

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC ROOTS OF
COMMUNALISATION IN COASTAL
MALABAR (1950-2005)**

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DECLARATION

I, **RAMDAS. P**, hereby declare that the thesis **SOCIO-ECONOMIC ROOTS OF COMMUNALISATION IN COASTAL MALABAR (1950-2005)** is a bonafide record of research work done by me and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any other degrees.

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CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF MAPS

PREFACE

**Page
No.**

	INTRODUCTION	1-28
Chapter I	THE MALABAR COAST AND ITS PEOPLE UNDER BRITISH COLONIALISM (1900-1950)	29-87
Chapter II	THE STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN THE KERALA FISHERIES SECTOR SINCE INDEPENDENCE	88-137
Chapter III	GROWTH OF COMMUNALISATION IN THE MALABAR COAST	138-173
Chapter IV	THE FISHERMEN STRUGGLE IN MALABAR (1984) AND AFTER	174-219
Chapter V	GENESIS OF SOCIAL CONFLICTS ALONG THE KERALA COAST	220-238
Chapter VI	SOCIAL CONFLICTS IN THE MALABAR COAST: THE CASE OF MARAD	239-286
	CONCLUSION	287-302
	MAPS	
	APPENDICES	
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	303-328
	GLOSSARY	

LIST OF TABLES

I	Marine Fish Produce and Investment	<u>104</u>
II	Fishing Crafts Operating in Kerala (in Nos.)	<u>107</u>
III	Per Capita Income: State Average and the Fishermen Average (1980-'81 – 1994-'95)	<u>132</u>
IV	Habitation Facilities (in %)	<u>134</u>

LIST OF MAPS

- 1 Major Fishing Centres of Kerala -
- 2 The field of conflict in Beypore Panchayath -

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PREFACE

It was the communal conflicts that occurred at the Marad coastal hamlet in the Kozhikode District in 2002 and 2003 that inspired this research. The events at Marad reminded the social science students of the questions regarding community, the communal conflicts, communalism and communitarianism. Social scientists have treated communitarianism as a harmless social mobilisation and communalism a harmful one. Then what is the boundary between these two propositions? How is it that communitarianism becomes communalism and ends up in communal killings and conflicts? And is there a separate process of communalisation? Equally important in this discussion is the role of the category like community. How far the notion of *community* is instrumental in the process of communalisation and how it is formed are yet other problems to be tackled. Whether there is a social process that generates communalism and conflicts is another issue that merits attention.

Marad massacres also reminded of the frequent conflicts that took place along the coastal Kerala in the last few decades. Many clashes that can be called communal erupted along the coastal belt since the last twenty years. Vizhinjam (Thiruvananthapuram-1980 1982, and 1994), Valiathura (Thiruvananthapuram-1982), Poonthura (Thiruvananthapuram-1970,1978, 1980 and 1992), Marad (Calicut, 2002 and 2003), Thaikkal (Alappuzha-

2002), Korman Beach (Malappuram – 2002), Perumathurai (2003) etc. were some among them. The recurrence of communal conflicts in the coastal areas compelled the researcher to concentrate on the fisheries sector and the coastal population. The following chapters are discussions on the socio-economic roots of communalisation along the coastal Malabar. The present study takes the five Northern districts of modern Kerala as the research field. These districts include, Thrissur, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Kannur, and Kasargode. The coast of Kerala is selected because of many reasons. Apart from the fact that there have been a number of visible and frequent communal tensions among the coastal population, it is also interesting to probe into the process of communalisation among a *subordinated* group such as the coastal fishermen. How did the traditional fishing *Jatis* become modern communities and were vertically mobilised into exclusive socio-political entities? The study seeks to find answers for the questions already raised in the light of the socio-economic transformation of the Kerala fisheries sector in the last 50 years. The period of study ranges from 1950 to 2005, because the introduction of the new technology or the capitalist production relations started from the 1950's and this is taken as a crucial point in the fragmentation and alienation of the coastal people. Communalisation among them is conceptualised as a process having direct bearing with this. Moreover, the social reform movements as well as the activities of the political parties among them were weak. Further, the

developments along the coast may reflect the trends that can be seen outside the coast.

In the present study, the methodology of socio-economic history is followed. We have attempted to look at the coastal fishermen as a discrete social group who make use of the sea as their means of subsistence and have tried to provide an analysis of the social and economic relations that they have entered into in their struggle for subsistence. The changes that have taken place in their subsistence patterns under British colonialism and in independent India are taken as the basis for the changes in their social formation. The data regarding the fisheries sector is mainly collected from the government publications, Reports and Proceedings of Kerala Legislative Assembly (PKLA) and the working papers of the Centre for Development Studies (CDS) and Malabar Coastal Institute for Research Training and Action (MCITRA). Newspapers and published works also were made useful to collect data regarding the sector. The socio-economic history of the fishing people is traced using archival data. The contemporary history of the fisher people is traced by field survey and personal interviews with fishermen, activists and subject experts. The researcher could not pool much social data because it could only be obtained by participant observation. As the self-identification of the coastal population has already come into existence, it is not easy for an 'external' to get into the coast without proper 'links'.

The section titled *Introduction* briefly discusses the different approaches to the problem of communalism. It also deals with the basic theoretical position that is used in this study. The first chapter titled *The Malabar Coast and its people Under British Colonialism (1900-1950)* deals with the peculiarities of Malabar Coast at the beginning of 20th century. The distribution of different communities and their social organisation and fishing practices are explained. Further, it also contains the changes brought in by the British authorities in the form of industrial endeavours, land assignments and the introduction of salt tax etc. The socio-economic activities like the starting of co-operative societies, temperance movements and educational institutions also have formed part of this chapter. This chapter also looks in to the nature of the development of community consciousness during that period. The second chapter, *The Structural Changes in the Kerala Fisheries Sector since Independence* is an attempt to delineate the development of a full-fledged capitalist system in the Kerala fisheries sector in the post-independence period and the technological and social implications of these changes. The third chapter, *Growth of Communalisation in the Malabar Coast* discusses the decline of the traditional regulatory systems like *Kadakkodi* and the birth of new institutions like *Araya Samajam*

and *Mahallu Committee*. The major communal discourses developed outside the coast are also discussed to show its impact on the coastal life. The Fourth chapter *The Fishermen Struggle in Malabar (1984) and After* focuses on the labour agitation of 1984 to interrogate the nature of labour mobilisation in the beginning of the 1980s. This chapter also discusses the changes in the ownership and working pattern in the period of capitalist incursions into the traditional sector. It also looks into how the social classes constituted by the non-fishing fishermen, the middlemen and the NGOs, set the platform for communalisation of coastal Malabar. The Fifth Chapter *Genesis of Social Conflicts along the Kerala Coast* explains the different conflicts that happened after the 1970s. The Sixth Chapter, *Social Conflicts in the Malabar Coast: The Case of Marad* is focussing on the unfortunate happenings at Marad in 2002 and 2003. And it tries to bring out the nature and trend of communalisation that took place in a coastal spot of Malabar. In the last part general conclusions drawn from the study are incorporated.

INTRODUCTION

By 1970s the terms like *community* and *communalism* assumed great significance in the historical discourse. The discourse on communalism was initiated by the scholars in the background of the recurring communal pogroms in various parts of India. In the subsequent decades, categories like *community*, *secularism*, *development*, *modernity*, *civil society* and *identity* gained prominence in social discourses and analyses¹. The concepts like ‘caste communities’, ‘village communities’, ‘traditional communities’, ‘religious communities’, ‘linguistic communities’ etc. were interchangeably used and which has often obstructed the proper understanding of such terms. *Communities* were being viewed as ‘some of the most active agents of political practice in the new political societies like India². Vandana Siva has placed the ‘traditional communities’ as the custodians of moral values and village purity and viewed that the breakdown of which may cause unpredictable tragedies³. In the discussions on development also, this village community has been construed as the natural ‘unit’ for organising development since 1952 and the legislation such as the 73rd amendment has buttressed this perception of community participation⁴. This discourse on the

¹ “Community and Identities Interrogating Contemporary Discourses on India”, *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)* Special Articles, October 9, 1999, www.epw.in.

² Partha Chatterjee, “Community in the East”, *EPW*, Vol.XXXIII (6), 1998.

³ Vandana Siva, *Violence of Green Revolution*, Zed Books, London, 1991. She argues that the crisis in Punjab in 1980 was due to the developmental efforts in the agricultural sector since 1960, which as a result of the ‘external inputs’ changed the structure of social and political relationships.

⁴ Indrajit Roy, “Community Organisation and representation Implications for Development”, *EPW Perspectives*, August 31, 2002.

sociological categories shifted the attention from the social phenomenon of communalism to a sociological category like community. The category of *community* is very much important in the analysis of communalism, though community consciousness need not necessarily end up in communalism. But at the same time, the community consciousness is a precondition for the development of communalism.

There are three major theoretical strands in the analysis of the category of caste/religious *community*. The first one being the substantivist perception that views the institution of community and hence communalism were the essential character of the Indian society⁵. The second is the constructivist paradigm that deals community and communalism as colonial constructions⁶. And the third is the Marxist approach that denies the *a priori* existence of *community* as distinct from other social groups. They perceive communalism as a result of some peculiar social processes that are divisive and obstruct the formation of social classes.

The recent researches treat the notion of community as ‘imagined’ and as a ‘cultural artifact of a popular kind’⁷. If we take this theoretical base as an analytical category then we must accept that there will be as many ways of constructing community as there are of imagining it. This constructionist argument of the community is shared by many social scientists who have

⁵ See Christopher Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazzars, North Indian Society in the age of Expansion, 1770-1870*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983. (Hereafter *Rulers Townsmen...*)

⁶ Gyanendra Pandey, *Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, OUP, Delhi, 1996, p.6.

⁷ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1991.

seriously studied communalism in the colonial context. Thus caste, as they argued, was constructed out of the old content and this was ordered and disciplined by the colonial initiatives⁸. Gyanendra Pandey's work, *Construction of communalism in Colonial North India* is an excellent example of dealing communalism as a colonial construction⁹. He argues that the 'construction' is a process through which a form of knowledge is evolved and the colonial subject is informed of their sociology and history, a process that is well summed up in the term *communalism*¹⁰. Gyanendra Pandey is critical of the colonial view that communalism is inherent in Indian society as well as the nationalist view which holds *communalism* as of recent origin and as an outcome of basic economic and political inequality and conflict. He criticises the economic explanation of sectarian strife and takes the 'excessive religiosity' (and stupidity) of the people as the only explanation for the ease with which masses of ordinary peasants and workers, unemployed youth and petty bourgeois elements generally are diverted from what, we are assured, are their primary concerns'¹¹. Amrita Shodhan looks into the problem of colonial legal system, which treated 'self governing polities' as 'communities' in the process of the codification of caste/religious laws¹². This preoccupation with the constructionist theory is seen in the classification of the pre-colonial and colonial communities into certain

⁸ See Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2002.

⁹ Gyanendra Pandey, *Op.Cit.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.21.

¹² See Amrita Shodhan, *A Question of Community: Religious Groups and Colonial Law*, Samya, Kolkata, 2001.

binaries on the basis of their nature and structure. Thus, we have fluid/objectified¹³, fuzzy/enumerated¹⁴ communities etc. The assumption is that fluid and fuzzy communities consist of individuals whose membership is blurred and overlapping between groups, whereas, in the other forms of communities like objectified and enumerated, the membership is seen as exclusive and hierarchically ordered. R. B. Bhagat argues that the *fuzzy* communities have been turned into enumerated communities and then into political communities by the colonialist strategy of census¹⁵. He also explains how a secular institution like census was used to form religious communities in India¹⁶.

But still the questions are due. What is a community? And how is it being constituted? Thus Vinay Lal asks: “What is a ‘community’, and do all segments of the ‘community’ think alike, acting in perfect consistency with each other? Does an individual always speak as a member of a community, and are there not moments when the individual is called to go beyond the community?”¹⁷

In approaching these questions the Marxists have a different paradigm. It is this paradigmatic shift, which makes their analysis different. Bipan

¹³ See Bernad S. Cohn, “The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia” in Cohn (ed.), *An Anthropologist among Historians and other Essays*, OUP, Delhi, 1987.

¹⁴ Sudipta Kaviraj, “The Imaginary Institution of India”, *Subaltern Studies Vol.VII* (eds), Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey, OUP, Delhi, 1992, pp.1-39.

¹⁵ R.B.Bhagat, “Census and the construction of communalism in India”, in *EPW* commentary, November, 24, 2001.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Vinay Lal, *The History of History Politics and Scholarship in Modern India*, OUP, New Delhi, 2005, p.11.

Chandra takes 'community' and its formation as a modern phenomenon¹⁸. The critics of *community* enrich the discussion by questioning the *givenness* of community. Saral Jhingran is of the opinion that, the caste and religious community conception are similar but such communities are non-existent because each caste and religion is heterogeneous in nature. The distribution of economic, social-cultural and symbolic capital within the community is uneven¹⁹. Romila Thapar comes to a similar conclusion. She says that a religion cannot constitute a community because a community may have some social groups within and the reality is not the *community* but the identity of the social group²⁰. Thus, the internal stratification and the diversification within a *community* question the myth of the monolithic nature of the community.

Communalism and Communalisation

The Neo-Cambridge school holds that communalism is simply a carry over from the pre-colonial past. One of the most significant exponents of this position is Christopher A. Bayly²¹. He takes examples from the revivalist policies of the eighteenth century rulers of India. According to Bayly, religious syncretism had existed in the eighteenth century India. At the same

¹⁸ See Bipan Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India*, Vikas, New Delhi, 1992.

¹⁹ Saral Jhingran, "The Function of the category of 'Community' in a secular socio-political order", Research in Progress Paper, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), Centre for Contemporary Studies, IIIrd Series, No. VIII, Delhi, (Mimeo), November 1996, pp.1-8.

²⁰ Romila Thapar, "The Tyranny of Labels", in K.N. Panikkar (Ed), *The Concerned Indian's Guide to Communalism*, Vyking, New Delhi, 1999, pp. 1-33.

²¹ Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen...*

time, 'the eighteenth century Indian powers, particularly the sikhs, Marathas and Mysore, were committed to exclusive strategies of religious revivalism'²². And he goes to the extent of calling this phenomenon as 'state communalism'²³. What is interesting in his argument is the negation of the nationalist position of a syncretic history in the pre-colonial period. His question, why the eighteenth century regional kings maintained the scholars of other religions in their courts and at the same time their attempt to declare some special spaces as exclusive and sacred (eg. Banares), has to be viewed in the context of political expediency of the time. A classical example was of Tipu Sultan, who patronised 'Hindu' scholars and revenue officials, maintained the Sreerangapatam Temple and is also alleged to have persecuted the Malabar Nayars. These acts need not to be seen either as syncretism or as communalism, but as state's political strategies. Further, the inter-sectarian strife of the 18th century could be better seen as a feature of south Asian pre-modernity. In other words, it is still doubtful that anything that could be called 'community' ever existed in the period under discussion. And the formulations of the Cambridge school about communalism are mistaking *whale for a fish*.²⁴ A few Indian scholars too share this substantive position as they trace a 'cultural contestation' behind the so-called 'religious

²² Christopher Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia Patriotism and ethical Government in the Making of Modern India*, O.U.P., Delhi, 1998. pp.210-237.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.217.

²⁴ M. Muraleedharan uses this phrase to denote the conceptual confusion in treating the groups of the pre-colonial period as 'communities'. "Hindu Community formation in Kerala: Processes and Structures under Colonial Modernity" in *South Indian Studies* 2, July – December, 1996, pp.234-259.

conflicts'²⁵. They argue that communalism is not a continuation of the religious conflicts of the pre-colonial India, but what is continuing is the 'cultural fault line' prevalent in the Bhakti discourse²⁶.

Some neo-Cambridge scholars provide communalism the stature of nationalism. Peter van der Veer²⁷ and Bruce Graham²⁸ share this view on communalism. To Peter van der Veer, communalism is the extreme kind of nationalism, i.e. religious nationalism and religious belief and practice are the major constituents of people's social identities²⁹. According to Jaffrelot, it is ethnic nationalism. Positing *communalism* as an extreme degree of *nationalism* may make the discussion a little bit confusing. But one should not forget the qualitative difference between the concepts of nationalism and communalism³⁰. However, there are scholars who believe that communalism is a threat to democracy and nationalism. N.Ram says that religious fanaticism, religious fundamentalism, or religious extremism all may be termed as a part of communalism³¹. As a whole communalism is a cold-

²⁵ Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh, *Struggle for Hegemony in India 1920-1947*, Vol .III, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1994, p.17.

²⁶ *Ibid.*,p.18.

²⁷ See Peter Van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*, University of California Press, Berkely, 1994.

