called as *Thandal therattaradu* and is considered as the privilege of the members of the boys’ dormitory. During the other days, just before sunset, from all the households of the settlement, firewood (one or two per household) is regularly collected by the junior members of the boys’ dormitory. It is also the duty of the younger members of the dormitory to come little early in the evening to clean it and light the fire-pit inside. They also have to arrange water in a small-vessel inside the dormitory for all the members to drink during the night.

Collectivism gets expressed in the Muduvan society during the tilling operations also. Tilling the fields (*Kilaikkaradu*) with the hoe is the hardest task in the cycle of shifting cultivation, as it is undertaken when the climate is extremely hot – the peak of summer – during March. To lessen the burden and difficulty of performing this task, a mechanism operates among the Muduvan since time immemorial. If a family finds difficulty in accomplishing this task, it requests all the *Ilandhari* (unmarried boys) of the

settlement to work for it for one day. Sometimes, other members of the settlement also join them. From morning till evening, when all these people get involved in sowing and tilling in a family's patch, most of the work is completed for that family in one day itself. In reciprocation of the services received from all these persons, the head of that family offers a simple feast (sometimes a chicken, other-wise an ordinary rice meal) to all of them on the same day evening. This way of feasting is termed *Selavu Poduradu*. In the past, it occurred very often among them, as they had to till larger plots when shifting cultivation was the main source of livelihood. Now a days, this event rarely occurs because only small and limited patches of land are available and brought under shifting cultivation. Today, only when someone is unable to complete tilling of his fields in tune with others, due to illness, is this mechanism resorted to.

Another instance, which expresses the collective existence of this society, takes place during the harvest operations. Sometimes the quantity of *tenay* (*panicum italicum*) harvested, i.e. the yield, happens to be good for some households and some get poor yield due to the damage caused by pests, birds or monkeys. In such cases, those who have got a good yield invite the ones with a poor yield to help them in the *tenay* harvest. In reciprocation, those who received the service offer a basketful of *tenay* to those who rendered the service, i.e. their kinsmen. Generally, no one, not even those who have got poor yields, volunteers to render their labour for grains. It is usually only by invitation that such services are rendered. Those who are facing poor yields always get such invitations for plucking the *tenay*. As perceived by the members of the community, utilising the labour of the unlucky among them is a dignified way of helping their own kinsmen. It is also said that those who received the help by this mechanism do not have to feel guilty for having received the grains free. Looking at it from another angle, this operates as a mechanism for the survival of all the members of the community irrespective of their luck and misfortune, emphasizing the theme of cooperation and collectivism.

As a consequence of the shift in the Muduvan economy to cash-crop cultivation, the key role played by the members of the dormitories in activities such as slashing the vegetation and burning it, sowing, tilling and harvest, which are symbolic of cooperation and collectivism, are gradually being lost. The time and leisure that they enjoyed in the past and utilised to reinforce the cultural traditions of their community are also no longer available to them. Due to reduced involvement in shifting cultivation and also due to cultivation of only selected and fast yielding food crop species, the remaining species were lost from their possession.

TRANSITION TO CASH CROP CULTIVATION

In Coorg, Mysore, Nilgiris and Wynad, coffee cultivation was well established in the early nineteenth century due to suitable soil and climatic conditions. During 1880s, cinchona (the tree from which quinine is obtained) cultivation was introduced by the British in and around the Anamalai hills. In the early 1890s, tea became the most important plantation crop in the Anamalai, Kannan Devan and Cardamom hills. As Baak (1997:49-97) observes, many of the pioneer planters were either missionaries, or sons and brothers of missionaries, or they were government servants or their sons. Baak has also mentioned that during the initial years of establishment of plantations in this region, the hill tribes including the Muduvan, refused to accept the work offered by the planters. The tribes considered themselves to be the lords of the soil and regarded the forests as their home. The planters were therefore thought to be unwanted intruders. By the emergence of plantations, large tracts were denuded, increasing numbers of planters and labourers arrived and influential trading-companies penetrated the area. In 1868, the government

determined that shifting cultivation needed to be restricted so that more land would be available for coffee cultivation. Land being used for shifting cultivation was often sold to planters, without the cultivators being informed on beforehand about the sale. Often, the illiterate tribes were not in a position to defend their interests against those of the planters and the government.

