



Indigenous Knowledge Resources with the Kani Tribes in the Pothigai Hills of Tamil Nadu

Dr. M.S. Thangam

Head of the Department, Research Head and Associate Professor of History,
Sarah Tucker College (Autonomous), Tirunelveli 627 007, Tamil Nadu, South India.
Email - msthangamus@gmail.com

Abstract: *The term Indigenous Knowledge, is used to depict the knowledge system developed by a community as opposed to the scientific knowledge. The specific value of indigenous knowledge is searching for a way to sustainable development for mankind. The Kani tribes who have a rich wisdom embedded in their cultural traditions passed it from generation to generation. Their knowledge about medicinal plants, health care, construction of house, innovative method of honey collection and minor forest products, art of traditional system of governance, intuitions about wild environments and animals behavior, harmonious interactions with nature and sustainable forest conservation ethics, knowledge about landscape etc., are worth mentioning. Hence such knowledge should be collected, preserved, analysed and applied carefully by the present day generation without altering its basic values. Hence this study aims to attain this objective.*

Key words: *Indigenous Knowledge, Kani tribes, Traditional Systems, Biological Resources.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The term "Indigenous Knowledge" refers to knowledge system embedded in the cultural traditions of the regional, indigenous or local communities. It is the unique local traditional wisdom in a society or culture passed from generation to generation. International Council for Science's study group on Science and Traditional Knowledge characterizes traditional knowledge as: a cumulative body of knowledge, know-how, practices and representations maintained and developed by peoples with extended histories of interaction with the natural environment. These sophisticated sets of understandings, interpretations and meanings are part and parcel of a cultural complex that encompasses language, naming and classification systems, resource use practices, ritual, spirituality and worldview.

The term Indigenous Knowledge, is used to describe the knowledge systems developed by a community as opposed to the scientific knowledge that is generally referred to as 'modern' knowledge. In other words, the motive for looking at Indigenous Knowledge System is not only because it will provide us with a rich stratum of ideas and theories, but also it will allow us to consider the knowledge in our own society and assess whether we in reality are as 'advanced' and 'developed' as we think we are. Indigenous knowledge is based largely on bio-indicators or natural signs.

The significant benefits of indigenous knowledge are that these communities have developed their own knowledge in the realm of plant breeding and medicinal plants, which are even more obvious. The fact is that there would be no modern plant breeders if there were no indigenous knowledge. The value of indigenous knowledge for disaster risk reduction is significant. Thus their knowledge has been the basis for agriculture, food preparation, health care, education, conservation and the wide range of other activities that sustain societies in many parts of the world. Indigenous knowledge maintains health for humans and nature in the context of sustainability and with a goal to better understand culture as original human heritage. The rich artistic tradition that is found within most indigenous society includes the visual arts, dance and song. Indigenous diets can help fight modern illness say health experts. Many have clear tradition of custodianship over knowledge and customary law may guide who may use different kinds of knowledge at particular times and places, and specify obligations that accompany the use of knowledge.

South Indian Western Ghats are considered as one of the oldest mountain ranges in the world. The Pothigai hills are lying in the southern part of the Western Ghats. Situated in the tropical forests mainly in the southernmost part of the Western Ghats, India, inhabit an indigenous Kani tribe who are traditionally nomadic. They are the original inhabitants residing in the dense forest from time immemorial. According to the 1981 censuses the Kanikkarars were numbering 3698 in Tamil Nadu. There are five Kani settlements at present in the Kalakkadu Mundanthurai Tiger



Reserve (KMTR) area. They are Servalar Kani settlement, Agasthiyar settlement, Periya Mayilar Kani settlement, Chinna Mayilar Kani settlement and Inchi Kuzhi Kani settlement.

The Kani tribes resided in these areas have a rich wisdom embedded in their cultural traditions passed from generation to generation. The knowledge about medicinal plants, health care, construction of house, innovative method of honey collection and minor forest products, art of traditional system of governance, intuitions about wild environments and animals behaviour, harmonious interactions with nature and sustainable forest conservation ethics, knowledge about landscape etc., are worth mentioning.

2. OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this study are to

- identify and high light the indigenous knowledge resources with the Kani people and to
- explore indigenous knowledge among Kani Tribes and making use of their knowledge to solve actual modern problems.

3. COLLECTION OF DATA / MATERIALS:

It is an original, descriptive and analytical study based on observation and interview schedule. Extensive field survey has been undertaken to study their indigenous knowledge resources. Field study by means of questionnaires, interviews, interactions, discussion and case studies have developed the study on right perspective. The information from the local news papers, journals and television news has been added. The published articles and books related to this topic form part of the study. This study aims at theoretical, methodological and empirical insights on this area.

4. METHOD:

For investigating the indigenous forms of production, transmission and circulation of knowledge among the Kani people anthropological and historical works form part of their memory transmission networks. By way of recording field research data, narratives, images as well as sounds among the Kani people and collecting the historical documents, published materials etc., were increasingly used by the researcher for the inductive methodological approach in research.

5. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY :

The Kani tribes have a rooted, traditional and indigenous knowledge system. Yet, all their knowledge is gradually disappearing due to many reasons. This study has great significance in the collection of that knowledge, preparation of recorded data and conservation of those information for the use of future generation. This work is proceeding towards the achievement of durable solution to this problem in the focused area.

6. STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM :

The indigenous Kani tribes in the Pothigai Hills in Tamilnadu and their living environment are enriched with indigenous knowledge resources. Since their knowledge system is embedded, collective and diversified the ownership, protection and management of these areas are complicated. Other problems are the collection of information, classification, copyright, intellectual property rights, the politics involved etc. So far these resources are not yet systematically documented and scientifically analyzed. Hence this study aims to overcome the above said problems.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HOUSE CONSTRUCTION

There is no ownership in the natural world. The Kani people by nature never think about ownership of land area in the forest. They believe that the whole Pothigai hill as their abode. Ever since they live in forest and hence they want to remain in forest. They have the freedom to live anywhere in the forest and to construct their houses. Nestled in Pothigai hills they have no parameters about their accommodation. They consider their houses as temporary sheds.

In olden days the Kani people used to build huts on the top of the trees. The huts which were called '*anamadam*' (elephant huts) have been said that the hills abound with elephants and tigers and that the Kanikarar were compelled to build their houses high up in trees. The walls were made of bamboos and the roofs were thatched and securely fastened to the branches of a substantial tree. A crude ladder was removed out of the reach of elephants.

Yet after their settlement, though they do not own land and do not possess documents for the ownership of lands or houses, they are allowed to build houses anywhere in the forest. They are allowed to make use of forest products for the construction of their houses. At the same time they are not supposed to sell them to outsiders. They have to have forest pass to go interior part of the forest.

The selection of the land for the construction of the houses for Kani people is quite interesting. They carefully select their residential areas. Mootukani is the eldest tribal chief of the Kani people. He selects the land for settlement.



While selecting the land area, he considers the land which is away from the danger of wild animals and river floods. He selects the plain slope area which is little away from water area. He prays to traditional gods while selecting the land.

Since they have fear over divine spirit they never select a spot where they feel the presence of divine spirit. In Pothigai hills they believe that nearly 101 gods are existed. Hence they want to live away from their presence. The Kani Pilathi recites the mantras to find out the movement of the divine spirit .using the musical instrument called “Kokkarai” and sing songs called “Sathupattu.” Following Pilathi, Mootukani confirms the area for residential purpose. When the selection of land is over, Mootukani measures and allots 10 feet of land to each family with a help of a stick. Then the land is cleared and leveled. The central parts of the lands become the area for the construction of their houses. They have a unique way of house construction. The Kanikarars have a hut type of dwellings. The huts are wide apart in places. They live both in small and big huts. They make fencing with living plants and wooden sticks around their areas.

