

## **Marginalization, Globalization and Scheduled Tribes in Kerala**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*India is the home of different kinds of indigenous people. Scheduled Tribes are the most marginalized and underdeveloped communities scattered across India. Many tribes were displaced as companies encroached on their lands, and some of them continued fighting to either protect their homes or demand just compensation. The government was denying these people the most fundamental sources of livelihood by removing forest lands for industry and plantation forestry rather than protecting the native species that support their way of life. The lives and livelihoods of tribal communities in Kerala largely depend upon the forest and natural resources. The governmental policies and programs adversely affected tribal communities in Kerala. They are the victims of large-scale development projects, including the construction of dams and long-standing politics, land laws, etc. Kerala is well known for its socio-economic development and land reform policies. However, these reforms least benefited the tribes in Kerala because they historically lived in the forest. Another important factor for the deprivation of tribes faced and continues to face is land alienation. Small land holdings, lack of resources and infrastructure for agriculture, conflicts with wild animals, particularly elephants, and drought in rain-fed agricultural areas due to inadequate rainfall put tribes' livelihoods at risk. Tribal people's malnutrition has a direct relationship with food and an indirect relationship with non-food factors. Some of the tribal hamlets in Kerala, especially Attapady in the Palakkadu district of Kerala, have the lowest rate of life expectancy and living conditions. Tribes in India are ignored by the governments, political parties, and media. They have to struggle for their existence. This paper attempts to discuss the problem of marginalization of Tribes in India with special reference to the state of Kerala.*

**Key words:** Globalization, Land, Land alienation, Marginalization, Scheduled Tribes.

### **Introduction**

The word “tribe” originated from the Latin word “tribus” which refers to a particular kind of social and political organization that is present in all these societies. When the word first originated in the English language in the sixteenth century, it referred to a group of people who claimed a common ancestor. The term "tribe" has administrative and legal meanings in India. In the Constitution of India, Scheduled Tribes are defined as “such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be scheduled tribes for the purpose of this constitution.” Forest occupies a central position in tribal economy and culture. The forest greatly influences the tribal way of life, from birth to death. Ironically, India's poorest residents reside in areas with the most abundant natural resources. Tribes have always been forced to the margins by the economic interests of powerful groups. Tribal people are still being forced to make way for land development in contemporary India. As a result of globalization, non-tribals, huge multinational corporations like Coca-Cola, were suddenly able to freely occupy land that tribal communities had previously been unable to. It is estimated that more than 1500 significant irrigation projects have been built. More than 16 million people have been displaced from their homes since independence in the name of development with over 40% belonging to tribal communities. This article analyses the marginalization of the tribal communities in Kerala. The successive governments in Kerala made several legislations but none of them implemented. Tribal land was alienated in the first place, then they had to face a serious number of problems related to land alienation including poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, exploitation, loss of cultural heritage, etc. Globalization is a major reason for the marginalization of Scheduled Tribes. They are sidelined by the fast growth of industries and the benefits of development not distributed among them.

### **Tribes in Kerala**

Historically, Scheduled Tribes are the most marginalised and underprivileged community in Kerala. Even though they constitute only 1.1% of the total population they victimized several kinds of social and economic disparities from the mainstream society. The highest number of tribes constitute in Wayanad district (33.47%), then Idukki (13.26%), Palakkad (12.25%) and Kasaragod (10.74%). According to the 2011 census report, the total population of scheduled Tribes is 10,42,81034 in persons and they constitute 8.6% of the population of the country (xaxa tribal committee report, 2014). In Kerala, Scheduled Tribes are known as ‘Adivasis.’ They are diverse and heterogeneous regarding their language, culture, population size, and way of living. Generally, they live together in clusters or settlements commonly called ‘Ooru.’ A cluster of five or more tribal households lying adjacent to each other has been considered as an ‘ooru.’ There are different kinds of tribes in Kerala such as adiyar, malai arayan, malai vedan, malai pandaram, irulan, kadam, kattunayakan, kanikkaran, Konda, koraga, malakkuran, mavilan, karimpalan, paniyan etc. Traditionally, they live in forest or the fringes of forests so they are

not visible in the world. The land is the only tangible asset and the mainstay of a tribal community. 90% of tribal communities depend upon the land and agriculture allied activities.

