

# Like Paddy in Rock

Local Institutions and Gender Roles in Kolli Hills



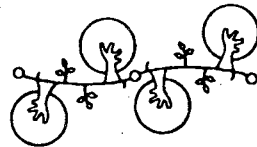
M.S.Swaminathan Research Foundation



# **Like Paddy in Rock**

**Local Institutions and Gender Roles in Kolli Hills**

**Shubh Kumar-Range**



**M.S.Swaminathan Research Foundation**

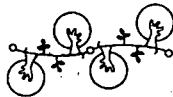
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## Foreword

The Uttara Devi Resource Centre for Gender and Development of the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation is engaged in promoting studies relating to various aspects of the interface between gender and development, including gender dimensions of agriculture and rural development. Farming still remains a way of life in many parts of India, in addition to being the primary source of livelihood, and gender roles, which affect many local institutions and practices, exert a profound influence on both lives and livelihoods. In order to stimulate research by independent scholars on gender issues in development, the Uttara Devi Centre instituted a programme of Visiting Fellowships. Dr Shubh Kumar-Range of the International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, DC, USA was the first of such Visiting Fellows and worked at MSSRF from February to May 2000. The present paper is based on field studies carried out by her during this period in Kolli Hills, Tamil Nadu, in collaboration with MSSRF staff located at both Chennai and Kolli Hills.

Kolli Hills in the Eastern Ghats region of Tamil Nadu was chosen for Dr Shubh Kumar-Range's study, since MSSRF scientists have been working in this area since 1993. Also, being a predominantly tribal area, Kolli Hills provides an opportunity for studying the social and economic factors that influence continuity and change in gender roles. The pace of change has been particularly great during the last 50 years, since after Independence, Government efforts have centred around accelerated "economic and social development of tribal areas". The emphasis of Government programmes has been more on individuals, while tribal life is based on communities, thus creating some mismatch between Government priorities and tribal realities.

Several studies have shown that often development has not gone as planned, leading to failure in the realisation of the desired outputs. Such an outcome is partly due to lack of attention to the critical role gender relationships play in shaping household and community level institutions and actions. A perusal of this paper will provide a glimpse of the numerous local institutions that influence gender roles in ecology, economics and employment. The

results of this study underline the need for introducing gendered approaches in areas such as strengthening household food and nutrition security, biodiversity conservation and enhancement, health and education of girls and several other aspects of human and economic development. It is clear from the present and similar studies that a proactive analysis of the potential impact of development projects on women should be undertaken, while designing programmes with the 'lofty' goals of social and economic upliftment of tribal and rural families.

Unacceptable levels of gender inequity still prevail in our country, as evidenced for instance, in areas such as land rights, wage differentials, literacy rates, maternal mortality rates, sex ratios and weight of children at birth. On the other hand, it is becoming increasingly clear that population growth is reduced and household well being is improved, wherever women's economic and social status and literacy levels are high. Hence, mainstreaming of considerations of gender equity and justice is a must in all aspects of public policy.

Our thanks go to Dr Shubh Kumar-Range for her well-planned study and incisive analysis. Thanks also go to Dr K Balasubramaniam, Director, JRD Tata Ecotechnology Centre, Dr D Dhanapal, Head of the Kolli Hills Programme and their colleagues for their advice and help in the planning and implementation of this study.

*M. S. Swaminathan*

M S Swaminathan

## **Acknowledgements**

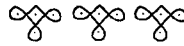
This study was conducted with the support of the Visiting Fellow Programme of the Uttara Devi Resource Centre in Gender and Development of the M.S.Swaminathan Research Foundation. It would not have been possible without the enduring support, thoughtful guidance and encouragement of Mrs. Mina Swaminathan, and her extraordinary commitment to gender issues. The work was included as part of the work plans of both the JRD Tata Ecotechnology Centre and the Uttara Devi Centre and, as a result, received invaluable technical, logistical and moral support from both these efforts, and from Dr. K. Balasubramanian, team leader of the JRD Tata Ecotechnology Centre. The experience, interest and tireless support of the Kolli Hills team of the Ecotechnology Centre, under the leadership of Dr. D. Dhanapal, and his colleagues Mr. G. Alagu Kannan and Mr. E. D. Israel Oliver King formed the backbone of this effort. I am particularly grateful for their patience in the careful cataloguing of the information the people were generously sharing with us, and for helping me to get through the barriers of language to tap into the rich cultural history and lives of this area. This study is really theirs, and all I have done is assemble the material together in a way that they may be able to use in their work in the Kolli Hills communities so as to bring about sustainable change with the empowerment of women. Others who not only shared their experience and knowledge of Kolli Hills with me, but also provided valuable personal and technical resources for conducting this study are Drs. L.Vedavalli, P.Tamizholi and R.Rengalakshmi. The families of Kolli Hills, who were my hosts and friends, I thank for providing me with an experience to remember forever. I am also very appreciative of my husband, David, for his enduring support during this project, and indeed, of everything I take on.

October 2001

Shubh Kumar-Range

## **About the author**

Shubh Kumar-Range has a doctorate in International Nutrition and Agricultural Economics from Cornell University. She has over twenty years of international experience in the analysis of nutrition, health and food security programmes and policies. She is also well known for her work with IFPRI, UNDP, USAID, FAO and CARE, on gendered economic roles and their outcomes for health/nutrition, environmental degradation, disaster mitigation and growth with equitable distribution.





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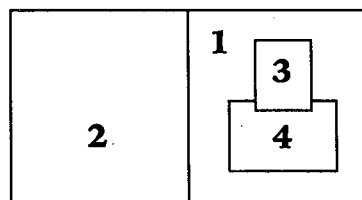
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1. A view of Kolli Hills
2. Paddy fields
3. New bride
4. Women's multiple burdens



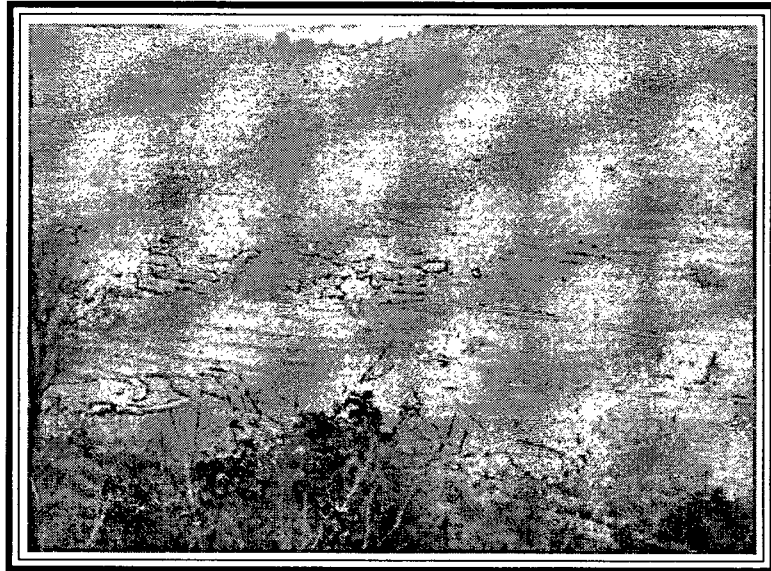
**To the new bride**  
**about to go to her husband's home**

<i>Like the bamboo</i>	<i>முங்கில் போல்</i>
<i>Live unbroken</i>	<i>முளியாமல் வாழ்ந்திரு</i>
<i>Like paddy in rock</i>	<i>கல்லிலே நெல் முளைச்சி</i>
<i>Live sap unseeping</i>	<i>கசியாமல் வாழ்ந்திரு</i>
<i>Like the sturdy arugu</i>	<i>அருகு போல் வேறான்றி</i>
<i>Its strong roots fixing</i>	<i>அருகு போல்</i>
<i>Verdant and spreading</i>	<i>தளை தளைச்சு</i>
<i>Live steadfastly</i>	<i>அசியாமல் வாழ்ந்திரு</i>

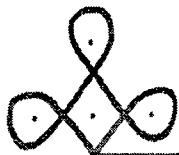
Folk song from Kolli Hills

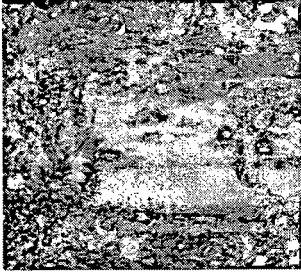
**SECTION**

**I**



**RATIONALE**





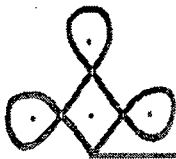
## INTRODUCTION

*In the jargon of the economist, institutions define and limit the set of choices of individuals. Institutions are a creation of human beings. At the same time the constraint that institutions impose on individual choices are pervasive.*

*Douglass C. North 1990*

Institutions are formal and informal constraints that are formed by human beings, and gradually change over time in relation to external forces. In the form in which they exist at any time, they shape the choices and constraints that individuals face as they undertake their economic and social activities. They include codes of conduct, conventions, norms of behaviour, accepted laws including common and religious laws. According to North, 'the major role of institutions in a society is to reduce uncertainty by establishing a stable (but not necessarily efficient) structure to human interaction' (North 1990).

Local institutions have been shown to be, therefore, a key to development outcomes, even though they are largely ignored in economic analyses and their resulting policy prescriptions. Economic outcomes at the aggregate level are often limited by institutional characteristics which shape behaviour and information flows and therefore condition transaction costs that influence the payoffs from individuals engaged in productive activity (Bardhan, 2000). According to North (1991) 'all but the most myopic economists agree that institutions are important. What is missing is a way to integrate institutional analysis into economic theory'.



Though we generally think of an institution as synonymous with an organization, both its literal definition, and its use in economic

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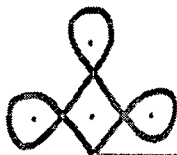
theory are much larger. Local institutions embody a combination of formal and informal rules while policies and laws embody formal rules, and customs and tradition shape informal rules. Development outcomes are a combination of both.

Gender roles form the core of local institutions in every society. Efforts to enhance gender participation based on policy proclamations and even legal frameworks have been slow and limited. The structural characteristics of informal constraints, formal rules and their enforcement and the way in which these evolve need to be understood. An in-depth study based on such understanding can draw on the effective support of local organizations to change social behaviour towards attaining economic and social goals such as gender equity, child survival and nutrition, and sustainable livelihoods.

Political economists have identified institutions at four levels: state, market, community and household. It can be seen on the one hand that household and community-level institutions are crucial in shaping operations of the market and state-level institutions. On the other hand, household and community-level institutions also undergo a process of change in response to market and state institutions (and policies, laws etc.). This study will focus on the second set of processes, that is, the changes in household and community-level institutions. In particular, institutions that shape gender roles and resource allocation will be addressed.

### **Objectives**

The primary objective was to study the process of change in local institutions (formal and informal) and their influence on gender roles and economic status. The focus of the study was to be on changes in institutions related to gendered participation in economic activity and transactions involving resource use and human capital formation. One of the expected immediate outcomes from the study was the comparison of alternative approaches for promoting the status and effective role of women in development. This was to form the basis for a longer-term strategy of informing policy makers, and designing community-based interventions by MSSRF.





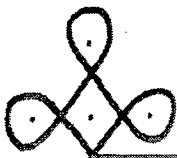
## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

Rapid transformations of economic systems are taking place on a worldwide scale. This so-called freeing of market forces is, however, not producing the rapid economic results that the neoclassical economic models had predicted. There are still largely unexplained differences in outcomes of virtually identical structural reform measures. An important reason is that it is the institutional framework that determines the payoffs (Ostrom, Schroeder and Wynne 1993). According to De Capitani and North (1994), to realize the gains from trade requires institutions to change and evolve so that transactions are not based on personal ties alone. In this process of change, most economies appear to become 'stuck' somewhere along the way. Economic analysis however, still lags behind in its capacity to incorporate an analysis of institutional factors in the economic change process.

### **Role of institutions in development**

In a recent paper, Pranab Bardhan (2000) explores the role of institutional economics in explaining underdevelopment. Institutional arrangements between parties, contracts, and conditions of information and enforcement are important factors that determine the scale and efficiency of economic transactions. In traditional village-based communities, personalized exchange reduces transaction costs, but production costs are high. As self-enforcing institutions give way to a wider network of interdependence, so can efficiency improve, but only if in-built asymmetries and behaviours are resolved in the process.

But how do we explain the continuation of poverty in much of the world if the sources of growth are known? The answer is to be found in the failure of humans to organize themselves to undertake the improvements that would lead to increasing output. The institutional framework of a society provides the incentive structure that directs economic and political activity. (North, 1999)



What are institutions? Though we generally think of institutions as synonymous with organizations, they encompass much more,

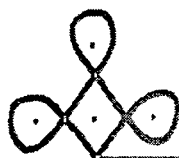
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both literally, and from the perspective of economic theory. Institutions embody a combination of formal and informal rules. Policies and laws embody formal rules, and can be changed overnight. However, informal rules and constraints embedded in customs, traditions and codes of conduct are much more impervious to deliberate policies. These cultural constraints not only connect the past with the future, but also provide us with a key to explaining the path of historical change and economic growth patterns (North 1981). Local customs and practices form the foundation of all human interaction, and through them policies and laws are translated into development outcomes. In the process, local institutions shape development outcomes, sometimes in ways quite unanticipated when policies were designed. Also, local institutions too change and adapt to external forces, creating a new interface with formal policies and laws.

In traditional societies such as in India, there is often a large disconnect between formal and informal institutions. Policies and laws are devised to ensure egalitarian and gender sensitive economic development outcomes. However, their impacts are often very different from what they were expected to achieve. Impacts of identical policies, therefore, can also differ between communities.

In the institutional view of development, organizations are the result of formal institutions (policies and laws) and operate in a milieu dictated by informal institutions prevalent in society. The functioning of these organizations, the cross-section of participants, and the results they achieve, are determined at the interface of policies and the local informal institutions in which they operate. In this sense, these three elements in turn have the opportunity to shape and mould local institutions. Together they shape the incentive structure and the feedback process by which individuals perceive and react to changes in the opportunity set (North 1990:7)

## **INSTITUTIONS AND GENDERED PARTICIPATION**



It is necessary to examine development from an institutional perspective in order to understand the startling contrast between

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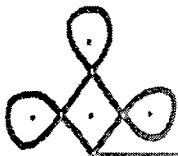
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the logical implications of economic theory and the performance of economies. For example, neoclassical theory shows that the increase in women's education and wage rates benefit children's health and education, household income and welfare (Becker 1965, Becker and Lewis 1973). Empirical evidence from diverse communities also supports this hypothesis, for example, Kerala (Kumar 1978), Philippines (Garcia and Pinstrip-Andersen 1987), Nepal (Kumar and Hotchkiss 1988), Guatemala (von Braun, Hotchkiss and Immink 1989), and Zambia (Kumar 1997). A recent empirical analysis for Sub-Saharan Africa shows that gender inequality is a significant factor in the region's low economic growth rates (Blackden and Bhanu 1999). Despite the widespread scholarship and numerous policies and laws to change traditional practices of discrimination, persistent inequalities remain.

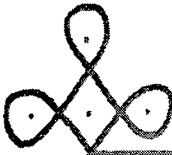
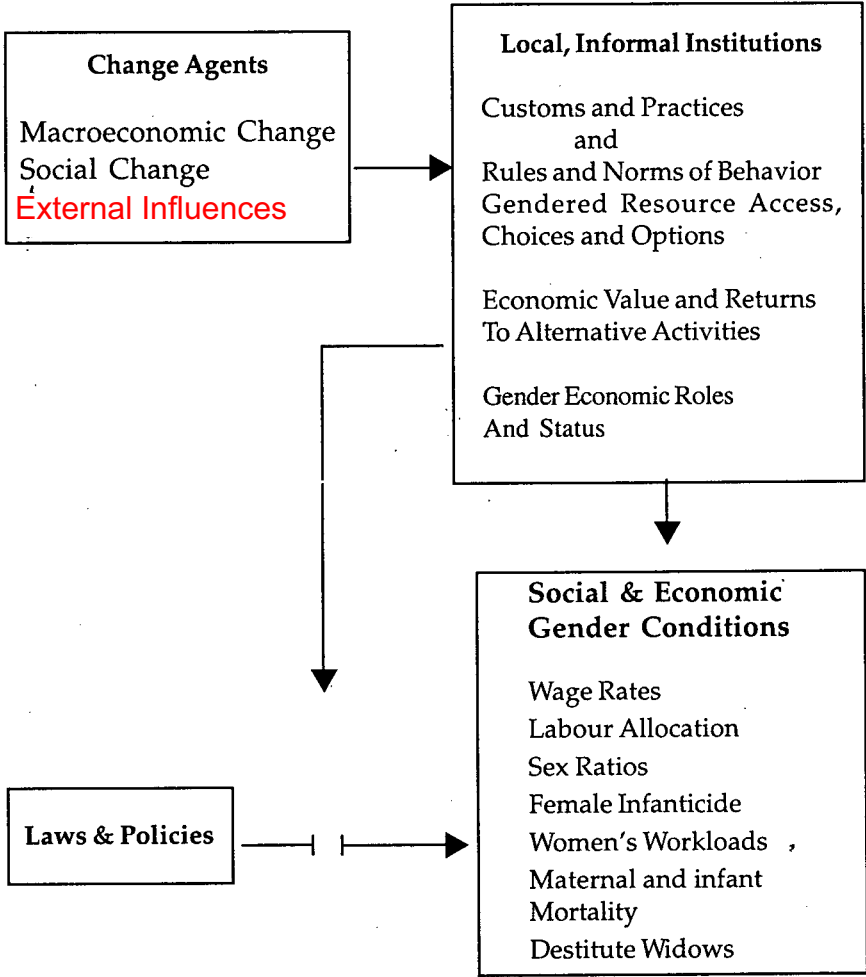
Local institutions are at the heart of this dilemma. The key is that institutions are not necessarily, or even usually, created to be socially or economically efficient; rather they, or at least the formal rules, are created to serve the interests of those with the bargaining power to devise new rules (North 1990:16). Once devised, they form the basis for decision-making by all individuals by conditioning behaviour patterns. Their value derives from making human interactions predictable, even while limiting the choice set of the actors. Though policies and even individual convictions may be consistent with optimum behaviour, institutions can alter the price paid for one's convictions and hence play a critical role in the extent to which non-wealth and welfare-maximizing motivations influence choices (North 1990:26). Property rights in the sense of rights to services derived from particular assets, and the extent to which they are assured and clear, are a big dimension of local institutions that influence the transaction costs of economic activity, and therefore the possibilities of resource allocation.

### **The black box of local institutions**

The conceptual model of institutions and gender economic status is derived from customs and practices that give rise to rules and norms of behaviour. These are responsible for the existing structures of resource access and distribution, between and within



households. Together, they determine household and individual choices and options in the local setting by dictating social and economic value and return to alternative actions that can be taken. From an economic perspective, this process shapes developmental outcomes including gender economic roles and status. The figure below shows how the black box of local institutions links with gendered developmental outcomes on the one hand, and with macroeconomic and policy change on the other.



**The Black Box of Local Institutions and Gender Roles**

## **Characterizing institutions**

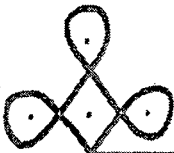
In 'Social dimensions of governance', Geoff Wood (1999) identifies four levels of institutions: state, market, community and household. Though this particular work is specifically in the context of Bangladesh, its theoretical underpinnings have broader applications. In his analysis, both the household and community are highly gendered institutions, and form an axis with which state and market-level policies and reforms must contend.

### **Household-level institutions**

The household was once viewed as an altruistic unit of individual welfare under the benign leadership of the household head. Those familiar with recent advances in intra-household economics, now recognize that it is to be regarded more as a site of a contest on gender and generational terms. Clear forms of power are exercised here, and these lay the foundation for codes and principles of social interaction, psychology and cultural preferences. These include, in the South Asian context, the norms for deference, dependency, risk avoidance, plural security portfolios, blood ties, mutual interdependence, subordination of individuality, patriarchy and the submersion of self to the collective identity, which together constitute socialization for life.

