

INTRODUCTION

The land of God, Kerala is believed to be a gift of the Arabian Sea. The pride of Kerala are gorgeous and exotic beaches, breath taking hill stations, enchanting waterfalls, beautiful lagoons, meandering rivers and amazing natural scenarios. These colours are made Kerala as a land of beauty and paradise on earth. Named as one of the ten paradises of the world by National Geographic Traveller, Kerala is famous especially for its ecotourism initiatives and beautiful backwaters. Its unique culture and traditions, coupled with its varied demography, have made Kerala one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world.

Thamarassery, formerly known as Thazhmalachery, is a major town and bishopric in the Kozhikode district of Kerala, India, 30 km east of Kozhikode (Calicut) City and 29 km east of Koyilandy. It lies on the Calicut - Wayanad - Mysore route (National Highway 212).

Thamarassery belonged to the Kingdom of Kottayam before India became independent. It has witnessed the departure of the British and the great march of Tipu Sultan. Kottayam Kings who died fighting the British were given part of the land of Thamarassery in the days before freedom. The tomb of Payyampally Chandu, who was a warrior under the Kottayam Raja, is located at the Thamarassery Kotayil Sree Bhagavathi Temple.

Thamarassery Churam is a mountain pass in Kerala, India across the Western Ghats. "Churam" is the Malayalam word for mountain pass. Hence, it is more prominently called Thamarassery Churam.

The British used to transport spices from Wayanad to Beypore Port, Kozhikode via the Kuttiadi route. Between 1700

and 1750, they searched for a new route which could reduce the distance. For which, they sought the help of Karinthandan Moopan (chief), a tribal leader from the Paniya tribe in Wayanad. The route via the Thamarassery ghat was found with the help of Karinthandan. It is believed that he was later shot to death. However there is no solid evidence for this. It is also believed that Karinthandan's ghost haunted the travellers for a while until it was nailed to a tree by a wizard. The mysterious chain tree is situated about 58 km from this ghat.

It is located around 800 meters above sea level along National Highway NH 766 in Kozhikode District. This area is a popular tourist destination that offers a unique blend of landscape, wildlife sanctuaries, waterfalls, dams, coffee plantations, beautiful hilltop view and varied flora and fauna. This mountain range connects the Kozhikode and Wayanad Districts. It lies within the Western Ghats that run parallel to the western coast of the Indian peninsula, located entirely in India. The highway has nine hairpin bends. Churam is about 14 kilometers in length, starting from Adivaram to Lakkidi View Point.

Objective of the Study:

The first objective of the study is To find out the socio-cultural impacts of tourism in the Thamarasseri Ghat section. The present study has been crafted to provide a broad view regarding the importance of Ghat Roads in enriching touristic experiences in manifold ways with particular focus on the Thamarasseri Ghat Road bordering Kozhikode and Wayanad in Kerala.

The next objective of the study is To examine the experiential aspects of tourists in this area, This paper also evaluates the potentialities of the Ghat Road in promoting Hill Tourism and also its attributes which goes into the place making of both Wayanad and Kozhikode and the study ventures to unveil some of the important bottlenecks for promoting Hill tourism.

The another objectives of this study is To probe the possibilities of developing Ghat Roads in the Wayanad-Kozhikode belt as a tourist attraction by exploring the multiple dimensions.

Methodology:

A study on the Thamarassery Churam as about a historical, cultural, traditional, ritual, as well as developmental amend in Thamarassery Churam. The study is making use of the existing primary and secondary sources which reveals out the interesting facts about the topic. The primary source is of the interviews with the peoples of Thamarassery locality. The secondary sources are the books, documents, and some web pages. Using these sources Thamarassery Churam in context of historical, cultural, developmental and so on in Kerala history.

Chapter Overview:

The whole project is been divided into three parts, first one is the introduction which introduces the project its major themes. The second part is again sub divided into three chapters.

Chapter one: - “The history of Thamarassery Churam” will introduce the history of Thamarassery Churam and formation of Thamarassery Churam to be discussing in this chapter

Chapter two: - The second chapter will explain the Thamarassery Ghats.

Chapter three: - The third chapter discuss about the socio-cultural aspects of Thamarassery Churam.

