
History and Development of Devikulam High Range, Idukki District, Kerala

S. Suresh¹, S. Rajesh² and A. P. Pradeepkumar²

¹. Department of Geography, Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, Ernakulam - 683 574, Kerala, India (Email: geogaya@gmail.com)

². Department of Geology, University of Kerala, Kariavattom Campus, Thiruvananthapuram – 695 581, Kerala, India (Email: geograjeshmunnar@gmail.com; geo.pradeep@gmail.com)

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Abstract: This paper gives a brief account of the history and geographical conditions of Devikulam high range. Geographically the area falls within the pre-Cambrian metamorphic terrain. The study area is located in the tropical monsoonal belt experiencing alternate dry and wet periods, and hence the geomorphic processes are dominated by weathering and denudation that operate on the surface to produce a myriad of beautiful shapes and awesome structures. The average height of the area is 700 meters above mean sea level. About 80% of the area has moderately steep to steep slopes. Owing to the undulating nature of the land and its high altitude, Devikulam has a well-ordered system of natural drainage i.e. Pambar, Idamalayar, Periyar and waterbodies. Fertile valley fills are created by the depositional action of these rivers along the river course. This has attracted people from the plains to high range for settled agriculture practices. There are several mysterious folk stories from the period of Epic Era (Mahabharata), Pandanchondiyas and Palayakarar to recent Muthuvan, based on the human culture in the area. Archaeological evidence states that human presence in the high ranges dates back to 8000 years. The petrograph, petroglyphs, Tamil vatteluthu, trident and terracotta objects found in the Anchunad valley reveals the ancient development of human culture and of settled life. However, these areas can be considered as key sites in the search for more such ancient habitation sites in Kerala. The history of the present population is very recent. In the year 1840 Ward and Connor made a trigonometric survey and subsequently vast tracts of virgin forest has been converted to tea plantations. During the late 1990s Devikulam high range areas has been transformed into a bustling tourist destination and has developed modern infrastructure facilities.

Keywords: Devikulam, Idukki, Culture, Muthuvan, Dolmen, Rock Paintings, Plantation

Introduction

According to geologists, Kerala was submerged under Arabian Sea. Millions of years ago the sea gradually receded westwards from Western Ghats and the narrow strip of land was raised by various catastrophic agents like earthquake, volcanoes and the

deposition by major rivers (Soman 2002). The Quilon-Varkala beds belonging to Eocene and upper Tertiary periods show ample supporting evidences for this evolution.

During the last four decades, studies on the pre-historic archaeology of Kerala have made considerable progress. In the absence direct evidence bearing on the first settlers of Kerala, archeologists and historians have to concentrate on the unwritten oral stories prevailing among the tribes and the material scattered by the settlers in the shape of megalithic dolmens, menhir, rock caves, rock arts, terracotta items and others. According to the archaeologists Mohanty and Selvakumar, around 2200 megalithic sites can be found in Peninsular India (Rajat 2016).

Archaeological evidence indicates human presence in the Devikulam high ranges even from 8000 years ago (Gurukkal 1999). Ancient dolmens (*Muniyara*) and different kinds of rock paintings in Marayur, Kanthalloor and Chinnar regions are strongly related to a Stone Age culture. New rock paintings and dolmens were continuously discovered by various researchers. 'Discovering Idukki' a project of the district to explore and document pre-historic sites (The Hindu 2012), a research from Kansai university, Japan in association with the Department of Archaeology, University of Kerala (Giji 2017) are some of the initiatives to protect and document the megalithic era sites in the study area. Several rock art sites are under peril and conservation efforts to prevent further deterioration have been mooted (Ajit Kumar 2015), while it has been pointed out that a geological solution to the issue may be non-existent (Pradeepkumar 2015). But still the mysteries of the dolmens are to be unravelled and advanced research in these sites is needed to unearth the history of these dolmens and cave paintings. However, the area can be considered as the key site to search for more habitation sites in Kerala, a detailed enquiry need to be carried out to examine and document the various historical evidences of Devikulam taluk of Idukki District.

Study Area - Location

The high range mountain landscape of Devikulam taluk is located on the western slope of the Western Ghats (Figure 1). It is the northern most part of the Idukki District. The study area stretches between the latitudes of 9°56' 56''N to 10°21' 29''N and longitudes of 76° 45' 00''E to 77° 20' 00''E covers an area of 1140 km² and has a population of 177,621 persons (Census of Idukki district 2011). Devikulam taluk consists of 12 villages, nine panchayats and two blocks. Munnar is a census town in this taluk. The Devikulam taluk possess definite physical characteristics. This highland region has a highly undulating topography with ridges and intervening valleys, high peaks, steep slopes leading to narrow gorges like valleys with gradient streams and plateau.