They construct houses considering the direction of the wind. Since the wind blows and rain comes from the western direction, they construct houses accordingly. The roof is inclined towards south. Houses are rectangle in shape. Bamboo forms the chief building material. They use ideal woods as pillars to their houses. Each hut has six wooden pillars. The pillars are perfectly arranged in their houses. They call the pillars as legs. The six pillars are meant for six legs of a mother, a father and a child of a family. They believe that if the house has six legs then only their generation will multiply. They use leaves of “alappanai” or “tharuvai grass” for the construction of roofs and tied with “dolly” creeper. Approximately once in three years, they change the roofs of their houses with new leaves and grasses.

Each house has minimum two doorways. The main doorway leads to the backside door in straight path. Kani ladies often use back side door. The height of the door is very low. Those who enter should bend while entering. They construct houses of normal and small sizes with good ventilation having doors ways in straight line. Sankara Kani told that often bear, cheetah, tiger etc., visit their residential areas. For this reason they keep windows at a very low level while constructing their houses. Therefore they can identify the presence of animals around their houses through the windows. They construct house with the help of their neighbours and relatives. The construction of the house will be over in 2-3 days. They do not follow any rituals for the construction of their houses.

They apply cow dung regularly on the floor. The surrounding areas of their houses have plenty of garden plants for their domestic purposes. They grow plants like coconut, tamarind, narthai, jack fruit, pepper, roots, flowering plants etc., in front of their houses. In recent times some steel cabin toilets have been installed by the side of their houses with the support of the central government scheme. Since they do not have ownership documents over land and houses they cannot sell their houses to outsiders. They altogether change their settlement all of a sudden.

There are many differences in the mind set of the Kani people regarding the concept of house. The attitude of the Kani people towards house is totally different from the so called civilized people in plain areas. It may be a dream, an ambition and considering it as a temple to own houses to the people of plain areas. They feel proud and jealous over their houses. They consider house as their soul and it has life also. Having envious over the ownership of land with registration documents (patta) and possessing houses with many storied buildings they cannot understand the values of Kani people towards the ownership of houses. And the Kani people also cannot understand the attitude of the people in plain areas about house construction. But for Kani people, they consider houses as temporary shelter. Kani people do not construct houses, where they feel the presence of gods and goddesses. But for others, they consider houses as temples and they wish to have the existence of divine spirits in their houses.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT ART OF GOVERNANCE

The Kanikarar live together in small communities. Kani settlement system in Pothigai hills is that, a few families live in a cluster in the fringes of the hills. They live in several segmented areas each consisting to ten to twenty families dispersed in different neighborhood. Though they live different areas, they do follow their common customs and practices.

Every Kanikkarar settlement has a community council for maintaining social control. It consists of the Mootukani (chief), the Vilikani (convenor) and the Pilathi (physician and priest). All these offices are hereditary. The traditional structure of the Kani community is highly co-ordinated unit under the control of a tribal chief or head man called the “Mootukani.” Customarily Mootukani combines the role of a law giver, guardian and disposer of justice. He shoulders the responsibility as chief to solve the problems and issues arouse among them. He holds considerable influence over his community and enjoys various benefits and privileges. He presides over their community’s council meetings. And all the social questions are discussed and settled in that meeting. He decides the matters related to clearing the forest areas, agriculture, religious activities etc. Traditionally he plays the role of the protector, controller and problem solver. The amount of money collected as fines from the people during the community council meeting are spent to appease the gods and goddess.



The tribal physicians among the Kanis are known as “Pilathis.” They are the main source for the medicinal wisdom. Much of the tribal medical knowledge among the Kani is administered by the Pilathis. They are believed to have magical powers and perform various rituals and chant mantras with the help of an instrument named ‘Kokara.’ They are allowed exclusively to use this musical instrument. The Kanis can change the Pilathis if they found him inefficient. The existing Pilathi trains the new person for about six months before he quits his responsibility. However with time the traditional system of governance among the Kanis has been diluted to a large extent.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT MEDICINAL PLANTS

The Kani tribes have an extremely rich knowledge about the use of the biological resources around them. The forest where the Kani tribes are living is rich in medicinal plants. Rare varieties of plants enrich this forest resource. They have vast knowledge about medicinal plants. The use of the traditional knowledge for herbal medicines among the Kani tribes inhabiting the forests of the Western Ghats region is quite rich. They have their own medicine men known as “Pilathies” in their area and they can identify the herbal plants and their significances. These tribal physicians are the exclusive holders of the traditional medical knowledge of the tribe.

