ORAL HISTORY - OH 2.2 20-12-1990

Ponbal was an old Toda man who I met on the near his mund on the Nilgiris. His mund is on the northern and western edge of the Nilgiri plateau. In this arae there are three or four Toda munds. The biggeset Toda cathedral of the Todas with an impressuve spire is located in these parts. I waited many hours to see and talk to this gentleman. When I met him in his house he requested me to go and sit on the gently rollomg grasses, like the downs and wait for him. I patiently waited for iver 4 hours to meet him. Then I with hunger lost my patience and called him out for a talk. He was relaxed and loved to just sit on the grasses and look over his landscape and the buffalos in a leisurely manner. He liked his leisure and managed itvery well. He spoke at length about the different Toda munds on the landscape and their modes of livelihoods.

Nilgiri Plateau
Ponban, Todawar, Tarnaad mund, Nilgiri Plateau

Personal profile
Pattarmund
Ponbal Todawar
Only one family : (5+3)= 8 acres. No agriculture, only some Geranium planted,
No cattle or buffaloes

Personal profile
Ponbal, 70 years old a Toda; resident of Pattarmund, above Sholur village. Has no buffaloes. Survives from the rent that he gets from the agricultural land that the govt. has given him.

Toda habitation areas
Olakadmand,
Badanbadmund,
Kengodmund,
Thavalkodmund,
Karimolimund - near Kamaraj Sagar Dam,
Muthunamund - near Talakunda, Schoolmanmund - near Finger post,
Majakalmund - Ooty Botanical Garden,
Lanadalmund - Ooty area,
Kekkerimund - Ooty area and near Mysore Rajaghat,
Kundigodmund,
Agannadmund,
Anakalmund - near Ganesha Shola,
Kolkadimund - 2 furlongs from Ganesha shola,
Pennapalmand - 2 furlongs from the side of river,
Nattnermund - near the above,
Neukachimund - 8th mile from Ooty,
Narikullimund - 9th mile from Ooty,
Tagalbadimund - 10th mile from Ooty, Talpatimund - 10th mile from Ooty,
Khaggodimund - 10th mile from Ooty,
Peretthormund - 1/2 furlong from above,
Kariamund - near Pykara 13th mile,
Thomalkandmund - near Glenmorgan road,
Pudumund - near Glenmorgan road,
Tarvad mund - near Glenmorgan road, Arthalmund - near Glenmorgan road.

Others in Kodanad - 2 mund, -Narkadmund, Kadathouimund
Cooner - 2 mund, -Kattabattamund, Nediamund
Analanil - Mulloamund
Upper Bhavani area - Battamund, Khabbadimund, Onnemund,Narbulimund, Koolimund.

Ponbal, Tarnadmund says, Only where people are, have I listed.

In olden days-days of my grandfather there must have been 10/30 more munds that do not exist any more eg., Thelgodmund was a mund that existed earlier and now have only religious significance for the Tarnadmund.
Pattarmund called so because there are many rocks around here.

Cattle disease
34 years ago, a big cattle disease

18 years ago @ Khaggodemund and Kalpattemund - 300 buffalo disease
@ Karimund - 100, Tarnadmund - 50

5 years ago. Here - 41 buffalo disease

Human Disease
100 years ago in Nilgiri about 4,000 people died they say. Many in our munds also died then, so say my old father.

Pastoral migration
In other mund, also people would migrate for 3 to 4 months to areas where grass and fodder is available and graze buffaloes and conduct rites burn the temple lamp there and return.

Pastorals and buffalo sacrifice
Earlier there were many buffaloes. Even I had over 100 buffaloes. Earlier with foolishness, we were killing buffaloes during deaths. The Kotas who reside close by. As far as I remember about 30 years ago, we still used to kill buffaloes at deaths. As far as I know, the kotas would come and play music at our deaths. Then, we would kill 5/6 of our best buffaloes and they would take them away. They would simply take it away and eat it. They eat anything. Since then as time went by we have realized that the buffaloes are pitiful, and we should not kill them. That the man has died, if we kill the buffaloes the next day, will he drive the buffaloes to the place where he goes? Yama has taken that person away, but what is the point in killing buffaloes. These were actions done during the Karnataka time. It was mindlessly done.

Now, in our house, I die and I have a son. If we kill one of our two buffaloes how will my son survive? So now, about 30 boys have got together and made a Sangha and decided that we should not kill buffaloes. It is only for the past 4/5 years that we have stopped this practice. Before that, for each death 4/5 buffaloes would be killed, and the Kotas would take them away.

Culture
In the olden days, there was a mund here called Mudidevarmund. In our language it was called Ente. It was a big cathedral. There was only one pujari and two helpers who would go with the temple buffaloes about 60-70 of them and stay for 2 months, and then return here. Connected with the Mudidevarmund, there is a Ti in the Mukkurthi area called Majjad Ti. Enti is a big Ti. It is a head Ti. Then during the dry or summer months this Ti is transferred to the smaller, subsidiary Ti in Mukkurti.

Secondly, Khaggulir is joined or connected to the Tarnadmund. For that, only one pujari exists, and one helper. In Tarnad these days there is a pujari, and during the dry months, the buffaloes are driven up to Kodamal mund in the Mukkurthi area. We would go and stay there for 3 months, with only the pujari and buffaloes. Whereas here in Tarnad mund the whole family including women and children stay near the Ti.

In the olden days, there was a Ti below Kalpataru mund in the Pykara area. Majjadmund Ti near Mukkurti was the second; Mudidevarmund Ti, the third; on the other side near or alone Avalanche, where the power office is built, there was a Ti there. Earlier, in the Upper Bhavani area also at Koolimund also there was a Ti, that was the fifth; Kodanad people had a Ti there towards Kodanad was the sixth Ti. I have only heard of it. I have not seen any; in and around the Ti there should be no women. Only two men should be there, one pujari and his assistant. And if we want ghee or something, we should go near the Ti and sit down. The helper of the pujari will come out and give us whatever we want. We are not to go into the Ti. In the Ti tradition, women should not consume anything except the Ghee from the temple buffaloes. Only the Ghee from the Ti can be consumed by all, but should never be sold.

Mutunadmund on top of Talakunda is a big Ti diary. The buffaloes belonging to the Mutunad mund used to be driven towards Mukkurti for 3 or 4 months to the mund called Kashti mund (it is near the Mudimund estate). It is connected to the Muttanad mund. The buffaloes as well as the pujari and the temple buffaloes would be driven there during the dry months. And there the buffaloes are grazed and the rites performed.

Culture

As regards the Tarnad mund, this is considered the headquarters of the Todas. The buffaloes were actually created here they say- we do not know. At all the other Ti sites or temple sites that I have said earlier, none of them are still active- or none of them are active all the time. They all close ritual once in a while due to lack of fodder, lack of milk or some such reason. But as regards the temple at Tarnad mund, it is supposed to be active all the 360 days of the year. The lamp that we burn in the temple with Ghee should be burned everyday. This light must never be put out. In the other temples, the light would burn for 6 months or 4 months depending upon the situation, but here at the Tarnadmund, the light would burn for 360 days everyday. The light must never be put out. By any means, at least one buffalo must be milked and the lamp burnt. Even if there is only one buffalo a pujari must take care of it.

At present 12-13 buffaloes have calved. So till the next calving season, at least one or two buffaloes will be yielding milk. And even if only one buffalo is yielding milk the pujari must tend to it and burn the temple lamp.

At all the other places or at the other temples if there is shortage, either they will abandon prayers or move to some other place. If there are only one of two milk yielding buffaloes, out of non-enthusiasm they would give up milking them and conducting prayers. They may abandon prayers deciding to start after more buffaloes calf.

Here, if a pujari takes up worship he must continue for one year or at least for six months. In other munds pujaris can change as often as they want. One can stay for 8 days and then decided to give up.

Here a pujari must be very strict. He should not eat tobacco or smoke. He should eat rice mixed with temple butter, butter-milk and some salt. He could chew on a chilly. He should not take sambar gram or anything else. Those were the days they were strictly followed. And even now, we have threatened today's youth to follow these rules, and they still do follow these rules at the Tarnad temple.

Culture and Tradition

Death rites are performed on two occasions. If one dies today, we would cremate the body tomorrow. And during cremation, we take a lock and hair and keep it with us. We put it in a nice mull dhoti and stitch it up and keep it. Only after that we have the end of the death rites. The Tamilians have a final death rites at the end of 8 days; but we keep the lock of hair for 2/3 months; and in the olden days; some time we will go Mysore, this site of Mysore we go to a place where there is a 'jaggery' 'sandy' or market at the place called the 'Tarkalami sandy', held on a sunday. It is near Gundlupet. We go there and bring a big ball of jaggery, and we will bring some samai grain. We would roast the grain mix it up and make it into a sweet of 4-5 bags. Then we will inform all our folk all around saying we are conducting the death rites. And that day we would feed everybody who comes for the rites, and on that day we kill 4/5 buffaloes over to the Kotars. But since the last 4/5 years and more so since the last 30 years we have thought of the tremendous waste of money involved in this 'vaigad' and we have now stopped this rite altogether. So we finish the death rites immediately after the person died. Thus at death, if we have 400 or 500 Rs. then with the contribution from people coming from the funeral, we can comfortably finish all the rites and rituals. So now-a-days, the wasteful expense of 'Vaigad' has now been avoided. Those days, before we were cultured, we would do all these rites. We would even keep the body for 2/3 days for everybody to come, but now-a-days we do not wait, we dispose the body the next day itself.

Each mund has a place where they burn the bodies of their men. For example, Muttunadmund has a place near there; and Tarnadmund has a place around there, where they burn the body. Again for men and women there all separate burning ghats. We would use only the wood of the Euginia tree to burn the bodies.

Relation with Kotas

Now-a-days the Kotas also do not come and play at funerals. Saying they want to become 'higher' than us, they have gone till Delhi, they have gone till Nehru and represented their case.

There are early records of our relationship. When they come here, they would keep a distance away and we would give them some rice and jaggery. They would cook it there. We would give them some Ghee. With all this they would prepare food, eat and go away.

When our buffaloes calf, and if there are more males than females, we would then pass over the male buffaloes to them and nurture the females. They would kill and consume that calf of one month or 15 days. Now, of course if a buffalo dies or something happens we sell the skin and meat off. But, if the temple cow dies or the temple calf dies, we never sell it, and we still give it to the Kotas. They would came and take it.

In turn what they do for us is to make implements like Kodali(axe) and hatchet knife. This was the early relationship.

Now, they have gone all over and reputed that it is we who came first. They claim that it is they who come first to the Nilgiri hills, and that they will not do any service under us. So they stopped playing music etc. So we do not care too. It is now 30 years since this relation has stopped. After that if buffaloes die we have been selling them to the tanner or some one.

As soon as a buffalo dies, traders would come and join and agree to carry away the buffalo paying us some money too. That suited us fine. After we have sold the buffalo, the Kotars would came stealthily and buy some meat and take it away.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 2.3

P. Siddhan was an Adi Jamboan, This is a harijan community that have moved into the area from the Mysore plateau. This is a small group in a village were most of the families are Harijans and do not have much land and agriculture. They are thus obviously later immigrants to the Nilgiris plateau, probably in the late British period and the modern pereiod. One comes across many such colonies and Nagars on the Nilgiri plateau. One of these labour colony settlements is called "Lease", which is the site of some mining and quarry operation, which has been settled, by Harijans alloted land for building their houses. Often, the government has given them some land for housing and agriculture unedr some scheme, but these lands are normally very unproductive and their house sites are in unfavuorable areas as regards water supply and other services. The village of Kakkaji, situated on the northern edge of the Nilgiri plautaeu is better of and seems to be an old village. I met and talek to Siddhan who related briefly about the area and his village settlement.

Nilgiri Plateau
P.Siddhan, Adi Jamboan, Kakkajji Nagar, Nilgiri Plateau

Personal profile
P.Siddhan, Age 41yrs
Kalumdi/Kakkajinagar

Habitation
1955 Kakkaji Nagar was a Reserve Shola the house line built by Govt, 24 houses built in 1957, Reserve shola was dereserved and the village built due to minister Kakkaji, under Kamarajar period. 2.95% of RE.

41 houses @ 2 cents/house in 1980, Puttayyan came and created the village Kalundi. 5 generations ago, ie., 100 yrs ago. After 1948 many families came.

Culture
Group : Adi-Jamboa spread also in Kinnakorai 1 fly
Beyond Devanshola Baccod estates 2/3 fly
Kilsingara - Mettupalyam 1 fly

On Kotas
The Kota village used to pay rent/homage to Dannakkan king and then, the Kotas brought the Kattiparyas from there for helping them for their work.

Miscelleneous
In survey No. 315/1 land = 14,610 acres
In 1872 Dunsandle estate land leased = 300 acres (in199gns) 118 years
In - Sheep farm = 3,000 acres
(300 taken by F.D)
In 20 yrs ago N.K.Kavimala Maistry = 1.5 acres
In 1948 is before for Adi-vasi Kotans leased 12 acres
P. Siddan s/o Puttan, Village headman from 1976/1990

ORAL HISTORY - OH 2.4, 21-12-1990

I met him on a typical rainy days, with occasional bouts of bright sunshine. He was working in the foundary in the villages and with a group of young men, was working fashioning iron implements. I sat with him while he was working and spent the evening and night in his house along with his family. We talked about various things, but what seemed to come through was the fine community feeling among the Kota community and a limited pride in him about what he was doing. Their houses were beautifully carved out of good hard wood, and was comfortably built for the weather of the Nilgiri plateau. He talks about the cohesiveness of his group, and the tremendous diversity of skill that the Kotas pocess. They are in the principle the core of artisans on the Nilgiri plateau. This was the village, where I spent a night with the family of Raman. The next day he showed me the plant from which they extract fibre and spin clothes. He calims these were the clothes they used to wear, but today, the plant and fibre from the plant is only used for ceremonial occasions.

Nilgiri Plateau
Raman, Kotar, Sholur Gokal, Nilgiri Plateau

Personal profile
Sholur Kogal
Oral History of Raman with his family, his sister, mother-in-law and Father-in-law.

Kota
We have a fine social organization and community feeling. We come together in times of need and security. During periods of death, we all come together to console the family with music and lightness. In our festivals also we all take part with great gusto and friendship. We play all kinds of musical instruments and have different kinds of music for different occasions.

Our village consists of 3 keris here. In these keri all of us are brothers. People in the other keris are all our 'mamas' and 'machans'. We take brides from these keris and they take brides from our keris (This is their system of exogamy).

We conduct 2 funerals, one in a few days after death itself, and the other is the dry funeral that we conduct in this village, only once every 2 years. In other Kota villages they conduct this every year. This is also a function worth observing. We make small cots for each of the dead, decorate them and consume them to flame.

We also take brides and give brides to any in other village of our group.

Kota pottery
We also do pottery. We all go on a particular day of the year, 8 days after the Bokkapuram festival and go to a certain spot to collect clay - a type of clay available only in that spot. We carry them to our houses - only women carry them - and pound and treat them. Then we make pots out of it on the potters wheel and only those pots are used as containers for our temple.

Kota skills
Olden days they used to spin their own cloth called "tori mul". Pottery was a very important skill those days.

Habitation
This line of houses were built in 1930. It consists of 6 houses. We ourselves built these houses from scratch. There was no outside labour used at all, we went down to Bokkapuram and felled huge teak trees, dressed them into logs and carried them up. You saw our houses are all made and fine strong teak and huge sizes of plants.

Habitation
Old name of the village Padugundla Kotal. The whole village was built of straw houses. Temple site shifted in 1915 to new site.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 2.5

This is a Harijan village outside a Kota village, on the northern edge of the Nilgiri plateau. Oral history has it that they were the iron ore smelters who were sperad all the Salem and Coimbatore plains. Local people still believe that they came from these plains some time in history and since then stayed here. They are a small community and do have any direct contact with the plains. They distributed along with and nearby Kota villages. However among the seven Kota villages distributed over the landscape, only one other Kota village seem to have a Kattipariyar community. In the last few years they have received some benefits from the Administration in the form of house plots, allotment of agricultural land and housing.

Nilgiri Plateau
C.Rajakumar, Kattipariyar, Dhruvakkandi, Nilgiri Plateau.

Culture of Community
V. Nanjundan - Talaivar - official (Liaison)
S.C.Lakshmanan - Nattamai - Local Panchayat
K. Krishnan - Bhandari - Local Panchayat

Iron working
We were the original smelters of Iron. We were subjected to the Kottars. When the British came we were no longer under their subjection. The British stopped us from smelting.

Conflict with Badagas
1988 : They were collecting water from a small spring in Badaga lands - when the Badagas mixed "shit" with it to stop them from coming for water.

When I was 10 yrs old, ie., 50 years ago our whole township was burnt. Then we, eight of us joined together and bought 2 acres from the Badagas and built our township here.

Habitation
We were the one who had opened up the estate. The British were the ones who had opened the estate.

Personal profile
C. Rajakumar,
Sholur Dhruvakkandi,
Kokkar post,
Nilgiri - 643 005.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 4.2 26/03/91

Kannan was an employee of the fisheries department. He worked on the rout breeding farm in the western extremity of the Nilgiris. The trout farm itself was a historical event. The British wanting to cultivate recreational sport in the hills, interfered and introduced many exotic species specifically for sprot. One such act was an attempt to stock the streams of the Nilgiri plateau with trout like those of back home. This was to provide for fishing on the Nilgiri plateau. After careful attempts and many failures they finally succeded in establishing a rainbow trout hatchery at Avalnche. The staff of the hatchery was specialised and continued to serve at the hatchery for long years. Kannan was one employee who has seen and experienced the changing landscape of these western portions of the Nilgiri plateau. He talks about the vegetation changes and talks out with graphic detail the recreation sport of horse racing played out for the tonga transporters in Ooty, supervised by the European elite on the hills.

Nilgiri Plateau
M.R. Kannan, Employee, Avalanche, Nilgiri Plateau

Personal profile
M.R.Kannan, age 58 years: a fisheries worker at Avalanche.
I was working in Mettur, at a salary of Rs.35/-. Then they transferred me to Amaravathi. I was at Mettur for 6 to 7 years. At Amaravathi I was there for 2 years. Then Coimbatore, then Krishnagiri, then I was posted back to Mettur.

Vegetation; Plantations; Grasslands
Those days the whole area was grassland. Then there were forest sholas here and there. Many of them were cut down. Those forests would have a lot of dried trees. We would cut them. We would not cut green trees. We had to stock wood, especially, for the rainy season, otherwise we would suffer. It would be very cold. So during the rains we should be stocked with firewood. The wattle was a great help for fuelwood on the hills. The shola trees do not burn too easily and well. It would be very smoky. The wood would not burn properly. So the wattle was a great relief for our fuelwood. But surely the landscape before wattle came was very beautiful with the grass hills and long view. We could see layers and layer, ranges from ranges of grassland hills. So, if you look from a high position it would be very beautiful. Now, the view has gone. That view has now gone. All over there are Eucalyptus and Wattle trees. Even Pykara was full of grasslands before the plantations came. There is no place now on the hills where you can see the original vegetation. The whole area has been planted up in the last 30 years. After I came, the whole area has been slowly planted up. On the route from Ooty to Pykara there used to be beautiful grasslands. You could see from Talakundah to Mukurti peak. During the British period the place was called Wenlock downs.

The horse race
It was really grasslands. This was near about Sandywallah. They started planting the Sandynallah area with Eucalyptus. Earlier they used to have a race at Sandynallah. It was a horse race during season times. The track was strewn with stones, there would be ups and down on the track. It used to be a track of 7 to 8 kms. The remains of the track may still be visible. Also the Sandynallah dam has covered all that area. Even now, here and there, you could see the race track. All the horses of Ooty that are used to carry loads and pull carts; these used to be run in those races. All the horses would be decorated along with their carts and brought to Sandywallah. There would be a winning posts where the dorai's would be seated. About 10 to 12 horses would be run in these races. It used to be great fun. The horses are all load carrying horses, and are not race horses. About 20 horses would race. Some would stop in the middle of the track to graze. Some would slip and fall in the slush. The track would be wide enough. But running on the stone track, some horses would slip and the dorai on it would fall down. The jockey would fall, and by the time he gets up, the horse would have galloped away. I would go around thus. And by the time the horses go around the whole track, about 6 horses would reach the finish. It is great fun. Some of the dorais would get hurt; their shirts would tear etc. But they all would enjoy it. It used to be an annual affair during the tourist season. The winner would get money. There would be gambling too.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 4.3 01-04-1991

Plantation work on the Nilgiri plateau was a labour intensive ordeal. It involved committed people who manned and did the planting operations in remote and inhospitable locations. We meet one such person in Puttan, who is currently a forest watcher. His father had migrated from Karnataka into the Nilgiri plateau to work on the tea and coffee plantations. The family settled in the Nilgiri hills and their children had to find livelihoods on the plateau. Hectic construction activity followed by the expansion of forest plantations provided ample opportunity for livelihoods on the hills.

Puttan explains vividly the expansion of forest plantations, along with their trials and tribulations.

Nilgiri Plateau
Puttan, Forest Watcher, Korakundah, Nilgiri Plateau

Personal profile; Labour migration
Puttan, age 45, Forest Watcher at Korakundah nursery. Came to Nilgiris a generation ago. I was born in the Kaducuppa estate. My father came from Mysore and joined the Kora Kundah Estate during the British days. They came walking all the way from Mysore. They were all collected in Mysore and brought here during the British days. Those days, there was no road this side of Kundah. There was a jeepable road till Bengal mattam. Beyond that one had to walk and come. Kokathorai is the name of a place. That was built by the British. For this my father transported Iron, tin etc to this site. Then, there were 10/30 horses, and these would be driven to Kundah, and rice, dal etc would be transported. They would come by the Nammakal route short-cut to Kora Kundah and Kokathorai. Thus was the Korathorai rest house built. Now it is more that 60 years old, ie., 1930s. It is now with the forest department.

Plantation labour
My father thus came from Mysore along with 5 or 10 other people and joined the estate. In fact it was then that the estate was established with the help of this labour. Garret dorai was the manager then. He would send people from here and bring 5 or 10 people from Mysore to join the estate. There used to be no busses then from Mysore. So this place has a majority of people from Mysore.

Tea Estates
Thaishola, and this Kora Kundah was owned by the Brooke Bond Company. Gudalur, Devanshola, Thaishola, etc., totalling 32 estates including the Korakundah was owned by the Brooke Bond. The tea estates on the hills itself was started by Brooke Bond. And they were the ones who started the Korakundah estate too. We were here then, afterwards we moved to the Kadukuppe estate where I was born. That estate was owned by some Badagas, and they asked for some labour from here and so we were there. Again, Garret dorai came and asked my father to return here and join as the Head-maistry. So he came back here. Only after that was the rest house, roads and other things built.

Kora Kundah Estate
When they first came here, they did not plant tea first. First they laid out the trees all around the hills as a shelterbelt. They consisted of Eucalyptus, wattle, cher chavukku (pine?) etc., There used to be very strong winds then. Very strong winds accompanying rains. When the rains would stop, they would work a little, and when the rain increases, we would be indoors warming ourselves over a fire. Again, if the rain stopped for 1 or 2 hours, we would go out and work. Such was the work those days, protected by the whitemen and asked to work.

Climate; Frost; Kora Kundah Estate
After 15th December, there would be a lot of dew and frost. It would look as though it has snowed like in the Himalayas. Huge blocks of ice would lie on the ground. Now-a-days, there is not much of frost. When you walk over grass, you would go 'crunch-crunch', stepping on the ice. Those days we had no shoes or boots. The estate would provide gunny bags, and we would tie them on our legs, with rope and go walking over all the ice. In the morning, they would provide one glass of rum, like giving some medicine. So brandy or rum would be given, and only then, we would be taken out to work. Working thus slowly, we built this shelter belt that reduced the strong winds around here. The shelter belt was built all around the hills here. This estate is about 2,400 acres and now about 1,800 acres of tea is grown here, and the rest

is planted with wattle and blue gum forming shelter belts and other fuel wood plots. Then, slowly they started putting out tea plants. The tea plants, tea cuttings would come from Gudalur by jeep till Bengalmattam. Then they would be headload carried from there till here to be planted. Every year 1 or 2 hectares would be planted and slowly the tea estate grew. Then slowly 300 or 400 people joined the estates permanently as labourers. Then, there were a total of 500 people on this estate. Now, there are atleast 500 temporary staff itself. Those days for about 1000 hectare they have about 500 labourers. According to government rules at present, you should have atleast 3 persons per hectare of tea plantation. There is not even one person per hectare. Having one person for 2 hectare, he extracts double the work in this estate. Those days the wages were 2 and 1/2 annas in Brooke Bond Company.

For rations, there used to be one person called Appanna Chettiar, he still lives, his father is dead. He was the one who used to bring goods and keep a shop in this estate. The shop was situated below the current bakery. That building was the old shop. In that shop all rations including Brandy to be supplied to the labourers was available there. Just like the white man having food and brandy in the morning, the labourers were also supplied Brandy before being taken out to work. Otherwise, they may die of the cold and dew and frost. And those days there were no coats and boots for all of us. This was in the 1930's and 1940s, during which there was tremendous frost.

Korakundah Estate

In 1955, this Korakundah estate was with Brooke Bond. There was an Iyer who was the manager here. He showed the estate as a loss because of frost etc. He made a lot of money on the side. Showing the estate as a loss, the Slanes Co., brought it from Brooke Bond. It may have been bought for approximately Rs.10 lakhs. He came and cut and sold wattle improved tea etc and made a lot of money. Even now, everyday loads of bark are sold from this estate. One m3 of fuelwood costs Rs.200/-. Those days none would buy it even for Rs.50/- per m3. After, Srimurugan and Tan India, these two companies came up, there is a good price for wattle bark, Blue gum and wattle timber, yields a good price at Sirimurugan. You can by gold in the market but you cannot get the timber easily. Daily, the factory needs 50 loads of wood to keep the factory running. The machine is stopped only once in 3 years for maintenance for one month. So the machine does not stop for 3 years at a stretch.

Tea Estates

In 1955, so the Stanes bought this estates. Thaishola also has been sold but their tea is still sold in the name of Brooke Bond although there are many owners now. Thaishola, Gudalur, Devanshola etc 32 estates were bought up 3 years back by Tata. But, the name of the tea brand is still Brooke Bond, so that the sale is good. But for good quality tea, every year it is Korakundah that gets the trophy. The best tea in southern India is from here. They make the tea very well and send it to the Cochin market. At the market, there is a whiteman who grades the tea. He is paid some Rs.28,000/- pm. He drinks the tea and tastes it and books it to the foreign countries. He tests and certifies the tea from each estate. In that, every year a 'cup' is given to the best tea that is bagged by the Korakundah estate. The tea here is best because there is good care in this estate, and frost dries the tea plants. And when there is the first shower, all the bushes sprout and yield the best tea. And the climate at Korakundah is very healthy. If people have malaria or sick, if they come here and drink this water all their illnesses disappear. Upper Bhavani, Bison Swamp,etc have such good and clean water that you cannot get anywhere else. The water is good here too. The only problem is when you start getting used to the place, you could have some cold and feel uncomfortable. We have all got used to it.

The tea here is also made very carefully and properly; and the tea here tastes better because of the climate. Thus they get the first prize. If tea is sold at Rs.60/- per kg; at the Cochin market, the Korakundah tea sells at Rs.62/- or Rs. 63/- per kg in the market. Last year the Thaishola estate dust sold at Rs.60/- at the Cochin market. At Cochin, the price of each estate tea is decided and the companies are informed. And of the tea of a certain factory gets a better price, the Tea Maker in the factory gets an increment, and he would get some benefits. Because he has brought a good name for the company. So the Tea Maker is an important officer in the estate. He has a bungalow, a watchman, a gardner etc., He is like a manager. In this estate he is looked after well. He even suggests to the manager some changes.

Climate

Again in 1959, it rained so much. For three months, we could not see the sun. It was raining and raining. There is a Bungalow on the way to Upper Bhavani called Paye Bungalow. On the way to Pay Bungalow

from here, labourers who had come here to work on the dam scheme here; 13 persons died that year. It would be cold and freezing, and they would sit down here. They would then freeze and die. We have burried 13 dead bodies, where to dig trenches for them. Just put them by the side of the road and cover them with stones.

Climate; Water resources

The rains have changed a lot over the years. By March 15th this place would receive rains. We have a Kannada festival called Ugadhi. When this festival ends, that night which is an Amavyasa, or the next night rain should definitely fall. Even last year it rained on those days. After that by May 10 or 15th it would rain once. Then 15th or 20th May, it would rain often and on. Then by June, we need not mention, it would start to rain and rain continuously for about 10 days. This river would overflow three times in one season. It should overflow the bridge. That we consider a normal rainfall.

Climate; Swamps; Water resources

Those days, till Adi 18- the Adi is festival that comes in the month of July; these 3 months, there would be continuous rain, and by these 3 months, the 3 overflows would have occurred. Then the trees and plants and the ground would be so full of water that if you step on the grass in certain places, water would spring up. It would rise up from the ground. So there used to be good rain till Adi 18. After that 6 months if there is no rain, there is no fears. But even then rain would fall off and on. Those days to today, the rainfall is less that half of what it used to be . So rainfall is less and even dew and frost is less lasting only 10 days. The dew season is Dec and Jan. Then, we have only water dew, and no frost in Feb and Mar. But Dec, Jan will be full of frost on the ground and you have to walk with shoes on the ground. Those days we worked with gunny bags tied on our legs; and now even ordinary women do not go to the field without shoes and socks. Such is the climate of this place. Comparing the climate of the 1950s and 1990s, rainfall and dew has decreased tremendously. It has reduced by more that half. If there is a cause for it; from my experience;

I can say that the sholas have not been cut. It has never been cut here. But in the lower areas, sholas have been cut ie., in the Kotagiri area and the Gudalur area, sholas have been cut by the forest department for finding place for the Cylon repatriates. They came very early to the Gudalur Devanshola area where tea has been planted after destroying forests. As regards Nilgiris, sholas have not been destroyed. TANTEA. So I really do not know the reason why the climate and rainfall has changed. But rainfall has definitely decreased by more the half. For the past 10 years this has been the situation. Even dew and frost; Korakundah, Pykara and Avalanche used to have the greatest rain and frost recorded. Even in these places now-a-days there is little rain and frost and dew. The reason, I cannot say. But since pines has been put, ie., since 1962 when I planted Pinus here, (before that only wattle and bluegum was here, even blue gum is less these days) Pinus area has increased. Learned people say these plants draw water from a distance of 2/3 kms. So I do not know why?, but since we put pinus, the rainfall has decreased. It did not happen with Bluegum plantations. This is my experience. Pinus come up well here, but it has to be taken care off, and maintained according to the department rules which is not being done by the officers these days. The plantation must be fenced off the wild animals and cattle. Then planting must be done and protected from animals for 4 to 5 years, till the plant reaches 4 to 5 ft. Here they put up the fence after planting, but in between, the sambar go and graze in them; and if the tip of the pinus is bitter off the plant does not grow. This is my experience. The Pinus is also propagated by the seed in the nursery. After 19 days the seeds would sprout; and only after 3 months it is planted. Now, after the bags have come, they are kept in the nursery inbags for a further period of 6 months, and the roots have to reach the bottom of the bag, only then it is taken for planting.

I do not know the reason, but since 1960's rain and wind are decreasing year by year. The winds in 1959-60, during the months of May, June, and july many huge and big trees would simply be sheared off. Above the estate boundary, all those trees would be broken. We would wear 2 raincoats each. From the Ramaiah road; ie., the last boundary of this estate towards Upper Bhavani; to the Payee bunglow, the winds and rain would be so strong that both our raincoats would be wet. The wind would be piercing. These days, you can go to work with Rs.3/ Rs.4 plastic sheets that you get in the market. First, we would tie up a blanket, then some gunny bags, and then our raincoat; and still feel cold.

The picking season would start with the first rain. This year the season is a little dull because of no rains. And the picking would continue for 6 to 7 months continuously. Then again the picking would go down.

During peak it would be about 20,000 kgs or 30,000 kgs; then it would decrease to 5,000 kgs, and by December it would only be 4,000 kgs. It is only during season that he would make his money in the 6 to 7 months, harvesting some 10,000 kgs per day. When the first dew and frost falls in December, the picking would be reduced. Some of the plants in the valley would even be burnt by the frost. The higher tea bushes would not be affected. To avoid this he would put grass etc. on the tea. At the Thaishola estate, coconut palm thatch is bough from the plains and placed on the plants, and they would remove it before the first rains. Here, they cover the bushes with grass.

So, only you people have to study records and say why the rainfall has decreased. But rainfall has decreased and water in the streams have decreased. This stream opposite my house used to flow full.

Climate

In 1959 and 1960, there was excess rain and disasterous conditions. In 1959 it was very bad. We did not see the sun's rays for 90 days. The sun would shine slightly and again it would be overcast. It was in June-July. Those days there were rains for 6 months. I do not know, maybe it was 'Satyaniti' days. My father would say it would rain today, and it would rain. According to Kannada shastra on Amavyasa and festival days it would rain. They would definitely say and predict rain.

Heavy rainfall

The 1959 rain was heavy. There were some landslides in Upper Bhavani; and a lot of people died. At Avalanche, there were about 30 deaths. Here there were 13 deaths that I buried. I went to Manjur position. Manjur was included in our beat. The whole road from here to Manjur was blocked with huge stones on the road. You had to walk all the way. Then me and one Eddy, a military service forester went to the Manjur position. Eddy is now retired and stays at Coonoor. We went to Manjur and told them at the police station that there were 10-15 deaths on the road and requested him to come and see. The SI said "should I come by plane; I cannot take the jeep and come because the road is blocked; and I do not know the walking short cut to that place. So please take whatever valuables on the person that you can find and bury the body by the side of the road and carry on. Do not come here again to report". Eddy forester took cause with the SI and said "it was his duty to register the dead and our job was to look after the forests. So you should come and see- or please give your statement in writing." Then after 10-15 days the SI came with his jeep to inspect. By which time, we had buried the dead. Again he requested us not to call him because he was not used to the cold himself, and to dispose off the bodies ourselves, that year I buried about 15 bodies.

After that near the Paye bungalow, there is a tea shop. A Nair person had a tea shop there. He used to say, if the rains stop, you go out and work. If rain is in excess do not go out and die. Monthly once, rice bags, kerosene, jaggery, beedies, matchbox; all would be brought and stocked there for all of us. If there was no rain, we would work. On rainy days, we would put fire and warm ourselves. Even then, a lot of people would be bitten by the cold. And he would bring them by bike to Korakundah to send them for treatment.

Climate; Tea Estates

After 1960, there has not been such heavy rains. In 1972 also there was rain, but not as much as the 1959 rains. In the 1972 rains the estate worked everyday except for 2/3 days. In 1959, 10/15 days work was stopped. Even then the estate would work till 1 pm noon. Nearby at many places in the fields, he would have died and firewood bunks, and the workers, as soon as their hands freeze, would go and warm themselves on the fire. Then again they would go and work for one or two hours. In such a way he worked, because he couldn't let the leaf plucking season go. He has to do pickings in cycles of 15 days, or the leaves would mature and go coarse. So he would make arrangements for plucking. That is not the way our FD works. The estate looks after its labourers very well. Now about 600 to 700 labourers are there in Kora kundah estate. Now they have a tea factory here itself. And if leaf is in excess, they would send it to Chamaraj estate factory. Here there are 3 to 4 beds in the factory. He would keep leaves for these 3/4 beds only, and if leaf is in excess, he sends it off to Chamaraj.