Kannan Devan Hills is the largest village with an area of about 557 km². Devikulam and Adimali are community development blocks. Edamalakudy and Devikulam are the newly formed panchayats by splitting the Munnar Panchayat. According to the Gadgil as well as Kasthurirangan reports this area comes under ecologically fragile

region. Nilgiri tahr, star tortoise, grizzled giant squirrel etc. are some of the vulnerable species living in this area. The average rainfall varies from 1166 mm in Munnar to 8 mm in Marayur (rain shadow region).

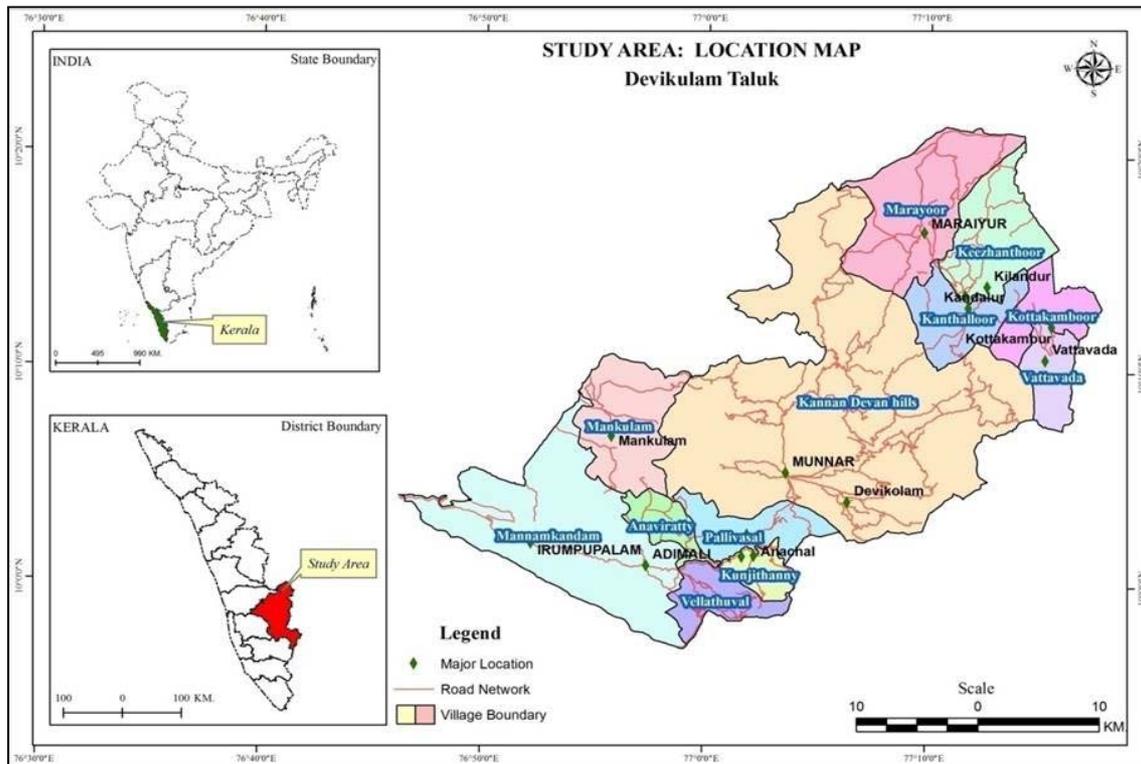


Figure 1: Location Map

History of the Study Area

The genesis of population in Devikulam is not a recent one. It has a very old history which finds mention even in the epics. The migrant population in the study area is a unique feature. The state Manual of Travancore 1940 described the High Range as: "... this land is almost of indescribable beauty. "Sholas" or small pieces of jungle clothed the banks on one side of the water, while on the other sweeping grass-lands rose to the blue cliffs above, a further colour contrast being lent to the scene by the bright red flowers of the innumerable clumps of wild rhododendron trees. Herds of wild goats (Thar) looked down upon them from rocky peaks, while elephants and bison roamed the grass-land. Under cover of the forest, tiger and panthers, sambhar and munjac, and many other species of South Indian fauna thrived, undisturbed by the presence of man."

The population of Devikulam taluk has genetic links with the Poonjar kings, tribal people, Tamil migrant laborers and the settlers from erstwhile Travancore and Cochin states.

The early history of the study area is obscure and there is no clear evidence for the Paleolithic age. Though the epics are a work of imagination it cannot be denied that

they throw light on the post-vedic society especially on the invasion of Aryans. To account for the detailed history of Devikulam high range, the standard periodization has been modified. Based on the Mahabharata epic, historical evidence, the invasion of British rulers and modern tourism, the study area can be classified into five different stages. They are:

- Megalithic Period (1000 BC – 500 AD)
- The Pre-Colonial Period (500 AD – 1858 AD)
- The Tea Plantation Period (1858 – 1940)
- The Post Tea-Plantation (Settlement) Period (1940 – 2000)
- The Modern (Tourism) Period (2000 onwards)

Megalithic Period (1000 BC- 500 AD)

The people of the study area believe that Pandavas of the Mahabharata epic had stayed in this area in exile (Vanavasam) and so the place was named as “Maranjiruntha Oor” or the land where they hid themselves. Later it became “Marayoor”. The Pandavas also stayed in Pallivasal village. There is a hill named after Pandavas as “Pandavar Mala”. The people of this area believed that the Pandavas of the Mahabharata hid themselves in the hills. The wife of Sri Rama, Sita, used to take bath in the pond which is located near Devikulam. Therefore, the taluk has been named as Devikulam, the etymology remains like it. Thus, the present Devikulam taluk is even related with the two great epics – the Mahabharata and the Ramayana (Mani 2012).