### **Defining Marginalization**

Marginalization or social exclusion happens when some groups of individuals are excluded from areas of society. Marginalized people do not always fit into one specific group: Ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, and handicapped status are all factors that contribute to marginalization. Disadvantaged populations frequently face barriers to accessing quality healthcare, education, and employment that would enhance their quality of life. According to Ghana S. Gurung and Michael Kollmair, the idea of marginality is generally used to analyze the economic, political, and cultural spheres in which underprivileged individuals find it difficult to get resources and fully engage in social life. To put it another way, marginalized people may be neglected, excluded, or ignored in social, economic, political, and legal contexts; as a result, they are vulnerable to livelihood change (Gurung S. Ghana, Kollmair Michael, 2005).

According to Sommers et. al., "Socio-economic marginality is a condition of socio-spatial structure and process in which components of society and space in a territorial unit are observed to lag behind an expected level of performance in economic, political and social well-being, compared with average conditions in the territory as a whole." Exclusion from fulfilling all of one's needs on an individual, interpersonal, and societal level stems from marginalization. Marginalized people may experience discrimination and are frequently the target of unfavorable public attitudes; they also have comparatively little control over their lives and the resources at their disposal. They might have few opportunities to contribute to society, and they might grow to have low self-esteem and self-confidence.

### **Background of Tribal Land Alienation**

The lives of tribes have been conditioned by poverty, illiteracy, health issues, unemployment, powerlessness, and other several kinds of deprivations that have pushed them to the bottom of the social margin. Most tribal people were defined by the denial of their civil and political rights, repression, social exclusion, economic inequality, and alienation. Land alienation is the crucial question that tribals in Kerala face today. The most significant factors that have had a significant impact on their lives are their relationships with land and forests. The introduction of private property in land and the penetration of market forces were the two main factors that led to the encroachment on tribal peoples' land rights when British rule began. After the tribal areas were linked with the larger society by roads and railways, large-scale land alienation took place. In the post-independence period, successive governments took various protective and restorative measures to stop land alienation, but the situation remained deteriorating. Not only the invasion

of non-tribes to the tribal land but also the process of development is a reason for land alienation. Outsiders began to visit tribal lands when the Zamindari system, administrative towns, offices, homes, colonies, schools, hospitals, colleges, railway stations, post offices, etc. were established. In addition to coming for services, business, money lending, etc., they also bought tribal properties and settled in the tribal territories. They acquired an increasing number of properties in tribal territories over time (Reddy, 2022). Now tribals became the servants of their own land.

Following independence, the government purchased the tribal lands to build towns and industries, making of reservoirs and dams, exploitation of mineral resources, etc. Thus, in the post-independence era, tribal land transfers were caused by industrialization, urbanization, the exploitation of mineral resources, and hydropower. Tribal unrest has increased as a result of lack of laws to stop tribal land from being transferred to non-tribals. Tribal land is still alienated to non-tribals for their own exclusive uses because of certain loopholes in the present legal conditions. Additionally, the state government purchased tribal land for mining, power, irrigation, industry, and other purposes. The indigenous people's rights over the land have thus been taken away. Borrowing money from the forward communities for non-productive purposes mainly for meeting day-to-day expenditure is another reason behind the tribal land alienation. Drinking habits, poor economic conditions, lack of land records, administrative inefficiency, delay in getting judgment, oral mortgage of land in the hands of non-tribals, non-possession of judgment, interest not shown by tribal leaders or not taking interest due to heavy bribe, fear from police and court, urbanization, establishing marriage with tribal women, share cropping etc are another reason of alienation of tribal land.

### **Tribal Land Laws**

The tribes of Kerala are among those who have been most marginalized by land alienation and dispossession, and they have fought tenaciously to keep their ownership of the land. In Kerala, there were numerous attempts made in the 1950s to end the janmi-kudiyam system of land tenure and impose an equitable land distribution. The Land Reforms Act, which went into effect in 1970, was one of the main pieces of legislation the state had enacted to guarantee land for the landless. According to the amendment of Act in 1972 the surplus land available for assignment in a taluk was to be assigned to landless agricultural labourers which one-half shall be assigned to landless agricultural labourers belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and such other socially and economically backward classes of citizens as specified by the Government by notification in the Gazette. To an extent, some of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were benefited (Prasanth, 1985).

