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Examination of Adivasi women's perspectives on gender theories and ecosystem values associated with human-forest interactions

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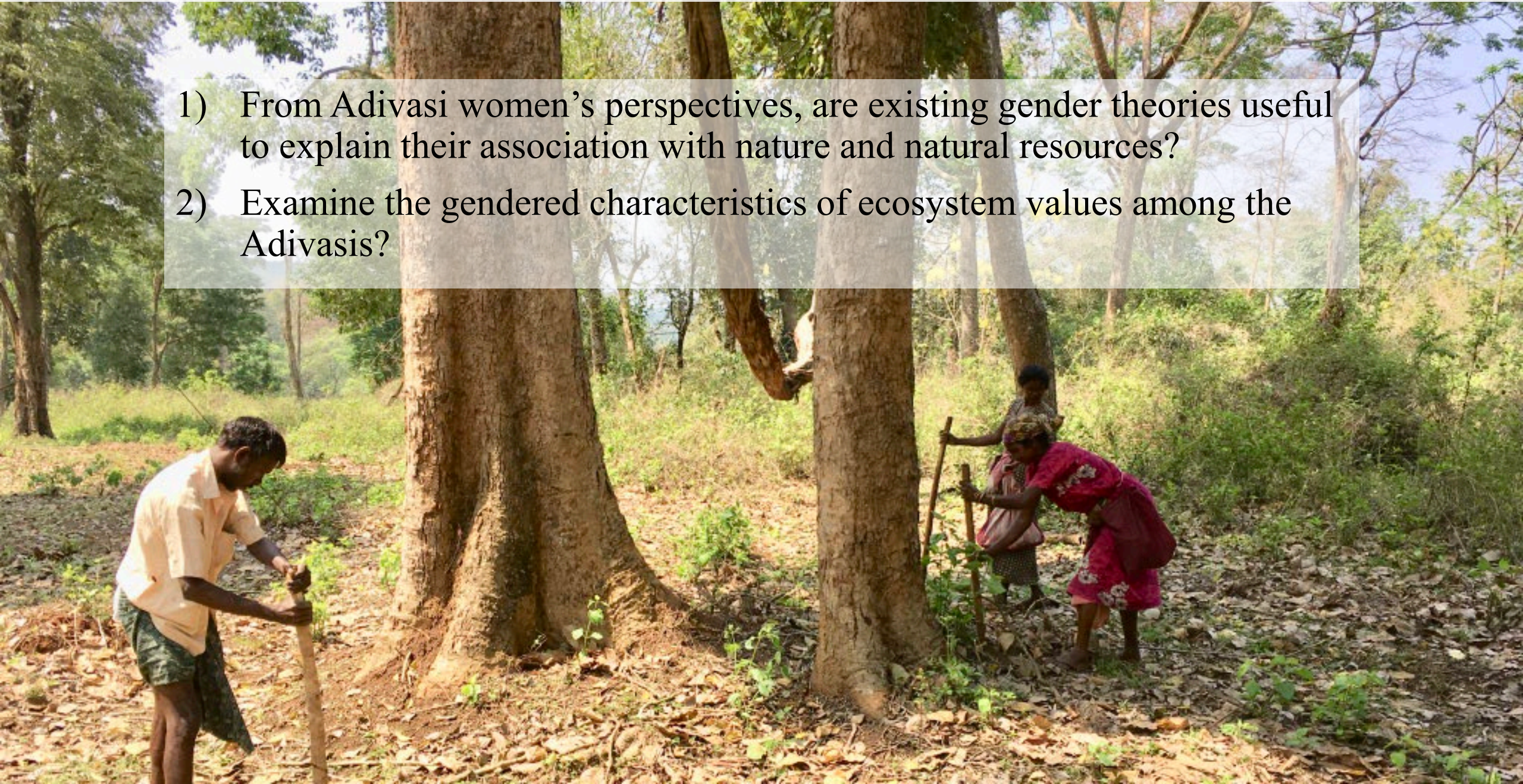
Women's vulnerability is closely related to their natural resource dependency.



