

# Displaced and Marginalised

Protecting the Traditional Knowledge,  
Customary Laws and Forest Rights of  
the Yanadi Tribals of Andhra Pradesh



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Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, India

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Traditional Knowledge has its origins hand in hand with the existence of mankind, as is the case with the customary laws and practices. Originally mankind was nomadic and mostly living in the forest areas as tribes. When people started settling in a particular area, their traditional knowledge and customary practices came with them and they did not forget their rich traditions. They used their traditional knowledge for their sustenance, primary health care and other needs. The tribals that practiced the age old traditional health knowledge protected it by not revealing it to others but only to their kith and kin. They used their knowledge among themselves but also for the well-being of mankind.

The royal society that was ruling through much of India's history used to give much patronage to the Traditional Knowledge holders and avail their services by giving it utmost importance. The advancement of science and technology of the modern era is causing much inconvenience to the age old methods practiced by the tribes and other communities who live based on their knowledge. People who originally used traditional knowledge have slowly shifted to modern methods of science and technology. People who hold traditional knowledge and related customary practices feel that their existence is at stake and are slowly moving away from their age old practices. The pharmaceutical era also made them loose their knowledge and resource base through biopiracy cases involving Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs).

The national forest and wildlife conservation laws made intermittently over the last 2 decades have made the people move away from their resource base and live as aliens outside their usual abode. Policies such as cordoning off rich biodiversity areas as protected /reserve forests, have made the people loose the right to live in the forest. In addition, illegal smugglers of plants and terrorist activities of the Maoist insurgency have entered into the forest areas of many states, further depriving the tribes that are mainly depending on non-timber forest products for their sustenance, of their rights to live in the forest areas. This has made the younger generation loose their interest in preserving their knowledge and customary laws and practices. The modern way of life has also taken them away from their traditions.

Most of the Yanadi community in Chittoor and Nellore districts are now seeking their livelihoods by getting jobs in other places and are living their life forgetting much about their age old rich traditions and customs. The net result is that traditional knowledge and customary practices that were in practice since times immemorial are dying out day by day. Once the knowledge and related customs disappear, many problems could be caused for the whole of mankind. It is time to protect community rights over traditional knowledge and related customary laws and practices and give back their rights to live in harmony with the forest. The very word Traditional knowledge and customary laws connote that they are gifts given by nature to mankind.

In this context, this study sought to protect community rights over TK and customary practices related to it. It was undertaken with the Yanadi community of Chittoor and Nellore districts of Andhra Pradesh , and entailed an extensive survey and research to find ways to protect their rich TK, bio-resources and customary laws and practices that are intricately woven together.

## 1.1 Objectives and focus of the case study

The Indian case study with the Yanadi community of Chittoor and Nellore districts of Andhra Pradesh used a participatory approach and was developed with the consent and support of the tribal healers. The study's overall objectives were:

1. To enable the Yanadi to gain recognition of their customary rights over Traditional Health Knowledge (THK)
2. To safeguard the Traditional Health Knowledge and free access to the bio-resources needed for its practice.

The specific objectives were:

1. To sensitize, capacitate and strengthen the Yanadis with regards to customary laws over THK, IPRs, and TK protection and documentation.
2. To identify customary rights over traditional knowledge relating to Medicinal and Aromatic Plants and customary authorities for THK conservation and benefit-sharing
3. To prepare community controlled registers to conserve TK for posterity, promote its local use, and facilitate ABS if any; and develop viable procedures for participatory documentation of traditional knowledge and biodiversity in community registers.
4. To understand Yanadi TK systems, related customary laws and practices, and the threats they face.
5. To study the implications of IPRs for Yanadi TK, bio-resources and ABS.

## 2 CONTEXT

### 2.1 The Yanadi Community

The Yanadi tribe of Andhra Pradesh, India are endemic to the region and recognized as Scheduled Tribes under the Indian constitution. They traditionally lived in the fringe forests and derived their primary source of livelihood from collecting non-timber forest products.

The Yanadis have a rich traditional health knowledge, including knowledge for everyday healthcare and specialized knowledge (eg. snakebite cures). The traditional health knowledge of the yanadis is closely interlinked with bioresources and medicinal plants for healthcare are derived by continuous access to and observation of the natural resource. The Yanadis have many religious beliefs and festivals connected with the forest flora. Ceremonial visits are made to the forest to show respect to nature and diseased ancestors, worship health goddesses and give reverence to the plants that keep them healthy. In the past entire family used to go to the forest for collection of non timber forest products and the head used to educate his family members about medicinal plants and their use. That way knowledge generation and transmission continued unabated and new knowledge was added.

The conservation policies and forest laws of the last few decades – such as the Forest Conservation Act (1980) and the Wildlife Protection Act (1972) - forced many Yanadis to move to the plains where they were typically allocated small plots of degraded land for cultivation. A large segment of the tribals now work as seasonal agricultural labour and supplement their income by collecting seasonal forest products.

### 2.2 Project area information & Demography

Andhra Pradesh (A.P) is the fifth largest state in India both in area and population. It has a widely diversified agricultural base with a variety of cash crops. The agricultural sector accounts for 50% of state income and provides livelihood for 70% of the population. The state is the largest producer of rice in India and is the leading producer of cash crops such as tobacco, ground nut, chilies, turmeric, oil seeds, sugar cane and jute (India Profile Network, 2001). Chittoor district borders the state of Tamil Nadu and is located in the pohni river valley. In 1997/98, 23.2% of the district's 15,151 square kilometers was under forest cover (State Government of A.P, 2001, [www.fsi.nic.in/sfr2003/andhra.pdf](http://www.fsi.nic.in/sfr2003/andhra.pdf)). The Tirumala hills which surround the city of Tirupati are a part of the northern tip of the Eastern Ghats, a mountain range in South India that runs parallel to the east coast of Andhra Pradesh and is considered to be rich in biodiversity. Nellore district is adjacent to Chittoor and its eastern boundary is the Bay of Bengal.