Megalithic culture in India can be dated to 1000 B.C to 500 A.D. Iron-based items were extensively used for various purposes and hence this period is known as ‘Iron Age’. The study area is historically famous for the Dolmens (Muniara) existing in Marayur (Figure 2). These caves were built by the saints (Munis) for shelter and meditation (Nihildas 2014). The competing hypothesis states that these are burial sites of the Megalithic Age. The dolmens excavated from the Anjunad valley were arranged on flat land in-groups of three, four or five. Around each was found a circular packing of rough sheet of stones on boulders. They were distributed in a circle (Jayson 1999). Remnants of rubble stone packing were found over some of the cover slabs. There was also a semi-circular opening on one side (Menon 1975).

The petrographs (colour paintings made on rock walls and rock surfaces) and petroglyphs (scratching, pecking, sculpting or drilling) are found in Marayoor and Kanthalloor panchayats of Devikulam taluks (Figures 3 and 4) (Benny 2009). In 1974, the first rock paintings were discovered by Tampi in Marayoor, Ezhuthala, Pallanad, Chambakkadu and Chinnar. Vannanthurai paintings were discovered in the year 2003. In 2007, Athiyoda, Malasarpetty, Nellimedu cave and the Vayumala area paintings located in Chinnar were discovered. A series of paintings were discovered near Kodanthoor. In 2011, nine new rock art sites were discovered in the Manjapetty-Anjunad valley (Figure 5) (Giji 2011). The paintings depict images of fighting, burial, elephant, sambar deer, Nilgiri Tahr, honey gathering, rituals, dances and *payee thullal*

(removing the spirit of a dead body from his/her relatives). These paintings (Figure 6) belong to different periods. Some of them would be about 2500 years old. Giant human figures overlap the animal motifs at Ezhuthupara and a few Tamil letters are found in Malasapetty. The map (Figure 3) shows the important rock painting sites in Marayoor and Kanthallor areas.



Figure 2: Dolmen (Muniyara)