### **Community-level institutions**

Community-level institutions represent dimensions of 'social capital' of individuals and groups. Personal social resources tend to be highly gendered, and 'patron-client' relationships are generally the norm, especially in highly stratified social settings. In situations where options for exit are so low that 'social closure' operates, 'loyalty and inclusion occur only on adverse terms for dependent clients (including women in households), in which long-term positive social capital has to be traded off to meet immediate needs' or demands of this patron-client relationship (Wood 1999). Escape options from these community-level institutions are often fickle, and can be temporary. The recent highly publicized case of the released bonded labourers in Tamil Nadu whose plight grew worse



after the release program was announced, is a case in point. The expectation that simple payment for a release programme would work is also flawed, even if the payments did reach the target group after being filtered through heavy government bureaucratic processes. Alternative institutions to support their entry into new sustainable livelihood options are needed, as has been shown by the failed rehabilitation programmes for sex workers (Mina Swaminathan, personal communication).

Kinship patterns are an extension of the family, and can be seen as a form of community-level institutions. Traditionally, for example, marriages took place within and in surrounding villages in Kolli Hills. Each hamlet consisted of intricate kinship networks, with all families residing in one hamlet or in a cluster of villages being linked in kinship. Growth in villages, and the opening up of roads has increased the population movement, and in the process, has diluted the density of kinship relationships. People use kinship norms and loyalties and respond to them. For example, *muraikadan* (customary loan from those with mutual social obligation) is a loan that is available to landless labourers only from their kinship members in parts of the coastal belt in Tanjore district in Tamil Nadu (K. Balasubramanian, personal communication). Landless poor rely on these kinship-based loans, and, for this reason, are reluctant to emigrate even though an area might have an excess of labour, and better employment opportunities could be found elsewhere.

Kinship relationships and their role in daily life form an important dimension of the socialization process and of livelihood strategies. The practice of religion also ties in closely with kinship and other community-level practices through ritual and social ceremony. In her comparative study of gender and kinship in South and South East Asian countries, Leela Dube has argued persuasively that a study of kinship institutions is at the core of gender relations (Dube 1997). Family formation, bride price and dowry payments, inheritance and family dissolution rules and practices are governed by kinship ties, and these play a key role in shaping gender relations. Kinship ties even represent a type of patron-client relationship

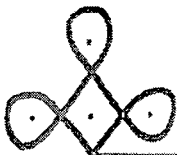


between men and women, as the economic dependence of women increases. Kapadia (1995) in her detailed ethnographic study in the Tamil village of Aruloor found that Brahmin castes were most typically those in which a woman was considered most inferior and was most economically dependent on men. Unfortunately, since this group also represented the pinnacle of class aspirations, non-Brahmin groups of higher economic status also increasingly adopted Brahmin rituals and practices pertaining to gender roles.

### **State-level institutions**

Development effort is generally aimed at building new, better and more efficient state institutions. The focus of most of this effort is generally on policies and laws, and in setting up mechanisms for administering these. The state-level institutions are consequently overloaded in terms of effort and attention required, both in national and international agendas. Although the devolution of socialistic patterns has helped to reduce this slightly, it has in turn, overloaded the expectations of market-level institutions in the new economically liberalized systems.

State-level institutions relate to all aspects of governance. It can be argued that the performance of state institutions can only be understood in terms of the broader, 'relative' rationality referred to above. This is based on a simple premise: that state actors do not discard their social norms and values when performing as officials! Wood (1999) poses the question: 'What social and cultural distance does an official have to travel from home to work every day?' Permeability between two sets of norms is expected to be high in weak public institutions, as well as when the distance to be travelled between official and societal norms is large. In such instances, larger societal principles and norms may well run the show in state institutions. Accessing public institutions and services becomes challenging without adequate information and accountability mechanisms, and rent-seeking, patronage and other prevailing societal institutions predominate. Can all individuals have equal treatment and equal access to public resources and opportunities? While state institutions promise this, do they really ensure it?



Recent advances in organizational theory are also uncovering the often hidden role of cultural paradigms in shaping organizational performance (Edgar-Shein, 1992). Taking this enquiry to gender dimensions has shown how cultural paradigms block change towards gender equity in state institutions (Itzin and Newman, 1995). Rao *et al.* (1999) call this the 'deep structure' of organizations, which they refer to as - 'the collection of values, history, culture and practices that form the unquestioned, normal way of working in organizations'.

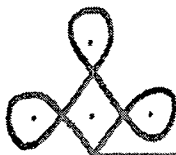
Public institutional performance when seen from this perspective of state-society relations offers a more structured and culturally grounded analysis of performance of state institutions. If the problems of permeability can be understood from an institutional perspective, then organizational remedies become more complex, and by implication not amenable to simple curative responses that stem from seeing these behaviours as 'pathological' (Wood 1999).

### **Market-level institutions**

Market institutions, in a perfect world, are the key to efficient resource allocation by households and firms. In reality, the obstacles to this are many. There are numerous instances of market failure, for example, in 'marketized' state scenarios, private actions become state dependent, either directly or indirectly, and often result in absence of competition, colluding behaviour and high transaction costs. However, market institutions are shaped largely by the extent to which individual entrepreneurs can interface with macroeconomic changes taking place and benefit from them. They are also influenced by household and community-level institutions.

### **Gender asymmetry and institutions**

In many societies, women are economically dependent on men, and this is associated with heavily gendered socialization within an overall patriarchal ideology. South Asia is a prime example of this. Both household and community-level institutions are responsible for perpetuating this asymmetry, while, as seen earlier, state and market institutions play a very significant role in supporting it.



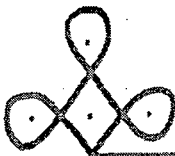


In India there are some very visible outcomes of the unequal social and economic status of men and women. Female infanticide, dowry deaths, adverse sex ratios in the population and statistics on numbers of 'missing females', and even the level and quality of national discourse on these, are all shaped by household and community level institutions. These practices are widespread, despite the fact that the Constitution of India guarantees that no citizen in the country shall be discriminated against on the basis of caste, creed or gender (Negi 1997). Though this has not been often highlighted, the role of the media in playing up to the popularly accepted institutions, and helping to add credence and strength to these has been documented (Natarajan 1997, Chilimampunga 1998).

Moving towards greater equality in social and economic gender status, requires a multifaceted agenda. Local initiatives and participatory development processes are increasingly seen as most likely to meet needs of, and involve, vulnerable groups, and also to promote the processes of sustainable development. Local organizations like Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) link local communities with broader policy initiatives. Since problems of food and nutrition security are often linked to economic marginalization of vulnerable groups and of women, supporting the local organizations is seen by many as a way to facilitate sustainable improvement in these conditions. These organizations are expected to play a major role in building and shaping local institutions, and especially in the enabling of gender equity, to enable broader participation.

### **Women's rights and local institutions**

From the perspective of community-oriented development practitioners, the results have been disappointing although the 'cutting edge' of development practice in the 1990s has been in terms of expanding participatory, community-driven action and empowerment. However, for some reason, despite stated intentions, there has been minimal consideration of gender issues and inadequate involvement of women, while hiding a bias that favours the opinions and priorities of those with the most power and ability to give voice publicly to their point of view. This is the result of an

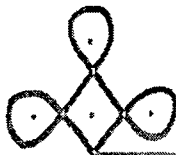


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inadequate understanding of the internal dynamics and differences, which are so crucial to positive outcomes (Guijt and Shah 1998). Attempting to dissect the challenges faced by community-based attempts to reach women, Robert Chambers (1998) identifies four main issues:

1. Visitors to most communities face a pervasive bias against women's participation, which partly stems from women's workloads.
2. Local contexts are diverse and can be easily hidden under the 'myth of community'.
3. There is potential conflict in tackling issues of power and control over resources. There is a tendency to avoid making changes here that might actually have long-term benefits for the community.
4. Interventions that are couched as local initiatives but, which in fact, are derived from outsiders' perceptions of needs based on 'universally accepted values', fail to get widespread local acceptance, and are unsustainable.

Those advocating women's rights as the prerequisite to their economic advancement also recognize the role of local institutions. However, they too view these as static and tend to prescribe government policies to facilitate a reallocation of resources. For example, the women's empowerment framework views women's equality and empowerment as central development objectives in their own right – the focus is shifted from economic objectives, such as enabling women to be more productive or use their labour time more effectively to participate more in development. While such strident views may be useful for advocacy purposes, and for combating extreme violations of women's rights, their translation into enforceable policies requires a large growth in women's rights organizations. Although necessary, this approach can tackle only very specific issues. At the same time, the very bases of institutions that shape the conditions under which women operate are in constant flux in response to a host of macro and local forces.



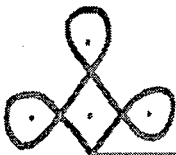
At the core of all the issues noted above, is the absence of understanding of local institutions and how they interface with the change agents, programmes or organizations. Also missing is the recognition of the dynamic nature of local institutions. The process by which local initiatives (and macro-changes as well) interface with, and shape the evolution of local institutions is most critical from the standpoint of understanding and designing a successful change process. It may also be possible to gauge sustainability of the initiatives by the ways in which programmes change local institutions.

Kolli Hills was chosen as a site for this study because it was an enclave that not only had a differing gender tradition from its surroundings, but also had been relatively cut off and isolated due to its remoteness and inaccessibility until recently. As a result, large-scale changes in economic and political institutions have occurred over a short period of time, making it an intriguing place to examine the pace of change in gender relations and their links to other institutional changes taking place.

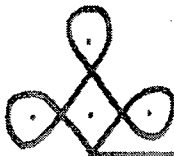
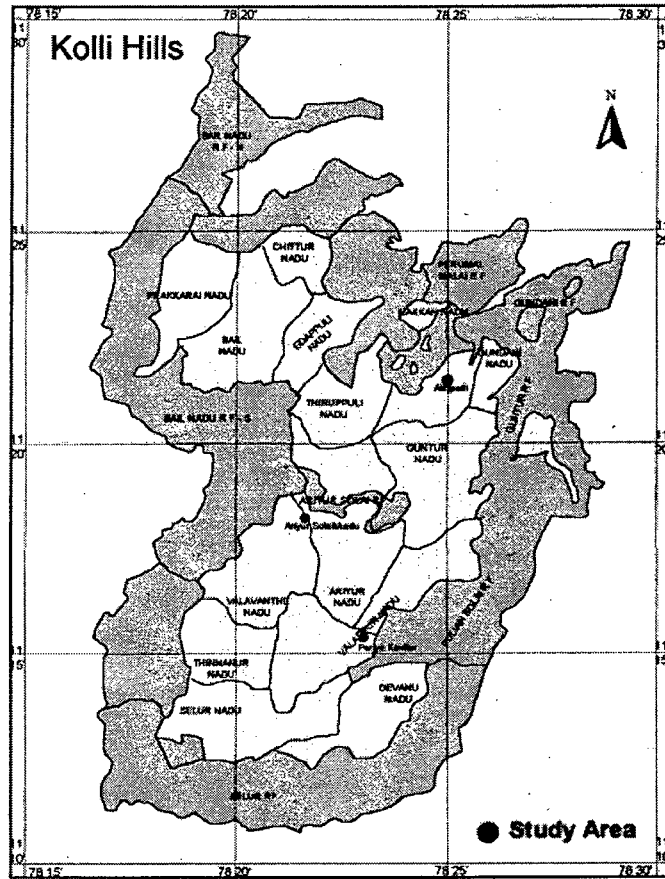
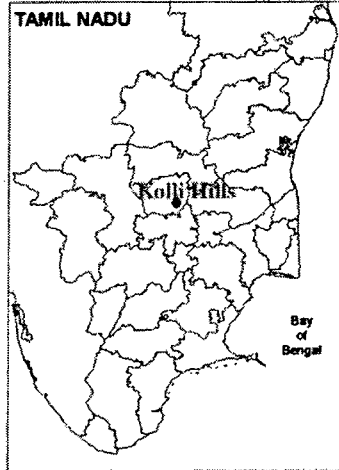
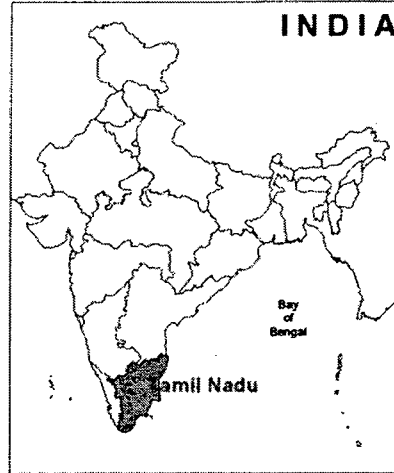
### **ABOUT KOLLI HILLS AND ITS INSTITUTIONS**

Kolli Hills encompasses an area of about 283 sq. km, stretching 29 kms from north to south and 19 kms from east to west. It is one of the Talaighat hills of central Tamil Nadu that are part of the Eastern Ghats of India. It rises sharply from the surrounding plains from the east, west and south, and from the north ascends via long, gently sloping spurs. It is still relatively inaccessible. It is surrounded by Reserve Forest and its one metalled road from the west provides the only access to it by vehicles. Apart from this, it is only connected to the surrounding area by footpaths. Most of the inhabited area is at an altitude of about 1000 metres above sea level (Vedavalli *et al.* 1999)

Even though the area is relatively small, and has a long history of contact with the surrounding plains, it has still remained somewhat secluded from the outside world. The population that lives here is one of the three sub-castes of the *Malaiyali* tribe that inhabit the



**The Study Area**



Talaighat hills. The origin of these hill people is clouded in myths and conflicting anthropological assessments. Their social and religious practices are sufficiently different from the mainstream plains culture of Tamil Nadu for them to be considered 'backward'. The primary distinction is that the hill people, or *Malaiyalis* do not recognize the Brahmins as their priests. They also have less of the layered and hierarchical caste system characteristic of the plains people. The entire 'sub-caste' or 'tribe' comprises a large number of *kulams* (kinship groups) the members of which can intermarry except if they happen to be from 'brother' *kulams*, that is, the father's, or closely related *kulams*. All the others are referred to as '*mama-macchan*' *kulams*' between which marriages can take place. Many early writers, for example, Ehrenfels (1943) have noted some distinct remnants of a matriarchal society among these hill people, despite evidence here of the gradual assimilation of patriarchal institutions over time, as in the rest of the country.

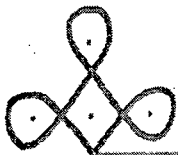
#### **Population distribution and its organization**

The population of Kolli Hills, according to the 1991 Census, was just under 34,000, of which about 95% was classified as 'Scheduled Tribe', a classification of the Government of India that entitles the population to certain benefits extended to economically depressed areas or groups. Habitation is spread out into 247 hamlets and the area is divided into 14 *nadus* (local administrative units) which also parallel the jurisdiction of the 14 elected *Panchayats*<sup>2</sup>, in accordance with the laws for local village elected bodies and governance of Tamil Nadu and the Government of India. Local elections are held every 5 years to constitute each of the 14 'Revenue Village' *Panchayats* – each of which has one president, and 3-5 ward members. It is the president of the *Panchayat* however, who wields most of the power at the local level, since it is he/she who participates in the *Panchayat* Union Council at the Block level – which is the level at which development resources are available from the government.

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<sup>1</sup> This term connects the current day reality to an earlier practice, remnants of which are still present in marriage customs, in which a maternal uncle or his offspring were the primary choice in marriage alliances.

<sup>2</sup> There are 14 *Panchayats* and 16 'Revenue Villages' in this area.

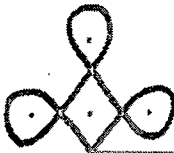


## Local governance

The population within each of the 247 hamlets is a cohesive group, with an intricate system of self-governance that also connects each hamlet with the surrounding hamlets. This latter is the traditional and consensus-based system of local governance in which, generally, only male residents of the hamlet (usually the senior-most male from each household) have an option to participate when community-related decisions are made. Hamlets have a village headman or *Oor Gounder* (headman of the village)– a hereditary position from a *kulam* that has established dominance and respect in the community. A cluster of hamlets also has a *Periya Gounder* (also known as *Naattu Gounder*), who is senior to the *Oor Gounder*. Other hereditary posts are the *Karakkarar* (a village official, manager of ceremonies and festivals) and *Poosari* (priest in the village temple), though each hamlet may not have all three posts. Although the *Oor Gounder* is the one primarily entrusted by the people with hamlet governance and law enforcement issues, the *Karakkarar* and *Poosari* also exercise leadership in dealing with hamlet-level issues, and can step in if the *Gounder* is not available. Only males can assume posts of the *Gounder*, *Karakkarar* or *Poosari*.

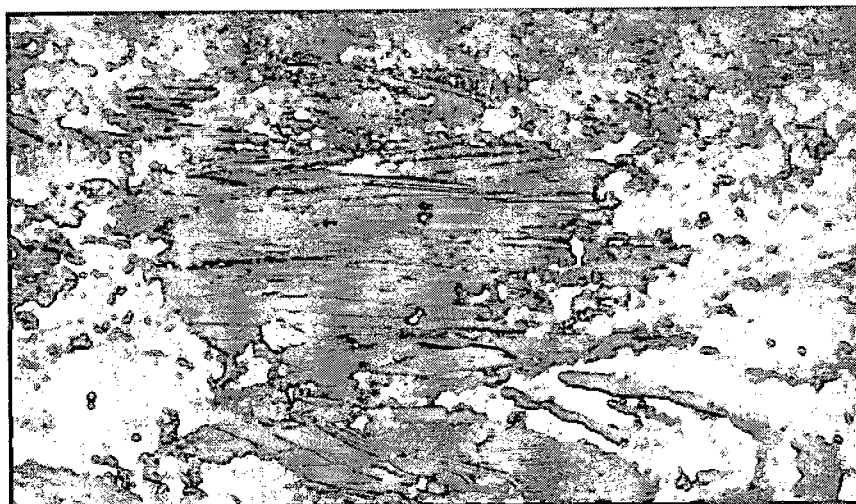
The *Oor Gounder* and other village elders together formulate a set of rules that govern the local community. The *Oor Gounder* and sometimes the *Periya Gounder*, preside at all wedding functions (including when liaisons are fixed, establishing and mediating the terms and exchanges agreed to by the two families), and at times of property division to ensure that existing inheritance rules are adhered to in a fair manner. The *Oor Gounder* and village elders also set the local wage rates for men and women. As a general rule, women are not allowed to participate in village meetings where such decisions are made. In some instances, it was reported that women could participate as spectators, although they find it difficult to attend the meetings that often take place late at night.

## The local economy and markets



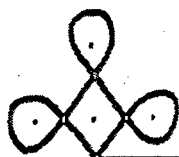
Agriculture is the mainstay of the Kolli Hills economy. At the present time, about 51% of total area is under agriculture, and about 44%

remains as forest area. This compares with the situation about a century ago, when the Madras Forest Act of 1882 delineated nearly 84% of the area as forest (MSSRF, Vasudevan 1999). The majority of cultivated land (86.7%) is on terraced hill slopes and depends on rain-fed agriculture. Only about 13.3% of the cropped area is under irrigation using mostly natural seepage from springs and streams, supplemented by some gravity irrigation from ponds.



1. Agricultural landscape at Kolli Hills

Virtually all households own land for cultivation, but only a minority own both lowland and upland plots. Lowland or *vayal* (field) is generally used to grow paddy, of which usually two plantings can be made annually. A wide range of improved open-pollinated varieties have been imported from the plains by the people of Kolli Hills and these have spread rapidly through the common practice of seed exchange. The local Agricultural Extension Office has also introduced high-yielding crop varieties. The varieties reported include *Rendan* (literally 'two') *number*, *thungaara nellu*, and *samba* (traditional rice varieties,) and *adudurai 29* and *36*, *IR8*, *IR64*, and *IR50*, (high-yielding rice varieties). Only minimal quantities of paddy are sold, reportedly directly to traders who come to villages. The crops grown on upland plots are predominantly cash crops such as tapioca, pineapples, bananas, coffee, pepper, and fruits such as citrus, tamarind, guava, mangoes and jackfruit. Other upland crops that are used primarily for



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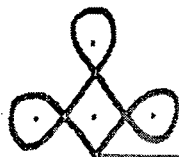
subsistence consumption are legumes, *ragi* (a variety of millet), coriander, minor millet varieties, and upland rice.