CHAPTER -1

THE HISTORY OF THAMARASSERY CHURAM

Local history tends to be less documented than other types, with fewer books and artifacts than that of a country or continent. Many local histories are recorded as oral tales or stories and so are more vulnerable than more well-known issues. Artifacts of local history are often collected in local history museums, which may be housed in a historic house or other building. Individual historic sites are inherently local, although they may have national or world history importance as well. Many however have little overall historical impact but add depth to the local area.

Local history is the study of history in a geographically local context and it often concentrates on the local community. It incorporates cultural and social aspects of history. Historic plaques are one form of documentation of significant occurrences in the past and oral histories are another. Local history is often documented by local historical societies or groups that form to preserve a local historic building or other historic site. Many works of local history are compiled by amateur historians working independently or archivists employed by various organizations. An important aspect of local history is the publication and cataloguing of documents preserved in local or national records which relate to particular areas.

Mass tourism activities have brought about noticeable changes in the socio environmental spectrums of many a hill tourism destination. Kerala, renowned world over as the *God's Own Country* is home to majestic hill stations. Wayanad and Kozhikode- the districts of Kerala are important landmarks in the tourists' itinerary to the State. The Ghat Roads en-route to the destinations dot a niche image and makes the journey of the tourists a scintillating experience mainly owing to its unique attributes such as

adventurous trails, historicity laced with mysticism, offerings of ecotourism, etc. The heavy and unprecedented inflow of tourists during peak seasons leads to sporadic developments at the Ghat Roads to cater to the accentuating tourists' demands. Furthermore, the requirements for infrastructural developments have increased manifold due to escalating demands of tourism industry. Yet, both the premier destinations have been witnessing irreparable damages to the ecology and environment. Thus, the positive impacts have been overshadowed by the negative impacts so much so that policymakers and planners must be now concerned to decongest Wayanad and Kozhikode. The Ghat Roads connecting the districts offer amazing vistas that are very likely to woo tourists. Tourism development along the Ghat Roads can curb the irreversible loss of the invaluable environmental wealth. Following the guidelines of sustainable tourism shall essentially help check unplanned tourism development. At the same time, alternative tourism concepts can also be ideally introduced in the Ghat Roads such as the Thamarasseri Ghat Road to neutralize the loss caused to the ecology and environment and to help the ecosystem function effectively. Besides, littering and other antisocial activities which pose a big threat to hill ecology can be reined.

KARINTHANDAN

Karinthandan was the local chieftain of Paniyas in Wayanad district in Kerala State. He was leaved between 1700 - 1750 AD. He is a mythical character of Paniyas and this fretarnity still be leaves he is the person who found out the Wayanad Ghat route during British period. Karinthandan knows every nook and corner of hillocks of *Adivaram* region and he helped foreigners to find out a way through the dense forest of Wayanad .The Viceroy announced a reward earlier to those who build a road across the *churam*. In order to gain the reward and fame the Engineer planned to kill Karinthandan .

He cunningly led his guide to a peak area and shot him dead. Now the people of Wayanad believe Karinthandan is still alive.

The soul of Karinthandan started troubling passengers. A number of accidents happened.. As a result, the natives called a panditji (manthravadi) and he chained the soul of Karinthandan to a huge banyan tree (aal maram). This tree is known as '*Changala maram*' in Malayalam.

This program was started in the year 2011 by PEEP in commemoration of the martyrs' day of Karinthandan Mooppan. Who was lived in the forest area of western side of Lakkidi slope of Wayanad during 1700- 1750 AD. He was the *Mooppan* of that area. After the advent of British people to Wayanad they started to cultivate coffee, Tea and pepper extensively . For transporting the spices from Wayanad to Bypore the nearest port of Malabar they need a road through the Lakkidi slope. With the help of some tribe men and other local people Britishmen started to check the feasibility of a route through Thamarassery to Lakkidi through high ranges. Finally with the assistance of local people they catch hold this *Mooppan* who know the forest route to the downhill and made the Thamarassey pass. Only after the completion of the route *Mooppan* realized that this road will make way for large scale exploitation to his society and Wayanad as a whole by the foreigners so it should be stopped. But the British people were not ready to accept this demand and a small scuffle had occurred and in that melee the Britishers shoot the *Mooppan* and killed him. After this incident years passed. Even the route was opened for traffic so many accidents happened and lives were lost. Then the road safety authorities find out the cause of this kind of massive lost of lives in this ghat route that the spirit of *Karinthandan Mooppan* is still moving in and around there so it has to be rested somewhere and they find out a way and with help of some ritual men he was kept in a chain there. This is the story of Chain tree.

