

# The Gender Disparities in Digital Media Access among Adiya Tribes of Wayanad

Communication & Journalism Research

5(1) pp 19-30

©The Author(s) 2016

Reprints and Permissions:

masscomhod@uoc.ac.in

ISSN 2348 – 5663

**Dr. B. M. Rajesh Kumar**

HSST in Journalism, GHSS Kolery, Wayanad, Kerala, India

## Abstract

The present study is aimed at seeking the existence of gender disparities in accessing digital media among Adiya tribes of Wayanad. The researcher has given emphasis on the mobile phone access and chances of m-governance for supporting development activities since the Adiya community is one of the most vulnerable tribal sects in the District. Today mobile phone has become an everyday gadget that addresses different income groups with specific utilities. The device offers more opportunities with wider perspectives in the process of development. The study used survey method for data collection. The samples selected for the study is the Adiya tribe residing in the urban and rural areas of Mananthavady Taluk. The study gives focus on the gender specific media habits of Adiya community.

## Key words

Gender, Digital Media, Media Access, Tribe

## Introduction

The Adiya tribe is one of the marginalised tribal communities in Kerala. They are traditionally called Ravula and are related to Ravula language speaking Yerava tribes of Coorg, Karnataka. The word Adiya denotes slave and the community is survived through bonded labour. Even today the major source of their income is daily wage labours of the migrants and the mainstream society.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, there were some isolated efforts from non government funded agencies and political parties to uplift Adiya tribes in certain perspectives. Personalities like Sri. P. K. Kalan was raised up to the level of Block Panchayath President and Folklore Academy Chairman with the support of CPIM (Communist Party of India Marxist). C. K. Janu, was another Adiya leader who initiated combined struggles of many Adivasi groups on the land issue which ended up in a violent reactionary revolt at Muthanga in 2003. Apart from P. K. Kalan and C. K. Janu the Adiya community continues to be marginalised in the social, educational and economic scenario.

This study focuses on the attitudinal differences between male and female Adiya tribes in the use of mobile phones in informing, educating and responding to the development efforts implemented among them.

## Objectives of the Study

### General Objective

Keeping in view the major field of research, the study aims to evaluate the existence of gender disparities in accessing digital media among Adiya tribe residing urban and rural areas of Wayanad District.

### Specific Objective

To study the gender disparities in the media habits with a special reference to the use of mobile phones and allied services.

### Research Method

An exploratory study was first conducted on a pre-defined segment of tribes comprising different demographic groups in order to provide a better insight and purpose to this research. Certain corrections were made to the questionnaire after the pre-test. Since the majority of the tribes are illiterate it was not possible for them to read the questionnaire and answer accordingly. Therefore the questions were translated to Malayalam and the enumerators read out the questions for the tribes. Survey method is administered for the collection of precise and objective data. The data collection was done through personal interviews via questionnaire.

**Table 1: Which mass medium do you depend the most?**

		Radio	TV	Cinema	Internet	Newspaper	No Answer	Total
Rural	Male	22	19	5	1	0	3	50
	Female	26	17	1	0	0	6	50
Urban	Male	23	25	1	0	1	0	50
	Female	22	23	1	0	1	3	50
Total		93	84	8	1	2	12	200

Mass media has proved to be the strongest catalyst of change. They have important roles to play as magic multipliers of information explosion. In the present era access to mass media and media literacy is considered to be key factors in the process of development.

Majority of the samples depend radio or television. When 44 per cent of the rural and 46 percent of the urban male use radio, it is 52 and 44 percent in rural and urban women respectively. The aggregate dependence of radio is 45 percent in the case of male and 48 percent in the case of female. So radio consumption of Adiya women is slightly over their counterparts.