Introduction of road access to Kolli Hills in the early 1960s, the expansion of its road networks since then, and the growth of its own marketing institutions since the 1980s have dramatically expanded market access and cash income options for the population. In addition, traders and contractors from sago mills nearby also participate actively in seeking out farmer sub-contracts and commodity purchases in many unique agro-ecological niches in the hills. Changing marketing options have gradually altered the crop production practices here. For example, the gradual decline in wheat production can be attributed to the decline in use of the plains markets such as Puliancholai which had an active trade in wheat, when the more easily accessible Karavalli market started in the early 1970s and in which wheat traders did not participate. Road networks that have made villages accessible to lorries are also changing the crop production options dramatically, and making cash crops such as tapioca replace former upland crops



2. Women's work: pounding paddy

such as *ragi* and minor millets. Such shifts are contributing to sweeping changes in the life of the Kolli Hills population – the dietary staple is shifting from home-produced *ragi* and minor millets to purchased ration rice; cash incomes are rising rapidly and women's activities and workloads are changing.





In the meantime, the rapidly growing agriculture of the Tamil Nadu plains, and labour shortages in the coffee plantations in Kerala and Karnataka have dramatically increased labour migration of both men and women from the Kolli Hills. Most of this is seasonal migration and has contributed to an additional income source, and also to increased contact for the Kolli Hills population with agricultural, social and economic practices of Tamil Nadu plains.

### **State and other institutions**

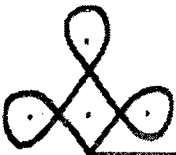
Access to state institutions and organizations is relatively limited in Kolli Hills. The Tribal Federation of India Ltd. (TRIFED), the tribal development programme of the Government of India, supports two cooperative societies of the Large Area Multi-Purpose Society (LAMPS). They provide subsidized loans for purchasing agricultural inputs, tree seedlings, etc. The Department of Forestry also has a large and visible presence here. Besides monitoring reserve forest uses, it also runs large nurseries and supplies large numbers of seedlings (e.g. silver oak and gallnut saplings, coffee, cloves, pepper and cinnamon) at subsidized prices. Primary schools, *balwaadis* (childcare centres) and school feeding activities are widespread, and are monitored by the Block Development Office located in Kolli Hills.

For the past 2-3 years, the Tamil Nadu Women's Development Corporation has initiated Self-Help Groups (SHGs)<sup>3</sup> in Kolli Hills. These groups are primarily savings/credit-oriented, and also take on community-oriented initiatives, such as maintenance of community meeting places or other common areas, writing to authorities for resolving local issues. SHGs have also been initiated by MSSRF for seed exchange and expansion of production of minor millets. The latter project has now successfully linked the SHGs engaged in minor millet production to the TRIFED, which is expected to promote the expansion and sustainability of these groups.



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<sup>3</sup> The corporation offers a scheme called the Tamil Nadu Maghalir Membattu Thittam executed by the Community Services Trust based at Salem and operated at Kolli Hills.

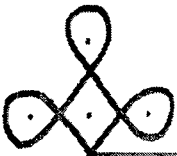


**SECTION**

**II**



**METHODOLOGY**





## KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

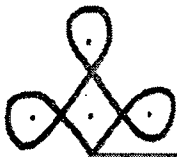
An understanding of the institutional dimensions of access and control of resources was considered the key to gender economic roles. The issues involved were identified for the study and grouped under four heads as follows:

### Issue 1

What were some of the key formal and informal institutions and services in a highly traditional society that could be relevant to shaping gender relations, roles and status?

These included access to and control over: (a) private and public resources, (b) labour allocation and income access, (c) physical mobility, (d) legal, political, social and cultural organizations, and (e) information. These posed a bewildering array of practices and values to address, and clearly needed to be sharply focused. An initial inventory of local institutions was needed in the study area using the political economist's way of grouping institutions, to arrive at a limited number of key local institutions - those that are considered vital in shaping intra-household resource allocation and gender roles. With this perspective, on the basis of key informant interviews and existing reports and information from Kolli Hills, institutions were grouped at four levels - state, market, community and household. A few key institutional dimensions were identified for the study. These were:

1. Family formation and inheritance practices
2. Local community institutions
3. Labour markets
4. Product markets



### **Issue 2**

Could a portrait of gender-wise participation in these institutions and services help in understanding gender roles, expected behaviours and constraints faced, and economic choices being made by men and women?

The core of the study methodology was focus group interviews, in which perspectives of men and women were separately obtained on gender-wise participation in institutions, the process of devising rules and norms, how these shaped economic participation and status by gender, and examining the role of macroeconomic change and policies in shaping institutions over time.

### **Issue 3**

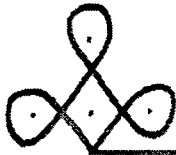
What study design criteria could effectively distinguish differences between generations, and groups within the community, and how could this help in identifying temporal influences and patterns of institutional change?

Locations with diverse levels of economic and market development were chosen for cross-sectional diversity in the Kolli Hills region. Within each location, focus groups and key informants were chosen to represent three different age cohorts of men and women to identify temporal dimensions of the selected institutions.

### **Issue 4**

Could the sources or mechanisms by which gendered dimension of local institutions and services change over time be identified?

There were several sources of change in local institutions. Major economic changes affecting households were identified. These included, for example, introduction of cash cropping and other new opportunities/constraints as a result of national and regional policy outcomes, economic influence of non-indigenous ethnic groups, male out-migration. In addition, community-level initiatives that might influence gendered participation were



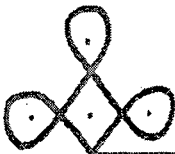
identified. Studies of the *Panchayati Raj*, for example, showed that they did have an impact on women's leadership roles. How did these changes influence gender roles in the community? The type of change in institutions was observed, as well as the opinions of focus group members on the factors contributing to identified changes used for drawing some tentative conclusions on this subject. The study design did not permit a rigorous analysis of or conclusion on the relative influence of alternative influences, and conclusions were expected to be qualitative and indicative of local perceptions.

### **INCORPORATING MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS**

Site selection was based on a pilot reconnaissance study conducted over 10 days during which visits were made to 14 villages/hamlets spread out in nearly all the *nadus* (a small local unit of land) in Kolli Hills during which key respondent interviews were conducted to obtain an institutional inventory for a range of institutions and people (Appendix A). These included agricultural production and markets, types of labour arrangements and occupations, Government departments and their activities, irrigation practices, schools and school attendance, and SHGs. Other aspects of social life in the area were also taken into account and these included sacred groves and temples, fairs, festivals, information channels and means of transport. Traders and middlemen, traditional *Panchayat* and related officials, and cultural groups were also included in the inventory. Based on the information, sites were selected and questionnaires designed.

#### **The study sites**

Three hamlets were identified for the study based on the variations in degree of commercialisation and infrastructure access across Kolli Hills. Since these factors were important in the process of institutional change, it was expected that information obtained from these locations would also shed light on the nature of change taking place. (map on next page)



Site 1: Aleri Patti, Alathur Nadu

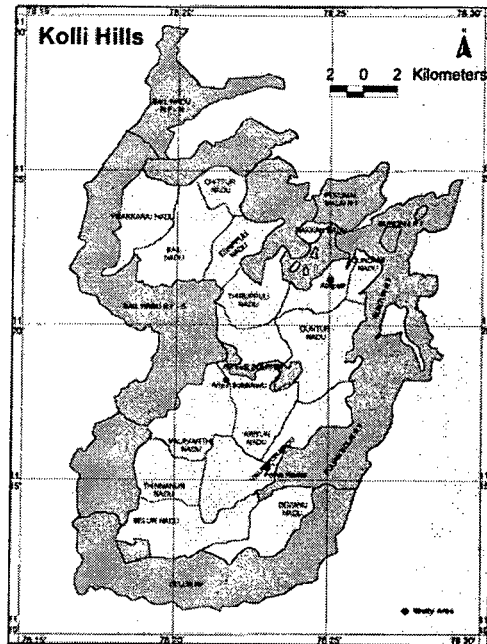
This is located in one of the most remote *nadus* in Kolli Hills. It is not electrified, and its main market link is via head load to the foothills markets of Mullukurichi and Thamambatti.

Site 2: Periya Koviloor, Vallapura Nadu

Located about 15km from Solakkadu on the main road. It has a frequent bus service as there is a major temple nearby, and also has its own weekly market.

Site 3: Ariyoor Solakkadu, Ariyoor Nadu

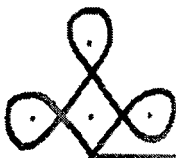
Economically prosperous and commercialised, it is about one km from Solakkadu. It is, therefore, well connected with both the main Kolli Hills market and plains markets by road.



### The historical dimension

In addition to studying the current variation in institutional arrangements in Kolli Hills, it was also of interest to examine how these had changed over time. In order to study changes over time, three age cohorts of men and women were selected and historical points of reference were located to obtain information from the present population about institutional changes that have been taking place over the past 50 years.

Using group-interviews, a Timeline was constructed for each village in order to create consistent historical points of reference. This was a listing of key local events that, when connected to specific



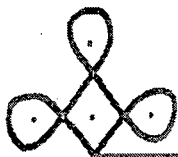




*3. Men's focus group discussion*



*4. Women's focus group discussion*



calendar time periods, were used as points of reference for locating other parallel circumstances that existed during that time. This was used as a starting point for generating a historical recall of institutions. (See Appendix B for the Timelines that were obtained for each of the three villages in this study.) The three points of time that were used for the three cohorts in group-interviews for constructing a historical picture of local institutions were: early 1950s, early 1970s and early 1990s. The fourth point in time, and the only one used in all three cohort-interviews was the present.

### **Selection of interviewees**

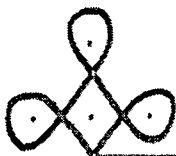
Three age groups of women and men were selected for focus group and individual interviews:

Age group 1: Above 65 years old. The historical point of reference for this group of individuals was centred around events in the early 1950s.

Age group 2: Between 45 - 55 years old. The historical point of reference for this group was around events of the early 1970s.

Age group 3: Between 20 - 35 years old. The historical point of reference was the early 1990s.

For each group, the challenge was to ground them in their living conditions during the 'historical point of reference', and to refer to that time period only, rather than to some earlier or later period, that is, creating an individual context for historical recall at specific time periods. In order to enable focus group members to accurately recall the conditions during that particular period a 'personal point of reference' was first created for them in relation to the 'historical point of reference'. This 'personal point of reference' was created by locating each individual in his or her precise life cycle conditions during the 'historical point of reference'. This combination of the historical and personal life-cycle conditions was expected to make the recall more robust.



## TOPICS FOR INTERVIEWS

A set of household, market and community-level local institutions was identified for study. These relate to: (a) marriage payments/inheritance; (b) participation in labour markets; (c) access, use and participation in product markets; and (d) local governance. Key norms and practices that shaped individual and group actions and interactions were identified based on results of the institutional inventory.

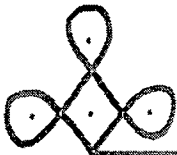
### Group Interviews

A listing of institutions to be studied within these categories was developed. (See Appendix C for Checklist) For each of the institutions studied, the following types of responses were elicited:

1. What were the key practices, and what was the extent of women and men's involvement?
2. What were the underlying values that were reflected in the practices? Responses to why a practice was followed could be an example of this.
3. What were the opportunities offered by these practices for women/men? Perspectives on this could have differed by gender.
4. What were the types of change occurring at the time each age group was starting their families?
5. What were the sources of change behind what was occurring?



5. Member of oldest age group



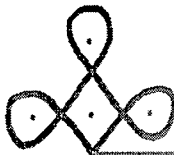
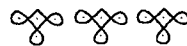
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### **Individual interviews**

Focus group interviews were supplemented by individual interviews that essentially yielded similar information, in addition to some additional detail on land ownership and crops produced and community institutions not discussed in the focus group, such as local festivals. The main purpose of the individual interviews was to provide a measure of corroboration for the information obtained in the focus groups. Six individual interviews were conducted for each hamlet – respondents being one man and one woman for each of the age cohorts selected. Individuals interviewed were those who were not part of the focus group discussion. (See Appendix D for the questionnaires used for these interviews.)

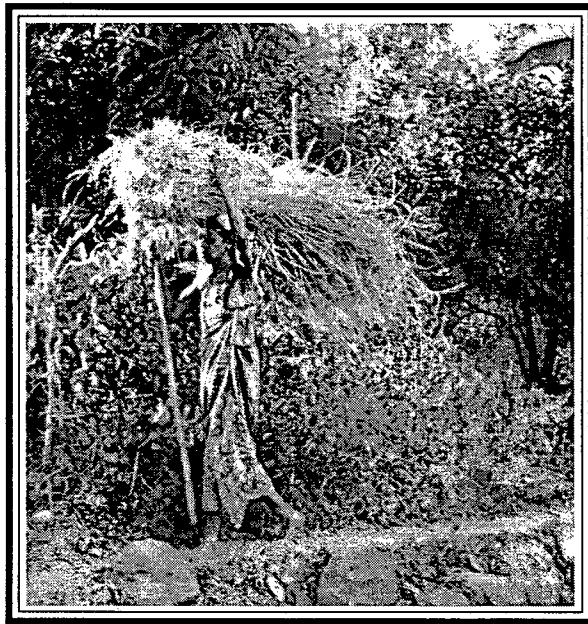
### **LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The data collection for this study was carried out during a three-month period, and is mostly qualitative in nature. It was intended as an exploratory study documenting the process of institutional change in gender economic roles. The aim was to make some connections between gendered institutions of the household and community with those in agricultural production, labour and product markets within Kolli Hills. In showing the connections and the change process, an attempt was also made to trace some of the factors that, in interaction with local populations, have contributed to the change process. In the latter context, no definitive conclusions could be drawn, but a representative collection of local perceptions about these issues as drawn from the focus group discussions is presented.

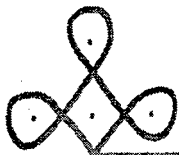


**SECTION**

**III**



**FINDINGS**





## FAMILY FORMATION AND INHERITANCE PRACTICES

Marriages in Kolli Hills involve not only the families concerned, but also community leaders who undertake the responsibility of both assisting in agreements of exchanges that are to take place, and also for making sure that the agreements are kept. Traditionally, marriage exchange involved payments in cash and kind by the groom to the bride's parents, following which the bride-to-be came to the groom's home where the wedding ceremony took place. The cash payment, *parisam* or *pariyam* (formal bride price) was supplemented by *varisai*<sup>4</sup> or in-kind gifts of food and condiments made to the girl's parents<sup>5</sup>. Often, the *varisai* was reciprocated later by the girl's parents at the time of the first-born child. In addition, a *thali*<sup>6</sup> (a gold ornament strung on a sacred thread), was given by the groom to the bride during the marriage ceremony.

### Marriage exchanges

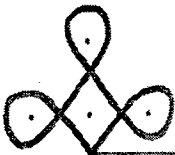
The practice of asking for a bride was always undertaken by the groom's family. In the past, key people from the boy's family went to the girl's home to ask for her in marriage. They were usually accompanied by the *Periya tanakkarar* (the council of village elders) including the *Oor Gounder*, *Karakkaarar*, and the *Thandalkaarar* (messenger in charge of conveying messages from the village elders).

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<sup>4</sup> The term originates from 'aadu' (goat) and 'arisi' (rice) both of which were traditionally included in the gift.

<sup>5</sup> The *varisai* is given by the groom's side either during the marriage exchanges, and/or at the time of the first *Pongal* season for the couple. The bride's side generally reciprocates with its own *varisai* after the birth of the couple's first child.

<sup>6</sup> Earlier it was made from about 1 *poun* (about 8 grammes) of gold, and in more recent times from 1/4 to 1/2 *poun* of gold. In rare cases, a brass ornament was given when the man could not afford to purchase gold. The *thali* is a symbol of the marriage union, and is returned by the woman in case of divorce.



If an agreement was reached, the *parisam* was paid. The agreement was actually reached among the *Periya tanakkarar*, and the parents of the boy and the girl participated only indirectly in the discussions. The older age group (>65 yrs) said that in their days, the *Periya tanakkaarar* from the girl's village would ask how much the groom's family was willing to pay for the *parisam*, and would try to negotiate for a higher bride price.

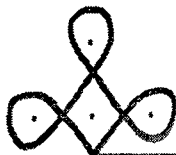
The current practice, in contrast, is that although it is still the groom's party that goes to the girl's home, the question asked at present regards the number of *pouns* (unit of weight, approximately 8 grammes) of gold the girl's parents intend to give to the girl. Once the girl's side pledges a certain amount of gold, the groom's side reciprocates with about half, or more, of this amount. Now the *parisam* is a token Rs. 16.25, plus the amount of gold that is agreed to by the groom's side.

In the 1950s, the *parisam* was reported to be about Rs. 50 in Aleri Patti and Ariyoor Solakkadu, and over Rs100 in Periya Koviloor (Appendix E, Table 1). In some places, a sari was given at this time as a confirmation or *nichchayam* (her engagement) to the girl, and in other places the sari was given when the girl arrived at the boy's home. It was reported that 50 years ago this used to be a white dhoti with a coloured border<sup>7</sup>. The *parisam* was given and received by the *Periya tanakkaarar* from the respective sides, and then given to the girl's parents. Both the mother and father of the girl received the *parisam* together<sup>8</sup>. At the time of confirmation and payment of *parisam*, the date for the marriage would also be fixed. Between the early 1950s and about 1990, the *parisam* amount increased from about Rs. 50 to about Rs. 1000. In relatively poorer areas, such as in Aleri Patti, *parisam* is currently about Rs2000. As

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<sup>7</sup> The practice of wearing a blouse began in the 1950s, but it appears to have become widely prevalent only in the 1970s after the bus service from the plains to Kolli Hills began.

<sup>8</sup> It was interesting that in one focus group (Ariyoor Solakkadu) of the over-65 age group who were recalling events in the early 1950s, the men said that the father of the bride received the *parisam*; the women disagreed and said it was the mother who received it. Eventually they agreed that both parents received it





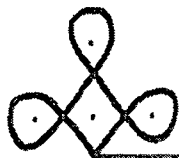
before, the bride's parents use it for wedding expenses, including the purchase of gold and clothing for their daughter. However, in more prosperous areas such as in Ariyoor Sollakadu and Periya Koviloor, for the majority of families, especially in the higher economic strata, it now seems to be a matter of pride not to seek a sum of *parisam* beyond the ritual Rs16.25, and instead to pledge gold and household items for the girl to take with her. The new trend, we were told, is that the groom and his family have larger expectations from the girl's family. Although they initially appear to compromise and limit their demands, possibly at the mediation of the village elders, it was reported in Aleri Patti that their dissatisfaction has now become an excuse for wife beating.

### Wedding ceremony

At the appointed date for the wedding, a group from the boy's family comes again to fetch the girl from her parents' home. At this time, they bring gifts or *varisai* that are given to the girl's parents. In the early 1950s, *varisai* brought by the groom's side when coming to get the bride typically included two earthen vessels with rice, provisions such as rice, vegetables, ghee, bananas, coconut, betel-nut, turmeric, jack, and tamarind. Although the content of the *varisai* may vary, the practice continues to this day,



6. Procession carrying traditional seer



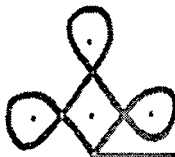
but the focus on bringing provisions has shifted to more symbolic and ceremonial items.

The wedding ceremony takes place in the boy's home, and it is here that most of the festivities take place. This was often a community effort in which most households contributed by pounding, de-husking and cooking the rice for the wedding feast. In Periya Koviloor, the marriage ceremony has traditionally taken place at the temple. During the wedding ceremony, the bride receives the gold ornament, the *thali*, from the groom, which she wears around her neck, as a symbol of the marriage. Other than this, she did not receive anything else from either side in the 1950s, except a sari from her parents, which she wore when she came to her new home. They said this was the *palakavalakam* (social custom) in those days, and the girl did not receive anything else.