Hydro-electric dam Construction

The dam construction and survey was started in 1955. I have gone for the survey. Nari AE was the AE during survey. Now he is the EE in the EB. He was the one who started the survey. He had a bungalow in the estate from where he conducted his survey. From the last boundary of the estate, there was a

whiteman called Hoara; he was the contractor. We were the estate labour who cut the road, and the road to the IB and to the dam at Upper Bhavani. Estate people were the ones who had taken contract for road labour. It was started in 1955 and by 1960, the foundation work to the dam had started. All the construction material was then transported by this route via Kundah. During that time the Ernaland scheme was also progressing and they laid the other road Avalanche to Upper Bhavani later. From the Avalanche rest house to the Ramaiah road junction on the Kundah, Upper Bhavani road was cut later. The EB laid that road. After that the main supply route for construction material was the Avalanche route. This route via Kundah was very small. So the other road was used to move large materials. The estate did not allow the tea plants to be destroyed to broaden the road. So the EB resorted to the other road. During the dam construction, there must have been 8000 labourers over there. Many came for Salem, Madurai, Tiruchi, etc. Karuppanna Pillai was a big contractor; he did not have his right hand, must have been some accident. He had 3000 people with him. He used to make payments to his labour every Sunday. I do not know where he kept all his money. Then there were many small and petty contractors. Karuppanna Pillai was the main contractor. He had 6 to 7 lorries even during those days. 7 lorries were used to transport sand, cement, etc., all being transported from Mettupalyam. The lorries had to return to Mettupalyam by the evening. All the sand for the construction had to come from Mettupalyam. There is no sand available on the hills. Even now, sand has to come from Mettupalyam. Even Bricks have to come from Mettupalyam. Now they do take at Ooty and Manjur, but those days all had to come from Mettupalyam.

All the 8000 people were housed in the EB sheds around here. That side of the dam, the FD too had some quarters. That whole area by the side of the road was a big market. It was a huge market. All the labour have left the place after the dam construction finished. They have all gone down.

I have gone for the initial dam survey and the sholas are as they were when we went for the survey. No sholas have been destroyed by the department.

Dam construction

The Varahapallam Dam, West and East was started in 1964. For the labourers of dam construction this was the market for provisions, tea, a hotel, vegetables, etc. All the labourers would come here by the evening. At the dam, there were one or two hotels. Those were small dams. They finished it in 2 years time. After the Upper Bhavani scheme finished, all the labour was brought here and quickly finished both the dams. After this, some of the labourers went to Gudalur saying there was some dam there to be built. But till date that dam, money has not been sanctioned and built. All this was built during the Congress rule, during Bhaktavatsalam period. He had come here along with our conservator Andiappa Nadar and were staying at the Upper Bhavani IB. The old IB that was beside the shola. That was in 1960s.

Vegetation

I can definitely say that the sholas are as they were years ago. The department has not destroyed any shola in the area. Not one shola tree was cut. All the planting that was done was on the grasslands only. Wattle, Bluegum, pines all that never existed before. There was some shola trees cut for fuelwood by the labourers. The EB houses were supplied with current for all their heating and cooking. The labourers alone, about 4000 to 5000 people used woodfuel. The EB people, staff, engineers, supervisors, maistry, contractors etc were given current supplies.

Wildlife; Vegetation

From Korakundah, the whole area used to be grasslands, white grasslands of 1ft high. There would a lot of sambar in this area. There were not many tigers and leopards. Elephants are here only for the past 10-12 years. Earlier, there were no elephants ind this area. There was mno fear of elephants anywhere. We could even sleep in the forest. In the lower plateau, the Irulas, because the elephants were raiding their crops, used to set fire, and burst crackers to scare away the elephants. They just got used to climbing up on to these hills. And here there is a lot of food available in the form of Ochlandra, that they prefer. Now-a-days, even Ochlandra has decreased in these parts. There are some on the fringes of the shola, today. Earlier, there used to be a lot of Ochlandra. The elephants have come and broken and eaten them, then they have decreased.

By 1965, there were a few tigers sighted here. There were a lot of Nilgiri Tahr. Above the West Varahapllam Dam there is a rocky outcrop and an estate- an estate of tea on the Kerala border, done by the Manjur Badagas- in that area if you go around 3 pm, you can see 50-60 Tahr.

Shikar

Those days a lot of licenses used to be given for shooting. The hunting gangs would come regularly for camping for one or two nights. Some would come by car or jeep. Then, there used to be a bungalow called the Billikadavu bungalow, it has gone below the waters of the Upper Bhavani dam. It was a very old bungalow. It was built along with the Kokathorai hunt building. It was built all at the same time by the whiteman, who used to come for tront fishing, hunting etc. They would stay at these bungalows for 8 to 10 days. They would come often. Now, of course all that has stopped. Now, everybody, the Badagas, the Jamindars etc, all of them have got guns, and licenses, and they all hunt. Earlier, only the whiteman used to hunt. They would hunt Sambar, Wild Boars, Jungle Fowl, Rabbits, Tahr etc. Rabbits used to be plenty then, but they do not seem to be around these days. Tahr, they used to hunt. In the estate there used to be a manager called Horan. He would kill one Tahr every week. He even has those trophic put up in the Kora kundah bungalow; in the managers bungalow. He had an all India hunting license in those days. There are 2/3 trophies in the bungalow now. He used to hunt all over, in Mysore, Kerala and Tamilnadu. Those days itself he was drawing a salary of Rs.3000/-pm. He was the Group Manager of the Slanes Group of Estates.

Forest Plantations

Now, the Bison Swamp area, Wincent dorai, had put a lot of blue gum saplings. He had put these in the 1940s itself. That provided some fuelwood. I have worked with Wincent dorai. He was the one who acquired the Bison Swamp Land. It is 15 hectares. Other than that there is 15 hectares of revenue land in that area, adjoining it. When the lease was cancelled last month, our DFO had suggested that he would give the land to them (the FD workers) and they could stay there planting tea or something. Our 1 to 15 families going and staying in that remote area among elephant forests, what can we do, so we refused to go.

In 1958, there was a DFO called Chokkalingam. Andiappandar was the Conservators. The DFO, suggested in 1955 to Nachimuttu that we should plant some wattle in the area. Nachimuthu Gownder, was a person whose native place was Telunga palyam near Coimbatore. He was a rich man. His father in those days itself was a railway and road contractor. He had road and rail contract from Coimbatore to Madras. He had 30 town busess plying. He was a rich man. He planted 500 acres in Avalanche-Wattle. That was the first plantation in this area. It was a sample and trial plot. In all the 500 acres, Wattle came up very well. It was a 100% survival and success. Then Andiappandar presented a cup to Nachimuthu. After that initial success, a nursery was started at Avalanche for Wattle. In 1955 they planted and by 1956-57, wattle had come up very well. Immediately from 1958, the Korakundah planting was ordered. Before that, from this junction getting into the valley, all the hills around were grasslands. Over a 1000 ha, Bison Swamp area, Lakkadi area, 10 to 15000 hectares all were empty. Then in 1958, we started a nursery here at Korakundah. That area is even now called the '58 line, where labours lines were built and a nursery raised. That was the year when Chokkalingam took over. He has just retired. 1,040 acres were planted that year 1958. It was the area from here till the West Varahapallam Dam. The first block was of 1040 acres. In 2 years the trees had come up very well. They put wattle because there was a lot of money and profit in it. Those days itself the going rate for bark was Rs.800/- to Rs. 1000/- per ton. The bark used to be sold to the Bhais at Mettupalyam. Now the rate is Rs.2500/- per ton.

When Andiappandar the conservator came and sampled the plantation, in a 10 x 10 plot for dried samplings; none had died. 100% success. First the bed in prepared in the nursery. The bed would be fertilized with cow dung those days and now urea is used. The bed is then allowed to dry. The bed is made very fine. The wattle seeds are put into hot water and boiled. Then the seeds are cast out and dried and cooled. The seeds would be sticky, so some sand and fine silt is mixed with the seeds, and the seed pellets broadcast on the bed. Then the bed is closed up with some leaf mulch. On the 19th day, the seeds would sprout up. Then after the seeds have sprouted, the leaf cover of the bed is removed. Then a pandal of about 1-1/2 ft is built above the bed. Then daily in the morning at 6 am the plants should be watered. In 1-1/2 months, the seedlings come up to 1-1/2" to 2". The saplings are uprooted, and moss is removed from the sholas, mixed with some soil and then with some leaf and fibre tied up and stacked in on the bed. A bed would have 6000 to 7000 samplings. The bed would be watered everyday for 4 to 5

people. After another 1 or 2/3 months, the saplings would be 1-1/2" ft or 2 ft. These are taken to the forests. Pits are dug in the forest of 1ft deep; and some cowdung or urea is put in the pits and the wattle samplings are put out. By May 1st the planting season would begin, after the first rains. This hear there has been no rain. Otherwise, it should rain by the 15th April itself. After the first rains; planting starts. Then automatically in June and July there is plentiful of rain. The planting was first done at 4ft c/c for wattle. Blue gum was planted at 1-1/2' c/c. Now, the department rules is 2m c/c for blue gum, pines wattle. For the past 2 years this has been the practice.

If we plant wattle over in an area that is enough. Earlier they used to say, the age to maturity of a wattle tree is 10 years. The wattle can be cut in 8-10 years time and harvested. No thinning is done during the 1st planting. At 4m c/c they grow nice and tall like coconut trees. After 10 years, the wattle is cut, and the bark and wood is taken. The plot is then set fire to, as it is. Because of the fire and heat, all the seeds of wattle germinate. There is very luxuriant regeneration after fire. Only then thinning is done, leaving the bigger trees and removing the smaller saplings. The trees left would grow to maturity. Thinning is done 3 years after setting fire. According to departmental rules 2 thinnings are to be done. But now only one thinning is done these days. These are adjustments in the government department- of funds etc. But even now, the rules say 2 thinnings are to be performed. Now the current DFO has been insisting that 2 thinnings are to be done. We have never done thinnings till date.

First plantation was at Avalanche- 500 ha. Then the Korakundah area. Nilgiri those days was one division, with one DFO and one ACFO, and only one office. When planting started, it was divided into 3 parts. It was divided into 3 ranges. Ooty was number1; Avalanche was Number2; Korakundah was Number3.

Ooty No. 1 was Naduvattam, Pykara, Parsons valley, Porthimund, Mukurthi. Avalanche No. 2, was Lakkadi top, Korakundah range was No.3, this side. First planting was in 1955 at Avalanche. Then, it was Korakundah, then planting was started in the No. 1 range. It was all within 6 months that planting had started in full scale all over. The place was divided into 3 ranges thus. But the planting was done only on the grasslands. The sholas never were destroyed. The little plants 'Kotagiri malar' etc that had grown, were burn't off and planted. No shola was destroyed. If the sholas were destroyed, Chokkalingam DFO, would say, there would be no water and rain, and the plantation would not succeed, so the sholas were ordered no to be destroyed. One or two of the sholas may have been destroyed inadvercently. Especially in the upper Bhavani side, fuel wood was scarce.

People would of course, cut sholas there; the labourers who had come for the scheme. We would fine some of them, and they would pay up. There was no other go for their fuelwood to cook their food. The contractor used to hold pay Re.1/- per week to pay as fine for the FD for fuel cuttings. So some of this collection will be shown as fine to the FD. If an officer came and enquired about cut trees, he would be shown the case recorded and the fine paid, so some of these would be recorded. If in a place 10 trees are cut, 5 trees cut would be registered and fine extracted.

Forest Plantations; Personal profile

I joined the FD in 1958, in the 3rd month on the 5th day. It was Chokkalingam DFO who gave the order, as a nursery watcher- for watering the plants. It was at this same place. They were just beginning planting. Those days my salary was Re.1-1/2 ie., Rs.45/- pm. When they were giving Rs.45/- I could save Rs.10/-. Now, even if I get Rs.1,800/- or Rs. 2,000/- it is not enough. Since then I have been here, but for 1 year when they transferred me to the Porthimund range. I have gone to the top of Mukurthi amman temple and planted. We had to go by boat. A lot of those plantations there are a failure. Because, the soil is too thin and below, there is hard rock. So the roots do not go down. Upper Bhavani, Beyond Bison Swamp, planting has been a failure. Similarly, Emerald side has been a failure. Parson's valley side near Mukurthi is also a failure. All this is because of rocky soils.

Forest Plantations

Those days, were used to be paid, Rs.12/- for 1,000 pits. Now, they pay Rs.80/- for 1,000 pits. This is for digging 1 foot pits. Those days the work used to be well done. 3ft deep was a pit. We put the fork and remove the soil to the side. Then again we will put the fork and loosen the soil in the pit. Then, we would put some fertilizer and break the soil and leave it. May 1st, after the first rains, planting would start. Before that all this preparation must be done.

Those days it used to be 3 ft c/c; now it is 2m c/c. So we have 600 pits in one acre these days. Earlier, it used to be 3,000 pits per acre. Now all of it is Pinus. This year, we have raised some blue gum and wattle to be planted. Also, there are no suitable areas for plantations. Only 0.5 ha or 0.25 ha here and there along stream beds etc, is available for planting. In places where planting has been a failure, we continue to plant. If we put 1000 saplings about 200 or 500 would come up. Planting is not what it was like earlier.

Forest Department

Now, in the FD there are of course well-trained officers. But the work and enthusiasm is not the same as it used to be earlier. Now, everybody in the department wants to become an officer, and no body goes to field. We used to tour a lot those days in the forests. In 1959,'60,'61,'62,'63 planting was going on that side of the river, across the Upper Bhavani dam. Those days the dam was being constructed. We would leave this place at 7 am and by the time the 8 am wistle goes at Upper Bhavani, I would be there by 8.30am. I would be in the forest. All this where I say now in the musterline. This was built in 1962- Govindaraj, a range officer built this. Now, he became an ACF and DFO, now posted in Rubber. Govindaraju, Thyagarajan. Those days Wilson was the DFO who died in a car accident last year in Madras. He was the DFO after Chokkalingam DFO. Then there was Dorairaj DFO who became a conservator and retired. He and his brother were in the FD. Subbaraja Naidu, etc were the officers of those days. On days of inspection, they would wear their raincoats and walk through each area even in the rains. Those days, there were no roads here. The road would stop at our office up there, and walk. We would cook food and carry it. Lunch would be in the forest. Again at 3 pm we would have tea. Till 5/30pm we would be in the forest and return. Those officers would work hard thus. Now DFO comes to inspect planting in his jeep till the side and does not even get down from his jeep. He signs the book and returns. Today no one really works hard. Everyone looks after their own interests and none work for the welfare of the department.

Fire

Fire has been an occurrence here from a long time. Fire would not occur on its own, because there is no bamboo here, lower down they say, the bamboo would rub on each other and cause fire, but here such fires cannot be caused. The cause of the fire is human here. The Todas here have 300 to 400 buffaloes each. They drive their buffaloes down towards Avalanche and stay there for 6/7 months. They they would come here during Jan, and stay till March/April. In the month of May they would go down towards Avalanche, Ooty, Governor shola etc. They have their own houses there. During the dry season alone they would come here and stay. They are the ones who set fire to the grasses so that their buffaloes can have good fodder. If they set fire, immediately after one rain, all the grass would come up green and tender. I know of annual fires in this area. From 1958 onwards. From the bottom in Attappadi of Kerala, the Irulas would start fires and they would spread into here. We used to stop such fires earlier, by cutting firelines of 12 feet width. Then we would give counter fire and stop the fire from crossing the borders. Now, such firelines are not cut. Earlier for every 200 acres there would be a fireline, so that only 200 acres blocks would burn fever, such were the works of the department, working with interest. Now, nothing is being done for the past 10 years. Every year there would definitely be fire here. Every now-and- then the Irulas would come for hunting and they too would set fire at night. They would rest at camp light a fire and that fire would inadvertently spread.

Irulas

Irulas are here about 10kms away at the Kerala border in Attappadi- EdaBhavani; Dodda Bhavani, etc., there are about 10-30 villages there. You can go to Coimbatore from there. From there they would bring chicken, avarai, tunari, etc here for sale. They have been coming here to sell their produce from the time I was a child. Now, of course, the govt. has given them land, trees etc.

Forests of Attapadi

Those forests are steadily being destroyed. There is a lot of teak, rosewood is plenty and all that has been cut and sold. Irulas cut these trees, headload them here and sell them. Even last month about 3 lakhs or 4 lakhs of felled timber has been confiscated from Attappadi- at some small village near Kotta thorai. It was all rosewood. Here there is no felling because the department is strict. At Naduvattam there is rosewood in Nilgiris. But from Kerala they bring these timbers fashioned into beams for cots etc. One man carries 1 ft or 0.75 ft sizes it and brings it here for sale. A lot of such timber come towards the Kinnakorai side. From Kinnakorai you can go to Mulli and have to go through the Yanaikatti check post of

Kerala-Tamil nadu border. I have gone around these areas a lot. It is a four-hour walk down the hill. From there one had to catch a lorry those days to Coimbatore. Now, of course busses run.

Communications

The bussess come to Korakundah from the 1940s onwards. There used to be a busses of a private owner coming here. Earlier, it was a small road. Not the Manjur road, but the lower road from the Kundah dam, via the power office to here. That was the old road. After the dam was completed at Kundah, the town was shifted to the top at Manjur. Only after than the Manjur road was laid. NMT was the company. There was one CTC Gundan who stood for elections and lost. In those days itself he had 40-50 busess. It was a Ford-petrol vehicle with 30/35 seats. He would carry 50/100 passengers and come from Ooty to here. Again, he would leave Ooty at 2.30 pm and come here at 5.30 pm. Those days, kundah was the main centre and post office for this place. All the mail would come from Kundah to this estate manager and he would redistribute them. Then slowly the post office and the telephone came to this town.

Communications

MCC sons was a bus service operated from Mettupalyam to Korakundah. It would come here at 12.30 pm and leave Korakundah at 1 pm, and reach mettupalayam in the evening 6 pm. In the morning it would see the Coimbatore mail and leave Mettupalayam. Those days the busses here were MCC, NMT, Rajalakshmi, Rajalakshmi operating towards Mysore. All these especially Rajalakshmi and NMT were very good and efficient, and punctual. Rajalakshmi had an office at Ooty, Mysore and Gudalur. Similarly NMT. MCC was not so good.

Only after that, during the Karunanidhi period only these busses were taken off and Cheran transport took over with 40 buses and gave the managerial job to the NMT staff. NMT was the one with more number of busess.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 4.4 02-04-1991

Nilgiri Plateau
Madha Gowder, Badagar, Melkundah, Nilgiri Plateau

Personal profile
Madha Gowder, age 70 years; resident of Melkundah village; Ex- manigar of the village, Ex-Chairman of India Tea Factory of Manjur.

Climate
Those days the rains were much better. In one year, during the south-west monsoonal fury; about 20 buffaloes that were huge and forest lived died in the rain. That was many years ago, in my childhood. During my childhood, we had 40 to 50 buffaloes, and all my father's five brother stayed together. In one days rains of the South-West monsoon, 20 buffaloes died. They died then and there. Such were the rains. Now-a-days there are no such rains.

Agriculture; Landuse
Those days the main stay of the people here was agriculture; wheat, ragi, samai. That was during very ancient days. After that we were growing some potatoes. Now-a-days, none of that agriculture survives or exists. Everybody has put tea. Agriculture is not economical. It is not economic because the rains are not reliable. So we have all put tea. It has been over 50 years since we planted tea in this area. There was little of tea here and there. Now, we have improved and a lot of people have planted tea. Those days coffee as an estate crop was more predominant. There was no tea. There were small estates of 1 acre, 2 acre of coffee. Now, there is no coffee, Coffee is an yearly crop. While the crop blossoms, in March- April there should be rain- and good and heavy rain. Only then the coffee crop would be good. Otherwise there would be no yield. So about 20 years ago, when these spring rains became unpredictable all the coffee was destroyed. There is another reason for destroying coffee. Coffee needs shade trees- usually silver Oak is planted- Cypress. The Silver Oak has been sold by everybody for a good price. Again to put shade trees on the coffee was not easy. So they unrooted the coffee and put tea instead. Tea also requires shade, but not that much as coffee. The samai, Avarai, traditional crops have been discontinued over 15 years ago. It has completely stopped. Only some people put a little of these for their own consumption. The grain Pappari that is there on the hills is grown on the Merkunad side; not here.

Traditional Regions of the plateau; Badagas
Merkunad side is Ittalar, Nananad etc. This area is called Kundah Poranganad is Kotagiri side; and Todanad is Tuneri side. These are the four 'seema' of the Nilgiris. This was the method of ordering in the Nilgiris earlier. I am the Parpatti or community leader of the Kundah seema. We have four community leaders in our district, one for Merkanadu, one for Tadanadu, one for Poranganadu, and I am the leader for Kundahnadu. We call these community leaders 'Parpatti'. We cannot say when we came to Kundah nadu and settled, but may be 400 years ago we came and settled here. People say we came from Karnataka 800 years ago.

Badaga settlements
Melkundah is the main village in the Kundahs nadu. The next is Kil kundah. In Merkunad Ketti is the main village. In Perunganad the main village is Tanganadu. In Todanad, the main village there is Tummanahatti.

Kundah
Kundah is a name common in this area Kora Kundah, Kil Kundah, Mel Kundah, Kundahpallam; Talakundah near Ooty. So Kundah is a common name here. Because we are above, we are called Melkundah, lower down there is a hatti with 200 houses. It is called Kil Kundah, Kundah is the name of a tree that was common here Kundah tree that has beautiful flowers. Even now there are kundah trees all over here. It has white and beautiful flowers. It bears flowers in April. That is the time our forefathers used to saw the grain seeds of samai etc. They would observe the flowering of this kundah tree and then sow seeds. So the Kundah tree became famous here.

Badaga tradition

Erodiya, Hiriya and Odaiya - Erodiya or Hirodiya is a temple dedicated to our forefathers. Hiriya means big, Odaiya means protector that is the derived meaning. Erodiya also means forefathers.

Badagal

But our traditional history is that we came from Mysore about 400 years ago. We came and settled all over the plateau in all the four nadus of the Nilgiris. But if you look at the population of Badagas today, we are most in Perunganad ie., Kotagiri area. Then the 2nd comes Todanad, Tuneri firka; 3rd Merkanad and the 4th is Kundahnad. In Kundah, the population is less. There are about 36 hattis, villages in Kundah. Other areas would have 100 to 150 villages each. In total we have 400 hamlets in the district. In Merkanad there are all Gownders. The Lingayat Badagas are in Katteri side. The Wodayers are near Ooty at a place called Wadaiyar hatti it is above Ketti. The Toreyars are at Melur Hossetti, that side of Kaikatti (finger post), they are also there in the Kotagiri area. That is their main concentration. We do not intermarry, although all of us are called Badagas. All these castes practice agriculture. The Toreyars are lower castes, but they too do agriculture. But we not descriminate against them. Of course, we do not intermarry with then. The Gownders are an endogamous group. And the Merkanad Gowders, and the Gownders of all other nadus are our mama-machchan. If there is a Merkunad family in this hatti in Kunda, we would marry, but we do not marry within the Kundah Gownders themselves. Similarly all other nadus. We would pick brides from the other three nadus. Similarly the other nad people. I am the traditional community leader of Kundahnad. It is hereditary. In 1961 my father died. Then I became the Parpatti and the village munsif.

New settlements; Immigrants

Doddakombai is a new village here. It is full of recent settlers. All the surrounding villages own land at Doddakombai. There was a school at Doddkombai which my father had built. It was the centre for Mullimallai, Keechihatti, Kerappadu and Melkundah and so the school was situated there. We all studied there. Then recently, we built an elementary school here itself in this village itself. The village now consists mainly of people who have come from outside and settled there. They came as workers many years ago; some of them have their own pattas, and many have settled there working for a livelihood in the estates around here. When I was a student in that school at Doddakombai, there were no houses there. It must be about 40 years since the village was established. None of our people live there. People have come from all over and settled there. People from Ceylon; people from Tamilnadu plains, Harijans; Kalkattis, stone masons; etc; many people have come and settled here. They have not built on our patta lands. They have settled in government revenue lands. The government infact allotted their revenue land to them to build houses, about 10 years ago. Only after that they have built houses.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 4.5 02-04-1991

Nilgiri Plateau
Nandiram, Badagar, Melur, Nilgiri Plateau

Personal profile
Nandiram of Melur age 65, Oral History recorded at Manjur.

Vegetation
I know the changes in this area for the last 48 years. I have lived in the estate. I have lived close to nature and all that has been destroyed to my full knowledge.

Vegetation; Water resources
During British times itself; he never touched the forests from where waters flowed. The streams thus were peruvial. When we got pattas and estate lands from the British, on both sides of a stream to a width of 15 ft or 20ft were left aside as forests and none could touch it. Ownership rights and patta stones were all above the 10-15 ft streamside forests. Even small streams and little odais had protected forests on either side of them. So there was always moisture in the streams and there would be a trickle of water. The water would never dry up. Such was nature those days. Then after independence, all those people who had difficult, and had no land would come and build houses on those streamside forests. They would do some agriculture there and thus those forests got destroyed.

Personal profile; Vegetation
About 20 years ago, my son-in-law was a student of Engineering doing his Phd in Bangalore, IIsc. He is now in Malaysia. Now, when we used to go to Bangalore; the route from Ooty to Gudalur and to the Mysore State border was full of forests and was receiving a lot of rain. There were thick forests at Gudalur. At Gudalur there was only one coffee shop. Other then that, at certain placers here and there, there would be some Adivasi hamlets. As far as I know this was the situation then. Now, when you go that side the whole thing is a desert . There are no trees there, no greenery there; there are no thick forests there.

Rainfall
We have here what is called 'Kodamazhai'. That rain comes from Kerala and Gudalur side. There, it would rain a lot. A little of that rain would spill over to Kundah and Melur. Now there is no such rain. Kodamazhai usually comes during June- July. During my childhood, we cannot describe; 2 months of continuous and heavy rain or 3 months of continuous rain. Before the Kundah dam scheme, our village is about 7 to 8 miles from this place along the Kundah river. When we sit near our temple, we can hear the huge sound of the river flowing and then we infer that it has rained in this area. Such was the streams here.

Rainfall
Earlier, there used to 7/8 months frequent rains. And there used to be a lot of mushrooms all over that could be collected. It was available year around. I would pick up these once every month. Good, non-poisonous mushrooms, some are poisonous. These were available in plenty in nature. This has been consumed traditionally for a long time.

Vegetation; Plantations
The dam construction people did not destroy any of the forests. They did not do much here. Here there was a lot of natural streams. The forest department made a lot of money by planting Eucalyptus and wattle and cutting the whole thing down in 10 years. The government was doing this plantation business. They have been doing it approximately for more than 20 years. They have taken 3/4 crops so must he much more than 20 years.

Vegetation; Wildlife; Water resources
Nature here was; small-small thick forests here and there. And the rest was natural grasslands. And these grasslands had a lot of water, and it had good fodder for grazing of sambar, buffaloes, cattle, bisons etc. When it rains, the water in the streams would be perennial. Now, these forests have been destroyed and planted all over the grasslands, and thus the streams have gone dry.

Wildlife

There was some talk about an animal coming and killing an old lady near Melur, a panther they said it was I do not know how true that is we never had anything about it after that. There are no wild animals around today. There are neither forests, nor food and prey for the wild animals. These wild boar there would be 30/40 in one herd; and there would be many herds. Now, because the forests are all destroyed, they have been destroyed too.

Immigrants

The settlers have increased here only after the agreement between Lal Bahadur Shasti and Ceylon. So, a lot of Ceylon people came here and here there was a lot of natural water, land and work was available. If near the village they could get work. They could work in the estates here. Then there was a lot of money in cutting these forest plantations and selling them. So even if coolie work was not available, he could steal a tree from the forest and sell it. There was none to ask them questions. That is how the whole of Gudalur was destroyed. The whole area was destroyed through illegal fellings. Even the revenue department was scared to go and check their activity. It was said that these Ceylon people were lawless and they would kill people. There was plenty of opportunity for them here. In the plains they would not be allowed to cut trees as they liked and indulge in other illegal activities. Here they could do as they liked. You cannot do anything to them- because they were many. The government has not given any patta lands to them, but in the revenue lands called forests they could settle down. In Gudalur they have destroyed the whole area. I do not know the reason for it. Was it RF, was it Janmi lands? They destroyed all these natural forest lands. In addition, these settlers encroached large areas, and can't be evicted.

Agriculture; Land use; Tea

Our agriculture has also changed drastically. Before my childhood, they used to say, agriculture was very poor and bad. That was because there was no fertilizer available and so a lot of land could not be brought under agriculture. Buffaloes and cattle here were natural and were well-adapted to the area. People used to husband cattle and buffaloes here. Using the dung of these animals as fertilizer agriculture used to be practiced. We used to grow ragi, wheat, ganji, greens etc etc; Amaranthus; which has white seeds and is very nutritious. We would soak it in milk and have it. It used to be very tasty. I myself have eaten it for 20-30 years of my life. Avarai varieties were also grown; there were many varieties of them. So for us with our milk and these grain, we were happy and prosperous. We did not know anything about rice and paddy. Paddy does not grow here. It grows on the border, at Gudalur and Mettupalayam. Now of course, we grow them at Tengumarada. Now, the whole area is full of Tea. And if we had not planted Tea, the Nilgiri would not be there and we would have gone somewhere far away as immigrants. For our agriculture, we did potato cultivation some time back. And if we did agriculture in those areas where we had planted potato, the yield would be good. We were growing a lot of potato earlier. Now, if we want to plant potato, we have to use a lot of fertilizer. Only since 1930, fertilizer came to the Nilgiris- thats what people say. I must have been 4/5 years old then. After fertilizer came, there was a big boost to agricultural production. It was virgin land- natural lands. A little fertilizer would do boost agriculture. The Amaranthus in our fields would grow to 8 to 10 ft; and its earl would be 3 feet tall. I have harvested such crop. Such was the bountiful nature in the Nilgiris. That was just after chemical fertilizers came her. Before that, yield was not so good we only used cow-dung manure for our fields. With that we did some agriculture. But our mainstay was milk and milk products. And we adjusted and lived on these. Those days the population was also little.

After that potato was the main crop, and we grew a lot of potato. Then, about 20/25 years ago when the potato was growing well on the hills, and large areas were under potato, a disease called leaf blithe struck the potato crop. That disease wiped out the potato crop. The Indo-German project people came and tried all they could, but potato never grew like it used to. Infact potato was wiped out. The agriculturists all got into a lot of debt. If we plant potatoes, it requires a lot of capital investment. Fertilizer, agricultural implements, labour, etc etc., costs a lot money. And after all this if the crop fails, there would-be serious losses. If the crop is good, we could make money; but if the crop fails, we are done for.

Tea plantations

Then, in the Kundah area and in some other villages like Melur village area we first planted Tea. Since we put tea sampling here, humans are surviving in this area. We are living here only because of the Tea. We can say this for the whole of the Nilgiris. Ooty area completely has been planted with Tea. Tea has

been the saviour of the whole of the Nilgiris. Especially, after research they have developed and discovered a close variety we call 'virya' samplings. This was discovered in Ceylon 50 to 60 years ago. It came to the Nilgiris 10/15/20 years ago only. This researched tea plant is the one that has grown and naturalized all over the Nilgiris. So it is Tea that has made us live like humans. In the Ooty area, coffee does not grow, earlier there used to be nothing there. Now tea has spread all over. Tea can grow anywhere. Especially the 'viryanathu'. There was coffee here earlier, but all the coffee has been destroyed by disease; and by loss of rain. For coffee herries, we need a lot of rain. Many other varieties like orange trees, etc., all have been destroyed because of loss of rain. So all that has been destroyed. In my days, there used to be a lot of Kamala orange. There were two types of orange- Kodaga orange and Kamala orange. In our estate there was one tree that used to yield more or less 10,000 fruits. Such was a tree and such were the fruits. Last time, I went to Malaysia 3 years ago. There American advertisement, one fruit was opened and displayed for juice. The colour of this is red. My daughter is there. She knows the tree in our estate. She looked at it and commented that it was costly here, but in our farm, we did not even have people to eat the fruit. And now none of the trees exist here. Because of lack of rain the whole thing has been destroyed. So because of this tea we are surviving like humans on the Nilgiris. If this Tea is gone, we cannot do anything here. There is no means to do natural and traditional agriculture because of inadequate rains. This is an area that is completely depended upon the skies and clouds for its survival. So, if there is no rains the whole place is gone. Now, there is also a great increase in population in this area and there would be no natural areas at all, and no nature at all. A lot of settlers have come in here. But there is no point in blaming the people. If you go to other parts of the world, Malaysia etc., you have to pay for wood to be removed from your land. And here, for a small piece of firewood, imagine the costs. Such is the situation here. The government has not acted at all here in providing basic necessities. If there is gas supply or other cooking fuel supply to every homes, why would he cut forests, and destroy nature. The human population has increased tremendously. Now because there is tea, the place looks a little green, and this has not done bad to the area. So the place is prosperous.

I have carefully looked at the situation around and analysed it, so I know what is happening. When I was young I worked in the estates and tried to understand the situation. This tea is like a divinity to us today; and that too the newly developed 'viryanathu'. Near Ooty side the old tea that is propagated by seed would not grow. It would die before it comes to maturity. This new 'virya nathu' comes to maturity in one year and starts yielding. It can adjust to drought conditions and less rainfall. So that is the situation in the Nilgiris; the original landscapes and agriculture in the Nilgiris is completely destroyed.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 4.6 03-04-1991

The Kotas have displayed a stunning variety of artisan skills and services for all the impliment requirements of the area. This man was a Kota priest. He was a young man. He was dressed in while and had long hair. He was sitting by the temple with its grove and grassland. A few children joined us, and for two hours or so he went on talking and performing. He also gave me his lute recital, playing different tunes for different occasions. (I have a recording of this in my tapes). He was very articulate and talked about a variety of topics, ranging from their origins, their settlements, their tradition, and their relation with other communities. His explanation and loaction of the seven villages on the landscape and the role that the kotas played

Nilgiri Plateau
Kota priest, Kota, Kundah Kotagiri, Nilgiri Plateau

Kota settlements
I am a Kotar. I reside in Kota giri, a mountain of the Kotas. And since Kundah is close by, this place is called Kundah Kotagiri. We live in seven hamlets in the Nilgiris. All of them cannot be called Kotagiri. So the one near Kundah is called Kundah Kotagiri. Then there is Kollimalai; Sholur Kotagiri called Khurgojh Kokal; Tiruchigadi called Tiruchigad; Kogad which is the big Kotagiri; then the lower Kotagiri, Kol Kotagiri called Khigad; then Gudalur called Khalassi. These seven villages still exists. The one near Gudalur in the upper Gudalur settlement; and we have contact will each and all of the seven villages. But the population in Khalassi ie., Gudalur is small. The largest population is in Tiruchigadi. There are no Katti Pariyar close or attached to Kundah Kotagiri. The Katti Pariyalu have only come to Tiruchigadi and Sholur. They are not there in the other villages of the Kotas. They are there only in those two villages. Those days, before the British, they only came to the hills to get a livelihood here.

Iron smelting
Earlier our people used to extracts Iron from Iron ore soils. The soils are over here, wherever there is clay, and black soil, all of them have Iron that can be extracted. There, there is a flat place from where sand would be bought and smelted for Iron ore. Some of the old people may know how to extract Iron. But they have grown very old and the younger people do not know. The younger people have not seen it. It seems they used to smelt iron here itself, and fashion tools our of it. In all there areas, you can see slag; the remains of smelted material. At our houses we have many old make implements. In old houses all those old iron implements will be available. Kodali (axe); hatchet; mannetti; Kotlu(fork). We never used to make guns. Although we know how to make it, because it is not supposed to be done, we do not do them.