²⁸ Bruce Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics The Origin and Development of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh*, Cambridge University Press, Foundation Books, New Delhi, 1993.

²⁹ Peter Van der Veer, *Op.Cit.*, p.ix..

³⁰ 'In the west, communalism stands for community based positive action, in South Asia it stands for conflict between various religious communities and nationalism a binding force which developed in the anti colonial struggle. But if the Hindutva forces see nationalism as a *homogenised* nation-state hagemonised by the elite then that come closer to the term communalism in the South Asian context.' says Ram Puniyani, while reviewing *communalism in Indian Politics* by Rajni Kothari, see Ram Puniyani, 'Politics of Elite and Communalism', *EPW Reviews*, October 7-13, 2000.

³¹ N.Ram, "communalism, challenge to democracy", *The Hindu*, Aug 03, 2002.

blooded political mobilisation as unambiguously understood in the South Asian and Indian contexts. It is a "socio-political project" underlined by "hate politics" directed towards minorities with an aim to win elections³². As a corollary to this point, the noted woman writer in Kannada, Sara Aboobakkar, has pointed out that communalism is all set to destroy regional languages and culture, as communal forces have cultivated the tendency to identify themselves with major languages such as Hindi and Urdu³³. Thus, the communalists undermine the true nature of the nation and the spirit of nationalism.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Sara Aboobakkar, *The Hindu*, April 6th 2002.

Bipan Chandra maintains that communalism is basically a modern ideology and political trend that expresses the social urges and serves the political needs of modern social groups, classes and forces³⁴. Sumit Sarkar also holds the view that communalism is a modern phenomenon. He traces back the origin of communalism to the 1880s. He has identified the Urdu-Devnagari controversy, cow protection riots and the age of consent debates as the key issues giving rise to communalism³⁵. He also underscores the role of myths as a contributory factor to build an ideology of communalism for the last sixty years³⁶. The post-independence developments are also crucial in the development of communalism. “Following Nehru’s death in 1964, the wars between Pakistan and India in 1965 and 1971, the increasing authoritarianism of the political order, the repression of student, working-class, and peasant unrest, and the imposition of an internal emergency in India in 1975, secularism found itself under onslaught and communalism acquired a refurbished legitimacy”³⁷. Sandy Gordon gives a complementary note. She says that the bequeathal of the secular tradition cherished by the national movement and the rise of the Islamic fundamentalist forces in the countries like Pakistan gave birth to communalism and terrorism in India³⁸.

³⁴ Bipan Chandra, “The Rise and Growth of Communalism”, in Bipan Chandra, et.al., *India’s Struggle for Independence 1857-1947*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1989, p.401.

³⁵ Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947*, McMillan India Limited, Madras, 1992, pp.59-60

³⁶ Sumit Sarkar, “The Fascism of Sangh Parivar”, in P.R.Ram (ed.), *Secular Challenge to Communal Politics-A Reader*, Vikas Adyayan Kendra, Mumbai, 1999, p.80.

³⁷ Vinay Lal, *Op.Cit.* p.17.

³⁸ Sandy Gordon, *Muslims, Terrorism and the Rise of Hindu Right in India*, Working Paper No.389, The Australian National University, Canberra, May 2004, www.hinduonnet.com. This paper, however, tries to make a distinction between communal conflicts and terrorism.

Achin Vanaik says that the interpretation of communalism is not complete without tracing the process of communalisation of the civil society³⁹. He says that in the crucial areas of civil society like education, health, recreation, welfare services, the private media, even trade unions and political parties, secularisation has been extremely slow and uneven⁴⁰. Hence the solution lies in the secularisation of the civil society. K.N. Panikkar also points to the need for a drive to secularise the civil society, as it is being communalised by the cultural interventions of the Sangh Parivar out fits⁴¹.

The emphasis on the political factors contributing to the communal riot is a dominant trend in the historiography of communalism. The competition between the Hindu and the Muslim elite was regarded as the chief cause of the riot in the pre-partition period⁴². Asghar Ali Engineer underlines a shift in the causes for the communal riots in the pre and post partition period. In the pre partition period, the super structural aspects like the religio-cultural sentiments were the prime reasons for the eruption of the riots in India but in the post partition period a significant change occurred there that more local factors like the immediate economic grievances and

³⁹ Achin Vanaik, *Communalism and Nationalism: Some Tentative Reflections*, Occasional Papers on History and Society, NMML, II series No. LVL (Mimeo), Delhi, 1992, p.21.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.31.

⁴¹ K.N.Panikkar, "Introduction, Defining the Nation as Hindu" in K.N.Panikkar (Ed) *The Concerned Indian's Guide to Communalism*, Penguin Books India, New Delhi, 1999, pp.VII-XXXV.

⁴² Asghar Ali Engineer, "The Causes of Communal riots in the post partition period in India", in Asghar Ali Engineer (Ed), *Communal Riots in Post-Independence India*, Second Edition, Sangam Books, Hyderabad, 1991, pp.33-41. Also see, Asghar Ali Engineer, "Gujarat Riots in the Light of the History of Communal Violence", *EPW* Special article, December 14, 2002, www.epw.org; Prabha Dixit, *Communalism-A Struggle for Power*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, April, 1974.

political aspirations and the disappointments etc. emerged as the reasons of conflict⁴³. However, he acquits religion from the causation of communalism⁴⁴. Rajni Kothari is also of the opinion that the change in the political approach that took place in the 1980s along with the economic changes that caused for the communalisation of Indian states⁴⁵. Another variant of this argument could be seen in the treatment of communalism by Riaz Ahmed. Analysing the Gujarat violence of 2002, Riyaz Ahammed writes: “The current violence in Gujarat should be seen in the context of the total crisis sweeping through the Indian political system.... Globalisation has not merely opened up new economic avenues; it has also made the economic crisis worse. The political crisis emanating from inadequate responsiveness of the political system has contributed to greater authoritarian tendencies that have further distanced the people and the state, thus making the crisis even more serious. The economic and political contradictions have been manipulated to promote communalism so that it serves as an escape route for the brewing tensions among people, provides a breathing space to certain sections of the ruling elite and ensures the victory of some of them in the number game of electoral politics”⁴⁶.

⁴³ Asghar Ali Engineer, “The Causes of Communal riots in the post partition period in India”, in Asghar Ali Engineer (Ed), *Communal Riots in Post-Independence India*, Second Edition, Sangam Books, Hyderabad, 1991, pp.33-41.

⁴⁴ Asghar Ali Engineer, “Resolving Hindu-Muslim Problem An Approach”, *EPW Perspectives*, February 13, 1999, www.epw.org. He writes, ‘... it appears as if religion is the main culprit and the whole fight is religious. In fact, this is not the case’.

⁴⁵ See Rajni Kothari, *Communalism in Indian Politics*, Rainbow Publishers, Delhi, 1998.

⁴⁶ Riaz Ahmed, “Gujarat Violence: Meaning and implications”, *EPW commentary*, May 18, 2002.

Amrita Basu and Atul Kohli maintain that the sufficient conditions for the phenomena like communalism are transparently political⁴⁷. Their argument comes closer to that of Bipan Chandra that the democratic system is a source and solution to power politics. Zoya Khaliq Hassan attempts to examine the socio economic basis of communalism, and the political compulsions behind communal violence in post-independence India⁴⁸. She takes the fragmented and uneven capitalist development that created the condition of backwardness, which in turn, has facilitated the growth of communalism⁴⁹. In analysing the attacks on Christians, Somen Chakraborty finds out the lopsided development and the pauperisation of the adivasis as the prime reason for their communalisation⁵⁰.

In a recent study, Paul Brass addresses the *production* of Hindu-Muslim violence rather than treating it as a *happening*⁵¹. In his scholarly exercise he attributes the causes of this *production* to an institutionalised riot system, which involves men with money, incentives, local knowledge and daring attitude in the cities of India⁵². Thus, in his analysis he neglects the usually put up reasons for Hindu-Muslim conflicts like the prejudices and

⁴⁷ See the Introduction, Amrita Basu and Atul Kohli (Ed.), *Community Conflicts and the State In India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998.

⁴⁸ Zoya Khaliq Hassan, "Communalism and Communal Violence in India", in Asghar Ali Engineer (Ed.), *Communal Riots in Post Independence India*, Second Edition, Sangam Books, Hyderabad, 1991, p.68-87.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Somen Chakraborty, "Gujarat: Attacks on Christians Looking Beyond Communalism", *EPW Commentary*, April 17-24, 1999.

⁵¹ See Paul R. Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India*, University of Washington Press, London, 2003.

⁵² *Ibid.*

hostilities between these communities, and suggests that, ‘the decisive factor is the action that takes place before the precipitating incidents and immediately thereafter, action that is often planned and organised and that fills the intermediate space and time between past history and immediate circumstances’⁵³.

Further, he says that the linkage of macro and micro communal conflicts is simultaneously done and the maintenance of communal tensions, accompanied from time to time by lethal rioting in specific sites, is essential for the maintenance of militant Hindu nationalism, but also has uses for other political parties, organisations and even the state and central governments.⁵⁴ This analysis is worthy enough to explain the goonda and mafia involvement in the lethal communal killings but why and how a section of the society becomes the essential cogs in this institutionalised riot system is left unanswered.

There are attempts to label communal conflicts as ethnic conflicts. Ashutosh Varshney probes into the causes of conflict between ‘ethnic groups’. Here *ethnicity* is ‘simply the larger set to which religion, race, language, and sect belong as subsets’⁵⁵. He underscores that the Hindu-Muslim violence is primarily an urban phenomenon and is concentrated in

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.11.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.9.

⁵⁵ Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*, Yale University Press, 2002, p.5.

the cities like Ahmedabad, Aligarh, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Meerut, Baroda, Calcutta and Delhi⁵⁶. He finds the absence of the inter-communal civil society as the cause for the ethnic conflict in the cities⁵⁷. He says, “where such networks of engagements exist, tensions and conflicts were regulated and managed; where they are missing, communal identities led to endemic and ghastly violence”⁵⁸. His methodology is to pair the cities of similar characteristics. In the interesting comparison between Aligarh and Calicut(Kozhikode) he found Aligarh as a city, most of its civil society organisations are intra-communal and a site of frequent communal conflicts and those of Calicut are inter-communal and the city is free from communal conflicts. But Varshney does not mention the communal problems that occurred in and around the city of Calicut. The Naduvattam incidents (in 1936 and 1954)⁵⁹ that took place just out side the southern boundary of the city and the similar incidents of conflicts at Palayam in 1952⁶⁰ (Palayam is

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.7.

⁵⁷ Sujatha Patel, in her paper titled “Shiv Sena, Culture and Identity”, presented at the workshop conducted by the Department of Sociology at the University of Hyderabad on March 19 and 20,1998, emphasised the need to look into the restructuring of the Urban economy in Mumbai and the rise of Sena. Sena in the changed circumstances changed its mode of mobilisation from trade unions to residential units. And sites of social organisation were the *Vada Pav* stalls, the video parlours, the club and bars, the paan shops, the retail trade outlets the film industry and cultural festivals etc. Thus the civil space is communalised. Sujatha Patel quoted in, “Community and Identities Interrogating Contemporary Discourses on India”, *EPW* Special Articles, October 9, 1999, *Op.Cit.* While discussing the communal riot Darshani Mahadevia points to the phenomenon of ‘Casting of communal space over life space’. “Communal Space over Life Space Saga of increasing Vulnerability in Ahmedabad”, *EPW* Special Article, November 30, 2002.

⁵⁸ Ashutosh Varshney, *Op. Cit.*, p.9.

⁵⁹ These incidents are explained in the Chapters III & VI.

⁶⁰ There was a clash on August 3rd 1952 between the Hindus and Muslims before a mosque at Halwa Bazar in Kozhikode town, *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, dated, 5th August 1952, Tuesday.

inside the city) and Panniyankara in 1954 were not properly analysed in the haste to reach at this convenient conclusion.

Perhaps this may be because of the distinction he makes between the terms *ethnic conflict* and *ethnic violence*. He takes *ethnic conflict* as an inevitable fact of life and the *ethnic violence* as a phenomenon not an inevitable one. The *ethnic conflict* is construed by him as a part of political discourse and hence harmless⁶¹. This distinction does not necessarily explain the condition of normalcy. The latent competition in the society for survival and forward movement need not always be *ethnic*. When it is conceptualised in ethnic nature, the analysis ceases to be a healthy one. The riot (*violence*, as Varshney puts it) that took place in Thalassery town in 1971 is an example. There was, among other reasons, an urban rivalry between the Hindus and Muslims over the space for business in the town⁶². And it was a latent condition of competition between the emerging elite of that developing urban centre. It has nothing to do with ethnicity or community. But when it accrued a communal colour it became a catalyst for the violence. A similar *conflict* of business interests could also be seen between the Hindu and Muslim elites of Naduvattam in the 1950s. This condition of *conflict* mobilised the people into two different camps and armed them physically and ideologically to fight against the *other*. When this happened, there were other forms of

⁶¹ At this juncture, Varshney also unknowingly shares the essentialist view on communities, which he tries to criticise in his theoretical discussion. He sees ethnic conflict and mobilisation as part of the polities like India. See Ashutosh Varshney, *Op. Cit.*, p.28.

⁶² *Report of Commission of Enquiry, Tellichery Disturbances, 1971 (RCETD)*, Government of Kerala, p.74.

mobilisation taking place in Kerala. One should not forget the class mobilisation, which characterised the Kerala society during the fifties⁶³. It should also be noted that *ethnic mobilisation*, is a pre-modern criterion of political mobilisation to be bestowed with any positive character and all political discourses are not pegged on to this category. The role of intercommunity civil society in dealing with communalism or ethnicity is very much important but the question remains - why this civil society is shrinking and transforming to intra communal spaces. Further, the communal incidents of the Marad coastal village in 2002 and 2003 poses questions regarding why villages, where everybody has personal and face-to-face interaction became prone to communal strife.

The recent developments in the history of communal riots maintain that the treatment of this as a middle-class question can no longer be entertained. The ethnic cleansing that took place in Gujarat in 2002 shows that all sections of the society, including the middle class men and women, the dalits and the adivasis actively participated either in communalisation or in the carnage⁶⁴. Why these sections were attracted to the communal riots

⁶³ Varshney was criticised by Karin Kapadia while reviewing Varshney's work for avoiding the social science terminology 'class relations' and the continuous usage of the terms like 'civic networks' 'civic engagement' and 'civil society'. Karin Kapadia says that 'these terms (in the usage popularised by Putnam and his advocates) connote a depoliticised sphere of public action- that is a sphere that, supposedly has no connection with the state' and he further criticise Varshney for not giving 'sufficient weight to the possibility that there are strong economic and class-related reasons why communal violence flourishes in certain places and not in others', "Understanding Communal Violence", *EPW* Book Review September 21, 2002.

⁶⁴ 'There has therefore been a systematic communalisation of all social strata across class and gender and generations and women, dalits, young and old and a variety of other strata who, at one time had been thought of as providing the basic elements of a people's coalition', Rajni Kothari, "Culture of Communalism in Gujarat", *EPW* Special Article November 30, 2002.

may be better explained in the context of the socio-economic factors. Lancy Lobo undertakes such an analysis while exploring the participation of the adivasis in the Gujarat riots that followed the Godhra carnage⁶⁵. Lancy Lobo highlights the fact that character of riots in adivasis areas was different from that in non-adivasi areas and links the communalisation with the political economy of adivasis. The problems of adivasis are related to ‘jal’ (water), ‘jungle’ (forest) and ‘jameen’ (land). The transfer of their resources to non-tribal areas upset them. Instead of addressing issues of political economy, the Sangh Parivar and BJP, whose social basis is among the upper castes and middle classes, diverted the attention of the adivasis and misguided them to target Muslims and Christians⁶⁶. A similar study by Jan Breman on Ahmedabad, another centre of the riot, merits attention. Jan Breman shows that the workforce affected by the decline in the Ahmedabad industries were used by the front organisations of the Sangh Parivar and mercenaries from this lumpenised milieu of subaltern groups were mobilised to assist in the operation of killing, burning and looting⁶⁷. Darshini Mahadevia studies how the uncertain economic base of the city left self-employed and casual workers vulnerable to the vagaries of market forces leading to the casting of communal space over life space⁶⁸.

⁶⁵ Lancy Lobo, “Adivasis, Hindutva and Post-Godhra Riots in Gujarat”, *EPW* Special Article, November 30, 2002.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Jan Breman, “Communal Upheaval as Resurgence of Social Darwinism”, *EPW* Commentary, April 20, 2002.

⁶⁸ Darshini Mahadevia, *Op. Cit.* “Communal Space over Life Space Saga of increasing Vulnerability in Ahmedabad”, *EPW* Special Article, November 30, 2002.