Some among the Muduvan and other tribes living close to Plantation Centres, like Munnar, Devicolam and Pirmed in the Idukki district of Kerala, were in that way gradually brought into wage-labour in tea and cardamom plantations in addition to their involvement in shifting cultivation. But those Muduvan who lived far away from them in deep-jungles, for instance those belonging to Sankarankudi, Paramankadavu and Milagutharai settlements in the Valparai taluk of Coimbatore district, did not immediately change from shifting cultivation. For quite a long period, even in places where the Muduvan were working as plantation labourers, the Muduvan did not seem to have taken up cultivation of cash crops on their own. In the ethnographic accounts of Thurston (1909) and Iyer (1936, 1939 and 1941), only some of them were reported to be working as tea plantation labourers and many of them as being involved in shifting cultivation as the primary mode of survival. It was also reported in these accounts that cardamom was one of the minor forest produce that the Muduvan collected to sell to the traders, who seldom visited their settlements. Therefore, it appears that the Muduvan were taken to cultivation of cardamom only after the 1940s. As the elder members of the Muduvan community living in the three study settlements also say, the process of cardamom cultivation seem to have begun a little early among those living close to Devicolam or Munnar. In the case of the settlements situated close to Valparai, including Sankarankudi, Paramankadavu and Milagutharai, cardamom cultivation was taken up a little later, immediately after the pressure from Forest department became severe around the 1970s. With regard to the cultivation of lemon-grass (*Cymbopogon Citratus*, DC) and the extraction of oil from it in the settlements of Kadambarai and Karumutti, it is reported that the Muduvan living in these two and other neighbouring settlements have been involved in it as the primary source of income almost for the same number of years as their kinsmen who are involved in cardamom cultivation. More or less at the same time when the Muduvan living in Sankarankudi and Paramankadavu were pressurised by the Forest Department to give up shifting cultivation and to vacate the forest, here too, the Muduvan were reported to have been subjected to the same treatment. As the Muduvan of the Kadambarai and Karumutti settlements were already working as wage-labourers for at least six months in a year, in cutting the lemon-grass around their settlements for the outside contractors, they did not find much difficulty in developing their own lemon-grass fields around the settlements and also in gradually establishing their own lemon-grass oil extraction devices. The lemon-grass oil thus extracted by them is sold to the money-lending traders who visit their settlements every week. The traders in turn sell it in the main Maraiyur market.

The hilly region, beginning from Kadambarai (in Valparai taluk) and covering the entire range of forest tracts of Udumalpet taluk in Coimbatore district and further extending to the Maraiyur taluk of Idukki district in Kerala, is naturally abundant with lemon-grass growth. Large tracts of this region are grassy hill-slopes having dense forests at the top of the hills. Growing lemon-grass and extraction of oil from it has been in vogue for several years among the non-tribals living close to Maraiyur. Several licensed contractors also used to employ the tribals of the region in the above said jobs for wages. In fact, it is the Forest Department that actually induced the Muduvan of the two settlements to take up full-fledged lemon-grass cultivation and extraction of oil from it, in order to prevent the Muduvan involving in large scale