Artisanal skills
There is no skill we do not know. We know pottery, we can do carpentry; there are 10/12 carpenters here. We can do smithy works. Whatever is necessary and demanded at that time, we would do it. So at home we would have tools for carpentry as well as smithy. Earlier, we also used to weave. But its in ages since we gave up weaving. I do not know anything about it. Earlier we used to weave for our traditional funerals. Now even that has stopped. Now, we get these embroidered dresses that we have from Mettupalayam. It is natural that we know so many skills; it is our nature. When I am a carpenter, and I keep working, my son sees me work and assists me in my work; and slowly he will learn the skill. All of our can do all this work. This young boy goes to the 4th standard; but he is also learning the skills of carpentry. We will not leave these skills. The father will not leave his child without teaching him his skill. Our houses will be well equipped with all these tools.

Pottery
In addition, we can do agriculture. The women do mainly pottery and agriculture. The women should not enter our smithy at all. Our smithy is like a temple for us, and our women are not allowed inside them. The women do not do carpentry too. The women are confined to pottery skills; and we do not do pottery. The pottery is done from clay soils available in swamps here. This is mixed with sand, got from stream beds. These are thoroughly mixed together and dried. Then it is mixed with water and fashioned into articles. These pottery would be black even after they are burnt. They would not become red. And these articles would yield a different sound. The pots done by us can be easily identified.

Iron works

One day I went to Ooty and asked for a knife. He looked at me and said he had no knife for me because we know our knives. Our work is very fine and specifically made. If we want a manutti or a fork or a knife; we would make it suitably. It should also look good. Tools for women should be different from tools for men. We would make anything, as required for what ever purpose out of iron. Also, with beauty and aesthetics in mind, and with the idea that the object must be kept for a long time. We have done carvings on our tools. That was implements of those days. A Kodaly, axe of those days would not wear out; it would be 1-1/2 ft. Then when the British came they used to supply us with iron, and we stopped making our own iron. The 1-1/2 ft kodalis have been used, and have now reduced to 1/2 feet. It must be 100 to 150 year's old, and well used.

Tradition

Our lords are Doddainur, Kurnainur, and Ammavur. These are our three dieties. In our smithy, there is the bellows. That is the only object kept in our temples. On the motto that "our skill in our diety", we keep the bellows as a symbol of our skill and pray to it. We do not have a physical form that we pray to. I cannot take you and show you the object. It is a symbol of our skill. It is not actually a bellows- but something like it. The pipe that conveys the wind to the fire. That is our object of worship. There is no sculpture in our temples. No one knows our philosophy or principle. We do not talk about it. No one knows our origins, or the origins of our deities. We see the temple, we pray to the deity, and we reverse it. We do not talk about it. The elders have not told us more details, or talked about the life histories or myths about them. Our origins have not been talked about. None have been able to discover our origins. All that we know is we were born here, and continue to live here. The Badagas came later from Mysore. They first came to Melur or Melkundah village first in the Kundahs and we sheltered them and gave them place.

It seems only one person came to Melkundah, one house came. We were the one's who built houses for them. We even kept sentry for them. They came singly, so had to be protected. So we got an Irula women and married her to him and help him set up house. Only after that they spread all over. The Irulas are here all around the border areas. They are not on the Nilgiri hills, nor are they on the plains below. They inhabit the middle area, the border of the two realms. They would come and go to the hills often. They would come here to buy knifes, axes, etc. etc. They have been coming here for these implements for a long time.

Cholera epidemic

The Cholera epidemic struck this area and in this village about 100 people died at the same time. This must have been 70 years ago; ie., in 1920s. He was ten years old then. Now he is about 80 years old. Cholera came and many died. It effected the elderly people more. Many men died. All the elders had died. There was a 20 year old who was the eldest in the village. He is our grandfather. He was the one who protected our group and brought us up again. He is no more now.

Tradition; relation with Todamar

There was a notion that Todamar and we were brothers. So the Todamar would come to us and take from us samai, Ragi etc and other agricultural produce. The Todamars would come to our village, our keris, and while the grains are put out to dry, they would come and steal the grain off. To avoid this, we imposed a rule in our villages that Todamars should not come into our villages. They should be kept outside the village and given grains there. They should not be allowed in because they steal. Similarly, we do not go to their village. Now-a-days we go and come to each others village.

We do not go and play music at Todamar deaths. We play a lot of music and dance. We used to go and play at the death of Badagas. At Badaga funerals we used to play music. Now, for the past 20 years that has also been stopped. We helped them and served them on humanitarian grounds. That they had come alone to our lands. But this goodness of ours had been reversed and looked at us like coolies and servants of theirs. So we realised this and decided that we would not help them if servitude was their attitude and they demanded our services. We were not keen on selling our art. So we decided to stop this custom. For our own festivals, and for our own functions we sing and dance.

Festivals

We have fairs and festivals. Our festival our religious and spiritual festival comes in January, around Pongal times. We called it Dodapabam. Then, we celebrate Shivaratri ie., in Feb or March then, we celebrate the Mariamman festival. The Dodapabm we celebrate at this temple in the village itself. Then, in March, we reverse and pray to Aainavar and Ammanavar. After that only is the mariamman festival in the end of March. For Mariamman we go to the nearby mariamman temple. Then in August also we pray to Aainavar and Ammanavar.

Rites and Rituals

Then in January we celebrate the 'Vara savu' or the Dry funeral. That is our biggest event. In January, we celebrate the 'Vara Savu' in the memory of the 'Siddhas', ie., the people who have died earlier among us. We do not necessarily do it every year. We do it once in a few years; may be once after 5 years. Sometimes we do it within one year itself. If the number of deaths in an year is very little we would do it after 2 years; if the number of deaths in a lot, we do it within an year itself.

Kota music

During the Varasavu, for each person died we would build a chariot; then we would take the chariots to a place. We normally burn over dead. At the site specifically meant for the Varasavu, we burn the chariots along with all the rituals that even all of you do ie., Tirtha yatra, etc. It is only after the completion of Vara savu, that all the other festivals would be celebrated. We would call all the Kotas from all the other seven villages. It is compulsory to invite them. Even the other jatis on the hills would come to see the event.

We have different kinds of music that we make. Our repeater is very elaborate. Two people coordinate and play the blow instrument in unison. $.....$.....$.....This tune is called ghat koil, and is played to a dance by men. This is the first tune that is played. The second tune is also for men. It is called Tirunatu.....$.....$.....$.... The third is the tune played for the Tigar dance ....#.....#.....#. This is a tune played for women dancing. There are 4 to 5 such tunes to be played for women dancing.

Now, the tune to be played for death. It devotes sadness and shoka. There is also an accompanying long that we sing with this ....*.....*.....*....*....

Then there is one for mariamman festival. ....."....."...." And we have a whole elaborate set of tunes and dances for each occasion. One music is very good. Especially when it is accompanied by all the other instruments. We have 2 blow instruments that is blown by 2 people in unison. Then we have a tambatlam; a percussion instrument on one side. Then we have the 'mattalam' a percussion instrument played on 2 sides. We have thus 2 types of drums. Then, we have the jallary or symbols. Then there is the kombu or the bugle. All this has to be played together. Then it sounds very good. What you heard was just the kids practicing.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 4.7 04-04-1991

G. Mani was a construction worker who came as labour gangs with the hydro-electric construction on the Nilgiri plateau. He participated in the construction of the dam and settled near one of the dam sites. Indrra Nagar is mainly a labour colony with some amount of marginal agriculture over the last few years. Many residents of the village are persons who came as labour during the different waves in the modern period and settled on the plateau.

Nilgiri plateau
G. Mani, Settler, Indira Nagar, Nilgiri plateau.

Personal profile
G.Mani, S/o Ganesan; resident of Indra Nagar- Emerald post. And many others joined in the meeting.

Immigration; Dam construction; Livelihoods

We came here during the dam construction here at Emerald and Avalanche. We came here during the time when foundations to the dam were being built. The dam and the Avalanche power house we being built. We have been in the Nilgiris for 3 generations now. The dam was built around 1949. My father came here. I live here and I have children who were born here. But I do not have land of my own. When the dam was being built, many families and many labourers came here from the plains. After the dam was completed, there was no more coolie work to be had here. So a lot of people went back, and many went to other places in search of jobs. Only a few people stayed behind getting some work in the estates around. Now, the wages in the estate is not adequate and proper. They pay us Rs.10/- or Rs.12/-. If we seek work outside we get Rs.25/- or so working in the wattle plantations, or working for the Badaga here. So the estate people do not allow us to stay on their estates when we work outside. So where can we stay? We catch some unclaimed, government owned revenue lands and build our houses on them. There are about 20/30 families who migrated here during the dam construction.

[Old man] I was here when the dam was being built. I work in the estate. The dam was completed in 1951. There were, of course, a lot of people who had come during the dam construction. Having spent 60 crores, do you think only a few people came? After the work was completed there was no money to be had here, so many left. I came here in 1947, before the dam even started. I came from near Madras near Dindivanam. We came in a team of 36 families from the same area. Iam the area maistry. I was the one who sounded up these 36 families and bought them here for seeking a means of livelihood. We came to the Red Hills Estate. I had come earlier and seen the place and gone. There were two dorais here, Ismail dorai owned the Kadukuppe Estate and it was bought by one Muthurukuli. Then there was an Ulli Dorai who owned the Red Hill Estate. During those times, my uncle was living and working here. I came to see him. It was thought that if I come to the Nilgiris. I can enjoy the wind, and I had heard that all the whitemen from Madras came here to enjoy the breeze. So, I came to Nilgiris to see the place. I was working in a hotel at Ooty. There was one lawyer called Krishnan who came to the hotel. I made tea for the lawyer. Those days tea was 1/2 anna. The lawyer tasted the tea and gave me Rs.7/- for the tea. Muthurukuli also drank the tea. They had both came to the court. Then he brought me to the tea estate here.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 6.1 22-10-1991

Bedars are an interesting community on the Nilgiri plateau. They are a small group, in two villages of the northern edge of the Nilgiri plateau. They are situated close to the village Kalhatti, through which the Mysore - Ooty road passed. Nanjan has a shop at the Kalhatti chekpost, where I met him and went with him to his village. The Bedars claim to be hunters and the soldiers of an empire that was located and flourished in the Coimbatore plains. But this group seems to have migrated from the Mysore plateau through Wynaad.

The related to me about their martian capability. At the village they seem to pray to a weapon deity and kept many knives and swords for ceremonial purposes. He also told me about the archaeological site of a fort in the area overlooking the Sigur plateau and the Mysore plateau. This was the only one I found in these parts. The fort was has a legend of concealed treasures. The expansion of towns has consumed any remnants of the fort by removing stones, etc. for construction. The story of the fort is associated with the kingdoms of the Wynaad plateau, whose remenants still exists and some of them are in use.

Nilgiri Plateau
A.P. Nanjan, Bedar, Tattneri, Nilgiri Plateau

Personal profile
A.P.Nanjan of Tattneri, age 72 years. A Bedar.

There are a few people elder to me in my village, but they are not so knowledgeable or articulate. I am a Beda Naikar.

Personal profile
I was in the police force from 1940 to 1952- during the British period. I was a constable. I left it because I did not like the way of life of the police. It was against a family life. There was a lot of injustice and unfair play. So I did not like it. I did my training at Coimbatore and joined in March 1941 at Gudalur. From there I was on special duty monthly once at Singara. That was the war period and each month 12 constables were to come to Singara power house. I was there for one month. Then I was transferred to Devala, and was there for 6 months. From there I was in Devanshola for 6 months. Then I was at Naduvattam for 6 months. The rest of the time I was in Gudalur. The work was good, but I did not like it. All kinds of crime like murder and assault and theft would take place. We would never catch the actual culprit, but would catch people on suspicion and put them in the lock-up. I came to Ooty in 1947. Then I was the telephone oderley. I could not stand the injustice done to suspects- and I gave my resignation. There was one Manifield a circle inspector. He called me and advised me not to resign after 10 years of service. I advise you like my son. What is your problem, let me, but I will not recommend your resignation letter. Then I thought and said, I would give it a try. He tore my resignation letter away. Then in 1952, I did election duty at Madukkarai, Pollachi, Erode, Malabar, etc for one month. I came back and too 3 months leave. Then after the leave, I resigned. They advised saying I would not get any benefit after resignation nor would I get a job again. But I persisted and got my resignation accepted. I had Rs.300/- as P.Fund. My son was born then, he was one year old. I went to Rameswaram and shaved his head and spent all the PF money. Those days there was no road to our village, no lights,. Lights came in 1952. I strove for all this. Then I helped set-up feeder schools at Ekoni and Bikkatti. I was till class 3. I helped set up a society here to get fertilizer from the company at concessional rate. Those days we used to plant, each person 20/30 bags of potato. I used to put 100/200 bags of potato- not only in our village but in the Todamar mund at Pykara, Glenmorgan, Gladimand, schoolmund, Kuzhishola etc. Three of us got together and each of us would plant 200 bags of potato in that whole area. I was during those days, that we seeked the help of Ekoni people and put a road through their fields. Earlier, it rained, we could cross the stream and come this side for 2 or 3 days. Then we took the help of a 'Boyan' and wrote the block level development, who granted Rs.3000/- with which we built the bridge. I was the one who helped the road as well as the school to our village. There was one Maruthanayaken a development officer, who said a school was sanctioned and it must be contracted and built properly. We gathered the people of Ekoni and together, we built the school with Rs.1500/- from Govt, and Rs.1500/- village contribution. I this I lost Rs.1000/- but I did not mind it. Now it is a high school. today there are 4 people from our village working in the Government. One is the Municipality, one in Agriculture, one in Chinchona, and my son is in the Education Department as a Junior Asst.

Traditional origins

We have come to the Nilgiris some 10 generation earlier. We must have come before the British arrived here. We all came from Mysore. We do not know the specific place from where we came in Mysore, but generally we came from the Mysore state. Why did they come? I do not know exactly, but we came from Mysore and settled here. Earlier, we came here and built small villages here. Those days this area was fully forested, with sholas. Slowly, one by one, we came and settled here. First only 2/3 families came and then slowly the others came.

Bedar group

We are the Bedar naickar descendants, of those days. I do not know if we stayed in the forests, but now in 2 villages here we are settled. One called 'Bannimara', near the Malakkotai, close by about 1/2 mile from Kalhatti and here at Tattneri. It is only in these two villages were reside. There are no other Bedar villages. In Tattneri, there are about 50 families, and 30/40 families in Bannimara, and that is all. Our marriages are within these two villages. In Mysore state also there a large Bedar community, and we sometimes do marry with them. They are in Mysore town itself, then near Gundalpet, a place called Depapuvam near Tarkaname, about 3 miles, then near or at the foot of Gopalaswami temple a place called Kunnigalli and Lakkipura- and then near Hole Narasipura, then beyond, near Salem border, then there are many near Bangalore. But in Nilgiri there are only 2 villages of Bedar. We also marry with other plains Bedar. There are some Bedars in Coimbatore, in Pollachi, in Ayakudi.

Bedar means, people who hunted in the forest. Those days they must have hunted.

Bedar settlements

When the British came, these people, our people were settled. The British surveyed the area and put in marking stones in the places where we were. And the families who had held as much land in those days, were marked and delineated for them. Our traditional occupation as far as I know is agriculture.

Bedar tradition

We have a temple in our village called Madheswara temple. All of us worship Siva as our deity. In our temple, festivals are similar to other temples. We have a festival at our temple every six months- in February and then in August. We burn our dead other communities, the Badagas finish their death rites the day they burn the body, but we have rites; on the 3rd day after death, we take milk to the burning ghat. Then on the 12th day we do the final rites.

Resource use

Now-a-days, all of us are agriculturists. Most of us own some land. The original settlers have a lot of land, but people who came late have little land. I am an early inhabitant of this place. Some Bedars have come in recently. Our village is only a Bedar village, and there are no other communities either in Tattneri or in Bannimara. But in Mysore and other places, Bedars live in villages along with other communities.

Archaeological remains; Tradition

There was a Malakkotai arasu, a territory, and there was Malakkotai raja. When he came here, our early ancestors came with him. They came and separately established a village here with a few houses and worked helping the Malakkotai king. This Malakkotai is slightly beyond Kalhatti. Now there is nothing there. Earlier, there was a stone wall and a moat around the fort filled with water. It was here that the king resided. Those days, the Mappilas of Malabar came with their army and stormed the fort. During that time, the king was away in Mukurti, beyond Pykara to see the place. When the Mappila army came, the queen fell into the moat and committed suicide, so that she does not fall into the enemy's hands.

They say in Nalliallam, there was a queen and the sub- kingdom was here, they say. But we cannot say anything definitely.

After the queen died, the king would not stay here and went to Nalliallam. The Mappilas came here looted the place and returned. Here the whole fort etc fell into ruins. After that the British came. We supposed to be the 'Olaikkara', something like the forest guards, helping and guarding the kings territory. Then, after king abandoned the place, we stayed on and built villages here.

Artifact remains

Then when the whole fort and area around was falling into disuse, the maniyagar of Hullatti, which was the old revenue village discussed to whom all the territory belonged. They claimed all this territory belonged to them, and appropriated all the territory. And the whole area of the fort and the moat were destroyed and made into agricultural fields. Even today, they do agriculture in that fort area, and many people find many things in the area. They say, gold etc was got from that area, but I have not directly seen anything. Recently about 6 months or 1 year back, some lead/iron blocks were discovered from there when they were ploughing/hosing the land. That iron block was deposited with the government. The locals thought it was gold and deposited it with the government, but on examination it was an iron block.

Agriculture

We used to cultivate Ragi, Samai, Ganji, Wheat, Potato. Now, as days have gone these agricultures have decreased; no Samai is grown now-a-days. We do grow some Gangi, Wheat, Ragi etc. Samai has been discontinued for over 8/10 years now. This is because Samai agriculture is difficult, and it involves a lot of thrushing etc etc., Earlier a lot of Ragi used to be grown, and we used to harvest 10/20 bags of Ragi per household. Now, there is not so much ragi. We grow vegetables and Potato and make money. We do make some Wheat, some Samba Wheat.

Those days, we used to sow in April and harvest in August. Again September we would sow, and by January we would harvest. From January to April, the land would be fallow. In April, we would sow Ragi and Potato. In September, Potato and Wheat. We would not grow wheat in April. In April we would put Gangi, Ragi Samai and Potato. In Sept. only Wheat and Potatoes.

Land use

In those days in our village if one had 10 acres of lands, we would cultivate only about 4 or 5 acres. Those days, we did not have so much potato. We did not have this foreign fertilizer, we would only put cow dung manure and grow a limited amount of potato. The maximum being 1/2/3 bags of potato seed put, Ragi, Samai etc would be more. Now since the last 10/15 years this type of agriculture has decreased. Now, mainly we grow carrot. These days, even potato is less, about 10 years ago, when the rains were better, a lot of potatoes many loads of them would move from here. Now, only 4/5 bags of potato is put. So, now, this vegetable agriculture is the most. Mainly carrot, and out of these earnings we live. Carrot, Beetroot, Noolkol etc, Garlic etc. Now Garlic is a lot in these parts.

Land use; Vegetation

Those days agriculture was very limited, and the rest of the whole area was forests. There were large sholas over here. There were a few estates here and there. The Sophia Estate the Fatima Estate, these are very old estates. These were earlier coffee estates. The whole area was full of coffee earlier. In the Sophia Estate coffee crop was very good producing 1/2 bag for each bush of coffee. All the coffee was destroyed by a disease. It was about 20 years ago. And one by one each of the bushes were cut. The leaves all turned black. All the coffee estates had a silver oak shade cover, and these too have been cut and sold. Now, there are some Tea here and there in the other estate, Tea did not come up well, and now many areas are wasted. This time they have put some lime saplings.

The labourers in these estates were not immigrants, but local hatti people. No outside people here only the hatti people are labour.

Rainfall; Water resources

Earlier, because the rains was good, agriculture was prosperous. Earlier some where during some year, during one cropping season, the rainfall would be low, but otherwise, it used to be raining all the time during the season, and the stream would be flowing all around the year. Now for the past 10/15 years, the streams are not perennial. It is mainly because of less rains, all the springs have died out. Earlier because there was plenty of rain, even during 3 dry months the streams would run.

Rains those days, in April if the big rain starts, April and May would be heavy rains, with thunder and lightening in expressible. In June, the 'Kodai malay' would starts. When this Kodai rain starts, we would not be able to get out of the house. Now for the past 10/15 years, there has been no Kodai malay. Those days, for many days, we would not be able to get out of the house. June-July is the Kodai rain season. In August, there would be some sunshine for harvesting the crops of Ragi, Samai etc. Rain would give a

let-up of 10/15 days. Again, August last if the rain starts till November last it would be cloudy and raining all the time. December onwards, the heavy dew and fog season would start. Dec-Jan are cold and figgry. Feb and March will be sunny- maybe with occasional rains.

Livestock rearing

We never did any agriculture in the Bokkapuram area, but we all including us and the Badagas used to keep cattle and buffaloes there. We had a lot of cows and buffaloes there. And that, when there is the Kodai rain, we would drive the cattle down June and July they would be in Bokkapuram area. Then in August we would bring them up. Now, of course, all the forest areas have been planted with Eucalyptus and wattle. But those days, in the Wenlock downs there would be good grass and a good area for cattle and buffaloes to graze. Our cattle would stay here for 2 months and again they would be driven down. Those days, we did not sell milk, but made Ghee and sold them at Ooty. This has been stopped since the beginning of and establishment of the milk society. Even now, those who herd cattle and buffaloes in far away places make Ghee and sell, but that is not much. Even during my period, every week one tin (Kerosene tin) of Ghee would be produced and sold for Rs.12/ Rs.13.

Livestock

We too keep cattle and buffaloes, but we do not sacrifice them on deaths. We do not eat beef at all.

Wildlife

Those days, there were many wild animals too- Tigers, Panthers, wild boar, Sambar, etc would be here. Even now there are bears around here. Right here there is one. This is the limit of bears. Beyond this higher there are no bears. I saw a bear here recently. Those days, each village had 2/3 guns, licensed guns, and we would hunt Sambar, Wild Boar etc. Sometimes Tigers and Panthers would come near the village and catch one or two cattle. Even now sometimes they do strike at our cattle in these parts, not beyond. Even 2 weeks ago, a big cow was killed here. No elephants come up here. I have seen elephants only twice here. About 2 years ago, an elephant came up. In my childhood, no elephants would come up, but there were many in Sigur area, in Karugampulla estate, and below is the elephant area. Now, a few days earlier, we do not know how, but an elephant came near our village, on the village path. Women who had gone to gather water left the pots and ran. The elephant kicked the pots and meanwhile the villagers gathered and chased it down. Then, other time elephants came near Hullatti; but they do not stay here at all.

Relations with other groups

We do not have any marital exchanges with Badagas or Todas or the other communities here. But for all our festivals, and other occasions, we would interact. They would come for our celebrations, and we would go for their celebrations and participate so contact and interaction has always been there, but there are no marriage relations among us.

We speak a kannada, similar to the Badaga language. We speak a combination of Kannada and Badaga. Badaga does not have a script, but we have the Kannada script. But here we speak and learn Tamil in schools here.

Other groups

In this area, there are Badagas, Bedas, Toreyas, Kusavans who are there in Kalhatti and Kemble. They have also be generational settlers here. They also do agriculture. They do noti make pots here. In Gundlupet they make pots, but here they are agriculturists. Then there are christians etc, etc, many communities. There are no Todamar munds near here- they are all above this area.

Communications; Markets

The nearest market for us is my childhood was at Ooty. The road here is very old. It was the Mysore Raja that laid this road. Even earlier we used to have contact with the plains for marriage etc; and this was the route. We had to walk down this path. The bullock carts used to come up along the Gudalur ghat but taken down along this route. Those days 40/50 bullock carts would come from Gundalpet and Tarkamane. Material would be bought at the 'Sandy' there and brought up to Ooty. Vehicular traffic and busses were introduced in 1940s. The British used to go along by horses and horse carts. The bullock carts going down from here would go empty. The carts would bring up Ragi, Sholam, Rice etc. from the weekly market. Those days the bulk of the material used to be brought from this side and not much from

the Coimbatore side. Now, of course, a lot of things are brought up from Coimbatore. Those days, the Gundalpet side was very prosperous. Ragi those days were sold at Rs.2.50 or Rs.3.00 per bag at Ooty.

Communications

On the way to Ooty we had to walk through wilderness- there were a few villages at specific places along the route. From here if you climb, you come to Kavaratti- Jakkalare; then above there is a Todawar mund called Marlimaund. Then the Marlimund tank. Then beyond that was Ooty. It was a 3 hour walk to Ooty and we had to headload the provisions from there. There used to be some mules and cattle to carry heavy loads of vegetable etc.,

Pilgrimage and travel

Earlier we used to go to the Nanjangud temple yearly once. We would walk till Masinagudi. From there, we would go by bullock cart to Gundlupet and then to Nanjangud and Mysore. About 4 to 5 people would get together and go. When we go from here, we would pack some food. Then go to Nangangud and then to Chamundeswari in Mysore and return. Those days it would not cost much. Now-a-days it would cost over Rs.500/-.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 6.2 22-10-1991

A Badaga resident of the Nilgiri plateau, he wants extensively about the cattle rearing and pastoral activity on the Sigur plateau, managed and run by the Badaga Dolla Gowder.

Nilgiri Plateau
Dolla Gowder, Gowder, Barramannu, Nilgiri Plateau.

Livestock rearing
Since my grandfather's days and before that I do not know, but since my grandfather's days and my father's days, we used to put patti and keep buffaloes in Sigur area. Because we had a lot of buffaloes, it was not possible to keep them here and graze them. And here it is a cold region, whereas Sigur area is a hot area, thus cattle and buffaloes were better suited to those parts. And my grandfathers used to keep a lot of livestock there.

During the rainy months, the livestock will be kept down in the hot tracts, and during the sunny months, the cattle would be brought up here. And here, we used to make dung fertilizer that was necessary for our fields. We did not have synthetic fertilizer those days. So, we used dung to fertilize our fields and grow Ragi, Potato etc and do agriculture.

There used to be only about 10 cattle for each household those days, but buffaloes were many depending upon the capability and affluence of the households. Each would have 30/40 if affluent, or 5/10 buffaloes if poorer. And people who had 5/10 buffaloes, would take them down use labour from locals and their own labour milk the buffaloes, make butter, clarify at, and bring it and sell it at Ooty.

Cattle penns
Now, things have improved, and we do not do that livestock rearing on that scale any more. They used to be many pattis there. Tengumarada was the last patti for us. Above that there was Tottakki, above that Halamaratti, then Kootrapatti, then Masipatti, then Paldhatti then above, Arakadavu, this side Odagari, then Anaikatti, near that Dhanatti. Above that Ambalatti, then Malappuram, then Chokkanalli, then Jailkadavu then Goruatti, then Moyar, then Chemmanattam, the Masinagudi, then Chadavupatti, then Bokkapuram. Beyond that on that side I do not know the pattis. These were the pattis I know and I have gone to.

Livestock rearing
In those days Kasavas used to help in keeping livestock and extracting butter and ghee. They would not come towards towns and villages. Only after we went there and used them to keep livestock our interaction increased. Before that, we do not any thing about their culture and livelihood. I know those people from the period of my father. Those days they were our helpers. They helped in keeping our cattle and buffaloes, and we would give them weekly subsistance grain and wages. Earlier to that I do not know.

All the Badagas on this edge of the plateau, - Ebanad, Cinna coonoor, Hullatti, Karakuzhi, Ekomi, Sholur, Kukkathorai- and that is the limit. All the Badagas here would keep cattle in the Sigur area. Only people in this border used to keep cattle/buffaloes there and not people in Kunda nor the Todas. Earlier, there were more buffaloes than cattle. Now-a-days we have given up livestock keeping. This is because the government wants to make the whole area a sanctuary. They want to increase wild animals and decrease domesticated animals. That is the view of the current government. This is the view for about 10 years now. Now, we cannot even take the dung from there, and this dung is essential for our agriculture. Earlier we did not carry up dung, but we used to make dung here by driving the cattle up. Now, since agriculture has increased here and when the graze is good there, we would keep the cattle there and transport the dung by a vehicle. Now, there is a ban on all that. Even now sometimes if the graze here is good we could bring the cattle up. But there is no grass here these days. So, we do not bring it up.

Now, there are more cattle, those days buffaloes used to be more. If one had 70 buffaloes he was a big man. Normally, each would have 20/30, even 5 buffaloes. Those days in my childhood days, in our village each household would have buffaloes, some 10 some atleast 2 buffaloes. And with those 2 buffaloes he would else a livelihood. This is our traditional occupation livestock rearing and agriculture are

our traditional occupation. How much money would he get from keeping 2 buffaloes? It would not be enough. We had to have some Ragi, and potatoes to supplement. In those days, like they used to say, for the British, their ships were paramount, for us buffaloes were paramount. Only those who had buffaloes were cultured humans. This was only for this edge and border villages. Beyond this the people of Kavilore, Kadanad had no connection with livestock rearing. This border area included, Kukkalthorai, Vailatti near Kukkalthorai, Ebanad, Chinna Coonoor, Hullatti, Karpulla, Ekoni, Sholur. That was the limit. Beyond sholur there are no Badaga villages. Near Kodanad agriculture used to be fertilized with cattle stall fed in the village itself. From Solur till Kukkalthorai, each of the house holds in the village used to have many buffaloes in the Sigur area that could not be kept here. Now, of course, the cattle/buffalo population is much more. But even earlier there were quiet a larger Cattle/buffalo population. May be there were much livestock earlier. But, there were not so much wild animals to predate on buffaloes. If 10 wild dogs got together, in one day they would finish 10/20 calves. Those days there were not so many wild dogs. Game license used to be issued, and if a buffaloes was killed by a tiger, 'dorai' would stay on the hill and with license definitely kill the tiger off. So there was not much predation. Now, we cannot even kill one wild boar. The wild animals have increased tremendously now. Thus a lot of buffaloes have been predated upon.

Livestock epidemic

Once there was an epidemic on buffaloes. So one who had 50 buffaloes was left with 20, one with 100 was left with 50. The ones that escaped that epidemic have now increased their population. But since wild animals have increased and because of such government laws to prevent killing of wild animals, many have sold their livestock and some have maintained them. Now, we cannot even keep dogs in our villages. The govt. came and killed our dogs because they kill wild boar. The govt. policies are very bad.

Agriculture

Agriculture was also there, but agriculture was only for the consumption of the household. It was not for growing more, transporting it to the market, selling the produce etc. That attitude of trading of agricultural produce was not there Agriculture was only for the house, harvesting about 4 bags, or maximum 10 bags for the year. Ad that was all the agriculture that was done. And for that agriculture, the cow dung manure was essential. This dung was not made during rains but only during the sunny season. In the rains the livestock would be at Sigur, and we would drive it up the slope during the dry season.

Agriculture; Land use

Those days, there was no major agriculture in Sigur plateau. There was some agriculture of chillies about 500/1000 plants at Anaikatti, some brinjals, some Ragi. Similarly in Sirur, Moyar there was agriculture. In Bokkapuram our Badagas used to do agriculture. In Moyar, there were agriculturists who had come from Mysore. They were called Kurumbakki Gownders. There were Mysore residents who had come there many generations ago. They speak Kannada. They used to grow Cholam, Ragi, Chillies etc. Agriculture was practiced there those days, but cattle and Buffaloes were many.

Development

During British days, I would not know about the towns, but our villages were very prosperous. There was not much education, but ways and means of livelihood looked good. Now, we say we have many facilities, but will all these facilities life is cumbersome.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 6.3 23-10-1991 Ebanad

The Killadi of the Niligiris, Sale Gowder calls himself. He was an old man, whom I met in his house in the village. He was an experienced person, who was a poineer and an expert on the Nilgiri plateau. He was knowledgeble in a variety of topics like pastoralism on the Sigur plateau, the different traditional regions of the Nilgiri plateau, the human groups inhabiting the Nilgiri and their interrelations and the gwort of estates in the area. He was slightly rambling in certain parts and was excited and incoherent.

Nilgiri Plateau
Sigur Plateau
Sale Gowder, Badagar, Ebanad, Nilgiri Plateau

Personal profile
Sale Gowder, Age 70 years; Ebanad.

I was in Masinagudi keeping buffaloes there. I was there for 10/12 years. This was only after 1957. Before that I used to be a 'Killadi', a loafer. I used to be loafing around all over. I have loafed all over-even till Kashi. I have loafed all around Nilgiris.

Personal profile
Why I am called Sait Sale Gowder is a story. There was a big man a Muslim who had a shop in the mandi at Mettupalayam. During Deepavali, he would buy clothes and distribute them to all. He gave us also clothes, and he bought me a muslim cap and I was wearing it. It must have been 50 years ago. So since then, people have been calling by Sait Sale Gowder. Even in court my name is Sait. S.G.

Development
My days were very good. We used to be true to the words. We would not steal, we used to be scare of the law. Now, people would do anything. As the government changes so will the people change. Just as the government's wrong doings, so are the people. I have 10 children. We were scared to do an operation, but now, we all get the operation done with government incentives.

Vegetation
Earlier, the sholas were only confined to the valleys in the hills and the rest of the area was good grasslands for grazing the buffaloes. Many of these sholas have been destroyed, and many sholas of wattle and eucalyptus have been raised by the department. Eucalyptus wattle have increased only in the past 20 years or 30 years.

Drought; Migration
When people used to feed on pickly pear fruits in the Sigur area, those were days when there was a famine in those parts. It was called 'Katlallakkai panja' or prickly-pear fruit-famine. When we were eating this, it was a drought period. It was only after this many people came to the Nilgiris. Including the people whom we called Gowndas. It was then that a lot of immigrants came to the Nilgiris. It may be 57 or 58 I do not know. I have not kept any record of these.

All the Harijans who are around this village, settled around here, it was I who went and got them here from Satyamangalam. I brought them up from Satyamangalam and kept them on my patta lands. After that slowly more and more people came here and there; and some were given 1 acre or 0.5 acres by us and by the government. I brought them here in 1957. I brought them here to do agriculture. Before that we were doing our own agriculture and our numbers were small and our agriculture was small. When they came in those early days they would fear to come near our houses. They would stay in the fields. During that famine, I brought a lot of people. After seeing that more people came and were brought. I brought about 10 families. I brought them promising labour and food. Those days the coolie rates was 0.50p or Re.1/-.

Local tradition and histroy
Earlier there was a lot of food, a lot of milk and butter. Now things are bad. When I was in Masinagudi, there were 3000 households there. I kept buffaloes at Mallapuram. There are many hero stones around

there. Those days in the previous yuga, that was satya kala, and there were good rains. Masinagudi area had about 2808 villages are something. There were 2 jamins. One at Chemmanattam and one at Masinagudi Makamakkatti by name there is a Kotai a fort, that is near Masinagudi, on the way to Vazhatottam, on the left side by the road, there is a tank where buffaloes drink water. Just beyond there is a fort. There were 2 jamins, 2 major rich agricultural territories. These two jamins together had one Raja. The jamindars were Uddarrayya and the Muttarayyah. They were Lingayats or Shivachari. There were 250 villages there with a lot of agriculture. This was told to me by the elders. Ragi and Cholam were the main crops. There was one stone at Satyamangalam and beyond Gudalur was a stone. These were the limits of the jamin. Beyond Gudalur was Kallukkutti area. The area that side of Gudalur was included in Chemmanattam. It was a huge area. There were all kinds of communities in the area, including Muslims. It was villages of many communities.