The above discussion on the various views on community/communalism delineates three major trajectories: A group of scholars considers community as an essential aspect of Indian society; some others take community as a constructed one; a third group questions the *apriori* existence of community and views communalism as a product of a social process. The neo-Cambridge historians and the Subaltern historians constitute the votaries of the first two groups. Notwithstanding the ideological differences in the interpretation of the Indian history, both share a common territory in the analysis of community that they accept the *apriori* existence of community as a factor in the development of communalism. The western Scholars, despite their differences of opinion in some specific aspects of communalism, generally tend to endorse the notion of community. Christopher Bayly, Susan Bayly, Sandria Freitag, Peter Van der Veer, Bruce Graham etc. belong to this group. The scholars like Partha Chatterjee, Gyanendra Pandey, Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh, etc. also share the views of the former group. They believe that there are different communities in India and each community differs significantly from others. K.R. Malkani, Ashish Nandy etc. are other Indian writers who maintain the ideology of community. Robin Jeffrey, Roland E. Miller, Filippo Osella and Carolina Osella have accepted the notion of caste/religious community in the context of Kerala.

While the third group, constituted primarily by the Marxist historians, argues that community formation is a result and function of the communalising process, which in turn is the product of crisis in socio-economic and political features of a given society. Scholars like Bipan Chandra, Romila Thapar, Sumit Sarkar, Achin Vanaik, Saral Jhingran, K.N.Panikkar etc. are rejecting the possibility of the *apriori* existence of a community on the basis of a religion or caste. They accept the existence of caste and religion as social groups in India but do not conform to the idea that these constitute a discrete community. Because, they maintain that there are different social groups within the broad frame of caste and religion and the interest of these social groups are mutually contradictory and competing. Hence it would be illogical to assume a discrete community on the basis of caste/religion.

Kerala is experiencing a distinct form of communalisation. Though direct communal politics has not yet become dominant through electoral victories of manifest communal combinations, communalisation of civil society in terms of caste community or religion is gathering strength⁶⁹. Community based arguments have been occupying the centre stage in current politics. There are several ways of understanding the problem of communalisation. Firstly, it may be understood as the reflection of

⁶⁹ George Mathew, *Communal Road to a Secular Kerala*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1989; Dick Kooiman, *Communalism in Indian Princely States Travancore, Baroda and Hyderabad in the 1930s*, Manohar, New Delhi, 2002; K.N. Ganesh, *Kerala Samooha Padanangal* (Mal), Prasakthi Books, Pathanamthitta, 2002, pp.34-120.

international and national tensions; secondly, as the result of the political trends of the post-independence period; thirdly, as the out come of the politics of community appeasement by all secular parties including the leftist parties. The validity of any of these has to be tested on the basis of the historical process of communalisation in the modern period.

The dominant argument regarding the modernisation of Kerala society considers the colonial administration as the agency for bringing about transformation⁷⁰. They believe that the European intervention not only changed the economic structure but also unleashed a number of new social forces. New form of education introduced by missionaries not only served the colonial purpose but also produced an intelligentsia in colonial fashion. The Anglo-Saxon legal code and property rights supplanted the feudal ethics. Moreover, the legislative assemblies and councils slowly bred facets of modern politics and action. These facts are very crucial in the socio-political transformation of Kerala. The last decades of nineteenth century was important in this regard.

The last decades of Nineteenth century was a period of social reform activities and the first half of the twentieth century was a period of Nationalist politics and radical movements in Kerala. Nationalism and radicalism were extended political actions that had their roots in social

⁷⁰ Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nair Dominance Society and Politics in Travancore 1847-1908*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1994, pp.63-141.

reform movements. The trajectories of transformation discerned above, i.e. nationalist movement, social reform movements etc., provided the backdrop for the peculiarities that could be seen in the structure and development of socio-political mobilisations in Kerala, right from that period.

In this context, certain categories that have occupied a place in the academic and popular parlance in Kerala have to be interrogated. The categories such as *Jati* (caste) and *Samudayam* (community) have been used interchangeably and in loose manner in contemporary literature. But historically speaking, these terms came to acquire different meanings in the very particular historical context as discussed below.

***Jati* (Caste) and *Samudayam* (Community) as two Different Analytical Categories**

Here, it is noteworthy to present a discussion on that transformation of the category of *Jati* (Caste) to *Samudayam* (Community). This signifies a structural and functional change in *Jati* collectivities that existed in pre-British period. A sociologist would define caste as hereditary, endogamous, usually localized group, having a traditional association with an occupation and a particular position in the local hierarchy of castes⁷¹. Thus, *Jati* signifies

⁷¹ M.N.Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India and other Essays*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1977, p.3; In the *Karnataka Backward Classes Commission Report*, L.G.Havanur defines caste as, 'the word caste could be used in a concrete or in an abstract sense. In the concrete sense, 'caste' means a group of persons or families. In the abstract sense, caste means status or position with occupation', Havanur, quoted in, Ravivarma Kumar, "Caste Enumeration in Census: Constitutional imperative", *EPW Commentary*, August 26–September 2, 2000. But in this definition, the complexities of 'caste' are not present.

a social group as a collectivity that is structurally interlinked through marriage, kinship, ritual and occupational ties. Sometimes this includes residence also. This social group had two roles to play. One was to provide the basis for stratification in an unequal, hierarchical, society. The second role, perhaps more important, is its material role that jati functioned as an occupational group⁷². In Kerala, up to mid-Nineteenth century, the term jati was used to denote not only the Hindu castes like Nairs, Ezhavas, Pulayas etc. but also the religious groups like Mappilas (Muslims) and Nazranis (Christians). *Keralolpathy*, the Brahmanical text on the origin of land and society of Kerala, states that Sankaracharya ordained 72 Kulams or lineages of Kerala along with customs internal to each⁷³. A caste is usually segmented into sub-castes and each sub-caste is endogamous⁷⁴. But there are scholars who are doubtful of accepting caste as something fundamental to Indian civilization, Indian culture and Indian tradition⁷⁵. Nicholas Dirks states that the units of social identity had been multiple in pre-colonial India...and caste was just one category among many others, one way of organizing and representing identity⁷⁶. But the colonial authority accepted caste as the basic form of social organisation in India. They assumed a hierarchy following oriental perceptions in Indian society and initiated a discourse of difference.

⁷² Ramkrishna Mukherjee, shows that the Jati division of society denoted the relation of people to land for production and the ancillary artisanal and trading activities. See his article, "Caste in Itself, Caste and Class, or Caste in Class", *EPW Perspectives*, July 3-9, 1999.

⁷³ M.Muralidharn, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 234-259.

⁷⁴ M.N.Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India and other Essays*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1977, p.3.

⁷⁵ Nicholas B. Dirks, *Op. Cit.*, p.5.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.13.

‘Caste is a modern phenomenon that is specifically, the product of an historical encounter between India and western colonial rule.... It was under the British that caste became a single term capable of expressing, organising and above all ‘systematising’ India’s diverse forms of social identity, community and organisation’⁷⁷.

In pre-British Kerala, Jati identities seem to have existed as localised entities, with their position in the social hierarchy based on a set of obligations and privileges based on *vazhakkam* (Custom) and *maryadai* (Obligatory practice). Jati defined the location of a particular social group within the over all hierarchy in a village community. But in British rule, this situation changed. In miscellaneous collection and volumes of official manuals, gazetteers, and in census, caste figured as the most important subject and classificatory scheme for the organisation of the social world. When this was done they categorised a population, not a group associated with a certain form of labour. This process of amalgamation resulted in conferring a common name for a group consisting of various social groups with varied interests. These classifications lay at the root of the community formations in Kerala. M. Muralidharan says that in the census of 1881 an all-inclusive statement of the *population* was made in which Hindu, Muhammeden, Christian and others were introduced as *nationalities*. This *nationality* was the overall category within which we have castes and sexual

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.5.

divisions⁷⁸. K.N.Ganesh underlines the curious example of the disappearance of *upajatis* (sub-castes) within the Nair section in the 1931 census⁷⁹. Thus, by the late nineteenth century, the notion of a Jati as a closed entity began to emerge and it began to be viewed as a *vyavastha* (a system).

The social reform movement of Kerala was a platform where the quest for sanskritisation, resistance of Jati oppression and reform of evil caste practices were displayed. These social reform movements were intended to make changes in the *vyavastha*. The introduction of capitalist production relations, a new code of ethics and law and the gradual emergence of a civil society made changes in the social positions of Jatis. The greater mobility brought about under the British rule, the movement to the cities for higher education and employment, urban cosmopolitanism and westernisation were the factors responsible for this change⁸⁰. The social reform movements may be viewed as the attempts to make the castes or the *samudayam* more mobile.

Each *samudayam* argued for social justice and social equity and fought against the *evils* within the *samudayam*. But at this stage they had not posited an *antagonistic other*, though they did have a self-perception of the internal construction of their community and its distinctive characteristics, which caused their subjection. Effacement of these characteristics, they believed, would ensure their upward mobility. Hence they gave some

⁷⁸ M. Muralidharan, *Op.Cit.*, p.252.

⁷⁹ K.N. Ganesh, *Kerala Samooha Padanangal* (Mal), Prasakthi Books, Pathanamthitta, 2002, p.63.

⁸⁰ M.N. Srinivas, *Op.Cit.*, p.4.

enduring slogans like *One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man*. With the emergence of these communitarian organisations, the Ezhavas, the Nairs, the Pulayas, the Christians and the Muslims began to speak of their rights as *samudayams* or communities i.e. different groups hitherto were *Jatis* began to address themselves as *samudayams*. Thus, a notion of community has been introduced into the social sphere of Kerala. This notion was developed in the premises of colonial modernity⁸¹. At the same time it used traditional notions of *Jati* to construct a community. Thus the form of community that emerged accepted and rejected both tradition and modernity. This rendered the category of community highly ambivalent.

Generally, the term *communalism* is used to denote a condition of suspicion, fear and hostility between members of different religious communities. This condition is generated by a perception of self and of the other based on a certain level of religiosity. A sense of relative deprivation, say economic, social, political or cultural informs the member of the community and the loss of status quo in any of these realms is expressed and analysed by them in communal terms.

Scholars make a distinction between Communitarianism and communalism. As Muralidharan argues, 'community sentiment or Communitarianism is significantly different from communalism, though the two could often merge'⁸². Prof. K.N. Panikkar observes, 'an identity of

⁸¹ M.Muralidharan, *Op.Cit.*

⁸² *Ibid.* p. 242.

belonging to a religion or belonging to a community need not necessarily be against another religion or community. Yet it is important to recognise that such an identity could be transformed into communal by positing an antagonistic relationship. At a suitable social and political conjuncture community consciousness could be transformed into an antagonistic communal consciousness and relationship⁸³. The *Araya Samajam* backed by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and *Mahallu* Committee supported by Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) of Marad Beach in Kozhikode District, where major acts of communal violence took place in 2002 and 2003, are glaring examples of this metamorphosis of communitarian organizations into communal ones⁸⁴.

Communalisation is defined as a process through which a community is theoretically assumed and sought to practice by constituting oneself on the basis of a given community and distancing oneself from the other communities. This process is assumed as one developing along with the process of secularisation. This process of secularisation has been started since the beginning of 20th century with the emergence of the social reform movements, nationalist and radical politics in Kerala. These developments along with the spread of education, a full-fledged press etc. contributed to the emergence of a public sphere in Kerala. The social reform movements were

⁸³ K.N.Panikkar, "What is communalism today?" In P.R.Ram (Ed.), *Secular Challenge to Communal Politics – A Reader*, Vikas Adhyayan Kendra, Mumbai, 1999, pp.43-44.

⁸⁴ A Group of Researchers, "Marad Kalapam Oru Anweshanam", (Mal.), in *Marxist Samvadam*, E.M.S. Seminar Special issue, AKG study and Research Centre, Thiruvananthapuram, Vol. 23-24, January – June 2003, pp.60-68.

started to fight for social equity and justice negated to the oppressed castes. These movements worked within the public sphere developed in Kerala and maintained communitarian aspirations. But at a certain historical point of time, these organisations began to claim authority as the single spokesman of the respective communities. Then they became competitors for material gains and began to posit an antagonistic relationship with other communities. Thus community formation started and the public sphere within which the earlier communitarian organisations functioned began to be fragmented and the process of communalisation started.

The beginning of 20th century saw the reassertion of communities with strong political content and bargaining power. The experiments in electoral politics, the spread of education, the need for entry into the educational institutions, demand for due share in government jobs and legislature etc. resulted in a competition between different communities. This competition contributed to a speedy consolidation of the communities on a trans-local, trans-occupational basis. The vernacular press played an important role in the communitarian quest for jobs and status⁸⁵. The historically ambivalent character of these organisations has helped them to use their past in order to justify their present and use it to exploit its democratic political space, but at the same time working to organise people in communal terms. And

⁸⁵ George Mathew, *Op.Cit.*, p.36; G. Rajendran, *The Ezhava Community and Kerala Politics*, the Kerala Academy of Political Science, Trivandrum, 1974, p.30.

communalism in Kerala always camouflaged itself by maintaining a secular facade.

Regarding the fishing sector of Kerala, there are some pioneering works. P.R.G. Mathur has attempted a sociological study on the fishermen of Tanur fishing hamlet in Malappuram district. He brought out the inter-relationship between the habitat, technology, economy and society and its impact on shaping the life world of the fishermen.⁸⁶ John Kurian has written extensively on the effect of mechanisation and over fishing on the coastal fishing community.⁸⁷ T.R.Thankappan Achari analysed the changes that occurred in the small scale fisheries sector.⁸⁸ The work of Nalini Nayak and Gabriela Dietrich deals with the organisational processes in the fisheries sector and its impact on the class organisations of the fisher folk.⁸⁹

K.M.Shajahan tries to analyse the root cause behind the turbulence along the Kerala coast. He finds that the inability of the government to understand the real problems of the fishers is the basic cause of tensions.⁹⁰

Mathew Aerthayl attempts a detailed study of different agitations made by

⁸⁶ P.R.G.Mathur, *The Mappila Fisherfolk of Kerala A study in inter-relationship between Habitat, Technology, Economy, Society and Culture*, Kerala Historical Society, Trivandrum, 1977.

⁸⁷ John Kurian, "Technical Assistance Projects and socio-economic change: the Norwegian intervention in Kerala Fisheries developmental experience", working paper No.205, (Mimio), CDS, Trivandrum, May 1985; "Small scale fisheries in the context of globalisation", working paper No.289, CDS, Trivandrum, October 1998.; *The Blessing of The Commons: Small Scale Fisheries, Community Property Rights and Coastal Natural Assets*, working paper No.349, CDS, August 2003.

⁸⁸ T.R.Thankappan Achari, *Emerging Trends in Small Scale Fisheries*, Fisheries Research Cell, PCO, Trivandrum, 1986.

⁸⁹ Gabriele Dietrich and Nalini Nayak, *Transition or Transformation A study of the mobilisation, organisation and emergence of consciousness among the fish workers of Kerala, India*, Department of Social Analysis, Madurai, March 2002.

⁹⁰ K.M.Shajahan, *Ashanthamakunna Kerala Theerangal* (Mal.), Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad, Kozhikode, 1990.

the organised fisher folk of Kerala.⁹¹ The Kerala government had appointed many Enquiry Commissions to study the problems of fisheries sector. The reports of Dr. Babu Paul Commission (1981), Kalawar Commission (1984) and N.Balakrishnan Nair Commission (1989,2000) merits special attention.

Non-Governmental organisations like Programme for Community Organisation (PCO), Malabar Coastal Institute for Training Research and Action (MCITRA) etc. have many micro studies at their disposal. MCITRA is particularly interested in the studies about the issues of Malabar Coast.

⁹¹ Mathew Aerthayl *Keralathile Malsya Tthozhilali Prasthanam Samoohika Sasthraparamaya Oru Vishakalanam* (Mal.), D.C. Books Kottayam, 2002.

CHAPTER I

THE MALABAR COAST AND ITS PEOPLE UNDER BRITISH COLONIALISM (1900-1950)

Geographically, the narrow sandy tract lying at the extreme west of Malabar constitutes the coastal area. The coastal area, when compared with the mid land and high range areas is less fertile but suited for coconut plantation. Malabar coastal area touches the southern boundary of Karnataka state in the north, and Ernakulam district of Kerala state as its southern end.¹ The people inhabited on the coast had their own dwellings around the *thurai*. *Thurai* constituted the habitable landmass adjoining the sea. This spot on the coast was an entry point to the sea and a space for keeping the crafts and gears after use. The beach associated with it has been used for the drying of fish, mending of nets and for the limited agriculture they would like to do. The essential fresh water would be available in the *thurai*. The dispersed settlement pattern may be due to the dispersed nature of the *thurais*. The Malabar Coast does not have sand dunes everywhere. In some places there are rocky areas extending up to the sea. Likewise, at some points the *parambu* lands are also extending to the costal area.