shifting cultivation. As the region comprised grassy hill slopes having thin forests, the Muduvan living here have not attempted cardamom cultivation. In order to make the Muduvan fully engaged in lemon-grass oil extraction and to depend on it as the only source of income and also to stop moneylenders exploiting the Muduvan, the Forest Department, in recent years, have denied permission to the outsiders for lemon-grass cultivation and oil extraction in that area. Moreover, the Muduvan have also been warned not to involve in shifting cultivation at all. The Tamil Nadu Forest Department, as it has done in the cardamom growing Sankarankudi and Paramankadavu settlements, here too it allotted demarcated patches for lemon-grass cultivation for the settlement as a whole. In the remaining areas surrounding the settlement, saplings of commercially valuable trees have been planted by the forest department, in order to prevent Muduvan involving in shifting cultivation. A major effect of Muduvan involvement in cash-crop cultivation is the permanency of their settlements. While practising shifting cultivation, at least every alternate year they used to shift the settlement site close to the cultivating area. As lemon-grass and cardamom are grown by individual families in the fields demarcated to them, and both these crops also require to be raised and harvested over a period of time in a patch, the Muduvan have started living adjacent to the fields of lemon-grass and cardamom. If any shift of the settlement-site takes place at all, it is only for a distance of about 500 metres away from the original site but not far off from the permanent lemon-grass fields or cardamom gardens.

Ownership of lands in cash crop cultivation

About thirty years ago, when the Muduvan of Sankaran kudi were forced to take up cardamom cultivation, 120 acres of land were demarcated by the Forest Department for cultivation of cardamom and it was divided among them under the headmanship of Sankaran. Each family, depending on its size, got about five to eight acres of land at that time. It was left to the individual families to bring the area allotted to them under cardamom cultivation, gradually, as and when they felt to do so. When the allotment of land to the Muduvan was made, the Forest Department secured all the 120 acres of land in the name of their headman Sankaran. As these lands are situated in the reserve forests, no one, including the Muduvan, could transfer purchase or sell these lands legally. Individual families made boundaries for their cardamom fields by lining up the boulders available and also by fencing it with the hardwood poles and *eeta* reeds. During the last 30 years, the population in the settlements of Sankaran kudi, Paraman kadavu and Milagu tharai has considerably gone up. New households have been established as their children grew up and got married. Lands have been divided further between the married sons in a family.

Lemon-grass (*Cymbopogon Citratus*) Cultivation:

Lemon grass cultivation takes place in the settlements falling on the hilly tracts of Udumalpet (in Tamil Nadu) and Maraiyur (in Kerala). These areas are naturally abundant with lemon-grass. As the Muduvan had been already working as daily wage labourers for the outside contractors in cutting the lemon-grass and in transporting them to the oil extraction sheds as head loads for the last several years they did not find much difficulty in taking up regular cultivation of lemon-grass and extraction of oil from it when they were forced to do so.

When the forest department demarcated areas, which were naturally abundant with lemon-grass, for the Muduvan to utilize for lemon-grass oil extraction, they divided the lands among themselves under the headmen of respective settlements. As lands were sufficiently available, each family acquired the

maximum area of land it required, depending on the number of working hands available in that family. Those who wanted to bring more lands under lemon-grass cultivation, resorted to burning the hill slopes which were filled with bushes and all kinds of grass varieties. Thereafter, they have sown the seeds of lemon-grass by the broad-cast method, tilled the fields with hoe to mix the seeds with the soil and gradually raised the lemon-grass fields as they did in slash and burn cultivation. Usually the lemon-grass fields thus raised, last for at least seven years, i.e. the grass keeps on growing continuously for seven years as the process of cutting the grass also goes on every 45 days throughout the seven years period. After raising the lemon-grass in their fields, the Muduvan do not involve in any further activity for seven years in the lemon-grass fields, except cutting the grass periodically. No fencing or clear-cut boundaries have been erected by the individual households for the lemon-grass fields they own. The rivulets, streams and trails, which cut across the grassy hill slopes, are generally recognised as boundaries for the plots of the individual families.