As for television, a slight majority is evident among the male respondents. Here 38 per cent rural and 50 percent of the urban men opted television where as it is 34 and 46 per cent among rural and urban women. Ten per cent of the rural men voted for cinema where as it is 2 per cent women in all other strata. Of the 200 samples there is only one respondent who is a rural male marked the access to internet. The total percentage of tribes who access

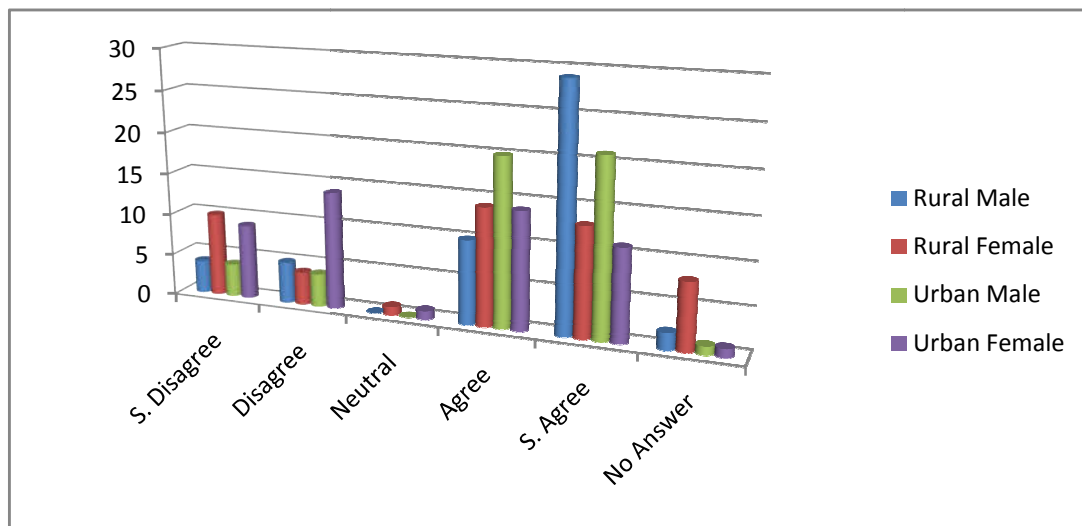
newspaper is 1 per cent which is equal among urban male and female. Six per cent of the samples say ‘no answer’. Except radio the Adiya males enjoy a slight majority in the access to all other mass media.

**Table 2: I use mobile phone**

		S. Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	S. Agree	No Answer	Total
Rural	Male	4	5	0	10	29	2	50
	Female	10	4	1	14	13	8	50
Urban	Male	4	4	0	20	21	1	50
	Female	9	14	1	14	11	1	50
Total		27	27	2	58	74	12	200
		Total -ves		54	Total +ves		132	

Mobile phones change our lives drastically. As the prices of the handsets as well as the service slashed, mobile phones became affordable for everyone. Like dress or other gadgets it is consumed all income groups. Tribes are not different here. Introduction of china made unbranded phones and the availability of pre-owned handsets made this medium more popular.

**Chart 1: The use of mobile phones**



There is a universal acceptance for mobile phones among Adiyian tribes as 78 per cent of the rural males, 54 per cent rural females, 82 per cent urban males and 50 per cent urban females say they use mobile phones. With 40 per cent agree and 42 per cent strongly agree Urban males are the largest users of mobiles among Adiyian tribes. When a total of 27 per cent tribes say they do not use mobile phones 61 per cent welcomes the technology. There are 1 per cent neutral and 6 per cent no answer. Hence there exists a significant percentage of difference in the use of mobile phones among Adiya males and females.

**Table 3: Mobile phones are helpful to keep touch with friends and relatives**

		S. Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	S. Agree	No Answer	Total
Rural	Male	1	4	0	18	23	4	50
	Female	1	1	0	16	17	15	50
Urban	Male	0	3	2	30	14	1	50
	Female	2	2	8	20	15	3	50
Total		4	10	10	84	69	23	200
		Total -ves 14		Total +ves 153				

Mobile phones add speed to interactive communication. They are convenient and handy. Adiyani tribes understand this fact and accept the device as helpful. From the above table it is evident that majority votes positive to the statement. 82 per cent of the rural men responded positive to the statement where as it is 66 per cent in rural women, 88 per cent among urban men and 70 per cent in urban women. So Adiyani males show more positive attitude towards the use of mobile communication for socialization process.