Although it was reported that the *parisam* is given by the *Periya tanakkaarar* to the girl who gives it to her parents, there are many components to it. Women in some of the focus groups became shy and withdrawn when asked about the underlying value of the *parisam*. In one group we were told that a part of the *parisam* is given to the girl's mother to thank her for her milk she had fed the bride when she was a baby. Another part is gifted to the *Periya tanakkaarar*. This payment is generally received by the *Oor Gounder* who might put it into the village fund of which he is in charge. In Ariyoor Solakkadu, this amount was reported to be Rs. 6.15. A part of the *parisam*, called *paaga parisam* or *urimai kaasu* (customary share of bride price) goes to the maternal uncle, in cases in which the girl is not marrying into his family. The proportion to the maternal uncle varies, and in Aleri Patti, it was reported that this share could be from 1/5th to half of the *parisam* amount. When the girl is marrying into the maternal uncle's immediate family, no *parisam* is paid<sup>9</sup>. The rest of the *parisam* is used for the wedding expenses and for the gifts to the girl.

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<sup>9</sup> The practice of marrying off daughters into the maternal uncle's family appears to have been relatively common until as recently as the 1970s. In the Ariyoor Solakkadu focus group, 4 out of 5 men in the 45-55 age group had not paid *parisam* since they were entitled to the *paaga parisam* or *urimai kaasu* if their wives had married elsewhere.



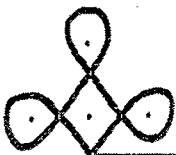
### Changing practices

It is very clear that the practice of 'bride price' payment was the norm 50 years ago in Kolli Hills. When trying to elicit underlying perceptions regarding this practice, there was a tendency among the respondents<sup>10</sup> to refer to it in a deprecating manner. This was especially so among the middle and younger age groups. Even among the older age group, there were responses such as: 'It was the custom to buy a bride in those days'; 'In those days, there was a lack of awareness' which showed that they felt they had been very backward in the old days. It is not clear to what extent such responses were elicited within the context of the questioning, especially since those running the meetings were all men from the plains, where the practice of dowry payments is common. Other responses by the older group were: 'This is a hill tribe custom. The bride is not given without it, and the *Periya tanakkaarar* has to agree on the amount to be given by the parents for the marriage'. Among the middle-aged group (45-55 yrs) reasons given by men included: 'It was given to help the girl's family'; 'Without it they



7. Bridal procession returning to groom's house

<sup>10</sup> Though both men and women were included in the over-65 age group, it was noted that men wanted to dominate the discussion. Even when the focus group leaders took extra pains to elicit women's responses in the mixed group, the men kept interrupting, indicating a desire to be the spokespersons for the group.

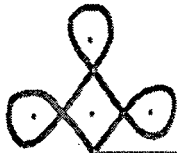


would not agree to give their girl in marriage'; 'It represents a commitment that is why it is taken before marriage.' Women in one of these groups also said 'There was a lack of knowledge, culture and intelligence earlier'.

In attempting to identify the sources of the changes in marriage exchanges, the older group cited better education and improved incomes as the main factor. They said, 'Now we have tiled roofs and not thatches of millet and *samai* (little millet); there's also road transport and we don't have to carry head loads everywhere' implying that women's labour may not be as heavily in demand as it was earlier. In this connection, they also said, 'Now the bride has to come here and live peacefully. Earlier we did not care about the quality of the girl's life so much, and wanted to get as much money as possible from the groom's side'.

A second line of reasoning attributed the changes to the increased influence of customs of the plains due to the opening up of the Hills to road transport. The older group referred to this as *nagarigam* ('civilized behaviour', often used ironically) which led to improving their culture. However, they also noted, 'Now those who give birth to a girl child are finding it harder to marry them off because of these new practices'. In their youth, girls were not perceived to cause hardship, as the family would receive up to Rs. 500 when the girl became a bride, but now they have to meet high marriage expenses, including demands for gold, household items, and metal vessels.

The younger age groups also referred to the new national laws requiring equal inheritance for male and female children as a source of changing marriage exchanges. Since local inheritance laws are unchanged, and only male children inherit parents' properties, the greater demand for the girls' share at marriage is being voiced by grooms and reportedly by daughters as well. In addition, other practices from the plains are being adopted as well. An example is *anbalipu* (literally, a gift given out of affection), which is replacing the *varisai* or *seer* gifts given by a girl's parents upon the birth of the first child.



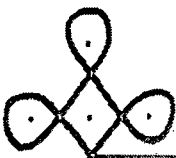


8. *Women's multiple burdens*

Both men and women of all ages recognized that marriage customs, both the traditional bride price and newer ones in which girls' parents give gold and household items, inherently benefited males. In Aleri Patti, the 45-55 year old women's group members said, 'Men and their family get a girl to work for them for the rest of their lives. Parents raise girls, and when they grow up, they go to men's homes to toil for them. They get food, but their labour is worth more than just the food they get'. Now, women do get gold from both their parents and bridegroom, but the benefit is still to the men who indirectly receive most of the exchange in both directions, and also have control over the gifts since they can assert disposal rights over the wife's property. The dislocation that women experience in moving to the new home, while men do not, was also noted by women as a point that favoured men.

### **Divorce, remarriage and polygamy**

Although multiple marriages are common, there was little visible evidence of overt polygamy. Divorces and remarriages do not seem to have any stigma, and the village council headed by the *Oor Gounder* mediates in marriage disputes, and if reconciliation is

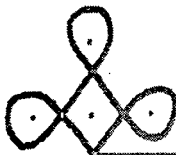


not possible, in facilitating a divorce. However, the village council also levies fines against the aggrieved party in case of marriage disputes, and break-ups. This may tend to reduce liaisons outside marriage. However, if the aggrieved party is a woman, she has to take up her case with the village council, generally not an easy task. In case of a divorce, children from the previous marriage retain inheritance rights to the father's property, even if the mother remarries.

### **Inheritance**

The *Periya tanakkaarar*, the *Oor Gounder* and other men supervise the process of inheritance and property<sup>11</sup> division. This was, and still is, the practice during the past 50 years. Parents are not at liberty to decide on how to divide their property on their own.

Although the general practice is for sons only to inherit parental property, there appear to have been exceptions made when there were only daughters and no sons. In the early 1950s, it was reported that there were instances when a paternal uncle and his sons inherited the property when there were no sons in a family. However, in other instances, if a daughter and her husband came to live with her parents, and took care of them, she could inherit the property. It appears this type of inheritance by a girl is acceptable only in instances where there is only one daughter, indicating the prospect of conflict with other sons-in-law if such a preference for any one daughter is exhibited. There seems to be growing acceptance of this practice. If this is the case, then it is stipulated during the daughter's marriage arrangements, and agreed to by the groom. Even in these instances, the property transfer is often made to the grandchildren (as in the case of widows) since this reduces the chances of the husband's control (or in the case of widows, of a new husband's control) over disposition of the property.



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<sup>11</sup> Land, trees, cattle, utensils, jewellery and household items were traditionally the main kinds of property that were inherited or divided among the children.

Earlier, it was reported, practices were stricter in terms of limiting inheritance of girls; for example, only sons could inherit paternal or maternal property, if any. Now, if there is any maternal property in terms of *patta* (land with legal title deeds) land, this is for daughters only<sup>12</sup>, and paternal property is for sons only. Other than that, the increase in marriage payments (gold to girls) was said to represent the inheritance of girls at the present time.

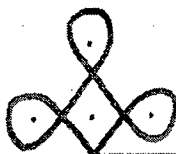
The inheritance of parental property by sons alone is clearly an expectation by all members of families. This was one point on which the women in the >65 year focus group had strong views: 'If you give property to girls, how will boys take care of us in our old age, and how will we survive? Who will take us to the burial place after death? That is the boy's job. That is why even when the woman has any property it is inherited by her son.' Even if parents wanted daughters to inherit some of their property, their sons and daughters-in-law would object. Furthermore, the daughters are expected to live on and enjoy the property of their husband.

### **Widow inheritance**

In the past (50 years ago) if a widow had male children, she would receive the husband's property on behalf of her sons. In the case of older widows, with grown-up sons, a share of the husband's property could be assigned to her so that she might have an independent source of income, and not be dependent on the sons. However, if she had no children or only daughters, she was sent back without anything, and she would be free to marry again if she chose. Even now, widows without sons are not likely to receive any benefits from husband's property, but it was reported in Ariyoor Solakkadu that current practice was for widows to receive a sum of money, Rs. 5000-10,000 from the husband's family. The rights of widows with only daughters appears to have strengthened over time, as the inheritance of property by girls appears to be accepted now, in case there are no sons from the marriage. Widows without children may not inherit their husband's property, but are free to remarry. Widow remarriage is commonly practised.

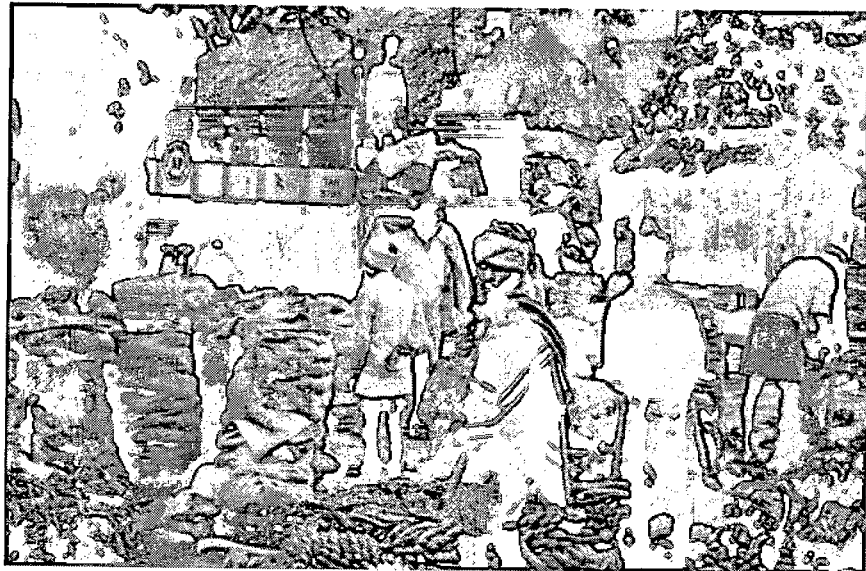
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<sup>12</sup>This was reported in Periya Koviloor with relatively more clarity than in other sites.

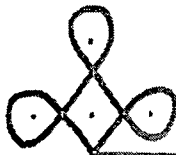


## PRODUCT MARKETS AND GENDERED PARTICIPATION

In the early 1960s, Kolli Hills became accessible by road, and with the growth of its own marketing institutions since the 1980s, the population now has dramatically expanded market access and cash income options. In addition, traders and contractors from sago mills nearby also participate actively in seeking out farmer sub-contracts and commodity purchases in many unique agro-ecology niches in the hills. The gradual decline in wheat production here, for example, can be attributed to the decline in the use of the plains markets such as Vairichettipalayam and Puliancholai which had an active trading community of *Chettiars* who bought and sold wheat. When the more easily accessible Karavalli market (in which wheat traders did not participate) started in the early 1970s, wheat production and marketing declined. With the introduction of tapioca, wheat production has practically disappeared from Kolli Hills and former upland crops such as *ragi* and minor millets have been replaced. Even though paddy is still grown on all lowland, irrigated fields, plot sizes have been reduced, and the varieties grown are shifting towards new high-yielding composite



9. Loading trucks at weekly market Solakkadu





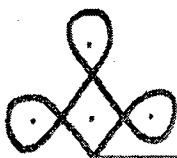
varieties that are responsive to chemical fertilizer inputs. Traditionally preferred rice varieties such as *samba*, which had a reddish grain and a supposedly 'cooling' effect on the body, have practically disappeared.

## **Road and market development**

Crop production and marketing have undergone tremendous changes over the past 50 years. This change has chiefly come about through improved access to markets. In the 1950s, farmers had to trek for half a day or more on footpaths to reach foothills markets. However, from the 1960s, partially due to the creation of road infrastructure and the active involvement of the local population in creating local markets, farmers can reach traders within a matter of minutes. Table 2 (Appendix E ) shows the evolution of market access and crop production and marketing since the 1950s in the three study sites of Aleri Patti, Periya Koviloor, and Ariyoor Solakkadu.

We were informed that the first time outsiders had systematic contact with Kolli Hills was in the 1940s, when the first dirt road from Karavalli to Solakkadu was built for the Forestry Department. This was converted into a tar road only in the late 1950s. It was as a result of this road development that the Karavalli market came into existence. Traders from the plains operated this market in order to purchase products unique to the Kolli hills at that time, for example, cardamom, jackfruit, tamarind and bananas. The tar road to Solakkadu greatly improved market access to the east, central and southern parts of Kolli Hills, and exposure to the plains economy. However, the northeast parts of the hills remained relatively isolated and continued to rely on footpaths that led to foothills markets of the northern and southern plains such as Thamambatti.

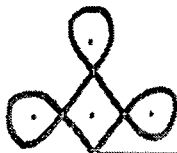
In the 1950s, very few traders or contractors came to Kolli Hills. Nevertheless, in both Ariyoor Solakkadu and Periya Koviloor, village level sales to traders were reported for commodities like cardamom, coffee, mustard, coriander, beans and bananas. Such sales appear to have been relatively minor, since only small quantities could be



carried back by individual traders, and there is some indication that this was a form of exchange with exotic items that they carried from the plains, for example, *idlis* (steamed round rice cakes) and tapioca tubers. No such sales were reported in Aleri Patti. Farmers on foot carried surplus produce over long distances to reach foothills markets. At that time, for example, from Periya Koviloor, men and women would start their journey around 4 a.m. or earlier to reach the market, taking the produce as well as food to eat during the day. Purchases consisted of provisions such as salt or clothing.

### **Group marketing strategies**

The 1970s saw a surge in the cash economy of the hills, possibly facilitated by a combination of the new Karavalli market, and the fast-growing agricultural economy of the Tamil Nadu plains. Both traders and Kolli hills producers sought to benefit from this. In response to an increase in a head-load tax imposed by Karavalli traders on hill products like cardamom in the 1970s, leading members of the Ariyoor Solakkadu community mobilized a boycott of the Karavalli market, and established their own first Kolli Hills market in Solakkadu in 1980. The process leading up to the Solakkadu market, as well as the more recent Thenpulum market in Vallapura Nadu saw some creative use of group marketing by Kolli Hills producers to force the foothills traders to leave the comfort of the Karavalli market, for example, and go to the hill markets if they wanted to procure their produce. There are also examples from the northern *nadus*, of turmeric-producing farmers coming together to collectively take their produce to Namakkal and other markets so as to get a better price for their product. This knowledge of active group marketing by farmers in the face of economic need and market opportunity made available by improved road access provides a useful insight into the likely success of group marketing initiatives such as the minor millet production and marketing initiated by MSSRF. The only areas of Kolli Hills where previous examples of group marketing were not found to exist were in the north-eastern *nadus*, which to this day, remain poorly accessible by road, and still rely on foothills connections



provided by footpaths through the forests. However, as can be seen in the section on labour market institutions, there is good experience of group work in both local labour contracts and in seasonal labour contracts. Although group marketing has not been attempted before in these areas, it appears that the reason for this is lack of a viable economic opportunity or incentive rather than lack of interest or ability.

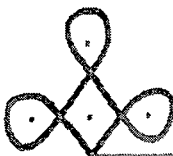


10. Vegetables at Solakkadu weekly market

As the tar road network in the Hills expanded in the 1960s, first south to Semmedu and east to the Vallapura Nadu, and finally north towards Ariyoor and beyond, so did market access. Not only could farmers reach Solakkadu and the plains via road transport, but also more significantly, traders and contractors from the plains could now more easily come directly to the farmers and purchase their produce.

### **Barter, grain and seed exchange**

There is some evidence that prior to the growth of the cash economy with introduction of tapioca production, and the availability of ration rice, there was some barter, referred to variously as *sarriku sari* (equal exchange), *daaniathukku daaniyam*, (grain for grain)



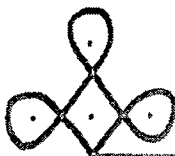
or *pandathukku pandam* (equal return of the thing borrowed), but only for exchanging cereal grains. The exchange was on a 1:1 basis. In Aleri Patti, an area with relatively few farmers with lowland for rice production, and with a majority of families growing minor millets until the advent of tapioca in the 1990s, exchange of paddy for minor millets was reported<sup>13</sup>. Ariyoor Solakkadu reported such exchanges until about the 1980s. No such bartering exchanges were reported since the 1950s in Periya Koviloor. Seed exchanges between farmers, however, continue to be practised in all the sites. Seed exchanges were reported on a 1:1 basis when two different paddy varieties are exchanged between two farmers at the time of planting.

Food loans also exist, where the pre-harvest to post-harvest ratio was 1:1.5 units of grain. The most common form of grain exchange was a form of seed loan - *otti ki retti* (return of twice the loaned amount, literally, 'two for one')- in which seed was given during planting and was returned in the ratio of 1:2 after harvest. Seed loans were taken for most grains and legumes, with the same repayment rates. If the loan was not repaid after the first harvest, then the *vatti kutti podum* (interest begets interest) principle operated and the amount of the repayment was increased to three times the loaned amount of grain. This practice has been in existence for the entire period reviewed in this study - from the 1950s up to the present time.

The vitality of plains economy and linkages with Kolli hills agriculture have led to increased contacts among farmers, traders and contractors. Cash options and cash cropping have grown. The hill agro-ecology, and also the possibilities and practice of agro-forestry make many of their products highly desirable and valued. The prices of jackfruit, tamarind and bananas have, for example, risen sharply over the years, more than keeping pace with inflation.

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<sup>13</sup> Feeding visitors was reportedly a reason for resorting to such an exchange in Aleri Patti. Rice was stated to be the preferred grain to serve for visitors, especially plains folks, so households that grew only *ragi* and minor millets or did not have any rice stock, would exchange these grains for rice on a 1:1 basis with other villagers.

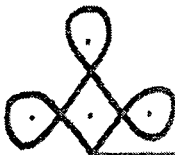


Tamarind producer prices reported in Periya Koviloor have, for example, increased by about 16-20 times over the past 25-30 years. Tapioca production on hill slopes has expanded in parallel with road access to villages as contractors from sago mills are willing to pay high upfront advances to the farmers for producing this crop once the produce can be picked up by trucks.

Crop production and marketing by contracts has grown not only for tapioca, but also for coffee, bananas and pepper as well as for high-demand tree crops such as jackfruit and tamarind. Until the 1970s contracts were made between local households for lowland and upland for production in sharecropping or lease agreements. Lowland was typically used for sharecropping or *varam* (lease on sharecropping basis) arrangements. For example, in *samba* paddy production, with the leaseholder providing all the inputs, the owner received half the produce. Upland plots on the other hand were leased on a fixed cash basis, also called *kuttaghai* (lease), an arrangement similar to the traditional leasing of jackfruit trees for cash sums based on the number of young fruit on the tree. No sharecropping was reported at the present time, and this appears to have been replaced by cash lease of lowland. Currently, five *vallam* (a measure of paddy which is also used to measure land in the sense of the area that can be sown with this amount of seed-grain – here, about 1 acre) lowland is rented out for about Rs. 5000 per season in Periya Koviloor. However, since the 1970s and the opening up of markets, a wide variety of contracts for tree crops and other upland crops has emerged.

### **Gender roles in marketing**

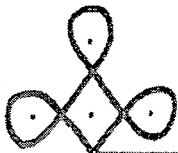
From a gender perspective, changes in the roles of men and women in marketing have been important. Even in the early 1950s, when the trek was up to 8 hours each way, women always accompanied men to sell their produce. However, in those days, they simply carried their loads, and did not talk with the traders. The men did the talking and they also handled the cash. Even when traders came to the village, women did not talk with them. In the older age group (>65 years), the men said that only they could transact



business since they knew more about it. The women had to obey the wishes of the men, even though it was clear that they thought they were capable enough. The group dynamic in this age group, the only mixed sex focus group, was very interesting. Men typically exaggerated their own role in matters of marketing and decision-making. The women generally remained silent, but they did sometimes laugh or pass a sarcastic remark. If the facilitator picked up a point or asked for a clarification, it was conceded that the role of women was significant. For instance, in the matter of crop sales decisions, the issue was discussed, and the consent of the women was taken. On the matter of use of cash from the sale of produce, however, women clearly had very minimal influence in decisions. Women in this age group felt that any cash from crop sales belonged to the men who could spend it as they chose.