As of 1991, 73.1% of Andhra Pradesh's population lived in rural areas; 15.9% of the population was a member of a scheduled caste; and 6.3% was a member of a scheduled tribe (see table 1). India's scheduled tribes (ST) are defined as "indigenous peoples who maintain their own distinct life style, world view and



language” (India Profile Network, 2001). They are among the poorest and most marginalized communities in India, given their lack of access to resources and decision making forums. Similarly, despite quotas and reservations established to empower groups that are marginalized based on their ethnicity, scheduled castes (SC) of India remain largely disenfranchised (India Profile Network, 2001)

**Table 1: Population Statistics for Andhra Pradesh**

Year	State pop		Rural population		Scheduled Castes		Scheduled Tribes	
	'000	% of state	'000	% of state	'000	% of state	'000	% of state
1961	35983	82.6	29709	82.6	4974	13.8	1324	3.7
1971	43503	80.7	35100	80.7	5775	13.3	1658	3.8
1981	53550	76.7	41062	76.7	7962	14.9	3176	5.0
1991	66508	73.1	48621	73.1	10592	15.9	4199	6.3
2001	76210				12340		5020	

Source: Government of Andhra Pradesh Official website, 2001

## 2.3 Tribes of Chittoor and Nellore Districts

The predominant tribal populations in these districts are the Yanadi, Yerukala, Nakkala and Irula tribes, although the yanadis are the most populous in the area with a population of approximately 367,200 in 2000. The yanadi tribe lives primarily in the districts of Nellore, Chittoor and Kadapa. Approximately 10% of yanadis are literate. Segments of yanadi population are semi nomadic, moving every few years in search of agricultural labour or improved sources of forest products (India Profile Network 2001). Minor forest products, such as fire wood, wood for house construction and medicinal plants are used for both subsistence and income generation. Non Timber Forest Products (NTFP) collectors will typically sell a large portion of their harvest to local traders and to Girijan Cooperative Corporations (GCCs) and retain a small portion for domestic use.

## 2.4 Forest Management in India

Traditionally the Yanadi and Yerukala tribes managed the fringe forest areas and derived their primary source of livelihood from sustainable harvesting of non-timber forest products such as medicinal plants. In 1887, the sale of forest produce was strictly prohibited by the British colonial government in order to ensure their undivided access to forest resources. After independence, the new Indian government reserved one third of India’s land as forest to be governed and managed exclusively by the State forest Department. The Government tightened legislation and increased the minimum punishment for such offences, further reducing tribal access for forest resources. However ‘illegal’ harvesting of NTFPs continued. This, combined with over- harvesting of timber by the Forest Department and virtually no reforestation efforts, resulted in a significant decline in forest resources. One study estimated an annual loss of approximately 1.3 million hectares of India’s forest between 1975 and 1982 (TERI, 2001; Jeffery, 2000).

In the last two decades, state and civil societies have recognized that conservation priorities cannot be determined or enforced in isolation from local communities, particularly forest user- groups. With this recognition, the Government of India (GOI) via the Ministry of Environment and forests, issued policy guidelines for the integration of local communities and voluntary agencies in the regeneration of degraded forest lands in June of 1990 (TERI, 2001). The policy called for Joint Forest Management (JFM) between the forest department and the fringe forest users, which are largely tribal communities in Andhra Pradesh.

The area under JFM exceeds 17.3 million hectares of forest land which is being managed by some 85,000 village organizations across 27 states (Khare, 2000). In Andhra Pradesh, VSS had been formed in 6575 villages by 1998 (SPWD, 1998). Approximately 200 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and volunteer organizations are assisting the communities in Andhra Pradesh with the formation of a Vana Samrakshana Samithi (VSS)- village organizations that will liaise with the forest department in co- management of forest areas. The VSS allows local participating communities to plant trees for fuel, paper, fruit, fodder and timber, as well as shrubs, fodder and grasses that aid in water conservation. Medicinal plants are grown according to the preference of the participating villages (SPWD,1998).

## 2.5 Tribal Peoples' Rights and PESA

There are provisions in the Indian constitution to safeguard the special and peculiar tribal situation.

- Article 244 of the Constitution provides for the administration of “Scheduled Areas” in accordance with the fifth schedule and sixth schedule. In concurrence with this, the Tribal welfare department was instituted for the protection and advancement of Scheduled Tribes (ST).
- Article 46 of the Constitution declares that the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interest of the ST and protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

*The Panchayat Raj (Extension to Scheduled areas) Act 1996* has more powers with regard to control of resources by local communities. It provides that the grama sabha is empowered to safeguard the traditions, customs of the people, cultural identity, community resources and customary mode of dispute resolution. It has the power to approve plans, programs, projects for social and economic development and responsible for identification of beneficiaries. It is endowed with ownership over minor forest produce. It is also empowered to prevent alienation of land in the scheduled areas. The Constitution of the grama sabha is mandatory before making acquisition of land in scheduled areas.



## 3 METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research team and initial activities

The Herbal Folklore Research Centre (HFRC) with its team of research staff and consultants started the work from December 2004. The study is the continuation of the previous work done on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants with the assistance of IDRC and extends to address the problems of degradation of natural resources and traditional knowledge loss in yanadi communities of Chittoor and Nellore district areas. The team started awareness meetings in the selected hamlets in Chittoor district and identified literate youth with an interest in liaising with their community and serving as 'activists' for the project.

A series of workshops / meetings were conducted to give the activists orientation on the research problem and on documentation of Traditional Health Knowledge and associated genetic resource registers. These were monitored by the principal investigator, field coordinator, anthropologist and field assistants. During these meetings, the activists suggested developing a questionnaire to identify the customary laws and practices associated with the THK. This led us to conduct awareness meetings to sensitize the reputed herbal healers of the selected hamlets. The experience with the herbal healers made us develop a questionnaire to explore methods for recording THK and ways to safeguard the community's rights based on customary laws and practices.

The policy issues and challenges relating to the research problem were explored, and an awareness raising booklet was prepared on the rights of the community to their bio-resources and TK and on Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) laws and patent rights, to sensitise stakeholders. The draft was prepared in the local language to raise awareness of the communities and chosen activists who are literate.

Aspects covered in the booklet:

- Socio-cultural back ground of the community
- Traditional knowledge regarding health and medicinal plants
- Customary laws
- Custodians of TK
- Transmission of TK
- Protection of TK
- Biopiracy
- Patent rights
- Constitutional provisions
- Rights over resources
- Norms for benefit sharing from THK

### 3.2 Participatory Research

Participatory research was undertaken by involving the communities (20 activists and 2 field assistants from yanadis), and series of awareness meetings were conducted both in the hamlets and at the HFRC research centre.

A local planning meeting inviting the communities, especially the reputed herbal healers and some local forest range officers and panchayat members was held during the first phase, in April 2005, in order to discuss the issues and develop the approach. The participants who attended the one day workshop were academics, rights activists, study members and consultants of HFRC, officials from the forest department, Girijan Cooperative Corporation members, and panchayat officers. The workshop was useful to draw inputs from participants and involve them in the methodology design. It became the platform to distribute the booklet prepared by HFRC and helped to constitute an advisory body for the study.