According to Kani tribal customs, only the Plathies have the right to transfer and disseminate their traditional medical knowledge. All the medicinal plants in the forests of the Western Ghats region are known to the public. Yet the knowledge of preparing the medicines is exclusively with the Kani tribes. Since they have the inherited knowledge the members in their family come to know since they involve in the preparation like collecting, drying, grinding and mixing the herbs.

ART OF HONEY COLLECTION AND MINOR FOREST PRODUCTS

Kani people used to collect wild honey from the interior forest area in the past. Even now collection (apiculture) is their main occupation. They are innovative and expert in taking wild honey from honey combs. They follow a peculiar method for honey collection. They tie a larger size dried bottle-guard skin cover in their hips. A nylon thread is hooked-up with an arrow is connected with the bottle guard cover. When they throw the arrow on the honey comb the honey flows through the thread and collected inside the bottle guard cover.

At present the Kani people rear honey bees in their neighborhood. They collect and sell honey for their day to day expenditure. They sell honey for Rs.600 per liter. Pure honey is always available in their houses. Honey bees are essential for the existence of living being on earth. It is a potential force for the safeguarding life cycle on earth. They are doing life saving business for the cause of humanity. Different types of silk worms are also reared by them.

Minor forest products play an important role in tribal economy. Minor forest products like *kuntharikkai*, *kadukkai*, *echchampattai*, cardamom, elachi, *jathikkai*, *elavankapattai* etc., are enormously available in the forest. Elachi and cinnamon are available in abundance in deep cool forest areas. Kani people know the art of collecting all types of spices. They cut the bottom portion of the *kuntharikkai* tree and lit fire on it and then milk like fluid oust out of it, and dried into benzoin resin. Oil seeds and flowers are put to myriads of medicinal uses.

They depend upon the forest raw materials for various purposes. Canes and bamboos of the forest are utilized for making household articles. Forest provides them with material to build their homes and to make items to practice their arts. Their art of collecting and making use of forest products is unbelievable. These minor forest products supplement their meagre income. The right to collect the minor forest produce and fuel by the tribal did not result in the depletion of forest wealth.

There is no business interest or intension in their mind. Citron fruits, coconuts etc., fall more under the trees. Though the ripped fruits fall on the floor around their houses, they do not think of selling those items with monetary interest. Though the merchants buy citron fruits for Rs.500/-, they do not show interest to sell those items.

INTUITION ABOUT WILD ENVIRONMENT

The Kani people are inbuilt genius. Their instinct works marvellously with nature. And they are innovative and their perception power is stunning. They are keen in observing the sounds and conscious about their safety always. They are sharp in watching whether any wild animals are roaming around their houses. If any sound comes they give absolute attention towards it. They identify all animals through their sounds. They stop talking while listening to the sound. They have the intuition to identify the wild animals. They observe nature acutely.

If any dangerous wild animal enters in their settlement area, all other animals will give different sounds. They very well get alert on hearing the sounds raised by monkeys, peacocks, squirrels etc., about the presence of wild animals. They identify all animals by their sounds. If any sound comes they give cent percent attention towards it. They stop talking while listening to the sound. And then the Kani people will raise their sounds above the volume of those animals to chase them.



They know the sounds of wild animals like tiger, elephant and *mizha* while they enter the area of their settlement. Though the tigers are carnivores they are very sensitive and they do not attack the human without reason. Hence these tribes do not have fear over tigers. They have vast traditional knowledge to encounter the wild animals. They are using tools made out of bamboo to chase away the animals that raid the agricultural crops. They have vast traditional indigenous local knowledge to counter the animal conflicts. They know the routes of the animals. They feel and identify the movements of the animals very easily. They can predict the arrival of elephants even before few minutes. And we can say that they can smell the animals also.