With the greater proximity of markets, women might go individually or in groups and negotiate prices with traders. This also has made them more aware of prevailing prices, and has increased their confidence in dealing with traders who might come to the farm. By the 1970s, women began to join in negotiating and dealing with contractors, but only when the men were present, according to the men. Women in the same village (Periya Koviloor) reported however, that if the men were not present and a trader came, they would discuss the possible sale terms, but would not finalize things on their own. In the middle-aged group (45-55 years), in the two villages where women's SHGs had been started, women were more outspoken on gender dimensions.

In Ariyoor Solakkadu, though the men conceded that there were consultations between husbands and wives before sales actually took place, the men referred to their relationship with their wives as similar to those between parents and children. In this village, the women of the middle-aged group complained that, 'Even though we do all the work in preparing the produce for the market, men do the negotiating and then claim that it they who have sold it, and they also take all the money received from the traders.' However, they also seemed to accept that it was the men's job to deal with the traders, and that even though they were perfectly



capable of concluding deals, they were likely to be rebuked for underselling, and might be beaten up for it. Although the focus group discussions revealed detailed knowledge of prices among the women, the men felt they could deal/negotiate better with contractors and traders who came to the farm. There are still only rare instances when a woman makes a sale decision with a trader who comes to the farm. However, more interaction and involvement are possible now than was the case earlier. This has made the women more aware of the amount of cash income that the men may be receiving from sale of produce, although they feel that the men have greater freedom in spending the cash income.

### **Closer markets**

By the 1990s, both Solakkadu and Thenpulam markets were in existence, making it possible for women to take produce to the market alone and in groups and sell it without help from men. In both Ariyoor Solakadu and Periya Koviloor, the close vicinity of



*11. Woman selling temple offerings*



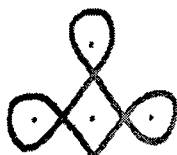
these markets has made women participate actively in crop sales. However, in Aleri Patti where long treks to the foothills require them to go with men, they do not participate independently in the sale or in negotiating the deal. Women in the 25-35 year old focus groups from these two villages expressed great confidence in their marketing and negotiating skills. They said, 'We used to go in groups of 10-15 women carrying head loads to the market, where we would negotiate with the traders and sell the produce even without the help of men. We know the price, and ask for 50% higher price and then negotiate down to the going price.' They also expressed the view that they were more likely to keep the sale proceeds when they marketed the produce, and also manage household accounts.

One woman in the group from Periya Koviloor said that even when her husband sold produce, he gave her the cash since she manages their accounts. This woman is also an active member of one of the two SHGs in this village. Only the men participated when it came to dealing with contractors, but women in the 25-35 year age group in the two villages with close market access claimed to have full access to the cash receipts from the contractor. In contrast, women of this age group in Aleri Patti were the least well- informed and involved with marketing, and also did not express any opinions on gender-relations dimensions.<sup>14</sup>

The SHG formation seems closely linked to the closeness of market access in these villages. Therefore, it is difficult to sort out the relative influence that each has had in the confidence exhibited by women in speaking out on gender relations in the focus group discussions. However, the SHGs are clearly facilitating the women's education in accounting techniques. This appears to increase not only their self-confidence, but also their husbands' confidence in them.

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<sup>14</sup> It should also be pointed out that the occasion of the group meeting with 25-35 year old women in Aleri Patti was a big event in this village. The audience began collecting nearly an hour prior to the start of the discussion, and included many village elders, husbands and youths who saw this as a huge entertainment. Women in this group also said that this was the first time they had ever participated in a group discussion where they could express their opinions and knowledge in this way.



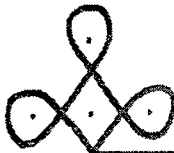


## GENDER DIMENSIONS OF LABOUR MARKETS

### Exchange labour

Historically, communal forms of labour have been recorded and are still prevalent in Kolli Hills. Surprisingly, even in the supposedly more market-oriented areas such as Ariyoor Solakkadu and Periya Koviloor, *aal saatuthal* (exchange labour), is still being used today. However, in Aleri Patti, which is relatively remote from the markets, workers demand cash wages, and *saataal* (exchanged labour) are reportedly no longer available. It may be precisely because of its remoteness and relative difficulties associated with crop marketing that the demand for cash wages is so high in Aleri Patti. The rationale given in all locations for the practice of exchange labour was that it was a response to labour shortages, 'In those days there were not many labourers'. It reportedly also increased the chance of performing the required job speedily, and was of value when time was of the essence. Another value of this practice was that it made it possible for them to help each other out when they could not pay for the labour input needed. The practice also created solidarity in the community. The term used for exchange labour in Periya Koviloor is *ottulaippu* (cooperation) or *saaturadu* (process of exchanging labour), implying its value in mutual support.

Fifty years ago, in the early 1950s, *aal saatuthal* was a very common practice. At that time, cash wages did not exist, and wages in-kind were given when the workers were short of food. Worker-to-land ratios were much lower than they are today, and therefore the demand for labour was greater. Since landlessness was non-existent, the practice of *aal saatuthal* was useful to all. The process of organizing the exchange labour involved the practice of farm families going around the village and calling out to their neighbours and kin. Family members would go and call out, '*Macchan, maman, annan, akka, thangai*, (brother-in-law, uncle, elder brother, elder sister, younger sister) come'. Only in Aleri Patti, we were told that they had *kothaks* (literally, 'labourers', but in this context, labour organizers) that helped organize exchange labour, male *kothaks* for men and female *kothaks* for women. In those times, when

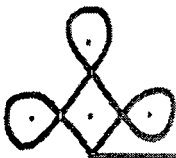




12. Group threshing of millet

exchange labour was more or less the norm, those with small plots of land which required less labour input from others would still participate in such group work, but ask for payment in grain instead of reciprocal labour.

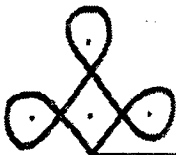
In some cases, the landowners might have a meal for everyone, but for the most part, the workers took their own food. The practice of supplying food appears to have been used by large landowners who required much more labour than they would have been able to give in return. An example of how this practice, referred to as *vayallukku vaanga* (come to the field) had evolved in the 1970s was described by an elderly person in Ariyoor Solakkadu. About 20 families in this village had large land holdings, 2-4 acres of *vayal* (field), and they used this practice. The *Thandalkaarar* would go around, and announce to the village - *vayallukku vanga* - and each of the 40-50 households would send one family member to the field. Everyone who turned up was entitled to work and get paid. This large group would be used for all kinds of activities including hoeing, transplanting, weeding and harvesting. They would pay the workers either in cash or in kind at the end of the day. This practice was reportedly discontinued about 10 years ago.



### **Evolving practices**

In the earliest time period of this study, the activities for which exchange labour were used tended to be the most labour-intensive ones such as transplanting paddy, planting *ragi* and minor millets, weeding and harvesting all the grain crops. Exchange labour also existed for house construction, where men in groups would help each other out. In the 1970s, when banana production began to increase, hoeing of these fields was also done using exchange labour. More recently, activities that have been added are weeding pineapple and tapioca, while the activities related to *ragi* and minor millets have all but disappeared. However, in Periya Koviloor, exchange labour in *ragi* weeding and harvesting was still practised. The practice typically involved both men and women, but exchange of labour was men for men and women for women. However, the list of activities performed by women was much larger than that by men, especially in the more recent periods. For example, in Periya Koviloor in the 1990s, women's exchange labour was used for paddy transplanting and weeding, harvesting and *bunding* (building low embankments around the perimeter of the fields) as well as for *ragi* harvesting, while men reported that they participated in exchange labour for field levelling, *bunding* and ploughing only. It does appear that, at least more recently, women are in the majority in exchange labour, and also seem to attach greater value to such jobs. They appear to particularly value its ability to shorten their backbreaking jobs such as transplanting and weeding.

With the advent of the cash economy, these exchange labour practices seem to have evolved into group contract work for cash. In Ariyoor Solakkadu, it was reported that by the early 1970s cash contracts were taken up by a large group of workers for large plots of land, for example, for 10 *vallam vayal* (or about 2 acres of paddy land). The *thandalkarar* informed the village, and both men and women, usually at least one person from each household, would come for the work. The amount would be Rs. 50 for harvesting which the group would share. In Aleri Patti, women have dropped the use of exchange labour in preference for such contract work, and have used their institution of *kothal* to manage this transition.





Kothal from Aleri Patti

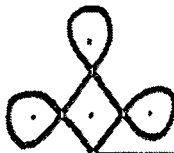
Today, there are two women *kothals* in Aleri Patti, both of whom say that they are never short of work, and that women prefer to work in such contract groups rather than for wages, since they can earn up to twice their daily wage by participating in group-contracts. This is particularly attractive to the women, as the local village council has established lower daily wage rates for them as compared to those for men. Women in the other two sites have not been able to make a similar transition, possibly since the institution of *kothal* does not exist there. It would be interesting to find out if such

an institution exists in other areas of Kolli Hills, and see if it could be facilitated in other villages.

Even today, exchange labour is a common source of labour for planting, weeding and harvesting activities for the major grain crops grown on both lowland and upland plots of paddy, and the now much reduced production of *ragi* and minor millets. It may also be practised for cash crops, but hired labour is predominantly the norm for these crops. Today in areas where exchange labour exists, the work groups can consist of a combination of exchange workers and wage workers.

### **Wage labour**

Wage labour is now the main source of labour input in Kolli Hills agriculture. In most sites, although harvesting work may still be paid occasionally in-kind, for the most part cash wages are

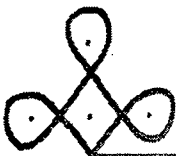


preferred by both men and women, even though the wage rate differential by gender is greater for cash wages than wages in kind (Appendix E, Table 3). In stark contrast to the present situation, just 50 years ago, cash wages did not exist in Kolli Hills and the norm was either exchange labour or wages in kind. This was an unexpected finding, and emerged only at the end of the study through informal questioning. Since it was unexpected, the structure of questioning assumed that both cash and in kind wages existed in the 1950s as they do today. The > 65 year old focus group members were asked the question: 'What were the wage rates in cash and kind during the reference period?' The answers gave information only for wages in kind, and in some cases, numbers were given for cash that did not actually relate to the reference period for that group, but to a later point in time. At the end, the question was asked 'Were there any cash wages during that reference period?' It was only then that the real answer emerged, which was 'No'. Further probing as to the time period when cash wages first emerged led to the conclusion that this practice became established in the early 1960s, and was probably connected to the cash wages introduced by road construction contractors who built the Karavalli to Solakkadu road in the late 1950s, and the road and government buildings for their Semmedu and Solakkadu facilities in the 1960s.

Although the wage rates in-kind translate to higher values when the grain is valued in terms of rupees, the preference now is for cash wages. Women prefer cash wages, since the grain paid in kind requires tedious processing, while the cash can be used to purchase ration rice that is ready to cook, even though it may be of poor quality.

### **Wages and gender**

Gender-based wage differentials are more marked when wage rates are quoted in terms of cash than when they are in kind. The evidence indicates that 50 years ago, when only wages in kind were paid, wage-rates were relatively more equal for men and women for the same work. All the groups relating to the earlier

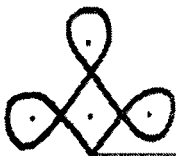


time periods stressed this point when they talked about gender differences in relation to payments in kind. Both men and women reported that when men did extra work, such as carrying the harvested grain to the storage area, they received extra grain. Even after incorporating this extra amount, the ratio of male to female wage rates was more equitable for payments in kind as compared with cash. However, this relative equity for women with regard to wages in kind appears to have declined over time, to more closely resemble the gender gap in cash wages, which have stayed steadily at a little below the ratio 2:1 for male and female wage rates.

Gender differences when wages are paid in cash are more marked than when they are paid in-kind. These differences in cash wage rates appear to hold irrespective of whether men and women carry out different or similar activities. In some cases (for example, Aleri Patti) some concession in terms of duration of work appears to be made for women, in that they were allowed to go to work a little later than men so that they could finish their household chores. However, in Periya Koviloor, the women complained that they worked the same length of time as men -from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. -



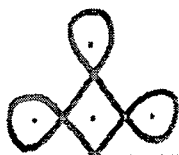
14. Woman with load of wild grass



and were still paid Rs. 25, while men were paid Rs40. Interestingly, cash wage rates for men have consistently been about twice that for women. This appears to have become an established entitlement, irrespective of the relative work output. Women pointed out that in some situations men could do twice what the women could, for example, in carrying loads, and weeding tapioca. In other instances, women may have an equal work output, as in weeding any of the grain crops, or may actually work faster than men, as in weeding pineapple, but they are still paid at only half the rate as for men.

The women in Periya Koviloor and Ariyoor Solakkadu were more willing to question the wage differential than those in Aleri Patti, even though the women in the latter area had actually evolved an earlier exchange labour institution into a women's contract work system in which they could overcome their relatively lower daily wage rates. The greater confidence of women in the first two villages could possibly be attributed to their SHG activities here. Women in the 25-35 year old focus group in Periya Koviloor said they could do everything men could, but not carry the size of loads that men could, which the men partly used to justify their higher daily wage. They noted that even though they worked similar hours – from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., they got lower wages which were slightly more than half that of the men. The women reported, 'If we ask for equal wages they will ask, "Can you climb the jack tree?"' Women in the same age group in Ariyoor Solakkadu said, 'In the case of pineapple weeding, they're not faster than us, but they still get Rs. 50 and we get Rs. 30. They say "We're men" and try to show they're doing more than women. They will always want to have the first rank, that cannot be changed, but we'll change things, that's why we have the *Maghalir Sangham*'. They added that in group contracts for pineapple in which both men and women work together, they shared the contract money equally with men.

The role of the village council in setting wage rates for men and women should be noted as an important factor in the institutionalisation of differential wage rates by gender. Each hamlet sets its own rates, and in some cases, individuals may prefer to seek work in neighbouring hamlets where the wage rates are set

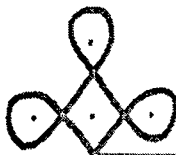


higher. This was observed in Periya Koviloor where a neighbouring hamlet offered Rs. 5 more per day. Since women do not traditionally participate or have a voice in the deliberations of the village council, gender-based wage differentials that are considered fair by men have been established. However, it should be noted that there are several examples of evolving labour market institutions, especially labour contract arrangements that have allowed women to circumvent the differential gender wage that has been established by the village councils in Kolli Hills.

### **Labour migration**

The practice of labour migration from Kolli Hills has grown remarkably over the past 50 years. During the earliest period of this study, in the early 1950s, there was little or no labour migration reported. One reason for this was given by a man in Ariyoor Solakkadu, 'We had a lot of work in our own fields then. Now, with the fragmentation of landholdings, farm sizes are about half of what they were then, so we have more time on our hands and can go outside for more work'. Another reason suggested for the growth in labour surplus in the Hills and increased seasonal migration was the displacement of *ragi* and minor millets by tapioca cultivation. This shift in cropping pattern in the Hills has cut down labour requirements, and has also decreased local food production. It has also spurred growth in seasonal migration for paddy harvesting to the plains. Harvest laborers are typically paid with a share of the harvest.

In the 1970s, labour migration for seasonal employment within Kolli Hills had begun, as well as some migration to plantations in Kerala. Within Kolli Hills, migration (daily) to nearby locations with higher production and labour demand was reported from Aleri Patti but not in the other two sites. This could possibly be due to lower rainfall in Aleri Patti, where the paddy lands for the most part, yield only one crop annually in comparison with the other two locations.



Since the 1990s, and especially over the past few years, growing labour surpluses and food shortages due to expanding tapioca





15. Palm used as food during famine

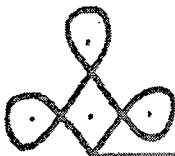
production in Kolli Hills appear to have fuelled a rapid growth in seasonal labour migration of both men and women to the plains. In Aleri Patti the men and women report that they go to Erode for the paddy harvest, and sugarcane cutting, and to coffee estates in Kerala and Karnataka. In Periya Koviloor, men and women go for paddy harvesting to Erode, Karavalli and Puliancholai and for onion harvesting to

Pavuthram. From Ariyoor Sollakadu, they go to Erode and Karavalli for rice harvesting and sugarcane planting and harvesting.

### **Organizing seasonal labour**

Seasonal labour migration is organized by *kothukkaaranga* (labour contractors), who come from the plains to seek out labour. They bring information about farmers who need workers, and the wage rates they are willing to pay. The *kothukkaaranga* arrange for the transport of groups of workers from villages, as well as for their accommodation at the points of destination. The workers prefer to take some provisions and fuel wood with them to tide them over this period.

Wage rates for men and women who go for seasonal labour to plains presented an interesting combination of market demand forces and traditional institutions of gender-differentiated wage rates. In all instances where daily wages were paid, the rates reported for men and women were equal, for example, Rs. 65 daily for men and women for weeding, pruning and collecting fruit in

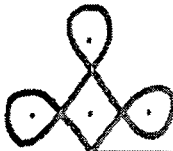


coffee estates of Kerala. When paddy harvesting was paid on a daily-wage basis (as compared to the more common share basis) the daily rate reported for men and women was also the same – 5 *vallam* paddy for each. Women then paid men 2 *vallam* paddy for lifting the bag of rice they had earned! For onion harvesting in Pavuthram, both men and women received Rs.40. For additional work done by men, such as lifting onion baskets, they received an additional Rs. 20<sup>15</sup>.

The fact that plains farmers who face labour shortages are willing to pay equal wage rates to women is an indication of not only a high demand for labour but also the high productivity of women's labour. However, when paddy harvest is paid on a share basis, men and women have to divide it among themselves. In such instances, the relative bargaining power of women and the power of local institutions appeared to intervene, and only in Periya Koviloor did they report that men and women shared the grain equally. In Ariyoor Solakkadu, men reported that they shared the paddy with women on a 5:4 basis. They justified this by saying that they supervised the women's work and therefore took a larger share. On cash contracts, for example, for sugarcane cutting, women reported that the men shared it with them on a 7:5 basis. Wage ratio returns for women's labour in seasonal migration were slightly more equitable in wages both in kind and in cash than the wage ratio between men and women established in Ariyoor Solakkadu. In the year 2000, the local male to female wage ratios were 6:4 and 5:3 for in kind and cash respectively.

### **Sources of information**

Sources of information have changed dramatically over the past 50 years. In the earliest period, the only source of information for women was their husbands, and for men, information came from visitors from other villages or contacts in the markets. The *Thandalkaarar* who visited villages with information was, and still is, cited as a regular source of information of general interest. In



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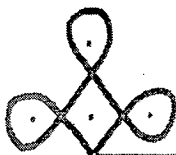
<sup>15</sup> It was interesting that this distinction was drawn only by women. When men reported wages, they simply stated them as Rs. 60 for men and Rs. 40 for women.

the middle period of the early 1970s, women's sources of knowledge were still limited to family and relatives. The limited government health and agricultural extension, as well as the information available from the *Panchayat* were apparently the only sources of information for men. In contrast, current sources of information have grown rapidly for both women and men. Women in Ariyoor Solakkadu reported that, if a Horticulture Department official visits a home, he is willing to impart his information to anyone, male or female, who is available. However, in Aleri Patti and Periya Koviloor, the women did not cite any government officials as a source of information. Women here cited their visits to the markets and seasonal migration as important sources of information. In roadside towns, such as Periya Koviloor that attracts many outsiders, men regarded visitors as a source of information. Surprisingly, only men of the youngest age group cited the radio as a source of information, even though most homes had radios. It is possible that the information broadcast over the radio is perceived as not being directly relevant to their daily lives. Interestingly, women in the middle-aged group cited young girls who went to school as a source of information, as they could read books and newspapers and share their knowledge at home. Surprisingly, SHGs were not cited as an information source even by women.