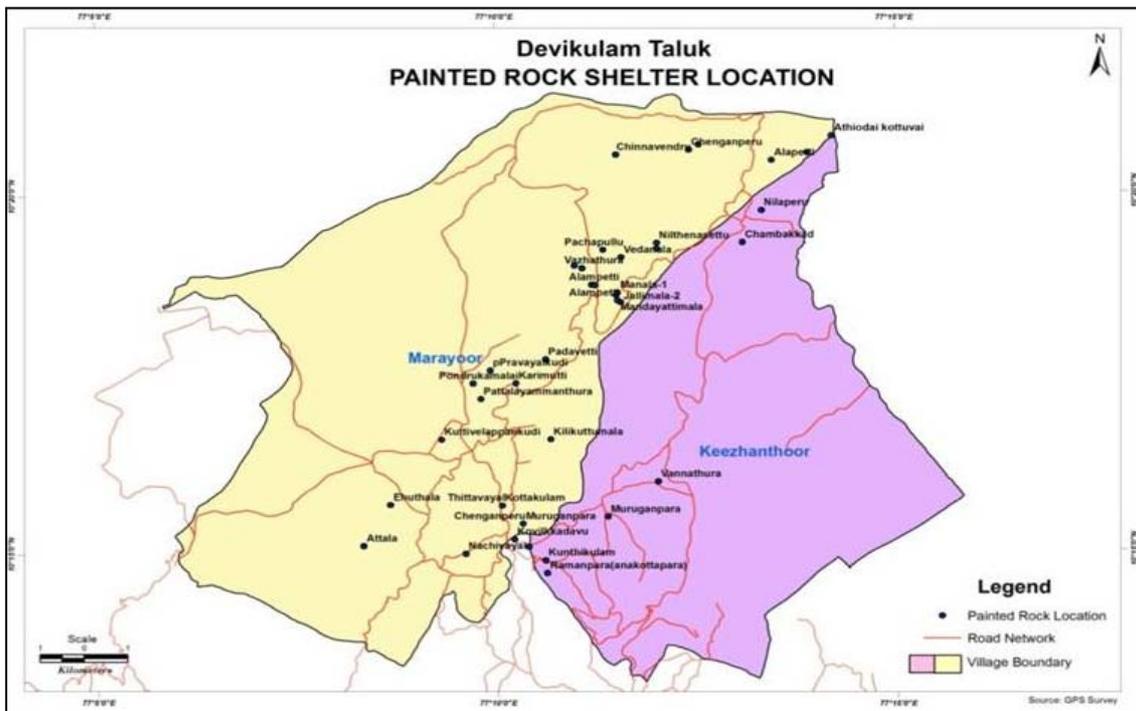


Figure 3: Location of Painted Rock Shelters

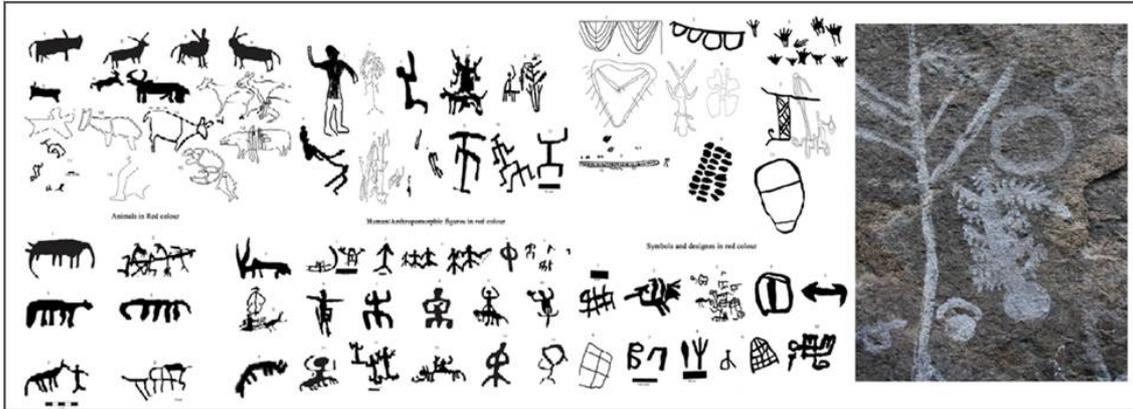


Figure 4: Animal Motifs, Human Figures and Symbols in White and Red Pigments
(Courtesy: Nihildas 2014)

White kaolin, red ochre and ashes are the main pigments used for these paintings (Figure 3). Pottery shards and iron pieces were collected from Nachivayal and Meladi areas revealing that the Stone Age civilization gradually made way for the Iron Age (Giji 2011). The red ochre paintings are older than the white kaolin paintings. The paintings of ritual dances, terracotta evidences point to a settled life. The main occupations are food crop cultivation and some people engaged in sheep and Brahman cows rearing, settled in rock caves and these nomadic herding people changed their habitats frequently. The fight scenes illustrate that they encountered frequent attacks from outsiders.