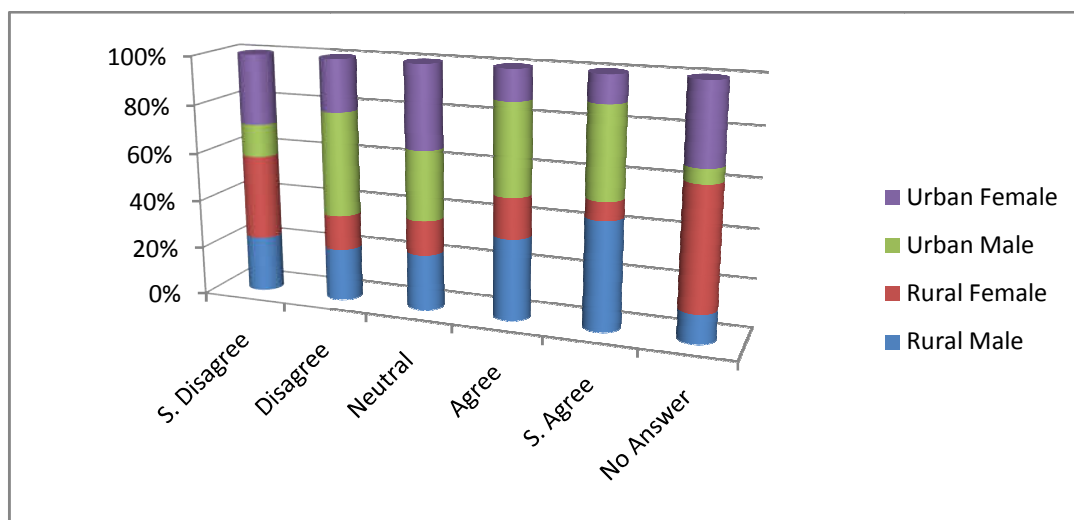
**Table 4: I utilise free SMS offers as a cheap means of communication**

		S. Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	S. Agree	No Answer	Total
Rural	Male	12	6	8	8	12	4	50
	Female	18	4	5	4	2	17	50
Urban	Male	7	12	10	9	10	2	50
	Female	15	6	12	3	3	11	50
Total		52	28	35	24	27	34	200
		Total -ves 80		Total +ves 51				

Short Message Service is meant to carry quick messages transfer at a cheap cost. The purpose varies in different categories of the society.

Of the samples 24 per cent of the rural men strongly disagree with the idea, 36 per cent of women join the squad. As for urban males 14 per cent say the same and 30 per cent females also say they strongly disagree. With 12 per cent rural males, 8 per cent rural females, 24 per cent urban males and 12 per cent females the total negative responses gross to 40 per cent of the samples. 17.5 per cent think neutral and 17 per cent have 'no answer'.

**Chart 2 : Use of free SMS**



When 40 per cent of the rural men support the idea, only 12 per cent of rural women agree with it. 38 per cent of the urban men think positive while it is only 12 per cent among urban women. There is a trait of male dominance visible here as the level of use of sms is comparatively high among both urban and rural men. In both urban and rural women it is less.

**Table 5: Which tariff do you prefer for your mobile recharge?**

		Rs. 100	Rs. 50	Rs. 20	Rs. 10	Others	No Answer	Total
Rural	Male	1	10	24	7	2	6	50
	Female	0	3	16	8	0	23	50
Urban	Male	2	7	25	6	0	10	50
	Female	0	5	15	7	0	23	50
Total		3	25	80	28	2	62	200

The recharge tendency is similar among urban and rural Adiyen tribes. Men show more recharge options than women. There are three men (one from rural and two from urban area) who prefer Rs. 100 recharges where as no women use this. 20 per cent of the rural men recharge with Rs. 50 coupons while it is only 14 per cent among urban men, 6 per cent among rural women and 10 per cent in urban women.

The most favourite recharge option among Adiya tribes is Rs.20 which is preferred by 48 per cent rural men, 32 per cent rural women, 50 per cent urban men and 30 per cent urban women. Rs. 10 recharge stand next to it as 14 per cent of Adiya tribes use it. 31 per cent of the total respondents give 'no answer' this statement. Here the recharge has a direct relation to the earnings and the role of men in the Adiya society. The wage for labour is almost the double in the case of men which is reflected in their spending habits.

**Table 6: The frequency of my mobile recharge**

		Daily	weekly twice	Weekly	Monthly	Others	No Answer	Total
Rural	Male	9	21	8	5	2	5	50
	Female	10	8	4	4	1	23	50
Urban	Male	8	16	11	7	0	8	50
	Female	6	11	4	4	1	24	50
Total		33	56	27	20	4	60	200

Recharge tariff and frequency reveals the way one utilizes the mobile phone. It also shows the affordability of the technology by the respondents. Here 18 per cent of the rural males recharge their phone daily where as it is 20 per cent among rural females, 16 per cent among urban males and 12 per cent among urban females.