## **INSTITUTIONS SHAPING THE GENDERED ECONOMY**

### **The traditional village *Panchayat***

The traditional *Panchayat* system or *Panjayam* in Kolli Hills is an ancient and intricate one that not only establishes local governance but also connects local communities through a hierarchy of leadership that is geared to enforcing established rules, social traditions, values and practices, and maintaining an orderly society which functions smoothly. It also facilitates key social events such as annual village festivals, deals with the upkeep of the local temples, and takes up local issues with external agencies such as government offices or the local elected *Panchayat*.



The *Oor Gounder* is generally the leader of the village *Panchayat*. The village elders or *Periya tanakkarar* form the local leadership. All households in the village are technically members of the village council and they can participate in its deliberations. The senior-most male member of each village household represents it in the village council. The leadership of the traditional council is all male. The *Oor Gounder* position, once entrusted to a family, is passed on to the eldest son. If an *Oor Gounder* has no male heirs, his brother's son can inherit the post. In cases where a successor cannot be found, or in a case where the community loses faith in its *Oor Gounder*, it can choose to elect a new person or family to assume the position. In this case, the *Periya Gounder* of the area or the *Pattukkaarakar* (a ceremonial head) together with other *Periya tanakkarar*s such as the *karakkarar* plays a key role in the process. In addition to the *Gounders*, the *karakkarar* and *poosari* are other inherited posts that have important functions in the local communities and the village council.

The most important function of the traditional *Panchayat* or village council is to resolve disputes that arise. Deliberations involve all household heads, but the village elders take a leading role in hearing the disputing parties present their points of view and deciding the verdict on behalf of the village. The *Oor Gounder* levies fines on the basis of the seriousness of the offence. In Ariyoor Solakkadu, the practice now is that the village council takes a deposit, for example, Rs. 500, from both parties in the dispute, and then refunds the amount taken from the innocent party. The village council hears the case and decides on the verdict. The judgement is written down by the members and signed by both parties to the dispute. If a dispute is resolved by the council, no other law enforcement measures can be taken by outsiders. However, if both parties do not agree with the verdict, then the dissenting side may go to the police. Alternatively, a higher council meeting can be called to resolve the matter, involving the *Pattukkaarakar* and *Periya tanakkarar* from neighbouring villages. If this occurs, the fines may be doubled. Also, if a resident does not obey the judgment of the village council, which is rare, not only the accused individual, but also the whole family could be ostracized. This creates a big





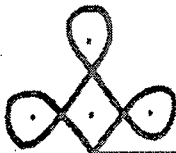
16. Traditional village Panchayat

incentive to cooperate. Others, even members of the local elected *Panchayats*, cannot interfere with this village governance process.

Only in disputes that directly involve them are women allowed to attend the council meetings and speak. However, women may not bear testimony in any dispute being deliberated upon. In cases where one party has been harmed, for example, in thefts, violent fights, adultery or divorce, a fine is levied on the offending party. Traditionally, only men were fined. Even when a woman was found guilty, the father or husband would have to pay the fine. At present, however, women can be fined, but are reportedly required to pay only half the amount men would have to pay under similar circumstances.

#### **Unwritten codes of behaviour**

In addition to resolving disputes, another key function of the traditional *Panchayat* is the formulation of village rules or *Oor kattupaadu* (the unwritten code of conduct). Mr. Malaisamy Gounder of Periya Koviloor gave us a list of items involved in *Oor kattupaadu* for their village. The *Oor kattupaadu* and the role of the *Oor Gounder* included all aspects of social life. There are:



1. Rules that restrict law enforcement officials from seeking out

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any individuals from the village without permission of the *Oor Gounder*.

2. Government officials or Forestry officials seeking to collect any taxes or other levies from village residents need to get the permission of the *Oor Gounder*.

3. Marriage arrangements, and related agreements on exchanges need to be mediated by the *Oor Gounder* and *Periya tanakkaarar* to avoid problems in disagreements or divergence between demands and the ability to meet them. They have to determine penalties if one party backs out of agreements. The *Oor Gounder* generally also gives his blessing for marriages in the village.

4. The *Oor Gounder* makes arrangements for death ceremonies.

5. Property division is overseen by the *Oor Gounder* to ensure equity and fairness.

6. The *Oor Gounder* sets coolie (casual labour) wage rates for men and women.

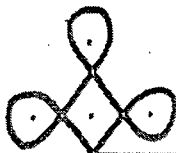
7. Resolving disputes, mediating in quarrels, resolving issues such as theft and injury, identifying guilt in cases of adultery, assessing fines and granting divorce are all part of the duties of the *Oor Gounder*. He is also involved in dispensing justice in instances when girls or women from the village are teased or assaulted by anyone.

8. The *Oor Gounder* conducts ceremonial prayers for new house construction.

9. Earlier (thirty years ago) the *Oor Gounder* used to help organize exchange labour for house construction. This is not done any more.

10. The *Oor Gounder* does a ceremonial ploughing to mark the start of a new agricultural season.

11. The *Oor Gounder* plays a major role organizing the village festival.



12. The *Oor Gounder* takes the lead in dealing with any outsiders who visit the village.

### Choosing a leader

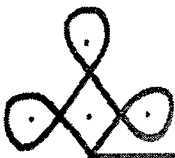
This broad range of responsibilities in all aspects of village life means that the *Oor Gounder*, both in his own person and that of his family, has to be held in respect for his conduct and behaviour. There are instances, as in Periya Koviloor one generation ago, when the community loses this respect for the existing *Oor Gounder*. The *Pattu karakkaararrs* (traditional leaders) of over 10 villages chose an individual to lead them. In order to make the selection, they visited the village and inquired about the possible choices that could be made. According to the focus group, the qualities they sought were: a good reputation, fairness, patience, willingness to work for the betterment of the village and not seeking to profit personally at the expense of the village.



17. Oor Gounder,  
Periya Koviloor

When a new *Oor Gounder* is chosen, or when the post is inherited, upon the death of a *Gounder*, by his son, the new leader has to organize a lavish feast with roasted pig and *ragi kali* (porridge made of *ragi*) - now usually replaced by rice - for all residents. The job also requires a large commitment of time and resources, and is without any remuneration<sup>16</sup>, therefore the *Gounder* has to have resources of his own, and be willing to devote them if needed for the benefit of the village. In Ariyoor Solakkadu, there are two *Oor Gounders*, who share the responsibilities. Men in this village have also established a 40-member village council involving a number of *Periya tanakkaarar*, so the functions of the traditional *Panchayat* may still be carried out, but without the *Gounder's* leadership. In Aleri Patti, the *Oor Gounder* had inherited the post from his father,

<sup>16</sup> The *Oor Gounder* receives token amounts during ceremonies, as well as a share of fines levied on offences committed by villagers.



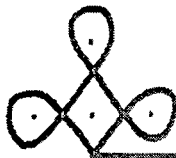
but did not appear to have much authority or respect in the village, possibly because he was an older man without any sons to inherit his position.

Participation in the traditional *Panchayat* by village households is not obligatory, but is seen as a sign of solidarity and willingness to work together. In Periya Koviloor, with its vicinity to the famous Arappaleeswarar temple, many residents are new to the area and operate businesses there, and about half of its 70 households do not participate in the traditional *Panchayat* process. The political affiliation of its *Oor Gounder* may also be a factor in this non-participation.

### **Women in the Panchayat**

Women are not involved in the selection process for the *Oor Gounder*, do not participate in the village council, and are generally not encouraged to attend any meetings even as observers. There has been no change in this over the past 50 years. The older men and women (>65 years) explained this as being due to the women's lack of abilities and knowledge. Women also said it was a time-consuming activity, and that they could not spend so much time away from their chores. Another factor that makes it difficult for women to attend these meetings is that the village council often meets late at night after all the work is done. However, in some cases, if a dispute being discussed is of interest to them, women do go as observers to the *Panchayat* meetings.

In Aleri Patti, we were told by men in the 45-55 age group that the number of women attending as observers is larger now than it was earlier. The men said, 'Now they go to the extent of arguing with us and disturbing the *Panchayat* meeting. But men don't listen to them and ask them to leave. Women feel they have to support one party or another, but are not balanced in their reasoning'. When asked why these changes are taking place, they replied sarcastically, 'Progress is removing differences between men and women'. Another man said, 'Earlier, women sat on the floor while the men had seats at a higher level. Now they come and want to sit with us as equals; they don't respect us any more'.





In Periya Koviloor, women said, 'Earlier, women didn't question the judgement of the village council, but now if they don't like the verdict they scold the council members'.

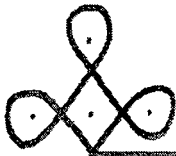
Fifty years ago, women neither participated in the traditional *Panchayat* process, nor had fines levied on them. In cases of adultery, the man paid a fine, and often this was by holding a pig-and-*ragi* feast for the village. Now, the feast is no longer held, and a cash fine is levied. Women can now be fined, although at a lower rate compared to the rates for the men. However, they still cannot go to the council meetings, not even to pay the fine, which has to be taken by a man. All these decisions, including whether to punish women, and what fines they should pay, are taken by men alone. The situation still remains the same.

### **Village festivals**

A number of village festivals are organized through the traditional village *Panchayat* institution, with a major role played by the *Oor Gounder*. These celebrations usually involve the local village deities and all festivals are not held annually. Discussions on when to organize the festivals are taken in the village council, with the *Oor Gounder* presiding, and men in attendance. A tax or levy is assessed on each household if the decision is made to hold a given festival, and there is an implicit commitment that all households will also contribute in kind and labour towards the activities involved in the festival. These decisions are taken several months in advance of the agreed date, but frequently modified in later *Panchayat* meetings, depending on the circumstances faced by the community.

In the three sites of this study, the following festivals were reported:

Aleri Patti: Kaliyayi Festival, Mariyayi Festival, and Perumal Festival. A fourth one – the Pidariamman Festival was reported for earlier periods, but appears to be either discontinued or infrequently held now. Of the three main ones mentioned, all are not held each year, but on a rotating basis. Some of the festivals



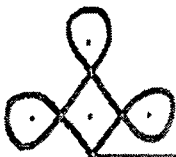
are more elaborate than others, for example, the Mariyayi Festival involves major feast preparation with roast pig, millet and country liquor offerings to the deity.

Periya Koviloor: The Arappaleeswarar Festival held on Adi 18, (the 18<sup>th</sup> day of the Tamil month of Adi) is the most important feature. In recent years, due to the administrative take over of this temple by the state government, the local Panchayat's role has become contentious, and the right to hold the traditional *palaaki* (palanquin) procession of the deity is a source of ongoing struggle. This was an annual event historically, but was not held in 2000. A second festival mentioned was the Mariyayi Festival, which was reportedly held at 2-3 year intervals.

Ariyoor Solakkadu: Here the Nachiyayi Festival was the most important one, and was reported to be celebrated in alternate years. This was reported to be a 3-day festival in which a traditional custom was to extend invitations to people of Vallapura Nadu. Some of the focus groups also mentioned other festivals including a Mariyayi Festival and also a Periyasami Festival.

Consistent with other traditional village Panchayat customs, men play a leading role in the festival events that have to do with the preparation of the deity and temple grounds, as well as the procession that is usually a key feature of the festival. The participation of women is generally limited to cleaning the homes and cooking for relatives. Only men are permitted to do the work connected with the food and offering preparations for the deity, (which are later distributed) including pounding of grain. In some cases, there are even more stringent restrictions on women. For example, in the 8 days before the Nachiyayi Festival, any menstruating women are not allowed to remain in the village, and are required to go and stay with relatives in other nearby villages.

The festivals are typically a community event, with attendance limited to the participating local villages and including any other invited guests. Guests who attend are generally expected to come with provisions and other offerings for the festivities. The

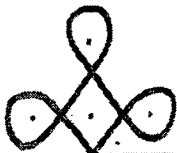


Arappaleeswarar Festival is an exception to this. This temple is very widely known and the festival draws a large gathering of visitors from the several *nadus*.

### **Modern elected *Panchayat***

There are several key differences between the traditional and the modern *Panchayat* systems. The traditional *Panchayat* is truly a village level governance system that deals directly with issues relevant to day-to-day activities of residents, and is an integral part of the economic and social system. In contrast to the traditional system, the elected *Panchayats* are relatively removed from the daily lives of the community. Each *Panchayat* is elected by and represents what is known as a 'revenue village' and which, in Kolli Hills can consist of twenty or more villages, each with its own *Oor Gounder*. In Alathur Nadu, for example, there are six wards each consisting of 4-5 villages which elect one ward member and also the *Panchayat* president. Together, the elected ward members and president constitute the elected *Panchayat* council of the 'revenue village'. The president meets monthly with the ward members, but these are closed meetings and villagers cannot attend them or get information about the agenda at the meetings. All 14 elected *Panchayat* presidents together form the *Panchayat* Union, and periodically hold meetings regarding development needs for the entire area. This council meeting is generally a forum for contact with the district officials. The *Panchayat* council members get details of programmes available to Kolli Hills, and information about the allocation of development resources from various Tamil Nadu or Indian government initiatives. The elected *Panchayat* officials are, therefore, the final point of contact between government and the people in all these matters.

The local elected *Panchayats* in their present form are relatively new in Kolli Hills. Also, as of the mid-1990s, laws enacting one-third reservation for women in all local elected offices have been in effect in Tamil Nadu. As a result, one-third of all ward members and *Panchayat* presidents in Kolli Hills are now women. The involvement of people with this process is either during the election



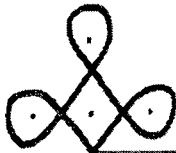
process, or when they are intended to be beneficiaries of improvements or investments being made. Any other problems or issues are generally dealt with by the *Oor Gounder* and the traditional village council, sometimes through petitions to the elected *Panchayat* president. Otherwise, there is little interface between the two systems.

The fact that women can now be elected *Panchayat* presidents, whereas they have no role in their traditional village *Panchayat*, does appear to have given some additional confidence to women. However, it is not clear if it has, *per se*, increased the confidence that men have in women's abilities. The figurehead nature of the present women *Panchayat* presidents in Kolli Hills, and the fact that their husbands not only run the 'revenue village' *Panchayat* meetings, but also attend the Kolli Hills *Panchayat* Union meetings in Semmedu is widely observed and commented upon.

There is also widespread scepticism about the resource-allocation process of the elected *Panchayats*. Although people see some of the benefits, they also point out cases of the misuse of resources. One example cited was an unusable water tank constructed in Periya Koviloor, while women still have to collect drinking water from the river. In Aleri Patti, a new *Panchayat* road built two years ago came only up to the neighbouring village, that is, it stopped one km from the village because, according to the villagers, they had voted for the present *Panchayat* president's competitor in the last elections. As a result, they said that none of their needs, for example, improvement in water quality, had been addressed.

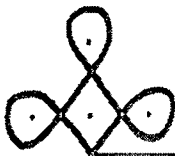
### **State institutions and their local interface**

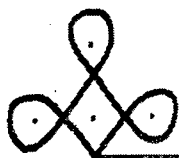
The entire area of Kolli Hills constitutes a Development Block under the administration of the District of Namakkal. The Block Development Offices are located in Semeddu. The largest and most visible services are in forestry, education (including school and preschool meals), and roads development. Health and Agriculture Department services are present, but at a very rudimentary level. In addition, there are two active LAMP societies, one for the southern and the other for the northern *nadus*, which provide



subsidized credit for agricultural inputs, tree planting and other production purposes including marketing of some forest products. The most widely used services are those dealing with roads, ration shops, education, forestry and LAMP society credit. Many of these, for example, the roads development, have had an enormous influence on the lives and livelihoods in Kolli Hills.

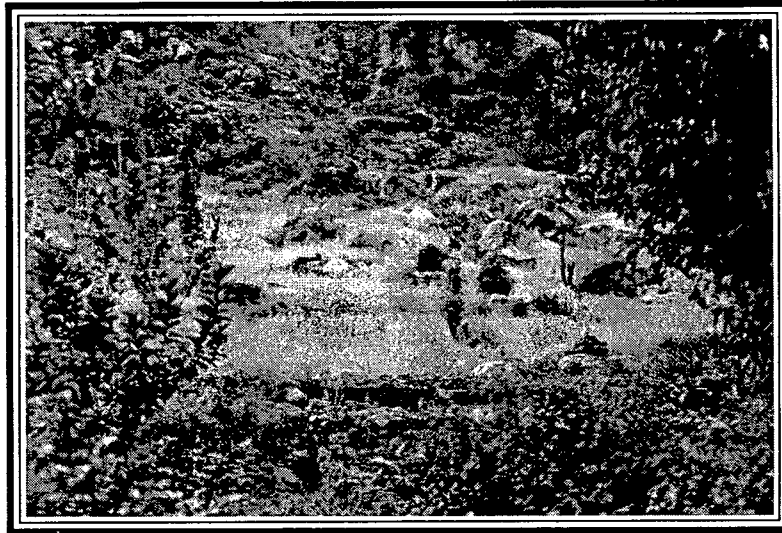
Recently, many training programmes, for example, in sericulture, are also beginning to make an effort to include women. In the education system, there is no great disparity between the enrolment and drop out rates for boys and girls. According to statistics provided by the Block Development Office in Kolli Hills, of all the children in primary and middle school, 53% are boys and 47% are girls. This predominantly reflects the preschool situation. In middle school, for every 100 girls who enrol in grade 6, there are 150 boys enrolled. Out of these about 13% of girls reach grade 12 as compared with about 15% of boys. However, middle and high school opportunities are extremely limited for both boys and girls. Another program that is impacting women's lives is the SHG effort of the Women's Development Division of Tamil Nadu. Although the program has been in operation for only about 3 years, it has expanded rapidly. Both Periya Koviloor and Ariyoor Solakkadu have two groups active in each location.



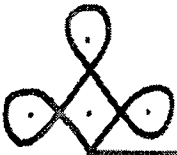


**SECTION**

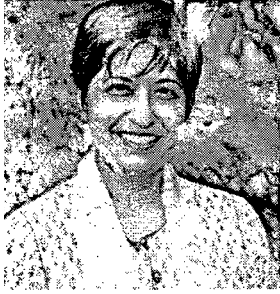
**IV**



**PERSPECTIVES**







## CONCLUSIONS

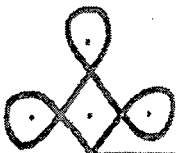
*Men, who are responsible for many of the views about women, have indulged in fantastic stories about their nature, and men's superiority to them. And we make the society in which we live. We are the masters of the institutions which have taken a wrong turn and we must discover the remedies for this sick society.*

*Dr. S. Radhakrishnan 1947*

This study has explored the institutional dimensions of gender roles in Kolli Hills society, the changes and the forces shaping these changes over the past 50 years. The study draws on the recent theoretical work in new institutional economics by Douglass North (1990,1991,2000), Pranab Bardhan (2000) and others.

This recent work on institutions in economic development essentially postulates that local institutions and the nature of changes in them are key components of both the course and the outcomes of development. They are so central because they shape behaviours and choices made by individuals. It is, therefore, necessary to take them into account when designing programmes that are effective and consistent with desirable development and economic outcomes.

Gender economic roles are an example of outcomes that are intricately connected with local institutions, and also central to key development goals such as economic growth, equity and improved well-being. A better understanding of these local institutions, how they are changing, and the factors influencing the nature and direction of change, is therefore of great relevance to the success of development programmes. Such knowledge could give us a greater awareness of the reasons underlying changes in gender relations and sex ratios, the rise in female infanticide and

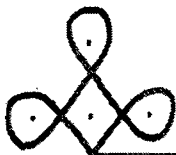


other trends that are not only inconsistent with social justice and human rights concepts, but that also actually interfere with efficient economic growth. This study is expected to contribute to the process of improving our understanding of these factors by documenting how institutions that shape outcomes such as gender economic roles have evolved over time in Kolli Hills, and the various forces that have shaped this process of change.

The primary focus of the study was on institutions at the household, community, and market-levels, since the continuity and interconnections among them for the population of Kolli Hills are of a longer term nature, and therefore, more likely to permit more robust conclusions. State-level institutions are referred to only indirectly, since these are meso-level institutions that have a relatively weak presence in the area, and have an indirect influence, for example, via road construction on market institutions, that have a much greater impact on daily lives and gender roles.