CHAIN TREE

The 'Chain tree' is the first sight that awaits the visitors who reach Lakkidi. The legend says it that the spirit of *Karinthandan*, the native tribal who showed the way to the English, was chained to this tree. The White man who wanted the credit of finding a way to Wayanad from the main land all for himself had killed his guide when his mission was accomplished. But the spirit of *Karinthandan* refused to die and the locals say that the ghost began to trouble the passers by. And there was no way out but to 'chain the spirit' to the tree. Another version is that the spirit in shackles was of a great sorcerer and a tribal chieftain named Lakkidi who was killed by the British explorers.

The legendary Chain Tree of Lakkidi is a large ficus tree standing by the wayside at this beautiful tourist spot in Wayanad around 15kms from Kalpetta. The tree, which stands at the end of the ghat section of the road that leads to Wayanad from Calicut, is bound by a chain and has an interesting story behind it.

Local lore has it that a tribal youth named *Karinthandan* was instrumental in guiding a British engineer to reach *Wayanad* from *Adivaram*, the base area from where the climb to *Wayanad* starts. The British rulers were attracted by the natural beauty of *Wayanad* and the wealth of spices available there. But getting there was near to impossible. There were no roads. Several attempts were made to cut roads through the rugged mountain passes, but to no avail.

The native tribesmen who lived in the forests knew the mountainous terrain well, and one of their youths *Karinthandan* showed the British engineer the shortest route to reach *Wayanad*. But after learning the route and eager to take credit for the discovery, the British engineer killed the youth, so says the legend. The spirit of the dead youth used to haunt the place, waylaying

travellers and terrifying them to death, especially unwary foreigners who happened to pass along.

It is believed that a Hindu priest conducted some rituals and chained the ghost to the ficus tree. The tree has grown considerably since then. Local people believe that the chain keeps growing with the tree. You can still find a heavy iron chain dropping down from the high branches of the tree and anchored to the ground. A tiny shrine has been erected where the chain is anchored. The Chain Tree is about 42kms from the eco resort; Banasura Hill Resort.

The Historicity, Aesthetics, and Potential of Roads

Roads have a niche place in the incredibly paced human life in the 21st century. Today, the increased mobility has led to the formation of road scapes and road landscapes. A.M Tung (2001), tracing back, in Mesopotamia in the sixth century anyone who ruins the surroundings of the Royal Road of Nineveh was hanged from the roof of their own house According to Mok et.al (2006), the characteristics of surrounding landscapes not only contribute to the experience of the travelers but also influence the performance of the drivers and roadside safety. Jakovlevas Mateckis, K. & Bitiniene, E. (1997) conceived an integrated design of carpark and resting slopes for Lithuanian tract via Baltic Highway and argued for a distinctive and memorable road side environment. Mauch and Zeller (2008) highlighted those roads and their environments, whether designed for road side aesthetics or as fast efficient transportation are the outcomes of historical negotiations. Attore et.al. (2000) emphasised on historical significance of vegetation planted along the roads. The species of trees and shrubs planted along the roads and the ways of their arrangement can represent traditions of different historical periods and can help to trace the history of the development of road. According to Wilson (2002), roads can also have associative values derived from their

interconnections with significant events, persons, and work of art, and they can also reflect entire periods of the development of the state, nation or other social groups. Such roads may be deeply embedded in the consciousness of people and can be figuratively called as *‘time line of the country’* or a *‘Country’s main street’*.

The Historicity of the Ghat Road

After the death of the great ruler of Wayanad Pazhassi Raja, the district was annexed by the British. The British rule turned a new page in the history of Wayanad. The British authorities opened up this land for cultivation of tea and other cash crops. They laid roads across the dangerous slopes of Wayanad from Kozhikode and *Thallassery*. These roads were extended to Mysore and Ooty through Gudallur. When the state of Kerala came into being in 1956, Wayanad was a part of Kannur district. In 1957, south Wayanad was added to Kozhikode district and north

Wayanad remained with Kannur district. The region was known as *Mayakshetra* (Maya's land) in the earliest records. *Mayakshetra* evolved into Mayanad and finally to Wayanad. By amalgamating the north Wayanad and south Wayanad the present Wayanad district came into being on the 1st November 1980 comprising three taluks viz. Vythiri, Mananthavady and Sultan Bathery. The British failed to find a way up to Wayanad and wandered long stretches through forests and at last decided to seek the help of the tribal king *Karinthandan*, who was instrumental in showing the path that leads to Wayanad. Thus the British could finally enter Wayanad.