Even now, you can identify those village sites with agricultural fields, forts and ragi storage bins. It was during that period, all the sculpture was done in the area. The villagers have all migrated to Mysore. That was many years ago, before my period. When I was there, there was not much of agriculture- only small pockets of agriculture, at Vazhathottam, Masinagudi, Moyar, Bokkapuram. All small agriculture of Cholam, Ragi, Amaranthus, Potato, etc. All that stopped because of disturbance from elephants, wild pigs. Even those days there was disturbances from elephants, but the people were braver. They had guns and they could shoot elephants. Now, we cannot shoot animals. Even the buffaloes that we had, we sold them because of high predation from wild dogs. Wild dogs and forest guards would trouble us a lot. Each day dogs would catch 8/10 calves. Earlier, we could shoot them, but now we cannot shoot them. The government is helping the adivasis now. They have been there for many years. There were Irulas, mainly, Kurumbas etc. Masinagudi was only built later. The place was empty earlier. We used to keep buffaloes there. Even Moyar was a cattle penn patti. It was called Kodai hundi. Those were places where buffaloes were penned. Hundi means a patti. It was the Denad Shivachari people who had a patti at Moyar-Kaliyyah, Rajayyah. It was their grandfather who had a patti there. During dam construction all their land was bought up. Even now they have some land, and a house there. His grandfather was called Pattimadha. Now there are two people Kalliyyah, Rajayyah there.

Local tradition

It has been about 8000 years since our village was built. It means that it has been so many years since our Badagars came to the Nilgiris. That is the count and the reckoning. By tradition, we have 100 years each head or generation, and we count so many head units. Thus according to my calculation, according to such head units, we have been here for 8000 years. 200 years before now when Christ was born, the Badagas had already been in the Nilgiris, and after that we has been here for 2 head counts.

People now say all kinds of things after reading books, that we came at the time of Tippu. All that is false. All is only stories. We do speak some sort of Kannada, but we do not have a script. We came before the Christian era. Our basis for saying this is we keep a head unit count. We do not have a script or writing. So we have an oral tradition that says, one head unit is 100 years. It is not true that we came here during Tippu's period. You take a count of the villages, the old villages that the Badagas built. And our peoples villages, the old villages, are all over the Nilgiris. People say Tippu was king of Mysore just before the British. And if you calculate from then onwards to today, you will get a lot of difference in the time recoming. During the British people, before Tippu's period when we rebuilt our houses, we found some buried old treasures. This we did not give to the government, but made them into jewellery for ourselves. It wall all silver. Thus to say that we came during Tippu's reign is wrong. We did not come here because of Muslims. Our basis is our estimates according to oral tradition, that we came 8000 years ago. To propate such notions that we came here because of Muslims is wrong.

In the Badaga villages, there is one village called Melur in Merkanad. Then there are Anianuru, and Kolavekobe all have been disused and spoilt. Thus, now we have Mela-uru and Kila-uru in Merkanad, it is beyond Coonoor. Everybody knows Mela-uru. It is before Melkundah. There you will find some basis and counts for our coming to the hills. There is one person called M.P.Nanja in Ketti. If you go to him, he would have all the old stories.

According to my notion and our tradition, it is true that we came from the North. Then we have built villages here and there in the Nilgiris. All these villages, Ebanad and others are old villages. We do not know which route we came, but we did come from Mysore. During later periods, Shivacharis have come,

ie., Kongar have come; Kumbharans have come; people who made pots; Kalkatti these is a community, they are linked to the Shivacharis. It is these 3 communities that came during the later periods. The Kotas are traditional and indigenous here and came almost during the period we were here. The Todas say they were first here, and we say we were here first. If you ask how was that, according to my researches, if you have soils, then you have to pay taxes or tributes to the king. And we have been the ones paying the taxes. Taxes have been there right through history. Who has been the persons paying taxes. Not the other communities. It is the Badagas among the three communities who have been paying the taxes- among the Kota, Todamar, Irula, and Badaga. And it is only the Badaga who pay taxes, and no other communities. Thus, I conclude that we are the original inhabitants, the first inhabitants.

Now, if anybody owns lands he has to pay taxes. This is not only after the British -even before that taxes were there. We had to pay taxes before the British came at a place near Satyamangalam, at a fort there.

Above Kalhatti there is a fort called Malaikkotai. The tax that was collected at Malaikkotai used to be deposited at the Kottai at Satyamangalam. It is beyond Srimurugan. That was the main head office of the kingdom. Then when the British came, they captured that area and fort. That was the last reign of a king before the British. Even now the Malaikottai ruins can be seen.

Traditional regions of the plateau; Local tradition

There are four nads in the Nilgiris: Todanad, Merkanad, Todanad in this area, beyond Ooty is Merkanad. Porangad in Kotagiri, Kattabetta. And Kundanad is beyond the Merkanad river. There are Badagas in these four nadus. In this are Ebanad is a main village and the first village. Mela-uru and Kila-uru are the main and early villages of Merkanad ie., the area beyond Ooty. Cinnacoonoor people are supposed to be the persons who are settled in 14 Katti villages and 14 Kunda village. They were people who had migrated from here, this area. Now, they have gone there and increased in population. Todawanad means; during the period of Uddarrayya, who was a Shivachari. He was in charge of the Jamin. During those times itself Aniuuru, Kolakambe in the area now called Mela-uru. Those villages have been spoilt by a curse. Like the Anaikatti area had been spoilt, that area had also been spoilt. People had abandoned that village. Earlier, about 15 years ago, the place that I mentioned, Anaikatti, rich people could not stay there. It was a curse of those days. A high caste women desired a low caste person. Those days the high caste and low castes was a rule. When they were making love, when the people found out, they killed the girl and buried her. When her lover came to see the girl, he found a portion of the buried girl's head, and then he cursed that the 281 villages in the area be spoilt, and so it was. And so after 14 years, no one can stay in that area.

Badagas

Badagas is one community with many 'mama-machchan' groups. Largely 4 groups for the 4 seemas, and marriages are only among these 4 clans or these 4 seema people. They would be people of the other seema in this area with whom marriages are made. I am an Ebanad person. There would be a person of Todanad seema or a person of Kodanad with who we have marriage.

Relation between human groups

Now, as the days go by, this cattle/buffalo herding is decreasing, the workers, the Irulas do not work properly, they are disobedient and do not follow instruction. They retort back. All this because the government discourages us and tells us of get out of that place-vacate the pattis. Now, the cattle and buffaloes are not looked after properly by the Irulas. So, our people have sold much of their livestock. Earlier, the Irulas used to fear us and be obedient, and do their job properly, but now they do not listen. Earlier, they of course, used to try some black magic on us, but now-a-days it does not succeed. Earlier, if you mention the name Kurumbal, people of our clan would fear, because they would do a lot of black magic. They would become invisible and come and they would come and even kill people. Earlier, there were many such Kurumbas. Now, all of them go to school etc. Even their population was more those days. Then, they all got scattered all over and were lost. Now- a-days they do agriculture, but in those days, they used to do some small agriculture, collect honey. For food our people used to give some money and grain, and that was their food. They would go to the forest and collect some tubers, there are many tubers that are edible. Even now these tubers are there, by the hill slopes. They would collect these, steam them, and put salt and eat them. And if our people saw them there, they would fling stones and chase us away. If they come to our pattis, we had to feed them, or else they would curse us. Earlier if

their name is mentioned, people in our village would flee. There were only about 60 houses in our village during my childhood.

Relation between human groups

So even here those two villages were spoilt, and we have at present Mela-uru. Then we have Katti and Kunda. In that side we have Tudigi sodai, called Toodigi, near Ekoni, and those people spread till Nanjanad. There there are 14 villages in Nanjanad. So those days there were 300 and few villages. Now, there are thousands of villages around.

Livestock rearing

Those days there were lot of natural forests, but now wildlife has increased. In the Moyar area from Satyamangalam and Bhavanisagar to Moyar there were 300/400 pattis. I have seen many of them. The pattis would have cattle and buffaloes. The studs buffaloes would be in the forest and would come to the patti during the mating season.

Those days, cattle-buffaloes were plenty and now-a-days because the govt. supports the adivasis, they are not inclined to look after the cattles and buffaloes in the pattis. So we have given up and are giving up cattle/buffalo rearing.

Those days rains was good, thus graze was plentiful. In between rains were poor, and this year rain has been good again.

I gave up my livestock 7/8 years ago. Before that I had cattle/buffaloes at Mallapuram, Chemmanattam, Odagarai, Arakkadavu, Melhatti. We used to make Ghee and sell it at Ooty. These cattle/buffaloes were confined there to the Sigur plateau and to Ebanad etc.

Estates

In those days, other communities would look after our buffaloes, and they would make Ghee. For their food, we would provide them. The Kotas would have to prepare the iron implements for us. We used to grow a crop called Samai. It is a very tasty grain. We would give them some Samai and some money. They in exchange would give us implements. Such have been the exchanges with other communities too. Beyond this we have no marriage or other relations. They do not come inside our houses. They would come to our door step and exchange goods.

During the British period, there were a few estates here and there. And before independence they had already made a lot of money and left the country.

Agriculture

Agriculture was mainly Samai, Ragi, Amaranthus, Gangi, many varieties of Avarai, some Potato. Potato came much later. Earlier there was no potato. It was only after the British that Potato was introduced. Then after independence all kinds of influences have come in. Their estates were brought up by locals and other Tamil people.

Housing

Earlier the houses were all straw houses. It has been over 50 years since we converted them to filed houses.

Iron works

Earlier the iron implements made by the Kotas were out of Iron extracted from the ores here. But since my childhood, all the iron for making implements have been bought from around here. We have heard that people extracted Iron from the ore here. They are called Kollas or something. This was before the British occupation. The lamps that are there of iron at the temple of Chemmanattam were made from iron ore stones available at Anaikatti.

Human diseases

There have been many epidemics before the doctors came over here. There was Cholera, that we called Black, then there was the 'lice' disease. Then after the doctors came following the British, there are no epidemics.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 6.4 24-10-1991 Kodumudi

Nanja Gwoder is an agriculturist on the Nilgiri plateau. He talks about the traditional agriculture of the Badagas and the changes in agriculture over the years.

Nilgiri Plateau
Nanja Gowder, Badaga, Kodumudi, Nilgiri Plateau

Personal profile
Nanja Gowder, Age 78 years; Kodumudi.

Traditional agriculture
In old days, our agriculture was different. We would go into the fields, and cut back all the shrubs, bushes, herbs etc. We would then heap them and burn them on the field. Then the field would be cleaned and prepared, and Samai, Beer Gangi, Gangi, Ragi, etc would be sown. Beer Gangi etc would be cultivated near the villages. We used to use only cow dung manure. No other manure would be put. Then we would sow by broadcasting the Samai. After 3/4 months after sowing Samai would be ready for harvest. Samai would be sown in April. Some people would plough the lands and then sow -those who have the facility, over poor folk would use the hoe to turn the soil. By August after April-May-June-July, by August the harvest would be made. Each person would harvest 3 bags/4 bags/5 bags and that is all because only family labour is employed and only the family is to be fed. We could not keep coolie and outside labour to work the fields. So such was the agriculture during my father's day, and I was aware of these practices. Samai, Ragi, Gangi, Wheat all these in the April crop. Those days we would have only one crop annually. From April to August. After August we had only coolie jobs to look for -no agriculture.

Agriculture
After that, we started growing Potatoes. When we used to sow Potato, the rains were good. And we have synthetic (foreign) fertilizer, supplied by Parry and Co., Shaw Wallace, Mysore Co., etc. They had agents here and they would give us fertilizer on account. In each village there used to be agents, who would give fertilizer on account. These were company agents. They would trust us and make advances. Then, during harvests of potato etc in 4 months, the agents would pick up the potato and sell them and the advance was settled. Such was the modus. The market was at Mettupalayam.

After the harvest of Potato, in the same fields, Samai, Gangi, Ragi, Wheat etc, would be sown. For these no fertilizer etc., was required because the fertilizer put for the potato is enough for these crops. Even cow dung manure is not necessary. The crop will come up in the same fertilized field. Those days, there were good potato crop, good grain crop and we were happy and contented. After those few good years, the rainfall started troubling us. Because of rainfall problems, we could not sow and reap potato well. We used to plant potato in April, and harvest in May-June-July-August. Then again in November, we would sow water potato; Potato for which we would bund water. Not rain fed. And in Dec-Jan-Feb-March, it would be harvested. Then if we leave March, from April onwards we would put hill Potato. Now, we do not have that convenience. That was the rotation cropping those days.

Lake Blithe started, and from then onwards our work ceased. We do not have the capability to grow potato any more. Now, even if some one puts potato, those who sow 1/2 bag now sow 1/4 bags, and somehow we manage, with debt upon debt. When we were thus sowing potatoes with heavy loans, the government advised us to sow atleast some tea saying we have been destroyed by sowing Potatoes. Now, please plant Tea, so you can atleast manage. They guaranteed us thus. Last year we put tea and the whole thing was destroyed. We put the saplings in November because they gave the plants in Nov-Dec-Jan-Feb-March are dry periods and when they gave it in Nov. none f them survived the dry spell. Now, again we have again put Tea, which they gave in good time, and that has survived. In the same plot if we had put potatoes and wheat following, we would atleast get food to eat for 2 months. Now, if we do not put potato there, we cannot sow wheat there. Now-a-days we do not put any organic fertilizer for wheat. We only grow vegetables etc. and then grow wheat in those fertilized fields.

Agriculture

Ownership of land has always been there with pattas. We never used to have lease lands. We would have the soil and burn the organic matter that had grown there during the follow period. That burnt matter was our fertilizer. These organic matter would be there after about 2 years of fallow. This year we would cultivate one patch, and the next year another patch while the first would be fallow. After 2 years again we would cultivate the first patch after burning the organic matter. That is the nutrient for cultivation. Ever two/three years, we would cultivate that patch. This was the agricultural practice of the Badagas all over the Nilgiris. Later, after potato spread, and synthetic fertilizer came, when seed potato spread, the agriculture was intensified.

Plantations

There have been Eucalyptus and wattle plantations for a long time, since my grandfathers period onwards. In this area there we not many shola forests anyway.

Livestock rearing

In Anaikatti we used to keep cattle. We could not keep 200/300 buffaloes and cattle and graze here. So, we used to keep them there. There was no agriculture there and there was no problem of grazing in agricultural fields. We would just leave the livestock that would graze in the forests. Animals would graze on its over and come back. We only had to milk the livestock, make Ghee; there was no question of selling milk. We would sell the Ghee and manage with it. During my father's time, that was what we were doing. Now, we keep one cattle per house, and sell some milk to the cooperative and manage. Those days there was no question of selling milk.

Wildlife; Hunting

There was wildlife around here and the Whitemen came for hunting. Dorais would come for hunting tigers, wild boar, Sambar. There are one or two Tahr, but it is difficult to shoot them. I have seen Tahr near Bikkepatti by my eyes about 30 years ago. Now, there are no Tahr, because there is no hunting since hunting is banned, the Tahr are not sighted. Only hunters would see the Tahr. Below Bikkepatti, by the sides of streams, only crags, they used to be there grazing. I have seen it when I went hunting. Now, the guns have been taken away and none goes hunting. I am sure even now Tahr must be there.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 6.5 24-10-1991 Kukkal

Jogi Gowder is an agriculturist on the Nilgiri plateau. He talks about changes in agriculture on the Nilgiri plateau. His village is situated on the northern rim of the Nilgiri plateau, towards the east. The village overlooks Sigur plateau, Coimbatore plains and in the distant the Satyamangalam range. This is an important point on the Nilgiri platea from which the lower plains were accessible. The Sigur temple was administered by the Badaga residents of this areas. There is also a fissured group of Badagas on the Satyamangalam plateau across the river Moyar, who claim to have migrated from this area. The village and the area is the catchment of the stream Kukkaltorai, that was in spate and floods caused heavy damage to the village. This is the stream that flows out via the village settlement of Tengumarada on the Coimbatore plain. It is the people of this area that identified land, requested the administration to allot the land and experimented with the co-operative form of farming.

Nilgiri Plateau
Sigur Plateau
Jogi Gowder, Badaga, Kukkal, Nilgiri Plateau

Personal profile
G.K.Jogi Gowder, Age- 73 years, Badaga, Kukkal.

Traditional agriculture
When I was just of age 10 years, agriculture, our basis was different. There was no fertilizer. We used only a organic manure. We would use organic manure and so a little agriculture. During those days, we would put organic manure in fields, and grow Ragi, Samai, and consume that. But if you consider the fruits in the forest, how many varieties there were! Oranges, Jack etc, etc., some 10 different fruits. I have myself consumed so many fruits in the forest -Nagamara fruits, Gottemara, Guina, Peaches, etc all this would grow in plenty. Oranges, we could not even describe and imagine. Even around the villages there used to be many fruits. Even I have contracted them for over Rs.2 lakhs. The fruits we got only for 3 seasons. After that the fruit trees were attacked by an epidemic.

Ragi, Samai, Gangi, Wheat, Amaranthus, Sesame, etc., were our main crops, and productivity was good. We only used the hoe to work the soil -no ploughing because there are no flat areas around here. We would turn the soil, break the clods and sow the seeds. Mullu, Kottu, Mammutti were our agricultural implements. The Kotas of Tiruchigadi were the ones who made these implements for us. When I was of age, Mullu was available in the market. The rest of the implements we got from the Kotas.

Potato pests
After 1962, Lake Blithe came and agriculture itself was made impossible. The govt. researched supplied all kinds of insecticide and fungicides, but none of them were effective permanently. Anyhow, during rains, some disease would strike and that was the end.

Agriculture
All that has changed with the decrease in the rainfall for the past 10-12 years. We used to have 2 harvests -2 growing seasons each year. Ragi would be sown in March end, and 4 months later harvest it, ie., July end. There was not too much potato only 1/2 bag, 1 bag. Ragi and Samai were in the same season. After that, it it rains well, we would sow Wheat, Gangi, Avarai etc. Avarai can be put in both seasons. But the second season is sown only after seeing the monsoon. During Oct-Nov normally there is a lot of rain. Such was the rain. But since the crop disease struct rain has decreased and crops have become unviable. Oranges that were planted in pits used to yield a lot.

Livestock rearing
We used to keep cattle in Sirur. In an year, 9 months the cattle/buffaloes would be there. Only if there is some big festival or something the cattle/buffaloes would be brought up - After Ragi, Wheat, Samai have been harvested, the cattle/buffaloes would be driven up here to graze the straw of the plants. They would be brought up in Jan-Feb-March, by April- May they would go down again. That time for the good straw and grass here they would be bought up. At other times the cattle/buffaloes would be there itself. They were not for selling milk, but for making Ghee. There is a walking path from here to Sirur.

Livestock rearing
Those days we would keep cattle and buffaloes at Sirur. One person who have atleast 10 heads, 50/60 was more like it. The Irulas would look after them, but we must also be there. The cattle/buffaloes must be milked, it must be converted to Ghee and then sold. We would stay there. Once a week we would come here and collect our provisions and walk down to Sirur. It would take about 3 hours to go and 4 hours to come back here. The route is via Kukkal thorai.

Rainfall; Water resources
The rains have also progressively decreased. How many springs were here. Innumerable springs were here. All the springs had dried. Even the big streams the headwaters of Kukkal thorai became dry. In my childhood the stream was perennial. During this season, it was not possible to cross the stream. The bridge across was put in 1972, during MGR's reign. Before that we had to cross the stream, and the stream was full that two of us had to hold each other and cross it. That was if we had to go to Kotagiri to buy provisions.
estates have been bought up by our folks and are now doing agriculture in them.

Rainfall; Water resources
Now, rains are decreasing. Only this year rains have been good, but even then the springs have not sprung up. Spring brings about water all-over the place. Now, that water is not there. Even for our drinking water has to be brought from Billicombrai. Even that has to be rationed. Now, it is in surplus. There is a lot of demand for water. For the past 10 years it has been difficult.

Forest resources; Wildlife; Shikar
In the forests there were Neri, Nigamara, Kottamara etc., that used to bear fruits that were like Ghee and Honey. In this area there was lots of such forests. Not so much in the Kotagiri area. After the monkeys evolved, there is not one fruit left on the trees. The monkeys eat them all. Now, they have increased so much in population, and come so close to human habitation, and eat all fruits. Then there are also many wild boar that trouble over agriculture. There are no elephants here. They are confined to our Sirur area. But Sambar are many, Kattu adu or barking deer, wild boar, rabbits, etc., Earlier people used to come for Shikars. But the present government has taken away our licenses and our guns. Here and there, there are a few guns, but the older people have died, and the younger people do not know how to use them. Now, you cannot imagine the wild boar population. It has become impossible. Even agriculture has become difficult. In the daytime monkeys, and in darkness, wild boar.

Estates
The estates around here were held by White men. There was a lot of coffee and no tea at all. There was so much coffee around here. But since the rain has decreased coffee has been replaced by tea. It must be 15 years since. Oh! the coffee estates here were unimaginable. In our village, Ooty Krishnappa etc., an Iyer was holding a big estate here. Then there was a Mandrakocchai Estate, it was a Badaga holding 200 acres of Coffee. Then Tuneri Combai, Asiengi, is still having held by our man. He is a man of Kagguchi. Cheria, a Shivachari, that was a big estate. Guddenna Estate of 700/800 acres is now bought by a Kannadiga. Earnby Estate nearby was an estate of a dorai and that has been sold. Then below that Gegite, Munda dodava, it was a White man's estate that was sold off. Geremora was another dorai's estate that has been sold. There were many Whitemen here who have sold their estates. All these

Plantations
Eucalyptus and Segai used to be there, but little. There was only silver in the coffee estates. That was most important for coffee estates. Silver would also regenerate on its own. Now, for the tea estates they plant them. There were not many Eucaly and Sugai. Only now they have increased.

Sirur temple
Even now, there is a big temple at Sirur that is looked often by our Village. By tradition, our elders were doing agriculture at Sirur, and at that time a god came and proclaimed a truth -that "you have to do service to this deity without a break". And since then, by generations, we have looked after the temple. It is the Irulas who are the priests at the temple. It is me who have appointed them and pay them wages for it, and food for them. It is a forest area, and elephants come, tigers come, and for this we have drums, and drumbeats to scare them away. And these are still there at Sirur. There is a village headman at Sirur who is responsible.

Tengumarada

Tengumarada is people from the Kotagiri side. They have bought land there and do agriculture there. It is none of us. Those days agriculture was done at Sirur, but now-a-days there are no possibilities to do agriculture. Now, the Irulas do a little agriculture here and there of Chillies etc.,

Markets

There was only a short cut to Kotagiri via Gundada, Tarnadu, and we had to carry provision one our heads. It would take many hours. We would need jaggery, some rice for festivals, salt, oils etc. But we also used to make oil. Even now oil pressing units were around. We have a lot of castor, which we used to process.

Settlement

When I was young there were only 35 houses in this village when I was off reasonable age, about 50-60 years ago. Now there are nearly 150 houses here.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 6.6 25th Oct 1991

The discussion in Kukalthorai became a meeting in the village square. Various people from the village participated in the discussions. They related the presence of some archelogical sites in the distant with some bizarre stories. I could not even locate the site on the map and could not visit it. The area seemed to be in a desolate area far from human habitation. Across the Moyar, is the Satyamangalam plateau where there is a fissured group of Badagas. Some in the group talk about this and the Badaga community on the hills.

Nilgiri plateau
Meeting, Badaga, Kukkalthorai, Nilgiri plateau

Local tradition
There is a hill called Durgamalai in these parts. It is beyond Guddanni Estate, beyond Marvalla Estate, you have to go down after 2 miles. There, people used to come from the Barracks to hunt and play shikar. Two or three people would come, out of which one was a Gurkha, he was in the military, he was staying here, working in the barracks. He has gone over to those parts and says 2/3 things. If there are some who have gone with the hunting party and we ask them, they would be able to say something. There are some like that in Coonoor, who used to go along with them for hunting, but I do not know their name. They say, on top the hill there is a tank or a well, and that tank or well is always full of water, and this sink here, in the rainy season gets muddy and would carry all kinds of fruits that call on its bank like fig fruits, these fruits would also be seen in the well on top of that hill. How did these fruits surface there? This is a mystery.

Secondly, in the next hill, there is a big tunnel, and that is straight connected to Mysore they say, but we cannot get into it. A fort is there I have not seen it, but only heard it from the shikaris. The nephew of the person who went to hunt in here in the 'shed' at Kukkal thorai, and he would be able to tell you about the shikari in Coonoor. Stanley he is called.

There is a temple there called Dandarayan. Even now we go and offer prayers at that temple. Earlier the Kurumbas used to be the priests at the temple. Those days, when they go and offer prayers there, they buy and take things from the shop to offer prayer, and after prayer if you push a stick inside the sanctum the money spent for the prayer things would be reimbursed, so say the elders. But now, this does not happen after a person asked for reimbursement twice. So that hole in the rocks in the sanctum is closed. There is a chain that rotates in the stream, and even now the sound is heard. I have gone to the temple. People have gone till the Chettigorai waterfall. Beyond which is the Durga malai.

Floods
The floods occurred here in 1978 and caused a lot of destruction. There was a land slide, above the check dam in Vuilatti, and the check dam was filled up impounding water. When water level rose, it broke the dam and gushed down, and within 3 to 4 minutes, the whole village was inundated. From a bhai shop 5 people were missing. Then one and two here and there, and a total of 11 people were killed. The house were all destroyed. It happened on the 4th Nov. at 7 pm. In Nov 5 and 6 there was no communication to here. Then MGR was abroad, and he was informed who said he would come to the village on his return. Then he came to Ooty, visited Ketti that was damaged and then came to this place and agreed to make all arrangement. He immediately arranged for the bridge. Then for 68 houses to be built, he get reserved forests denotified from the central government. Then along with a Christian organization. GT Pandiya Raj and his brother Soundara Pandiyan agreed to built the houses.

Badagas in Talavadi
There is a place of Puzhinjur, on the way to Chamarajanagar in Karnataka, 12 kms of the border. There, there are Badagas. Here in Tamilnad, near the Talavadi hill are - Kottada, Hosatti, Mavatti, Seekatti, Devaruattam, like this there are 4/5 villages of Badagas and some Lingyats.

From those villages some people have come and settled here recently. They are the majority. And there is a lot of contact between this village and those there regarding marriage etc. If we take a women from there we would bring her here and then finish the marriage. We marry into both places, here in Kukkal and other areas. But other villages in Kukkal etc do not have marriage relations with those in Hasanur,

Talavadi. In this village, the majority is not the people who were born and brought up here, but people who came from Hasanur are more. Another important reason is that this is a very dry area, before orange came here. From here, people used to go to Attikan Estates, stay there for months, work and bring back wages. Attikan Estate is BR Hills in Karnataka. And since we kept going and coming to those parts, we have since been having relations there. Then, slowly when this area started progressing with orange plantations etc., people started migrating from Hasanur area to this area. So people migrated from here over 80 years ago to Attikanam Estate area.

The Hasanur area Badagas are all people who went from Nilgiris and settled down there. This person is from Pulinjur in Karnataka. Ana all those Badagas are people who have migrated from Nilgiris.

Those days we had to walk from here. The route goes via the Dandarayan temple. It would take 1-1/2 days from here to reach Mysore-Talamalai/Thavali. So the Hasanur Badagas are people who have migrated from here. This area was a dry area and that place was sparsely populated to herd cattle/buffaloes, and there are a lot of forests there to graze cattle. Here, that facility was not there. So, these people have gone with their cattle/buffaloes and settled here and there. Like the Todas who have mands here and there with just 2/3 houses, similarly the Badagas have settled all over there in Hasanur.

I have come here 14 years ago. There we grow Ragi, Samai, Varanellu, Sala avari, etc. all these crops and all the agriculture in rain fed. There is only one crop in the year. All other cultural characteristics are simmiliar. The Hetle amman festival is common. When we conduct the Hette amman festival here, those people would come and mingle. There must be about 200/300 houses in that area. They also marry among themselves. Even those people there have the same exogamous clans like Merkunad, Todanadu, etc for marriages.

Badaga groups

Example I am a Kukkar area person. This is a part of Todanad. In Todanad there are two groups, one Tadagayi; and other is the Kukkal group.

We have 4 major divisions in the Badagas; Todanadu, Porangadu, Merkunad, Kunda. We do not have much contact with Kunda people. In Todavanad area, there is Ebanad village who is our 'mama-machchan', we we can take women from there. Similarly, for Eknoni etc, we cannot have marriages because they are considered Kukkal clan; our families are there; Nannanad, Edone, Kalhatti.

Now, if we have a child we would decide the marriage after enquiring the clan to which he belongs. This division into clans has been done since time immemorial. There are many groups. There is a separate group called Sholur, Kukkal, Todanad, Kaikar, Merkunad, Kunda; then there are some Lingayats in Deenatti who we do not give or take women, but we exchange with the Kaggucchi people, and they haves marriages with the Deenatti Lingayats. We cannot directly marry with the Dheenatti Lingayats. And the Lingayats do not eat meat, and the habit of eating is followed according to the patriclan.

Dheenatti are a Lingayats sect, but do not wear the linga. The Lingayats who wear the Linga -we have no links with them at all. They are Kongu people, and we do not enter their houses, even though we speak the same language. Thus there are many groups.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 6.7 26-10-1991

Nilgiri plateau
Nari, K.P., Toda, Kodanad, Pangadu mund, Nilgiri plateau

Toda munds
K.P.Nari is my name. There are many munds around here. This is Pangadumund. There is one called Bedkal mund where my younger brother lives. Maddurimund is down there, and there is Korduri mund, and Nerdal mund. Over all there must be about 50 houses here. There must be some 10/12 buffaloes with me. All the buffaloes that I had have died. If you include all the four mands, there must be about 50 buffaloes. There is a small temple and a Ti is there on the other side about 1 mile away. It does not have a name. Even now it exists, but there is no one caretaking for 4/5 years now. The tradition discontinued because we would not get buffaloes here. We should have a white buffalo and that is not available.

Toda groups and distribution
There are not many mund in these parts, most of us Todas live on the other side towards Ooty. We have been here since my grandfather's days. How they came here, I do not know. They must have moved here from Ooty but we have been here for very long. We are the same Todas as anywhere else. There are two groups of Todas : Tartar and Thewali. Our temple priests came from the Thewali group, Tartar do not become temple priests. Iam a Themali. There are no marriages between them. No giving or taking girls among the two groups.

Livestock rearing
Earlier we used to drive the buffaloes from one mund to another. Even now we sometimes drive the animals from place to place. But here I do not go. Beyond Avalanche there is a mund. They drive the buffaloes from there to other areas. People here do not go from mund to mund.

During the dry season, normally they would drive the buffaloes from place to place. They would go only if they have a mand in higher places. In rainy season, they would return to their own mund. The Avalanche mund people do this regularly, even today. It is the Tartar peoples mund. Only those people will go. The Tartar people go from mund to mund. Even the Themali could go, but they should have a mund to go to. If there is a mund, they they can drive the buffaloes there.

We used to kill buffaloes at our funerals. Now, we kill one only for each death. Earlier we would kill many.

The mates for the buffaloes are kept here itself. If the buffaloes become many then we would sell them to the Kakkas who would drive it from Masinagudi for slaughter.

Pilgrimage and Travel
We regularly go for pilgrimage to Nanjangud. I have gone there 2/3 times. I have gone with my father from here. We go to Nanjangud to offer prayers, and to shave our heads, bathe in the stream etc. This has been a tradition even from my grandfather's period. Those days we had to walk for some distance and then take a bus.

Toda Christians
Some Todas have become Christians. I am a Hindu. If we do not have means, they help us. There is a Daniel Kodan, even in those days they converted Linguris amma. That was a long time ago, when they were of your age may be.

ORAL HISTORY OH 7.11 13/01/1993

This is the most detailed interview on the technology, operation and running of tea estates on the Nilgiris.

Nilgiri Plateau
Joseph, Planter, Coonoor, Nilgiri Plateau

Personal profile
Mr. Joseph, UPASI.

Ideal climate for tea
The ideal climate would be well distributed rainfall. Nilgiris gets 35" to 45" only. In Highways, rainfall is about 80" to 90" and it is distributed round the year. Only Feb-March are dry months. Thus the cropping will be more. Manure application ideally done.

In S.W. Monsoon area like Nilgiri Wynaad, the rain is not uniform. Tea can survive in any elevation. The lowest elevation is about 2000 ft. It can grow at lower elevations. In Kerala, near Mudakayam, Kancharapalli, it is about 400 ft above MSL. There is tea there. But in such areas rubber is more suitable than tea.

Mainly climatic factor yields a better crop in the Anamalais. Nilgiris Estates are at elevations of 4000-6000 ft. Colder climate, Frost damage, Drought, land wind etc.,

In Anamalai, it is mid-elevation. Estates are situated at 3500 ft. In Gudalur also it is 2400 ft - 3500 ft. gudalur is the warmest area. And Nilgiris Wynaad has the longest drought -say 5-1/2 months. After Nov. 15 till end May. Soils are very clayey, so the plants are able to withstand the drought.

In Nilgiris, the soils is sandy-loam. So 120 days drought will be very bad. Even 100 days drought will do damage. Whereas in the Nilgiri-Wynaad can withstand 180-190 days.

Anamalai again has sandy-loam soil. It cannot withstand longer drought. But there is well distributed rain in the Anamalais. Even March you get rain in Anamalai,. So drought is 2 to 2-1/2 months.

Varieties of tea
There are 3 varieties of tea bushes.
Camellia chinensis ; variety assamica
" " " chinercy
" " " Combod

Assamia, China and Cambod, three major types. But what you find all over here are hybrid varieties. Assamia is broad leaved, high yielding, but drought suspitible. China type has good quality, small leaved, less yield and drought resistant. Cambod is in-between. It is not very popular because hybridisation has taken over. Tea being a highly cross-pollinated plant, by nature itself hybridization takes place.

In the olden days seed basis are grown in the estates. You allow a plant to grow to seed it. In Assamica variety there is Dongri manipuri, Doom Doom Manipura, Korijon, Veljols, all these good varieties are there. They collect these seeds from chosen seed producing bushes called seed baris. Seed baris would be grown in each estate.

Of late, over the last 2/3 decades, we never go for planting seedlings. We have selected our own cloves, vegetatively propagated cloves.

In seedling tree there will be a lot of difference between bush to bush, one will be light coloured, one will be dark; one will be large leaved, another will be small leaved. We do not do any hybridisation. We only select seed baris for seedling trees. It is not being carried out now. That was in British days. Now, that operation is stopped.

We do only clonal multiplication now-a-days. In a seedling area you have different varieties. We observe and choose the qualities that we want; large leaves, sucumbent shoot, larger bushes, can be more productive than periphery, and all four sides the bush should have other bushes. It should not be vacant, massive growth of branches, quick recovery after pruning, drought resistant -it should be flushing in the peak of dry month. So such plants we select, say about 200 plants. Individually the yield will be recorded every week or once in 10 days. We then select the consistently high yielding plants and tested for quality, fermenting character, rooting character etc. After that we may select 20/30 bushes as good. From these we take cuttings and multiply in the nursery. We take hard green wood cutting to multiply. One mother leaf must be there for each cutting of 1-1/2". Strike them in the rooting bed.

(Billimalai estate frost injury)

Cutting will be distributed to different agro climatic conditions. Cuttings from the mother bush will be sent to different agro climatic conditions. Like this cloves are selected and exchanged. For the last 30 years it is this method mainly.

There are cloves suitable for different agroclimatic conditions. One popular clove in UPASI 9 or B6/61. It is popular is all the districts. It is because nursery rooting is very good PH is another factor. Tea grows well in soils of 5 or so. Acidic soils. So we have to first test the PH of the soil. In certain areas the PH will be higher. B6/61 or UPASI 9 can survive in any time of jPH upto 5.5 or 5.7. So it comes up well in other areas also.

Tea Estates India have their own clove SA6. Similarly Harrisons Malayalam has W35. Then UPASI cloves are there. Craig More Estate has one clove 6017. All the small tea growers are now also planting cloves.