Cutting the lemon-grass every 45 days, transporting them as head loads to the lemon-grass oil extraction sheds situated amidst the lemon-grass fields, and immediately extracting oil i.e. lemon-grass oil, from it using the necessary boiler-sets are the essential activities carried out almost throughout the year. The job of cutting the grass is done by men, women and grown up children. It takes place every 45 days in the sense that, once the grass is cut in a particular patch, leaving three inches of growth above the ground, it requires a minimum of 45 days to grow again to the same height of two feet for further cutting. Roughly, every Muduvan family divides the field it owns into four or five portions. To cut the grass in one portion and to immediately extract oil from it in the oil extraction unit, it takes about five to six days for a family. By the time it completes cutting of the grass in the last portion of the patch owned by it, the first portion of the patch again becomes ready for harvest at a small gap of three or four days. In that way, the Muduvan living in the lemon-grass growing area settlements involve in this cash-generating job throughout the year. Every week, a Muduvan family distils two to five litres of lemon-grass oil to sell to the traders. The traders visit these settlements on a particular day in a week to collect the oil and immediately pay cash to the Muduvan. Their involvement in cash-crop cultivation, as a primary source of income, provides them with the cash required for the above-mentioned procurements.

Even though they dwell in deep forests, they are now totally dependent on the outside fluctuating market economy. Now they produce mainly for the market and less for themselves. In the process, a section of them are more pauperised than earlier. As the distilled lemon-grass oil and cardamom fetch cash directly, the concept of property and individual ownership of such property has strongly come into existence. When shifting cultivation was the only mode of survival, lands were viewed as common property or resources belonging to the community as a whole. The cash-crop lands are now viewed as assets of individual households and rupee value is fixed and added to it at times.

Negotiation

While talking about the ethos of the Paliyan community for securing individual autonomy, Norström (1999) coins **avoidance, negotiation and alliance building** as different strategies for working towards the goal of securing individual autonomy among the Paliyans in Palni Hills. He further adds, from a general strategy of avoidance towards outsiders, the interactions with non-Paliyans are today characterized by negotiation, especially in the form of wage labour of different kinds. The most common kinds of wage labour are farm work in estates and plantations, the collecting of forest produce for

contractors and the grazing of caste-owned cattle. Alliance building, negotiated on a group level, became from the late 1980s the new kind of interaction with outsiders for the Paliyans.

Avoidance as a strategy of survival – to retreat into the deep jungles to live and subsist in relative isolation without the interference of State agencies and outsiders – was practiced by the Muduvans too in the past, until 50 years ago, like many other forest dwelling communities. But it is no longer practiced as a strategy for two reasons. First, the State and its agencies like the Forest Department, the Tribal Development Department, and so on, have brought almost all of them into their ‘welfare’ fold; therefore, neither party wants to ‘avoid’ each other. Secondly, the recently promoted resource-use practices and livelihood pursuits, have made the Muduvans totally dependent on the outside market for all their survival needs and economic transactions.

Although the history, economy and ecological situation and context of the Muduvan is slightly different from the Paliyans, the strategy of **negotiation**, which is used by the Paliyans, is being employed also by the Muduvans in more or less the same way in terms of looking for alternate forms of survival and opportunities, when faced with a threat to their regular traditional mode of subsistence. In that way, ‘negotiation’ appears to me as a very useful conceptual and analytical tool to understand the process of occupational transition of the Muduvan society. However, I apply it in this context with a qualifying distinction.

Deriving the basic idea of ‘negotiation’ from Norström, I would like to make a finer distinction between negotiation of two kinds, namely, *formal negotiation* and *informal negotiation*. The constant interaction of the Muduvans with the State agencies, pertaining to their State-induced occupational transition to Lemon Grass Oil Distillation, Cardamom cultivation, Plough cultivation, and a few other hill crops cultivation within and outside the Protected Areas, appears to me, to be termed as ‘formal negotiation’ because it includes the formal demands of the Muduvans (for individual ownership of lands, financial assistance, etc) which they regularly put forth to the State for consideration. There is a Government approval and authorization in the case of these formal demands, redressal and negotiation processes. Whereas in the case of certain other demands, which the Muduvans can not officially and formally put forth to the State, which might be considered against the rule or law, the Muduvans resort to another kind of strategy and process, which I would like to call it ‘informal negotiation’. Personal relations achieve it with the rule implementing authorities. For instance, to continue the practice of shifting cultivation (on which the Muduvans have got the greatest affinity even today), in the neighbourhood of their settlements in small plots, for their own household needs and food security, using indigenous varieties of cultivars, Muduvans involve in informal negotiations with the lower level forest staff to allow them to practice it. As we all know, shifting cultivation is totally banned by the state. But they still involve in it on a very small scale if there is scope for it. As per the socio-economic survey I have recently made on the Muduvan community, who live in totally 91 settlements in various parts of the Idukki district, shifting cultivation continues to be taken up in very small plots. This indicates that the Muduvans do employ a strategy of informal negotiation for involving in their most revered traditional livelihood pursuit, which is also the way of life for them. More details on their present livelihood pursuits, combinations of occupations, etc are furnished in the annexure.