The participatory research involved the following main activities:

1. Awareness raising: The community volunteers (activists) and the field assistants with the support of the Investigator and Anthropologist passionately engaged in raising awareness and eliciting information.

2. Community registers: The community volunteers identified about 50 hamlets in the fringe area of the forest and started documenting the traditional health knowledge and related community biocultural heritage (CBH), with the consent and participation of the healers. Suggestions from reputed healers known to HFRC were used to inform the design of the questionnaire. The activists identified the healers and the head of the hamlet who would like consent for documenting their THK customary laws and practices related to the development of THK and conservation of bioresources, and to take charge of the registers once documented.
3. Healers association: The centre decided to assist the yanadi healers and activists to organize themselves as one group/society - the Yanadi Healers Association– to fight for their right to protection of customary rights related to their THK and bioresources. The consultant and research personnel of HFRC along with executive committee members of the “Yanadhi Vydyula Seva Sangham” started strengthening the association from November 2006.
4. Multi-stakeholder consultations:

Twenty participants from different walks of life with wide background of professional interest in Traditional Knowledge systems shared their views and ideas with the healers -including community members, NGOs interested in community work, Law Students from Padmavathy Mahila University and Anthropology research scholars from S.V. University. The objectives of the project were discussed at the meeting to identify the ways to fulfill them.

In January 2007, a herbal healers meeting was held at HFRC inviting academics from Hyderabad. The former Vice-Chancellor of N.G.Ranga Agricultural University and some scientist from CRIDA and Research scholars from Osmania University, Hyderabad attended the workshop and interacted with the healers.

In February 2007, HFRC invited Professors of Anthropology and Sociology and research scholars of the Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati, to a third workshop, conducted in the HFRC garden to discuss the customary rights of the Yanadis related to their TK.

In March 2007 the consultant held discussions/interviews with local elite people, Ayurvedic doctors and politicians who are like minded, along with tribal healers to get their views regarding the protection of TK and customary rights. A workshop was held at the Mandal parishath development office (MPDO) of Ramachandrapuram mandal office in Chitoor district and some forest officials of the district also attended the workshop.

## 4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 4.1 Traditional Health and Food Systems of the Yanadi

The Yanadis of Chittoor and Nellore districts of Andhra Pradesh now live in isolated hamlets; some are in the fringe area of the forest and others live away from the bioresources. The traditional health knowledge of the Yanadis is closely interlinked with bioresources. Medicinal plants for healthcare are derived by continuous access to and observation of the natural resources. Knowledge generation and maintenance is dependent on their traditional lifestyle, culture and heritage.

Age old herbal remedies are widespread among indigenous peoples and tribal communities in the area. This health system called natumandhu (amateurish medicine) is essential to the rural communities of the state, given the lack of formal primary health care network in remote villages/hamlets. Traditional healers, known as Vydhigulu, apprentice with their family members as the associated knowledge is handed down through generations within families. Yanadi healers in particular depend on alternative income sources and offer traditional healing services free of charge or as a secondary income generating activity. Several treatment centers exist in the district typically operated by home healers. In addition, Vydhigulu women typically serve as health providers within the home, using traditional herbal and plant based remedies that have been handed down through generations. Medicinal plants are largely harvested from fringe forests near the communities. The specialists who do the herbal cures for chronic diseases need specialized wild plants that grow naturally in wild forests. As a result of the restrictions imposed by reserve forests and protected areas, it is likely that vital Yanadi traditional medicine will vanish in the near future.

The Yanadi gather a variety of tubers, leaves, fruits, seeds and honey. They are well versed in their identification, time (ie. seasons) of availability, and location –HFRC documented 11 types of fruits, 5 varieties of tubers, 3 types of seeds, 8 varieties of leaves that are in use exclusively by the tribe. The identification, location, sustainable harvesting, storage, consumption, food value and therapeutic properties are known to the tribe.

### 4.2 Customary laws relating to TK and bio-resources

The Yanadi culture includes principles of Community property (heritage), Reciprocity (collective sharing) and Harmony (symbiotic relationship with nature and in society), but these principles are threatened. The THK used for primary health care is shared among the community and considered to be collective heritage of the community. In general THK and resources are considered to be the collective heritage of the community that has come from God. Forest resources are considered common property. There is reciprocity and harmony in sharing resources both for food and medicine. Even in non-timber forest product collection clear customary laws are followed to maintain flexibility and avoid conflicts.

During collection, the Yanadi go together and the community head decides about the place of collection and how to share. This provides clear evidence that the entire hamlet listens to the elder's advice and that knowledge is generated and held collectively.

The specialized THK about snake bite, chronic diseases, paralysis, skin infections, epilepsy etc are kept secret and not divulged to any one except to the kith and kin. Even the plants used for the cure are not uttered loudly, since it is believed that their efficacy goes away if the name is pronounced. The healers do not like to divulge their knowledge about the locality, identity and use of the plants to outsiders. In this way the knowledge is protected and the resource base is passionately guarded by them. Even though some special knowledge about treatment for snake bite is held individually and kept secret, it is perceived to be their collective heritage.

The Yanadis traditionally have no property of their own. No customary law of inheritance is reported since long immemorial since the Yanadis are nomadic or semi nomadic in their lifestyle and so don't own property. The formal laws do not make any sense to them since these are not made according to their customary rights and practices. They are poor and the older generation were nomadic and used to stay in the midst or fringes of the forest getting sustenance from the forest flora and fauna. Even the house they construct is a temporary abode. After the introduction of new policies which made them live away from the forest in separate colonies, this made them become owners of the house in the hamlet where they live. Even in this the younger generation (i.e the sons) get the right. The old men are not interested in owning the right since they feel that their sons have many years to live and are the rightful owners. That way the healer has no house, no land to cultivate and no free access to forest (because of the restrictions). His property is his

knowledge. That is why the healer showed the sac containing medicinal herbs as his own property and god given inheritance.

The communities traditionally use forest resources for food and medicine in a sustainable way, with self-imposed limitations on forest clearance, restriction in hunting certain species, protection of sacred groves/plants and rotational use of some rich biodiversity areas. These are clear examples of their collective bio-cultural heritage responsibilities and rights.

### 4.3 Customary decision-making and spiritual beliefs

The decisions regarding the economic benefits from NTFPs and identification of areas for NTFP collection are traditionally made by the 4-5 elders who take charge of the affairs of the hamlet and occasionally by the representative who is chosen by the revenue officials from the state. Anyway the final decision rests on the elders. Many decisions regarding customs are taken by the kulapeddalu (head of the caste) of the entire community (many hamlets elect their elders) – including on religion, worship of village goddesses, sacred trees, festivals, conservation practices linked to worship/gods, diseases linked to gods & goddesses, rituals connected to cures, and prosperity linked to grama devatha (village deity). All should abide by the rules framed by them. The customs enacted by this group become customary law and violation of that results in punishment. There are many examples of such customary law – one of these relates to infectious diseases.