¹ Some earlier writers used the term 'Malabar' to signify the entire Kerala Coast. In the present study, Malabar refers to the present districts of Thrissur, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasargode.

The rivers sprouting from the Western Ghats (the elevated area of eastern Kerala) crisscrossed the land and divided this tract into small regions. During the southwestern monsoon season all these rivers flowed with abundance of water to join the Arabian Sea. The rivers acted as important channels of trade. The estuaries functioned as natural harbours at the time of high tide. The West Coast, always found a place of fame in the maritime history of Malabar.

In the case of the coastal population the rivers are very important for the enhancement of resources in the sea. The rivers during southwest monsoon bring a lot of phytoplankton and zooplankton in to the sea on which the different species of fishes feed on². The major varieties of fish feed on the plankton available at the time of monsoon. The other important phenomenon associated with southwest monsoon is the formation of the mud bank known as 'chakara'. During the monsoon the huge quantities of sediments and other organic matters carried by the river water is accumulated and a mud bank is formed in the sea. This mud bank is plankton packed and the sea will be calm there. This calmness of the sea and the presence of the plankton call for the fish and they gather around this mud bank. The fishermen can easily catch the abundant fish shoal assembled around the mud bank³. Moreover, the mud banks are considered to be the natural fence to prevent coastal erosion in the

² P.R.G. Mathur, *The Mappila Fisherfolk of Kerala A Study in inter-relationship between Habitat, Technology, Economy, Society and Culture*, Kerala Historical Society, Trivandrum, 1977, pp.29-32. (Hereafter *The Mappila Fisherfolk of Kerala...*)

³ D.S.Rao et.al, "Mud Banks and Coastal Erosion in Relation to Fisheries", in *Marine Fisheries Information Service*, Technical and Extension Series (MFIS), No.19, May 1980, Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) Cochin, pp.1-6.

monsoon season⁴. Mangroves, Swamps, coral reefs, Sea grass meadows, beaches, deltaic regions and fish species are the major coastal resources. Mangroves act as the feeding centre and niche for some of the varieties of the highly demanded fish species in the tropical regions like shrimp and other fishes. The coastal birds and other edible fishes are also found here. Moreover, these act as a bio-wall against coastal erosion and such ecological pressures. Coral reefs and the sea grass meadows provide a permanent habitat and feeding grounds for the different varieties of fishes.

The natural productivity of the continental shelf off the coast of Kerala is also worth noting⁵. The Arabian Sea, being situated in the tropical area, is a peculiar and positive niche for different varieties of fish species⁶. These factors also contributed for the fame of the Kerala waters off the coast of Kerala as a rich source of fishery. This richness of the resources was one reason for the high concentration of fishers along the Kerala coast from time immemorial. They exploited these resources with their technology, however traditional it may be.

Geological studies on the evolution of the Kerala coast have shown that the present coastal stretch, which is extremely narrow, has been recently formed and it is fragile⁷. The activity of the winds including monsoon winds

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.6.

⁵ John Kurien, "Technical Assistance Projects and socio-economic change: The Norwegian intervention in Kerala Fisheries developmental Experience", Working Paper No. 205, (mimeo), Centre for Development Studies (CDS), Trivandrum, May 1985, p.1.

⁶ Francis Day, *The Fishes of Malabar*, London, 1865.

⁷ K. Soman, *Geology of Kerala*, Professional Paper No. VIII, Centre for Earth Science Studies, Trivandrum, March 1980, pp.45-49.

and constant tidal activity result in sea erosion and invasion that make the livelihood of the fishermen a risky enterprise⁸. In the peak of the monsoon the fishermen have to fish against high risks. The sea invasion and erosion also affect their settlement and on innumerable occasions the settlements are washed away by tidal activity. This meant that while the Kerala coast was considered safe for trading purposes and extremely high in fish varieties, the fishermen had to suffer considerable hardship in sustaining their livelihood.

The Population

At the beginning of 20th century these fisher population was comprised of different caste, community or religious groups. The Mukkuva, Araya, Mugaya, Bovi Mogayer, and Pudu-Islam were the major community groups along the Malabar Coast. There were references about the groups like *Kollakkar* (catholic converts whose ancestors were fishermen), *Patanees* (a Tamil colony of Catholics who originally belonged to the Tirunalveli coast but settled down in Kannur many years ago) and the Mappilas (the ordinary Muslims of the coast and not Pudu Islams)⁹. But Kollakkar, Patanees and Mappila fisherman are only seen in some pockets. The other groups like Mukkuva, Mugaya, Araya, Pudu Islam¹⁰ caste groups are still seen on the Malabar Coast. The *vala* and the Christian fishers are also seen at some

⁸ M.S. Moni, "Costal Erosion in Kerala-Some Aspects" in Geology Section I, Special Publication, No. 5, n.d., Geological Survey of India, pp.83-86.

⁹ Madras Fisheries Bureau Bulletin (MFBB) No.9, Madras, 1916 pp.50-53, KRA.

¹⁰ 'Pudu-Islam' means 'New Muslims'. It is implied that they are newly converted from the non-muslim fishing castes to Islam.

pockets. All these communities and their social customs and organisations were described in different ethnographic studies and district Gazetteers.

Social Organisation and Culture

The cultural life of the coastal people was more or less simple. Each section of the fishing population followed its own ways of traditions in worship, marriage, death etc. But one could see more resemblances than distinction in these practices. For instance, the Araya, Mukkuva and Mukaya populations had their belief in *Bhagavathis* or Mother goddesses. The non-Pudu-Islam fishers worshiped the common Hindu deities and celebrated almost all the festivals popularly celebrated by other Hindu communities¹¹.

The coastal communities had their own systems of traditional social organisation. The Arayan or Moopan was regarded as the head of the community. In older times these communities had strict regional boundaries (*Rajiams*). In Kannur, Thalassery etc. there were strong caste panchayaths¹². Among the Hindu fishing communities, the head of the community was the *karanavar*. The role of the *karanavar* was also important in the auspicious occasions like birth, death, marriage, net making and its launching etc. These rituals in connection with craft and gear were adopted because of the uncertainty of their profession. It was the *karanavar* who functioned as the

¹¹ K.S. Singh (ed), *People of India Kerala*, Anthropological Survey of india, Volume XXVII Part Two, Affiliated East-West Press Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2002, p.939,962, 975. (Hereafter, *People of India Kerala*, Part Two...)

¹² Caste Panchayath is the usage often found in British administrative records. At times the colonial authorities used this name for the *kadal kodathy* (Sea Court) also.

occupational and ritualistic head. The *karanavar* or *mooppan* with the cultural and symbolic capital maintained the social code and moral standards. In a hunting gathering society, with limited technical skill and limited resources at its disposal, he had to make sure that no community member was gone against the common will of the society with respect to fishing or crafts and gear. Thus, the head of the community ensured the 'traditionality' of the profession. Similarly, in this profession, the male population was always out in the fishing grounds and hence it was important to maintain the moral-ethical code¹³. For this purpose, the *Kadakkodis* and the caste councils were used. Through the exercise of power, the *male will* was disseminated in to the various aspects of community life. There was compulsory subscription collected from the community members and failure to remit the fee invited severe consequences. Temple and the council insisted on the collection of the subscription to increase the financial resources of the community. Thus, the caste council and the temple oriented life structure invariably made the transaction of cultural, symbolic and economic capital easy within a given social space. Elaborate rituals in connection with puberty, marriage, and delivery were also practised. The castes like *kavutheeyan* and *arayavathy* were the special groups to perform the rituals for the other castes.

¹³ The famous Malayalam novel *Chemmeen* is woven around a myth that the chastity of the wife in the fisher community is very important and that once it is broken it will affect the life of the husband who is engaged in fishing.

The existence of the different kinds of the *Illams* (lineages) among the Mukkuva, Mukaya, Mogeyar, Mugaveera and Araya groups signified more or less patriarchal organization of the community. *Illam* exogamy and community endogamy was the norm followed by many castes. In the older period the marriages were limited within the community. But marriages were prohibited within the same *Illam*. *Nalillakkar* (the caste with four *Illams*) were considered higher than the *Moonillakkar* (caste with Three *Illams*). Among the Mukkuvas there was a social hierarchy with *ponnillam* being the highest and *Karillam* the lowest¹⁴. Arayas also practised it. The inter community and intra community hierarchical relations were also maintained by tradition and conventions¹⁵. In Malabar, Mukaya considered themselves as superior to other communities. They traditionally did not accept food or water from the Mukkuva and the latter were only allowed up to their compounds. On the other hand, the Mukkuva accepted food and water from the Mukaya. The Mukkuva also maintained such a relation with the other castes like the *Kanakkan*, *Cheruman* and *Mannan* etc. However, the

¹⁴ K.S.Singh, *People of India Kerala Part Two* p.972. Innes says that 'In North Malabar Mukkuvas are divided into four exogamous *Illams*, called *ponnillam*, *chembillam*, *karillam* and *kachillam* and are hence called *Nalillakkar* or people of four *Illams*; while the South Mukkuvas and Arayas have only the 3 later *Illams* and therefore called *Moonnillakkar*, people of three *Illams*', C.A. Innes, , *Malabar Gazetteer*, vol. I, II, Reprint, Kerala Gazetteer Department, Trivandrum, 1997, p.126.

¹⁵ For a discussion of the rituals among the different communities of the coast, see K.Padmanabhan, "Mukkuvar" in *Jeevithavum Samskaravum* (Mal.), Vol. I, General Editor M.V.Vishnu Namboodiri, Kerala Folklore Academy, Kannur, January, 2003, P.P.118-122.: A.M. Sreedharan, "Mukayar" in *Jeevithavum Samskaravum* (Mal.), Vol. I, General Editor M.V.Vishnu Namboodiri, Kerala Folklore Academy, Kannur, January 2003,pp.104-117.: also see K.S.Singh (ed), *People of India Kerala*, Anthropological Survey of India, Volume XXVII Part One and Two, Affiliated East-West Press Pvt.ltd., New Delhi, 2002.

Mukkuva considered themselves equal to thiyya community. The position of the Mukkuva among other Hindu fishing communities was one that was lower than that of the Valan and Arayan and very much below that of the Bovis Mogeayar and Mogavirar. Mogavirar acknowledged the higher status of Bovis Mogeayar since the latter had ten *Illams*. For an all kerala classification one scholar gives a hierarchy where Valan was placed on the top followed by Araya, Mukkuva and Mogaya¹⁶. This showed that there were local variations in the observance of intercommunity relations. Hence, it would be difficult to trace a uniform practice everywhere among these groups in the older days. In the *kadakkodi* functioning also we could see variations between the area north of *kavvayi* and south of it. In other words there was strong internal stratification within the different sections of fishing community. At the same time, a wide variety of social net works were limited in those days. Usually, inter fishing village labour migration also would be of a limited nature. But within the village they had a better mobility. Nevertheless, the fishermen rowed their canoe to distant destinations in search of fish shoal. In such cases they returned to their home hamlets after selling the catch locally¹⁷. Normally, the life of the fisher people was very much tied with the sea,

¹⁶ P.R.G.Mathur, "The Marine Hindu Fisher folk some Ethnographic Notes", in *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Vol.VI.Part I & II, March-June1979, p.132. (Hereafter The marine Hindu fisher folk.)

¹⁷ According to a record of 1926, "Last year when shoals remained on this part of the coast, fishermen from Ponnani came this side, caught large quantities of fish and sold it locally. This year when shoals stayed on the Ponnani coast, very few of the local fishermen had the enterprise to go to Ponnani for fishing" Development (1926) Department G.O.No. 1538 dated 25.10.1926. KRA.

fishing, mending of nets, repairing the crafts, drying the fish etc. Women did the vending of the fish to the far away places, that too to the interior areas and not to other fishing villages. Hence, the existence of a strong sense of community and mutual bond, other than the mutual differences in their worship and other practices, cutting across the fishing villages might have been absent in the early years of 20th century.

Among the Pudu-Islam fishermen, community endogamy was the norm. Among them there was a difference on the basis of the type of fishing one pursued. The *Beppu* fishers (those who use hooks and line for fishing) considered themselves above the *Valakkar* (those who use nets for fishing). They were (and are) organised under the *Mahal* system. Each *mahal* had one *jama't*. The Muslim inhabitants of that area were the members of that *jamat*. There would be an executive committee to look after the affairs of the *mahal*. The *mahal* committee was supposed to look after the welfare of the community.

In the case of Malabar, there existed an *east-west* dichotomy. The people in the *east* never considered the fishermen with respect. Francis Buchanan wrote: 'they (Mukkuvar) will not show the courage to enter into the interior crossing their boundary. Fishing is their caste occupation...'¹⁸ This fear was set by the subjective subordination they had vis a vis *others* of the east. Among the Hindu population, perhaps, only the *thiyyas* maintained

¹⁸ Francis Buchanan, *Francis Buchanante Keralam*, (Mal.), Tr.by C.K.Karim, Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, November 1996, p.191.

a good relation with the fishers. Though some of the fisher community like the Mukaya had entry to the houses of Namboodiries, they were never regarded as equal. The local landed magnates employed them as palanquin bearers, boat managers and warehouse keepers. They were not considered as community brethren and there was no marriage relation between them. The Pudu-Islam fisher folk also had this kind of sense of inferiority. Buchanan states that the Mappilas of the coast never considered the Mappilas of the inland as their brothers¹⁹. Further, the Mappilas of the east also never considered the Pudu-Islam fishers as their brothers. The Pudu-Islam fishers form a distinct group within the Muslim community²⁰. Because of their conversion, their northern non-Muslim counterparts also looked upon them with contempt²¹. The *eastern* Mappilas never entered in marriage relations with the coastal Pudu-Islam fishers²². In the cosmology of the fishers the *east* signified vices. Thus the coastal population of Malabar, as elsewhere, lived in a kind of detachment with other segments of society and some degree of stratification within the communities that constituted it.

Social Regulatory Institutions

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.129.

²⁰ P.R.G.Mathur, *The Mappila Fisher folk of Kerala*, *Op.Cit.*,p.2.

²¹ Francis Buchanan, *Op Cit.*, p.191.

²² Interview with the fishermen of Ottummal Beach, Parappanangadi interview conducted on 25.10.2003.

A social regulatory institution known as *kadakkodi*²³ had been functioning in the coastal area of Malabar. The *Kadakkodi* was more prevalent among the Mukkuva population in the older period, but among the other communities like the Mokayas it was the caste Panchayath that controlled the affairs. In either case, the functioning of this system had a lot of resemblances so that for an outside observer both appeared to be the same. And the scholars use both these terms interchangeably²⁴. An explanation of the structure and functions of this traditional institution is attempted below. For this, the contemporary literature on this *Kadakkodi* system is mainly relied on.

The Structure of *Kadakkodi*

Scholars and journalists have described the present structure of the sea court²⁵. According to them, each *Kadakkodi* consists of three distinct bodies. They are *Sthanikans*, *Kadavanmar* and the Temple Committee. The *Sthanikans* were the Jury. This body consisted of the *Karanavans* of the four *Illams* of Mukkuva Community. *Achanmar* (Oracles) helped them. They were the oracles at the *Kurumba* Temple. There were four manifestations for the *Kurumba* Devi i.e. *Kurumba Moothaval*, *Kurumba Ilayaval*, *Dandan* and

²³ This word is an aberration of the Malayalam term *Kadal kodathy* which means Sea Court. *Kadal*= Sea and *Kodathy*=Court.

²⁴ While discussing the Mukkuvas, K.S. Singh concludes that, “The caste council was known by different names like *Kadakkodi*, *Raivamkuduka* and *Karayogam*. See *People of India Kerala* part two p.974. And in British administrative reports the term *Kadakkodi* is seldom used.

²⁵ C.Ramachandran, Conflict resolution or “*Sui generis* co-management ?” in *Teaching not to F(in)ish?: A Constructivist Perspective on Reinventing a Responsible Marine Fisheries Extension System*, Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Kochi,2004. Annexure 1,pp.83-102; and B.S.Nizamudheen, “Kadalolam Neethi”, *Madhyamam* Daily, 26.3.2006.

khandakarnan. These four deities were represented by Oracles known as *Ayathanmar*. Further, the additional deities in each temple called *Vishnumurthy* and *Gulikan* were also represented by their oracles. *Kadavanmar* were assistants to the major priests of these temples. The *Kadavanmar* were working as *police*, passing the summons, and announcing the holding of the court. The last body was the temple committee. According to C. Ramachandran, this was a comparatively recent addition to the court and could be interpreted as an attempt to strengthen the legitimacy of the court in tune with democratic aspiration of the community²⁶. The functioning of the *Kadakkodi* was the result of the concerted effort of these different bodies with responsibilities unto them. There was no written code of law to guide the functioning of this institution. The proceedings and verdicts were directed by convention.