CHAPTER-2

THAMARASSERY GHAT

Thamrassery Ghat is a spine chilling experience taking a ride on Thamarassery Ghat roads. The panoramic view of the nature while journey in through Thamarassery Ghat and the adventurous hairpins hold you spell bound. Thamarassery Ghat or Thamarassery Churam as it is called in Malayalam is a gateway to wayanad connecting Calicut district with Wayanad district on NH212. In this 14km long pass there are 9 hairpin bends which is a daring experience. Thamarassery Ghat or Thamarassery Chruam begins from *Adivaram* and ends at Lakkidi where you see the welcome board to Wayanad district. Thus, it should be well understood that the Ghat belongs to Calicut district, though it is also known by the name Wayand Churm or Wayanad Ghat. If you pass through Thamrassery Ghat, you cannot but stop and take a look at the fascinating beauty of the mountain ranges and the forest below. It attracts hundreds of travellers everyday. The view point at the 9th hairpin, at a height of 2000ft. above sea level give a mesmerising sight of green forest, miniature view of vehicle moving up and small towns beneath. The monkeys on either side of the road thrill everyone. The tourism department has undertaken to build more view points for the travellers to admire the splendor of the ghat.

There is a story being told about the discovery of Thamarassery Ghat or Thamarassery Churam. Karinthandan, a native tribal man of Wayand district helped British engineers to construct a road from Calicut to Wayand. The Viceroy had announced a reward for those who build a road from Calicut to Wayanad. In order to gain the reward and fame, the engineer led his guide to a peak area and shot him dead. The soul of *Karinthandan* started troubling passengers; occuring several accidents at the Ghat. The natives called a

panditji and he chained the soul of *karinhandan* to a huge banyan tree . this tree is known as *Changala Maram* or Chain Tree. There is an interesting feature about this tree. It is believed that the chain is getting lengthened as the tree grows taller. Although this tree is getting taller, the straight chain hanging on the tree has been just touching the ground. As soon as you cross the welcome board to wayand you can see the Chain Tree. People now consider *Karinhandan* as the guard of the Thamarassery Ghat and Wayand district. A small temple is constructed near the Chain Tree and people pray at the temple for the safe journey through the Ghat.

IMPORTANT GHAT ROADS CONNECTING WAYANAD

The district of Wayanad is awesomely spread in an area of 2126 sq. km. It is bound on the east by Nilgiris and Mysore districts of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka States respectively; on the north by Coorg district of Karnataka; on the south by Malappuram district of Kerala; and on the west by Kozhikode and Kannur districts of Kerala. The altitude of Wayanad varies from 700 to 2100 meters above sea level.

The hill ranges of Vythiri Taluk, through which the road from Kozhikode ascends to the Wayanad plateau over mind-boggling bends and ridges are the highest locations. From the highest altitude of the Western Ghats on the western border of the district, the plateau of Wayanad gradually slopes down eastwards. Further, from Mananthavady, it becomes a common plain of paddy fields with the swift flowing Kabani River meandering through it. The reserve forests through which the river flows are Begur, Rampur, Kurichiyat, Kuppadi and Mavinhalli regions in Kerala and Kakankote and Begur in Karnataka. Its geographical position is peculiar and unique. The difference in altitudes of each locality within the district influences the variation in the climatic conditions.

Wayanad is one of the principle areas in Kerala for tourism. The Kozhikode– Mysore National Highway 212 (NH 212) passes through Wayanad district. Wayanad is well connected by road to various parts of Kerala and other neighbouring states. Buses go frequently between important centres like Mysore, Bangalore, Ooty, etc. While travelling from Mysore on NH 212, at a place called Gundelpet the road forks, and one route leads to Ooty and the other leads to Sultan Bathery, which is a prominent town of Wayanad. More than 50% of the traffic in and out of Wayanad passes through NH 212, mainly via Kozhikode.