In certain areas, through these informal negotiations, the Muduvans have even started to make cardamom gardens under the forest tree-cover by deriving a kind of sympathy from the lower level forest guardians for which the Muduvans do make certain ‘payments’ and make ‘adjustments’. Achieving,

maintaining, and keeping alive these kinds of alliances and informal negotiations, cost the poor tribal people heavily sometimes e.g. 500 tribal unwedded mothers in the Silent Valley area of Palghat in Kerala! It was reported widely in the newspapers two years ago that the lower level forest officials, extension workers, middlemen, etc who maintain day to day links with the tribal people and used stay in the tribal settlements here, exploited a good number of the tribal women and deserted many of these women, producing children with them.

Concluding Remarks

By pursuing a mix of traditional and modern occupations and by combining the strategies of formal and informal negotiations, the Muduvans continue to live in their ancestral places, inside the forest tracts of the Anamalai, Kannan Devan and Cardamom hills. Underlying the collective subsistence of the Muduvans in the highly monetized situation today, are the themes of Sharing, Collectivism and Cohesion which is expressed in the form of dormitories and associated practices of sharing food, sharing the risk, etc. The core functions of the dormitory system in the Muduvan society, particularly its role as a readily available labour force in the shifting cultivation cycle and life-style, have almost disappeared due to the ban imposed on shifting cultivation and their subsequent reduced involvement in it. But the dormitory system continues to perform routine peripheral functions in the day-to-day life of the Muduvans in the spheres of recreation, festivity, enculturation(to an extent), accommodation of visitors – both kin and non-kin, etc. With these functions, it exists as a cultural phenomenon and as a marker of the cultural identity in the Muduvan society today. In almost all the settlements of the Muduvans, irrespective of the size and location (whether situated in deep forests or outside the forests), still one can find the dormitories for both boys and girls. The associated custom of sharing and eating together also continues to be followed by the respective dormitory members, signifying its prominence in the collective existence of the Muduvan society.