If anyone gets chickenpox or viral disease where the etiology is not known, the people isolate that house and prevent the entry of others in the name of their goddess- Gangamma. The house is identified as having the wrath of gangamma by spreading fire ash in front of the house. This is an indication to outsiders that someone is suffering from the infectious disease. This type of custom prevents the spread of the disease and at the same time helps the patient recover speedily without intervention of infections from outside. Other rituals which go along with this are all for the recovery of the patient- use of neem leaves, turmeric, liquid foods etc. The older people respect their customs and all observe the rituals connected with them.

The Yanadis feel a mythical affinity with certain species of nature and even with inanimate objects. They regard these as their ancestors. This belief system and associated practices are called totemism. The totemic objects are considered sacred and killing or eating the flesh is taboo. If the totemic animal dies the clan members (ie. entire yanadi community) come together and observe all kinds of rituals and ceremonies. The social organization of yanadis is not only based on totemic objects but is further aligned on the basis of exogamous kinship (ie. marriage outside one's own kinship group). The totemic living objects consisting of animals and trees are found simultaneously in each kinship group (or phratry) and all these objects are sacred - even cutting the trees is taboo. The members of a particular phratry believe that the animals or plants they represent protected their ancestors while they faced dangerous situations.

The Yanadis believe that the origin of life and the Gods and Goddesses that protect them are in the forest (adavi). The prayers (puja) and invocation they perform calls the God that is in the forest to come to their temporary abode given by the Government and rescue them from evil eye (a look superstitiously believed to cause injury or bad luck). Here the people appeal to the spiritual bodies to address their inability to live in the midst of them. Even now they go and live in the forest stealthily during famine days to get sustenance.

### 4.4 Maintenance of Yanadi TK:

**The role of bio-resources:** The Yanadis have unique plants where the use is known to them. One among them is an endemic plant called *Decalepis hamiltonii*. The roots are used to make a drink called Nannari. They used to guard this plant passionately by using sustainable harvesting methods. Recently an Ethnobotanist revealed the use of the plant and the plant became endangered due to indiscriminate over-harvesting of roots for commercial use. This made the younger generation loose the cultural habit of using the festive drink. Women used to store the roots and make pickle since it has limited season of harvest. Since the roots became scarce their knowledge of food processing, preparation and storage are lost. This clearly shows the link between the maintenance of biodiversity for customary use and maintenance of traditional knowledge and the need for secure rights over biodiversity to safeguard it for customary use.

**The role of women:** The yanadi women play a key role in maintaining TK. They are responsible for the food and nutritional needs of the families and play an important role in maintaining knowledge about wild foods and grandma cures. Yanadi women still practice their age old plant remedies or grandma cures because of their strong belief in customs and culture. They give first preference to their grandma cures rather than modern medicine. Most of the birth deliveries are conducted at home by the birth attendants but the services and the role they are playing in remote areas is not recognized or supported.

**The role of sacred forest and wild resources:** Medicinal knowledge is acquired and transmitted through rituals in sacred groves and forest visits. Plants for specialized cures are harvested wild through special rituals. It is believed that their cultivation will remove their potency and that growing such plants in kitchen gardens may inflict the disease for which it is used. Hence the maintenance of knowledge system depends on access to sacred forests and wild plants.

The Yanadis have many religious beliefs and festivals connected with the forest flora. Ceremonial visits are traditionally made to the forest to show respect to nature and diseased ancestors, worship health Gods and give reverence to the plants that keep them healthy. In the past the entire family used to go to the forest for livelihood and for collection of non-timber forest products. The head used to educate his/her kith and kin regarding the identification and usage, sustainable collection etc. That way knowledge generation and transmission continued unabated and new knowledge was added.

## 4.5 Threats to Yanadi TK and Bio-cultural heritage

Much Yanadi THK and a number of medicinal plants are on the verge of extinction. The use of plant based traditional remedies to treat both common ailments and chronic diseases of indigenous people is threatened due to a number of complex factors, two of which are central:

- Knowledge networks and traditional mechanisms for exchange of information are breaking down due to lack of patronage in higher circles (ie. Indian elites/government), and due to livelihood changes to become agricultural labourers.
- Lack of formal access to forest areas combined with rapid deforestation caused by over exploitative trade of NTFPs by the younger generation who have no knowledge about their use in healthcare.

Doctors discourage the use of traditional methods, dismissing illiterate herbal healers' knowledge as rooted in unfounded 'black magic'. There has been a decline in public legitimacy of herbal healing over the last 10-20 years and the confidence in traditional grandma cures is slowly declining.

New policies on forest conservation and a materialistic outlook along with cultural change in lifestyle is making the younger generation forget their roots and emulate the concepts of the urban elite. Hence they are moving away from the forest and are not interested in the concept of the forest as their abode. For them the forest is only for NTFP collection and to get money by selling them to the Girijan Cooperative Corporation or entrepreneurs. Sustainable harvesting, conservation ethics, equitable sharing are things of the past and the healers who preach this are thought to be living fossils who do not want progress of the community. The old men say that the forest officials are making them become laborers and beggars and not custodians of forest.

The healers believe that there is no need to have protected areas and national parks and forest protection systems if they are given the rights to safeguard the resource base. Otherwise future generations are going to loose the biodiversity which they take pride in. They feel that the erosion of their customs, customary laws and beliefs - eg. that the forest Goddess Chenchamma lives in the forest and unlawful activity makes her disappear from their midst, and that the Yanadis are custodians of the forest - is making the young become poachers and unlawful elements.

The lifestyle of the people has changed due to external intervention and pressures on their livelihoods and habitations. The younger generation is moving away from the forest in search of new avenues. The customs and practices related to conservation of resources are becoming a thing of the past and are regarded by youngsters as backward, old fashioned and even something to be ashamed of. Illegal logging of endemic and endangered plants (eg. red sanders) are taken up by the youth, encouraged by companies to destroy the biodiversity. The youth are not ashamed of this type of smuggling of their own resource, considered by their ancestors as mother, soul and God 's own land. This is clearly making them loose their customs and practices and view the forest only as a commercial resource.