Replanting

A bush, the oldest tree in this area should be about 100 years -in all these areas. Replanting is done where rejennation proving or no other cultural practices are effective. The yield cannot be improved. Such stages come when they are 50/60 years old. The replanted area is mulched. It is 6017 - Craigmore clove. v6/61 is also there.

The bushes are pulled and replanted; or there is no tillage replanting. The old stump is cut to the ground level. Then immediately apply some 240 or Urea to starch the plant and cover with soil. Then the whole area can be planted without disturbing the soil. The advantage is less labour and economy.

After planting, survival is about 80%. In SW Monsoon area, May-June is the ideal time to replant. Here in the NE Monsoon are they plant in October- Nov, because July is a very drought prone month. We recommend earlier planting, say Aug-Sept.

Tea planting distance

In the older estates the bushes are planted at a 4ft x 4ft spacing ^ 2500 bushes/acre ^ 6000 bushes/acre. Then there is a 4ft x 2-1/2ft spacing. That gives 10000 bushes/ha. Then the latest is double hedged planting ie., 13000 bushes/ha. Staggered double hedge.

The 4-1/2" will be the walking row. That works out of 13,000 bushes/ha. In Assam you will find more bushes/ha. In Nilgiris all the layouts are there. The small growers are very progressive. In Gudalur are and Nilgirs, the small growers estates are almost equal to member estates. Some are badly maintained careless estates.

Planting

The 1st year we plant the tree. Like Bonsai Cultivation, tea must be maintained as a bush. So if we plant in May-June, after 4 months, in Sept, we do a centring ie., when you have a leader stem, all the nutrients will flow in the central stem and side branches will not thicken. The central branch should be cut off and nutrient should flow to the lateral branches. This operation should be done as low as possible. Even if it is done 2" from ground it is OK. It cannot be uniform to all the branches. It varies from plant to plant. So one plant will be centred at 2" level, another 4" level, another 6", because it depends on the lateral branch you leave behind in the centring. Minimum 10 to 12 mature leaves must be left in one or two lateral branches left out after centring. This operation has to be done 4 months after planting. The laterals are allowed to grow. Then cut at 16", then again at 20". That will be at the end of 2 yrs, 3 yrs onwards the bush is ready for plucking. The bushes are brought to yielding level. 3 yr you may get around 1000 kgs of made tea/ha. 4 yr, it may 2500 kgs, 5th year, 3600 kgs/ha.

After the end of the formative prunning, in the 2nd cycle onwards, the yield can go up. By the end of the 3rd year, the bush cover will be achieved. it wont be about 24".

A periodical shoot after prunning. In plucking it is the periodical growth that is plucked. After you get 4 leaves and bud, you pluck 3 leaves and a bud and leave one mother leaf.

So, first centring, then 16" cut, then 20" cut, the table is formed. Addition of mother leaf is very important for root stock and vigourous growth of the bush. Else, the plant will not increase in growth. This can go on till formative prunning at elevation+1. Meantime, fertilizer is added 5 times annually, with 60 kg of N and 90 kg of Potash. This is for first 3 years. Last 2 yrs it can be 60 kg, 20gms /plants, then 25/30 gms/plant after 2 yrs. Then with formative prunning it becomes an adult. Thereafter the yield may go up, depending upon the care.

Shade regulation in tea estates

The basis principle of shade is -at what temperature photosynthesis takes place. It takes place between 12 to 35 degree celsius. What we need is an optimum temperature around 28 or 29 degree celsius. So far that regulation shade is required. Shade regulates temperature and humidity. When temperature is around 25 degree celsius, humidity should be around 70%. This is idea. Supposing the temp is 33 and RH is 40%, the plant requires shade to make it optimum.

During monsoon months shade should not be too much. Sunshine houses is also less during monsoon. It would be 2/3 hrs a day. Whereas in the dry weather period, the sunshine hours would be 7/8 hrs. So, when sunshine hrs is low, we have to allow more light. We do this by lopping the shade. In the dry period, ie from Jan to May, we need shade. Once the monsoon months come May-June-July, they log the branches. By regulating the shade an optimum is provided. There are a lot of places in Wynaad at 2500 ft elevation, estates without shade. The only thing is where there is no shade, mites will be more. They are sap feeders on the leaf laminar. We have 4 types of mites: purple mite, pink mite; scarlet mite; red-spider mite; pale mite. Pink, Purple and pale mites belong to the order Ereophytes. They suck the sap. Then we have grips also. Mite appearance is directly correlated with shade. More sunlight -more mite.

Shade trees

Shade trees are mainly Gremellia robusta. The recommended spacing is 20 ft x 20 ft at the time of planting. Then after the end of the 1st prunning cycle, it can be made to 40" x 20", 20" x 20" means 250 trees/ha at the time of planting. Then it will be reduced to 140 t/ha at the time of 1st prunning cycle. Then 2nd prunning cycle ie., at the end of 8 to 10 years after planting it can be brought down to 40" x 40" ie., 67 or 70 trees/ha.

1st prunning is the formative prunning given at the end of the 5th year after planting. Thereafter in the mid-elevation conditions; the calculation is elevation+1; that is the formula for prunning cycle. In high elevation, because of the cold weather, the growth is very slow. So in 4 year period, the bushes would be small. So instead of 4 year cycle, it can be 6 to 7 years. Now, 6000 ft. elevation; then 6+1+7 year cycle. Whereas in mid-elevation 3000 ft elevation; 3+1=4 year cycle. Tea can also grow at 400 m. but the yield here will be more.

The Company estates, the large growers are situated between 2000 ft and 6000 ft. in south India. In Assam tea is grown in the plains. There the cultivation is very different. They are more quality conscious. Ours in South India is more quantity conscious. We pluck 3 leaves and bud or 4 leaves and bud. In assam, they only pluck 2 leaves and bud. In assam they pluck on 6 day round. Ours on 8 to 10 days rounds.

Manure and Fertilizer for tea

There is no experiment with organic tea in the Nilgiris like the BBTC Singampatti Estate tea. In the tea estates, teh tea bush does not get any organic matter. There are millions of tea bushes. Say an estate with 700 acres of tea; it will have 2500 x 700 = 17,50,000 bushes.

How can you apply organic matter? Here the organic matter is added by natural return of leaves by defoliation from shade trees, and burial of prunning is the source of organic matter. Once in 5 years or once in 7 years, the prunnings are buried in the soil. So that adds to organic matter. We are given inorganic fertilizer. For Nitrogen, we apply Ammonium sulphate, Urea, Calcium-Ammonium-Nitrate. Then for potash..... For every 100 kg of made tea, 10 kg of Nitrogen should be applied. So, if an yield of the field is 2000 kgs, we recommend 200mkg Nitrogenper year. This will be divided into 5 application. This is depended upon 3 site conditions : high organic matter, medium, and low organic matter.
For Low organic matter : 12 kgs of N/100 kg of made tea
" Medium " : 10 kgs of N/100 "
" High " : 9 kgs of N/100 "

So this total N application say 200 kgs should be divided into 5 applications of 40 kgs/application 40 kg N is mixed with 40 kg Potash. In SW Monsoon area, we recommend applications in May-June-Aug-Sept-Oct. 65% of the total N is applied in the form of Urea. 25% of N, as ammonium Sulphate in the pre-monsoon. The 15% of N as Ca-Am. Nitrate. NH_4SO_4 is applied in Apr-May-June- depending upon locality. The volatilisation loss is low. It can be applied soon after receipt of 3" of rain. But Urea application-volatilisation is 40%. So it is fit to be applied in cloudy weather, moild drizzling say June-Aug-Sept. Ca-Am-N contains 25% Nitrogen, out of that 50% in NH_4 and 50% in NO_3. The Noc is immediately used in Oct-Nov. The NH_4 will be gradually converted to NO_3 to be absorbed by the plant in the winter period. So the winter quality season crop of tea will be increased. Applying potash along with N is a must because the potash and N interact for better efficacy.

Phosphate is also applied in alternative years in the 1st year and 3rd years. We recommend mineral phosphate because of the cost factor. Rock phosphate is cheap. We recommend it, application by deep placement is the root zone, because it forms an absorbtion zone. It gets fixed in the place where it is applied. It is not mobile in the soil solution. So it should be at a root zone. It can be placed in Oct-Nov, when there is enough labour.

Pest attacks on tea

In areas that are blister affected, blister blithe; Exodesidium excence, which is a fungus. where you have more blister you have to spray Copper-Copper-Oxy-Chloride ie., Phytolon, Blitheox, or Blue Copper. Nickel Cholore is another fungicide. These will be combined together and sprayed. Blister control has be started from May-June upto Nov. In the Nilgiris blister blithe is very little. The atmospheric condition causes the blister. The leaf metaus. Nilgiris in general is a dry place, whereas in other areas, Anamalais, Periyar, Nilgiri, Wyanaad, the humidity is more. So wet conditions is here. In such areas, blister will be very severe. For the development of blister 80% and above humidity is required. Leaf wetness, combined with misty weather. Constant use of Copper at least 30 rounds have to be sprayed on weekly intervals - Copper-Oxy-Chloride + Nickal Chloride, ie., (Phytolon 210 gms + Nickel Chloride 210 gms)/ha. This is necessary to counter bliths. But this Copper addition every time induces mite build up in the dry season. So dry condition without shade + lopper causes mite build up. Cu is required for the multiplication of mites.

In the Nilgiris pests like mites and thrips are more common, but fungus attack is not much-confined to Nov-Dec. Thrips attack the plant from Feb onwards. May be the peak. We control them by spraying. We have EPA Environmental Protection Agency cleared chemicals eg., Dicophol/Thion/Zolon which is a Phosolene/Endrosulphon. Etheon is an achariside for the control of mimtes. So is Dichopho. Phosolence and Endosulphon are broad spectram which low mammalian toxicity. Now, economy has also become an

important constrain. The cost of chemicals are going up. Earlier it was Rs.30/- or Rs.40/- a litre. Now, it has become Rs.80/- or Rs.100/-.

Pesticide usage in tea

Most of the estates in the Nilgiris export their tea. So they are very chanciest of over using pesticide. Their export should not be affected. These pesticides are used for mites and thrips. but they cannot handle fungi. There is no question of excess application of pesticide. They are all well educated. They will spray only 3 to 4 times annually for both mites and thrips. This is less than our recommendation which is 4 to 5 rounds. So residue build up etc., are not valid. Some people are against Nickel Chloride. By this has been used as a fungicide from 1957 onwards in South India, and there are no complaints.

Pesticide

Pesticide application is about 750 gms or 1 ltr per hectare, per application. If it is a first year field, ie., first year after prunning, bushes will be smaller. We recommend 750 ml to 1l/ha. This chemical should be dissolved in water of 250 ltr or 400 ltr. For power sprayer 250 ltr. for knapsack sprayer 400ltr. When we use power sprayer it may be 150 to 350 ltrs of water, 350 ltr/ha will be for the 3rd or 4th year. after prunning. Usually, for larger bushes, they will not use power sprayed. Spray volume on an average can be taken between 200 ltr to 500 ltr. Only 3 annual applications are used. The chemicals are diluted to a great extent and then sprayed. Even there the tolerance limit is 8ppm for dichaphol is manufactured leaf. So there is no residual affect.

Pesticide usage

In the Nilgiris, residual pesticide is not much, because pest attack is not much. In Vandi Periyar, pest attack is heavy. All four mites are there, sever thripe are there, Heloppeltis is there, nettle grubs will be there. Even there these do not use too much insecticides. Our recommendation is 4 to 6 rounds in such area, but they do only 3 to 4 rounds.

Dichophol, Kelthane - for mites exclusively.
Etheon or Tafetheon
Phosolene or zolon
Endosulphon in Thyodol - All cleared by EPA.

In our institute any new insecticide or fungicide will be tested for taint. The insecticide smell should not be there in made tea, ekg., Orthodifoliton a fungicide for blister blithe. At 12oz/acre it gives very good results. But this had a taint, and we had to drop it. So when you do sulphur spraying etc, there will be a taint, and nobody will buy. Only when UPASI approves a chemicals, the planters will use them.

Let us say mites are there and you apply Dicophol, in the 1st year after prunning. 750 ml in 250 ltr or 500 ltrs of water. For power sprayer, the spray volume per hectare will be less. For a knapsack sprayer double that will be required. So it will be 150 ltr to 400 ltr dilution. If the bush in large, one has to give a drenching spray with a dilution of 450 ltr/ha in a 4/5yr field. So with this dilution there is no question of residue. Moreover, these are low mammalion toxicity chemicals. Also, in the soil all these chemicals get disintegrated. We use a weedicide, Gramazone, 2-4D, Divron, Glyphosate, Gramazone disintegrates the moment it comes in contact with the soil 2,4-D we recommend in May or October. The dosage is 1:4 kg/ha. At that level, there is no residue build up. All the literature is there at the Tea Research Institute of UPASI at Valparai.

Tea plucking labour

The permanent workers get wages of around Rs.45/-. In hand they may be Rs.30/-. Minimum they have to pluck 14 kgs/day 8 hrs work. 14kgs/day of green leaf. If they pluck more they get incentives. Between 20-30 kgs @10ps /kg; 30-40 kg @ 8ps/kg. A women may pluck upto 65 kgs a even 100kgs/day.

Total number of plucking rounds for each bush will be about 30 rounds/year. 30 or 34. The plucking average/day/worker of green leaf would be around 24kgs/plucker ~21kgs. While on a very high cropping season, they could pluck upto 100 kgs. Normally in Nilgiris, they pluck about 65 kgs/day.

In Uganda, one Negro boy was brought to Coonoor. He comes from his home every day running 8 km. Then, he plucks about 350 kgs/day. He cam here and demonstrated. Our South Indian fastest plucker can pluck only 250 kgs during the same time, but next day she fell ill.

Tea production

In Tea estate production is measured in terms of made tea kg/ha. This is called yield. The crop is the overall total output. It is also made tea in kgs. for the whole estate.

The yield in South Indian estates vary. There are estates that yield nearly 4200 kg of made tea/ha. The Tea Estates India in Highwavies, Jayashree in Anamalai, and Forsley Estate in Kotagiri yields 4,100 kg. Then Havukkal, Glendale near Coonoor yields 3,800 - 3900 kgs/ha. These are all clonal area. You can make out the uniform green of the clonal area, and the patchy green of the seedling tree areas.

The average production or yield in Nilgiris would be about 2,600 kgs/ha; Anamalais 2,800 kgs/ha; and Nilgiri Wynaad will be 2,700 kgs/ha. First Anamalai, then Wynaad, then Nilgiris. In Anamalais, there is well distributed rainfall and drought is less, and gaps (vacancies) in the estates are less. In clonal areas, there are no gaps because the planting has completely survived, while seedling areas, there are gaps. Infilling should be done to fill gaps.

Yield

In Nilgiri Wynaad, in CWS-Caroline Estate and Attikunnu Estate yield 3800 kgs/ha of made tea.

Tea manufacturing

1 kg of made tea requires about 4 kgs of leaf. The average outturn is about 25%. It varies with climatic conditions. In monsoon it would be 19 to 21%, whereas in cool and dry months it will be much more. This is the quality season. Average is about 25%.

Most of the tea in Nilgiri is Orthodox manufacture. You collect 2 leaf/3 leaf stage and rollers are used to curl the teak. Whereas in CTC, Cut-Turn-Churn is done with CTC cutters and rollers. CTC is manufactured in larger company Estates like Tea Estates India, Harrison-Malayalam, BBTC etc.,

In Nilgiris most of Tea is exported. So for export purpose they manufacture Orthodox tea. The aroma of the orthodox tea is more, it will light and pleasant to drink. Whereas CTC has strong liquor. Orthodox or CTC depends upon manufacture. 1 Kg of made tea can produce 300 cups of Orthodox tea; where 1 kgs of made tea 600 cups of CTC tea. The manufacturing difference is rollers are used for orthodox tea, whereas in CTC cutters are used. Fermenting etc are the same. The time of maceration, made by the roller and cutter. The Rollers will not destroy the cell structures -without much disturbance; whereas in CTC the cell structure is broken completely. So the quality components, Giaflamin, Giarubigin, they are brought out in different ways. Orthodox tea has flavour, light and mild. Some people prefer orthodox, whereas the common man prefers CTC strong lacquered tea.

ORAL HISTORY OH 7.12 13/01/93

Lingan was a Badaga farmer of the Nilgiri area. He was one of the many small planter himself, agriculturists who had taken to tae planting on their small plots of land. Lingan was an elected leader of the small patnters association of the Nilgiris. His postion was to lobby for the small panter section. Small planters were the major thrust of the government and UPASI for the expansion and increase in the production of tea. The involvement of small farmers in growing tea extended tea cultivation area in the Nilgiris. It was also instrumental in the spread of tea to the so call "non-traditional" areas where the cvlimate was not the most ideal for tea. But the release of improved varieties of tera made it possible to extend cultivation effectively into these areas. Further, the growing of tea by small farmers redefined the growth and manufacture of tea on the Nilgiris.

Nilgiri Plateau
Lingan, Planter, Balacola, Nilgiri Plateau

Personal profile
Mr. Lingan of Balacola.

Personal profile; Rainfall
He was Mr. Ramachandran's father's eldest brother. I was born and brought up at Kecchihatti. We are neighbours. Somehow Kundah has become a desert now. Right from 1960s, the rainfall has also decreased. That area does not get the rainfall Chamraj gets.

The region; Land use
Bengalmattam, is actually Ben-kal-mattam, a white-stone-flat. That is the original name of the place. We have six villages around. One is Kotiben, Bengal, Denad, Mynalai, Kokarbada. My village is Kotiben. All is 100% tea in Kotiben. The whole area changed to tea about 1910. This area has the first small growers planters in the Nilgiris -right from 1910. All others were European opened company Estate. Thaishola started in 1850s, but that was a Company European Estate. We were the first small growers in Nilgiris, growing tea from 1910. Before that we were growing potato, wheat, etc, primarily agriculturists. And what made us change to tea is very interesting.

Shade trees in tea estates
Farmers, small tea growers are planting more than 200-300 trees of Grewellia per acre. That is because it is money. After 20/30 years it gives a good income. And if I and you apply for tree cutting permit, it may not come for years, but if you go to the local contractor, he undertakes the job. If you have trees worth Rs.20,000/-. But as small farmers want money immediately for marriage or whatever, their application will take years, and will not even be entertained. The contractor will buy the whole thing for Rs.10,000/-. He is losing Rs.10,000 from his trees, and the contractor cuts the trees. Supposing he has a permit for 20 trees,he will remove 1000 trees. The Collector and everybody knows this. If you see in the evening, there will truck loads of Grewillia going down. The all go to Mettupalyam. It is sized there, and sent all over the place/country. Grewillia is soft wood.

This district has been spoilt by the Govt. ADMK and DMK Govts. This was a quiet and peaceful area, with god fearing people. My forefathers, for generations, they were protecting Govt, land, revenue land, grazing land, poremboke land, forests -Thinking Govt. lands nobody should touch. Right from 1972, everything is given as house site pattas to Ceylon repatriates and other immigrants right inside the village. From that time, we have lodged protest. Every Monday in the Govt. is a grievance day. They openly say wherever there is revenue lands, grazing lands go and occupy. Now the local people have become a minority. We have given representation and picketing, but of no use.

The previous Collector was Mr. Raj kumar. The Tamil Nadu Govt. has allotted him to give 680 house pattas to the Ceylon repatriates. This fellow has given 6000 pattas. He says in Tamil Nadu, Nilgiri dist. is the 1st in giving the maximum pattas. For him it is an achievement. Now, there has-been a ban on pattas.

The constructions in Ooty -who has given the permits -not you and me -it is the municipality. There is a standing rule saying there should be no construction within 100m from the lake, but the municipality has

allowed them to construct. Now, the local people are blamed for ecological degradation. There are certain rules -the law is very clear, but they do not bother. It is all money from the Chief Secretary to the peon. It has gone to dogs.

Do you think this timber is going without the Collectors knowledge? Definitely she knows it. She knows everything, but she cannot go against the politicians. Here the Collector is very powerful. We have only 3 MLAs in Nilgiris. So the Collector is the Prime Minister of Nilgiris.

Estates

My people were working in Thaishola Estate as agriculturists. We had 6 months works, and 6 months, no work. Only at monsoon, there was work. They working in the factory and the field. Those days they brought tea seeds and planted. This Chamraj Estate area actually belonged to our small growers. They all sold it to the Company. When the Thaishola company was planting, the rejected plants would be thrown out by the management. There rejected plants would be collected by these villagers working in the estates and planted on their land just for fun and curiosity. So this area had a lot of small growers tea plants. I wrote an article about it in the Tea time magazine.

Tea estates

The rejected plants that were planted in the farmers fields started yielding and became the first small growers. They collected these leaves, put it in a bedsheet and take it to Thaishola Estate. Whenever there is a shortage of leaves in the factory, they would buy. Our people would sit by the roadside, spread the bedsheets, to show the quality of the leaf. The Manager would come in the horse and look out. If there is enough leaf in the factory, he will say the quality of the leaf is poor and discard it. The farmers would throw the leaf there and come away. In the night, our own people working in the factory would be told to collect the leaf and he will come to our village and tell us he has collected the thrown leaf. This was going on for 5/6 years. Then one gentleman, Mr. B.K. Nandi Gownder. He was an educated man from Kecchihatti near Kundah. That time, about 1915-1920, about 300 or 400 acres of small growers estate was there. Mr. B.K.Nandi Gownder had a British friend in Ooty. He asked the British fried why the company was behaving like this. He rejects our leaf and collects them in the night for free. He suggested to Mr. Nandi Gownder to start a tea factory for these small growers. That was how the first tea factory came up for small growers, the first bought leaf factory.

Land use; Small growers

Merkanad area is beyond Chamraj, Dever betta area. Previously they depended upon potatoes a 100%. They came to tea later. That and Kundah area came to tea cultivation later. They are not doing well. There tea is badly maintained. But other areas, small growers are doing extremely well, ie., Bengalmattam area, Coonoor area, Kotagiri area, Gudalur area. All other areas except Kundah and Merkanad. Even Ooty area, Nanjanad, they are all converting to Tea, 100% cloval varieties.

Small growers; Land use

Small growers seem to plant more trees on their land than estates of companies. Right from here - Chamraj to Kundah you see only small growers. Now, about 75% of the production of Tea comes from Small Growers. The Small Growers would constitute about 25~30,000 ha. Now, we do not have actual figures, but every year it is increasing. This is the Nilgiri district, including Wynaad. And estates I think it is 28,000 ha.

In 1976, we had about 20, to 25,000 small growers. In 1984, the Tea boon has come. It was UPASI's impact. People were spending a lot of money cultivating other crops. The potato had nematode disease that could not be controlled. Near Kundah the area was full of coffee-previously. Prior to that 1984 tea boom, in 1981, there was a scheme by the Tea Board -for conservation of wasteland and other potato land into Tea crop. Ooty areas were previously only a vegetable cultivating area, mainly potato area. On a trial basis the Tea Board wanted to convert that into Tea with UPASI's technical advise. That started in 1981. That was very successful. That was called a non-traditional area. So people were assured that their land was suitable for tea cultivation. And the price was so good in the 1980s; per kg of green tea was sold at Rs.10/-; Now it is Rs.7/-. Four months back it was Rs.3.50p. It was Rs. 10/- per kg of green leaf in 1984. So a lot of people wanted to go for tea. The technical advise was given by UPASI. The HADP was supplying plants at subsidised rates. So large areas became tea. This was in Ooty area -Nanjanad area. It started from Thummanatti area; from there is spread to Ittalar, Nanjanad -all over.

[This area is called Kallikode. It was converted to tea about 15 yrs ago. It was good coffee area. They have planted over tea, a lot of shade trees. They are in a way tree farmers.

This area, Kundah side yields only 1,500 kgs of made tree/ha].

Small growers

The criteria for a small grower is that you must grow below 10.02 ha, ie., below 20 acres of land. This small growers association was started in 1935. I am an office bearer for the last 15 years. This association is only for Nilgiri Dt. In Kerala, there are only about 2000 small growers. In Himachal Pradesh, about 1,000. In Assam, total only about 500 acres. I have visited all the tea growing areas in India.

There are 365 Badaga villages in Nilgiris. The INDCO Serv has about 10,000 growers. They are also member of Small Growers Association. A Small Grower can supply to a bought leaf factory and the INDCO Serv factory. In our fold, we have about 120 factories -Bought leaf Factories. We produce about 30 million tonnes of tea. The INDCO Serv. together produce about 11 million, in 15 factories. INDCO Serv started in 1960. They started production in 1964. It is 100% government. They do not have any elections. Tamil Nadu has not seen any cooperative elections.

Actually we, the small growers represented to the Govt. for INDCO factories. That was in 1956, when the committee came (?). Bought Leaf Factories are owned by individuals. About 40/50 growers join together and construct a factories.

Th KVK, Krishi Vigyan Kendra at UPASI is mainly for small growers. The advisory service is for the large growers. KVK, NPA, UPASI, PAT, and we, we all work very closely. The problem are very similar.

Land use

The Tea Board also every year spends about Rs.20 to Rs.25 lakhs for conversion of other lands into tea. You have to apply to the Tea Board. Per hectare, the tea board will give you Rs.12,500/- as a subsidy. It is not a loan. There are many schemes that encourage tea planting. The first is the Tea Board. It gives for rejuvenation, about Rs.3000/- per ha. For replanting they give Rs.12,400/- All this is free money. Then, for conversion, they give Rs.12,500/-. this is for small growers only. This is rejuvenation, prunning subsidy; and replanting subsidy.

The HADP. For the new tea growers, the HADP supplies tea plants previously at 0.30ps, now at 0.50ps. In the open market it is at Rs.1.25 at UPASI. The UPASI will give 1 lakh plants at 0.50ps. In the open market it varies according to supply -demand. It would vary from Re.1.50 to Rs.2.00

The HADP gives, through INDCO factories, manure and pesticides at subsidy to the new growers. The subsidy is 25% for fertilizer, and 50% for pesticides. For the entire programme, the UPASI gives technical advise free.

The HADP gives saplings of tea through the horticulture. Even now all the subsidy is given. A lot of people utilised it. The govt, also made a lot of money from these schemes.

Bought leaf factories use 90% firewood.

Plantation labour

The plantation labour comes from almost all the districts of Tamilnadu. But previously there was a lot of labour from Kerala and Karnataka. Now labour from Kerala than has become nil, because they get much more in Kerala than here. Labour from Karnataka also very much reduced by 90%. We have about 10% to 15% in Thaishola only. They must be 3/4 generations. Before 1970s, we had labour from Tiruchi., Tirunelveli, Coimbatore, all those areas. Now, those people have also gone off and the majority is Ceylon repatriates. Those days those labour from the plains had some land but no irrigation facilities, so they left the lands and came here. Now, after so many irrigation works and construction activities, they get better wages at home. So many have gone back. Now, we only have Ceylon repatriates. Few people did settle here. Now, many are going back to their own places to settle down. Labours sons too do not want to work in the estates. In all the estates and everywhere you have schools. Children compulsorily go to schools.

Once he has passed 10th or +2, he is not interested to work in the field. He wants a job outside. So gradually they are moving out. And that is why the Ceylon people are getting jobs everywhere. From Wynaad onwards, everywhere they are the people in the plantation.

When I came to Wynaad in 1984, only the local Mappila muslims were there. Now the place is full.

Plantation labour

Before 1970, we had tea estate labour from Kerala, Karnataka, and Tirunelveli, Tiruchi etc. From 1970s Ceylon Repatriates started coming. The early labourers had some land in their village. When they started getting facilities in their villages some of the labourers returned. You can see the Gundalpet area now. That wasteland is not turned into a cultivated area. So the majority of people who came from Gundalpet have gone back. Also, the next generation of estate workers who has had education etc. does not like to work in plantations. Now, we have only 20% of this kind of labour in the plantations. Over 80% is Ceylon repatriates labours.

Fuelwood

For about 1000 kgs of made tea 96 cuft ~ 100kgs of fuelwood per tonne of firewood you can get about 700 kgs of made tea. And 1 kg of lignite coal will make 1 kg of made tea.

Kundah

This Kundah guest house was constructed in 10 day because Nehru was coming to stay for 2 hours. I studied in Manjur only. I know this area from 1956. Previously Manjur was a small bazaar. You have to search for a tea shop. When the construction came the town boomed. Now, 50% of Manjur is Ceylon repatriates. The construction labour also stayed behind. The majority of them came from Salem and Pollachi.

Tea trade

Bulk of the exports come from the larger estates, and the bulk of the local market tea comes from small growers. Our exported started only in the last 4/5 years when Russia was in the market. Once Russia goes away from the market, the tea price will depress at Coonoor. Previously we had only 2 traders buying for Russia -New Bharat and Jayalakshmi. Today we have 18 traders buying tea at the Coonoor Tea Traders Association. Why are they buying? Because if you are exporting shoes or garments, they ask you to supply tea also. The importer asks for tea also. Most of this trade goes via Singapore, Bangkok, or London.

Interaction among human groups

I am a Badaga. In my community we do not treat Harijans as a different class at all. Even Muslims we do not treat them differently. We would have a different area for them of course. We do not have communal or religious feelings. Everybody comes to our temple. They invite us to their temples too. The majority of our villages Harijans are working. But we have had problems with Ceylon repatriates. The whole trouble started after Ceylon repatriates came. It is very bad. It started with DMK. Karunanidhi. You settle them wherever you like. It started after 1970s. Before that Nilgiris was heaven. It was very safe. We need not lock our houses. Now, it is not safe. The Ceylon govt. only deported the criminals and rouge. They were originally Harijans from Tiruchi, Salem who went to Ceylon and are back here.

Population

I am an executive member in the Family Planning Association. Why this population growth in the Nilgiris. My community stands 1st in India in Family Planning. My people have on child; maximum 2 male or female they do not bother. But the other fellows, they do not believe in Family Planning. Take this Ceylon repatriates. There population increase.

ORAL HISTORY OH 7.13 13/01/1993

Nilgiri plateau
Village meeting, Badaga, Nanjanad, Nilgiri plateau

Personal profile
My name is Gujje Jogi Gowder.

Nanjanad

Water resource
Water is a major problem here. Water comes from 23 kms away. The scheme has been irregular. The pipe keeps breaking down. N M Linga Gowder, the 1st MP from Nilgiri was from Nanjanad. Ari Gowder, the MLA was from Uppadala near Coonoor. The MP Linga Gowder was MP for 10 years.

Grazing lands; Water resource
These areas used to be grazing lands above this village. About 10 yrs ago, the whole area was planted up by the forest department with Eucalyptus. The water source has dried up. Now, water is piped in from 23 kms away, and even that is not adequate. It is difficult. There are a 1000 houses. Even keeping cattle is difficult. When I was young there were only 300 houses here. 300 houses has grown to a 1000 now. Earlier we had 2000, 3000 heads of buffaloes. We sold it because there was no grazing lands.

Water resource
Water, the old source is still there but it is not sufficient, because the village has grown. So a new source has been tapped, but it has not brought water efficiently still.

Grazing lands
All that revenue land was used for grazing. Now, the settlers have occupied it. They have been given house sites as well as patta lands. And there is no land left now to graze.

Land use
Tea is now only recently coming in. Previously our main crop was potato. But it was become uneconomical now. Now, we have 200 acres of tea. We have demanded a factory to be set up here. An INDCO factory has been sanctioned. For tea we get subsidy.

Immigrants
The immigrants have been here for 30 yrs. But now the Govt. has given them houses out of revenue lands. Earlier when those lands were free, we had a lot of buffaloes and cattle. The regular grazing lands have been taken over by the FD and planted with Eucalyptus. So now these are no grazing lands and no cattle and Buffaloes.

Badaga tradition
In marriages, only after the women is 7 months pregnant, do we tie the thali only then have we been wedded.

We have 2 groups. One group of brothers, the other groups in the one from where we could marry girls.

This Nanjanad is Todanadu area. Todanadu, Merkanadu.....

We can marry with villages in the Merkanadu seemai. So there are some such rules.

Voices of the Sigur Plateau

The Sigur Plateau is situated north of the Nilgiri massif. This small plateau is contiguous with the Mysore plateau but seperated from it by the 300-meter Moyar gorge, or the Mysore ditch. The western portion of the platuea is moist, with an annual rainfall of about 100mm and the eastern edge is dry with an annual rainfall of 500 mm. On the east, the Sigur plateau falls off 300 meters, steeply into the Coimbatore plains. In a sense the area is wedged in by the Nilgiri massive on the north, the Wynaad plateau in the west, the Moyar gorge in the south and the decent into the Coimbatore plains towards the east. The area is endowed with a climate that would support moist decidious forests towards the west and dry vegetation forests in the east.

The vegetation has been in constant dynamics with the human population living in the area. The dense distribution of archaeological remains in the area, and the oral history and traditions of the area, suggest that the Sigur plateau has been under influences from the Coimbatore plains from historical times. These archaeological remains range from burial sites, with dolmens; hero stones; many remains of forts from the pre-British period until Tippu Sultan; many abandoned agricultural hamlets; abandoned and continued remnants of early British ventures in the area.

The dynamics of the livelihoods of the people, with their environment suggests massive changes to the vegetation of the area, significant changes in the modes of resource use of the people, huge changes in the composition and distribution of population; and a dynamic adaptation to the environment. The area was obviously more densely populated than at present. It has remnants of kingdoms, pastoralists, and many agricultural areas, some of these provided with irrigation. Over the years, as this historical dynamics plays out, the area has experienced changes in vegetation composition, with grass lands, forests, and scrub jungle; the distribution, spread and contraction of weeds like *Opuntia* and *Lantana*; and growing back of the forests in the modern period.

The cultural landscape on the Sigur plateau is diverse with many communities, small and large utilising the area from historical times. Again most of these early movements of people are from the Coimbatore plains, but later in the pre British period there are been movements from the Mysore plateau and the Nilgiri plateau. In the British period there have been influences of the Colonial regime, that mildly affected the culture and orginisation of the people of the area. And in the modern period, there have been massive influxes, as a consequence of development programmes, increased communication infrastructure and the conservation programme. However the older communities still live on with their means of livelihood and their oral histories enliven the changes during the period. These communities inhabiting the Sigur plateau have intensely interacted with each other and with communities of the surrounding area. Equations between these communities have constantly changes and positions have been renegotiated in a dynamic way, suggesting a very alive and interactive set of communities in the historical past. Numerous cultural sites, with temples and festivals carry legends of the area reinforce ritualistic positions in the social hierarchy. The area has had its measure of inter tribal violence reported in a very matter-of-fact way in oral histories.

The area has always been rich in various forms of wildlife. Many large mammals and predators shared this territory with the local communities. The oral histories cover a range of interactions between wildlife and local communities, from myths of interaction and relation with the wild animals to conflict with local communities. Shikar and game hunting has had its influence in the area and these initiatives have evolved into the conservation programmes that has had significant influences on the lives of people and their means of livelihoods.

Communication and markets have integrated the Sigur plateau in various ways with the outside world. The position of the Sigur plateau, tucked away a small distance away from one of the main thoroughfares of pre British India, has however been a know territory to the people on the Coimbatore plains and the Mysore plateau. The famous Gajalhatti pass connecting Coimbatore plains and the Mysore plateau, pass through the foothills of the Sigur plateau. In the pre British period, there are indications that the area has been integrated with the Coimbatore plains by various chieftains whose artefact remnants and legend survive to this day. During the period of Tippu Sultan, while he integrated the major parts of southern India, the Sigur plateau was also firmly under his control. Tippu had set up routes and established garrisons on the Sigur plateau. The early routes to the isolated and cold environs of the Nilgiri plateau all passed through this area. Thus this area had been well connected with the rest of peninsular India. However, in the British period and later, because of opening up other communication routes, parts of the Sigur plateau became a dead-end for vehicular communication.