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ANNEXURE

SOCIO-ECONOMIC UPDATE OF MUDUVAN SETTLEMENTS IN IDUKKI DISTRICT, KERALA - UPDATED JUNE 2003

| Name of the Panchayat | Sl. No | Name of the Settlement (Kudi) | No. of families | Falling within WLS or RF | Approximate age of the Settlement in Years | Present livelihood pursuits |
|-----------------------|--------|------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Kanthaloor | 1 | Ollavayal Kudi | 44 | RF | 60 | LGOD, SHC |
| | 2 | Mangapara Kudi | 26 | WLS | 50 | LGOD, SHC |
| | 3 | Kulachivayal Kudi | 52 | RF | 60 | LGOD, PC-V |
| | 4 | Naakkupetti | 16 | RF | 70 | LGOD, SHC |
| | 5 | Theerthamalakudi | 83 | RF | 68 | LGOD, SHC, PC-S |
| | 6 | Sembatti (Chempetti) | 17 | RF | 7 | LGOD, CC, SHC |
| | 7 | Susani Kudi | 6 | RF | 300 | LGOD, PC-SP, CC |
| Marayoor | 8 | Karpoora Kudi | 21 | RF | 30 | LGOD, SHC, OHCC |
| | 9 | Periya Kudi (Kooda Kadu) | 51 | RF | 300 | LGOD, PC-SP |
| | 10 | Kavakudy | 35 | RF | 25 | LGOD, SHC |
| | 11 | Kulthu Kallu Kudi | 36 | RF | 40 | LGOD, SHC |
| | 12 | Nelli Patti (Venga Paara Kudi) | 80 | RF | 60 | LGOD, SHC, PC-S |
| | 13 | Kammalan Kudi | 44 | RF | 70 | LGOD, SHC, PC-SP, OHCC |
| | 14 | Iruttala Kudi | 46 | WLS | 50 | LGOD, SHC |
| | 15 | Pudu Kudi | 32 | WLS | 25 | LGOD, SHC |
| | 16 | Vellakal Kudi | 31 | WLS | 200 | LGOD, SHC |
| | 17 | Oli Kudi (Thenan Kadu) | 17 | WLS | 100 | LGOD, SHC |
| Vattavada Panchayat | 18 | Maasi Kaattu Kudi (Thayannan Kudi) | 17 | WLS | 50 | LGOD, PC-P, OHCC |
| | 19 | Koodalar Kudi | 68 | RF | 300 | PC-V, PC-P |
| | 20 | Saamiyaarala Kudi | 63 | RF | 300 | PC-V, PC-P |
| | 21 | Keezh Valasapetti | 32 | RF | 300 | PC-V, PC-P |
| Chinnakanal Panchayat | 22 | Mel Valasapetti | 32 | RF | 300 | PC-V |
| | 23 | Pachapul Kudy | 20 | RF | 50 | CC, OHCC |
| | 24 | Chembaka Thozhu Kudi | 117 | RL | 200 | CC, OHCC, PC-R |
| Mangulam | 25 | Taanki Kudi | 40 | RL | 200 | CC, OHCC, PC-R |
| | 26 | Seval Kudi | 43 | RL | 50 | OHCC, WL |
| | 27 | Chikkanan | 44 | RL | 30 | OHCC, WL |
| | 28 | Sinku Kudi | 41 | RL | 30 | OHCC, WL |
| | 29 | Kalla Kotti Kudi | 14 | RL | 20 | CC, OHCC |
| | 30 | Koyala Kudi | 49 | RF + RL | 80 | CC, OHCC |
| | 31 | Subramanian Kudi | 12 | RL | 15 | CC, OHCC |
| | 32 | Company Kudy | 55 | RF | 50 | CC, SHC |
| | 33 | Veliyambara | 102 | RF | 45 | CC, SHC |

| Name of the Panchayat | Sl. No | Name of the Settlement (Kudi) | No. of families | Falling within WLS or RF | Approximate age of the Settlement in Years | Present livelihood pursuits |
|-------------------------|---------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Munnar Panchayat | 34 | Aandavan Kudy | 42 | RF | 60 | CC,SHC |
| | 35 | Edalipara Kudy | 40 | RF | 25 | CC,SHC |
| | 36 | Pudu Kudi (Society Kudy) | 48 | RF | 25 | CC,SHC |
| | 37 | Settu Kudi | 36 | RF | 25 | CC,SHC |
| | 38 | Nooradi Kudi | 29 | RF | 35 | CC,SHC |
| | 39 | Chennaai Para | 5 | NP | 30 | CC,SHC |
| | 40 | Vella Kasam | 6 | RF | 15 | CC,SHC |
| | 41 | Vellavara Kudi | 20 | RF | 12 | CC,SHC |
| | 42 | Mel Valayampara | 8 | RF | 40 | CC,SHC |
| | 43 | Iruppu Kallu | 16 | RF | 40 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 44 | Meen Kutthi | 17 | RF | 35 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 45 | Milagu thara | 16 | RF | 25 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 46 | Koodalar Kudi | 8 | RF | 20 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 47 | Ambalapara | 3 | RF | 15 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 48 | Nadu Kudi | 8 | RF | 10 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 49 | Keezh Pattham | 14 | RF | 30 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 50 | Pattham | 5 | RF | 32 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 51 | Keezh Valayam Parai | 12 | RF | 45 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 52 | Kasappu meankudi(Ambalaparai) | 9 | RF | 25 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 53 | Thenpara | 6 | NP | 13 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 54 | Nemmanal (2Km from Milagu Tharai) | 6 | RF | 10 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 55 | Kavakattu kudi | 10 | RF | 25 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 56 | Komali Kudi | 10 | RF | 20 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 57 | Veliya Kudi | 15 | RF | 30 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 58 | Kandathu Kudi | 20 | RF | 35 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 59 | SappuKattu Kudi | 22 | RF | 35 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 60 | Udumban para | 15 | RF | 15 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 61 | Kala Kudy | 16 | RF | 20 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 62 | Vazha Kuthu | 21 | RF | 40 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 63 | Parappiyar Kudi | 29 | RF | 30 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 64 | Paara Kudi | 14 | RF | 30 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 65 | Lakkam Kudi | 32 | RF | 50 | LGOD,SHC |
| | 66 | Vayakadavu | 7 | RF | 60 | LGOD,SHC |
| 67 | Kundala | 60 | RL | 200 | PC-V | |
| Santhampara Panchayat | 68 | Aaduvizhunthan Kudi | 17 | RL | 100 | CC,OHCC |
| | 69 | Kozhi Panna Kudi (Aanai irangal Kudi) | 13 | RL | 60 | CC,OHCC |
| Adimali grama Panchayat | 70 | Kurathi Kudi | 160 | RL | 100 | CC,OHCC |
| | 71 | Veliyampara | 23 | RF | 40 | CC,SHC |
| | 72 | Moothassery | 10 | RL | 60 | OHCC,PC-R |
| | 73 | Elampillassery | 9 | RL | 100 | OHCC,PC-R |