## 4.6 Eviction from the forest and restricted access

The Yanadis are dependent on the forest for their livelihood. The old people said they used to reside in the midst of the forest along with their family members. The people in all the hamlets surveyed feel that access to forest is their customary right. However, official policy is to relocate tribal communities out of areas designated as national parks, and wildlife sanctuaries, rather than engage them in resource management. Forced eviction, lack of services, discrimination and harassment are making them loose their inherent probing nature for Traditional Knowledge development. The tribals are also declared as encroachers and treated as disposable population by various development projects (eg. monoculture plantations). The forest that once

nurtured them is slowly changing in the name of Special Economic Zones (SEZ) managed by international and national companies with the help of the Government.

In 1865, the Indian Forest Act was promulgated and the government was empowered to protect forests and the tribals who were depending on forests lost their customary rights of free access to forests and forest products. This situation continued up to 1927 and some changes were brought into forest management after India became independent. During 1950-60s when the country struggled to become self-sufficient and develop industrially, forests became the main source of timber and minerals needed for industrial growth. These resources were taken at subsidized rates from forests at the expense of the needs of villagers and tribals. The same situation prevailed up to the 1970s, when the government introduced social forestry programs like farm forestry and plantations on common lands. During this period the tribals came out of the forest in search of livelihoods and started residing in the fringe areas of the forest for better living conditions. As narrated by the old men of the Yanadi tribe in Chittoor District, the development of Joint Forest management (JFM) groups or vana samrakshana samithis (VSSs) alienated the tribals completely from the forest and made them live in the fringe areas of the forest. Thus, the process of alienation of the Yanadi from their ancestral forest happened gradually and no one took interest in preserving their culture.

Compensation for the tribals who came out of the forest was only given in the form of some land to live on and some houses built by the government, with electricity and bore wells, but this is not provided to all the colonies. Many Yanadi are still living in make shift huts without any facilities. No recognition is given to their culture and customs.

The forest conservation policies are also restricting access to the forest. The development of Reserve Forests, Biodiversity Parks and Protected Areas in the midst of the rich biodiversity areas converted the tribals into aliens and poachers. Forest officials naturally restrict the movement of people into the protected areas. Access is only allowed for NTFP collection, and only NTFP collectors that get Giri Card (license) are allowed into the forest, while others are fined if they venture in. The people say that government policies are preventing families from moving into the forest and only chosen people get the card. The older generation is forgotten and they do not get the "Giricard".

**Box 1: Yanadi women are not allowed access to the forest**

In Yanadi community the husband and wife live traditionally together and never part. Now the new forest policy gives permission only to male member and not to the female and the customary belief of living and working together is broken. If the wife goes with him without the Giri Card, if it is found, she will be fined and the collection material will be confiscated. The custodians of the forest are treated as aliens and are not allowed freely to enter, even for medicinal plant collection in protected areas.

In many villages surveyed, the people are not happy with their new habitations. Their customary right is to live either in the fringe area of the forest or in the midst of the forest. That way they get continuous access to flora and fauna and enrich the Traditional Knowledge. Especially the habitations which are away from the forest, are making them loose their rich resource base and knowledge associated with that. The Traditional healers also are not having much access, and the young are unaware of the rich resource and knowledge. By alienating them from the resource base and not involving them at any stage in the management of forests, policies intended for conservation are in fact making them loose their traditional sustainable way of life, customs and conservation values. This is also making them loose the practical knowledge about MAPs and innovations have completely stopped because of this.

**Box 2: Access is denied to tribals, but given to industry**

A tribal who lives in the fringe area of the forest narrated that he was fined when he cut a dried stem of Babul for the preparation of tooth powder and at the same time the nearby contractor who has influence was allowed to fell all the trees for developing Eucalyptus plantations for the paper industry. The healer feels that he is treated as a thief and the forest once nurtured and looked as part of his life is now completely changed. The healer is deprived of the herbs that are available in that area because of the plantations where his mobility is restricted and undergrowth also has disappeared due to monoculture.

## 4.7 Yanadi food customs and women's rights are threatened

Alienation from the resource base is leading to erosion of knowledge about wild foods

and food security. Yanadi traditional food habits have changed leading to erosion of plant biodiversity, decline in nutritional status and in the status of women on the whole as creative persons of culinary.



Women healers are denied access to reserve forest even for medicinal plant collection, despite their intricate potential to safeguard the health and food needs of the family. This is making the women lose their practical knowledge about medicinal plants and wild foods, leading to malnutrition and poor health. Their children are also deprived of the special knowledge and crave only for junk foods that are available in the market. The awareness meetings in some yanadi hamlets of Nellore district revealed that there is greater gender bias in THK practice than in Chittoor. Women who manage primary healthcare have been largely ignored. Women's protection spaces, such as home gardens are forgotten once and for all. The loss of primary health care knowledge is linked to failure of gender relations.

Some tribal women who are members of Self Help Groups (SHG) feel that the groups are not empowering women fully. The groups exclude the poorest because they are not able to save regularly and pay according to schedule. They feel that educational inputs are necessary to enable women to critically engage themselves with the SHGs and safeguard their knowledge about health practices and traditional foods. Otherwise the knowledge they possess is thought to be the superstitious knowledge of illiterates.

## 4.8 Traditional institutions have been weakened

Customary rights and land rights are now decided by the local forest committees (VSS) with forest officials and bureaucrats, and not by the village committee (grama sabha). The Government policy of decentralization through the panchayati raj system has also resulted in the erosion of customs related to the tribal lifestyle. Rather than empowering the tribals through decentralized institutions, these policies have meant that younger people who have no knowledge about the customs and beliefs of the community have replaced the traditional village organizations headed by community elders. This has diminished the power of elders and destroyed the traditional health practices. PESA - the Panchayat Raj (Extension to Scheduled areas) Act 1996 – is meant to empower traditional gram sabhas to manage their resources in accordance with their traditions and customs, but there has not been any meaningful implementation of PESA in Andhra Pradesh.

## 4.9 The Yanadi are increasingly marginalized and poverty stricken

As noted by many of the stakeholders consulted, the tribals are the custodians of a culture with strong customs dating back to tens of thousand years. However, they are displaced from the natural forest habitats and their economic, social and psychological conditions are deteriorating. Poverty is steadily increasing.

Marginalized tribal communities in Andhra Pradesh face more significant health challenges than other segments of rural population. The tribal population is characterized by a very high incidence of nutritional deficiency, maternal and under 5 mortality, in addition to a high prevalence of malaria and tuberculosis (Rao 1998; Switzer 2000.)

The exploitation of tribal land has destroyed their economies and knowledge base. Consequently, the tribals have had to resort to unskilled labor in order to survive (Prof. Gangadharam, Sri Venkateswara University, pers comm.) They have been vulnerable to the abusive resource of their land by both legal and illegal means.