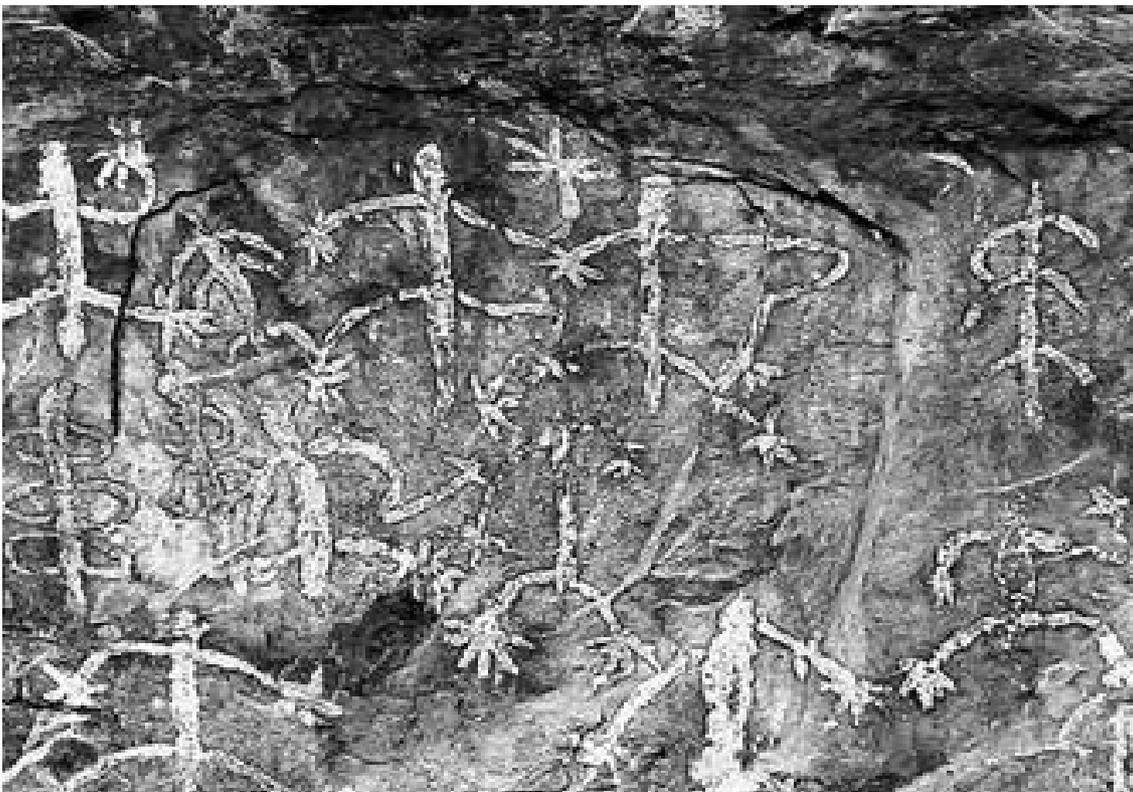


Figure 5: Rock Paintings in Manjapetty (Courtesy: The Hindu, 17-4-2011)



Figure 6: White and Red Rock Paintings

During the Early Historic period, Buddhism spread all over India including to the study area. In Kovilkadavu near Marayor a tiny idol of Sakyamuni (Figure 7) was identified in Thannasiappar Kovil (Sanyasi gradually changed as Thannasi) presently known as Thenkasi Nathan Kshetram. Between 830 and 966 AD in the name of Hindu revivalism hundreds of Buddhist statues, stupas and viharas were destroyed. The same effect might reflect in this area also.



Figure 7: Buddha Image



Figure 8: Vatteluthu Inscription

The Pre-Colonial Period (500 BC – 1858 AD)

Divergent opinions exist on the human settlement in Devikulam taluk. The first view holds that five groups of people migrated from Madurai region to this land during the unrest of late Sangam age (300 AD). They settled in five different localities on the eastern foothills of Anaimalai. These settled villages are known as Ur Grammas and their location came to be known as Marayoor, Karayoor, Kizhanthur, Kanthalloor and Kottakudi.

The alternate viewpoint is that the peculiar funnel shaped valley (the valley of Anjunad) is the fertile tract of land known by the name Nanchinad. In the Sangam period (300 BC and 300 AD), the Nanchil country was ruled by a clan of the Valluva order and Nanchil Poranan is praised in the Purananoooru in the highland torn verses by a number of poets (Tampi 1983). According to tradition the glorious country Nanchil Valluvaras is said to be of two principal divisions. These are Manchinadu Thenvakai or Nanchinad South and Nanchinadu Vadavakai or Nanchinadu North. Naturally the Anjunad Valley in the high ranges is generally taken to be the same as Nanchinadu Vadavakai. Tradition has it that the last of the Nanchil Kurava chieftains fled from Alagiyapandiapuram on account of the defeat sustained in the hands of the enemies and retired to Nanchinadu Vadavakai (probably Anjunad region). Further the kurava chief took with him the image of the Then-Nanchillingar and consecrated it at Marayoor in the Anjunad Valley. Tradition does not preserve anything more about the Nanchil Kurava and his later life. Curiously enough, the Thenkasinata temple at Marayoor is dedicated to Siva and the deity is called Thonnanehil Lingers, i.e. Siva of the Southern Nanchinad. Equally there is a temple of the then Nanchil Linger at Puthugramam (Southern Travancore) and it exists even today just as in the case of Marayoor. There is some connection between both the temples as inferred from the four inscriptions found at Puthugramam (Tampi 1983:141).

The Tamil inscription (Figure 8) engraved on the rock to the north of the Siva temple at Marayoor characterizes the deity as Thirunachiappar, i.e. the lord of Nanchinad. This custom of naming a deity from the tradition narrated above is that a ruler of the Nanchil country was driven out of his original home by his enemies and that he returned at last to the thick forest of the Anjunad Valley and established some habitation there. We have no ground to hold this view that it was last of the Nanchil Kuravas who did it. Because so far the last phase in the history of the Nanchil Kuravas is obscure. Still it could well be inferred that the king expelled from Nanchinad should have either been a member of the Nanchilkuravan clan or a monarch of the Pandiya line. In this connection a word has to be said about the origin of the name Anjunad, Anchunad, Anchinad as variously spelt by many. Probably the correct name is Anchinad which is of some historical bearing. In the classical Tamil Anchinan means one who is humiliated or depressed. In south Travancore there was the custom of establishing “Anchinanu pukelidan” within the limits of which a humiliated or depressed person enjoys all privileges. A corruption of this is Anchi meaning a place where dwells the humiliated. Vira Pandya retired to the Anchinad Valley in disgust, dishonor and despair (Tampi 1983:140-142).

Another story says that this valley of Anjunad was ruled by the king Kannar Thevar (which became anglicized later as Kanan Devan). It is said that the travelers from Madurai to the West Coast in those days gave the hills its name as a mark of respect to this headman of Anjunad. It is said that Pallanad, Marayoor, Kanthalloor, Vattavada and Kovilloor constituted Anjunad, for which Kannan Thevar was the headman (Tampi 1983).