They know where the water springs are available inside forest area. They cut the stem of the timber and use it as vessel to carry water while moving inside forests. And also they cut a creeper and collect nearly four pots of water from it. If the water is not available, they bite an amla fruit and manage their thirsty situation. And also they know well, the places where forest products are available. They also know the availability of plants in the interior region of the forest.

They know the level of water in the river at different seasons. They say that very heavy rain will occur once in three years. Since sounds are primitive form of language, they use them perfectly. They convey their messages inside forest through sounds. They use varieties of sounds and signals as language in the interior jungle.

In olden days they used to go inside their houses and shut the door while other community people visit their area. Even now they have shyness and fear over the people from plain areas. They get little panic while seeing other community people and not with wild animals. They have hunting dogs in their houses and it is like cheetah and looks ferocious.

The Kani people attain socio economic equilibrium in relation to their environmental conditions. Most of them live close to their physical environment and it determines their economic activity.

HARMONIOUS INTERACTION WITH NATURE AND SUSTAINABLE FOREST CONSERVATION

The relationship between forests and the Kani tribe is intimate and age old. They have close association with forests and hills. Their dependency and association with forests are reflected in all aspects of their culture. They proudly identify them with forests and mountain. They live with nature. All the essential items for living are available in forest. Forests are their dwelling place. And so how we live in plain area, the same way they live in forest. They find out the routes inside the forest very easily. They go deep inside forest even up to 25 kilo meters.

It is common to find their community names after natural objects like trees, land, birds and animals. Besides indicating close relation between nature and society some of their names are of totemic significance. This totemic belief prevents them from harming the particular species of plant or animal. They have strong attachment over nature and it's by products.

They call forest as "*Solai*" (garden). They do not wear foot wears while at settlement. They go barefoot inside forest. It will be slippery to walk inside forest wearing shoes.

Kani tribes are hunter-gatherers. Hunting is not a sin in tribe's history. They hunt only for filling their stomach. They do not preserve food for future use. Though they are hungry, they do not eat stale items remaining after eating. They may use the heated food items only one time in a day and that too very rare. They share the food they have gathered with their neighbours. They do not know the technology of making salt and oil. They do not fry food items. They take bath in public places. Everything is public, open and sharing.

Animals disturb them both inside the forest as well as in their residential areas. Bears are lying inside *Solai*. Kani people always have fear over bears inside forest. Sometimes the bears visit the settlement areas and pluck the jack fruit and other fruits. If they come in group, one of the bears climbs on the tree and pluck fruits. Those who are standing below will run away with fallen fruits. Hence the bear on the tree will create loud noise. They have no fear over wild animals except bear. Bear will beat all animals and humans. The Kani people threaten their children by telling the name "bear".

Since they settle the other side of the river, the elephants find it difficult to cross the river to reach their residential area or otherwise they choose their settlement area, where elephants are unable to enter. Yet the tigers and elephants occasionally visit their residential area. If they come, they will pluck the coconut and jack fruit trees with roots. They identify the foot prints of the elephants easily. Even if they cross the grass area, they identify easily with the folding of those plants. If they cross the area after drinking water, the area will be wet. The Kani people have the ability to tell how many days or hours before the elephants crossed that area. If they cross very recently, they will not go in that area.

The ants and insects on the floor bite them and it creates pain and itching. They do not bother and get irritated out of it. Yet the tribes do not have fear over those animals and insects. In the Pothigai hills, days are meant for Kani



people and the rights for wild animals. Both are living harmoniously. The visitors can observe this situation, wonder and learn how human beings are interdependent with nature and leading a simple life.

The attitude of the tribal people towards forest is influenced by their relationship with it. They believe in the law of nature. They do not have ownership over land. They believe land is common to all given by nature.