Every year millions are spent on tribal development but nothing much by way of progress is visible. Despite several constitutional safeguards in the form of 20 articles, the tribals still lag behind in literacy, employment, health, social security, asset levels etc. The Government wants the assimilation of tribals by abandoning their past and not integration in which they retain their identity.

The forest dwellers should be treated as custodian of forests (Prof. V. Gangadharam pers comm..) They know the changes in season, and of the oncoming rains, by close observation of the behavior of flowering plants and mushrooms. It is a real pity that urban people feel that the tribals who produce many beautiful handicrafts, who can identify and know the use of hundreds of plants and animals species and who can survive in the forest for years together, should be treated as unskilled workers. Public policies and programmes are leading to degradation of natural resources. This is making some tribal communities turn towards revitalization of their culture and traditions that enable them to manage the resources. The regeneration of dwindling forest could be done through a people-centric movement involving tribals who are living in the fringe areas of the forest by securing sustainable livelihood for them. The traditional knowledge holders have good knowledge about traditional systems of water storage, local forest management, conservation and recycling of used resources.

## 5 FOREST RIGHTS, IPRS AND ABS

### 5.1 The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006

The Act recognizes the rights of tribals and other forest dwellers who have been residing in forests for generations but whose rights could not be recorded during the consolidation of state forests. Parliament passed the Act in December 2006 and notified it on December 31, 2007. The Act aims to ensure that tribal communities and other traditional forest dwellers have the legal right to own, collect, use and dispose of minor forest products including medicinal plants. It gives the gramasabha the authority to initiate the process of determining the nature and extent of individual and community forest rights. The three tiers involved in the process are: the Forest Rights Committee (FRC) which is a body of the gramasabha, the Sub-Divisional Level Committee (SDLC), and the District Level Committee (DLC). The gramasabha selects a FRC, which receives claims from local people. It then consolidates, verifies and prepares a map delineating the area of each recommended claim. The FRC's recommendations then need to be approved by the gramasabha through a resolution to that effect forwarded to the SDLC. The SDLC after verification sends the resolution to the DLC for further scrutiny. A state level monitoring committee with the chief secretary for forests as the chair person is meant to monitor implementation of the act. The decision of the DLC on claims for forest rights is final and binding on the claimant. Claimants dissatisfied with the DLC's decision cannot contest it in the courts unless the state level monitoring committee has not acted on the same for 60 days.

Although it looks good on paper, some people feel that the Act will not undo the historical injustice done to the tribals. In practice, the spirit of the Act is being sabotaged by the bureaucracy which is not permitting the grama sabhas (village assemblies) to play their envisaged role as a transparent and democratic forum for the recognition of rights under the Act. Community forest rights in particular have been largely ignored and in AP, the forest department has engineered the granting of such rights to VSS controlled by it instead of the gram sabhas. Timber and poaching mafias are plundering the forest wealth –eg. smuggling the endemic and endangered plant “red sanders” (*Pterocarpus santalinus*). Pro-people changes in tribal rights legislation such as empowering them to manage local forest species in terms of collection, cultivation and value addition are needed. Changes to ensure their proper implementation are also needed.

On the restoration of lands to tribals, the government should take steps to ensure their possession in the schedule areas is only with tribals, by implementing the Andhra Pradesh Schedule Areas Land Transfer Regulation (APSALTR, [www.aptribes.gov.in/html/tcr-ria5-1ap11.htm](http://www.aptribes.gov.in/html/tcr-ria5-1ap11.htm)). Since the inception of APSALTR, 73,489 claims cases were made covering 3.27 lakh acres in the schedule areas (HINDU daily paper). The Andhra Pradesh government is considering issuing ownership rights to tribals provided they have records of cultivating the forest land for the last 10 years. However, getting land rights will be difficult since most of the Yanadi were evicted from their forest lands decades back, or are gatherers and forest dwellers without any agricultural background.

The customary rights of the tribal community have been recognized by the Act, but they have not been realized on the ground due to failure of the authorities/Forest Rights Committees (FRC). Although the Act recognizes individual or community tenure or both, the officials are only raising awareness of the tribals' individual rights on the forest land. The collective biocultural heritage of the tribes is now at stake because the Act is giving ownership rights to individuals. The healers say that they need collective rights to continue their customs and practices. The healers are disappointed when the Act provisions are made known to them since most of them depend on the forest produce and think of the forest as their mother.

The FRA 2006 requires holding of gramasabhas in hamlets and not in panchayats. But FRCs have not reached the hamlets yet because they are confused over the definition of forest dwellers. Community rights and customary practices are recognized in the Act but are very difficult to establish in practice. The local traditional temples, sacred places, historical sites, collection of NTFP, tanks, ponds, wells and springs and other water bodies which are community assets are not recorded by the authorities. Thus the Act lacks direction for protecting the rights of communities over THK and genetic resources. The younger generations feel that gramasabha constituted by them should resolve the claims/ rights so that no one has to approach the sub-division or state level committees for 'omissions and commissions'.

The forest officials and range officers who participated in the discussion feel that the Yanadis have rich knowledge about flora and fauna and even the forest officials depend on them for identification, usage and conservation of bioresources. The protection of forests and people's rights should go hand in hand. The Forest Rights Act can be improved through some fine-tuned amendments like the ones to be proposed in the Rajya Sabha (Higher parliamentary body). It should deal with appropriate access to water bodies and fish,

wood for fuel, forest compatible transport such as hand carts and bicycles, provide a stronger role for grama sabhas in decision making committees and provide clearer guidelines for identification of National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries.

Furthermore, the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) should take an active part in getting a sustainable market price for forest produce, encouraging ancillary industries, and developing marketing facilities. The roots of Indian culture lie in tribal life and custom, hence the tribals should be respected.

## 5.2 IPRs and the National Biodiversity Act

The research students of the law department who attended the discussion sessions along with the consultant advocate of HFRC made some suggestions regarding the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) system that determines rights over biological resources and TK. They stressed that patents cannot protect TK for various reasons. Firstly, it is impossible to identify the individual inventor. TK cannot be attributed to a particular geographical location (many case studies were discussed). Secondly, exclusive ownership of plants is alien to tribal customs. The required criteria of novelty and inventive step are not always possible. Even the National Biodiversity Act has many weaknesses, the biggest being that it does not say no to IPRs. It should vehemently say that no IPRs are permitted on biological materials, its components or derivatives accessed from India and the TK associated with it. Instead, assertion of India's sovereign and community rights to TK is needed i.e. rights to wild local foods, health culture, promotion of traditional customs and practices, traditional seed saving methods etc.