The highest number of respondents voted for the option ‘weekly twice’ as 42 per cent of the rural males, 16 per cent of the rural females, 32 per cent of the urban males and 22 per cent of the urban females opted this. 16 per cent of the rural males say they recharge weekly while it is only 8 per cent among rural and urban women. 22 per cent of the urban males recharge once in a week. When 10 per cent rural men recharge once in a month, it is 8 per cent in rural and urban women and 14 per cent in urban men. In the case of daily recharge rural women showed a clean majority of their counterpart but in weekly twice it is the males in both urban and rural areas show the majority. Most number of no answers is marked by women. 46 per cent of the rural women and 48 per cent of the urban women say ‘no answer’ to the frequency of recharge while it is 10 and 16 per cent among rural and urban men respectively.

**Table 7: I use the special recharge offers for free services**

		S. Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	S. Agree	No Answer	Total
Rural	Male	10	12	5	11	7	5	50
	Female	16	6	3	4	0	21	50
Urban	Male	6	14	9	13	4	4	50
	Female	9	3	6	12	1	19	50
Total		41	35	23	40	12	49	200
		Total -ves 76		Total +ves 52				

Use of special recharges and offer tariffs are utilized when people are vigilant and informed of these ideas. Such information can reach the target chiefly through retailers, newspapers, business promotion sms or calls etc. The level of such use indicates one’s knowledge and utility rates of the medium.

With 22 per cent of agree and 14 per cent of strongly agree the total positive response among rural men is 36 per cent where as it is 8 per cent among rural women, 34 per cent in urban men and 26 per cent in urban women. Here also the option ‘no answer’ is higher among women as 42 per cent from the rural area and 38 per cent from the urban area vote

for this. There is a considerable difference in the use of special recharge offers between rural and urban females as well as the male and female in general.

**Table 8: I gave my mobile number to the Tribal promoter**

		S. Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	S. Agree	No Answer	Total
Rural	Male	13	10	5	3	14	5	50
	Female	18	2	3	5	3	19	50
Urban	Male	16	17	6	4	3	4	50
	Female	12	7	6	2	3	20	50
Total		59	36	20	14	23	48	200
		Total -ves 95		Total +ves 37				

‘M’ governance is the new age mantra which is chanted by every corporate office all over the world. The tribal promoter is employed to mediate the process of development in the tribal groups. Tribal promoters are directed to work as a link between the tribal development office and the tribes. If the promoters or tribal offices can reach the tribes through phones, effective M governance will be the result.

With 26 per cent strong disagree, 20 per cent disagree and 10 per cent ‘no answer’ the rural men mark 56 per cent of negative responses where as it is 32, 34, 8 and 74 per cent respectively among urban men. When 36 per cent of rural women mark strong disagree with 4 per cent disagree and 38 per cent no answer, it is 24, 14 and 40 per cent among urban women to a total of 78 per cent of negative in each strata. The sum total of all the negative response is 71.5 per cent.

Comparatively rural men are more positive to the idea of ‘M’ governance as 34 per cent of them gave their mobile numbers to tribal promoters while it is followed by only 16 per cent of the rural women, 14 per cent of urban men and 10 per cent of the urban women. The total positive response among Adiya men is 48 per cent whereas it is only 26 per cent among Adiya women. There exists a gender disparity in the perception of mobile based governance among Adiya tribes.

**Table 9: Employers contact me through mobile phone**

		S. Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	S. Agree	No Answer	Total
Rural	Male	7	1	3	12	23	4	50
	Female	13	1	4	7	8	17	50
Urban	Male	5	0	4	21	18	2	50
	Female	13	7	4	3	6	17	50
Total		38	9	15	43	55	40	200
		Total -ves 47		Total +ves 98				

M governance has proved to be successful among software industry in India as the employers can make use of the services of the engineer even if he is on leave or in sick bed! Job seekers and students are happy to give their mobile phone numbers to potential employers.