Their settlements lie mainly on the river side like Servalar, Karaiyar, Inchikuzhi and Mayilar. Inchikuzhi is on the top of the Pothigai hills. The fresh water originates in the hills strike first only this area. It is a very fertile area. The Kani people do not have transport facilities to reach that area. They have to climb and reach that area by holding iron chains. They claim very easily even holding luggage and baby in their hands. Healthy atmosphere prevails always in Inchikuzhi. No sickness affects them. Hospitals are not essential. Banana, Sugar cane, Pine apple, papaya, coconut, mango, orange, betel nut trees etc., are abundant. They do not bother about time calculations. The sun will set even at 2 p.m. in Inchikuzhi. When the cock gives sound they understand it as morning. A particular variety of flower blooms at 4 p.m. and then they recognise it as evening time. Kani people prefer to stay in Inchikuzhi settlement because of their close intimacy with nature.

In olden days Kani people grew a rare variety of paddy called 'karai nel'. Now days, it is not available. It has been almost disappeared. Yet it is available in Kerala. The Kani people avoid chemical fertilizers or manures in their cultivation. All the food items produced here are organic in nature.

The Kani people consider forest products as gifts of god. Hence they must be used judiciously. Traditionally their economics are automated towards the satisfaction of their basic needs. Another important feature of their financial system is that their demand on the forest resources is minimum only for personal consumption. And such demands are easily met. Though there is free access to all resources for over-utilization is not in practice. Their wants are limited to necessities only. Traditionally accumulation of produce is less. And all activities are directed towards immediate consumption. They do not worry about future and do not preserve anything in their house. And profit motive is very less. A sense of mutual obligation and sharing is prevalent. There are avenues like ceremonial exchange, communal fests and other celebrations, which facilitate redistributions of the accumulated resources.

Most of religious celebrations, life cycle ceremonies etc., of the Kani tribes are connected with the forest. They are closely associated with jungle from his birth to death to fulfil their various needs. Many of the deities and spirits are believed to live on trees. It is common to find trees as places of spirits. Kani tribes believe that all the resources of the forest are the precious gifts provided to them by the supernatural. In fact the Kani tribes are observing different rituals and ceremonies for the supernatural forces before they use the natural resources. Failure to perform these rituals is considered to be a violation of their belief which leads to supernatural wrath.

Taboos on using different natural objects regulate the utilization of forest resources to a certain extent. Kani *Pilathis* organizes various magico-religious ceremonies for the welfare of men, animals, crops and forests.

If there is no rain in seasons, they assemble together in Karaiyar and sing rain song. And they sing with full faith. In the Tamil month of *Karthigai*, they perform *pujas* (rituals) to forest gods and sing songs. They collect bunch of bananas from everyone's garden for this rituals to restrict elephants not to enter inside the habited areas. They do not have any idea about famine. Though famine occurs in country side, it will not affect Kani settlement area.

When the jack fruit trees are not yielding the Kani people make a small cut on stem and pour water on it during solar eclipse day and raised their voice as one musical sound (*kuravai*). They believe that it will yield after this ceremony.

Their religions lead them to believe that there are many spirits living in the tress and forests. Their folktales often speak about the relation between human beings and the divine spirit and it is striking to see how many myths and legends, the deep sense of identity with the forest is emphasized.

Nature teaches us many lessons. The visitors of the forest can learn many lessons from the Kani people, animals, birds, plants and insects. Animals are living in groups. Elephants are known for living in groups. The young mother elephant leaves their small babies under the care of senior female elephant (aunty) in their group. When the small male elephants reach the age of three, they are chased away from their group. But they allow the males from other group. Tribes also want to live in group, love children and do not have marital relationship within their blood line. They teach us values through their behaviour. Since other community people are slowly deviating from nature, these values and behaviour can be observed and learnt from nature.

Practices like communal hunting, bounded relationship and collective festivities felicitate everyone to enjoy the forest produce maximum. The needs of the tribal population are more or less limited, their consumption pattern is congenial to the conservation of forests. Traditionally tribal culture is oriented towards the preservation and judicious use of forest wealth and there is no question of destroying it.