### **Insights**

The study shows that family and community institutions in Kolli Hills are central in shaping gender roles and economic status. The interconnections between these are very strong and clearly discernible. In particular, the importance of community institutions in maintaining gendered differences emerges very clearly. This is not to say that these alone are monolithic. State and state-induced institutional changes that are externally driven, are seen to have an influence on local community and family institutions. It is interesting to observe the different impacts that various external changes have produced in local institutions. Laws, such as that intended to lead to gender equality in inheritance are an example of formal rules that can be changed overnight as a result of political or judicial decisions. They can be seen as an example of 'distant' institutional change, that do not necessarily change informal constraints embodied in customs and traditions which are 'much more impervious to deliberate policies' (North 1990:6). In the case of laws intended to increase women's inheritance rights, they have had little impact, and in fact may have fueled the increasing

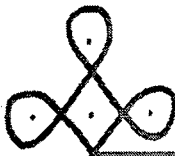


demand for dowries. Traditional community institutions relating to inheritance have changed little in the past 50 years, and can be seen to be connected to other local institutions such as those relating to marriage and parent/child support practices.

Introducing laws relating to particles of this interconnected mesh of institutions produces results that could perhaps be seen as 'internally' consistent with existing local institutions. How the results play out, is then very logical. In contrast to new laws, which are the most distant of state institutions, other changes have taken place that are less distant, such as those relating to local government institutions. Elected *Panchayats* connect local communities with Block Development Offices and District governments and help to raise/bring resources back for development activities. These are considered important by local communities, but are still somewhat removed. The recent laws requiring one-third of elected *Panchayat* officials to be women, has produced minimal change in gender roles and perceptions to date. The strong tradition of male dominance in community institutions, such as the local *Panchayats*, is a factor in this outcome.

A third set of state-supported institutions that is contributing perhaps, to the most positive change on gender roles, is the construction of roads and local market development. These developments have enhanced the ability of women to become more effective economic agents, gaining knowledge and actively participating in marketing and sale of produce and increasingly in access to proceeds from sale and its allocation.

From a policy and programme perspective the implication is clearly for increasing focus on local efforts that include and involve large numbers of people – men and women, on an ongoing basis. It is seen that top-down efforts, even when intended to produce gender equality, have the least impact, and could even be retrogressive, and help to further reinforce and strengthen existing inequalities by introducing other prevalent models of often grossly unequal gendered institutions on local communities. From this perspective, even locally driven community-oriented programmes such as those of MSSRF need to pay attention to ensure that balanced and equal



gendered participation opportunities are managed when new efforts are introduced.

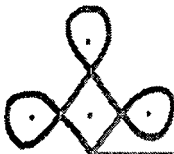
### Positive trends

The strength and importance of the traditional village *Panchayats* under the leadership of the *Oor Gounder* and *Periya tanakkaarar* cannot be overestimated. This institution helps to maintain law and order, and is also central to formalizing marriages, negotiating marriage exchanges, overseeing property divisions and fairness in



18. Author with hosts in Aleri Patti

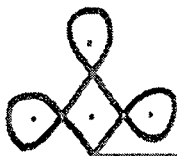
inheritance according to the traditions of the Hills, resolving all kinds of disputes, etc. Women do not have now, nor have they ever had, a voice in this system, but, while earlier, there were no punishments or fines levied on them, since a man (husband, father, son) would be held liable, this is no longer the case. Women however, still cannot bear witness in the resolution of a dispute. The *Periya tanakkaarar* establish the *Oor Kattupaadu*. The cash wage rates for women have been consistently set by this institution at about half the rate for men. The all-male institution of the *Periya tanakkaarar* has been the most enduring and has witnessed the



least change during the 50-year period covered by this study. Empowerment of women may be perhaps seen as most threatening to this institution, and could be a reason that nearly all the SHGs want to take on social activities that would enable their acceptance by the village elders. Repairing, cleaning and maintaining the *Panchayat* meeting rooms, other supportive community tasks, and preservation of common property areas are also taken up by women's SHGs in addition to their own income-earning activities.

A form of group work that is especially valued by women in the Hills is exchange labour. This is still used in the area for backbreaking agricultural activities such as transplanting and weeding. Even though working on each other's fields does not reduce the total amount of work, it does appear to reduce the drudgery element. Each field gets done faster, and gives them a breather, enabling shorter bursts of heavy activity and higher productivity. In the villages where women's exchange labour is organized by women, the *Kothal* appears to have made the transition to group-contracts for cash. Instead of exchange labour, groups of women take cash contracts for a wider range of activities than would be the case in exchange labour, and also manage to circumvent the significantly lower casual labour wage rate for women established by the men in their traditional village *Panchayat*. These findings have implications for efforts that are aimed at shifting cropping from low labour crops such as tapioca to minor millet production that requires more labour, especially by women. They are also relevant in measures for raising women's income and/or drudgery reduction. Building on such traditional and popular labour sharing arrangements between women may provide some interesting options.

Development of roads and markets in Kolli Hills has produced a wide range of consequences for gender roles. These include cropping changes that have led to rising incomes as well as surplus labour, making markets more accessible, expanding the role of women in produce marketing, increasing seasonal labour migration to high demand areas in plains of Tamil Nadu and plantations, opening up the possibility for equal wage rates for men and women.

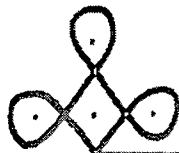


### Negative trends

At the same time, these trends and exposure to plains culture have had the effect of making men aware of dowry demands, and women seeking a share of parental property. The concept of women's property inheritance rights has expanded over the past 50 years, and there appears to be an increasing acceptance of a girl child's inheritance of property. However, this is limited to instances where there are no male offspring. The limited control of income and assets by women and their lower wage rates both continue to reinforce the perception of a low value for women's contributions. This is clearly a contributing factor to their high workloads, which in combination with related social practices, could lead to their poor health status, and to adverse conditions for childcare and nutrition.

While incomes appear to be rising, as evidenced by the statements of people and the growth of the cash crop economy with tapioca production, local institutions that render women unequal have been relatively slow to change. Economic progress appears to be an inducement to adopt cultural practices of the more 'advanced' plains communities, such as dowries, and ostentatious wedding expenditures. The adverse effects of this for gender and social equity, and for child health and nutrition have been widely documented, though not directly investigated in this study. There are also likely to be adverse implications for population pressure, which, with the declining land sizes is likely to create a huge unmet need for limiting family sizes. This is an important health issue for women, given the virtual absence of a health care system in the Hills. The negative effects of low wage rates for women are clear, but, in the face of population pressure, it is difficult to address these problems.

Women's unequal economic status could however, be re-examined, and not taken as a *fait accompli*. There are lessons from the apparent success of women's contract labour groups in negotiating higher effective wage rates in Aleri Patti. In new efforts, such as the re-introduction of minor millet production, which demands higher labour input, including that of women, there will be opportunities for group efforts to improve wages and productivity



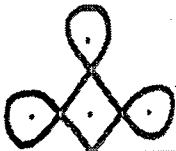
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of underpaid women's labour. The benefits of raising wage rates and labour productivity of women's work are likely to yield dividends towards empowerment, and also for help with reducing workloads and increasing child welfare. Recent empirical and theoretical work reinforces this (Murthy 2001; Klasen 1999). In addition, promoting group efforts also help to build local institutions and social capital.

### **Looking into the future**

The application of an institutional perspective to understanding gender roles can facilitate efforts to design better and more effective policies and programmes. It is interesting to note that there has been a parallel growth of interest and scholarship on the role of local institutions in development and on the importance of social capital in facilitating equitable, efficient and sustainable development. The relevance of institutions for social capital formation efforts can also be discerned. Understanding, working with, and building on existing local institutions is most likely to be effective, as seen for example in pilot community theatre project of MSSRF (Swaminathan, Mangai and Samuel 1998). Also needed is a greater emphasis on local, participatory efforts that help in building social capital of different segments of the population, particularly groups that are being marginalized due to their lack of such forms of capital. Such community level efforts should be seen as an important complement to those focusing on design and implementation of legal and policy frameworks.

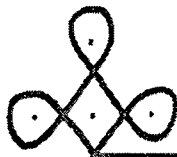
The people of Kolli Hills have strong traditions of group solidarity and this is reflected in the resilience and continuity of traditional village *Panchayats* and their importance in establishing and maintaining local rules. It is also reflected in the various examples of group work, from its original form of exchange labour to the more prevalent form of group contracts for agricultural labour, and in the various group marketing efforts mobilized by local communities in their struggle to set up their own commodity markets in the Hills.





19. SHG members packing produce

Women's SHGs have recently been started in Kolli Hills and have expanded rapidly. Given the traditions of sex-specific exchange labour and other village solidarity and support groups, these new institutions could logically be expected to take hold with the energy and initiative supplied by the women. Even with the relatively little tangible support provided to them, these groups appear to be functioning well. Their growth may well provide opportunities for initiatives to bring about change towards greater gender and social equity. It should be recognized that the growth, success, and influence of these groups on changing gender economic roles will depend on the space provided by, and their acceptance by the men-dominated community institutions. Working with the men, and gaining their interest in supporting these groups, will therefore be instrumental in their long-term success.





## APPENDIX A

### Local institutions and key practices identified for study

Institutions	Practices
1. Agricultural labour/production	
Exchange labour	Types of crops and activities; extent of m/f involvement in organizing and carrying out
Wage labour, wage rates	Types of work (crops and activities) and locations by m/f; payment practices
Seasonal migration	Crops, activities, duration and seasons; how organized, wage rates
Sources of knowledge and information	Sources available; open to and accessed by m/f
2. Product markets	
Local markets Plains markets	Crops marketed locally, and in plains; who prepares, who goes, how
Contract marketing	Which crops; selection process of contractor; who negotiates, prepares produce, receives payment
Trader to farm-level purchase	Which crops; who deals with trader, who harvests and prepares produce, receives payment
Farmer 'group' marketing	Any attempts at this? Which crops and markets for which applicable, with what experience

3. Community institutions	
Village <i>Panchayat</i>	Selection of <i>Oor Gounder</i> , participation in <i>Panchayat</i> process; types of issues and problems addressed
Elected <i>Panchayat</i>	Participation in selection, ongoing activities/ process for local issues/problems; links with traditional village <i>Panchayat</i> leadership and functioning
Village festivals	How organized, who participates in organizing, preparing for it, and in events
4. Marriage, bride price and inheritance	
Marriage payments by groom's side	Who pays, who receives, who eventually owns/keeps
Marriage payments by bride's side	Who pays, who receives, who eventually owns/keeps
Inheritance by men	What received, from whom
Inheritance by women	What received, from whom

## APPENDIX B

### **Timeline for Aleri Patti, Alathur Nadu**

- Mid 1940s : White man on horse came with medicines.
- 1950-55 : Coupe felling in Reserve Forest areas
- 1950 : First gramophone in village, used for weddings
- 1960-65 : *Panchayat* radio was started
- 1960-65 : Primary School started (about 1 Km from Aleri Patti)
- 1970 : Famine
- 1970 : Public Distribution System ration shop opened in nearby village (about 3 Km)
- 1986 : First mud road to village
- 1987 : Solar lamps were installed
- 1991 : Colony houses built by Govt.
- 1998 : Tar road to village

#### **1st Reference Period: Early 1950s**

After white man on horse with medicines

Around the time of coupe felling in reserve forest and after first gramophone in village wedding

#### **2nd Reference Period: Early 1970s**

After the big famine

Before the Public Distribution System ration shop opened in nearby village

#### **3rd Reference Period: Early 1990s**

After introduction of solar lamps

Around the time 'Colony' houses constructed by Govt.(this term is used to denote the area where people belonging to he scheduled castes reside)

## **Timeline for Periya Koviloor, Vallapura Nadu**

- 1940-50.1 : White lady came on horse with medicines. She lived in Semmedu Bungalow
- 1949 : Pangali Famine. Ate *koonthal panai* (*Caryota urens*), bamboo rice and *kallu seppais* (tuber *Colocasia*)
- 1951-52 : Big outbreak of Komairi disease (foot and mouth disease of cattle). Went for medicines to Sendamangalam
- 1960 : Tar road came up from Karavalli to Solakkadu
- 1965 : Asakkadu Primary School about 1 Km from Periya Koviloor
- 1967-68 : Tar road came from Solakkadu, Semmedu to Periya Koviloor
- 1970 : Public Distribution System ration shop opened in village
- 1970 : *Panchayat* radio was installed
- 1972 : Vinayaham bus (operated by private company) came up to Chinna Koviloor
- 1977-78 : Reconstruction of Arappaleeswarar temple by Arunachalam Mudaliar from Tiruchi
- 1980 : Street lights
- 1986-87 : First 5-6 houses got electricity (village not yet fully electrified)
- 1994-95 : Thenpulam school (upto 8th Grade) started
- 1997 : Thenpulam market started
- 1997 : Water tank for village

### **1st Reference Period: Early 1950s**

After Pangali Famine

Around the time of the big Komari disease outbreak

### **2nd Reference Period: Early 1970s**

After tar road came to village and PDS ration shop opened, and Panchayat radio installed

Before temple reconstruction

### **3rd Reference Period: Early 1990s**

After first 5-6 houses got electricity

Before Thenpulam school, market and water tank started.

## **Timeline for Ariyoor Solakkadu, Ariyoor Nadu**

- 1920 : Twenty-five houses constructed with *samai* straw constituted this village
- 1925-30 : District forest officials came with people sitting in *dolis* (carrying chairs)
- 1935-40 : A white man came and tried to establish residence nearby. People protested about this; they were concerned about forest restrictions. A school was run nearby (in Puduvalavu) up to 5th standard by another white man
- 1940-45 : Horse road from Karavalli to Solakkadu built during this period. Also there was a famine at this time; people ate bamboo rice, *koonthal panai* (*Caryota urens*)
- 1955-60 : Tar road from Karavalli to Solakkadu was built. PWD quarters in Solakkadu also built during this period
- 1967-69 : Union Office, BFO Offices, Highway Quarters were built in Semmedu
- 1968-69 : Primary School (up to 5th standard) started in village
- 1970-71 : Pineapple production was started (this was not a clear cut event)
- 1975-76 : 'Rendan Number' paddy was introduced (not a clear cut event)
- 1977-78 : Edible tapioca production started (not a clear cut event)
- 1980 : Solakkadu market started
- 1981-82 : *Jalli* (stone and mud) road from Solakkadu to village
- 1983-84 : Single bulb light to home scheme came
- 1984-85 : Tar road from Solakkadu to village
- 1985 : Public Distribution Scheme ration shop in village
- 1986-88 : Water tank and first pipeline constructed

- 
- 1986-87 : Red Rose (commercial tapioca variety) production  
started (not a clear cut event)
- 1988 : 35 'Colony' houses constructed by Government
- 1991-92 : Pananjadu mine opened 2 Km away
- 1999 : Kambiparai mine opened, about 5 Km away

**1st Reference Period: Early 1950s**

After famine and horse road from Karavalli constructed

Before tar road to Solakkadu from Karavalli constructed

**2nd Reference Period: Early 1970s**

After Semmedu offices, and local primary school to village

Before edible tapioca and '*Rendan* Number' paddy

**3rd Reference Period: Early 1990s**

After 'Colony' houses constructed and Red Rose tapioca was introduced

Around the time the Pananjadu mine opened

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Checklist For Focus Group Interviews**

For each of the institutions identified below, the following types of responses will be elicited:

- a) key practices, and extent of women's and men's involvement in each;
- b) what are the underlying values that are reflected in the practices; responses to "why?" a practice followed is an example of how this could be done.
- c) what are the opportunities offered by these practices for women/men?
- d) what are the types of change occurring since then?
- e) what were the sources of change behind what has been occurring?

## 1. Family Formation

Institutions	Practices	Description	Under-lying values	Benefits for m/f	Change occurring	Source of change
Marriage Payments	<p>groom's side:            who made,            who received,            how used,            spent,            who            eventually            owned after            marriage,</p> <p>bride's side:            who made,            who received,            how used,            spent,            who            eventually            owned after            marriage</p>					
Inheritance	<p>men inherited            -from parents            -from spousal            property</p> <p>women            inherited            -from parents            -from spousal            property</p>					



## 2. Community Institutions

Institutions	Practices	Description	Under-lying values	Benefits for m/f	Change occurring	Sources of change
Traditional Panchayat	Selection of <i>Oor Gaunder</i> Types of issues and problems addressed, Local <i>panchayat</i> activities, participation of people, m/f					
Modern Elected Panchayat	Participation of m/f in election process, Participation of m/f in <i>panchayat</i> activities, and dealing with issues/problems Links with traditional <i>panchayat</i> leadership and functioning					

### 3. Agricultural Labor and Production

Institutions	Practices	Description	Under-lying values	Benefits for m/f	Change occurred	Sources of change
Exchange labour	which crops and activities; extent of m/f/c involvement in organizing and carrying out					
Wage labour and wage rates	types of work (crops and activities) and locations by m/f/c; payment practices, wage rates, cash/ kind					
Seasonal migration	crops, activities, duration and seasons; how organized, wage rates, cash/kind					
Sources of knowledge, information and training	sources available; open to and accessed by m/f					

#### 4. Product Markets

Institutions	Practices	Description	Underlying values	Benefits for m/f	Change occurring	Sources of change
Local markets	Any crops/ NTFPs bartered, extent of practice which crops/ NTFPs sold in weekly markets, Who prepared, who went, how					
Foothills markets (or plains)	Which crops/ NTFPs sold, Who prepared, who went, how					
Contract marketing	Crops/NTFPs for which used, Selection process for contractor, who negotiated, Who harvested, who received payment					
Trader to farm level purchasing	Crops/NTFPs for which used,					

	Who dealt with traders, Who harvested, prepared produce, received payment					
Farmer 'group' marketing	Any attempts? Which crops/ market for which tried? If not, why?					

## APPENDIX D

### Questionnaire For Individual Interviews

Location: Nadu \_\_\_\_\_ Hamlet \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

#### 1. INFORMATION ABOUT INFORMANT

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_

Origin a) \_\_\_\_\_ Born here  
b) \_\_\_\_\_ Moved at marriage; from \_\_\_\_\_  
c) \_\_\_\_\_ other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Education (Years completed) \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status: \_\_\_\_\_ Married; \_\_\_\_\_ Widow/er; \_\_\_\_\_ Divorced;  
\_\_\_\_\_ Remarried; \_\_\_\_\_ other

Age at Marriage \_\_\_\_\_ yrs.

Household Characteristics (Cooking Unit):

Number of generations residing \_\_\_\_\_

If two or more generations, describe nature of relationships of residents:

A \_\_\_\_\_

Household Size: \_\_\_\_\_ Older adults (over 50) \_\_\_\_\_  
Younger adults (under 50) \_\_\_\_\_  
Older children (over 10) \_\_\_\_\_  
Younger children (under 10) \_\_\_\_\_

Any household members living elsewhere (sending/receiving financial support) Yes/No

If Yes, specify member and type of support

---

Crops Cultivated in past year:

Lowland plots Vayal	Field Crops		Tree crops/ horticulture	
	Mudal Bogam	Renda Bogam	Mudal Bogam	Renda Bogam
Upland plots Metangal				
Karada				

Who owns land cultivated by household?

\_\_\_ Household members; \_\_\_ others; \_\_\_ both

Household members: # of Plots \_\_\_\_\_, area of each \_\_\_\_\_ (note upland and lowland)

Names and Relationship to Respondent:

\_\_\_\_\_

Others: # of Plots \_\_\_\_\_; area of each \_\_\_\_\_ (note upland and lowland)

Names and Relationship to Respondent:

\_\_\_\_\_

Other: # of Plots \_\_\_\_\_; area of each \_\_\_\_\_ (note upland and lowland)

Names and Relationship to Respondent:

\_\_\_\_\_

For each of the sections below, the following responses will be elicited

<p><i>Underlying Values</i> _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p><i>Benefits for Men/Women</i> _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p><i>Changes since then</i> _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p><i>Sources of Change</i> _____</p> <p>_____</p>
---

## 2. FAMILY FORMATION

- a) In your own marriage, do you remember what payments were made and received by your family? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If Yes, go to c); If No, go to b)

- b) Establish another marriage for which details can be obtained

\_\_\_\_\_

- c) Year in which marriage took place \_\_\_\_\_

Comments about type of marriage: eg. On Mama/Macham angle

\_\_\_\_\_

Payments by Grooms's side

- d) What payments were made by the Groom's family to Bride's Family?