Functions of the *Kadakkodi*

Different scholars have enumerated major functions of the sea courts differently. A few have maintained that conflict resolution within the community and Community Based Fisheries Management were the important functions of the *Kadakkodi*²⁷. Apart from this, the maintenance of the strict boundary regulations, ritualistic relations within the community and the community with the temple and the control of the use of dangerous crafts and gears were also came under the purview of this institution. Any issue that was of importance to the fishing community was discussed in the sitting of

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

the *Kadakkodi*. K.M. Udayabhanu said that the systematic collection of records of the major events concerning the community was also one responsibility of the *court*²⁸. The aim of this institution was the development of the industry as well as the community. It mainly functioned to maintain the ritualistic hierarchy of the community and the maintenance of the industry through the measures of conservation of resources. This included the ban on the use of some destructive gears and methods like fishing with the help of detonators and fishing in some period where there is a traditional ban²⁹. '*Kadakkodi* issued sanctions on night fishing during the months of June, July and August and gillnets were not allowed during monsoon. This net was allowed after the 5th of *kanni* month. Punishments were given according to the gravity of the crime. In the heydays of its power, *Kadakkodi* punished the guilty with excommunication, social boycott and fines'³⁰. Many of those excommunicated persons converted to Islam or Christianity³¹. Fishing was prohibited during the occasions like the annual celebrations day of the temple, when there is a death in the community, when sea court was summoned and on auspicious days or any day as decided by the temple committee'³². The conservation of resources and the maintenance of ritualistic relation were done with great care and both of these demanded

²⁸ K.M.Udayabhanu, "The Dheeveras of Kerala: A Historical Perspective", *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Department of History, University of Kerala, Trivandrum, Vol. XIV, March-December, 1987, Parts 1-4, pp197-202.

²⁹ 'The use of Ayilachalavala and Mathichalavala was forbidden by the local fishermen's Caste Panchayath in Cannanore, Tellichery and neighbouring villages and also at Tanur; last year this was relaxed in North Malabar but is still in force at Tanur', MFBB No. 9, p.20.

³⁰ K.S.Singh, *People of India Kerala*, Part Two, p.975.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 974.

³² C Ramachandran, *op.Cit.*, p.91.

obedience from the community members. As we have noted earlier, the title *court* itself signified the conflict resolution function. The internal problems within the community and between the communities were resolved by the intervention of this institution. Hence it could be assumed that this traditional institution had a great role in maintaining the social solidarity of the coast as well as in the conservation of the marine resources.

In older period, the sea courts were spread all along the Malabar Coast especially among the Mukkuva population. There are references to similar institutions in the other parts of the Indian coast, such as the Coromandel beach³³. We have seen that Araya, Mugaya, Mogaveera, castes had their own caste councils. The Pudu-Islam fisher folk also had their own *Kadakkodi* institutions to discuss the matters related with the profession³⁴. The Muslim anglers of the Marad Beach also said that there functioned a sea court having equal number of representatives from all communities³⁵. Now a sea court with this nature is not functioning anywhere on the coastal Malabar. At present, the functioning of the sea court is seen only in the northern most districts of Kerala³⁶ and in some hamlets extending from Thikkodi to Chombala³⁷.

³³ Maarten Bavinck, "Caste Panchayaths and the regulation of fisheries along Tamilnadu's Coromandal Coast", in *EPW*, March 31, 2001.

³⁴ P.R.G.Mathur, *The Mappila Fisherfolk of Kerala*, *Op.Cit.*, p.196.

³⁵ Koya (75), Marad, interview conducted on 24.8.2008.

³⁶ C. Ramachandran, *Op.Cit.* and B.S. Nizamudheen, *Op.Cit.*

³⁷ *Deshabhimani* Daily, 11th November 2006.

Traditional Knowledge System of the Fisher Folk

In the beginning of the 20th century, the fishing operations generally were done through one unit of *Odams* involving two boats with Boat Seines. *Odams* were larger in size than *thonis*. A *thoni* will carry two or more persons whereas *Odams* had the capacity to carry seven or eight persons. Both were dugout canoes made of locally available trees. *Ottappathi* (very small dugouts) were also used. The dugouts were made by scooping out the trunks of trees like *Mavu* (Mango tree- *Mangifera Indica*) *Elavu* (*Bombax malabaricus*)³⁸ etc. *Payin* tree (*Acanthus Ilicifolius*) was also used to make *Odams*. Oars propelled these dugouts. The dugouts of Malabar normally measured 32-42 ft. in length. Besides, there were also plank built boats. The planks built boats were made by Nine to Eighteen planks fixed on to each other. In Malabar, the planks were fixed to each other with the help of coir rope, copper nails and a gum called *pantham*. This gum was obtained from the *Payin* tree. The gum was mixed with coconut oil, boiled and the resultant solution was used for fixing the planks with the help of pieces of clothes. *Payin* was abundant along the coastal area once. Further, the *Payin* gum was also used to keep the crafts waterproof³⁹.

The fisherman never engaged himself in craft making. ‘There was never a carpenter among us, Mukkuvas. Expert carpenters would come from

³⁸ “Integrated Fisheries Development Project For Kerala” Beypore Project Report, Government of Kerala, Development Department, 1975,p.3. (Hereafter IFDKB)

³⁹ Janardhanan, Field Worker, CMFRI, Kozhikode. Interview conducted on 21.5.2007.

Kozhikode'⁴⁰ who prepared excellent pieces of fishing crafts all along the Malabar Coast. In net making and preservations they had their own measurements and estimates. *Vakku* plant was used for the net making. In older times there were *vakku* plantations along the coast. Coir and cotton were also used to make nets. These nets were principally made by the women folk of the fishing communities. Pudu Islam fishers also were excellent net makers.

There were ceremonies connected with the making of new net, its launching and the beginning of the construction of a new boat as well as its launching. They made offerings to the deities like *Bhadrakali* and ancestors to bless them for a bumper catch. They even made offerings to the worship centres of other religions. The Mukkuvas of Malabar made offerings to the tomb of Seethi Thangal of Vatakara to get good catch⁴¹. The Mappila boat owner also made arrangements for the rituals needed for the boat making⁴².

The traditional fishing was confined to a narrow belt of 12-15 Km. off the sea bordering the coast. The operation of the traditional canoe was limited to the coastal belt. They cannot usually go out of the expanse covered by naked eye from where they could make out the landmarks to return to the shore. The canoes operated manually by the fishermen do not carry any

⁴⁰ Bhaskaran, "Mukkuvare Pidicha Bhootham athava Kannan Karnnoru Kanda Kadal", *Bhashaposhini* Weekly, May, 2003, pp.5-10.

⁴¹ P.R.G.Mathur, "The Marine Hindu Fisher folk...", *Op.Cit.*, pp.131-172.

⁴² *Ibid.*

navigational equipment. Because of these limitations the fishermen actually have to wait for the fish to move into their range of operation to catch them⁴³.

Traditionally they were experienced in locating the fish shoals and understanding the direction to land the craft. The presence of the fish was identified from some signs. The change in the temperature, the presence of some birds and other predators etc. were observed and the arrival of the fish was identified. “In the morning when the temperature of the water is low and in the evening just before sunset the fish move upward and can easily caught. The presence of fish beneath the sea level is inferred from certain indications. The ‘rounding about’ of the sea crows above the sea level indicates the presence of fish in large quantity. Roaming around of ‘karimandu’ (beetle-a colepetrous insect) indicates the presence of fish. The water surface appears to be oily if fish shoal is present underneath. If bubbles are coming up, it indicates the presence of sardines. If Edi (a Kind of Dolphin) is seen to be busy in catching small fishes, it can be inferred that there is fish shoal underneath.”⁴⁴

If the presence of fish was identified, the *thalaiyali* (head man) of the unit would give the necessary instruction to the crewmembers. He would identify the nature of the shoal from the colour changes in the sea. This shoal identification was known as *polappu kanuka*. The *polappu* (shoal) was recognized from the changes in the shades of the sea and from the colour of

⁴³ IFDKB, p.3.

⁴⁴ Mathai V.D., “Sustainable bio-diversity conservation in indigenous systems”, MCITRA, (mimeo) Calicut, 1998,p.6.

the *polappu* the type of the fish. He would also give necessary instructions to the crew members to spread and beach the net. The skills, knowledge and health of fishermen were given importance in the traditional method of fishing. The knowledge of the stars in night to fix the direction was also worth noting. There were local variations with respect to this knowledge⁴⁵.

The familiarity of the traditional fishers with the sea ecology was also commendable. The Hindu and Mappila fishermen of Kerala classify the fishing grounds on the basis of the depth of the sea. The fishing grounds according to the fisher folk fall in five types. (i) *karakkadal* (ii) *Idakkadal* (iii) *Padikkadal* (iv) *Vayyakkadal* (v) *Puramkadal*. The significance of this classification, according to PRG Mathur is that it coincides with the classification of Marine biologists of the Marine ecology from shallow water to the shelf area⁴⁶. He further explained the Mappila fishermen's acquaintance with the climatic conditions and cosmology. It included the knowledge about the wind, sea currents, tides and the stars that helped them substantially in their harvest and navigation⁴⁷.

In fishing they used different types of nets to catch different species. "They had different varieties of nets. There are small (meshed) nets to catch small fishes and big (meshed) nets to catch big varieties like sharks. For a big "vadakara boat" and its materials may cost one thousand rupees. Normally

⁴⁵ P.R.G.Mathur, *The Mappila fisher folk of Kerala, Op.Cit.*, pp.116-128.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.27-29.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.64-128.

nets are made of coir. Some small special nets only are made of cotton fibre.”⁴⁸ This was seen as a sign of their relation with the sea ecology. This was a step for conservation of the resource base and was endowed by the intimate relationship with the nature of the seascape and its resources. For instance, the Vadakkanvala was used for prawns, pony fish, bronze croaker and squid. *Chooda vala* for white sardain and white bait, kollivala for mackerel and sardine, ozhukkuvala for seer fish and shark⁴⁹. Besides, there were also the practice of hook and line fishing. They were either known as *chundakkar* or *Beppu* fishermen.

BRITISH RULE – ITS IMPACT, ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL

The major events influenced the fishermen under the British were the starting of fish curing yards, introduction of salt tax, land assignments, and beginning of fish oil and guano factories. The educational and co-operative endeavours also influenced the fisher society. All these factors contributed to a drastic altering of the coastal ecology and life. The commercialisation of the fishery generated a ‘new class’ that had no relation with the actual fishing and led to the decline of some fishing groups. This socio-economic process is explained below.

⁴⁸ Malabar Gazetteer III Volume, 1935, State Archives Department, (Mal.), p.86.

⁴⁹ Ayyapputty (70), Mandalam Kunnu Beach, interview on 3.6.2007.

Fish Curing Yards

The first effort of the British Government was to start the fish curing yards on the Malabar Coast. It was in 1884 that the Madras Government issued instructions banning the use of Salt Earth for curing fish and insisted on the use of the salt supplied by the salt department for the purpose⁵⁰. This practice was institutionalised when there established a chain of fish curing yards along the Malabar Coast under the salt department. In the new system, separate yards were constructed to cure the fish. To enter in to the new type of curing system, the authorities issued tickets. The ticket holders alone were permitted to use the facilities of the government yards including the supply of duty free salt. The tickets were issued to fishermen as well as the non-fishermen. The frequent references to the *Mappila curers* in the administrative reports and the official correspondence testified to this. Simultaneously, a salt tax was also introduced. The reaction of the fishing community to this change was interesting. While the Mappilas and Christians positively responded to this move⁵¹, the Mukkuva fishers were doubtful of this change. “When the collection of salt earth was prohibited owing to the introduction of salt tax and fish curing yards were opened for enabling the fish to be cured with duty-free salt, these people (Mukkuvas) were reluctant to do so owing to their timidity and fear that any slight infringement of the rules would result in their being sent to jail”⁵².

⁵⁰ Development Department. G.O.No.1050 dated 15.6.1921,KRA.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² MFBB No.9,*Op.Cit.*,p.54.

Traditionally, the Mukkuva fishers were doing the curing with the help of their women. They were making a good profit out of the curing business. The new system affected the traditional curing system of the Mukkuva fisher women primarily because of their fear to switch to the new system. Secondly, every body did not have the tickets in the curing yards. So they had to depend upon the fish curing yards of others to cure their fish. The fish thus cured was given to the yard owner or the fish trader. In some cases both were the same. This individual (the yard owner or fish trader) some times also acted as a moneylender. He exported the cured fish to Colombo or the east coast. The cured fish made in Kannur was even exported to Karachi⁵³. The fish trader did not make payment at the time of the receipt of fish from the fishermen. On the contrary, the payment was made when the business made profit. If the trader did not get the expected profit, the trader would not give the stipulated amount or he would give a sum at his fancy, that too after several weeks. The fish workers out of their difficulties were satisfied with what they got⁵⁴.

At the same time, the decline of the earlier salt fields also merits attention. The existence of salt industry and salt fields could be discerned from the place names like *Kizhakke padanna*⁵⁵, *padanna valappu Mukkadi*

⁵³ Letter of Frederick Nicholson (LFN I), dated 21st July 1910 in MFBB (1908-1917) No.X, 1918, p.29.

⁵⁴ MFBB No.9, *Op.Cit.*,p.53.

⁵⁵ Discriptive Memoir of Panniyamkara Desam No.39 of Calicut Taluk Malabar.

*paramba*⁵⁶, *Uppalakkandi paramba*⁵⁷, *Arayakuzhi padanna*⁵⁸, *Padannappuram*⁵⁹, *Padannapram Kuni*⁶⁰, *Kuzhi Padanna Nilam*⁶¹, *Padanna Sthalam*⁶², *Perumbatanna talappangada parambu*⁶³ etc. In these names the oft-repeated term *padanna* signified 'salt'. These names could be seen in the first settlement registers of the coastal *desams*. The first extensive land survey and settlement were done in the year 1905 by the British officials. By that time the salt fields were transformed in to the Parambu names. In 19th century Buchanan had reported the existence of salt fields in Kurumbranad. He also said that earlier there were more salt fields in Kurumbranad⁶⁴. These salt fields were seen in the low lying plains along the rivers adjacent to coastline, where there was a possibility of these rivers being flooded with saline water at the time of high tide. Most of the workers in these salt fields according to Buchanan were *vettuvass*⁶⁵. We could infer from the statement of Buchanan that, by the beginning of the 20th century a number of these salt fields were disappeared leaving only the names as we have seen in the settlement records. The lands might have transformed in to coconut planting fields as a result of the encroachment and colonial assignments either on

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Discriptive Memoir of Thalayi Desam No.168 of Kottayam Taluk Malabar.

⁵⁸ Discriptive Memoir of Palanchannur Desam No.38 of Ernad Taluk Malabar.

⁵⁹ Discriptive Memoir of Naduvattam Desam No.41 of Calicut Taluk Malabar.

⁶⁰ Discriptive Memoir of Elathur Desam No.1 of Calicut Taluk Malabar.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Discriptive Memoir of Vallikkunnu Desam No.39 of Ernad Taluk Malabar.

⁶³ Discriptive Memoir of Tanniyurnagaram Desam No.6 of Ponnani Taluk Malabar.

⁶⁴ Francis Buchanan, *Op.Cit.*, p.169.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.147.

patta or on lease. This affected the indigenous salt production. The salt for the fish curing yards in the 20th century was brought from Thoothukudi⁶⁶. Moreover, by this time the salt tax was imposed and the local collection of salt earth was prohibited. In a petition the Mukkuva women of Kannur said that: “the government was kind enough to permit the poor fisherman to manufacture earth salt from saline earth which accumulated in *kaipad* lands near the sea where the overflow of sea water accumulated and to use the same for curing fish and encouraged dried fish trade and protected the poor petitioners from starvation at a time before salt tax was levied before 1881 when government formed fish curing yards and supplied salt at a very cheap rate”⁶⁷. It made drastic economic changes in the coastal society. For example, the Tellichery fishermen were “at one time some forty years ago – the richest and most advanced among the fisher community on the Malabar coast” said the report on 1916⁶⁸. It was said that by the year of the report they became dependents of the middlemen and the new merchant class. The riches to rag story was explained against the introduction of the salt tax and the opening up of the fish curing yards. Since there was a ban on the collection of the salt earth, those who did not have ticket had to hand over the fish to the ticket holders. The imposition of salt tax and the starting of the curing yards jointly favoured the formation of capital and gave birth to a commercial class and

⁶⁶ Malabar Gazatteer III Volume, *Op. Cit.*, pp.86-87.

⁶⁷ Development Department Ordinary Series G.O.No.937 dated 14.5.1924, KRA.