From generation to generation many indigenous peoples in different areas of the world used life activity optimal for their mode of life used the ecological function without destroying the resource basis on which they depend. Today, when mankind is faced with the necessity to find ways out of the worldwide ecological crisis as a result of over



exploitation of nature, the present society has come to understand the need to live in harmony with nature, and knowledge about nature becomes particularly necessary in this respect.

Since man is called as social animal, it is natural that he loves to be with nature. Humans like to see the behaviour of animals, birds, insects and plants etc., in nature. They like to stay in the natural environment. Awareness should be made to make the so called civilized people to feel the nature, that how it is different from their stressful living situation. Their instinct of love towards nature should be induced and they should learn lessons from the nature. They should also learn negative lessons from nature that when we go against and damage nature, we have to face the repercussions like natural calamities, diseases and disaster. And also when we go against our tradition, our own life on earth will extinct.

Humans almost destroyed nature. Everywhere the cry is “back to nature.” Modern brain is addicted to consumerism. Making use of indigenous experiences in nature using forest, soil, water, air on ethical norms of human beings which create harmonies inter relations in the nature-society system. There is a need for investigating the indigenous culture to solve the actual modern problems.

EXPRESSION OF INDIGENOUS ONTOLOGY (LANDSCAPE)

Regarding the fertility of the soil the Kani people are expert in telling the quality of the soil and its fertility. They like to stay in their settlement at Inchikuzhi in the top of the Pothigai hills. They call it as *solai*. Termites are comparatively less in Inchikuzhi. Hence they call the sand as “*chutta maan*” (burnt soil). The termites are more in Agusthiyar Kanikudiyiruppu. They call the sand in that area as “*patchai maan*” (wet soil). Anyhow there is no scientific proof regarding this.

7. CONCLUSION:

To conclude, the specific value of indigenous knowledge is searching for a way to sustainable development for mankind. The indigenous communities often do not have strong tradition of ownership over knowledge. Hence that knowledge should be collected, preserved, analysed and applied carefully by the present day generation without altering its basic values. The Kani people are depending upon nature for their livelihood. They have strong attachment over nature and it's by products. Only by combining our collective voices, we the people truly have to say in the creation of environment policies that encourage the sustainable development of a balanced eco-system without disturbing any of the components particularly indigenous knowledge of the forest.

REFERENCES:

Primary Sources:

1. Antony Xavier, Freelance Writer, Personal Interview
2. Daisy, Kani Tribes, Personal Interview
3. Gibson, CSI Reverend, Personal Interview
4. Karthikeyan, Forrest Ranger Officer, Personal Interview
5. Kumar, Librarian, M.S.University, Tirunelveli, Personal Interview
6. Mayan, Building Construction Engineer, Personal Interview
7. Pitchandi, Kani Medicine Man, Personal Interview
8. Sangara Kani Tribes, Personal Interview
9. Surya Xavier, Freelance Writer, Personal Interview

Secondary Sources:

1. Anuradah,R.V., “Sharing with the Kanis” – A Case Study from Kerala, India.
2. Edgar Thurston and Rangachari.k., eds.,(1987), *Caste and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol.III-k,(p.134), Madras.
3. Martin Nakata, (2002) Indigenous Knowledge and the Cultural interface; underlying Issues of Knowledge and Information System *IPLA Journal* 28
4. Sharma,B.D., (1952), Forests Tribal Welfare Conference (p.9) , Government of India.
5. Singh.K.S., *The Scheduled Tribes – People of India*, National Series Vol.III, Anthropological Survey of India, (p.263), Oxford University Press.
6. Thurston, E., (1909) *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, (p.79), Madras; Government Press.
7. Ravisankar.I., (Nov.2008) Forest Administration in Tirunelveli District 1950 – 1995, PhD Diss.,(p.163) M.S.University, Tirunelveli.
8. Report of the Committee on Special Multipurpose Tribal Blocks (1960), Government of India, New Delhi. p.36.
9. Venkat Rao,P., (2001) *Tribal Development Policy and Practices* (pp.121-124), Sarup and Sons.

Web Sources:

- www.theoryofknowledge.net