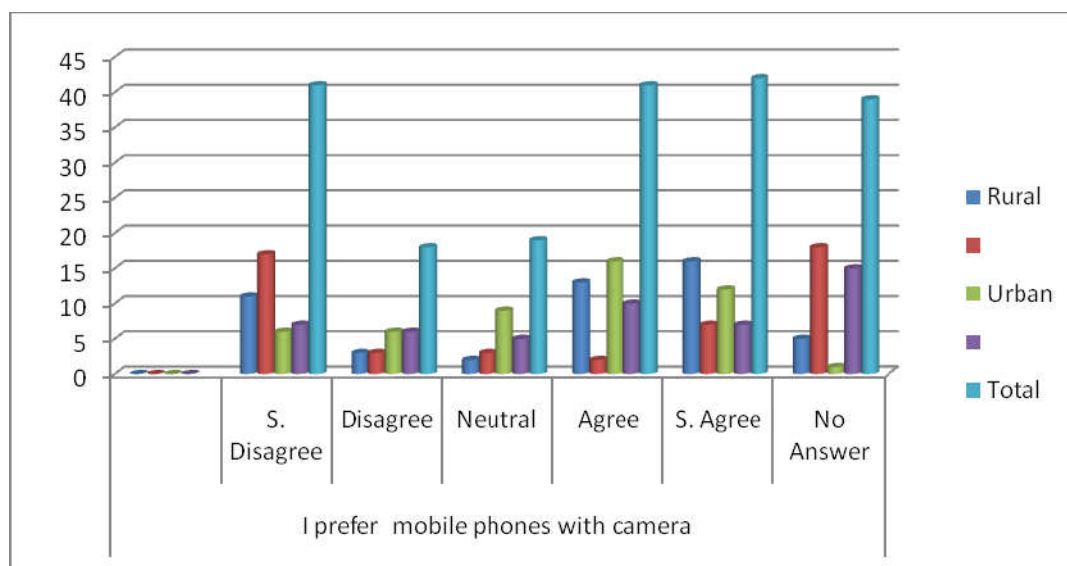
To the statement ‘employers contact me through mobile phone’ 70 per cent of the rural men and 78 per cent of the urban men responded positively where as it is only 30 among rural women and 46 per cent among urban women. Here also the gender disparity is evident.

**Table 10: I prefer mobile phones with camera**

		S. Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	S. Agree	No Answer	Total	
Rural	Male	11	3	2	13	16	5	50	
	Female	17	3	3	2	7	18	50	
Urban	Male	6	6	9	16	12	1	50	
	Female	7	6	5	10	7	15	50	
Total		41	18	19	41	42	39	200	
		Total -ves 59			Total +ves 83				

Camera phones are priced just above basic phones. As technology improves the taste of mobile aspirants also increase. This question is included to check whether the mobile using Adiyar tribes use options other than calls and sms.

**Chart 3: I prefer mobile phones with camera**



The positive response from rural men is 58 per cent while only 18 per cent rural women think so. 56 per cent of urban men prefer mobiles with camera while it is 34 per cent among urban women. Of the total women only 26 per cent think in favour of the idea of a camera phone where as 57 per cent of men prefer camera phones. The utilization of a value added technology of mobile phone is spread faster among men than women in the case of Adiyar tribes.

**Table 11: Which is your mobile service network?**

		BSNL	Idea	Airtel	Vodafone	Idea & Vodafone	Videocon	NoAnswer	Total
Rural	Male	0	25	3	15	1	0	6	50
	Female	0	23	1	3	1	0	22	50
Urban	Male	0	38	0	3	0	1	8	50
	Female	0	24	1	1	0	1	23	50
Total		0	110	5	22	2	2	59	200



This question was included to explore the understanding level of Adiya tribes about the choices they can avail of in the case of mobile networks. Here 50 percent of rural men against 46 per cent of the rural women and 76 per cent of the urban men against 48 per cent of the urban women prefer Idea network. One per cent of the total samples use two networks – idea and Vodafone. The main reason for choosing Idea is the wide coverage enjoyed by it. Many of the tribes did not hear any other network than Idea.

Vodafone is the next popular network among Adiya tribe as it covers 11 per cent of the total samples. Vodafone is subscribed chiefly by rural males as the statistics show 30 per cent of them use the network.

BSNL network has no subscriber from the sample where as lately introduced Videocon has managed to create at least one per cent subscribers. Women from both rural and urban strata show more no answer as it is 44 per cent in the former and 46 per cent in the latter. There are 12 per cent rural men and 16 per cent urban men to mark no answer or no mobile phones. Thus it is obvious that 29.5 per cent of the samples do not use mobile phones.