\_\_\_\_\_

e) Were any demands made by the Bride's side that influenced Groom's payments? Yes/No

If Yes, describe \_\_\_\_\_

f) Who made payments from Grooms's side \_\_\_\_\_

g) Who received payments made from Grooms side \_\_\_\_\_

h) How were these payments used, distributed to different individuals? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

i) Any gifts, jewellery given to bride from Groom's side, or from their payments? Yes/No

If Yes, who had ownership of this after the marriage? \_\_\_\_\_

#### Payments By Bride's Side

j) What payments were made by the Bride's family to Groom's Family? \_\_\_\_\_

k) Were any demands made by the Groom's side that influenced these payments? Yes/No

If Yes, describe \_\_\_\_\_

l) Who made payments from Bride's side \_\_\_\_\_

m) Who received payments made from Bride's side \_\_\_\_\_

n) How were these payments used, distributed to different individuals? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



- o) Any gifts, jewellery given to bride from her parent's side (not including from Groom's side payments)? Yes/No

If Yes, who had ownership of this after the marriage\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*(BEFORE MOVING ON, USE 'TIME LINE' TO ESTABLISH THE DECADE FOR RECALL OR 'REFERENCE PERIOD' TO BE USED FOR THE REST OF THE QUESTIONS:*

*Decade \_\_\_\_\_; 'Time Line' Events for Ongoing Reference*

\_\_\_\_\_

### 3. TRADITIONAL VILLAGE PANCHAYAT

- a) List some of the main activities of the Oor Gaunder and Traditional Village Panchayat in \_\_\_\_\_ time period.
- b) What was the type of involvement of men and women in each of these activities

Activities	Involvement of Men	Involvement of Women

#### 4. ELECTED PANCHAYAT

- a) What were the main types of involvement of people (m/f) in relation to election process, and activities of Elected Panchayats during the Reference Period?

Election Process	Types of involvement of Men	Types of involvement of Women
Local Issues		

#### 5. VILLAGE FESTIVALS

- a) Which was the main village festival/s in the Reference Period? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b) What was the process of organizing it each time? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c) What was the extent of men/women's involvement in the *organizing* process?  
Men \_\_\_\_\_  
Women \_\_\_\_\_
- d) What was the extent of men/women's involvement in *preparing* for the event?  
Men \_\_\_\_\_  
Women \_\_\_\_\_
- e) What was the extent of men/women's involvement in the *festival itself*?  
Men \_\_\_\_\_  
Women \_\_\_\_\_

6. LOCAL MARKETS

a) During the Reference Period, which crops and products did you (your household) produce that were *bartered* within the village or nearby?

Crops/Products Bartered	Generally by Men/Women/Both?
Crops	
NTFPs	

b) During the same Reference Period, which crops and products did you produce that were sold in local weekly markets? \_\_\_\_\_

c) Who was generally involved in getting produce to the market?

Crops/ Products Sold	Who harvested? Men/Women/Both	Any processing? Men/Women/Both	Who took to Market? Men/Women/Both
Crops			
NTFPs			

d) How was the produce generally taken to the market?  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. FOOTHILLS/PLAINS MARKETS

- a) During the same Reference Period, which crops and products did you produce that were sold in Foothills/Plains markets? (List Crops and Markets used)

Crops/NTFPs \_\_\_\_\_

Markets \_\_\_\_\_

- b) Who was generally involved in getting produce to the market?

Crops/ Products Sold	Who harvested? Men/Women/Both	Any processing done? Men/Women/Both	Who took to market? Men/Women/Both
Crops			
NTFPs			

- c) How was the produce generally taken to the market?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. EXCHANGE LABOUR

a) During the Reference Period, how prevalent was the use of exchange labour?

Highly Prevalent \_\_\_\_\_ Quite prevalent \_\_\_\_\_ Marginal \_\_\_\_\_

b) Was it practised between:

Own hamlet members only \_\_\_\_\_; Own and nearby hamlets members \_\_\_\_\_

Own relatives \_\_\_\_\_; Between relatives and friends \_\_\_\_\_;

For anyone interested \_\_\_\_\_

c) For which crops and activities was exchange labour practiced, and how were these activities divided between Men, Women and Children?

Crops	Activities by Women	Activities by Men	Activities by Children

d) What was the process of organizing exchange labour for a given crop?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

e) What was the extent of men's and women's involvement in organizing exchange labour for any given crop?

\_\_\_\_\_

9. WAGE LABOUR, WAGE RATES

a) During the Reference Period, how prevalent was the use of different forms of wage labour?

Highly Prevalent   1   Quite prevalent   2    
 Marginal   3   Non Existant   4  

Type of Wage Labour	Prevalence for Men		Prevalence for Women	
	How Preva-lent	Types of Activities	How Preva-lent	Types of Activities
Agricultural wage work - locally				
Non-agricultural wage labour - locally				
Agricultural wage labour - plains				
Agricultural or plantation labour - interstate				

b) Were children engaged in any type of wage labour?  
 Yes \_\_\_\_\_, No \_\_\_\_\_

If Yes, in which activities? \_\_\_\_\_

c) What were the wage payment practices and rates for different activities carried out by men and women?

Type of Wage Labour	Activities	Payment Practices, eg (cash,kind,both)	Wage Rates	
			Men	Women
Agricultural wage labour, Local				
Non-agricultural wage labour, Local				

10. SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE, INFORMATION AND TRAINING

a) During the Reference Period, what were the main sources of knowledge, information and learning on important matters?

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b) Through what mechanisms was such knowledge and information transferred to Men and Women?

Sources of Information	How transferred to Men	How transferred to Women

## APPENDIX E

**Table 1 Marriage Payments**

Period Persons	Early 1950s	Early 1970s	Early 1990s
<b>Aleri Patti</b>			
Groom's Family	Upto Rs. 50/- <i>Thali</i> of gold (1/4 <i>poun</i> ) <i>Varisai</i>	Rs. 200-500/- <i>Thali</i> of gold (1/4 <i>poun</i> ) <i>Varisai</i>	Rs. 2000/- <i>Thali</i> of gold (1/2-3 <i>poun</i> , up to 5 <i>pouns</i> if rich)
Bride's Family	Sari <i>Varisai</i> sent at birth of first child	Sari <i>Varisai</i> sent at birth of first child	Sari etc. Metal vessels Gold (1/2-3 <i>pouns</i> ) gold
<b>Periya Koviloor</b>			
Groom's Family	Rs.100-500/- <i>Thali</i> Clothes for girl	Rs. 300-600 <i>Thali</i> Clothes	Rs. 500-700/- <i>Thali</i> of gold (now 2-4 <i>pouns</i> )
Bride's Family	Earthen pot with 1 <i>padi</i> rice coconut, turmeric	Earthen pot w/5 <i>Vallam</i> rice, gold ornaments (1/4- 1/2 <i>poun</i> )	Gold (5-6 <i>pouns</i> ) Clothes, vessels
<b>Ariyoor Solakkadu</b>			
Groom's Family	Rs. 30-50/- <i>Thali</i> 5 <i>Vallam</i> rice	Rs. 100-1000/- <i>Thali</i>	Rs. 200-1000/- <i>Thali</i> of gold (now 2-3 <i>pouns</i> )
Bride's Family	Sari	Gold (1/4 to 1 <i>poun</i> -often old ornaments girl was wearing) Sari	Gold(up to 5 <i>pouns</i> ),clothes, vessels, etc.



**Table 2 Crop production and marketing**

<b>Period</b> <b>Crops and Materials</b>	<b>Early 1950s</b>	<b>Early 1970s</b>	<b>Early 1990s</b>
<b>Aleri Patti</b>			
Markets	Thamambatti	Thammabatti	Thamambatti, Vairichetti- palayam
Distance	3 hours walking	3 hours walking	3 hours walking?
Crops for home consumption only	Paddy, <i>samai</i> , <i>tinnai</i>	Paddy	
Crops sold in the markets	<i>Ragi</i> , sorghum, field beans castor-seed, black-gram, gingelly, horsegram	Jack, tamarind, mango, lemon, field beans, black gram, horsegram, castor, <i>tinnai</i> , <i>samai</i> , <i>ragi</i>	Castor, field beans, oranges, banana, coconut, jack, tamarind, pomegranate, lemons, paddy
Crops sold to traders, by contract			Tapioca, jack, banana, mango, pomegranate, paddy, guava, tamarind, coconut
<b>Periya Koviloor</b>			
Markets	Pavuthram, Puliancholai Sendamangala m, Vairichetti- palayam	Pavuthram, Varichetti- palayam Karavalli, Puliancholai	Solakkadu, Thenpulam
Distance	5-8 hours walking	3-7 hours walking	15 min to 1/2 hour (walking to T. or by bus to S.)
Crops for home consumption only	<i>Samai</i> , <i>tinnai</i> , <i>ragi</i>	<i>Samai</i> , <i>tinnai</i>	Paddy, wheat, sorghum, <i>tinnai</i> , <i>samai</i>

Crops sold in the markets	Jack, jack seed, bananas, guava, oranges, lemons, wheat, beans, coriander, mustard, paddy	Mustard, banana, coriander, guava, jack, lime, <i>ragi</i> , paddy, wheat	<i>Ragi</i> , jack, beans, mustard, coriander, banana, pineapple, pomegranate
Crops sold to traders, by contract	Coriander, beans, coffee, banana	Jack, coffee, banana, pepper, beans, guava, orange, lime	Tapioca, coffee, jack, pepper, pineapple, guava, banana
Ariyoor Solakkadu			
Markets	Puliancholai, Vairichetti-palayam	Karavalli	Solakkadu
Distance	5-6 hours walking	2-3 hours walking	15 minutes walking
Crops for home consumption only	<i>Ragi</i> , paddy, <i>samai</i> , <i>tinnai</i>	Paddy, <i>samai</i> , <i>tinnai</i> , <i>ragi</i>	Paddy, <i>samai</i> , <i>tinnai</i> , <i>ragi</i>
Crops sold in the markets	Oranges, limes, beans, wheat, coriander, mustard, jack seed	Oranges, limes, banana, beans, jack seed, pineapple, cardamom, coffee	Pepper, pineapple, oranges, limes, banana, coffee, coriander, jack seed
Crops sold to traders, by contract	Cardamom, coffee, mustard	Cardamom, mustard, coriander, coffee? beans?, wheat	Tapioca, pineapple, banana, <i>chendumalli</i>

**Table 3 Wage rates<sup>1</sup>**

Period Persons	Early 1950s		Early 1970s		Early 1990s		2000	
	In-kind	Cash	In-kind	Cash	In-kind	Cash	In-kind	Cash
Aleri Patti								
Men	3-4 m	-	4 m	Rs. 4	4 m	Rs. 10	8 m	Rs. 50
Women	3 m	-	3 m	Rs. 2	3 m	Rs. 5-6	6 m	Rs. 25-30
Children	2 m	-	3 m	Rs. 2	-	Rs. 5-6	6 m	Rs. 25-30
Periya Koviloor								
Men	5 m	-	5-6 m	Rs. 5	4-5 m	Rs. 15-20	-	Rs. 40-50
Women	-	-	3-4 m	Rs. 3	3-4 m	Rs. 10-12	-	Rs. 25-30
Children	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ariyoor Solakkadu								
Men	4m	Rs. 1.25(?)	5 m	Rs. 3	-	Rs. 20	12 m	Rs. 50
Women	3m	Rs. 1.00(?)	4 m	Rs. 1.50	-	Rs. 10	8 m	Rs. 30
Children	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

<sup>1</sup> Denotes the local measure, *padi*, used for measuring grain.

## GLOSSARY

<i>aal saatudhal</i>	exchange labour
<i>adi 18 (Aadi)</i>	festival celebrated on the 18 <sup>th</sup> day of the Tamil month <i>Adi</i>
<i>adudurai 29 and 36</i>	high-yielding rice varieties
<i>akka (akkaa)</i>	elder sister
<i>anbalippu</i>	gift
<i>annan</i>	elder brother
<i>balwadi (baalwadi)</i>	childcare centre
<i>dhoti</i>	garment worn by men
<i>doli</i>	carrying chair or palanquin
<i>idli</i>	steamed round rice cakes
<i>jalli road</i>	surfaced with stone and mud
<i>kallu seppai</i>	a root vegetable ( <i>Colocasia</i> )
<i>karakkaarar</i>	village official, manager of ceremonies
<i>komairi</i>	foot and mouth disease of cattle
<i>koonthal panai</i>	a variety of palm ( <i>Caryota urens</i> )
<i>kothals (kothaal)</i>	literally, 'labourer', in this context, an organizer of labour, especially women's labour
<i>kothu kaaranga</i>	literally 'labourer', here used to refer to labour organiser/contractor
<i>kulum (koolam)</i>	kinship group, family
<i>kuttanghai (kootanghai)</i>	lease
<i>macchan (machaana)</i>	brother -in-law
<i>Maghalir Membattu Thittam</i>	women's development scheme
<i>Maghalir Sangam</i>	women's group, club or association
<i>Malaiyali (malaiyaali)</i>	hill people
<i>mama-macchan (maama) kulam</i>	kinship groups within which marriage is permitted
<i>maman (maaman)</i>	maternal uncle
<i>muraikadan (mooraikadan)</i>	customary loans from those with mutual social obligations
<i>nadu (naadoo)</i>	administrative unit
<i>nattu Gounder</i>	headman of cluster of villages
<i>nagarigam (naagareegam)</i>	civilized behaviour
<i>nichchayam</i>	engagement, literally, certainty

<i>Oor Gounder</i>	<i>oor</i> is the village or hamlet of which the <i>Gounder</i> is the headman
<i>Oor Kattupadu (kattupaadu)</i>	discipline or rules of the village
<i>otti ki ratti</i>	literally 'two for one'
<i>ottulaippu</i>	cooperation, sharing work
<i>padi</i>	measure (of rice)
<i>paaga parisam</i>	customary share of bride price
<i>palakavalakam</i>	accepted practices, customs
<i>palaaki</i>	palanquin
<i>panjayam</i>	<i>panchayat</i>
<i>parisam or pariyam</i>	bride price
<i>patta land</i>	land with legal title deeds
<i>Pattukkaalar</i>	leader of several <i>nadus</i> - there are only 3 such leaders in Kolli Hills
<i>Periya (Naattu) Gounder</i>	literally 'big' headman
<i>Periya tanakkaarar</i>	council of village elders
<i>Poosari (poosaari)</i>	temple priest
<i>poun</i>	unit of weight (of gold), 8 grammes
<i>ragi (raagi)</i>	one of the millets
<i>ragi kali</i>	porridge made with <i>ragi</i>
<i>rendan number (rendaan)</i>	literally, number '2', a traditional variety of rice
<i>saataal</i>	exchanged labour
<i>saataradu</i>	the process of exchanging labour
<i>samai</i>	little millet
<i>samba</i>	a traditional variety of rice
<i>seer</i>	ceremonial set of gifts given at marriage by either the bride's or the groom's family
<i>seri ki seri</i> or	equal exchange, or grain for grain or
<i>dhaniattukku dhaniyam,</i>	item for item
<i>(dhaaniyam) or</i>	
<i>pandathukku pandam</i>	
<i>thali (thaali)</i>	gold ornament strung on string or gold chain and given the bride as a symbol of married status

<i>Thandalkaarar</i>	messenger in charge of conveying messages from elders/leaders
<i>thangai</i>	younger sister
<i>thungaara nellu</i>	traditional rice variety
<i>urimai kaasu (oorimai)</i>	rightful payment
<i>vallam</i>	a measure of grain, also used to denote the area of land in which this measure of grain can be sown
<i>varam</i>	lease on sharecropping basis
<i>varisai</i>	ceremonial set of gifts
<i>vatti kutti podum</i>	interest begets more interest
<i>vayal (vie-al)</i>	field
<i>vayallukku vaanga</i>	come to the field

NOTE: Traditional political hierarchy  
Each *nadu* has a traditional *panchayat*. The elders of the *Panchayat* are collectively referred to as the *Oor Periya Tanakkaarar*. Individual officials include the *Pattukkaarar* who is a ceremonial head, the *Naattu Gounder* (or *Periya Gounder*), the *Oor Gounder*, the *Karakkaarar*, the *Poosari* and the *Thandalkaarar* (the only non-hereditary post).

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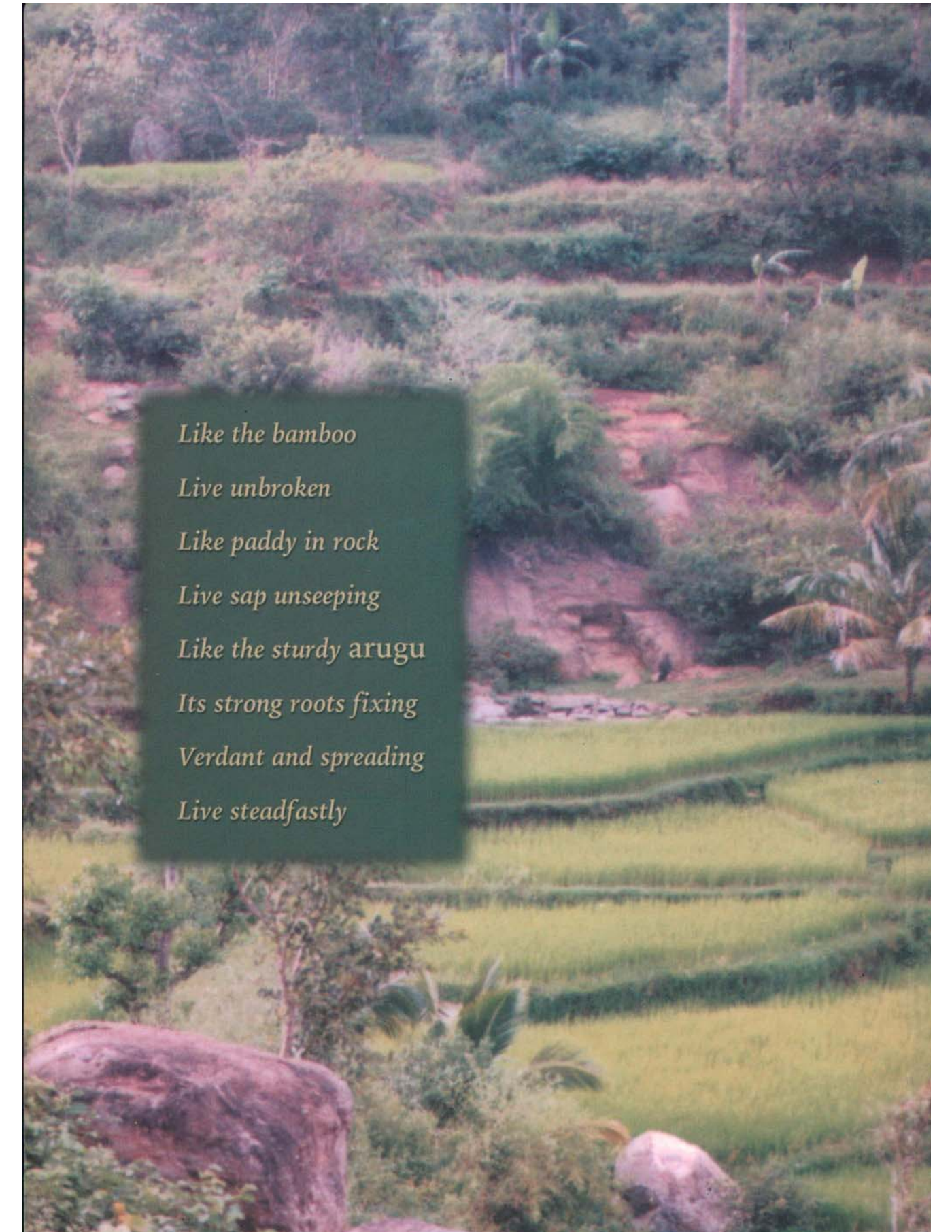
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1



*Like the bamboo  
Live unbroken  
Like paddy in rock  
Live sap unseeping  
Like the sturdy arugu  
Its strong roots fixing  
Verdant and spreading  
Live steadfastly*