⁶⁸ MFBB. No.9, *Op.Cit.*,p.53.

also its dependents. The report in 1916 described this process in the following words:

“That the fish curing industry has brought in large fortunes to some people *other than the fisher folk* (emphasis added) is also a significant fact. In almost every fishing centre there are men of non- fisher castes, who beginning life as labourers or petty dealers with hardly any capital have amassed considerable wealth in the short space of ten or fifteen years. It shows that the industry is a profitable one but the people who are now benefited most by it are not the fisher folk, and so long as this disadvantage continuous the fishermen themselves cannot develop their industry”⁶⁹.

Further, there were some signs in the administrative records to show that a kind of monopoly system came into practice in some fishing hamlets by this time. For Hosdurg fish curing yard, the report in 1916 said that:

“The fishermen own boats and nets and some of them have already become ticket holders in the yard and more of them are anxious to get tickets but owing to the want of space in the yard they have not yet been admitted. These are therefore obliged to sell their catches to the existing ticket holders at cheap rates and are deprived of the profits, which they could get if they themselves cured their fish. Most of them do not require any advance but the curers induce them to take it in order to have control over them. In one of the hamlets served by this yard there is an influential man who has secured a right or privilege to himself whereby all the fish landed in the hamlet must be

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.55-56.

sold through him. The fishermen cannot sell it direct to any body nor will any one come forward to make purchase directly from the fishermen. He fixes the price and pays it to the fishermen after deducting his commission which is said to be about 10 per cent and besides this the purchaser of the fish has to pay commission of 2 annas per rupee on the price originally settled”.⁷⁰

In 1920, the curing yards were taken over by the Fisheries Department from the Salt Department⁷¹ and it imposed many new conditions like the ticket holders should pay for the plot of ground that was to be newly acquired to attach to the yard; that ticket holders should bear the cost of the model sheds that were to be constructed within the yard; that in future instead of lying out fish for drying on coir nettings spread on the ground, suitable bamboo *thatties* (nettings) should be constructed and the fish dried on them and the foul water oozing out from salted fish should be reused for salting purposes after filtering the same⁷². The ticket holders resented these conditions⁷³. To make the condition worse, the Madras Government increased the rate of salt from 10 annas to 1-4-0 per one maund⁷⁴ of salt with effect from 1.4.1924 ‘in order to minimise the loss incurred in the working of the fish curing yards which in the year 1922-23 amounted to no less than Rs.1.35 lakhs’⁷⁵. This process involved the loss of the lucrative curing

⁷⁰ MFBB No.9, *Op. Cit.*, p.51.

⁷¹ Development Department. G.O.No.1050 dated, 15.6.1921, KRA.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Development Department G.O.No.431dated, 16.3.1921.KRA.

⁷⁴ A unit of weight.

⁷⁵ Development Department Mis.Series G.O.No. 792, dated.16.4.1924. KRA.

business of the fisher women and a complete dependence of them on the income of the males. And the fish worker was compelled to surrender the catch to the merchant at a price fixed by him. This fall of the fishing community was gradual and happened in ten or twenty years. This specific process that happened in Thalassery might more or less, be generalised to other hamlets also. The Mukkuva fishermen of Kasargode Taluk also submitted their grievances in 1924 due to the increase in the rate of salt⁷⁶.

Fisheries Department

In 1907, April, the government accepted Sir F.A. Nicholson's proposals for the initiation of a small Bureau of Fisheries for Madras⁷⁷. It was in 1908 that the British government established the fisheries department⁷⁸. The first director of fisheries was Frederick Nicholson⁷⁹. He initiated the starting of fish oil and guano factories and the modernisation of fishing practice. Frederick Nicholson made valuable contribution to the field of modernisation of Madras fishery in general. He headed many experiments and researches. Briefly stating the experiments in USA and France he commented in 1910:

“I need hardly say that if in the energetic business like states and in the temperate climate of Main a single branch of fishery work and that a more or less mechanical and well known one, had to be preceded by “six or

⁷⁶ The petition from the Mukkuva Fishermen of Ksaragode Taluk in the file, *Ibid*.

⁷⁷ *Report of the Committee on Fisheries In Madras (RCFM)*, 1929. Madras, 1929, p.4 TNA.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*.

seven years of experiment”. We can hardly expect to be more fortunate, more skilful in attempting to develop in ways suited to this tropical climate and amongst and with these tropical people a whole series a fishery operations and products developed amidst other conditions and other folk, beginning with the fishing net and ending only with the consumer”⁸⁰.

Then he called for a rigorous research and modernisation starting from the net to the consumer. The introduction of Ratnagiri boats for deep-sea fishing in the first decade of 20th century was, perhaps, the first attempt to use ‘alien’ technology in fishing. Because they were not the typical Malabar boats and had much potential than the traditional Malabar canoes. Nicholson was eloquent of the possibilities of this type of boats. In 1910 he stated that,

“But the catching work at Cannore was principally effected during October – December by two Ratnagiri Boats engaged for the purpose: these are 6 to 8 ton boats, simple drifters, fishing with their own drift nets measuring above half a mile when shot in 8 to 12 fathoms, outside the usual limit of the malabar canoes; they brought in large quantities of medium seer, small seers (varian), pomfret, chirocantrus dorab (valai) small sharks etc.; 1500 lb for one nights work was the largest catch – These boats enabled me to ascertain (1) the character of the fish available in the above zone (2) the ability of existing boats to catch such fish with existing appliances (3) the

⁸⁰ LFN I, *Op. Cit.*, p.30.

quantities, value and profits of the catches of such boats, (4) possibility of keeping fish fresh to shore”⁸¹.

The experiment with the Ratnagiri boats did not fetch many positive results. By the close of 1920s, the fisheries department made fresh researches in trawling. This might have been a great leap forward in the finding of new fishing grounds and new types of fishes. And the off water fishing in the east and west coast might have got a new fillip. But the government decided to stop these trawling experiments abruptly in the opening years of the 1930s. B.Sunder Raj, the then director of fisheries lamented that, “the momentous decision of government to abandon the survey means nothing less than a reversion to the conditions that prevailed prior to 1925”⁸².

Despite this the Madras government decided to sell the trawler on the ground that it was not financially viable to maintain the vessel. Thus ended the technological modernisation efforts under the colonial authorities. But at the same time the colonial authorities went a long way in the preservation technology and fish oil and guano business. Fish being a perishable commodity, the first director of Madras Fisheries Department introduced different methods of preservation. These methods included drying, pickling and curing etc.; he wrote extensively on the different preservation methods to be pursued⁸³. Nicholson taught the natives the new practice of gutting before salting to keep the fish untainted. The ungutted fish reached the shore “soft

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.12.

⁸² *Administration Report 1931-32*, Fisheries Department, Madras (*ARFDM*), 1933, p.1.

⁸³ F.A. Nicholson, *The Preservation and Curing of Fish*, Madras, 1909.KRA.

pasty or tainted.... I sent out a gutter on each boat who gutted and washed the fish and applied salt to the cavity; latterly a very small quantity of boric preservative was added to the salt; this precaution entirely preserved the fish and I seldom had pasty fish thereafter. The contrast between the fish of the first and last weeks was remarkable”⁸⁴.

This technique was remarkable because it helped to keep fish untainted without ice. This innovation in curing method was followed by a suggestion to establish fish oil and guano factories in 1908⁸⁵. The abundance of oil sardine and the inadequate curing and preserving methods compelled the fisher folk to use the fish as fertilizer. So, the gutting technique was an important step in beaching the fish untainted that the valuable oil should not be wasted while the nitrogen and phosphoric acid should be fully conserved⁸⁶. Actually there was an indigenous method of oil production. The first was natural beach drying which invariably meant loss of oil. The second method was, “boiling (the fish) in ordinary earthen chatties in which case residue is thrown away; or the fish was allowed to putrefy in vessels and the oil skimmed off and the foul residue thrown away or buried as a nuisance; ...”⁸⁷. Both these practice was considered as ‘sanitarily offensive’⁸⁸. “Under the new system the fish (or guts) are boiled in open pans over a fire, and the boiling stuffs is then preserved for oil; the pressed scrap is dried in the sun

⁸⁴ LFN I, *Op. Cit.*, p.13.

⁸⁵ RCFM, *Op. Cit.*, p. 61.

⁸⁶ LFN I, *Op. Cit.*, p.18.

⁸⁷ LFN, dated 10th August 1914, in MFBB X, p.35. (LFN II).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.36.

and forms guano; in this way the whole of the oil is obtained as a very valuable marketable product, while the fish (tissues and bone) are reduced to a variable mass one-fifth and of the weight of the green fish and readily assimilable as manure, while the process is absolutely inoffensive and free from sanitary objection”⁸⁹.

The oil and guano production was started in the year 1908 and soon by 1910 more factories were set up⁹⁰. The newly established oil factories inspired local capital. One Mr. Unichoyi was such a man from the Mukkuva community who had many oil and guano factories. Many people came to this field as well. The abundance of oil sardine (oil sardine was the major raw material of the oil and guano factories) was better managed with the oil and guano factories. Further the fish oil produced in the east and west coast of madras presidency was in good demand in the foreign countries. Here factories produced different qualities of fish oil. The oil was demanded in high quantity for the leather industry in Australia⁹¹. In the internal market also this product was attractive.

“... hundreds of tons of oil during the past two years, and has supplied large parcels of guano to consumers; large quantities of oil have been sent to the jute mills for batching purposes; the Agriculture department took tons of the guano last year and also buying much more this year; while large quantities

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ LFN II, *Op. Cit.*, p.37.

have been sent to planters in southern India and to Ceylon overseas. It is then already an important and growing industry, directly initiated by the department which is there fore somewhat responsible for its future”⁹².

In 1920 there were some 135 fish and oil factories along the Malabar Coast⁹³. In this year the British collector vested the factories under the control of the Taluk board with the right to licensing and to deal these factories hereafter⁹⁴. When many factories began to sprout there were some sanitary issues. From 1915 onwards, the fisheries department had been trying to regulate these factories on sanitary considerations. Finally in 1920 this was materialised. The authorities issued elaborate regulatory norms regarding the basic amenities and conveniences needed for these factories⁹⁵. But the prime concern for the regulation was its economic importance. The fisheries department feared that the entrepreneurs with low capital produce low quality oil, guano, and then the ignorant or moneymaking brokers may buy this stuff at cheap rates and mix it with better class guano⁹⁶. Thus the colonial administration had to ensure the quality of fish oil and guano produced. With this aim in mind, strict licensing was brought in for these factories.

Land Assignments

⁹² D.No.1058/L.F.20, dated, 15.11.1920 KRA.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

The various institutions like fish curing yards and fish oil and guano factories started by the British Government essentially implied the acquisition of lands on the coast by the government. Sometimes it was acquired and assigned for the erection of fish curing yards. Sometimes the land was assigned for private individuals either on pattah (deed given to a land holder) or on lease for private purpose. And in some other occasions land was leased to different entrepreneurs for the starting of fish oil and guano industries. During this period, there were a number of records showing the land assignments to private individuals. There were a number of jenmies along the west coast, besides the government. These jenmies were landed magnates like Zamorin in Calicut, chirakkal Raja and Arakkal Raja of Cannanore, and some Muslim families etc.

These Jenmies often assigned lands to lessees on kanam right. Government lands were assigned with janmabhogam pattah. Some times these kanamdar had some occupations. There was also *kuzhikkanam* tenure on the coast. The usual procedure for assigning the land was that somebody encroaches the land, plants coconut trees or erects buildings and then applies for the assignment. The names of some lands on the coast testified to this trend. *Kadalppuram thai vecha parambinte randu nilam kazhicha padinjare nilathil munpu jenmam vittathu kazhicha rayamarakkar veettil saidu nilathinu thekke nilam*⁹⁷, *Chettuvaya Pazhaya Azhi Thoortha thai vecha*

⁹⁷ Descriptive Memoir of Vadanappally Desam No.429 of Ponnani Taluk Malabar.

*parambinu thekke paramba*⁹⁸, *kadalppuram thaivecha sthalam*⁹⁹ were some examples. The British revenue department as per the enquiry report of the divisional officer and Tahsildars would grant occupancy right on payment of occupancy price. This assignment only showed the continuation of the foreshore land occupation started in the earlier times. In an encroached land of Kadalundi Amsom, the revenue officials found coconut trees having 50 years of age. Hence, the “Encroachment was therefore commenced even before patta was granted. This then accounts for the existence of trees in these items that are as old as those on the patta lands. That grant old-tree in item 4 seems to be the only remnant of the old coconut trees swept away by the sea a few years ago”¹⁰⁰. A statement submitted by Mr. Unnichoyi to the Chirakkal Taluk Tahasildar said that new huts and habitats started around his oil factory and he pleaded that the collector be pleased to give him permission to cultivate coconut and other trees to the west of the existing site¹⁰¹. Along with the coconut plants, he cultivated vegetables such as bringals, peas, chillies, sugarcane etc. Chirakkal Taluk Tahasildar reported to the sub collector that ‘some money seems to have been spent for converting the foreshore land in to paddy fats and vegetables gardens’¹⁰². This was done with some peculiar aims. Oil pressing was a seasonal profession. This job would be there only for a short period say from mid November to December or January – the sardine season in Malabar. After this season, the workers,

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ 1141.D/Rev.11 dated, 31.10.1911 KRA.

¹⁰¹ D/232/R.14 dated, 8.10.1914 KRA.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

mostly fishermen, would remain jobless so they could do agriculture for the remaining period of the year. An added advantage of this plantation was the shade in the open seashore. Similarly, the foreshore lands at Calicut and Beypore, 50 cents each, were given to Mr. M. Konali to start fish related industries¹⁰³. That the establishment of the fish oil factory meant the development of a new clustered habitat for the fishermen.

There was yet another factor that forced the industry owners to engage in the agricultural activities in the assigned lands. The licensing reduced the number of guano factories along the Malabar Coast. Moreover, the catch of oil sardine showed a fluctuating trend since 1914. This in combination with the adulteration of the oil might have affected the profit of the factory owners considerably. The World War conditions also adversely affected the fish oil business. The Beypore cannery was closed due to the record fall in profits due to a falling off in the demand for the product owing to post-war conditions¹⁰⁴. It was incurring a loss since 1916-17¹⁰⁵. The Government fish factory at Tanur also recorded a loss in 1915¹⁰⁶. Another circular showed that the season 1914-15 was really unfavourable for the fish and guano industry¹⁰⁷. The 1915-16 was also a year of fish famine all along the west coast¹⁰⁸. The beginning of the planting of the vegetables and of the annual

¹⁰³ R 7/Rev. dated 9.6.1912. Also see R.Dis 33/12 dated 27.6.1912, KRA.

¹⁰⁴ Development Department. G.O. No. 1807, dated 26.9.1921, KRA.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ D 677/R15 dated, 14.6.1925, KRA.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ LFN dated, 26th August 1916, MFBB X, p.123. (LFN III),

crops in the leased out areas for the factories should be seen as compensatory measure taken by the oil factory owners to handle this situation. Thus, the guano and oil factories began to alter the coastal geography in a considerable way. The economic interests of the colonial officials also were there in the extension of plantations to coast area. In 1912 F.A Nicholson wrote that, ‘(at Tanur) 8 acres of sandy beach were secured by the courtesy of the Revenue Department and a good fishery station is gradually being formed there; several hundred coconuts have been planted and are, thriving, and when fully planted, the income from the trees should pay for the subordinate staff of the station’¹⁰⁹. Perhaps in this process, the old coastal flora including the Punna and Payin tree, which were very much related with the profession might have been destroyed. This was an example for the international market fluctuations and colonial economic interests affecting the coastal ecology. These changes also resulted in the depletion of the saltpans that were seen along the coast in an earlier period.

Besides giving janmabhogam and leasing, there was also a practice of auctioning the land to the highest bidder¹¹⁰. However, in the 20th century a great number of non- fishing people settled there along with the fishing population. It affected the natural life pattern of the fisher folk. The entry of the non-fisher settlers to the coast actually resulted in the shrinkage of the

¹⁰⁹ LFN dated, 25th June 1912, MFBB X, p.53 (LFN IV); later he planted 500 coconuts there, LFN dated, 17th July 1913, MFBB X, p.66. (LFN V)

¹¹⁰ D 489/Rev.15 dated, 28.4.1915, KRA.

coastal space. The fishermen were constrained even to keep their fishing implements on the shore. This state of affairs compelled the authorities to create 'fishermen reserves'. In one instance, a large extent of land measuring 150.45 acres in Purathur Desam, Ponnani Taluk, was entered the prohibitive order book saying that: "the lands in question are used by the local fishermen for keeping their boats and spreading nets and they may be required at any time try the fishing community for the building huts in the event to an erosion which is not improbable. I think that these lands should be reserved for the purpose and include in the prohibition order book"¹¹¹. But in a later order, the prohibitive land was limited to 46-21 acre¹¹². Like wise, some lands in Kootayi desom, Ponnani Taluk also entered into the prohibitive order book. An extent of about 54.99 acres of Kootayi which was very congested and where erosion by the sea carries off occupied land every year, was reserved for the fishermen community¹¹³.