Later, in 1975, the Kerala government passed the Kerala Scheduled Tribes Restriction on Transfer and Restoration on Alienated Land Act (KST act-1975), considering the Dhebar

commission's suggestions to reclaim the Adivasi lands that were encroached by others. It was a historic move. The fight for Adivasi land rights in Kerala began with the fight to have this act put into effect. The Kerala Private Forest Vesting and Assignment Act, another statute created in 1971, could not grant Adivasis the right to land. However, more than 4000 applications to reclaim the encroached Adivasi land were not considered by the government under the KST Act. The considered applications on which the land redistribution process was to begin did not occur. To get the State government to apply the 1975 Act, Dr. Nalla Thampi Thera, a non-tribal person from the Wayanad district, petitioned the Kerala High Court in 1986. The court took five years to issue a favorable ruling on the public interest petition. The government was given six months to execute the Act by the court in October 1993. However, the lawsuit dragged on for two and a half years as the government persisted in asking for extensions to the Act's implementation deadline. In 1996, the court fixed a final deadline of September 30, 1996 to evict the non-tribal occupants, with the help of police if it is necessary. The tribal people themselves were growing increasingly pessimistic about the ability of the government and the courts to find a solution to their situation as the non-tribal settlers became established in the alienated territory of the tribal people. Therefore, even though government initiatives had helped many tribal people live better lives, the majority remained landless, had no means of support, and grew more reliant on non-tribal settlers for employment and pay. Most landless tribes had not filed the applications for land, and therefore, they were outside the purview of the 1975 Act. Even if the Act was implemented, they were not eligible for the land. The first sign of discontent is already evident in the tribal- inhabited areas, especially in the Wayanad district. In the early 1990s, some of the extremist groups had been active for a long time.

The state administration passed an amending ordinance in 1996 to get around the KST Act. The Indian president, however, rejected this. Later, in 1999, the Left government passed an amendment act that allowed encroachment on tribal land that is smaller than five hectares in size. Adivasis were expected to be given back any land larger than five hectares. The KST Act was also urged to be abolished under this act. With the support of both the right and left parties in Kerala, this amendment was passed, and KST Act was abolished (Khan, 2014). All the tribal dreams were destroyed by the 1996 Amendment Bill. Most importantly, it legalized all tribal land transfers before January 24, 1986. Or, to put it another way, the government eliminated the need to return alienated land (as required by the 1975 Act). Given the chaos and the political fallout that would have resulted from attempting to expel the non-tribal settlers, the administration said it was the only workable option. The tribal people, however, believed that the government was attempting to legitimize the alienation of their territory. The tribal's attempt to enter the State Assembly during the agitation in front of the State Assembly, supported by a group of Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) volunteers and led by their leader from Wayanad C.K. Janu, may have been an early sign of the movement's gradual transformation. One of the

most well-known incidents of the conflict occurred shortly after this. Invading the Palakkad Collectorate on October 4, 1996, the hardline group "Ayyankali Pada" took Collector W.R. Reddy hostage for nine hours (JS, 2022). Four men walked into the Palakkad District Collectorate with a pistol and grenade with a demand that the Kerala government should immediately withdraw the amendment bill of the KST Act. After nine hours of negotiations, threats, and blasts, with the help of mediators, the members of Ayyankali Pada and the Government reached a compromise. After the compromise, the members of Ayyankali Pada claimed that the weapons they had in their hands were fake, a toy pistol, a few electric wires, pipes, and a set of batteries. All they sought to accomplish with the "hostage drama" was to make a statement and draw attention to the Adivasi communities' unreported, unattended issues. Vilayodi Sivankutty, Kallara Babu, Kanhangad Rameshan, and Mannur Ajayan, four "comrades," pulled out this stunt. The tragedy prompted the government to take aggressive action against emerging symptoms of radicalism among Adivasis and, in a sense, stopped the unrest from worsening. Later, the President declined to ratify the 1996 Amendment Bill that the State Assembly had enacted because the 1975 Act had been incorporated into the Constitution's Ninth Schedule (R, 2001).

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During the 2000s, the state witnessed about 200 hunger deaths among Adivasis. The continued exploitation of Adivasis and denial of their fundamental rights, along with government inaction on the matter, resulted in the emergence of a wider movement in 2001 known as "Kudilketti Samaram." Adivasis from all over the state arrived, and they built small shelter huts in front of the secretariat while maintaining their demands. From August 29 until October 16, 2001, there was conflict. This demonstration may bring the critical land issues that Kerala's Adivasis have to the general public's attention. This could also raise the issues of rehabilitation of all Adivasis, and the need to include the Adivasi land in the 5th schedule, preventing the land transaction to non-Adivasis (Khan, Why are They Still Standing? Historic Struggle of Adivasis in Kerala, 2014)



### **Tribal Marginalization in the context of Globalization**

The resurgence of economic liberalism, which Adam Smith first proposed in his 1776 book "Wealth of Nations," is where the term "globalization" originated. It promoted individualism and the removal of trade barriers at the frontiers to reduce government control over the economy. Narrow commercial activity conducted across national borders declines because of globalization. In other words, it combines the indigenous market with the international market. Globalization involves economic integration, the transfer of policies across borders that transmit knowledge, stabilize culture, and establish a global market free from socio-political control. To Anthony McGrew, "Globalization is a process which generates flows and connections, not simply across nation states and national territorial boundaries but between global regions, continents and civilizations. According to Anthony Giddens, globalization is a process of the "intensification of worldwide relations which links the distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (Sabanadze, 2010).