The ten oral histories pertaining to the area have been collected from a variety of people. They include older tribal residents of the area, many of whom area community leaders; members of the landed community who are resident in

the agricultural villages of the area; and persons from the Nilgiri plateau who have traditionally used the Sigur plateau and its human and natural resources for pastoral activities, either as a subsidiary activity to agriculture or as a full time livelihoods. These carefully recorded oral histories present the changing landscape of the Sigur plateau as snapshots, as experiences, as a dynamic relationship, and as a feeling in their voices. The overall picture may be patchy and incomplete, but they depict the changing landscape from diverse viewpoints in their own voices.

ORAL HISTORY-OH 1.2 18 NOV 1990

Beguran was an agriculturist and a resident of Masinagudi. He was a Gowda, a non tribal upper caste on the area. He had lived all his life in Masinagudi and was well aquatinted with the archeology, geography and history of the area. Five generations ago his forefathers had migrated into the Sigur plateau from Karnataka. Masinagudi in the western extremity of the Sigur plateau, where is stays is closest to the Mysore plateau in Karnataka, rather than the Coimbatore plains. He worked as a forest guard for three years, between 1947 and 1950. He was a witness to the construction of the Moyar hydro-electric project; the Jungle warfare training camp in Kargudi and malaria eradication campaign. He was well informed about the early British exploits on the Sigur plateau, like attempts of expansion of coffee estates around this area. He died a couple of years ago.

Sigur Plateau
Beguran, Gowda, Masinagudi, Sigur Plateau

Personal profile
Beguran, 63 years old, resident of Masinagudi. Agriculturist.

Personal profile
I was a forest guard from 1947 to 1950, and I just stopped going to work after that. I used to get a salary of Rs.15 and a additional Rs.3 as malaria allowance, because malaria was very prevalent those days.

Origins
For five generations we have been here. We came from Karnataka near Tumkur and settled down here. Five generations would mean about 150 to 200 years ago.

Climate and Rainfall
Before 1937 the rainfall was very good and there used to be enough water all around. From June to November there would be frequent rains and agriculture used to be prosperous. Since then rains can be said only to be decreasing and can never be said to be increasing, although during certain years, there has been excessive rains and surface flows. In the 1930s and 1940s rainfall was adequate. There used to be good rains in August. June onwards, the skies would always be clouded. During August there would be heavy rains. Oftentimes, once or twice during my service, the Teppakadu Masinagudi road had been blocked for 2, 3 days. This has happened twice during my service. The Pykara river and streams flowing down flow that side would flow torrentially. After the many dams that have been built on those streams, these rivers are not big even during the rains. The bridge over the Moyar at Teppakadu has never been submerged, because the river flows way below the bridge.

Water Resources; Hydro-electric project
Drinking water is usually got from a well in the village and in olden times there were only about 50 houses in the Masinagudi hamlet. There is only one perennial well in the area and that used to suffice for all of us. After 1948 due to the hydro- electric project, water supply facility came to the village.

In 1946 was the Moyar hydro-electric scheme. The Singara scheme was from the period 1924 to 1932. I do not know about the 1932 construction. I only know the 1939 and 1947 schemes. Singara power house and the winch etc. were erected by the Germans. The skilled labour were mainly the Punjabis who worked along with the Germans. Menial labour and coolies had come from Tamilnadu and Karnataka and even from Andhra. But mainly Tamil Nadu and Karnataka and a few from Kerala. They all left the place after the completion of the project. After 1951, when the project was completed most of them left the place. During the peak of the construction period there must have been 10 to 12 thousand people in Moyar, Masinagudi and Singara.

It was during this time onwards, since 1947, that there was piped water supply in this area. In Moyar and Masinagudi, water supply was provided since 1948. It was only in 1948 that the Moyar Masinagudi road was laid.

Vegetation and Weeds
Earlier when the village was small, all around the village there used to be a lot of Lantana and Opuntia and other thorny bushes. As the village became bigger and bigger, the bushes and weeds have receded. They were not really cut back, but as people started swelling and moving around, Lantana decreased.

The trees and tree density were as they are today. The same trees, and the same density. Anoguessis dominating and very little Teak. Eastward from here, the whole place after all is "vyavasaya kadu" - agricultural areas; and from here eastward, till Tengumarada and Hallimoyar, it has always been quasi agricultural lands. And there were not many trees. Only around Manradiyar towards the foothills of the Nilgiris, along the Karimarahole river, there used to be some dense forests, and some big trees.

The British had an estate around those parts, called the Morgan estate. Even now that site is discernible, and there are remains of the coffee curing machinery there. There is a patch of ever green forests on that hill and that is the area that was the Morgan coffee estate. There is a three foot road that goes from Manradiyar avenue right to the estate. The estate was closed down even before my period and I do not remember any activity there. It had already become a forested area. Maybe during my grandfathers time the estate functioned.

Even Opuntia or the Prickly pear has decreased over the years. When the DFOs used to tour the area, they would take the cactoblast fungi, the white fungi from an infected plant with their walking sticks, and transfer them to the non-infected plants. They would even advise us to do the same if we see non infected Opuntia proliferating. Only if this plant was destroyed that things would be better- they would say. There used to be a lot of Opuntia earlier. Much more and many more times more than what you see in any area today. In fact in those days the Adivasis would simply survive on the fruit of Opuntia and buttermilk, both of which was plentiful in the area. Those days there was not so much of coolie work available and so, the Adivasis just survived on the Opuntia fruit and buttermilk. It was not the British who brought this plant to india, but it was they who attempted to destroy it.

Vegetation and Weeds

I do not know the weed Eupatorium. Lantana has been here a long time. There used to be another weedy plant called Kari akddi. That is still there in pockets.

Forest plantations

They raised a small plantation near the 16th mile stone on Ooty road before Mavinhalla. It was on both sides of the road. It was a plantation raised as per the working plan. They cut all the trees in the area, mainly Anoguessis and other trees, and raised the plantation there. There was no teak in the area. The plantation is near the Jayadeva avenue gate. There is even a huge watch tower or observation tower in the plantation. That place was clear felled and given for 'kumiri' cultivation for 2/3 years. Our townsfolk were doing agriculture there and looking after the plantation. They planted trees but there was no rain for a few years, and so the plantation failed. Anyway in this area rainfall is little. We get only the first few rains of the season. June rains do not come here at all. We get the first few rains and a few occasional showers afterwards, and the last few rains.

Forest utilisation

From the forests timber would be removed and auctioned. The Adivasis would remove honey, rock moss, tree moss, kadukkai, poochakkai, gum and resin from the Anoguisses tree, that excludes it during the summer months, seevakkai, etc. There used to be a contractor from Mettupalayam who would come and collect the minor forest produce and take it to the market. For this he would have taken a separate lease from the forest department. The forest department would auction the lease rights for collection of these MFPs by public auction in each range, say Sigur range and whoever was he highest bidder would take the right. The Adivasis then would be paid on a rate basis as so much per pound of the material collected. Honey used to be paid at the rate of 4 annas per bottle of 16 oz. Moss used to be 1/4 annas or 1/2 anna per pound. Moss is used they say as some kind of medicine to cure them of some nail disease. It is mixed with "pudina" and eaten, they say. The market for moss was at Virudhnagar, but the final consumers were in Andhra.

Malaria

A lot of us were affected by malaria. In summer if we drank water, we would be laid down. A diseased person would have a hard lump on the left side that can be felt. He would not be able to walk or do any strenuous work. We could not climb a hill. All the people were affected here including the Adivasis and many died because of malaria. Before 1947, ie., before the dam construction started, malaria was very prevalent. But after good water came into that area, after the construction of the dam, there has been no malaria. Malaria comes when you drink water and there is a malarial insect in it. When the army was here from 1943 to 1944, the anti malarial people used to spray some oil into every pond and tank in the area. Even water holes inside the forest were sprayed. In addition to the anti-malarial people even the military used to spray the oil in the water holes.

Malaria

It was only then that DDT was sprayed and malaria was reduced. Before that we would get "koyna" tablets if we got malarial fever. It is so bitter and unpalatable. The post office had these medicines and the forest department was supplying it too. There was also some Malayalees who used to come and sell the tablet to the local people. They were also available free. These tablets were so bitter that it was better to suffer the fever than to consume the medicine. The malarial disease would affect everybody including the Adivasis. Malaria was prevalent even during our grandfather's time. It was very common during our father's time at least. It was prevalent all over wherever water was stagnant. It was there even on top of the plateau. In all these stagnant pools, plant material would fall and it would smell and from such ponds, malaria would spread.

Agriculture; Land Ownership; Land tax

Agriculture those days mainly consisted of Ragi. Many acres would be planted with Ragi. All the land was leased land. The whole Singara estate was owned by one big landlord named Maddanna. He would give each family one pair of cattle/bullocks, five acres of land, and seven kandugam ie., 560 seers should be given to Maddanna at the time of harvest in return for the land and bullocks that the family would cultivate. The area from Singara to Masinagudi and Moyar was their land and they would thus lease it out. All the land was owned by this person Maddanna. This was the situation when I was small. 80 Seers would be one Kandugam - one Mysore Kandugam. For land one had to give four Kandugams and for cattle three Kandugams. Thus a total of seven Kandugams or 560 seers would have to be paid as lease amount to Maddanna. This would be the rate per year. The owner would thus get 560 seers and the rest of the produce would go to the cultivator. None of us have had or owned land around here. Some have owned 1/2 an acre but most or almost all the land was owned by Maddanna who was owning hundreds of acres in this tract. During my grandfather's time itself all the patta lands were taken away because of non payment of Kandayam or tax to the government. We can verify it in the revenue records. It would be written "Jodi rajanamma" which meant the land is vacated. Kandayam used to be 6 annas or 8 annas per acre, and even that could not be paid. It must have been more than fifty years when this happened. But since we were around, we tried our best to pay the Kandayam, but could not. Only a few people survived with their land. For example the lands at Chemmanattam is the revenue patta lands of people in Moyar. And today it is operated by his grandson, B. Kalilinga by name. They are from some royal family. They even hold a lot of land in Moyar. This whole loss of pattas because of non payment of the Kandayam must have been more than 80 years back. Maddanna and Co. had over 2000 acres and now have only about 1000 acres. A lot of their land was acquired for the construction of the power house, etc. Now about 1014 acres or so is held by them. And now that land is in the name of Sait Sivalan Malan Co. He holds the land and he does not give the land to anyone for lease or sale, because if he gives it he is fearful that he may not be able to get it back. Especially now since the 'land to the tiller' rule has come he does not give his land out at all. Right now one Mangal Chand of Ooty controls all the land. He is from Rajasthan who has bought the land from Maddanna. He owns all the land from Masinagudi behind the post office, all the way to Singara. They had a few acres on this side of the road too but that has been sold. He has kept with him only the land on that side of the road.

Agriculture consisted of Ragi, Cholam, Moccai kottai, Kollu, Kottamalli, Green gram, groundnuts, etc., but no paddy at all. Elephant problems of crop raiding was prevalent and so the did not grow coconut trees. Most of the produce was for consumption, but during the harvest season traders would come from the Gundlupet area and they would sell their surpluses. They would sell Avarai, Ragi, green gram etc.; Kottamalli was their main product for sale. They would keep about 2 or 3 Kgs and the rest would be sold off. Chillies sometimes would be grown and sold. The sale of these would bring some money with which we would buy cloth, salt, oil, etc. The Adivasis would also do similar agriculture. They would also take land on lease for agriculture. During the days of Maddanna, the Adivasis would be requested and coerced to come and settle on his lands and do agriculture. They would even be compelled at times to do agriculture on the lands and survive, because they were not naturally inclined to agriculture. They would prefer to do some coolie work and carry on their living.

Agriculture

Agriculture has always been with the plough; the kottu has only been used to sow inter-crops in-between Ragi, e.g., beans, etc. Only in teak plantation sites do we cultivate with a hoe or kottu in the mode of kumiri cultivation. In these areas the standing trees will be clear felled and so you cannot plough the land because it will be full of stems. Pits will be dug on the clear felled sites and teak will be planted in them. These areas are given to cultivation for a few years so that the teak trees are nursed and raised, and the local folk derive some land for agriculture. This kind of cultivation has been done on the Mudumalai side. But this side of Teppakadu, after a distance of 4 km on the Teppakadu Masinagudi road, there has been no shifting cultivation. In the forests on the north western side there have been a few sites where cultivation has been going on. Karimaripallam, Konimarakattan or Konimara karkhana, etc., are sites in the forests where some cultivation had been going on. There were 2/3 places around there where in the olden days, lot of cows were herded and the cow dung manure was collected and taken to estates like the

O'valley, etc. They would be transported on bullock carts and supplied to the estates on a cart load basis. Cow dung used to be supplied from Konimara kattan, Kucchimudi malla, etc. At Konimara karkhana there used to be a foundry. This place is near the Northern Hay estate, near Leighwood estate.

Near the tower line there is another place called Badaga gadde. This is on the Singara - Thorapalli tower line. There they say some Badagas used to cultivate land there long, long ago. It is near the current Dodda Moyar estate. If after Ragi is sown there are no rains, then there would not be any produce. And if it rains when the crop is ripe, again there would be no produce. It seasons are good Ragi can be harvested in three and a half months after sowing, ie. 110-120 days. Ragi needs rain for the first two and a half months. After 100 days if it rains too much, the crop will be destroyed. When the ragi is harvested, if there is rain all the ragi will sprout out again, and there will be little grain to be had. This has happened very often around here. During ten days of harvest if there is no rain, then we can bring a lot of produce home. Ideally, after the first few days of sowing there should be rain. After that, even if there is some rain every 15 days, then the crop will grow well. And if the seasons were ideal, we could harvest around 25 bags * 75 kgs of ragi in each acre. Now a days we do not even get 25 pallams of ragi for each acre.

Agriculture

Ragi crop would be sown in May and in August, September or October. The crop would be harvested. The kollu, kottamalli, and green gram would be planted and in three months harvested ie., by January these would be harvested. For the next few months the land would be fallow. If there was a occasional rain or two, the fields would be ploughed and manured and kept ready for the next crop to be sown in April or May.

Crop raiding

Elephant crop raiding has always been a problem. It was always a problem in these parts. But in those days, if you flash a light they would run away. But now, even if you burst crackers, and shine lights, the elephants are not scared. They do not run away. So all along one had to keep a watch over their fields and crop to protect their crop from elephants, pigs, and other wild animals.

Wildlife

Elephant capture was done only once in his childhood. They used to catch elephants by the pit-fall method. They did not do any Khedda operations like they did in Mysore. One or two elephants would fall into these pits that were dug up all along the Moyar. The elephant camp in Teppakadu is a recent one.

Livestock

On cattle population and pattis, those days there were many pattis. It is not possible to recount all the names, but some of them I will tell: Mylarapatti, Mallapuram patti, Dhanattipatti, Arakadavupatti, Hosattipatti, Odagaraipatti, Kakkamalapatti, Basavanahallipatti, on the way to Sirur, Mukkutipallam patti - beyond Anaikatti, there is a bridge and near that is Mukkutipallam patti; Chadavapatti, Hossur now called Vazhithottam, etc. Ask Bantan of Vazaithottam- there was nothing there sometime back. The whole habitation was destroyed. It was a coffee estate previously, some say Major Howard owned this estate and the one at Chokkanahalli. It was abandoned, then a person called Mr.Collet bought the estate, But after that in 1966, some 9 people bought the land, then 66 people bought land in the area. Now many people have bought land in that area.

There were no horses in the area, the only livestock were the local breeds of cattle and sheep. Earlier there must have been about 2000 cattle in Masinagudi, and now there are about 3000. Over the whole of the plateau, there must have been some 8000 heads of cattle, and even now there must be just about as much, although those days human population was very much lower those days. Buffaloes are normally only there on the eastern side, east of Vazaithottam. Sheep used to be there only in Masinagudi and no where else. About 2000 sheep then and just about the same now. But now in addition there are about 2500 to 3000 goats that are causing ruin to the vegetation. They never used to be allowed here in those days.

Livestock and Fodder

The shorter grass available towards Masinagudi is better fodder than the tall grass available near Teppakadu. Thus the milk from these cows is good and more tasty. These cattle killed by predators is much less than it used to be. In the summer months predation by wild dogs on the calf is heavy.

Livestock diseases

On cattle diseases, there was a huge calamity in 1939. Many cattle died. Then again in 1968-69 there was another outbreak. I do not know whether the 1939 disease affected the bison population also, but the 1939 calamity was

huge. One who had fifty cattle would be left with one, if he was lucky. Before that I do not know of any disease. Very many cattle died in 1939. We did not bury or burn them. The MFP came and used to take away the bones. The tanners would come and take the skin. These people made it good during those days. All these Muslim tanners came from Gundlupet. Now there are two or three of them here in Masinagudi itself.

Hunting and Shikar

Earlier hunting used to be done under the supervision of the Nilgiri Game Association. A shooting license would be issued at the cost of Rs. 80 and with that fee you could hunt two spotted deer, one sambhar and one bison. They would hunt in the Sigur range and even around Masinagudi. Lt.Col. Adams - Pythian Adams used to be an avid hunter. His house is now the house of Mr. Radcliffe at Talakundah. He was a Captain in the MRC. He only died about 25 to 30 years ago in Bangalore. He used to be tall and huge. He was a big hunter. All the Rajas would also come here during the season time, ie., Ooty season time from March to May. In June when the rains begin everybody would leave the place. And during season time, many parties would come to hunt. I cannot say how many teams would come in an year. They would hunt by baiting, driving or beating the animal to a spot. They would also hunt small game by flushing game birds out of bushes. A hunting party would sometimes consist of about 30 to 40 people. There would be 4 or 5 people to shoot these animals. I myself have seen seven to eight tigers being hunted. One was shot by the Uthukuzhi Zamindar. Walfson dorai also called Bob dorai used to hunt too. He is alive even now. He lives on the Chinese hill. It is about 3 km. from Gudalur. He has even now many cages in which he used to catch wild animals. He used to catch tigers and leopards in the cages. He was a very rich man. In British days, we would call it 18 1/2 O'Valley and he owned the whole place. He even owned a TB in Gundlupet, and another in Pykara. His was the biggest estate around here. Now all that has gone away. O'Valley has now been bought up by someone else. Mr.Walfson must be over 90 years old but even now fit and agile.

Markets and Communications

The nearest market used to be at Gundlupet, not Ooty because you had to climb to go to Ooty. Bus services started only after 1946 coinciding with the project. Before that if you wanted to see a bus you had to go to Teppakadu. No bus used to come towards Masinagudi. Bullock carts were the main mode of transport. They would go to Ooty as well as Gundlupet. To go to Ooty they would tie four bullocks to pull the cart up the steep slope. From here coffee, dung, etc., would be transported up the hill by these bullock carts. Even cow dung used to be transported to the estates around Ooty. Many estates on the hills would have their cattle around here and they would collect and transport the cow dung from here to the estates. On the hills itself they would may keep one odd cattle for milk, but the bulk of the cattle were penned here. They would collect cow dung and of course make ghee from the little milk that they got and market them in Ooty. Now a days of course they sell the milk itself to the cooperatives. Yes, in those days, when ghee used to be extracted, there used to be a lot of buttermilk flowing around and in fact, the Adivasis had a comfortable existence living on buttermilk and the Opuntia fruit.

Communications

Those days they would have to go to Teppakadu by bullock cart and then only take a bus to any place. The Bokkapuram - Sholur path is a very old path. It is the pilgrim road to the Bokkapuram temple which is famous around these parts. Bus services started from 1947. Before that bullock carts were the only means. Elephants would not bother the bullock carts. The cow bells would scare away the elephants. They would normally start at night at about 7 p.m. and travel through the night to reach Gundlupet the next morning at 5.30 am. It is 24 miles from here. Similarly we would return from there travelling in the night. In a week about 20 to 25 bullocks would go up and down to Gundlupet loaded with supplies for the estates.

Busses came in 1947. There was a person called Nanjundiyan. He was the one who started the milk business from this place. He used to cart the milk by bus and sell them at Ooty. Only after that, in the 1970s was the milk cooperative and the milk van operated. Earlier there was the RLMS bus service and there were two trips a day, one to Gudalur and one to Ooty. Often the bus would be full and because he would not overload the bus we would be stuck at Teppakadu for the night.

In 1970 there was a road accident on the Kalhatti road, and the forest department closed the road for five to six years. The Cheran mini buses were started from 1977 onwards. Towards Annaikatti the only means of transport was the bullock cart or by walk till recently. People from Anaikatti normally go up to Ebanad for their market which is the closest. The path goes through Mayiarpatti to Ebanad.

Population growth

Earlier there was only 50 houses in Masinagudi. Regarding human diseases, there has been no serious diseases after the 1950s when good water supply was installed in the area. Only normal deaths occur. So earlier Masinagudi had about 50 houses, Mavinhalla about 4; Chadavapatti, 1 house; Hossur 4/5 houses of Irulas, Bomman, Bantam and others; Anaikatti some 10 to 20 houses; At Anaikatti the East India company had attempted to grow cotton. They were the people who had constructed the dam over the stream that flows past the hamlet. The had brought horses and used them to plough the agricultural fields. The local people started agriculture there much later. It was the white men who owned all the land in the area. Leighwood, Westbury, Northern Hay, etc., was all theirs. Land was not available to our folk. The dam as well as the channel to the fields were all their handiwork. In the valley below they had grown cotton. But our folk although they lived for long in the area never did irrigated agriculture. I have not seen the cotton grow there. it was before my times, I have only heard so. When I was small there were many unused buildings in the area. They were made of tin sheets. We went and pulled them out of there and brought them here. The buildings can still be seen on the road, on the way to Sirur. The horse stable there can also be seen. It was all built by the British and not by Tippu Sultan. Tippu only built the Harallatti kottai in Jayadeva Avenue.

Habitations

Sirur had 4/5 houses previously. Adivasis there used to be the Irulas , the Kasavas, the Sholagas, the Kurumbas, etc. They were spread all over the plateau. They used to stay at the current Maravakandy dam site, and at the current EB colony. They would never stay in the village, but would stay at a small distance away from the village. They would do some agriculture, some coolie work and in addition collect honey, tubers and other minor forest produce for consumption or as labour for the MFP contractors. The Adivasi population has increased lately. There were only about 5 Harijan families who came in from Karnataka; but now there are about 150 to 200 families of Harijans. During the dam activity there were many more, but many of them left after the dam was completed. The dam construction did bring in a lot of permanent residents. The number of houses jumped from 50 to over 200 houses. The tea shops too came only with the dam construction.

Habitations

Tiled houses have been around a long time. The tiles had to be transported from Calicut. There were only 4 tiled houses in my childhood, and now there are many. Also these days we do not get thatch that easily to thatch our houses. Earlier there used to be plentiful of them near Teppakadu.

Habitations

Around this area, there were many sites where ragi used to be grown. Before the influenza epidemic there were many villages and cultivation sites that have since been abandoned. The tank near the EB camp used to be a village, and below that ragi used to be grown. There were seven villages between here and Guruvegowndanahalli the modern day Moyar. They were - Gundakarimala; Cettipura; Bastipura; Kakipura; Gaganhalli; Karkanahalli; Guruvankillarai; and Kadaundi. None of them exist today. One family out of these villages is in Karnataka, in Kaniyanapura. They had cattle here and they keep the same cattle there now. In the area called Gundakarimala, the Adivasis were in the Majority. In other areas there were Lingayats and other castes. In Moyar there were mainly Muslims.

Communications

In 1939 they built the Ari Gowder bridge over the Kakkenhalla river on the Mysore road. Before that there was a wooden bridge there. There are many walking routes from here to Karnataka.

Archaeological sites

There is a fort at Chemmanattam near the ruined temple. The fort is by the side of the stream. The well near the temple was recently cut by the owners of the land. The fort by the side of the stream is called Kottai Kadavu.

Archaeology

If you go to Tengumarada, you must go to the place called Halli Moyar. There is a fort there from where the famous Halli Rani ruled over the area. It is worthy to be seen the Halliarasani kottai. At Halli Moyar there are now many Adivasis residing. Kadimattam is another place worthy to be seen. There are many archaeological remains too.

Army presence in Kargudi

The army was here from 1942 to 1944. It was a huge camp here. There must have been more than 10,000 people around here. There were Europeans, Punjabis, and Nepalese. They had their head quarters at Kargudi and spread from Thorapalli to Kekkanhalla and Masinagudi. It was the Jungle Warfare Training Centre. They had pitched up tents and were all over. In Kargudi there were bunkers and a regular establishment with a bakery, a hospital, cinema,

etc. They must have been here for 3 or 4 years. They were here to train for war. There was no hunting and other violations by the army when they were here. Being in the military they were under strict discipline and if they ventured out into the forests without permission they would be booked. They did not destroy the forests. In fact during that time, a Major had shot a chital. We wanted to report the matter but were apprehensive because they were the army. However we did report the matter. The military police immediately came in their jeep and took the officer away. The deer was later auctioned off by the range officer. This incident was on the Teppakadu Masinagudi road. The military would not interfere and were under strict discipline.

Miscellaneous

I shall show you these seven villages that were destroyed during the influenza epidemic. I shall show you the Ragi kuzhis, the places where they were doing agriculture. They had grown ragi in all those areas. I shall show you those areas after you come back.

Miscellaneous

In 1967, a Hollywood team came to Masinagudi and shot the film 'Tarzan Goes to India' I was the local agent here. They came in the month of February and were here till April. They filmed at Masinagudi, Teppakadu, Singara and the Mysore palace. 60 elephants were involved in the shooting. In Masinagudi they staged a scene, where the elephants break a dam and Tarzan builds it up.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 2.6 16/12/1990

Chandran is a resident of the village of Sirur. This is situated in the east of the plateau, with the Nilgii massif behind it. It is situated on a river arising on the Nilgiri plateau and perennial, until a few years ago.. The expansion and intensification of agriculture on the Nilgiri plateau intensified water use and the stream became seasonal, going dry in summer. The village had an important temple and is a cultural site on the Sigur plateau. Its annual festival brings many communities of the Nilgiris together, the Badagas, the Kurumbas and the Irulas. The festival is held in March and the deity is the ubiquitous mariamman, who is a fertility and pox deity in the drier parts of southern India. Chandran who is an Irular, also officiates as a priest in the Sirur temple. He was also the village headman. I met him just a few days after the temple festival had concluded. He spoke in detail about the festival and its significance. He spoke elaborately about the inter-community relationship that was epitomised in the interaction during the conduct of the annual festival. We thus derive from this oral history, a lot of how relations between community existed in an elabota eweb, and how they were renegotiated at each time in history. I also had a chance to visit the other Badaga village village on the Nilgir plateau that was the focus of interaction with Sirur.

Sigur Plateau
Chandran, Irular, Sirur village, Sigur Plateau

Personal profile
Chandran; Mudalali; village headman of Sirur Village Irula : Age 55 years.

Temple festival at Sirur
The temple festival here at Sirur occurs in the month of March, on the Monday, we take the Sirur mariamman to the river, the Sirur river. Even if the river does not flow in March, these would be stagnant pools of water along the river bed. We take the amman to the river accompanied by drums and the 'peeka' an old blow instrument. In the river we wash and clean the belongings of the god. Early morning we send one person to the forest to collect 'jala' flowers. These flowers are available on the Nilgiri hill slopes. We believe that the god has 'heat' and this forest flower is placed on its head to remove the 'heat' from the god. The flowers from a certain tree that is available in the forests. Earlier it was the Kurumbas who were offering prayer here at this temple. The 'jala' flowers are used by the Kurumba women on their head. And because of that, these flowers are used to adorn this to god. This 'jala' flowers are then brought from the forest. Some other people would take 5 woven baskets. The 'jala' flowers and the 5 woven baskets will be brought to the stream side. Around the evening, the flowers, the baskets and the lord are brought from the river to the temple. The five baskets are taken to the gods house. The baskets are filled with sand. At the temple, prayers are offered to the god. Some others would cut 3 sticks from the forests and hide them around. Some person would then be possessed by the god, and he would know where the sticks are hidden - and he would seek them out from the forest. The gods 'teertha' would be thrown over the crowd; then one of the crowd would be possessed by the god to the accompaniment of music. The realization and knowledge would dawn on the possessed mind. He would go and bring the sticks that are hidden in the forest.

The baskets of sand would be given with 9 types of grain, 'tattai pairu', paddy, green gram, urad, etc. totaling 9 different grains. The sticks would be brought and implanted at the temple and simultaneously, the grains will be sown in the baskets. The baskets would be covered and kept in one of the houses. In the houses, where the baskets are kept, 2 women will have to maintain austerity for eight days. They must have a bath early morning in the river; should not talk to anyone, they should bring water from the river and cook in a separate room and eat.

The pujari must be fed by the food cooked by them. The pujari must stay for 8 days at the temple only. He should not go out anywhere. This should continue for 8 days. The next Friday - the 9 seeds in the baskets would sprout. On the Friday, the basket will be opened. The pujari will then go to the house where the baskets are kept. He would pray to the sprouted plants and then return to the temple. The following Sunday and Monday, the temple festival begins. On the Monday, all the temple paraphernalia would go to the house where the grain baskets are kept - with the temple umbrella etc., and the baskets of sprouted grain are carried on the heads of small girls and brought to the temple to the accompaniment of music and drums. After the grain baskets are brought, 101 prayers are offered to the idol, with lime and coconuts. The prayers go on the whole night. The next morning on Tuesday at 6 am the god is taken to

the stream again. Then is the fire walking ceremony. The people who want to participate in the fire walking would have to maintain austerity for the previous eight days. They should not eat meat; they should not eat in tea shops etc. They should not consume liquors. They would to the stream for a bath along with the deity. They then carry the deity to the temple. The fire walkers numbering over 500 would cue up. The fire has already been laid with wood charcoal on the previous day - Monday at 3 pm. In the morning there would be embers. The priest first performs the prayers and sprinkles water in the fire; then milk over the fire; then flowers into the fire. The fire pit would be 12 feet in length. The people would then walk over the fire and reach the temple. One person standing at the entrance to the temple would pour water on the pujari's feet. Only then can they walk into the temple and offer prayers. After prayers, they come and enjoy with music and dance. These dances are made in great pomp going right into the night, till 10 am.

Other than the Sirur mariattan, there is another deity called the 'Rakshasa'. This deity is also at the same temple. Some Bali- sacrifice is offered to the Rakshasa, in the form of goats, chicken, etc., People from all around bring animals for sacrifice then they go to the river for a bath and food.

That day there are lot of bus service here.

Relation with Badagas

The temple priests are our Irulas, but the material requirements for the festival is provided by the Badagas. They are the patrons here. Kukkalthorai Badagas - 'Yettetti grama', ie., Badagas from 8 villages are the patrons of this temple. The village imposes a tax from its residents for the performance of the temple rituals. Re.1/- per house is the tax collection. They may be about 200 to 500 houses in each of these 8 villages. This collection is used for procuring materials for the festivals. The Irulas then perform the rights. The donations offered at the temple in the plates are for us - whereas, what money is offered in the hundis is given to the Badagas. The temple mainly is sacred for us Irulas. Since we do not have enough resources for the temple festival, we seek their help. We call the Badagar 'aiyya'. We went and requested then once upon a time for funds to conduct the temple festival and we do not have resources, so please give us some funds for us to conduct the festival, and they agreed since then this tradition continues.

Relation with Kurumbas and Irulas

Before we were conducting the prayers here, the Kurumbas used to be conducting prayers at this temple. Their old paths, and habitation sites are seen here, on the opposite side of the river.

The relation between Kurumbas and Irulas is of brothers. A father and mother had 2 sons; one of them went into the forest to live, and the other went into the village to live. The forest dweller and his descendent were called the Kurumbas, and the village dweller and his descendants are called Irulas.

Now, there are no official relationships between these two. But in gathering activities, like gathering honey, or tubers from the forest, we cooperate. We do not eat at their home, but if we go to the forest and they are roasting tubers, we would partake of them. They would of course come to our houses, but they do not eat in our houses.

Relation with other communities

Earlier there were many Kurumba families around here, but now there are only 8 families. The whole community of Kurumbas was wiped out by a pox that attacked them. Their houses are still seen on the other side. After they all died, only, there was none to offer prayers to the deity here. And since we were their elder brothers, and our younger brother's families were all wiped out. We elder brothers, concerned at the absence of their brother family decided to offer prayers to the lord ourselves. And since we did not have the resources to conduct the prayers. We approached the Badagas. The Badagas, during those days were not so 'urbanized'. There were of course live all over the Sigur plateau. There were many pattis all over this area. During those days there were only 2/3 families of Irulas. They approached the Badagas for funds to conduct the temple festival from those times onwards slowly the whole festival has grown to the extent that now regular tax is collect from each family in those 8 villages.

Relation with Kurumbas

The Kurumbas here had died in large numbers. All of them are dead; and now there are only 2/3 families here. Kurumbas also work in the pattis of Badagas along with the Irulas. And now-a-days, the Kurumbas are more 'urbanized' or 'cultured' and it is difficult to differentiate between the Kurumbas and Irulas. Our languages do differ, but little. For food they say 'Ittu' and we say 'puttu'. Like this small difference exist. The language is a mixture of Kannada, Tamil, English etc.

Habitation

The temple was renovated by the Badagas about 10 years ago. It was renovated out of donations collected from many villages around. Earlier the temple was small; and earlier to that only a mud and shelter. It was built with mud and surface coated with the ash of Terminilia trees.

About half the families that were here have shifted to Anaikatti. They were here in Sirur previously. Near the present pattis, there were 4 houses, and here near the temple where we were staying, there were 3 houses.

Agriculture

In my childhood agriculture was good. There were thick forests with elephants right in the place these houses are built. Our old houses was a straw house, near the temple. We used to live there. And around there used to be only about 5 houses here. There was no agriculture then on this side of the temple. Only on the other side of the temple where there is a flat land and today these are patti there - that was the agricultural fields. The pattis then, were on this side of the temple near the tank. The whole area on the other side was agricultural lands.

Those days, the other side was a big flat agricultural land full of cholam, and ragi. Mainly cholam; then some chillies were also grown. The area was also irrigated by a canal from the river.

Canal and irrigation has been there a long time. The canal from the stream divides into two main branches. One irrigating the lower portion and one the upper portion. Recently, the canals were expanded to irrigate these lands in front. Before that this area was full of forests. There are many boundary stones around their area. There were no estates around here.

Agriculture and Wildlife conflict

Now-a-days, if we do agriculture it is very necessary to keep watch. Earlier, we used to even do some occasional agriculture on the other side of the river, growing cholam there. Then during ripening of the crop, we would go and live in the shelter that we built there. Then we would keep guard with fire and some drums to scare away the animals. Earlier, elephants would never come to raid crops. It is only now that elephants raid crops so bravely. By 4 or 5 pm, the elephants come these days and start grazing the cholam and ragi crops. This is so for the last 5/6 years. What can we do? We beat drums, and burn kerosene torches, and try to scare away the elephants. We also tie a stone to a string and rotate it and fling it towards the elephant. If by chance the stone hits the elephants, the elephant trumpets and runs away. So we do all this and chase away elephants. This year however, there is no elephant menace. And if elephants comes, this year agriculture has been very poor. Then of course, if we put beans, the porcupines come and raid our crops. However, we try to chase them they manage to destroy the crop. Potato crop was sown with the help of a Govt. loan. They gave Rs.3,000/- per family. So we brought seeds from Ooty and ploughed our land and sowed them. Then, the river went dry and there was no water for irrigation. Then, we brought a diesel motor from Anaikatti and from a pool of water in the river bed we pumped up the water. Even with that we could not save the crop. This was 3 years ago. So we did not even have the facility to pay any part of the loan. The whole crop was destroyed.