This move to create reserves implied that a lion's share of the land in seashore were either assigned to non-fishing population or brought under cultivation by the industrialists and the colonial officials and the occupation of the fishers was seriously threatened by this occupation. Moreover, this administrative measure limited the operational space of actual fishermen on the coast as it could be seen from some petitions of the fishers. The Mukkuva fishermen of Kuriyadi Kadappuram, Erupuram Desam of Kurumbranad

¹¹¹ D 1179/R.13 dated, 2.10.13, KRA.

¹¹² D 497/R.16 dated, 14.4.16, KRA.

¹¹³ D7/Rev.8.6.16, KRA

Taluk prayed in 1923: "...with your knowledge and experience of the disabilities of the fisher community of this district, can easily realise how intolerable our position would become, were any outsiders, above all village subordinates permitted to lease foreshore lands which are absolutely indispensable to boatmen and fishermen in the exercise of the precarious industry on which they are solely dependent"¹¹⁴.

Similarly, the Pudu Islam fishers submitted a memorandum to the honourable minister for development, Mr. K.Venkata Reddi Naidu, in which they said: "our occupations have necessarily to be pursued on the seashore and it is also necessary in view of the peculiar nature of the occupations that our habitations should as far as possible, be sea side, more so and our women and children are workers and not merely dependents. We have been finding it increasingly difficult to obtain such suitable house and working sites, largely because much of the land is owned by wealthy and influential landlords. Even where the foreshore is government property, we experience the same difficulty, by reason of our lowly status and our unrepresented condition, we earnestly and humbly pray that as the only practical solution of this increasing serious problem, the just and benign government will sanction free gifts of foreshore lands for house sites and for drying nets, etc., for the members of our community"¹¹⁵.

¹¹⁴ Copy of petition from the Mukkuva Fishermen of Kuriyadi Kadappuram, R.Dis No.1300.23 dated, 3.2.1923, KRA.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Both these representations showed the dearth of land on the shore for the comfortable occupation of the fishermen. Further, it suggested the pattern of the residence of the fishermen community, wherever they were along the Malabar Coast. They resided just near to the high watermark and hence, the erosion of the land was not new for them. They took this position because they wanted to be very near to the seashore to keep their craft and gear in tangible distance from their homes. The second reason was that the land just east of the fishermen dwellings was occupied by the jenmies and their kanakkar of the east. Such lands were identified as garden lands. This garden lands were managed and occupied by, in most cases, the non-fishing population. Usually, the fishermen got hold of the foreshore fallow lands only. Thus, fishermen were sandwiched between the eastern occupation and the western sea.

Co-operatives

The Co-operative experiment was started in the West coast in 1910 with the establishment of a society at Mangalore¹¹⁶. It was the result of the patient works done by V. Govindan ICS, the faithful deputy of Frederick Nicholson. The British Officials found co-operation as a solution for the manifold problems of fisher folk. F.A. Nicholson said: "Apart from general economic, social and moral considerations, there is peculiar need on the West Coast for cooperation, since the development of fishing industry in general

¹¹⁶ *RCFM, Op. Cit.*, p.82.

depends upon the syndication of men and capital, whole on the season under report has shown, in the new guano and oil industry it is of the greatest importance to unite co-operatively a number of small manufacturers who will combine their small parcels of produce and place them on the market in large parcels; this will be for the benefit of both manufacturer, middlemen and consumer”¹¹⁷.

The concern here was on the manufacturers of Oil and Guano, the middlemen and the consumer. The fishermen or the ordinary labourer was not given a place in this analysis. But V. Govindan ICS gave special emphasis for fishermen’s economic problems in his writings to fisheries department. He preferred economic issues to other ones. He stated that: “After four years of constant talk and persuasion I have succeeded in starting a cooperative society among the fishermen of Tanur. The society was registered about the end of March and arrangements are being made to commence business. Fifty of the leading fishermen who own boats and nets have already joined the society and paid the first call on their shares. This is a co-operative nidhi and each shareholder has to pay a sum of Rs.50 within 25 months by instalments of Rs. 2 per month and thus the members have to create a capital by their own contributions. As the maximum number of shares is 200, this society will have a capital of Rs.10,000 in two years time provided the fishing season is good, and with this large amount it will be easy enough to put a stop to the *sowcar’s greedy transactions in the place*

¹¹⁷ LFN II, *Op. Cit.*, p.51.

(emphasis added). Most of these people will require only short term loans, and it is not unlikely that they will have money on hand to lend to other societies or banks”¹¹⁸. Thus the official version diverged in to ways. Nicholson was for the manufacturers, middlemen and consumers; while Govindan, with experiences form field connections, argued against *sawcar* and for the fish worker.

There was a sudden spread of the cooperative societies along the west coast. In the beginning of the period 1918-19, there were 9 societies in the west coast, and during that year 29 new societies were registered in the west coast¹¹⁹. During 1921-22, the number of societies in west coast rose to 60 with 3581 total memberships that included 453 females. The societies allowed loans to repay the prior debts. The amount disbursed for this purpose also rose to 2,53,303¹²⁰. But from 1923-24 onwards, there was a steady decline in the number of members and paid up capital of the co-operative societies¹²¹. Thus in the subsequent administrative reports one could see the gradual weaning out of the co-operative drive. Many reasons were advanced to explain this. The presence of bad season in succession, mismanagement, and lack of supervision were generally suggested by the Administration Report of 1924-25 as potential factors for the failure of this attempt¹²². But the same report elsewhere stated that:

¹¹⁸ LFN dated, 18th June 1915, MFBB X, pp. 114-115 (LFN VI).

¹¹⁹ Madras Fisheries Department Bulletin (MFDB) No 12, 1921, p.34.

¹²⁰ MFDB, No. XVII, 1924, p.30.

¹²¹ MFDB, No. XIX, 1925, p.44.

¹²² MFDB, No. 20, 1927, p.59.

“It is a well-known fact that although several credit societies on a limited liability basis have been started among fishermen, they do not help the actual fishermen to the extent desired. There are many middlemen money lenders who deal in fish in these societies, and theoretically it is the middlemen that has credit, and the security offered by him to the bank is accepted, but the fish catcher does not command credit and therefore goes to the wall. The few actual fishermen in these societies pay for their shares in instalments during the fishing months and borrow from the societies up to the limit of the subscribed share capital when no fishing can be had. For the purchase of boats and nets they have to borrow at ruinous rates of interest, from middlemen and moneylenders who during the fishing season are ready on the seashore to make their levy. The fish is sold by the fishermen at the price dictated by the creditor”¹²³.

This narration eloquently speaks of the plight of the actual fishermen in the 1920s. This indebtedness is the prime reason for the death of many societies. During 1926-27, the Tanur society, the first one to start, ceased to function¹²⁴. Besides the sowcar factor, the traditional ‘chit-fund’ or the ‘Kuries’ stood in the way of the spread of the co-operative movement. “Fishermen are under great obligation to do their duties by the chit-fund societies lest they should be ostracised by their community. The ordinary thrift societies started for fishermen are not of much help during the non-

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p.58.

¹²⁴ *MFDB*, No. XXII, 1931, p.77.

fishing months or for the purchase of boats and nets. The fishermen therefore prefer the chit-fund to them”¹²⁵.

The fishermen showed some hesitation to sudden switch over to the co-operative system on the one hand and the cooperative experiment did not save them from the clutches of the moneylender on the other. The moneylender who entered into the cooperative institutions took credit from the societies and distributed it among the fishermen, as they were able to produce the surety, which the ordinary fishermen could not. This put the moneylender in an advantageous position to the actual fishermen. This pushed the actual fishermen to the extent of submitting the entire catch before the moneylender at a price fixed by the latter. The fishermen tried to break this vicious circle in some way. “A few societies in Kasaragode Taluk undertook the pooling together of the catches of their members and sell them jointly to the highest bidder. This enabled them get better prices and to easily collect their dues”¹²⁶.

But this was only in the 1950s that such experiments were done. The thrift schemes were popularised by providing hundi boxes to each member. Sixty-two societies, out of sixty-five keenly followed the scheme and a total amount of Rs.13,074 was saved during the year 1953-'54¹²⁷. In many societies cess collection were in vogue. This was a method of compulsory saving by collecting a nominal amount at the rate of 1 to 3 pies on every

¹²⁵ *MFDB*, No.XXIII, 1931, p. 43.

¹²⁶ *ARFDM*, 1953-54, Madras, 1955, p.52.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.54.

mund of salt purchased by the member curers in the fish curing yards. This amount so saved is used to liquidate the loans taken by members¹²⁸. The pooling of catch, thrift schemes and cess collection etc. were theoretically intended to ameliorate the conditions of the ordinary fishermen. But these remedies were not seemed effective to protect either the fisherman or the societies. Finally, after the 1950s the societies were directly brought under the charge of the fisheries department¹²⁹.

The temperance movement and the educational endeavours were two important socio-economic activities initiated by the colonial government. The temperance movement was aimed to force the fishermen eschew the habit of drinking and to practice thrift. Early in the 20th century, the colonial officers started the temperance movement among the fishermen of the Mangalore coast¹³⁰. Then it spread southwards. But the temperance movement was not a success among the fisher folk. Sometimes the elder generation prevented the youngsters from the observance of temperance.

A special fisheries school was started in 1913 at Tanur¹³¹. In 1919 Training Institute at Calicut was started to train the special School Masters¹³².

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.58.

¹³⁰ LFN VI, *Op. Cit.*, pp.115-116.

¹³¹ *RCFM, Op. Cit.*, p.82.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p.83.

During the year 1918-19, many schools were set-up along the coast¹³³. However, the spread of education was very slow in the coast. Closing the schools for want of students and reopening were usual proceedings. But the white authorities were very strict in the spread of education. The Training Institutes and village schools slowly but steadily functioned as an agency of social change.

EFFECT OF THESE CHANGES ON THE COMMUNITY FORMATION

As we have noted above, the dawn of the 20th century made many changes in the social life of the coast. The starting of Fish curing Yards, the land assignments for the purpose of the Fish oil factories, the co-operative experiments, and educational and temperance programmes etc. changed the traditional life and it brought new tensions to the shore as it gave birth to new social classes. A dispute among the moneyed men over coastal lands was precipitating from the 1907 itself. The dispute between Ayar Pokker and M.C. Unichoyi was such a dispute¹³⁴. Ayar Pokker made his requests for the land in 1907, 1908 and 1910 for a certain piece of land in Mattul amsom, Chirakkal Taluk; one Ussandevalappil Mammad also requested the same land in 1910¹³⁵. But this land, having an extent of 14.10 acres, was given to

¹³³ *MFBB*, No.12, p.35; In 1920s, '30s and '50s many schools were set-up along the coast. In some cases, the date of opening is not given. See List of Recognised and 'Recognised Aided' Elementary schools in the District of North Malabar during the year 1936-37 (L/168 and L/168 A) KRA; Combined List of Recognised and Aided Elementary Schools Cannanore South Range (L/171) and North Range (L/170) and Badagara Range (L/169) for the year 1952, Government press, Madras, 1952, KRA.

¹³⁴ Office of the Collector of Malabar- Station Calicut, No.13/R.Rev.12 dated, 30.7.1912.KRA.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*.

M.C. Unichoyi, a leading gentleman of the Mukkuva caste and a Municipal Councillor, an emerging businessman and the president of the Kannur Fishermen's guild for the lease of 49 years to set up fish oil mill and fishermen's hamlet¹³⁶. In the memorandum of 1923 by the Mukkuva fishermen of Kuriyadi Kadappuram and the Pudu Islam fishermen of Tanur referred to elsewhere, the anguish over the shrinking coastal space was expressed. The moneyed men competed among themselves for the occupation of fore shore land. But the ordinary fishers out of their constraints filed the petitions before the authorities in the name of their *community*. There were other instances where we could see the submissions in the name of the *communities* that raised the issue of land. The petitions for burial ground were the examples. Actually, the burial ground issues also were the result of the reckless land use pattern followed by the colonial administration. They were deprived of the land even to bury their dead. The Mukkuvas of Azhikode Desam Chirakkal Taluk made a request on 22nd June 1924 to regain some portion of their burial ground from the compound of the near by fish guano factory under a Thiyya named Kakkarikkan Kannan¹³⁷. They were disgusted with the in-migration of the people from the eastern side and they treated their development activity and value system as defiling them and their ancestors. The above-mentioned Mukkuva petition said: 'As a rule the fisher community in these parts are generally illiterate and ignorant and are easily

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ R.Dis No.5651/24 dated 6.1.1925, KRA.

duped by *clever sharpers with which the place abounds...*' (emphasis added)¹³⁸. They saw the dirty water coming to the burial ground from the guano factory as 'defiling the sacred place of their ancestors'¹³⁹. Similarly, in 1939, the *Araya community* of Kurumbranad Taluk applied for a burial ground for them and that was sanctioned¹⁴⁰. These were examples of the development of a community consciousness as the result of the encroachment of outsiders into their domain as part of the state initiated projects.

The Mogayer (Mukaya) *community* submitted a memorandum to the governor in council, Madras to inform their backwardness and the need to get more jobs and educational benefits in 1920¹⁴¹. In this petition, one could see the gradual transformation of a tradition bound *caste* that led their life with the traditional profession into a modern *community* that want to make use of the avenues provided by the emerging public sphere generated by the colonial intervention. This becomes more visible when they made a reminder of their above said petition in a subsequent one on 15th October 1929¹⁴². In this memorandum they demanded along with other general concessions, a reservation of one seat for them to the Taluk Boards and scholarship for the students from their community. The nomination of the fishermen as members to the maritime Taluk Boards, Municipal councils and District boards and

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ R.Dis No.6823-39 dated, 28.1.1940, KRA; also see R.Dis No.1442 /40 dated, 6.7.1940, KRA.

¹⁴¹ See the file, B-5254/29, KRA.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

Madras Legislative Council began during the year 1923-24¹⁴³. In reply to this, the government made it clear that, 'if four fishermen can be nominated to Taluk Boards and District Boards, a Mogayer may be nominated. Preference will have to be in the following order:- Araya Fishermen, Moonillakkar Fishermen, Pudu-Islam Fishermen, Mogayer Fisherman'¹⁴⁴. This reply cemented the self-perception of the Mogayer as a distinct entity from the rest of the coastal communities. Once this classification was established, then it would be impossible to count the coastal communities together in a lump. In the 1930s the Mogayer showed an enthusiasm to establish their distinct community character and their minority status. In a memorandum submitted to the government of Madras the Mogayers said: 'Mogears, though fishermen, are a distinct community from Mukkuvas.... and a very backward community suffering under great disabilities they are not able to make social educational and political progress.'¹⁴⁵. This was a sign of the increasing social diversification took place in the coastal life during the colonial period. Those who were advantageous in this process demanded better professions and positions within the public sphere. These demands were often forwarded in a communitarian way.

Similarly, the fishermen community associations in the various parts of the Malabar Coast have also been started in this period. A report of 1927 said: "The Moonillakkar Hindu fishermen of Kanchangad, Balla, Hosdurg

¹⁴³ *MFDB*, No. XIX, 1925, p.43.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ G.O.No. 989 dated, 27.11.1933, KRA.

and Ajnur villages have started an association under the name of “Dewara Yuvajana Samaj” their object being the social uplift of the community and have started a day and night school at Kanchangad which are being well attended”¹⁴⁶. The Mogayer fishermen of the South Canara district formed “the South Canara Mogaveera Mahajana Sabha” to exercise control in all social matters affecting the community and aims at improving its social and economic status; and it proposed to cut down extravagant expenses at marriages and other social functions; to preach temperance and to collect funds for the educational improvement of the community”¹⁴⁷. During the year 1926-27, there were a number of such organisations working along the West Coast. Sri Gnanodaya Samaj of Mangalore, The South Canara Mogaveera Mahajana Sabha, and the Mogaveera Clerk’s Association at Bombay were some of this type¹⁴⁸. These organisations taught the lessons of temperance, thrift and hygiene to the fisher folk. They also rendered help on the occasions of religious festivals. A quest of reformism and the resultant inward looking tendency for internal restructuring could be seen in these associations. The members of the Mogaveera Youths’ Literary Association, Mangalore conducted a Baby show in connection with their anniversary in 1927¹⁴⁹. Thus, the symbols of colonial modernity entered the fishers’ life and this spirit

¹⁴⁶ *MFDB*, No. XXI, 1927, p.64.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*.

