

# **MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT**

**ON**

**'severing of a symbiotic relationship. A survey cum study on the challenges before the indigenous tribe, Malekudiyas, being relocated from the Western Ghats in Chickmagalur, Udupi and D.K. Districts.'**

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## **FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

India has 650 protected areas – 96 National Parks 508 wildlife sanctuaries, 29 tiger reserves, 14 existing biosphere reserves and 3 conservation reserves. These national parks, wildlife sanctuaries are also homelands of tribal populations for whom the forests are the basis of habitat and survival. The total forest cover in India is reported around 765.210 km. of which 71 percent is adivasi areas.

84.32 million people belonging to 'Schedule Tribes' in India are generally considered to be adivasis, literally meaning 'indigenous people' or 'original inhabitants'. Out of the 5653 distinct communities in India, 635 are considered to be 'tribes' or adivasis. With ST population making up 8.2 per cent (as according to 2001 census) of the total population of India, it is the nation with the highest concentration of 'indigenous peoples' in the world.

Western Ghats in Dakshina Kannada district are home to the indigenous tribe or original inhabitants, Malekudiya tribe. As revealed in their name, 'Malekudiya' literally means children of the hills. From the survey of families it has been revealed that the Malekudiyas have been residing in forests for six generations.

Malekudiyas today are in a stage of transition. Even those against rehabilitation, concede that it is a matter of few years when Western Ghats will no longer have malekudiyas. 200 among 250 Malekudiya families in 11 villages within Kudremukh National Park under Beltangady taluk are keen on relocating. Throughout history, the rights of Malekudiyas have been violated. It is the onus of a just and responsive society to ensure that Malekudiyas are not subjected to further injustice in their transition phase.

## **WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE**

- 1) In the race for development and conservation of natural resources, the rich socio-cultural existence of indigenous tribal community should not be reduced to nothingness. Their customs and traditions should be documented before it merges with the practices of mainstream.**
- 2) The state's poor record (four per cent) in implementation of Forest rights act in 2010 is adequate proof to a bitter reality that the historic scheduled tribes and other traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 is not being implemented in principle and spirit. As buffer zones, national parks had been recognized as community forest resources under the act, the rejection of applications for forest rights should be stopped.**
- 3) Malekudiya families reluctant to relocated should be provided with better facilities like ensuring quick evacuation and medical assistance for sick and injured. The complaints of mobile PDS system not meeting the needs of Malekudiya families should be redressed at the earliest.**
- 4) LAMP Society should be freed from the clutches of lobbyists and vested interests. The sole right of collecting and supplying non timber forest produce (NTFP) like Seegeka, Ramapatra, among others should be vested with Malekudiyas.**
- 5) The compensation should not be limited to Rs 10 lakh and should stick to evaluation report. The compensation package should also include land even for those without patta records in order to ensure the effective rehabilitation of these resettled malekudiyas.**
- 6) As Malekudiyas are simple and naïve people, departments like ITDP should be entrusted with the task of identifying and registering suitable land with records in the names of Malekudiyas ITDP should liaise with all**

departments to ensure that lands are registered, facilities due to them are provided with any procedural delays.

- 7) As a special case, interest-free loans tax holiday upto a certain period, ration card, subsidy on seeds, agricultural equipment's and better infrastructure should be provided to Malekudiyas.
- 8) Injustice meted out to six Malekudiya families at Naydaguri - Majalahoutla in Sulkeri should be set right. A comprehensive compensation including land should be given to help these families lead a normal life.
- 9) ITDP's Ashram schools in its present set up is not serving any purpose to the objective of increasing literacy levels among St and SC communities it needs to be revamped.
- 10) Government should extend all co-operation to forums like Kudremukh Wildlife Foundation (KMF), Kudremukh Rhastriya Udyavana Santhrasthara Samrakshana Samithi (KRUSSS), Centre for Wildlife studies working amidst Malekudiya families.
- 11) Tahsildar's notice for submission of documents on March 21 2011, has left the Malekudiyas intimidated. Any coercive force against them at this stage will derail the entire process of rehabilitation of Malekudiya families.