

Estate workers have a say in Devikulam, Peerumade

- [Giji K. Raman](#)

There is a clear consolidation of tea estate workers' votes in Devikulam and Peerumade Assembly constituencies where they constitute a considerable percentage of the electorate.

It all started with the successful agitation of women estate workers in Munnar in Devikulam constituency under Pengal Otrumai without the support of trade unions or political parties. The leaders of Pengal Otrumai later entered the political space by contesting the local body elections and winning a seat to the Devikulam block panchayat and two seats in the Munnar grama panchayat.

A large number of tea estate workers in Peerumade are living in a pathetic condition since a crisis hit the sector a decade ago. The workers openly expressed their resentment when some of the candidates visited the area recently. Though the tea estate workers are of Tamil origin, Tamil political parties had kept off the fray, choosing to support a particular candidate in the two constituencies. However, this time, the AIADMK has fielded candidates in the two constituencies in addition to Pengal Otrumai contesting in Devikulam.

Peerumade Tea Company Ltd. which was locked out for long was reopened three years ago, was again closed down recently leaving hundreds of workers in the lurch. Chiva, son of an estate worker at the company told *The Hindu* that the consolidation of estate workers' votes was above political lines but not apolitical. "Who did what to the estate workers when they were in distress will be counted," he added.

Perumal, a worker at Kanan Deven Hills Plantation Ltd. in Munnar, said that political leaders enjoyed the favours given by estate managements and ignored the workers. Only those who have concern for us will be given votes, he said.

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