The Biodiversity Act 2002 does not provide the tribals with the power to approach the courts if they detect a violation or biopiracy. The Act is also soft on Indian entities, requiring only intimation for their use of bioresources and knowledge rather than permission (prior informed consent) as in the case of foreigners. Furthermore, the local Biodiversity Management Committees have only been empowered with developing registers of TK, which they are meant to transfer under government control. The spaces for conservation that the law provides run the danger of remaining hollow unless the custodians of the forest (tribals) are armed with knowledge and the principle of participatory local self-governance is vigorously pursued, including the full implementation of Panchayat Raj (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act 1996.

## 6 DEVELOPING RESPONSES TO PROTECT BCH

The project meetings made the Yanadis come out of their abodes and realize the potential of the use of wild plants both for food and medicine, and of conservation ethics to protect biodiversity. This realisation provided the basis for compiling the community biocultural heritage document registers with the help of literate community members. The documentation of traditional knowledge by taking the PIC (Prior Informed Consent) is a possible mechanism not only for protection of TK rights but also for preserving the knowledge source for posterity. All the community members feel that PIC should be taken from the healers and that the registers should be kept with the village head (preferably healer) and HFRC. The government should recognize and identify norms for access to bioresources and benefit sharing and pass comprehensive legislation to protect the tribal beneficiaries.

Some of the healers who were enthusiastic to provide healthcare to outsiders expressed desire to form an association of yanadi healers and register themselves as a society. Thus, the project helped them to form/register as “Yanadi Vydyula Seva Sangham”, to enable them to better assert their rights. After attending the meetings and interactive sessions conducted by HFRC with the selected tribal members as the main participants, this made them realize that the association should take up the issues seriously and move forward. In April 2007 the tribal healers met in Amudhala Kona, a remote village in Chittoor district. The meeting was attended by about 100 tribals of the three mandals. The healers decided to meet the Honourable Chief Minister and Tribal Welfare Minister of Andhra Pradesh with the following memorandum signed by the association members, requesting:

- Permission to gather Medicinal and Aromatic plants (MAPs) from forests for health practice, since it is their custom to get wild plants for specialized treatments.
- Recognition of their services and customs.
- Facilities for health practice in their home setting.
- Training to traditional birth attendants/ healers in modern primary healthcare services.
- Financial assistance to manufacture value added medicines for distribution in their hamlets.
- Land and infrastructure facilities for cultivation of MAPs in community herbal gardens.

However, they didn't get any response from the government. The Yanadi have since shown little interest in the community registers and the healers' association because they are fighting for survival and are poor daily wage earners. They formed the association largely because they expected it would allow them to get a loan from a government scheme.

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### 6.1 Action-Research lessons learned

#### **Community participation takes time but produces more accurate data**

The modern health systems supported by the government have devalued the people's THK. The loss of confidence and legitimacy in traditional methods stem largely from local health systems being discouraged in favour of western medicine. This increased the risk of courtesy –biased errors in data collection, where the respondents feel compelled to express only the views they think the interviewer wants to hear. This made us spend considerable time in each hamlet to build rapport and establish a relationship of trust between the researchers and participants. The awareness raising campaign contributed significantly to building confidence in traditional health systems. The multidisciplinary team from HFRC and the employees/ activists from the Yanadi community made the individuals willing to offer accurate responses to survey questions.

Similarly, each register took longer than expected due to the participatory process required to prepare the TK registers in practice. The need to build a rapport with the community members, and establish a long term commitment to the mutual exchange of information, meant that the project remained tied to only 50 hamlets and developed 50 registers only, as opposed to 300 that were originally planned.

#### **Communities should decide what is documented in Biocultural heritage registers**

A significant challenge in documenting the THK was the reluctance of herbal healers to share information. To some degree this stemmed from a fear of losing control over their knowledge. Another factor is that a number of traditional remedies are linked with local customary practices making it difficult to replicate and document specific details of remedies and treatments. The staff and the activists addressed this challenge by building a rapport with each healer, demonstrating respect for THK, ensuring confidentiality unless

otherwise authorized and demonstrating a commitment to supporting the issues and challenges facing them. In addition, they only documented daily healthcare knowledge which is openly shared, and not specialized healing knowledge which is kept secret. Greater stress was also given to documenting the available medicinal plants around their hamlets if any, their status and the conservation ethics followed by the tribe.

### **Spiritual values and secret knowledge should be respected**

A short documentary on the yanadi healers who are experts in snake bite healing was proposed and ground work on that was commissioned. The healers expressed their reluctance to reveal their expert healing practices and methods, since these are linked with their gods and goddesses and should not be shown to outsiders. Thus, that part of the film was destroyed. The healers themselves suggested documenting their lifestyle instead. After that the film was made into a documentary titled “Yanadi Healers”. Utmost care was taken not to reveal any secrets regarding the healing practices to prevent the risk of biopiracy. The film provides a tool to raise awareness about the rich Yanadi TK and the threats it faces.

### **Community ‘activists’ play an important role in securing participation and overcoming logistical challenges**

Many of the yanadi tribe associated with HFRC are geographically isolated and far from main roads. The activists chosen from the tribe helped the centre to establish contact. They received training and support in all aspects of the program, in order to enable them to act as a contact person for participating community members. The activists facilitated active participation of the Yanadi in the project and trust building with the external researchers.

For sample selection, the challenge was relative lack of visibility for THK services. Unlike government supported doctors or accredited Ayurvedic doctors, herbal healers are neither certified nor accredited and therefore not permitted to advertise their services in a conventional manner. Only the community members can identify individuals with particular knowledge expertise in a specific area.

### **The need to address community livelihoods and build confidence**

The awareness of their own THK and customs related to their knowledge gave the healers awareness of the need for their protection and recognition. But the community controlled bio-diversity registers and the association of the yanadi healers didn't evince much interest from them since they are fighting for their survival. Biocultural registers need to be carefully designed with communities so that they can really contribute to community livelihood needs. Furthermore, the communities have little confidence in their knowledge and in their ability to improve their situation.