The Tea Plantation Period (1790 – 1940)

The first European to visit these hills was the Duke of Wellington in 1790. In the year 1840 Ward and Connor made a great Trigonometric survey of the study area and in particular, the Anaimudi and Chokanad and this survey is valid even today (Speer 1953). The 'planting opinion' of 1896 records that the Duke, Col. Arthur Wellesley, was dispatched by General Meadows to cut off the retreat of Tipu Sultan at Kumaly gap. Tipu's intelligence, however, forewarned him of this move and Wellesley was ordered to retrace his steps. In 1877 Turner and a team came to India for shikar, reached the mountains by a pass called the Bodimettu and guided by the local hill men (Mudhuvans), eventually reached the summit of the Anaimudi and saw the grandeur of these hills with commercial advantage formulating in their minds, they ultimately acquired a concession of approximately 227 miles² of land for the purpose of developing Cinchona and other plantation crops from the Poonjar Rajas of Anjanad. Small holders then began to purchase plots of these lands and planted a variety of crops ranging from cinchona to coffee and sisal to tea, and eventually these planters formed themselves into the North Travancore Land Planting and Agricultural Society Limited in 1879.

In 1895, Sir John Muir, Baronet of Deanston, Scotland bought over the deeds of the concession for further development. In 1900 the concession area became vested with the Kanan Devan Hills Produce Company Limited (KDHP), of which the Finlay Muir held a large interest, and the area started to develop very rapidly along more commercial lines, the main crop being tea. The beautiful tea plantation draped areas that we see today was a completely virgin tract covered with thick forest until 1879, when Munro and Turner formed the North Travancore Land Planting and Agricultural Society and started planting crops like sisal, coffee, cardamom, etc. Then, in the year 1897, Finlay Muir & Glasgow become interested in this area & formed the KDHP. Thus the flagship company KDHP was formed, and its two subsidiaries – the Anglo-American Direct Tea Trading Company and the Amalgamated Tea Estates Company – formed subsequently, became more interested in the development and cultivation of tea among all other crops.

The Post Tea-Plantation (Settlement) Period (1940 – 2000)

The post-tea plantation era starts with the commencement of the formation of Travancore-Cochin state in 1940s and is characterized by the Malayali colonization in the High Ranges and the initiation of various High Range development programs. The severe famine that occurred in the erstwhile Travancore during 1944 led to the regular demand for the opening of large forest areas for food cultivation. In response to this, the Government opened forest land on an emergency basis for food cultivation. Large migrations particularly by Syrian Christians of central Travancore took place during this period (Sivanandan et al. 1986). The first major migration by Syrian Christians into the higher reaches of the Western Ghats occurred in 1940s (Tharakan 1978). In 1941 the Government granted exclusive cultivation rights (known as "*Kuthakapattam*") in the

forest areas (Chandrasekharan 1973). Five acres of land could be distributed for individuals for food cultivation on a short-term lease (*Kuthakapattam*) basis. The land granted by the Government was on a temporary basis and no permanent improvements were allowed. Roughly 13,600 acres of reserved forests throughout the State were offered for cultivation in that time.

The Modern (Tourism) Period (2000 Onwards)

The modern era for the present study is considered from the year 2000 at a faster pace. The sudden development of tourism industry, mechanization in tea industry, increase in the variety of educational institutions, rise in the literacy rate and other infrastructural facilities have caused rapid changes in this area since the beginning of 21st century. It plays a vital role in the study area's economic development at both the state and local level.

The Tribal People

In the study area the prominent tribal groups are Mannan, Muthuvan, Paliyan, Malayanan, Oorali, Ulladan and Hill Pulaya. The tribal hamlets are either scattered in the forests or located along its fringes. The major source of their livelihoods is farming of pepper and cardamom, collection of wild cardamom, honey, dammar, wild nutmeg, medicinal plants. Fashioning of broom sticks, reed mat weaving and lemon grass distillation are some of the small artisanal enterprises providing economic support for their livelihoods.

The majority of the area in Devikulam taluk is occupied by the 'Ur' Grama people, those who are said to be married from the Madurai District of Tamil Nadu in the modern times. They have mostly settled in four different locations of this valley, viz. Marayoor, Karayoor, Kizhanthur and Kanthalloor. The last settlement group believed to be known as Kottakudi is located in the eastern parts of this valley in the Palani Hills in Tamil Nadu. Apart from Ur people, a group of inhabitants in the Puttur, Perumala area in the Kanthalloor village, claims that they also belong to the 'Ur' Grama's of the Anjunad Valley. In addition, tribes called Muthuvans, Kurumbas or Hill Pulayans and a different group of Hill Pulayans known as Karavazhi are the present residents. It is reported that some of the tribes known as Vellals and Irulas in the present Nilgiri and Palani Hills had originally belonged to this valley earlier.