Agriculture and Livestock rearing

Earlier we never used to keep our own cattle, for agriculture, one would get them from the Badaga pattis that were around here. The Badagas would ask us to train a few young cattle to be used for ploughing. Then we would go and take these cattle tie them up, prick their nose, to train them for ploughing. We would put the log of 'tirugina mara' on its neck and slowly train them. We would train them like this for 8 days still feeding them with fodder and water. Then we would fix the plough on the animal. For a few days, the bullocks will go hither and titter. Then after a few days it would be trained and would become useful to agriculture. After this training, the Badagas would take the cattle up to their pattis on the Nilgiri hills to thrash and stamp the 'sama' crop that is grown there. After that is done, and the crop is stored at

home, they would inform us to bring the cattle back. And we would bring them back and use them for our agriculture. In return for the bullocks, during the harvest time, for each bullock we would give them one bag of chillies as rent for the bullocks. Similarly, 2 bags of ragi for 2 bullocks. This was before the Government loan system.

Livelihoods and Livestock

Now, with Govt. loan, we have got bullocks to plough our fields. In our village there are 4 bullocks and we share it among the village. We would agree to give Rs.30/- per day for the bullocks to the owner who has taken the bullock on loans. There are not many people in the village who have taken loan from the govt. There are only 9 families here, and the order of loan is Rs.2,000/- Rs. 3,000/-, Rs.4,000/- etc. Many of the Irulas are still working in the Badaga pattis. There is no other go. If nearby there is some employment facility then we could really become sure that there are no outsiders, including the Badagas anywhere here. So we have to work at tending the cattle of the Badagas. Each Badaga pours almost 60-70 ltrs of milk to the cooperative. Let us say they sell 50 ltrs of milk at Rs.4/- per litre, it works out to Rs.200/- per day. And for each week, for a man and women, they give wages of Rs.50/- per week - for looking after 200 to 300 heads of cattle per week. And in addition they would give 1 litre of milk per day. And with that Rs.50/- one family would have to live. Of course butter milk is free in any of the pattis. Now-a-days even butter milk is becoming scarce because the milk itself is sold off.

Wildlife and Shikar

The forest were full of elephants, tigers, leopards, bears, deer, sambhar etc. And many shooting parties used to come here. I have once gone for a tiger hunt. While men would come in a jeep and take us paying us a coolie of 8 annas or 12 annas. We had to carry their burdens. Then, there would be 'shikaris' - among us, who would be posted all around the forests keeping a watch on game. Once the game is sighted in a locality, we would go with drums etc and drive the animal towards the hunter who would then shoot them. There were many tigers those days. Then of course, elephants, leopards, bears, wild dogs etc. mainly. Wild dogs do not kill human but could kill a lot of buffaloes and cattle. It is now that their predation has increased. Earlier, when hunting was allowed here, the wild dogs were not such a problem but now they kill many of our cattle.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 2.1 13-12-1990

Masinin was an old friend of mine. I met him on my first trip to the Nilgiris in 1984. I met him at the forest watcher's quarters where I had landed the evening before, by the last and only mini bus coming into the area every day. I had planned to go across the edge of the Sigur plateau and get down into Coimbatore plains. This is a vast area of scrub vegetation, which has plenty of sites of archaeological significance. I spent the night with the watchers place, made arrangements for someone to take me across. I was introduced to Bomman, of Anaikatti. A young man who knew the area very well, and slightly hard of hearing. He took me comfortably across the rugged Sigur plateau.

In the night, he related stories and legends of their relationship with the environment, about the able to charm a tiger into placidness. Interestingly this legend is also mentioned in colonial notes. We also chatted about the period of Tippu's armies being positioned here during the war with the British, and later the British attempts to set up a small group of people to grow cotton and commodities for the market. This attempt failed, but they remember the attempts and show me the building sites now overgrown with weeds.

Masinan was a big talker and well versed in the culture and tradition of the area. During this visit, he talks about the organisation of the Irula community their social organisation ,and the myths associated with the various deities in the area. These sites and deities are still there. He talks about an interesting and elaborate legend that bases itself on site on the landscape, and is intimately related to the Irula community. It also mentions of waves of human communities often led by a human person or a chieftain. One of the old temples that he sites, the Karimbattarayan temple is situated in the middle of the forest. It is from here that a few years ago the idol was sloten. (I have a photograph of this idol).

Masinan currently works with the forest department as a watcher.

Sigur Plateau
Masinan, Irular, Anaikatti, Sigur Plateau

Archeological sites
Masinan of Anaikatti: An anti poaching watcher with the FD says these archaeological sites, that are the dolmens, abound around here. They are the habitation sites and houses of people who were 3ft. tall, or even shorter, they lived in these parts and we were the "Chakkilians" for them- the lowest caste. They had to use tall ladders to climb trees or even small plants. For ploughing their lands, they had domesticated the hare and the black nape on the shoulder is a sign that they used these animals to plough their fields.

Agriculture
"Anaikatti has about 220 acres of agricultural land. These were surveyed in detail about 4/5 years back i.e., in 1986 and given to each family. But much of the land is uncultivated and lie follow as you can see." Forest Watcher Anaikatti.

ORAL HISTORY OH 2.7 16/12/1990

Sigur Plateau
Masinan, Irular, Anaikatti, Sigur Plateau

Personal profile
Masinan, of Anaikatti, Irula, Age 45-50. Agriculture; Cattle keeper; Anti-poarching matcher of the F.D

Sigur plateau
Anaikatti is the most important village here in this locality. The social organization and the officials of here have a say over villages Sirur, Chokkanahalli, Vazhathottam, Mayar, and Bokkapuram. This village has control over all these above villages. This place is like a capital here.

Irula community
We belong to the Kalkatti sect of Irulas. This sect buries its dead at a site near Anaikatti near Dhanattipatti. We have a temple here where we pray to our ancestors and bury our dead. Then there are the Uppaliga sect of Irulas. They bury their dead at a site near Udagaripatti. The third sect is the Samba. And they bury their dead at a place called Basavanalla, off the Sirur/Anaikatti road. Then there are groups called Kurunaika, Kodava, Kuppa, and Devana.

Among these groups official relations take place. These are groups for exogamous relationships. We belong to the Kalkatti sect and we have to give our women in marriage to the other groups, and similarly, we have to pick women from the other groups. There is no other difference among these groups. Among these groups, the Kalkattis are slightly better off than the others. Some groups are poorer than other groups. By this kind of official relation each of the groups are is 'mama', 'machchan' relationship with the other, ie., each groups is related to the other by cross-cousin marriage. I am a Kalkatti, Samba is my mama group, Kurunaikan is our mama, Devan is also our 'mamas' etc. The lineages are all patrilinear and not matrilinear.

In burial rites also there is difference among these groups. Kalkatti bury at Dhanatti and no one else. Udagaripatti is the burial site of the Uppaliga. Basavanalla is the burial site of the Samba. Kodava and Kurunaika bury at Kaliampalayam down below this area in the Coimbatore plains. Kuppan bury at a site towards Garibur towards Sholurmattam. If one of the Kuppans die here at Anaikatti the body will immediately be taken to his groups burial site at Sholurmattam.

In Anaikatti, there are predominantly Kalkatti, Uppaliga, Samba, Kurunaikan. In Sirur there are Kalkatti, Samba, Kodava and Kuppan groups. Towards Maninhalla also there are Kalkatti, Uppaliga, Kuppan, Sambans, Kurunayakan, Deven etc. Regarding choosing brides and bridegrooms there is no selective preference among there groups. It is mainly economic criteria that governed the choosing of the brides, bridegrooms. After the choice is made it is ratified by the jati kootam. And it has been decided and accepted that the two are married, with tali tying.

Social organisation
There are many officials in our community who are responsible for various functions. First we have the Naidakattai, who is the head second we have the Naika, thirdly the bhandari, fourth the punda, fifth the 'urali', and sixth the pujari. All these officials are of great antiquity coming down generations.

Naidakatti is the biggest official in the village. He is the one who makes policy decisions, and orders the execution of orders. The other officials should execute his orders only.

Naidakatti's assistant is the Naika. Naika is the chief executor, maintenance of records etc. of the village. He is the one who maintains the accounts, extracts "revenue" or collective work from the village etc. His responsibility is the carry out orders of the Naidakatti.

The Bhandari and punda are lower down officials who keep in touch with the people and are involved in the social life of the people. Disputes over marriage, and questions of morality etc. are addressed to the Bhandari. He is supposed to go to each house and understand their problems and difficulties and report the matter to the higher officials.

The pujari is supposed to look after temple matters offer prayers etc.

The Urali is involved in the social functions of the village. He is the one who distributes purifying water during or after impurity acts like attaining puberty, death, and birth. He makes the purifying water and deposits it to the Naidakatti, who inturn gives it to the Naikan, who inturn gives it to the Bhandari, who gives it to the Punda and authorizes him to distribute it house by house. 'Naidakatti' is a hereditary function. Not anyone can become a "Naidakattai"

Irula Rites and Rituals

After birth 12 days is considered unclean. No outsider should go into the house and eat in the house. After 12 days, a pronouncement is made to the whole village about the birth, and prayers are offered at the temple. Then the house is purified, and normal activities continue. Next is when a girl 'comes of age' ie., attains puberty- the same 12 days of impurity is observed. We should not go to each other's houses. After the 12 days, we offer prayers at the temple with the cooperation of the headman of the village with a coconut and 1-1/2 rupees.

Then we have our death rituals. As soon as a death occurs within 2 days, we inform all our relatives in all the villages around and we get together and the village folk offer condolences. Then we do a "pada puja" for the body and then remove the body to the appropriate burial site. We will keep the body for 2 days. It will starts decaying, but we will have to keep the body for 2 days for all our far flung relatives to come. If it is decaying we would apply an oil called "eral oil" and this slows the decay. After relatives come together, we bury the body and then come to the stream for a bath after a prayer at the burial temple. The daughter and son-in-law and all other relatives then have a bath and go to the village. Then, we go to the headman who distributes some water and cleanses us.

Our marriage rites are very simple and more depends upon the economic capability of the people. Then we inform people around and tie the 'tali' in front of a few people.

Tradition and Myth

Those days, the 'Masikarimbattarayan' our deity came from Darapuram and came and settled here. The original home town of this deity is Dharapuram. I do not know where Dharapuram is. The deity came from Dharapuram to a place near Mettupalyam, a place called Nellithurai, and there is a cave and the lord descended into that cave. Then from there the deity came here.

Near "Masikoil" on the other side of the Kedarhall a near the place where there used to be a paddy field, above the temple, there was a village there with a lot of lingas around. There were 7 villages around here. Those were my great grandfather's times. Those time, in one day, we had to sow paddy, grow it and harvest it and offer it as prayer to the lord. Those were the days of "satya kala" with this was possible.

The lord Karibatta sami goes in the form of a white man on a white horse. While he was going on his white horse, there was a fort on a hill near the Hallimoyar village. In that fort there was a 'rakshasa' women residing. That was a fort where the 'rakshasas' demons were residing. Many deities were trying to marry that girl, but they all failed. We have all toiled in that area. Then 'Masikarimbattarayan' came along on his white horse. We all tried to win over the "rakshasa" but we could not. Then, when the masikarimbattarayan came along, we all ridiculed him, saying what could he do- when all of us have failed, how can you manage to marry her.

He listened to us and thought. He then changed his form to a women and went into the fort. The 'rakshasa' had gone to the forest to bring dead bodies, animals etc. When the girl saw him in his women form, she welcomed Karimbattarayan and started living with each other. Meanwhile, the "Rakshasi' returned and said she smelt a new person in the house. The girl wanted to save the sami Karimbattaraya and told him to leave the place. The sami did not leave and was prepared to face the 'rakshasi'. The girl then hid the 'sami' in the fort. The girl fooled the mother. But the mother smelling a different person in the fort, thought something was fishy, and asked her daughter. The girls agreed to show her the other person, if she promised not to harm him. The mother made the promise and so the girl brought the masikarimbattarayan and placed him in front of the "rakshasi". The rakshasi has a brother called Bommappa. Both had dinner. Karimbattarayan and Bommappa slept together and the girl slept

separately. The 'Rakshasi' slept near her daughter. The rakshasi was planning right through the night of some means to kill Karimbattarayan. The girl had the inclining and the feeling that her mother is going to kill off Karimbattarayan. She brought 2 stings of black and white. She tied the black thread to the leg of Karimbattaswami and the white thread to her maternal uncle's leg. The "rakshasi" woke up and saw, and thought that the white stringed person was the masikarimbattarayan and he was to be finished. Then she killed the person with the white thread, which was her brother.

In the morning she woke up, and masikarimbattarayan was still alive. She realised her own mistake, and biting her teeth for her mistake, went off into the forest. In the morning, the girl and Karimbattarayan decided to run away, and got prepared. The girl packed her clothes and all. They left the fort and started moving towards the west. While they were running away the mother returned and saw them running away. She picked up a stone and flung it at them. But they escaped and started running, she was in hot pursuit. The sami created a fire between the earth and sky separating the demon from them, but the demon came chasing through. The sami thought he was now going to be killed by the demon. The sami then made a hill between them, but the demon overcame that too. At his wits end, he thought he was going to die, then he made a sea of water between them. Even this the demon transgressed and come in pursuit. On the river side, beside the Masikoil, on the Kedar halla, the sami was tired and went to the stream to drink water. No sooner had he left his sword down, and drank water, the demon was on him. The sami then left the sword there itself and ran for his life. The demon came there and made the sword into a new born child. The demon took the child and started going behind the sami. The sami came and prostrated to the elders in the seven villages around there and asked for protection from the demon. The village elders agreed to protect him and hid him away.

The demon, then came to the village and asked if anyone had come that way. When the villagers replied in the negative, the demon showed the child to the villagers and said the man had thrown this child and discarded it and run away. The villagers overwhelmed with pity, towards the child wanted to reconsider their decision about giving refuge to the Karimbattarayan, and deferred the decision to the next morning. They fed them all and retired for the night. In the middle of the night, the demon, cut up the sami into 7 pieces and allotted each piece to each of the seven villages, and eating the rest of the meat, left in the morning. The demon told the villagers to partake of the 7 portions of the meat left for them. The villagers repented the act. They were so repentful, that all the villagers, all the inhabitants got into the ragi straw piles that were kept in the fields and asked a small boy to bring fire and set fire to the hay stalk. Thus they were all burnt in the fire.

This whole act was observed by Siva and Parvati from the heavens. Lord Shiva then seeing the tragedy, brought the masikarimbattaraya back to life, and gave the masi karimbattraya a boon that he could ask. The masikarimbattaraya said he needed nothing for himself but that he wanted all the villagers who had been burnt there because of him to be brought back to life. The lord Shiva granted the boon and the villagers came back to life. Next, masi karimbattaraya asked for the Bali of the demon in his own hands. He wanted the boon to kill the demon by his hands. The lord Shiva granted the boon. And so Karimbattarayan rode again to the Hallimoyan fort, and brought the girl. He was again chased by the demon till the stream. While he was drinking water the demon caught up with him. The sami took up his sword and cut up the demon. The body laid there itself; the head fell in the Bokkapuram temple, at the temple of the Bokkapuram mariattan. And there the "rakshasi" asked the Bokkapuram mariattan to propitiate her with blood, and the mariattan agreed to give the demon the wish and propitiate her each year, and thus from those days - the Todawars from those days used to come of the festival of the Bokkapuram mariattan. They would bring a child of any jati or group, and while the mariattan goes for procession around town and returns, the Todawar would search and bring a child to the masikarimbattarayan temple (just like the one here) that is situated on the other side of the river, a little higher from the Bokkapuram mariattan temple. Here they would conduct prayers and make offerings to the lord. And the next day while prayers are being offered, the earth would split and consume the child. Now-a-days those things do not happen. Only a child is offered there by the Todamars.

Here in this place, where the body of the demon fell, and where its stomach fell, yearly for its propitiation, goats are offered as bali. For masikarimbattarayan, which is a linga stone, a form of Shiva, no bali is ever offered. So all the bali is offered only to the demon that is situated there.

At the "masikoil" there are two temples, or two idol. The one higher up is masi karimbattarayan, and the lower one is the Ambalavar ettayyan who is the grandfather of the masi karimbattarayan. It is a deity that is associated with us. It is called the Ambalayar ettayyan.

In this they say, I do not know, but the elders says there were 7 brothers. No not 7 only 3; Karimbattarayan is one; Kongalliayyan is the second; the hill straight opposite Vazhathottan is the third called Tatarganaiyyan. If you see straight from Vazhathottan you can see a peculiar hill, and on top of that hill is the Tatarganaiyyan. Kongalliayyan resides in Karnataka. Tatarganaiyyan is the last or the youngest brother of the three. The three brothers decided to have a feast. They made a feast of Ragi flour and mixed it with mocchai kottai avarai and fed everybody sumptuously. The youngest brother was deprived of some avarai. He was disappointed and got angry. He then decided to leave his brothers in anger and fled toward Kerala (towards the west). While he was going, and reached the top of the hill near Vazhathottan, the day broke and the sun came out. Thus he froze there and he is now situated there facing westward.

The culture and story of this place is thus, it has a long and deep culture and tradition, and if you ask old people they would tell much more. But all the older folk who know all this are no more. 'Mooka sami' who lives here in this village knows all this, but he is always drunk. Mooka sami is my mama. He used to be the previous headman, but gave up that position because he could not run around much. He has thus appointed his brother's son as the headman now. He is called 'talaivar' who liaisons with the Government. So, if we want loans or anything from the govt. the 'talaivar' would go and represent us.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 2.10 14th December, 1990

Sigur Plateau
Shikari Bantan, Irula, 75 yrs old; Odagaripatti; Sigur Plateau

Shikari Bantan is a legend in these parts of the Sigura plateau. He is the last surviving Shikari of the Nilgiri Wildlife Assoctaion. He was attatcvhed to the Nilgiri Game Association, and supervised and guided game in the area. He is well know to Mr. Radclifee, the scot farmer who settled in the Nilgiris, was an active member of the Game association and later directed the Game Association as a conservation group in the Nilgiri Area.

Personal profile
Shikari Bantan, Irula, 75 yrs old; Odagaripatti; Pastoral Labourer.

Vegetation
Today there are more forests than there were earlier. Earlier there were a lot of grassy patches. You could see from here right till the other side of the river. But now, you can see beyond 500m. The whole place is a shola and full of thorny bushes. Earlier all this area was a 'maidan' grassy flat. Now there are many more trees around.

Wildlife and Shikar
Earlier, there were not many animals, wild animals in the forest, because the white men used to come and hunt these animals down. But today we see more wild animals around here. The whitemen used to hunt the deer, tigers, dholes, etc. Earlier even I used to come here for hunting. I used to be taken, hired by the whitemen inside the forest along with their hunting parties. I would take them and show then wildlife then they would shoot, and after they shoot, they would come here and propitiate the deity here at odgari and other places and return with the bounty. Now-a-days they do not come. There is no wildlife to be seen around here. I have not seen a tiger around these parts for many years now. In my younger days, I have seen a tiger growling around here in the nights. The hunters have killed many tigers around here. We used to be four Shikaris around here to help and guide the hunting parties around. The other three shikaris have died. We used to have a license. The licence was given to us by Item dewar(Adams). He was the one who got me a licence. Then there was a dewar at Nadubetta in one of the farms estates. There, he and another person came here and killed a tiger. He shot it at night. We, shikaris would climb atop trees and sit down and the animal would come at night. We would sit at one of the tiger kills, usually a cattle kill or buffalo kill. Then when the tiger came back to eat the kill, the hunters would kill it. We would bring the dead animal and go around this temple, here at Odagari and then take the trophy. Many white men parties would come here for hunting. If they do not get anything else, they would atleast shoot 'black gaped hares' or jungle fowls and take then. Now-a-days there are no wild animals. They have decreased now, because there is no rain in these forests. So the animals have all gone far-away. Earlier there were big trees, a lot of rain, but now only bushes and bramble and very little rain. Now the forests are very different from then.

Rainfall
During my childhood, there used to be unbearable rains. There used to be atleast 3 spells of rain in each year. And each of these spells were heavy rains.

ORAL HISTORY OH 2.8 17/12/1990

Sigur Plateau
K. Alan, Irular, Anaikatti, Sigur Plateau

Personal Profile
K.Alan, 45 yrs; Agriculturist; Irula; Anaikatti resident:

Agriculture, Climate and Water resources
From the year 1933 to 1955 there was good monsoon and there was a lot of water available. There was a lot of water in the forests and the hills. But these days from 1955 onwards agriculture in these areas are poor. Further, agriculture has expanded in the hattis on top of the hills. They keep motors and pump out water from the streams; thus there is very little water for our agriculture. Since 1955 onwards, there has been a water problem. For 3 months during the summer months, even drinking water is a problem. For drinking water we have to dig pits in the stream and use that water. Often even these pits dry up, or get filled very slowly. Only 2/3 pots will be available in these pits too. The govt. has put a bore and a water tank here, but there is no water there too.

Habitations
About 5 generations ago; there was one person here who helped us a lot by talking to the govt. and the forest department and giving us some rights to extract sandalwood trees, etc. He even prepared a sketch of the agricultural lands here and gave them to the F.D, towards some settlement of rights because we were forest dwellers. This was some patta papers etc. They were handed over to the forest department. Then these papers have not come back to us. Thus we have no patta papers at all.
Many years before their land was Suluguder Denad patta lands. That is, in this area they were residing. They were Kongans. They were the lingakattis. They were the ones residing here. After they came and left the area was occupied by the Badagas, of Tuneri. And when they evacuated the area the white men came and closed the pattas and went away. Our community, Irulas have only come here recently. Only 10 to 15 families were here in those days. These families lived along with the Badagas and when the Badagas left, they left the land with us. Then the Tuneri-Denad patta lands were a little lower that our present agricultural lands. Those days they had cultivated paddy in those areas. One can even see it today. The cannal runs along there. The area from here stretching all the way to Kovilpatti was full of patta lands. Kovil patti is the Anaikal mari gudi. There is a canal that comes right from the temple right upto here. There is a patta stone on the higher side of the road near the junction. On the higher side of the bridge there is a patta stone. That place is called "Company pallam" or Company kadavu. It was at that place that the white men had buildings, they had stables, they were staying there too. That is the beginning or the limit of the patta lands. Then there are a whole lot of patta stones all around this place. But five generations ago, all this patta documents have been deposited with the forest department. Many years ago all the patta documents were deposited with the forest department.

Before that it was the called the Konga nad and the konga people were inhabitants here. They used to keep a lot of cattle and buffaloes here and extracted milk and had machines etc. and did all kinds of things here. There is a place called "Santehada", above Arakadavu above the tower line, where there were villages their earlier. People have said there was a village there, and even during the construction of the towerline, there was still a settlement there at "santehada". So during the erection of the line, they were involved in the work, and those days, the Konga people kept a lot of cattle there. They used to extract butter and sell it to all the tower line labourers. So those days it was the Konga people who were living here. When the Kongas went they left all their wealth and belongings with the Badagas and left. Then during the British time the whole area from 'Company Kadauv' till the kovil patti, till here was all patta lands.

Infact a few years back about 10 yrs ago, the Collector came along with the Badagas here and was shown all the patta stones by the Badagas. The Badagas came here and asked for patta in this area but the collector did not agree. He agreed that the Irulas can stay here, but he will not allow the Badagas to have property rights in the area. Then the Badagas even tried to use the Adivasi Irulas to use their name and cause and get pattas in this area, but even that did not work.

Tengumara was settled as a cooperative with the support and help of the advasi Irula cause. But here the authority here is deposited with the forest department and we are now acting and living under the action/control and guidance of the forest department.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 2.9 17th December, 1990

He was an old man living all by himself in a single village near the temple of Anaikal margudi. He does not do any agriculture and keeps a large herd of cattle. He lives with an old local lady from the local area. His lives at his patti, one of the pastoral camp sites on the Sigur plateau. His is the only house in the area The place is situated at the foot of the Nilgiri plateau from where some paths go up to Ebanad in the Nilgiri plateau. This was the main route through which all the Badaga agriculturists travelled to/from the Sigur plateau to the Nilgiri plateau to supervise their pastoral activity on the Sigur plateau. There is an old mariamman temple at Anaikal marigudi near the patti.

During the British period, there were many Badaga agriculturists ~~that~~ who established themselves on the Sigur plateau using the land and human resources of the Sigur plateau for pastoral activity. In fact, all the agricultural villages on the northern rim of the Nilgiri plateau, the area known traditionally as Ebanad, had interests on the Sigur plateau. Many of them kept their cattle here that were looked after by the Irula families. The Badaga owner seasonally came down to supervise his cattle in the penns that were at one time very widespread on the Sigur plateau. The cattle would also be driven up to the agricultural areas on the Nilgiri plateau in times of need, but mostly kept permenantly on the Sigur plateau. In the British period an later, livestock produce in the form of clarified butter or ghee used to be carried up to the markets in Ooty, initially by the foot path and later by the bus service that was available from certain areas on the Sigur plateau to Ooty.

Nilgiri Plateau
Sigur Plateau
Nanjan, Badagar, Mallapuram, Sigur Plateau, Nilgiri Plateau

Personal profile
Badaga, 65yrs old; home town Chinna coonoor; stays at Mallapuram patti, Headsman.

Personal profile
I never go up. It is too cold for me. I prefer to stay here. I get sick there. Only if I feel I am going to die will I go up. I am not going to really sell the buffaloes- I am going to leave it behind for this Irula lady who has served me. My sons are in the hatti. I like this place I do not like the hatti. It is too cold up there. I am staying here as long as I am.

Livelihoods and Livestock
L.Lanjan, has stayed in the Sigur area for 35 years- during that time I had 50 buffaloes. Then one disease hit the buffaloes and almost all the buffaloes died. This happened 27 years ago, ie., 1963. One of about 10 buffaloes survived that disease. Then slowly the buffalo numbers swelled to 30. After that of course, one or two occasionally died here and there. But that disease that struck was not occasional ill-health. The buffaloes start purging and in one month or so the buffaloes died. The doctors had not been able to do anything about it.

Habitations
In 1932, I came down to the plateau from the upper plateau. I have lived in Sirur, Masi, ie., Masipatti, Arkadavu, Odagaripatti, Mariyanapuram patti, this side of Chemmanattam, Vazhaithottam etc. I have stayed in all these places.

Livestock
Those days, we never used to sell milk. We would make Ghee and sell it at Ooty. There used to be a lot of buttermilk around here. Infact the buttermilk used to be poured down and wasted. Pigs etc used to eat and drink them. The milk society and sale of milk has been going on for about 20 years now ie., since 1970. From Malappuram about 1 van ie., 40 ltrs of milk goes.

Vegetation and Climate

To talk of the difference between then and now regarding forests; there is no rain; no grass and fodder for livestock; the cattle that is there is decreasing; earlier there used to be a lot of rain, thus a lot of grass, and thus a lot of milk. This year too a lot of buffaloes died due to shortage of fodder. Only now, for the past month has there been rain, and water and fodder. A few months back, we had difficulties; we had to sell the cattle here and survive.

Water Resources

Earlier, there used to be only 3 months of dry season. From January to March. The rest of the year there would always be scattered rain. This decrease of rain has been since the last 5 years. 5 years ago, there was a storm and this, stream-Kedar halla was flooded. After that there has been poor rains and water scarcity. Just come a see a month later. Today there is water in the stream, but if you come a month later the stream will be dry. We have to dig a pit in the stream and then only take water. Above in the villages above, they would all put motors in the stream and draw out water. It is not one village above that does it- the 'whole world' above does it- Chinna Coonoor, Orahatti, Anaikorai, Oramalai, Iduhatti etc. a lot of villages are there above. Ebnad does not come under this catchment. Ebnad is on the upstream of Sirur stream. The motor pumping of water from the stream has been going on for 7-8 years. If we go and protest against the water usage, they say, "if you want you stay there, or else you come up. Come up and let us do agriculture why do you die there keeping buffaloes. Come here and plant Tea, Garlic, make a lot of money, build a house and live happily". So, many people have left this place sold their buffaloes and gone away. Even I am going to leave the place next year and go-away. The whole this is not economical. We do not get loans, or any support from the Govt. Whereas adivasis get a lot of support. For the poor these are difficult days.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 2.11 15th December, 1990

Nilgiri Plateau
S. Mada Gowder, Badagar, Kootrapatti, Sigur Plateau, Nilgiri Plateau

Mada Gowder is an old and straight man. I met him in the last pastoral patti on the Sigur plateau before it descends into the Coimbatore plains. The patti is about four hours of a treck away from the nearest read head, where public transport is available. He has cattle in the area, and comes here to supervise operations. The patti is looked after by an Irula group, who tend the cattle and buffaloes. He come along with worker from Anaikatti, stays the night where I too am staying and gets back early in the morning. He has considerable experience of the area and talks in detail about the Sigur plateau and livestock rearing.

Personal profile
S.Mada Gowder, 70 yrs old, Kootrapatti; resident of Chinna Coonoor; owns buffaloes, Pastoral-owner/managed by Irulas; owns 150 buffaloes; Agriculturist.

Personal profile
My sons are on duty. They will not take care of this business. They do not even know this place. They have never come here. I have made them study from a very young age and how will they come here. They studied in Ooty- and then at Madras for 4-5 years and have now joined duty. One has studied Veterinary science (vvc). But they will never come here. He will never get leave to come here and look after the buffaloes. I have kept the buffaloes and looked after them because they are my ancestral wealth. But they would not do it.

Personal profile
These days survival is a problem. I have two sons; the daughters have all been married off. One son is in the Sheep Breeding Farm on the way to Sholur. He does research there. My other son is a Pharmacist. He is in a hospital drug store at Ooty Government Hospital.

I have already given some buffaloes to these people. The rest of the buffaloes I am going to sell off and go away. My children's salary is not sufficient for them. And they have a few daughters for all of which they need money. I have already given buffaloes to the one family that works here. These people anyway keep changing.

Climate
From a very long time, the rains were good, but now, in more recent times, the rains have been progressively decreasing. So these days are getting to be more and more difficult.

The rainy season should start in the end of April or May; from April 15th onwards, the rains would start for the whole world. All over there would be rain- from Madras, Tiruchi and all over. Now-a-days, rains are torrential in one portion and in other portions there are no rains. Earlier a lot of rain would be there all over the place.

The rains season, about 10-20 years ago, and in my childhood. Feb-March-April would be the months when there will be no rain. From April 15th the rains would start. Now-a-days that is not the way it rains. These years, there was no rain in April-May-June-July-Aug-Sept; and only in the last week of October did it start to rain. And we had a lot of problems, lot of crops, lot of cattle died; there was very poor milk yields; and we did all kinds of things to fight over the difficulties, and save something.

Water resources
Earlier the stream that runs here starts from Ebanad and Tuneri. That stream used to be perennial till the last 5/6 years. Next month by Jan 10th or 15th, the stream will become dry. This has been happening only over the past 4-5 years. In the Mari koil, upstream from here, they used to celebrate the annual festival in March and now, because of the stream going dry in summer, they have postponed it to May and infact the dates is fixed after seeing the water position. We could at least give and make food if water is available. Even this festival delay has been going on for 5/6 years now.

Livestock

These pattis have been here for a very long time, it must be over a 100 years old. They were there before I was born. We do not ourselves know for how long the pattis have existed here. Pattis have not increased or decreased. They are much the same as they were. Some people have sold their livestock and gone up to the village, and some bought live stock and come down. Sometimes, the buffaloes will all die and there may be just a few remaining and it will not be enough, so a few people will stay and start increasing the stock. And there are some who own a large amount of livestock, and some who own very little.

Livestock Penning sites and Livestock products

There are many, many patti sites all over the place; there is Paldhattipatti, Bellimeenpatti, Karamalipatti, Kootrapatti, all these are on the Moyar. Then along Kedarhalla, there is Masipatti; then along the other tributary there is Gundattipatti; then Sirur. Then above Sirur there are 2/3 pattis, I do not know the name of them. Like this there were many pattis around here. Earlier, whoever had a sizable number of buffaloes and cattle each one separately built a patti at one of the sites and used to tend his livestock. Now-a-days they have all congregated to the milk collection centres. If you look at Sirur, there would be 20/30 pattis. At Odagari patti there would be 5/10 pattis. At Arakadavupatti, there would be 5/10 pattis. Before each of these people were living in different places. They were living alone far-far way. Now since the milk collection centres have come up, they have all congregated to these centres. The pattis that were far apart have all come together. All because of the milk collection that goes on, all this has happened. And this is encouraged by the government.

For us it is not economical to make Ghee, we have to put in a lot of work. Milk the Buffaloes, curdle it, chun the butter out, boil it and then transport it by headloads out. And these days nobody does that kind of work, and not many can do it. So if we milk the buffaloes and pour it to the Government, we get money. Thus the far flung pattis have come together. But there are other problems. Concentrated at these sites, we do not get good grass for fodder, and good water. I do not know if this is wrong or right. Only the lord knows it. Also we cannot stay in far and remote places, because to these places, the vehicles do not come. For this patti, the government was sending a Jeep from Kotagiri, via Mangalapatti. We were carrying the milk from here across the river and pouring it there at Mangalapatti. But now the Jeep is under repair, and the Jeeps are all sold off. Now, we do not know if they would send the Jeep for collection. So, we tried to hire a vehicle, but the quotation and rate must be acceptable to the Government.

And if the milk is sold to the Government, the locals don't even get butter milk for their nutrition. However, to churn out butter is a very tiring task.

Grazing permits

A few months back the Govt. thought of not giving grazing licenses around here. Then they gave a grazing pass and then they also gave a penning permit. This pass system has been there for a very long time. Even from my father's times this pass system has been prevalent.

Livestock population

Earlier, we had equal number of cattle and buffaloes. Then a lot of buffaloes died to a disease and after that there are fewer buffaloes and more cattle. Now of course the buffaloes have increased in number, but the number of cattle is more. We have our cattle up there on the plateau. There is no point keeping cattle here, because they do not yield much butter. But buffaloes need water so we will have to keep them here on the banks of the Moyar and not on the Sigur plateau.

Another thing is that, we cannot keep any stud buffaloes around here. In those days, some of the male buffaloes have run away into the forest and are now feral, and they do not allow any of the other male buffaloes to graze around. They kill the male buffaloes of the patti over conflict. They are even capable of charging at us. So no males stay at the patti. But on the Sigur plateau we do keep some studs at the plateau. Here there is no chance of keeping males studs. The Govt. has given some studs that we keep on the Sigur plateau.

Earlier the breed of cattle were local breeds, but now, the Govt. has given us 'Sindhi' cattle. They brought 'Sindhi' 'Kala' from the Hosur cattle farm and gave us. It must be over 10 years, they gave us this improved breed of Sindhu and now most of the cattle here are Sindhu. The earlier over were native

species and those that have been crossed and the recent progeny are all native cattle crossed with the Sindhi studs that we got from the Govt. Even now there are some native cattle. The Sindhi cattle give more milk, and the native cattle have better looks. But the Govt. has discounted the looks of the cattle to the milk yielding capacity. Now the population of Sindhi cattle is much more than the native cattle. The Sindhu breeds if they are born here are able to survive the weather of the place, but if the cattle is brought from another area, it does not survive here, but if born here the cattle will survive.

Livestock ownersip
Chinna Coonoor, Ebnadu, Thoraiatti, Ulitigrama, Sholur grama, Melur etc.; all these village people have pattis around here. All of them are Badagar. Badagar are of many groups; Wadaiyar, Kumbaran, then there are the Torariyur, and that is it. I am a Badagar, Badagar is also one of the groups.

Livestock rearing
From a long time, we would supervise and the Irulas would be looking after our buffaloes. Today someone is here looking after the buffaloes; then he would go away; then we would have to catch another person to come here and look after the buffaloes. And we would come and stay often to supervise.