The tribal healers confessed that they were hesitant to reveal and discuss their knowledge at a meeting since it included higher caste and income groups, and since they feared that they would be ridiculed for the use of traditional methods in the modern age. The HFRC team could meet the challenge put by the group by communicating a sincere respect for their traditional knowledge and establishing a unique rapport with the healers on this sensitive cultural subject/ belief system.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS & WAYS FORWARD

As this study shows, the Yanadi have a wealth of traditional knowledge about primary healthcare, specialized cures, wild foods, sustainable harvesting and management of forests and natural resources. Yet this knowledge, which they rely on for healthcare and which includes unique remedies (eg for snake bite), is dying out day by day and innovation has stopped. This is largely because the Yanadi have been relocated and alienated from their forest dwelling areas gradually over the past 150 years, to make way for industrial growth. New forest and wildlife conservation laws of the 1970s-80s prevent access to biodiversity rich forests. Access for NTFP collection requires Giri cards which are given mostly to young men, far less to healers and not to women. Yanadi THK has also been undermined by their change in lifestyle to unskilled labourers, and the advent of modern healthcare. The younger generation no longer want to learn about their traditional knowledge and practices, and are encouraged to plunder the forest. Overharvesting has brought a number of medicinal plants to the verge of extinction. Decentralisation and JFM has also weakened traditional village governance based on elders, in favour of younger leaders. Relocation to make-shift huts away from the forest has also brought steadily increasing poverty and deteriorating social and psychological conditions to the Yanadi.

Continued access to forest resources is critical to prevent the loss of Yanadi TK and improve Yanadi healthcare and livelihoods. Traditionally, collection of plants is a collective activity, through which TK is transmitted. Access to sacred groves is needed to harvest plants for specialized cures (cultivation is believed to remove potency). The loss of medicinal plants has led to loss of associated cultural use and traditional knowledge. Cultural values also sustain TK – eg. Yanadi women still practice age old cures due to their strong belief in culture. Forests sustain cultural and spiritual beliefs, which in turn sustain TK. The Yanadi believe that the gods and goddesses that protect them are in the forest, and that certain species are their ancestors. Thus, Yanadi TK, bioresources/forests, cultural and spiritual values are closely inter-linked.

Yanadi culture includes principles of community heritage, reciprocity (collective sharing) and harmony in society and nature. TK and forest resources are considered common property, except for specialized cures which are only shared with kith and kin, are not uttered loudly, and knowledge about their locality and identity is kept secret. In this way the knowledge and resource based are protected. But such specialized knowledge is still considered to be their collective heritage.

Legal protection of TK should recognize collective rights so as not to restrict the customary transmission of THK within the community or create conflicts between communities or THK holders leading to disintegration of customary laws and practices built around the THK. The protection and recognition should be undertaken in a manner conducive to social and economic welfare of the entire community. Moreover the commercial use of THK (validated medicines) should be subject to equitable sharing of benefits (equity is central to general IP law). Traditional communities (Grama sabha) should be directly involved in decision making about the protection, use and commercial exploitation of their THK, using customary decision-making processes and laws as far as possible.

The documented registers are kept under the custody of the chosen head of the hamlet. Though the treatments documented are for primary health only, there is a risk that they may be commercialized by parties outside the communities with no benefit accruing to the healers. An appropriate mechanism is needed to prevent biopiracy and ensure credit goes to the TK holders for their contribution. The Biological Diversity Act 2002 does not provide adequate protection for tribal community rights and equitable benefit-sharing.

The healers propose that stronger provisions are needed for:

- Prior Informed Consent of communities before accessing their biodiversity and knowledge;
- endorsement of the principle of consensus decision making through the gramasabha (village community) for PIC;
- citizens to approach the court under the Act, similar to *locus standi*;
- the same stringent ABS requirements for Indian corporations;
- dropping the exemption given to plants registered under plant varieties protection bill,
- recognition of all common property resources as belonging to grama sabhas for the purpose of benefit sharing; and
- inclusion of yanadi healer representatives in the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) and State Biodiversity Authority (SBA).

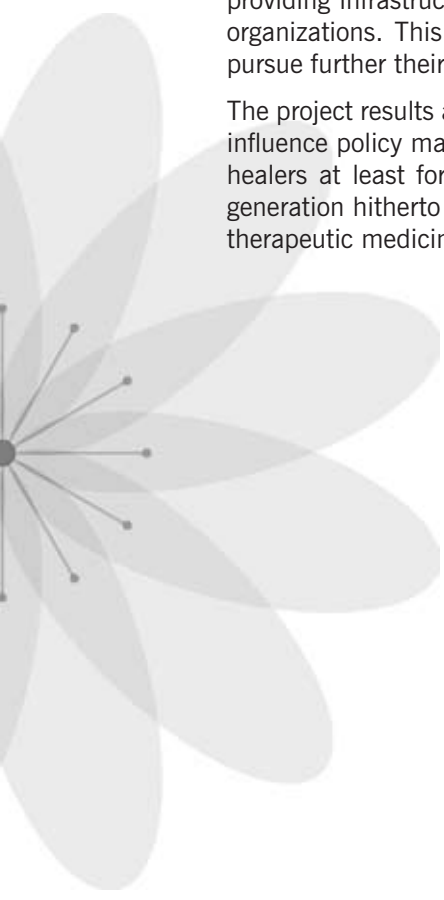
However, the yanadis feel that formal recognition to their THK in healthcare provision and exclusive rights to use the bioresources needed for the sustenance of their health knowledge/ practice should be given priority.

Only collective rights for access to the forest will allow them to live in harmony and ensure the survival of their traditional knowledge systems. At least the government should provide some land to the community as a whole for their day to day activities in providing medical healthcare to the people who live in and around the fringe areas of the forest.

Ironically, forest and wildlife conservation laws are making the Yanadi lose their conservation knowledge and values. JFM has not improved Yanadi participation in forest management and access to NTFPs, and has undermined traditional village institutions. Nor does the tribal Forest Rights Act hold much promise since tribal rights are difficult to establish in practice, and the implementing committees allow governments to control the process rather than village decision making bodies. The regeneration of dwindling forests could be achieved by involving the tribals living in the fringe areas and securing sustainable livelihoods for them. The protection of forest and peoples' rights should go hand in hand, but this will require pro-people improvements in the FRA and its implementation, and vigorous pursuit of the principle of participatory self-governance, including full implementation of PESA.

The healers feel that they need not only recognition as healers; but also training in hygienic practices and value addition to increase the shelf-life of herbal products for income generation. This can be done by providing infrastructure facilities to the herbal healers with the help of government agencies and voluntary organizations. This would instill confidence in the minds of traditional health practitioners that they can pursue further their practices by using modern technology.

The project results and the documentary film, if disseminated to various organizations at national level, may influence policy makers and mitigate the sufferings of the Yanadi healers and establish them as recognized healers at least for the benefit of their own tribe. In the long run it may pave the way for the younger generation hitherto turned away from their own THK to take up the practice and come up with many more therapeutic medicines.



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