Muthuvans

Many legends surround the tribe of "Muthuvar". One relates how they were originally peaceful cultivators of the Madurai side, but that when the forces of aggression led by Hyder Ali and his son Tippu, sometimes called the Tiger of Mysore, had fought their way almost to the gates of Madras, they folded their tents and silently moved off to remote jungles, preferring a life of freedom to one of slavery fettered to the Mohamadan yoke. On reaching Bodinayakanur a few of them, of whom little was ever heard again, struck North towards the Nilgiris, while the main body proceeded west, and carrying their children on their backs they ascended the steep ghats of the Kanan

Devan Hills where they settled in the forests calling themselves “Muthuvars” or “Back people” (Speer 1993).

Until quite recently the Muthuvans were exceedingly primitive and even now those who live in the more remote parts of the jungle greatly fear strangers. The reason for this fear is supposed partly to originate from the raids, in olden days, by gangs of dacoits from the Coimbatore side. These gangs made a practice of burning down the villages and driving off the cattle at not infrequent intervals. There are still Muthuvans who have never spoken to outsiders. This innate fear is very strong among the Muthuvan women who if met with suddenly, will dash off into the jungle. Houses have no back walls, the pent roof usually sloping into the hillside behind. The sides are sometimes made of bamboo matting, and the Muthuvars are skilled at plaiting this with split bamboo stems. The traditional hut of the Muthuvan tribes is eco-friendly and it is known for withstanding elephant attacks and much suitable for bitter cold weather conditions. The traditional huts usually have roof of grass or bamboo leaves. A Muthuvan house has two entrances. The entrance room used for sleeping and the second part of the house used as a kitchen and to store the belongings. Day or night the house of the Muthuvan will be dark. The older generations feel comfortable living in their traditional huts which control temperature well. At present the traditional huts are fast disappearing from the Edamalakudi landscape. The younger generations who works outside feels that concrete structures are better. At the same time Muthuvan tribes in Marayur forests are returning to the traditional huts leaving the concrete houses constructed by a non-government organization (Giji 2016).

Muthuvars believe that if an animal is killed by tiger or a panther and it falls so as to lie aligned north it would be useless to sit up in a “machan” or tree huts. They believe that a tiger will not return to the kill beast if it is lying thus. For the tiger the Muthuvars retain a very healthy respect, referring to him as “Kudduvool”, the Supreme Being (Speer 1993). The tribe has many omens, mostly bad ones. The bellowing of a sambhur, or the barking of a jungle sheep, is at certain times regarded as a presage of evil.

Though they made different houses in the settlement, all of them act on the guidance of one man, who is called the Kudi Kani or tribal chief (mostly elder men), who is still revered as the master of the settlement. Muthuvan people used large leaved ettah (*Ochlandra travancorica*) as a material. They have skill in creating unique bamboo mats, handbags, handicraft items and other household items with various designs. The material for making handicrafts especially mats need skill in selecting the bamboo canes as only those with a particular period of growth can be used. The mat has a prime look and is quite durable. They call the mat ‘Kannadipaya’ (mirror mat) due to its nice surface. But present days the local tribal people choose alternative items available in Munnar market. Moreover, the new generations is less interested in learning the skill from the elders. With alternative items flooding the market, and less interest towards traditional handicrafts among the younger generations, the items used and produced by the tribe is slowly disappearing.

In their settlement they all assemble at a place and discuss issues related to the community. They also sort out the issues between husband and wife and other issues. They will take the help from unmarried young boys to assemble the concerned party and sort out the issues. Entire households discuss the issues. They will not let the issue be handled by the outsiders. Every settlement has a boy's dormitory called Saavadi or rest house and unmarried Muthuvan male is called as Ilandari and they are the most powerful group in the settlement. All unmarried men of the settlement stay in the saavadi. Veli ilandaari is the leader of the young men. Anything related to the village is done in consultation with them, especially if it is a work of common interest to the community. There is another key person called mandirakkaran, the traditional priest. Sticks were used to design god, usually called peramban. Temple are found in all settlements. They also worship trees, nature and ancestors. A person is doing medicine is known as vaithyan. No one stored medicine for their future use. The belief is that storing medicine will make it impotent. Good knowledge about the medicinal plant species, which are distributed in the surroundings, exists. Chinchu et al. (2015) documented 24 species of ethno-medicinal plants in 23 genera and 16 families. These potential medicinal plants are used by these tribes for the treatment of various ailments in their daily life. Ajesh (2013) reports 103 flowering plant species belongs to 44 families and a lichen to meet a variety of their requirements. They use 21 plants for construction of hut, and traditional purposes 16 for domestic articles, 15 for cultural and traditional purposes, 12 for clothing and cosmetics, 20 for tools and weapons and other daily uses. Ajesh et al. (2012) documented 38 species of wild edible fruits belonging to 25 genera and 17 families are used by Muthuvans were recorded. But due to climate change, the level of poverty and environmental degradation, there is high risk of large-scale biodiversity loss. Several decades ago the Muthuvans were great wanderers, this wandering takes place between the harvesting of the crops on one piece of land and the sowing on another. This shifting cultivation had its natural detrimental effect upon the land. Later years these agricultural activities were greatly restricted. At present Muthuvans cultivate cardamom, ginger, coffee, pepper, arecanut, hill rice, ragi, millets, maze and fruits mainly banana, guava, sapota, mango and also gather honey.