| Name of the Panchayat | Sl. No | Name of the Settlement (Kudi) | No. of families | Falling within WLS or RF | Approximate age of the Settlement in Years | Present livelihood pursuits |
|-------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Adimali grama Panchayat | 74 | Kattamudi, Kunjipetty | 92 | RF | 75 | CC,SHC |
| | 75 | Padicappu | 64 | RF+RL | 150 | OHCC,SHC |
| | 76 | Ozhuva thadom | 82 | RF+RL | 80 | OHCC,SHC |
| | 77 | Thattekannan | 42 | RF+RL | 40 | CC,OHCC |
| | 78 | Machiplavu | 54 | RL | 20 | OHCC |
| | 79 | Plamalakudy, Navalpara | 70 | RF | 40 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 80 | Nooramkera | 39 | RF | 20 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 81 | Korangatti | 113 | RL + RF | 100 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 82 | Chinnappara | 194 | RL + RF | 80 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 83 | Thalayoorappan Kudy | 28 | RL + RF | 45 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| | 84 | Choorakattan | 69 | RF | 35 | CC,SHC,OHCC |
| 85 | 5th Mile | 48 | RL | 60 | CC,OHCC | |
| Vellathooval Panchayat | 86 | Anachal | 51 | RL | 300 | OHCC |
| | 87 | Komali Kudi | 71 | RL | 300 | CC,OHCC,PC-P |
| | 88 | Chokkarmudi | 40 | RL | 250 | CC,OHCC,PC-P |
| | 89 | 20Acre Kudy | 26 | RL | 100 | WL |
| | 90 | Manjakuzhy | 40 | RL | 150 | CC,OHCC,PC-P |
| | 91 | Mullanthandu | 6 | RL | 150 | CC,OHCC |

Total 3372

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|------|---------------------------------|-------|--|
| LGOD | Lemon Grass Oil Distillation | PC-SP | Plough Cultivation (Sugarcane & Paddy) |
| SHC | Shifting Cultivation | CC | Cardamom Cultivation |
| PC-V | Plough Cultivation (Vegetables) | OHCC | Other Hill Crops Cultivation |
| PC-S | Plough Cultivation (Sugarcane) | WL | Wage Labour |
| PC-P | Plough Cultivation (Paddy) | PC-R | Plough Cultivation (in Revenue Land) |
| RF- | Reserve Forest | RL- | Revenue Land |
| WLS- | Wild Life Sanctuary | NP- | National Park |