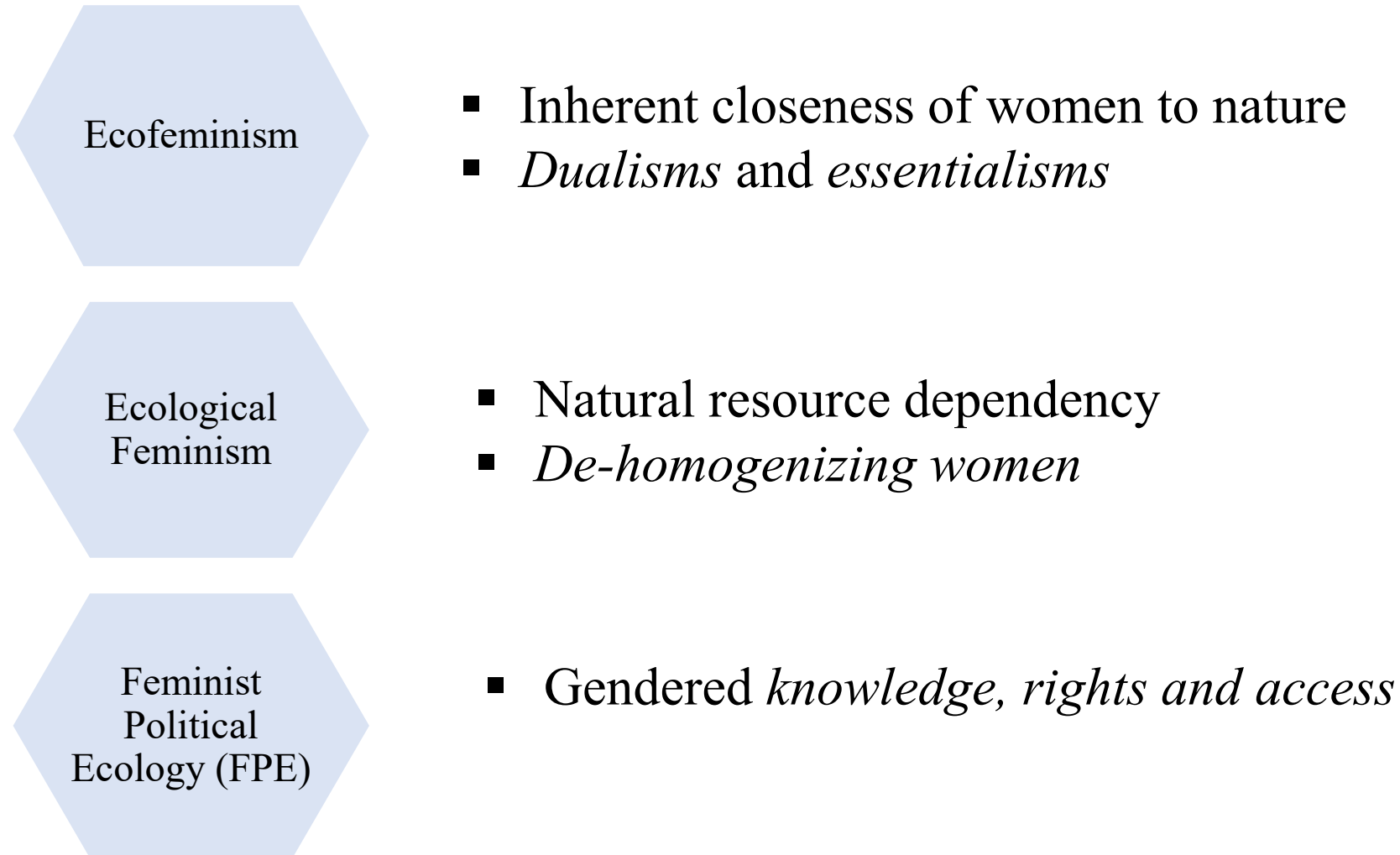


Research focus

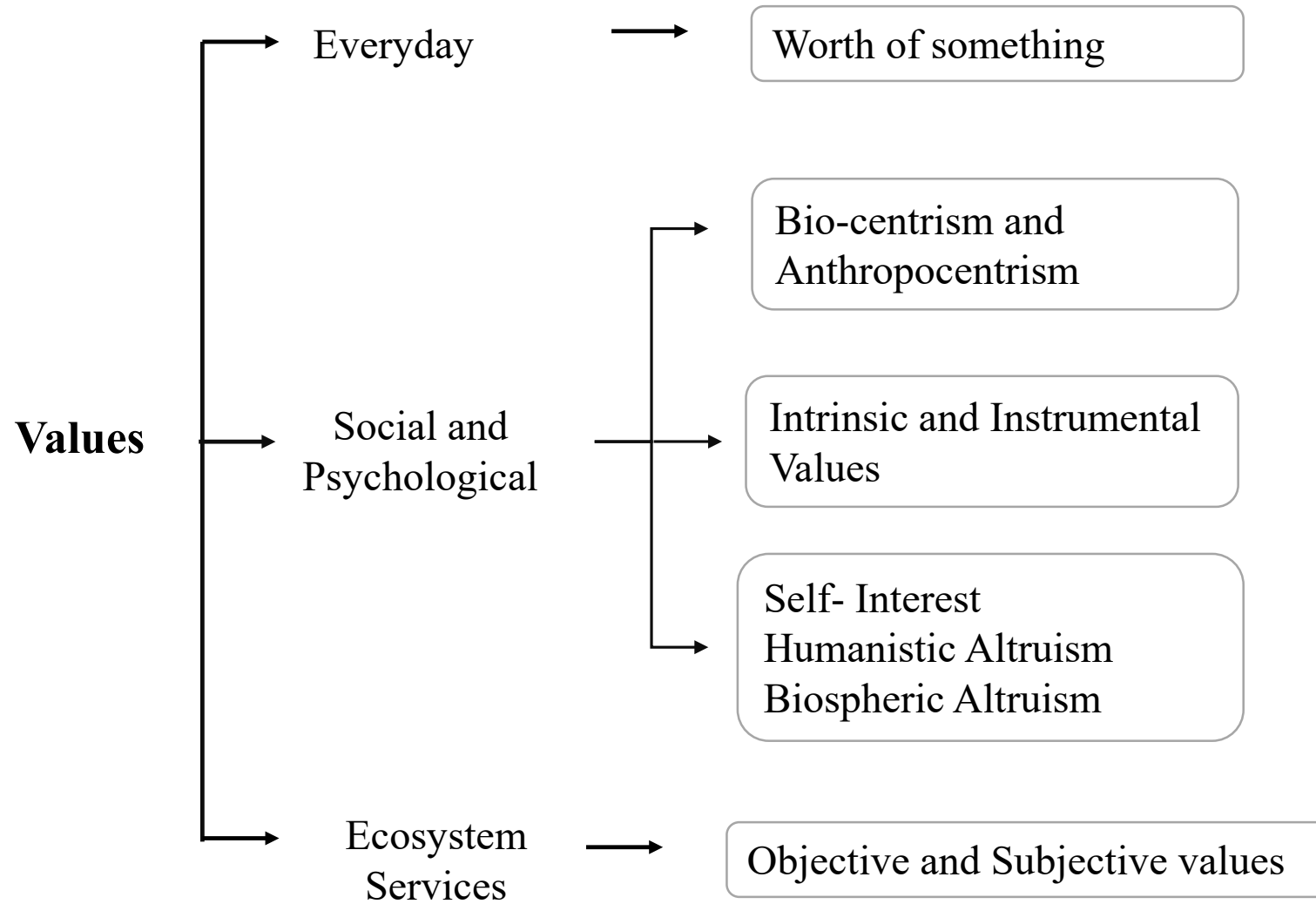
- 1) From Adivasi women's perspectives, are existing gender theories useful to explain their association with nature and natural resources?
- 2) Examine the gendered characteristics of ecosystem values among the Adivasis?