Mainly five **Ghat Roads** are used for reaching Wayanad from coastal towns and lower hilly towns of Kerala which are as follows:

- a. From **Thalassery** : *Nedumpoil–Periya Ghat road*, which connects Kasargod, Kannur, Thalassery and Kuthuparamba with Wayanad.
- b. From **Kozhikode**: *Thamarassery–Lakkidi Ghat road*, part of NH 212, which connects Kozhikode and the rest of Kerala, south of Kozhikode with Wayanad.
- c. From **Vadakara** : *Kuttiady–Pakramthalam Ghat road*, which connects Thalassery, Mahé, Vadakara, Nadapuram, Kuttiady and Thottilpalam with Wayanad.
- d. From **Iritty** : *Kottiyoor–Ambayathode–Palchuram–Boys Town Ghat road*, which connects lower hilly towns and villages of Kannur and Kasargod districts with Wayanad. The towns are : Panathur, Udayagiri, Cherupuzha, Alakode, Sreekandapuram, Payyavoor, Iritty, Peravoor, Kelakam, Kottiyoor, etc.
- e. From **Nilambur** : *Vazhikkadavu–Nadukani Ghat road*, which connects Nilambur, Palakkad, Thrissur and Perinthalmanna, with Wayanad

The NH 212 passes through Bandipur National Park and then through the Muthanga Wildlife Sanctuary which is on the Kerala–Karnataka state border. The roads are in good condition except for some sections inside the Bandipur Forest.

Thamarassery Ghat (*Churam*) is the gateway to the fascinating Wayanad district. This pass connects Wayanad to Kozhikode district (NH 212). There are nine hairpin bends in this 12 km long pass. This great pass is known for its beauty, mystique, and intrigue. This is the main pass to Wayanad and Mysore. It starts from Adivaram, a small town in Kozhikode district. The nine hairpin bends of the Ghat Road offers thrilling experiences to the tourists. The view from the top to the bottom is an amazing one. The View Point is another attraction on this pass. This is situated above the ninth hairpin bend, at a height of 2000 feet above sea level and provides an excellent view of the green forest beneath.

Thamarassery Site Profile

The Thamarasseri area is indeed a fascinating panorama. The ‘Thamarassery Ghat’ is known by some other names too like Thamarassery *Churam*, Wayanad *Churam*, Wayanad Ghat, Kozhikode-Wayanad Churam/Ghat, etc. The Ghat road is often called as Thamarassery Ghat.’ *Churam*’ is the Malayalam word for Ghat and therefore it is more prominently called Thamarassery Churam. This Ghat Road connects Kozhikode with Wayanad on National Highway (NH 212). It actually falls in Kozhikode district. The district Wayanad actually begins after the Ghat at a place called Lakkidi. One could see the welcome board to Wayanad, just after the top view point of the Ghat Road.

The Thamarasseri Ghat is just a connecting path between Kozhikode and Wayanad beginning from Adivaram. Nevertheless, it has more importance and relevance than a tourist place because of its enchanting and enamouring

offerings. Tourists cannot stay anywhere at the Ghat road except on the top point close to the Lakkidi Gate. Still the Ghat attracts hundreds of travelers every day. Starting from Adivaram and covering a distance of 12 kms the Ghat road ends at Top View Point, Lakkidi. It has 9 sharp curves described as Hair Pins. The Ghat road which is the gateway to Wayanad district passes through thick forests and high mountain slopes with lush green vegetation and cascading streams. Atop, almost 700 meters above the sea level, tourists can have a bird's eye view of the deep South valley and the beautiful winding roads.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT

Wayanad: The Historical Context

Wayanad was traditionally known as the land of forests (Nair 1911). There are different versions about the origin of the name Wayanad, that it was derived from the word *Vayalnadu* (the land of paddy fields) or *Vananadu* (the land of forests) and that it was the land of forests as well as paddy fields (Nair 1976).

There is considerable evidence about the new Stone Age civilisation as historical proof for the existence of organised human life in Wayanad, centuries before Christ. The earliest record of a ruling family in Wayanad is available in the shape of rock inscriptions in the Edackal cave of Ambukuthimala and this throws light on the bygone era and civilisation. This cave discovered in 1894 by a British Administrator was identified as a habitat of Neolithic people on the basis of the nature of representation on the cave walls (Gurukkal 1995). Based on the rock inscriptions in the Edackal caves in Wayanad, it has been presumed that Astroloid groups lived in the region prior to the arrival of the Dravidians and the Aryans (Gurukkal 1995).