**Table 12: I change my sim/mobile service provider according to offers and tariff plans**

		S. Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	S. Agree	No Answer	Total
Rural	Male	15	16	5	7	2	5	50
	Female	20	3	2	2	2	21	50
Urban	Male	19	12	9	5	1	4	50
	Female	13	7	6	2	1	21	50
Total		67	38	22	16	6	51	200
		Total -ves		105	Total +ves		22	

Changing the service provider according to offers and special plans is a new trend among mobile users. This question aims at finding if such habits are active among tribes. Here rural men showed their disapproval with the statement with 30 per cent strongly disagree and 32 per cent disagree where as it is 38 per cent and 24 per cent among urban men. When it comes to rural women 46 per cent disliked the concept and 40 per cent of urban women join the negative response.

A total of 11 per cent stand neutral to the statement where as 25.5 per cent say they have no answer. Only 18 per cent of the rural men support the concept of changing the service provider while it has acceptance among 8 per cent rural women, 12 per cent urban men and 6 per cent urban women.

The total score of negative response is 52. 5 per cent while the total positive marks only 11 per cent. From the above statistics it is assumed that there is no significant difference in the attitude to change the service provider among Adiya male and female.

## Conclusion

**Table 14**

<b>M-governance aspects</b>	<b>Rural male</b>	<b>Rural female</b>	<b>Urban male</b>	<b>Urban female</b>
Use mobiles	78%	54%	82%	50%
Mobiles helpful to keep in touch	82%	66%	88%	70%
use of sms offers	40%	12%	38%	12%
I gave my no. to Tribal Promoter	34%	16%	14%	10%
Employers contact me through mobile	70%	30%	78%	18%

The communication aspects among Adiya are tested with 13 questions. Of these questions four are direct questions and others are attitude scales. The major focus in this aspect is on mobile phone communication habits among Adiya. From selected five positive statements 1000 responses were marked on the use of mobile phones. The total positive attitude responses are 47.1 per cent against 29 per cent negatives. The neutrals and no answers are 8.2 per cent and 15.7 per cent respectively.

From the above table it is evident that in each aspect the positive response and awareness is much higher among males than females. In the case of mobile use the disparity among rural male and female is 24 per cent where as it is 32 per cent in the urban area. In the case of mobile communication this disparity level is 16 per cent in the rural area and 18 per cent in urban. The disparity rate is wider in using sms offers. It is 28 per cent in rural and 26 per cent in urban areas. A clear difference of 18 per cent is marked with rural are when it comes to m-governance and only 4 per cent in urban tribes. As for the employer contact the rate of difference is the highest. The disparity is 40 per cent in rural areas and 60 per cent in urban centres.

Though the result is promising for m-governance among Adiya tribes there exists a wide gender disparity in the access and use of mobile phones in the community.

## References

- David Demers and Viswanath K. (2004). *Mass Media, Social Control, and Social Change-a Macrosocial Perspective*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Uma Nerula. (2012). *Development Communication – Theory and Practice*, Har-Anand Publications Pvt. Ltd: Shrivastava,
- Divya.(2000). *The Development of Scheduled Tribes in Madhya Pradesh*. New Delhi: Gyan Pub. House.
- Sahay, K N. (1997). *Tribal Self Image and Identity*, In Dube (ed) 1977.
- R.D.Wimmer & J.R.Dominick (2003). *Mass Media reserch: An introduction*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Belmont C.A.
- Biminith B. S.(2014). *Navamadhyamangalude Puthiya Akashangal*, Kerala Press Academy,
- Patnaik, N. (1993). *Primitive Tribes-So-Called*. In Singh (ed).

National information centre – Wayanad district unit (2005). *Annex A Distribution of Scheduled Tribes in Kerala*, Thiruvananthapuram, Govt. of Kerala: NESAPublication.

Mathur P.R.G. (1977). “Tribal Situation in Kerala”, Kerala Historical Society, Trivandrum.

Krishnan Vinod (2006). *Wayanad Initiative – A report on the Adivasi cause for a multifarious Developmental package*. Calicut: Indian Institute of Mangement.

Jacob, T.G. *Reflections on the Caste Questions*, Bangalore.

Govinda Chandra Rath. (2006). *Tribal Development in India: The Contemporary Debate*. New Delhi: Sage.

Bhaskaran. (2004). *Mother Forest – The unfinished story of C.K.Janu*. New Delhi: Women unlimited publication.