Gender theories and Natural Resource Management



Literature review



Ecosystem Services Value Approach

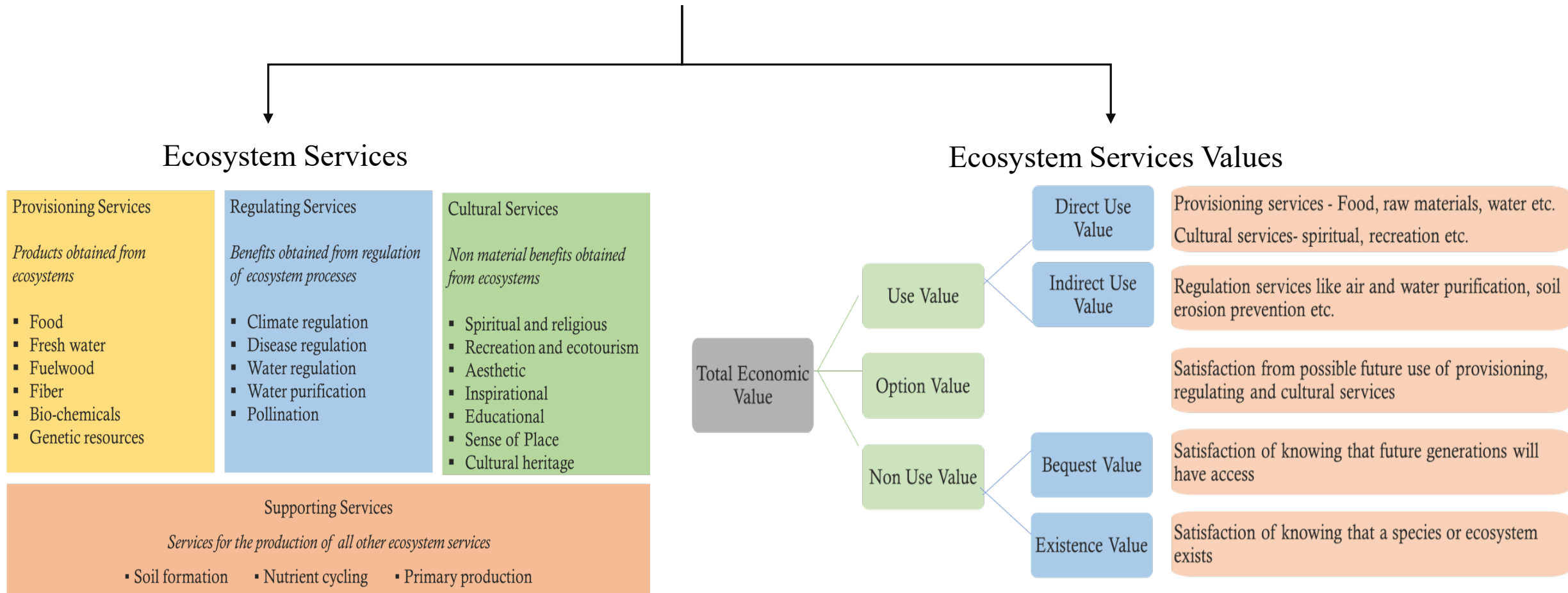