From the oral tradition, it is evident that there were trade routes to Wayanad in the pre colonial period and that the thick forests of Wayanad supplied part of the timber for the sea trade from Calicut port (Cherian 1999). However, the role of the Adivasis in early

trade is not known. There is a memorial in Lakkidi in Wayanad of an Adivasi chieftain who disclosed the route from Tamarassery to Wayanad to the Britishers, and was treacherously killed after the disclosure. Kunhaman (1989) points out that till the middle of the 17th century, Wayanad was inhabited exclusively by different hill tribes in separate geographical divisions and ruled by Adivasi chieftains. Historically, the Adivasi communities of the Malabar region became the least developed among the Adivasi communities of Kerala. This is attributed to the socio-economic and geo-political conditions that prevailed in the region (ibid).

Some glimpses of early history of Wayanad are available in William Logan's Malabar Manual and from oral traditions in the form of songs and legends. Logan (1989) observes that the country was formerly held by Vedar Rajas ruling the Vedars (wild hunters) and thus the belief that Wayanad has been the home of many aboriginal tribes driven up from the low country of Malabar is probably true. It is believed that Wayanad came under the rule of two neighbouring kingdoms of Kottayam and Kurumbranad in the late 14th or 15th centuries (Johney 2001). According to the oral tradition, the king of the Kuruman Adivasi community in Wayanad was defeated by the Kottayam and Kurumbranad kings and Wayanad came under their rule. The Rajas of Kottayam introduced a settled form of government in Wayanad and brought several Nair families from the coastal land. They divided the country into Nads or small divisions and placed them under Nair chieftains for purposes of administration (Nair 1911, Mundakkayam 2002). The Nair chieftains became hereditary holders of the lands and derived a share of the produce instead of regular rent. All administrative powers rested with Nair chieftains and they treated Adivasis as inferior beings and used them for hard manual labour. Even though Adivasis were enslaved by the migrants, they were free to use forest land and its resources by giving a minimal rent in the form of forest produce to the Nair landlords (Logan 1989).

The conquest of Wayanad by the Mysore Sultans had a significant impact on the property rights of the indigenous communities. After Hyder Ali invaded Wayanad in 1766 AD and brought it under his rule, the migration of Muslims to Wayanad, which had started in the 16th century accelerated (Johne 2001). During this period, large areas of forests were mortgaged by the Nair landlords to certain Muslim merchants who exercised the rights of the original proprietors. This affected the customary rights of Adivasi people and curtailed their access to agricultural and forest lands (Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam 2007).

After the defeat of Tippu Sultan in 1792, the province of Malabar was ceded to the British, but Wayanad was excluded from it. Tippu handed over the entire region to the British after the Sreerangapattanam truce. The Kottayam Rajas who were ousted by Hyder Ali and who helped the British in overthrowing the Mysorean power, were restored to their original status of rulers of Wayanad by the British (Kurup 1986). Wayanad thus came under the administration of Pazhassi Raja, the then ruler of Kottayam. Subsequently, the British turned hostile and this was followed by encounters between the British and Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja of Kottayam, and Wayanad became one of the main centres of anti-British struggle in the Malabar province under the English East India Company. Pazhassi Raja fought the British till his death in 1805. After that Wayanad was under British colonial rule until 1947. Kurichias who were experts in martial arts were part of Pazhassi Raja's army.

The entry of the East India Company into Wayanad stands out as the most significant part of the onset of „modern civilisation“. Wayanad was used for raising plantations and large scale cultivation of cash crops such as tea, coffee, pepper and cardamom. This district is one of the biggest foreign exchange earners of the state in India due to its cash crops and there is the complaint that it is not given the consideration and attention it deserves by the powers at the centre and state levels in various development programmes (Johne 1995). Wayanad has an

agricultural economy and there are no major industries in Wayanad. The severe drought in 2003 in a high rainfall district like Wayanad is clear evidence of the destruction of balance in the eco-system. This has affected agricultural practices, yields and prices and the availability of wage labour. Further, alienation of forest lands, village commons and other landholdings led Adivasis to material and cultural alienation. The transition of landless Adivasis was quick, from forest dependence to slavery, to bonded labour and to wage labour.