Livestock products
The Ghee from here is taken to Ooty. It costs Rs.50/- to transport a tin of Ghee to Ooty. About 10-15 kgs of Ghee. At Ooty we sell the Ghee at the rate of Rs.50/- Rs.60/- per kg. We do not mix or adulterate any of it. Even the Todar make Ghee and sell them. But now-a-days most of them sell the milk itself.

We too, in many of the pattis on the Sigur plateau, we sell the morning milk, and out of the evening milk make Ghee to sell. Even here, the collection vehicle used to be coming, but now it does not come, and so we are making Ghee at the present. If I cannot do it, I will have to sell the buffaloes and go. I will give them away at whatever price. People are buying them up in Masinagudi and Moyar. So I would sell them away. I am also planning to give away my buffaloes for whatever price I get.

Grazing
There were 2/3 pattis around here till recently. But because of shortage of fodder all of us dispersed all over the place. I went to Paldhatti patti, and they went to Bellimeen patti and only now I have come back. A few months back it was very difficult. During calving time because of shortage of fodder many buffaloes died, and many calves also died. We had a lot of difficulty this year. Now, only for the past month things are OK. It has rained a little and so things are fine. So, I am thinking of selling my buffaloes and winding up.

Pastoral tradition
They say it is our ancestral wealth for 800 years-1000yrs, but since we do not have a written script, we really do not know, and there are no records. It is only oral history. They say it is 800 years or 1000yrs since all this has been created and before that it was some other yuga or eon. But none of that is recorded, it is only orally transmitted. Cattle as well as buffaloes existed that far back.

Livestock
Our buffaloes are similar to the Todamar buffaloes. We call it mountain buffaloes. It is difficult to take these buffaloes towards Ooty, because they have all survived in the forests here, and it would be a nuisance to take them near towns. If a vehicle comes, they get agitated. If 4/5 people come, or outsiders come they get agitated. The Todamar buffaloes are much more pacifist. Also these buffaloes may not survive the cold of the Nilgiri hills.

Livestock manure
Earlier, we never used to have a source of manure for agriculture. We never had any manure. Only now do we have fertilizer available. So then, we had to drive up cattle and buffaloes up to the hattis and make manure, and only then we can do agriculture. If there is fodder there after rains, we would keep it these and make manure. It may be for 30 or 40 days.

Livestock rearing

The buffaloes that give milk would be left behind here to make butter and ghee. All the unproductive cattle we would take up to our fields to make manure, keep them there for 30/40 days, by which time they would get weak, there would be a fodder shortage, then we would bring down here. This practice has stopped 30/40 years back. Why that has happened is that the Govt. had decided that none of the forest lands should be wasted. Social Forestry programmes were started through the Panchayat Boards. So all the grassland and all the lands were planted with trees. So there was no grass growing there, and now the whole area has become overgrown with thorny plants. So even if we take the cattle and buffaloes up, there would be no fodder available and we have to bring them down.

Even now sometimes we drive up a few of the livestock, but there is no fodder available, so we bring them down again. There are many ways and paths to go up. The cold up there of course effects them. They get weak in 20/30 days. Then we bring them down, and in a few days they get normal.

Irulas

Earlier there were few Irulas and they were more innocent and poor. Today their numbers have increased a lot and further they get a lot of loans from the Govt. @ Rs.500/- or Rs.600/- per person males and females. And in the loan they have brought many buffaloes- murra buffaloes that are high yielding collage buffaloes. And now they are much better off these days.

Vegitation and Weeds

The forests have more or less here as they were earlier. It looks as though the forests are as they were. All these trees were earlier and they are still around today. I am talking of my childhood times to today. But the thorny plants and bushes have definitely increased. Before about 20 yrs ago visibility around used to be good. But now thorny plants have covered the area. Earlier there were less thorny plants and more grass. In this whole area, from here all the way eastward till Mettupallyam and Satyamangalam and now it has spread even till this place. This is only one year back that these plant (Prosopis) has spread to this locality.

Earlier there was a lot of the prickly pear that all people here used to eat. Then some pest attacked it and now if one plant comes up well, one plant withers away. This prickly pear does not occur too much here. It is only on top, on the Sigur plateau that there are many of these prickly pear plants. Here, there are none. Earlier there was no pest on the plant. They used to be healthy and proliforant. But now the pest has struck; so on one side the plant will be decaying and withering; and on the other side it will be growing and putting out fresh fruits. One front will be attacked, another would be free of attack.

Wildlife conflict

Predators used to be there earlier, and even today predators kill our cattle and buffaloes. It is just like what it was before. We do not know what animals kills, but if we go to the forest, one or two of our livestock would be lost.

And finally, we may be able to say that the cattle and buffalo population is decreasing in the last few years.

Communications

Earlier we would walk up and down to Chinna Coonoor, but now we will go the Arkadanapatti, take the milk van out to Vazhathottam and from there catch the M.gudi-Ooty bus and then go to Chinna Coonoor.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 3.5 10-02-91

Sigur Plateau
M. Kalalinga Gowder, Gowder, Moyar, Sigur Plateau

Kalalinga Gowder was a grand old man. He was a Gowda who has settled in Moyar. Moyar villlage is situated in the westerm portion of the Sigur plateau and is closer to Karnataka. It overlooks the Moyar gorge into Karrnataka. Moyar village, traditionally called Guruvegaudanahalli changed its name to Moyar after the hydroelectric project that was commissioned in 1950s. It was mainly settled by a mixed community of people who had migrated from Karnataka. His house was in the village where we sat and talked. His house was decorated with black buck trophy. He was knowledgeable about the history and tradition of the area. He was aware of the archeological remanis of the area and narrated a local tradition about pastorals and the Golla community that has a wider distribution on the Mysore plateau. These western portions are rich with a variety of archaeological remains of unique burial sites, abandoned villages and forts. The dense distribution of villages in the area with their habitation sites, fields, and grain storage bins suggest dense habitations in the pre British period. All these have since been abandoned and have been overgrown by forests.

Personal profile
M.Kalalingiya Gowder, 70 yrs of age, resident of Moyar.

Personal profile
I am about 70 yrs old, my name is Kalalingayyah.

Local Tradition
The old name of this village or area that constituted the tract from Masinagudi to Moyar was called Devarayapatnam. It was said that the people from this whole area and from areas as far away as Satyamangalam used to come here to pay their taxes. They used to come to Chemmanattam to pay their taxes. There is a fort there even now. All the villages around here have been destroyed. The people of these areas all died from diorreah.

Local tradition
The villages here were many in those days. They have all disappeared. The township Devarayanapatna will be even referred in Government records, in government books. In old survey books, it must be mentioned. This village was later called Guruvegovindenahalli. The earlier name was Devarayapatnam. There were other villages here, Bastipura, Settipura, Ganganahalli, Basavapura, etc. All these village sites are here in the forests now. The places where they grew ragi, the pits where they stored ragi, all are visible around here.

Human groups
There is a group called Kurumba Gownders here. I do not know if they have changed their name recently. We must ask them their origins, and the origin of their name.

The village itself was established by the Kurumba Gownders. Linga Gownders came later. They were actually Gownders, who used to be called Kurumba Gownders in these parts. There are other Kurumbas also, there are Kattu Kurumbas, Jenu Kurumbas, Betta Kurumbas, but we are the Kurumbas who tend sheep. Then there are Mulla Kurumbas. We, the Kurumba Gownders are the people who keep sheep. Actually we are Kurumbas because we keep sheep and we are called Gownders in Kannada. For the sheep in kannada we call Kuruba, thus we are Kuruba Gownders.

There are many types of Kurumba. There are Morra Kurumba who make seines. We are the sheep kurumba gownders. The people who collect honey from the forests are Jenu Kurumbas, etc.

Human groups
In this village there used to be Lingayats like us, Kurumba Gownders, Kasavas, Sholeyans, Pariahs, Chakkiliyas were there but the older people have vacated. Now only newer immigrant Chakkiliyas are here. All of these communities would practice agriculture. Even the Sholegas used to do agriculture. Earlier they used to be subjucated to us, but now they are independent. The ownership of land was

mainly with the Gownders. If you had land, I would join you and do agriculture and I would get a share of the produce. Now this system does not operate any more.

Archaeology

There are many archaeological remains in the area. There are these 2/3 sites with carvings on some stones. Some stones have inscriptions we do not know what script it is. No one has deciphered it yet. Some American had come to look for them. He saw them and went away. He has not replied. Then there are figures sculptured of Shiva, of a horse, of a warrior with a spear. Some of the stones have broken, and some have been built like a temple. We do not know who built it, or how they came to be. Our elders have only shown us these stones.

We do not know of any prevalence of 'sati' in this area. There are stones that have women depicted on them, but we do not know of any tradition of sati anywhere here. Then there are many of this dolmen type of structure. With side stones and a cap stone. Many of them have been destroyed by elephants. There are many of these types of structures around still. They are structure built during the Chola period. They are a samadhi, burial site. There are some bones in some of them; there are some pots and pans in some of them. They are under those stones. The pottery is finely done, it is as though it is glazed, and acts as a mirror. When the colony was being built, they discovered these and they had taken it and kept it in the bangalow of the EB. You may find pieces of it in the hattis and pattis around here too. Sometimes rodents dig into these place and bring out these pieces to the surface. Even now, we can dug them up. It would require some labour of 8 to 10 people. Some good flat stones are also available from such place so many have been removed. There would be 3 side stones and a cap stone. In one of the side stones is a round opening, then there are steps leading down to the pit. The younger people do not know any of these sites.

Wild life

Earlier in this place there was a lot of agriculture as well as cattle keeping here. During the British times, they had given us guns and licenses for self-protection, and crop-protection. We were shooting animals that trouble us. We were killing tigers, leopards, etc. But today's rules say we have killed too much of all these animals and now, we must allow them to grow. So now we have no guns and no gun licences, we cannot even go inside the forests. Now, you want to go and see the stones; the forest staff will question us as to why we came inside.

Shikar

Earlier there used to be a lot of whitemen coming here for shikar. They could come by car and jeep till Moyar and hunt in these forests. They would all have gave licenses. Now, the present government has stopped all that. Now, no hunting is allowed.

Livestock; Wildlife conflict

Earlier each of us used to have 50, 30, 100 heads of cattle, and now many of the cattle are caught by wild dogs and other predators. Even earlier there were predators, but during the British period, hunting and shikar used to be allowed and we would kill them and get a reward of Rs.25/- for wild dogs. Because these dogs capture and eat our cattle, if we kill one of the dogs and produce the head of the animal to the DFO office at Ooty, we would get a reward of Rs.25/-. There was no reward for tigers- only wild dogs shot were rewarded. They used to give Rs.5/- for wild boar, because these wild boar destroy our fields. Even now I think they give reward for wild boars. Now-a-days, wild dogs trouble has increased a lot. Tigers sometime come inside the village and carry away cattle from the cattle sheds.

Shikar

I have hunted animals in this forest. I have shot panthers, tigers, wild boar, sambhar, bison, etc. All this was serious hunting. Not for pleasure, but because they used to bother us. I shot a tiger nearby here with a rifle. It had killed a cow here, and sitting over the kill, I shot the tiger. I have shot 3 tigers. All of them big animals. Now, there are no big tigers in this locality. I shot these tigers in 1955-56, or earlier. I shot the tiger and gave away the trophy to the Collector and others, who ever asked for them. I do not have any trophies with me now.

Vegetation

Now, there are no sandal trees at all in this area. Earlier during the British period, he had plantations of sandal trees in this area. Now all those trees are not there any more. Those days sandal trees were huge. One tree would fill one lorry- but now nothing exists, not even its roots exist.

Rainfall

During my childhood the rainfall was good and regular. It used to rain atleast 2 or 3 times a month. It would rain from May onwards for 6 months till November. It would rain atleast 2/3 times a months. Now, for the past 10 years such rains do not occur, and for the last 2/3 yrs there has been no rains at all. For agriculture here, the rains are very important.

Water resources

The stream was never perennial in these parts of the area. None of the streams would have water year around, but now, after the dam construction, the Avarahalla stream flows year around because of water from the seepage of the dam. Before the dam, Avarahalla would have water only during the rainy season, and in the dry season, it would be dry. Even if the stream was only seasonal, those days the rainy season was very reliable. Now, all over and for longer periods the area remains dry. And now-a-days even our food requirements are not met by the agriculture.

In those days, the months of Adi, Avani, and Ippasi used to be the monsoonal months, or 'Adamazhi' period. And in one hour it would rain continuously for 5 days or 10 days. Now, those types of rains are non-existent.

Agriculture and Vegetation

Earlier, our agriculture was mainly Ragi, Cholam, Seseme, Kollu, Kottamalli, Mocchaikottai, Beans, Chillies, Brinjal, and many other vegetables. Now, there is no rain for sowing any vegetables. And there is no other source of water around here. There is no irrigation around here.

For drinking water we have wells. There are some very old wells in this area, but some of them are dry. When the department came in 1947, they put up a water supply system and supplied water to the village also. After 1947, we have had piped water supply system. And after Mahatma Gandhi got independence we have started having a lot of problems. Before independence it was a prosperous time for all of us. There is no food available now-a-days; the government tends elephants and deer at the cost of us villagers. Previously the forests were good and now the forests are being destroyed. So there is no food and fodder for the wild animals that the government is tending. They build dams, but there is water shortage all around. If we are the one who destroy the forests, we would have destroyed it a long time back. It is the government that is the cause for the destruction of the forests. The forests here never had teak or rosewood, but here there is sandal, tityphus, and other dry forest trees. The forests are decreasing because of decrease in rainfall, and the soil is very rocky. Thus the forests are thus decreasing. Earlier there was a lot of thorny bushes, and even that has decreased and the area is becoming drier.

Settlement

The population is increasing in spite of the government call for family planning. When I was small there were just about 40 houses in this village. Now, there are more that 800-1000 families in this village. A lot of EB staff and labour have come here. A lot of outsiders have also come here and settled. Even the original resident families have grown. Each house used to have 4 to 5 children, and these children have grown big and set up separate houses. Thus even the original resident populations have gone up. But surely the place has been swamped by outsiders.

Land Ownership

Earlier there was about 100 acres of patta lands her. Now there are only 3 patta holders here. Earlier the whole area here was patta lands. During my childhood days, my father died and me and my mother were unable to pay the taxes and the govt. confiscated the lands. My brother were all small. It was the British rule those days. The Collector came and left us 30 acres of land, a well and a house, and the rest was confiscated. We were then living off this 30 acres of land.

Hydro-electric power compensation

When the congress government came, in fact even during the British days, the power house and the dam were beginning to be built. So the government acquired our lands, and the Collector came and requested us. They paid us a compensation of Rs.18,000/- and acquired the lands, house and well. They also gave us alternative lands, double of the agricultural lands acquired by the Govt. Thus we had to get 60 acres for the 30 acres that they acquired. But in-between, the change in the govt. from the British rule to the Congress rule changed the whole scene and their promises were not met. Only I got monitory compensation. The others in the village got nothing. The rent has been raised. Each one had to pay Rs.200/-, Rs.300/-, Rs.400/- etc. and fines etc. Somehow, we paid all this. Then I put a 'stay order' in the court, and then the government gave my brother and me 6 acres each. The others had not got anything. The officials came, survey and go away, but nothing seems to be done. The issue is still not settled either way. The department thus acquired all the patta lands.

The patta lands was itself less, because much land was given away as 'Jhodi rajanama' or quit rent. Only a few families had patta lands here those days. All the lands have now gone into the dam. The other 8 families had only little lands. If I talk about the wrong doings in this village it will not suit the government.

Human diseases

Those days there were epidemics here. But after my period there has been no such disaster. Earlier of course, Cholera, Dysentery, etc used to be common, small pox has also struck this place. All this must have happened 60-70 years before. Even during my childhood, small pox came and about 10-15 people died in this village.

Diseases

I do know, even in my memory that Cholera has attacked this place, and many people have died. That must have been 40-50 years ago.

Communications

Earlier, there was no transport facilities to Moyar. We had to walk along the road. The nearest market was at Masinagudi. There used to be 2 or 3 shops at Masinagudi, and that was it. We would normally go to market once a week. There is also a route from here to Gundlupet across the Moyar gorge. We would occasionally go to Gundlupet along this route. There is another route called the Paldhatti route, via Paldhatti. That used to be the original Tippu Sultan route. There is a regular bridal path cut. We have seen the road and gone on the route, but whether Tippu Sultan laid the route or someone else, we do not know. It is a regular nice route. It is called the Tippu route.

There is another route from here, it used to be a bridal tract. Today it is in very poor condition. Earlier we used to have horses here. But because of the disturbance from panthers and tigers we have given it up.

Local Tradition: The Golla myth

There was a big rain in the area. Because of the big rain, all the cattle came back to the patti. The person has 2 wives and 2 families. He had 7 cattle penns or hundis in the area. 7 cattle penns and 7 penns for the cattle calves. Such was his wealth and well-being. But he was a Gownda and he had driven the cattle out to graze. Then the huge rain began. When you go from here, near the Gollattipatti, there are 2 streams on either sides with the patti in between. One is a bigger stream, and the other smaller. The bigger stream is the elder sister's and the smaller stream is the younger sister's. The huge rain came and water was flowing all around the area. The cattle got scared to the swirling waters and it became dark. In the darkness, everybody went to sleep. He spread a (sheet) and the Gowndan went to sleep on it. Then every body went to sleep. At about 3 am in the morning, a bird started given a call (hooo-hooo like a pigeon) which was very simmilar to the call that the Gowndan had trained his cattle to respond to. So, when the cattle heard the call of the bird, they mistook it to be the call of their master and ventured out of the penn. They fell in the swollen stream and all the cattle were washed away. 'Kattu kuzhi' that was there, that was used as a bed for the Gowndar to lie on was also washed away, he informed his family that the bird of a calamity has struck and now he had no wealth. So if they wanted they could join him, or else separate if they so desired. I cannot come from here. He has seven pots of silver and gold coins, kept in pots; each of his wives has 7 pots of coins each. Even that was washed away. Seeing all this, the Gownden also released the calves, and they too were washed away. Then in the afternoon, the two sisters had gone to drink water. They had left their clothes to dry at the place where there are some rocks. The rock is still there with some markings just like the saree that the sisters were wearing.

The wife and family of the Gowndan were on the opposite hill, and the dogs went and brought them over to the Gownden. The wives seeing all their wealth and riches, and all their cattle being washed away also decided to fall into the water and die. There on the landscape you can see the place where the sisters had fallen. The place is full of the landmarks of this legend. There are 2 trees there and the 2 streams are called elder, and younger sister streams. Similarly at the Sigur waterfalls too, the one on top, the larger falls is the elder sister's falls, and the second lower falls is the younger sister's. The same kind of flood event has happened even here at Sigur falls. The younger sister fell with more anger and wrath and thus she fell lower. The lower falls if you notice is in seven streams. That is how the big Sigur falls was also made. That is the fame of the Gollattikadavu site. Even now during the Amayvasa, there is some celebration at the site. They, the Gowndans' family conduct some rites at the site. You can hear the sounds when you go there. On the Amayvasa if you go below to the foot of the Sigur falls, you can hear the cattle shouting, the people doing prayer, bells ringing, the dogs barking, etc. all this can be heard. We cannot stay there with all such noises. One should go with great purity to that site, otherwise some calamity would befall us. Even now such things happen. A few days back, a women went there, and a cobra came with the hood, and she died there.

One Muslim who did not believe in this myth of ours went there and came back a believer. Even the whitemen have become convinced about the sanctity of these sites.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 3.6 11-02-1991

Jadiyan was the headman of the Irula village of Doddlingi. The village is situated in the western portion of the sigur plateau, at the base of the Nilgiri plateau. Beside this village there is a small hillock rising out of the plateau landscape of the Sigur plauteau that gives the village the name of Doddlingi. One site of this hillock is completely and densely scattered with hundreds of dolmens. While the villagers are all aware of this site, there is no special sanctity to the site and many of the capstones are periodically removed for some construction. Dodlingi is also important, for nearby is the most well know temple of Bokkapuram. The annual festival of Bokkapuram is one of the biggest festivals on the Sigur plateau attracting people from all over the plateau and lately people from the a larger area of neighbouring Karnataka and Coimbatore.

Jadiyan was the one who told me about the site of massacre of Irulas and Kurumbas by the Badagas. He showed me a site where this had occurred and took me there. This was situated on a steep hill on one of the spurs of the Nilgiri plateau. He related this is a matter-of-fact manner. He also said that for each person massacred at the site, the Irulas put up a stone in memory of the person at the foot of the Nilgiri plateau, a little distant away from Doddalingi. Jadiyan was an person aware of the developmental dynamics. He knew of various developmental initiatives in the area. He himself was educated and was concerned of advancement of his community and the necessity of education.

Sigir Plateau
Jadiyan, Irular, Doddalingi, Sigir Plateau

Local tradition
Those days one women ruled over these parts of the land. She was called Lingi, a women who was ruling from here. Thus this village was given the name Doddalingi after the queen that ruled this place.

Inter-tribal conflict
Those days, we were generally called Kurumbas by the Badagas on the hills. We were of course, Irulas, but they called us all who lived in these forests Kurumbas. Those days, we used to do a lot of medicine and used to collect a lot of medicinal herbs and roots from this area. The Badagas thought we were using these herb roots and chants against them. So they came and tied us together like they tie a herd of cattle, and they drove us thus to the foothills of these hills; built a fort around here and placed us on logs of wood and slaughtered us. After they killed us, in the memory of each one that they killed, they would pick up a stone and at Westbury estate, at a temple there, one each of our names they implanted a stone at the temple. By such ways, slaughtering thousands of us, they built a temple at the Westbury estate. Now, once an year we go there and pray to our ancestors who died there. It is called 'Kuruppada swami' temple being a 'kuruppa' or a memory indication of the people of us who died. We pray to that temple once in a year and in times of difficulties with respect to health or some other difficulties. We pray there to remove our difficulties. This was during the British times and the tradition still continues. This tradition, and the happening of this event has been coming down generations to our memory. They doubted us, and thought we were doing ills to them through our medicines and chants and thus killed us. We were helpless, because we are normally scared of outsiders. You are an outsider, and a few years back we would not even talk to you. If we spy you coming, if we saw someone with white clothes, we would leave our village and run into the forests. Only after 1986, since the school and education came to this village, we are aware and civilized and meet outsiders like you and talk with you. Now after education things have changed.

The place where they slaughtered us still exists. It is called the Kottaimattam, and I can show it to you. It is a flat area, with stones piled up upto 2 or 3 ft. in a circular form. There is a small entrance to the fort. There is the wood that is split in two on which they slaughtered us. It is on the edge of this hill. They caught us all here and took us up there. We do not know how many people died thus. They must have caught 50 or 60 of us in the night, caught us and tied our hands and legs together, and drove us up like a herd of cattle and slaughted us one by one at that site.

Knowledge of Medicinal plants

It is because of our medicine and healing capabilities that they slaughtered us. Now there are none that know these medicinal herbs in our village. Earlier many of us knew healing. But after 1956, our knowledge of these herbs and roots and medicines started decreasing. And now civilisation is coming into this area. The women who were caught and their jewels like chain, nose ring, waist belt, bangle, etc. would be collected and dropped into the ground between rocks in a bundle. We can show you these areas.

Development; Livelihoods; Bonded labour

The school here was built in 1986. It was during the regime of Ari Gowder, who was the local MLA of Nilgiris. P. Kakkan was the Adivasi minister in those days. It was during the Congress Kamaraj rule. Those days, we were all "Kottadi thozhil" or group bonded labour, our fathers, ourselves, and our children were to work under the agricultural and pastoral Badagas. Weekly we used to get 2 kozhaga of ragi ie., 10 padi/litres of Ragi. They would give Rs.1.25 to Rs.2.00 money instead to the Ragi. Then, they would give us silver coins of Rs.2.00. With that money we would eat. Our diet would consist of the Ragi, some bamboo shoots that we would collect and some greens available here. Those used to be difficult times with little food. We were slave labour for the Badagas, ploughing their fields, looking after their cattle, washing their loin clothers and doing other menial tasks. We would gather fuelwood for them, and we worked hard to bring the Badagas prosperity and advancement. They would take us up to their hattis, 5 miles from here to toil on their fields there. They would give us meals and some money. We were to do all tasks assigned by them. We were the coolie labours for them. Thus they became rich and prosporous and we became poorer and down- trodden.

Then during my father's time, we went and fell at the feet of Ari Gowder and said "Lord, we live inside the forests. We have no one to look to our well being, and we have no means. We have been working and toiling for your people, the Badagas for long. Please make some arrangements for our improvement. Please start a school for the advancement of our children". He conceded and gave an order and an assurance that he would meet the Adivasi minister and do something for our well-being. Only after that, in the survey no. 388 part, grazing land, they started a school there, since then, we started studying from class 1 onwards and slowly our condition improved, and we stopped being the bonded labour for the Badagas. We ourselves slowly got out of the clutches of the Badagas. There was of course, some resistance from the Badagas, they said we had loans outstanding with them. Then, during the regime of Indira Gandhi, these loans were ordered to be written off, and we were made free. Since then bonded labour was abolished, and the so-called loans waived. There was not any greater struggle. They accepted this decision, because it was we who had served them for many years and worked for their prosperity. There must have been Rs.200/- to Rs.300/- loans that we did not repay, but we had earned for them thousands of Rupees. So out of this gratitude they let us free from their bondage. Thus bonded labour was discontinued only in 1964-65. Till then, we were bonded labour. Even after the school started we were bonded labour. This is the main reason we are a backward lot. If we had worked as we liked, for ourselves, we would have been much better off today. We did not have patta lands, and all the patta lands were owned by the Badagas. Now, only after the help of the Government, we have squatted on some revenue lands in the area, and we do our own agriculture on the lease lands that we have from the revenue department. The government has still not given us patta lands in this area. We have to pay a fine of Rs.40/- and Rs.50/- per acre of the revenue lands that we cultivate.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 3.7 11-02.1991

Banton the poet of Doddlingi, accompanied me to the massacre site on top of the steep hill. He was good company and was explaining eloquent about the landscape, Irula way of life, and the joys of the natural world. He had an appearance of a very religious and wore vermilion paste prominently on his forehead. He seemed influenced by the dominant sanskritised culture and did not seem to approve of hunting animals for meat. He also had pride in his culture and their understanding of the curative abilities of natural products available in the area.

Sigur Plateau
Banton, Irulan, Doddalingi, Sigur Plateau.

Minor Forest Produce
Now-a-days there is not much of it. But in earlier days, during June, when we come driving buffaloes into the forest, we would get honey, nasara Jenu, kombu Jenu, bongu jenu and many varieties of honey. We would go into the Sholas along the stream, there are some places, there would be tubers. We would dig these tubers out and bring them. We would heat and cook them over the fire. We would make pots out of teak wood and put the tubers into the pot. We would put some ghee and stir the tuber with the ghee for a long time. Then we would choose a nice spot by the side of a stream on this hill top. Enjoy the view of Mysore, Gundlupet and Nanjangud and enjoy the meal with the large doses of honey. In these forest everything is available. We cannot say this is available and this is not available. All that you want is available here. There are wild animals too. There are tigers, bears, panthers, pythons, and many other types of snakes. Along that stoney cliff all animals exist. During my youthful days, I have taken honey from all these hills. I normally go alone and look for honey in rock overhangs- look for the 'Kucchi jenu'. I would get two, three bottles of honey and go down and sell it for food. I would sell to the forest department and other outsiders, two or three bottles. At the end of the week, whatever money they would give, we would buy grain to eat. We would not collect tins of honey, only whatever is available nearby.

Scavenging and Shikar
We would also get some meat from the forest. We do not actively hunt with bows and arrows, spears or snares. That is a separate group who hunt. We do not do it. Some of those people who do that are very good at it. We do not do that. If some game hunter comes along, we would show them the game, and if he shot something, we would get some of it or sometimes if we come across some tiger or panther kills, we would steal it and take it away.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 5.1 30-06-1991

Neil Kelly, is one of the last residents of the Sigur plateau who had links in various ways to the British ruling elite. The early British conceived the Nilgiri area, as a sanatorium because of its considered salubrious climate. In this early period, sanatorium, schools, asylums and orphanages for children with British lineage was established. There were also many Europeans and Eurasians who settled in the Nilgiri. Neil Kelly was one such resident of the Nilgiris. He stays in Mavinhalla, a village in the middle of the Sigur plateau. His son has migrated to Australia, but he continues to live in Mavinhalla with his wife on the lands of the Nilgiri Animal Welfare Society. NWAS is a remnant of a society set up by British residents as a philanthropic venture for the welfare of abandoned animals, mainly donkeys. Neil was a serious and versatile person. He was good with his hands and has a small workshop where he would do repair machines and do major overhauls of his vehicles. Over the years he has seen the village of Mavinhall grow at an unnatural and quick pace. Mavinhalla was a small little village, with a few tribal huts and the NWAS buildings. Over the years, the establishment of a Christian voluntary organisation has led to many buildings coming up at the village and the increase in the population of the tribal habitations attracted by the support and medical facilities offered by the organisation.

Sigur Plateau
Neil Kelly, NGO, Mavinhalla, Sigur Plateau

Personal profile
Oral History and Interview with Mr. Kenney Neol and wife Mrs.Evon Neol, at the Nilgiri Animal Welfare Society [NAWS], at Mavinhalla.

We have been here from the 1950s and Mavinhalla was a small place when we came here. The NAWS was located at Coonoor and later was shifted here. There was an old English Woman who started this place and ran it. It was a shelter for old and disabled and unwanted animals, and we would keep them and take care of them till they died. Ours is a society and is ran purely from donations. In addition, we have a dispensary for animals here. Now, we do not have a trained vet here. Earlier, we used to even have people who would pick up distressed animals and bring them here. 4 cow with a broken leg would be carried and moved from Coonoor over here to spend its last days.

Rainfall; Water resources
I have rainfall records here from the 1950s. And our records do not show any change in rainfall. However, it may be true that the rainfall has become very erratic and unpredictable. The other thing is that the streams around here have all gone dry. They used to be perennial a few years ago. But diversions and pumping out of water has reduced these streams to being very seasonal. And there is no ground water around here. It is only now that we have a check dam here that stores water for some duration of time.

Vegetation; Weeds
The vegetation along the streamsides was very thick. There was a lot of Bamboo. The Bamboo came to flow in 1970s and then the Govt. sold all the bamboo in coups. It is only now that in protected areas like the one around here, that bamboo is coming back.

There were a lot of other big trees too along the streams. Some rosewood etc. They have decreased a lot now. Many of the stream sides are bare now. And the opentia used to be very dense and thick in these parts till the Australian fungus was introduced to control them. It was a big nuisance for the Shikaris, and hunters and sportmen who came here.

Agriculture; Minor forest produce
There has been no agriculture here for a long time. But there are plenty of indications that agriculture was practised in many areas here. May be the disease wiped out all the agriculture here, or may be the turmoil and readjustments during Tippu's period destroyed agriculture in this area. Who were the agriculturists here? Most probably it was the people from Karnataka, across the Moyar who came and practised agriculture in these parts. Because the tribals here do not do any agriculture. When we first came here, the principal mode of subsistence of the tribals was the gathering of minor forest produce like

honey, prochabbai, horns, moss and lichens, etc. And they used to do some agriculture. In fact, agriculture was introduced to them by my uncle who set up some kind of a co-operative here.

Livestock

There were a lot of pattis around here. And now there may be a 10 fold increase in the number of cattle. The main pattis here were Chemmanattam, Cadavupatti, Anaikatti, Sirur, Bokkapuram, etc., And they were all used to manufacture ghee and sell it in those days, Kerosene tins and sold at Ooty. After the milk collection came, milk used to be collected privately from here and sold at Ooty. It is only since then has the cattle population increased in this area. Previously it was more buffaloes around here. Now, the cattle population has increased. Even I tried collecting milk from here and selling them at Gudalur. It was way back in the 1960s. Then there used to be about 200 cattle at Cadavupatti. I know the number because I was collecting milk from there. I have an old ford to transport the milk to Gudalur.

Livestock diseases

Rinderpest was a common occurrence here. Every year in the summer the local animals used to suffer from rinderpest. The calves if effected would die surely. The older cattle used to be treated here, but there was no effective treatment. You could clean the hoofs and do some dressing, or make the animal stand in sand and slush for days, and the animal may get well. But ones the disease spread to the mouth, it was difficult to save it. It is only at certain times that the disease spread to the wild population here. It happened in the 60s and 70s, and the bison was badly affected. But now they are coming back and rinderpest is more or less controlled.

Shikar

Shikar was common here. Shikar was controlled by the Nilgiri Wildlife Association and it was really a sport. Only specific animals were shot. There were a lot of tigers around here, and each year 4 or 5 tigers were shot. There was of course Pythean Adams who hunted here and there was RH Stoney an Engineer who built the Mettur dam. He was a keen sportsman. Then there were also many Jamindars who came up to this area for Shikar.

Malaria

In the 1950s malaria went out of this area. The Jungle warfare Training Centre was located here during the 2nd World War and they did intense spraying of all the streams in the area and thus malaria was eradicated from this area. Only after that, this place being free from malaria, the human population increased.

Settlements; Land ownership

My uncle brought these tribals when we first came here and settled them on the area around here. All the patta lands here of the Masinagudi village was owned by the Europeans here. But around each hamlet, during the revenue settlement, land was left for the expansion of agriculture, grazing and other needs of the villagers. All the patta lands was owned by us.

Coffee estate

The Westbury estate used to be a good coffee estate. Now it is run down mainly because of lack of care, and more money from the sale of timber trees of silver oak that used to provide shade. From 1970s, the estate has degenerated. There were many other good estates around here. The workers in the estates were mainly some tribals and during the peak plucking season. Labour would be brought from the Ooty, Glenmorgan and other estates on the hills.

Mavinhalla settlement

When we came here there were just 4 tribal houses at Mavinhalla. There were no other houses around here. Even till 1970 there were only 4 houses around here. Then it was we who sold the land to the Gilgal Mission and the Quiet Corner came up. They were missionaries from Kerala. And what they run here is only a dispensary for our medical treatment we have to go to Ooty.

Settlements

Masinagudi now has become a big town. It has lost it charm now. Those days there were only 3/4 houses along the road in Masinagudi. But I think with the dam construction- the Singara dam and the Moyar dam

in 1950s, the place really increased in size, the EB colony was contracted and built by my uncle. All those houses in the camp was built by my uncle.

Communications

When I used to come earlier here on visits, we take a bus to Teppakkadu and walked or took a bullock cart ride from there if we could inform our farm here. Thus was previously a taxi service. Tom's taxi service, who used to run Jatkas from Teppakkadu to Ooty. The old road used to go via Bokkapuram, Westbury estate up the Kalhatti road to old. There were a few stations on the route where horses used to be changed. Now none of Toms family survive.

Resource persons

Other people, old residents of Nilgiri are no more. But one Bob Wabshore, w/o Edward Wabshore who lives in Naduvattam Crompton Estate would have some interesting books and records of this area. Nandi Iyer of Masinagudi was the local contractor of MFFs. He still lives here in Masinagudi in the two storied house there.

ORAL HISTORY - OH 5.2 02-07-1991

Sigur Plateau
Mahadev Prasad, Trader, Masinagudi, Sigur Plateau

Personal profile; Trade
Mahadev Prasad. He had a sweet shop at Ooty during the British Period. He had taken my Periappa from Mysore State, a place called Badshalli, near Gundlupet, to Ooty to work in his sweetshop at Ooty. Then his confidence in my Periappa grew. So he set up this place in Masinagudi, built my Periappa a house here and set him up here. Mahadev Prasad was a rich man and he had a famous shop in Ooty. He was from North India and came and settled in Ooty. So he helped my Periappa set up this shop here in Masinagudi. Only after that, did this construction activity in dam building start here.

Here, my father and all his brothers were residing. We were the first traders to settle here.