The Muthuvan tribal community is male dominated and it did not encourage women entering public places. They are debarred even from attending meetings conducted by elders. There is a dormitory for the girls, referred to as tinnai veedu or Valaymapura or seclusion hut. The practice of housing women separately after their delivery is still followed for childbirth. Among Muthuvans, menstruating women are considered to be impure and supposed to bring bad luck to their menfolk. So, they are made to stay in a specially designated place called valaymapura, a tiny hut on the outskirts of the village, during those days. Men are not supposed to see them. Something bad will happen to their husband or father if women violate the custom. Food is given at the seclusion house by the elderly women who had reached menopause. A typical Muthuvan lady takes extreme care to decorate herself. For them bangles and chains made out of beet and lent are the most attractive ornaments. They used to wear bangles

from wrist to arm. A Muthuvan widow will not wear new clothes. Like women, men also have hair knot. Here instead of hairpins they use wooden needles to knot tight. After completing their work, women are engaged in preparing food while men assemble near saavadi and get ready to entertain them. Music and dance are the main source of entertainment for the Muthuvan. Men perform traditional dance which is called Veera vilayattu. Like men, women also perform dance as a group. Musical instruments like kuzhal (flute), kottu and urumi are the supporting instruments. From birth to death, there music and dance accompanies every occasion. The entire musical rhythm can be categorised into six types. Though the Muthuvan tribes live in the deep jungles much aloof and far away from the main stream, their life contains a lot of tradition and each one of them could be studied independently. These people adhere to community endogamy and clan exogamy. For marriage, the average age for girls is 14-18 and for boys it is 18-25. Cross cousin marriages are given preference (Manjusha 2013). Muthuvans have no plans for the future and live for the day. They never save money or food materials for their future requirements. Chewing tobacco is an accepted habit and almost all the people chew tobacco. Black tea without sugar is an energy drink consumed frequently. They have meals twice a day, in the morning and evening. In every settlement, there is a common place know as 'Sathram' used for public meetings and festival celebration. Pongal is the main festival celebrated by these people. Visitors and guests from outside stay in this sathram. Death on Saturday is considered special and a chicken is buried along with the body. During the funeral, everyone in the village is informed and the mourners join in digging the grave that is normally far from the settlement. Generally, a woman is buried with her ornaments and man with his implements.

Conclusion

The high range mountain landscape of Devikulam taluk is located on the western slope of the Western Ghats. The genesis of the population in Devikulam taluk is not a recent one. The population of Devikulam taluk is related with several people like the Poonjar kings, tribal people, Tamil migrant laborers and the settlers from erstwhile Travancore and Cochin states. The early history of the study area is obscure and there is no clear evidence about the Epic Period. The study area is historically famous for the caves (Muniara) existing in Marayur. Dolmens have been excavated from the Anjunad valley. The megalithic rock paintings of over 2500 years antiquity depict various aspects of daily life. Giant human figures overlapping the animal motifs at Ezhuthupara and few Tamil letters found in Malasapetty are also the important discoveries. The period 273–200 BC shows the spread of Buddhism. In Kovilkadavu near Marayur a tiny Budha idol is identified in Thenkasi Nathan Kshetram. But it was destroyed in 830 and 966 AD in the name of Hindu revivalism.

The beautiful tea covered area that we see today was a completely virgin tract covered with thick forest until 1879, when Munro J.D. and Turner A.W. formed the North Travancore Land Planting and Agricultural Society and started planting crops like sisal, coffee, cardamom, etc. Then, in the year 1897, Finlay Muir and Glasgow become

interested in this area and formed the Kanan Devan Hills Produce Co. Ltd (KDHP). Thus, the flagship company KDHP was formed, and its two subsidiaries – the Anglo-American Direct Tea Trading Company & the Amalgamated Tea Estates Company – formed subsequently, became more interested in the development and cultivation of tea among all other crops. More number of labourers migrated from Tamil Nadu and Munnar became a Tamil pocket.

The severe famine that occurred in the erstwhile Travancore during 1944 led to opening of the forest land on an emergency basis for food cultivation. Large migrations particularly by Syrian Christians of central Travancore took place during this period. The first major migration by Syrian Christians into the high section of the Western Ghats occurred in 1940s, and the Government granted exclusive cultivation rights (known as “*Kuthakapattam*”). Roughly 13,600 acres of reserved forests throughout the State were offered for cultivation in that time.

The sudden development of tourism industry, mechanization in tea industry, increase in the variety of educational institutions, rise in the literacy rate and other infrastructural facilities have caused rapid changes in this area since the beginning of 21st century. It plays a vital role in the study area’s economic development at both state and local level.

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