The Current Scenario

Wayanad is one of the beautiful hill stations located in the Western Ghats on the north eastern part of Kerala state. The District Headquarters at Kalpetta is at a distance of 76 km from the sea shores of Calicut. Its boundaries are North, Coorg and Mysore (Karnataka); South, Malappuram District; East, Nilgiri (Tamil Nadu) and West, Kannur and Kozhikode districts. During the colonial period, Wayanad was part of the Malabar district of the Madras Presidency, directly under British rule. The present district of Wayanad was formed by merging parts of Calicut and Canannore districts on November 1, 1980 as the 12th district of Kerala. A large part of Wayanad is forested and covered by plantations.

Despite the large forest cover and plantation economy in Wayanad, poverty among the Adivasi communities is estimated at 60.4 per cent (Chathukulam and John 2006). The level of extreme poverty is indicated by the fact that 32 starvation deaths were reported among the Adivasis in 2002 from a single Panchayat, Noolpuzha in Wayanad district (George 2004). Wayanad district has the highest proportion (37.4%) of the Adivasi population in the state, but they constitute only 17.4 per cent of the district's population (Census of India 2011a). Adivasis who had been in the majority in Wayanad a century ago became a minority over a period of time (Aiyappan 1992).

The Adivasi communities of Wayanad are socio-economically and culturally diverse and include Paniyan (44.7 per cent), Adiyans (7.1 per cent), Kattunayakan (9.9 per cent), Kurichian (17.4 per cent), Mullukuruman (17.5 per cent) and Uralikuruman (2.7 per cent),

(Menon 2010). Kurichians and Mulla Kurumans own land and practice settled agriculture; Paniyas and Adiyans are mainly wage labourers with a few who own land; Kattunayakans depend on forest labour for their livelihood. Occasional forest labour and collection of non timber forest produce contributes to their income. The Urali Kurumans were traditionally artisans and today, most of them are agricultural labourers (Centre of Excellence 2006). The landholding pattern and the nature of occupation are also different among these Adivasi groups.

The two communities under study are Paniya and Kurichia communities of Wayanad district. They represent two large tribal communities in Wayanad and have distinctive socio-cultural economic and political status and experience in the state initiated development programmes. As these two communities present maximum diversity in their social organisation, cultural heritage and practices and development experiences in terms of land and livelihood, they have been selected for this study. The following section discusses the socio-cultural background of the Kurichians and Paniyas.

Paniyas and Kurichias

As per the census of 2001, among the 35 Adivasi communities in Kerala, the Paniyas form the single largest group (22.5%), followed by the Kurichias (9.0%). In Wayanad, the Paniyas constitute 44.7 per cent and the Kurichias 16.9 per cent of the Adivasi population in Wayanad (Census of India 2011b).

The Paniyas, being the original inhabitants of the area, are considered aborigines (Nair 1911). Nair describes their past as savage tribes living in caves and thick

forests, enslaved by the *Goundar* land owners. Gradually, they spread to the Wayanad hills and neighbouring places like parts of Coorg and Mysore. An old *Chetti*'s narration is given in the 1961 Census, according to which the Paniyas were living in the interior of Wayanad hills until they came into contact with the plains people. They used to gather on festive occasions to collect the leftover food from discarded leaf plates of the *Chettis*, and flee to the forest uttering „*ippi – ippi*“. Once, the *Chetti* decided to trap them by using nets. The Paniyas entered as usual and the *Chetti* trapped them and used them for agricultural operations. They were living in the forests eating wild food and they wore no clothes but leaves and barks.

Different authors have different opinions about the exact location of the origin of the Paniyas. Aiyappan (1992) points out that according to Paniya legends, their origin is Ippimala, a mountain near the Banasuran hill in West Wayanad. However, the exact location is unknown to the Paniyas and they believe that their great forefathers whom they refer to as Uthappan and Uthamma were trapped by Wayanadan *Chettis* (Wayanadan

Goudar in another Mooppan's description) while gathering food and enslaved. However, they are perceived as the original inhabitants of Wayanad region according to this myth. According to Gopalan Nair (1911), *ippimala* is near the Thamaracherry Ghats. However, according to Aiyappan there are no traces of *Chettis* in Thamarassery Ghats. In their *penappattu* (the song they sing during the death ritual beginning on the seventh day), they narrate the story of their origin from Ippimala and remember all their ancestors beginning from *Uthappan* and *Uthamma* who negotiated with god in the creation process.