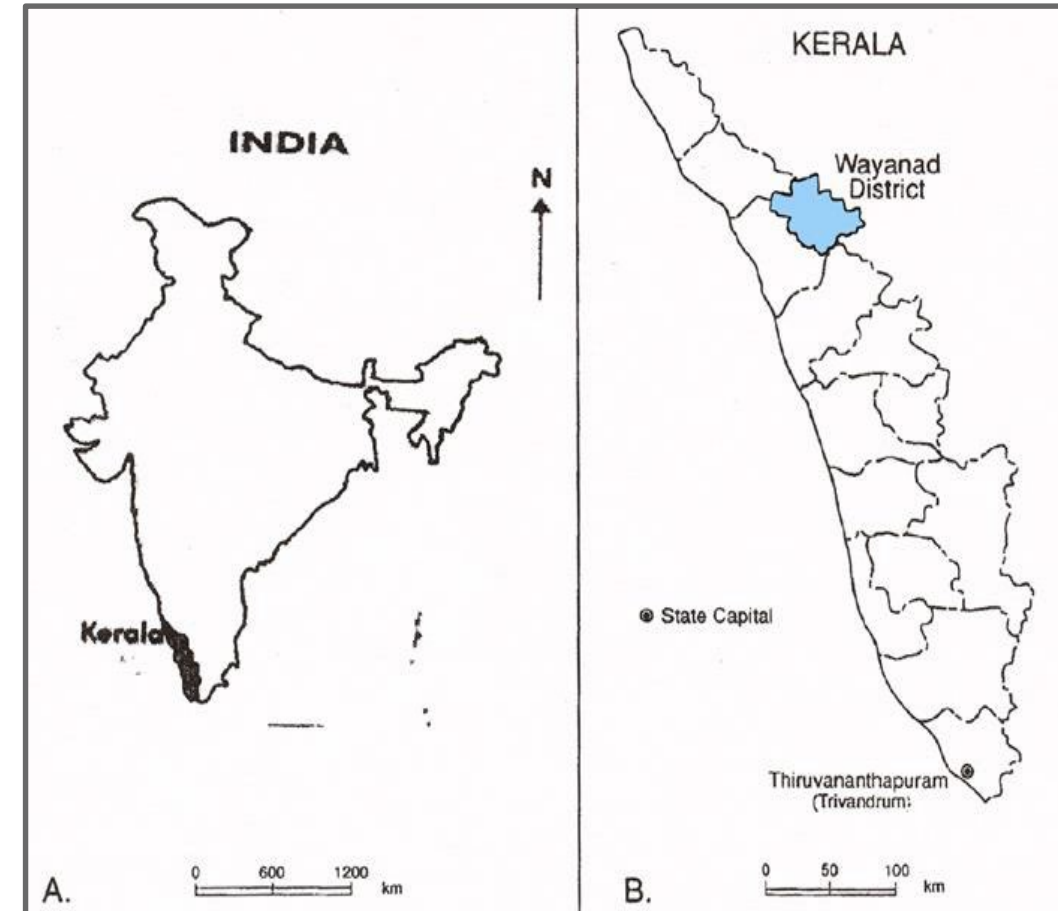
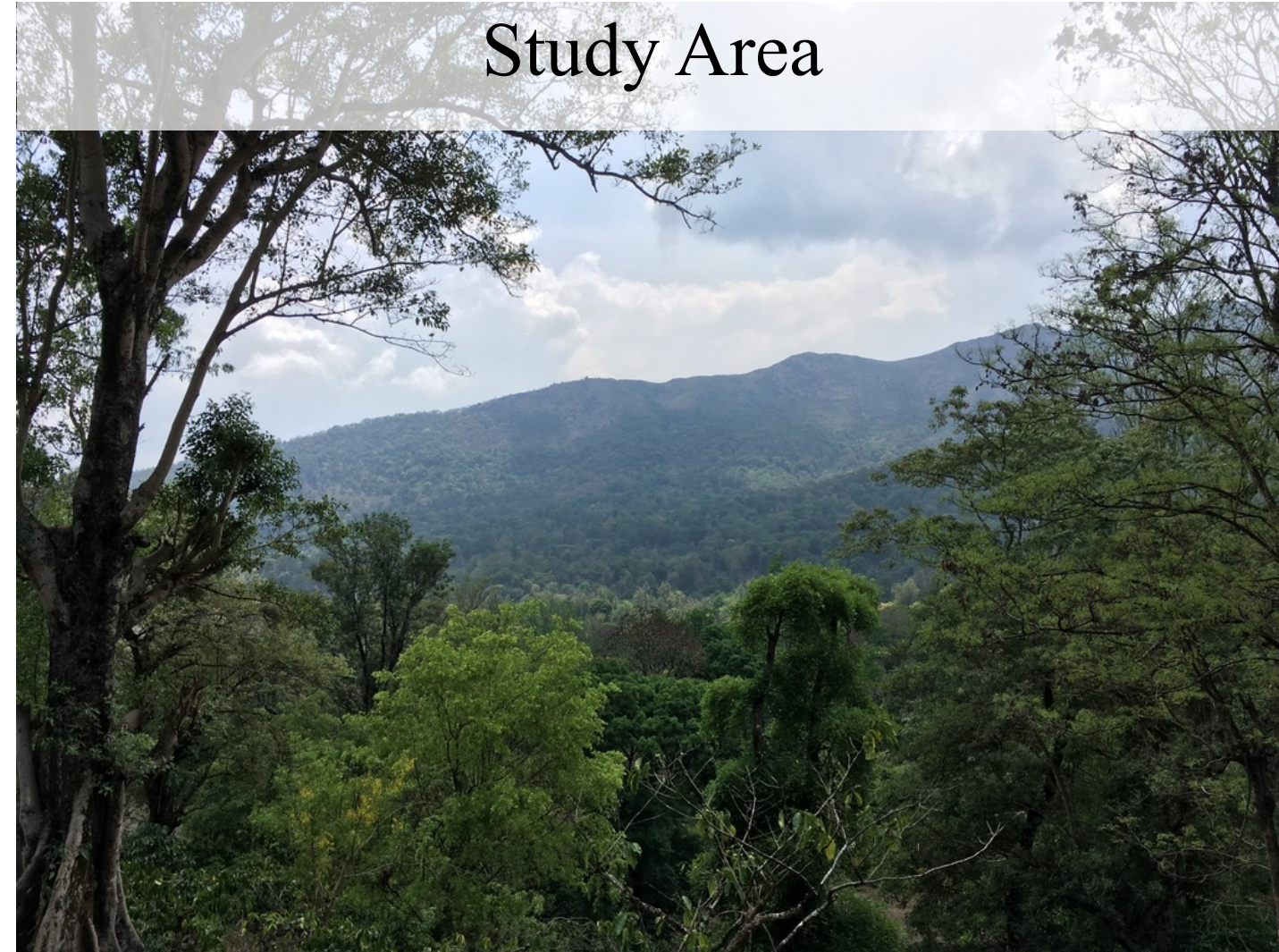
Figure 1- Ecosystem services