Although the extent of exploitation and marginalization varies from state to state and tribal group to group, the process of globalization has brought about unprecedented change in the lives of Indigenous people worldwide. As a homogeneous group throughout India, tribal people have paid a heavy price for development driven by the globalization process, which is evident in the massive so-called development projects that have forced them to leave the forest and become alienated from their land and means of livelihood, threatening their very existence. The Fifth and Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution focused on the protection of tribes in India. Adivasi groups are legally protected under the Indian Constitution, which also establishes socially equitable regulations for using resources, such as land, water, and forests, instead of a market economy (Khan, Globalisation, Development and Tribals of Kerala, 2012). However, this has not protected them from the negative effects of globalization. Indigenous people around the world are on the "frontlines" of globalization's spread; they inhabit the planet's remaining unspoiled areas, where resources like forests, minerals, water, and genetic diversity are still plentiful. Global corporations are actively pursuing all of them to drive indigenous societies off their lands.

Protecting the nation's 100 million tribes was the primary focus of the Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Constitution. The Indian Constitution gives Adivasi populations legal protections and grounds all its policies on social equity rather than a market economy when it comes to using resources, such as land, water, and forests. In a globalized world, the market not the community is the main player. Strong international lobbying imposed pressure on the governments. As a result, Adivasis lose sovereignty over their resources to private and international industry players, while legitimate governments like India permit constitutional amendments that harm their constituent populations.

One of the major problems in the age of globalization has been the displacement of tribal people from their ancestral lands. An estimated 16 million people have been displaced from their villages as a result of the building of more than 1500 significant irrigation development projects since independence; approximately 40% of these individuals are tribal. Numerous construction projects, including irrigation dams, underground coal mines, and mineral-based industries around the nation, have caused the displacement. Nearly all of India's large dam projects are inextricably related to global capitalism and its obedient national stooges. Nearly 60% of these massive dams are situated in central and western India, where tribal groups constitute the majority of the population. The government and planners are aware that a combination of commercial interest, development interventions, and a lack of effective legal protection is eroding the tribal population's resource base and socio-cultural heritage. They also know that an insensitive and unimaginative relief package is disrupting the tribal population's environment and way of life (Khanday, 2019). Tribal communities are primitive, so they rely on forest areas to survive. Despite living alone in forest areas, they coexist peacefully with other animals and forests. However, the creation of eco-parks and animal sanctuaries destroys their habitat and forces them to relocate. The wealthy nations have maintained their control over emerging nations in terms of economic regulation throughout neo-colonialism. It led to the delegitimization and transformation of the local economy, culture, and technology into imperialism. State authority over their natural habitat has increased as a result of the development of community forest management.

Globalization has affected indigenous people's cultural standing in addition to their socioeconomic circumstances. Globalization is simply the reorganization of values, behavior, institutions, and identity that allows the cultural life of popular or dominant sections to infiltrate tribal portions. Globalization is accelerating the shift that was previously started by colonialism and national growth. It is expected of each person to disregard the interests of others and only consider their own. A small number of people control an increasing amount of the finite natural, mineral, and financial resources (Fernandes, 2014). Globalization has destroyed entire tribal cultures as a result of this cultural subordination, and tribal people may feel embarrassed about following their customs. Their socio-cultural circumstances as well as their economic circumstances have been impacted.

### **Conclusion**

Tribes in Kerala have been historically marginalized and oppressed just as in other parts of India. Although the extent of exploitation and marginalization varies from state to state and tribal group to group, the process of globalization has brought about an unparalleled change in the lives of Indigenous people worldwide. As a homogeneous group throughout India, tribal people have paid a heavy price for development driven by globalization, which is evident in the form of



massive so-called development projects, forest displacement, alienation from land and livelihoods, violations of rights concerning the forest and its resources, and threats to their survival. Tribal life and the economy are very much affected by globalization.

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