The Kurichias are also considered one of the oldest inhabitants of Wayanad (Mathur 1977). According to Balakrishnan (1983), the Kurichias, Paniyas and Kadars lived in the heart of the high range Durga forests before the arrival of the *Namboothiris*, *Nairs* and *Ezhavas* (different caste groups). According to him,

they had no contact with *Namboothiris* and *Nairs* before they settled in the forest region. About Kurichias there are other constructions- for instance, that they are warriors from the *Kari Nair* community brought by Pazhassi from the southern part of Malabar (Aiyappan and Mahadevan 1990). According to Vayaleri (1996), this location is reasonable as there are Kurichias in the Kannavam areas, which is part of southern Malabar. At the same time, he doubts their origin as *Kari Nairs*. In a personal interview with him, K.K Annan an ex-MLA from the Kurichia community said that they were not brought from Travancore area by the Pazhassi Raja as some authors have written. In his enquiry about the family of the Rajas at Kottayam, Travancore he found that it is a baseless argument. He believed that Kurichias are one of the early inhabitants of Malabar. He maintained that their presence in Kannur and Kozhikode districts shows their traces in the Malabar area rather than in

Thiruvithamkur. Kurichia's *olipporu* (guerilla type war) with Pazhassi against the British and their special talent in *olipporu* gives further evidence that they knew the nooks and corners of Wayanad forests and this is another inference for their being the inhabitants of Malabar forests before Pazhassi.

The Paniya settlement was known as *Padi* (settlement) and it consisted of many *Chalas* (huts) where individual families lived. Now nobody is using these terms and their settlements are commonly known as „Paniya colony“, a term given by the state. During the feudal period and early independent period, Paniyan's huts were built on the fringes of their employer's dry land or paddy fields and thus a settled way of life began. At present, they are settled in the same area or in a different location in government built colonies, in tiled houses with two or three small rooms and a kitchen.

CONCLUSION

The Thamarasseri Ghat Road possesses all the attributes not only to catapult hill tourism in Wayanad, but is also imbued with the vibes to be a destination in itself. The niche landscape with absolutely thrilling dimensions is certainly a pull factor as regards special interest tourists. Of course, the negative impacts of tourism development is likely to pose threat to the unique flora and fauna in the Ghat zone and therefore unplanned and uncontrolled tourism initiatives need to be plugged in the formative stages itself. The Ghat Road, as brought to light in this work can pave the way to decongest the fragile hill tourism spots of Wayanad and its other access routes. It can also contribute immensely to the ‘place making’ of that part of Malabar region by carving out a niche image mainly triggering upon the experiential aspects. This study reiterates the fact that only tourism with responsibility at the crux shall gain grounds in Thamarasseri.

The present study has been crafted to provide a broad view regarding the importance of Ghat Roads in enriching touristic experiences in manifold ways with particular focus on the Thamarasseri Ghat Road bordering Kozhikode and Wayanad in Kerala. This research work attempts to examine the modus operandi in vogue as regards the preservation of the Ghat Road while also analyzing the views of tourists and the authorities concerning the touristic dimensions of the Ghat Road, especially as a scenic splendor laced with historical and cultural facets. This paper also evaluates the potentialities of the Ghat Road in promoting Hill Tourism and also its attributes which goes into the place making of both Wayanad and Kozhikode and the study ventures to unveil some of the important bottlenecks for promoting Hill tourism.

Furthermore, this study investigates on how tourism supports the conservation of the places around the Ghat Road and the public view towards this. An in-depth study on the prospects and significance of Ghat Road is expected to bring to fore the tourism attributes and resources and shall leverage the dynamics of management for developing quality tourism products and services along the Ghat Road which stretches 14 kms dotted with exquisite flora and fauna. The role of various stakeholders in the preservation of natural resources and the wildlife in the area is deliberated.

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Karinthandan : he is a local chieftain of paniyas

Churam: churam is a mountain pass in kerala, India cross the western ghats.

Adivaram: the lowest part of churam

'Changala maram' : chain tree

Thalassery.: is a place in kerala

Panditji

PEEP : People's Action For Educational and Economic Development of Tribal People