Figure 2 - Total Economic Value

Research Methodology



Study Area



Map of India and location of Kerala (state) and Wayanad (district); Source MSSRF office

Research Methodology



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Focus Community



Conceptual and scoping review of existing studies on gender theories, ecosystem services and values, Adivasi (Indigenous)- forest associations

Feminist political ecology

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Feminist political ecology (FPE) is a subfield that brings feminist theory and objectives to political ecology, which is an analytical framework built on the argument that ecological issues must be understood and analyzed in relation to political economy (and vice versa). Feminist political ecologists hold that gender – in relation to class, race, and other relevant axes of power – shapes access to and control over natural resources. FPE also demonstrates how social identities are constituted in and through relations with nature and everyday material practices. FPE builds bridges between sectors that are conventionally kept apart – academia, policymaking institutions, activist organizations – thereby connecting theory with praxis. In addition, FPE weaves threads between sites and scales to produce nuanced understandings of the socio-ecological dimensions of political economic processes. Rooted in feminist critiques of epistemology (the study of how knowledge is produced and legitimized), FPE asks compelling questions about who counts as an environmental actor in political ecologies and how ecological knowledges are constituted. As such, FPE has made substantive, epistemological, and methodological

Sites of inspiration and formation

Feminist political ecology was forged out of feminist and women-centered scholarship and activism in environmental and livelihood/quality of life issues. Inspired by feminist movements of the 1970s, many scholars and activists began to approach nature-society issues with a feminist sensibility, characterized by a persistent linking of the personal and the political. Such feminist environmental engagements brought the feminist movement's diverse political objectives to bear on the most intimate sites of daily life including relations between humans and nonhumans, food consumption, and corporeal wellbeing. Feminist scholarship in this vein both elaborated critiques of research that excludes women, and advanced alternative theoretical framings to account for women (Haraway 1991; Seager 1993). This now extensive and theoretically varied body of work asks fundamental questions about the relationship between forms of oppression and the domination of nature as manifest in environmental degradation, species extinction, industrial slaughter, toxic contamination, and so on. Feminists also advanced alternative ethical framings **built** on concepts such as relationality, care, responsibility, and friendship (Cuomo 1998).

Feminist political ecology emerged from this arena of lively debate and theorizing. Three bodies of work are particularly relevant to the

Nature's Services

SOCIETAL DEPENDENCE ON NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS

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SPECIAL ISSUE: The Dynamics and Value of Ecosystem Services: Integrating Economic and Ecological Perspectives

A typology for the classification, description and valuation of ecosystem functions, goods and services

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Abstract

An increasing amount of information is being collected on the ecological and socio-economic value of goods and services provided by natural and semi-natural ecosystems. However, much of this information appears scattered throughout a disciplinary academic literature, unpublished government agency reports, and across the World Wide Web. In addition, data on ecosystem goods and services often appears at incompatible scales of analysis and is classified differently by different authors. In order to make comparative ecological economic analysis possible, a standardized framework for the comprehensive assessment of ecosystem functions, goods and services is needed. In response to this challenge, this paper presents a conceptual framework and typology for describing, classifying and valuing ecosystem functions, goods and services in a clear and consistent manner. In the following analysis, a classification is given for the fullest possible range of 23 ecosystem functions that provide a much larger number of goods and services. In the second part of the paper, a checklist and matrix is provided, linking these ecosystem functions to the main ecological, socio-cultural and economic valuation methods. © 2002 Elsevier Science B.V. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Classification of ecosystem functions; Typology of goods and services; Ecological and socio-economic valuation

1. Introduction

In the past few decades, the field of ecological

concern with the valuation of ecosystem functions, goods and services. Early references to the concept of ecosystem functions, services and their

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No past, no present:

A critical-Nayaka perspective on cultural remembering

ABSTRACT

By means of an ethnographic analysis of Nayaka life stories and trance invocations, I revisit the common wisdom that cultures classed as "immediate-return hunter-gatherers" show little interest in the past. I argue that Nayaka are not interested in the past in the common Eurocentric understanding thereof. They are interested, however, in a past filtered through their own sensibilities. Their specific case supports a broader critique of studying ways of remembering the past in terms of a Eurocentric past-present distinction. [past, time, cultural remembering, history, spirit possession, Nayaka, hunter-gatherers]

In 2001 I returned to the Nilgiris hills of South India to revisit the small Nayaka group with whom I had first worked as an anthropologist in 1978–79. In a small clearing, amidst a shuffling deciduous tropical forest surrounded by rapidly expanding plantations, I met Madri, who had been my *aka* (sister) during the fieldwork. "What has happened in the *asaal*?" I asked her. She shrugged my question off, saying that her people did not remember such things. We talked at length about "our" parents and other relatives, remembering who was where and with whom more than 20 years before. This banal conversation raises a critical question in relation to the growing body of literature concerning the diversity of ways by which people remember the past. That is, in these a given, unhemmed past? Are there not diverse perceptions of the past and various ways that people remember it? Specifically, in what way should one understand the past in which Madri was interested, compared with the one about which I inquired?

Of course, these questions did not arise only from this conversation, which amplified other ethnographic findings. The Nayaka with whom I worked, and, to my best knowledge, Nayaka in general, rarely related their own myths about the past. They did not usually recount genealogies beyond two ascending generations. Their rituals did not commemorate past events, and the few objects that at they used therein were not approached as embodiments of the deeds of the deceased, but as the deceased themselves. Furthermore, they rarely drew trajectories of travel routes and settlements (about which I learned from their non-Nayaka neighbors). Their scattered clusters of huts, some with as few as one or two dwellings, usually were not referred to by place-names that condensed stories of the past but as *naama sime* (our home place) or by reference to a prominent landmark or the name of the closest plantation or rural market village, even if these were a long walk away.

These Nayaka belong to an analytical class of societies called "immediate-return hunter-gatherers," who, in reworked wisdom, are rarely interested in the past. James Woodburn (1980, 1982a, 1982b)

Field assessment

Expert interviews - Forest officials, Adivasi experts, historians, other Adivasi community members, MS Swaminathan Research Foundation scientists, villagers

Community interactions and field observations



Results and observations



Ecosystem Values and Adivasi

Predominance of intrinsic value - *“Forests are sondam (our own). We and other animals came from forests. We cannot measure value of forests . They are more valuable than us [people]” - [Kattunayakar man]*

Resilient biospheric altruism - *“We are not sad about elephant raiding our crops. They [elephants] do not have food in forests. What will the poor animals do. If we don't disturb them, they will eat food and go away. We are not sad.” [Kattunaykar man]*

Elicitation of memories and sense of place - *“We prefer living next to forests. Our ancestors live here [pointing towards the forest that joins the paddy field]. We were given settlement homes but we came back to forests since our ancestors refused to come with us” [Kuruma woman]*

Coexistence - *“Our ancestors lived with forests and wildlife. We are not afraid of anna (elephant) or puli (tiger/leopard). We sing songs and communicate with them. Elephants are scared of our sounds. We have some strategies to identify animals. Forest belongs to all of us and animals also care for forest as much as we do.” [Kattunayakar woman]*

Anthropocentric position

Instrumental values, Weak sustainability, Value monism

Bi – directional status

Mutualistic, Supporting, Contributing

Co – construction paradigm

Community perception, Disservices, Negative human impacts

Romanticize indigeneity

Cultural values, Intangible, Non -use values

Unaccustomed markets

Unfamiliarity, Poor and subsistence societies, Socio-cultural impacts



Fundamental values and perceptions towards Adivasi-forest relationship of women in the communities were similar to men.

There is a need for gender-sensitive approaches to understand how displacement from forests impacted women distinctly

- Livelihood activities (daily wage labourers)
- Proximity to forest areas and natural resources (fuelwood, food and water)
- Forest degradation (timber, forest fires)

Discussions and way forward

Reimagining PhD



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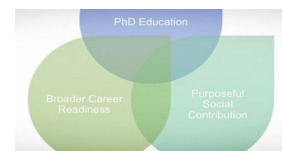
Thank You

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Questions and comments



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