¹⁴⁸ *MFDB*, No.XXII, 1931, p.75.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

along with the quest of social reform reached the areas south of Mangalore in no time.

The *Araya Jana Social Service League* (AJSSL) started during 1927-28 at Thalassery with branches at the various fishermen villages from Kasaragode to Calicut with the aim of improving the condition of fishing folk in all direction¹⁵⁰. It submitted a memorandum to the minister in 1936¹⁵¹. And that memorandum was referred to in a later one submitted on 22nd November 1937 in which they demanded the reduction of the price of the salt; provision of the free fishing right to the river fishers of Korappuzha; opening up of new schools along the west coast; the continuance of the Fisheries Training Institute in Calicut; and the inclusion of the fishermen among the scheduled castes¹⁵². Regarding the last demand, the memorandum said that: “the fishermen will never be able to make their voice felt if they are included among the non-Brahmin Hindus. In the government reply to the memorandum, the very strange statement is made that the Fishermen are not an untouchable caste. We do not know who is responsible for supplying this information to the Government. In Malabar the fishermen are not only “untouchable” but also “unapproachable” and there is every reason for including them among the scheduled castes”¹⁵³. This petition of the AJSSL reflected a broad humanitarian ethos in dealing with the problems of the

¹⁵⁰ *MFDB*, No.XXIII, 1931 p.45.

¹⁵¹ Development Department M.S. Series G.O.No. 2544, dated 17.10.1939, KRA.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

fisher population. They never use *Araya community* anywhere in the memorial. They demanded the inclusion of the fishermen in the scheduled caste. Moreover, the schools opened as the result of this memorandum were in the Kadappuram and Ponnani coasts, two predominantly Pudu Islam centres¹⁵⁴. Another petition submitted by AJSSL on 24.6.36 demanded that the price of the salt be reduced; and the levy of Rs. 2 from the fish curers of Calicut for keeping the out sheds be abolished¹⁵⁵.

A Samastha Kerala Araya Mahajana Yogam (SKAMY) was established at Alappuzha in 1928¹⁵⁶. M.C.Madhavan, the president of the Kannur unit of this organisation submitted a memorandum to the madras government in 1941. In this memorandum, he introduced himself as the ‘president of the All Kerala Hindu Fishermen Association’ and continued that ‘I beg to submit that the fishermen community of the west coast consisting of Hindus, Christians and Mohammedans have several grievances to be reported...’¹⁵⁷. SKAMY demanded that the management of the Government fisheries schools should not be transferred to private agencies; the advancement of the fishing industry in the west coast; the need for relaxation of certain rules and bye-laws in the fisheries Manuel governing ticket holders and officers in fish curing yards; revival of the fisheries training institute at Calicut which was

¹⁵⁴ See the letter from the Director of fisheries and Note by the Administrative Department in the file, *Ibid*.

¹⁵⁵ R.Dis – 14723/36 dated 15.1.1937, KRA.

¹⁵⁶ *Kadal Monthly*, World Fishermen Day Special Issue, MCITRA, Kozhikode., November 2006.

¹⁵⁷ Development Department (MS), G.O.No. 99 dated, 20-1-1941, TNA.

abolished in 1937 etc¹⁵⁸. In this case also the communitarian platform was used not as an end but as a means to express general demands. But in some instances, the direct need of the community was also expressed as we have seen in the case of the demand for burial grounds.

The second and third decade of the 20th century was characterised by the growth of educational institutions and the temperance movement in the coastal belt. Further, this period was also noted for the growth of representative governance. These factors contributed for the development of a public sphere. This public sphere was the result of the British intervention. The development of the public sphere resulted in the transformation of the old traditional *jati* (caste) identities into modern *samudayam* (community). The demands for the educational and political concessions by the Mogayer community and the establishment of the temperance societies along the West Coast were to be seen in this backdrop. The temperance societies aimed to reform the *community* with thrift schemes, temperance and the starting of educational institutions. But at the same time they maintained broad humanitarian values as the demands of AJSSL and SKAMY would show. Hence, the development of the modern community started in the second decade of the 20th century itself and it maintained a humanitarian face in the public sphere. But there were occasions where this community got linked with the ritualistic parameters of social life and broad religious identities also developed through the flanks.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

In the second decade of the 20th century there was a lot of hardship to the fisher population because of different reasons. First was the decline of the fish related industry along the west coast that directly affected the income of the fishers. It not only reduced the income but also induced the British government to increase the salt rate in 1924 to compensate their loss that was another bolt on the fisher people. In 1926 the 'Madras Mail' reported that the fishing folk of Malabar were starving due to the lack of catch¹⁵⁹. The assistant director of fisheries, Calicut reported to Director of Fisheries that 'the fishermen are not so bad off as is made out by the Malabar correspondent of 'Madras Mail'. It is true that between Mattool and Bepore the fishing season has not been a success...' ¹⁶⁰. After analysing the report of the 'Madras Mail', the 'Mitavadi' said that, 'the most important cause which has brought about this miserable situation, as admitted by all, is the levy of the salt tax which has disabled the industry by depriving it of the cheapest preservative for curing fish, and though government fully convinced of the hardships caused there by, have tried to minimise the same, by the establishment of fish curing yards where salt is sold duty free to the curers. The rules and restriction imposed in working them are too many which make it impossible for the poor fisher folk to derive any benefit from them, though they help to enrich the middle men who are mostly non-fisher folk'¹⁶¹. The authorities showed a disregard for the problems of fishermen. While admitting that the

¹⁵⁹ The paper cutting in the file, Development Department G.O.No. 1538, dated.25.10.1926, KRA.

¹⁶⁰ The letter from the Assistant Director of Fisheries, Calicut in the file, *Ibid*.

¹⁶¹ The Paper cutting in the file, *Ibid*.

‘fishing industry in Malabar is undoubtedly depressed at present’, the collector found it convenient to blame it on the ‘thrifless and generally drink-loving’ character of the fishermen and concludes that no relief work is necessary on the coast¹⁶². Then the fishermen opted to their traditional ways to deal with this precarious condition. At Tanur, the fishermen had subscribed a purse for a Thangal in order that he may charm the shoals; at Thalassery the fishermen celebrated a festival in their temple with a similar objective¹⁶³. The relief works at Calicut was reportedly initiated by a rich ‘fisherman-capitalist who has made lavish advances of grain ... (in) a determined effort to preserve the credit system on which, unfortunately, the fishing industry along the greater part of the coast is based’¹⁶⁴.

The government did not properly attend to the famine of 1925-26. As a result, the fisher people tried to propitiate the Thangal or the God to get a good catch. This return to a divine cultural milieu in search of a solution for a mundane problem was a process of social regression to the clutches of ascribed identity. At some hamlets middlemen appeared as saviour of this suffering people. In both cases government’s inactivity encouraged the hegemony of either religion or of capital. All through the period of famine, the fisher people were at the mercy of the middlemen and moneylenders.

¹⁶² Letter from Collector’s Office in the file, *Ibid.* Also see the reply by the Minister for Development, to the question of P.V.Gopalan, Development Department G.O.No. 1617, dated,12.11.1926, KRA.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

This reinforced the community consciousness that was already developed among the fishers as we have seen above.

The remarks on the conduct of some co-operative societies in the administrative reports bore the traces of inter-community competition in the conduct of the societies. About the Kundazhiyoor Society, an administration report of 1927-28 recorded: 'The Kundazhiyoor society, which at the beginning of 1926-27, was not working satisfactorily on account of communal difficulties was revived for some time through the efforts of the Inspector of Fisheries, but has fallen back again on account of fresh communal troubles.... The Chettuvayi Society also suffers from communal split'¹⁶⁵. Such a case was also reported from Kottakkadappuram near Vadanappalli in the Administration Report of 1925-26¹⁶⁶. Similar cases of communal disunity were also reported in the Administration Report of 1926-27, from Nattika and Puthan Kadappuram¹⁶⁷. The religious prejudices that caused disunity in Chaliyam society were also referred to¹⁶⁸. Cases of scuffles between 'Mukkuva (Hindu) and Mappilla fishermen' were reported from Kannur in 1933¹⁶⁹. On the question of instituting an Advisory Committee for the fishermen of the West Coast, the then Director of Fisheries replied that, 'in the present backward state of the community, *torn by factions, prejudices*

¹⁶⁵ MFDB, No.XXIII, 1931, p.43.

¹⁶⁶ MFDB, No. XXI, 1927, p.69.

¹⁶⁷ MFDB, No.XXII, 1931, p.75.

¹⁶⁸ ARFDM, 1933, p.65.

¹⁶⁹ FNR for I half of January 1933.

and jealousies (emphasis added) and with hardly any leaders worth the name' such committees are not needed¹⁷⁰. The factions, prejudices and jealousies were not explained in the letter but one could assume that the community identities began to take shape.

By this time, the Co-operative societies began to be named in a community way. The *ArayaJana Society of Cannanore, Tellichery Arayajana Society*¹⁷¹ etc. named so because of the symbolic competition exist between the Mukkuva fishers and the Mappila curers in these centres. Because, the decline of the flourishing fish oil and guano industries affected the fishermen than the intermediaries like Mappilas.¹⁷² Such names for the societies were seen at the centres like Nattika, Blangad, Thalikkulam, Vadanappalli and Calicut South etc. from where disunities were reported¹⁷³.

Some administrative measures also contributed for the development of community consciousness. We have already discussed the effect of the reservation to Taluk Boards on the community dynamics of the coastal society. When students were selected to the Schools and Fisheries training institutes, the classificatory criterion used was Moplah or Muhammadan (for

¹⁷⁰ D. Dis No. 1497-G/36 dated 15th September, 1936, TNA.

¹⁷¹ *MFDB*, No.XXII, 1931, p.76.

¹⁷² "The oil and guano industry brought much wealth to many fishermen families, but the continued absence of the oil sardine has demoralised the industry and ruined many people who owed their all to this industry. In Cannanore and Tellichery many Araya families once rich and influential, are now immersed in debts or actually bankrupt. To add to these misfortunes, the demand for and price of salted fish, has declined both in the interior markets and in Ceylon owing to the prevailing economic depression", *ARFDM*, 1930-31, pp.66-67.

¹⁷³ Appendices, *ARFDM*, 1953-54, pp.79-80.

Pudu Islam), Fishermen Hindu (for Araya, Mukkuva and Mukaya etc.) and non-fishermen Hindu (mostly to denote Thiyya, weaver, Goldsmith etc.)¹⁷⁴. But this was more of an official nature than of a popular kind of criterion even though there was a possibility of oozing out of this to the popular parlance. The division of the schools into Mappila and Hindu Board schools¹⁷⁵ contributed much to the creation of religious differences in the popular perception by the late 1930s¹⁷⁶ that the Mappila schools were meant for the Pudu Islam and the Hindu for the non-fishing and fishing *Hindu* castes. Likewise, in the 1871 census, the whole fishermen community, *Semadavan* (fishermen) was taken as one unit and counted as such¹⁷⁷. In 1921, Araya and Mukkuva were referred to in the Madras District Gazatteers under the heading *Castes, Tribes and Races*¹⁷⁸. In 1931, they were mentioned in a category *Other castes not specified* under the title *Other Hindus*¹⁷⁹. Perhaps the groups like Araya, Mukkuva etc. might have been included in this category. For the Pudu-Islam section there was only one classification *Other Muhammadans*¹⁸⁰. But in 1949, Mogaveera, Mukkuvan or Mukayan alias Mogayan (including Bovis) were included in the list of Backward Classes¹⁸¹.

¹⁷⁴ MFDB, No.XXII, 1931, *Op. Cit.*, p.69.

¹⁷⁵ Development Department M.S. Series G.O.No. 2544, dt.17.10.1939, KRA.

¹⁷⁶ The Hindu and Muslim schools were opened by the District Boards in Malabar in 1937. K.Kelappan objected to these separate schools, as he believed that it would hamper Hindu-Muslim unity, FNR for the I half of June 1937.

¹⁷⁷ *Census of the Madras Presidency 1871*, Vol.I, Madras, 1874. p.81, TNA.

¹⁷⁸ *Malabar District Gazetteers*, Malabar District Volume II, Madras, 1933. p.35, KRA.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.132.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.133.

¹⁸¹ Public Services Department MS Series G.O. No. 3400, dated, 7.10.1949, KRA.

Thus the growth of the concept of modern community started in the first half of the 20th century in Malabar Coastal society as a result of the development of a public sphere under the colonial rule.

CONCLUSION

Thus, one could see different sections like Arayas, Mukkuvas, Mokaya, and Pudu-Islam etc. lived on the coast of Malabar in the dawn of the 20th century. It was interesting to note that each of these sections except Pudu-Islam had their style of social organisation like *Illam* and they had their own arrangement of the social hierarchy. The observation of *theendal* etc. prevailed among them. But they celebrated Onam, Vishu etc. and included the gods like Vishnu, Siva and Bhagavathy in their pantheon. At the same time, the people out side the coast maintained an attitude of contempt and indifference to the coast dwellers. The people of the east did not enter in marriage relations with the coastal people. But some local landed magnates used them as Palanquin bearers. They were regarded as illiterate unhygienic *Mukkuvas* (this term included everybody who fish) who did not deserve any equal treatment. The Pudu-Islam section had their socio-cultural organisation of the mosque centred *Mahal* system. In the case of the Pudu-Islam fishers, they were not treated as *Original* Muslims. In their case also marriage relations with 'eastern' Muslims were rare. This internal differentiation within the coastal population was maintained by the traditional social regulatory systems like *Kadakkodi* or the Caste Panchayaths that regulated

the social life and the resource conservation measures. Hence, we have a picture that presented two peculiarities. First was the internal hierarchy within the coastal community and second the dichotomy that existed between the coastal communities on the one hand and the people of the *east* on the other. But generally, in the case of fishers, the nominal ritualistic differences did not, however, affected their profession. A fishing unit included the members from all communities of the fishers and at the work place, they functioned as a homogenous group, perhaps the best binding spirit one could see among them, because in the pre-mechanisation period the traditional knowledge was very important and a fishing unit selected people on the basis of ones technical know-how and not on the basis of community.

The British administration brought many changes to the fishery field. The Fish Curing Yards, Fish Oil and Guano Factories and new preservation techniques etc. were the contribution of the Colonial rule. They could not go far in modernising the fishing technology but were successful in commercialising the sector to a great extent. This commercialisation resulted in the rise of a feeble capitalism on the coast and the decline of some enterprising fishing groups as well. Further, a consolidation of the money lending class was also a result of this. This dislocation of the fisher section accelerated with the land assignments to the non-fishers on the seashore. The co-operativism, educational institutions, temperance movement etc. paved the way for the growth of a public sphere.

As a result new organisations started at the Northern most point of West Coast for social reform activities like temperance thrift and hygiene. These movements were partially initiated by the authorities. These social reform activities, the aforesaid British initiatives like education, administrative concessions, the opening up of Hindu and Muslim schools and the industrialising attempts along with the economic impact of the British rule shattered the old *Jati* (caste) identity and brought in the modern *Samudayam* (community) identity to the costal life. The organisations like AJSSL and SKAMY began to form in the areas around Calicut. The communitarian articulation began by the close of the 1920s. It was in the memorandums submitted to the authorities in the post-1920 period that they use the suffix *community* to their caste names. It was not accidental that incidents of communal divide (not conflicts) were reported from some parts of Malabar. But up to the 1950s the articulations were largely communitarian and humanitarian, as we understood from the memorials of the AJSSL and SKAMY.

CHAPTER II

THE STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN THE KERALA FISHERIES SECTOR SINCE INDEPENDENCE

Since independence, the coast line of Kerala was redefined on the basis of the boundaries constituted during the formation of the linguistic state of Kerala from Thalappadi in the North to Parassala in the South. Now, Kerala has a coastline of 590-kilometre length, which comes to 10% of India's total coastline. The bio-productivity of the Kerala inshore waters is much higher than any of the other coasts¹. It averages 250 mgc/m³/day and the average annual produce is 390 kg/Hector². Further the shallow Continental Shelf and the extended Ufotaky zone (the transparent area) helps its productivity³. About 150 shrimp-fish varieties of commercial importance are bred in this comfortable climate. The seabed upto a depth of 45-60 m. is the spawning ground of all the important variety fishes and shrimp. According to the vertical distribution, the species of marine organisms may be (i) surface forms (Pelagic), (ii) Columnar or mid layer and (iii) deep water or bottom forms (demersal, benthic or benthic)⁴.

¹ *Kadal Manal Khananam Uyarthunna VelluVilikal (KMKUV)* (Mal), Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP), Thrissur, May, 2003,p.9.

² *Ibid.*, p.9. Also see T.J. Job and G. Asokan, Report on Fisheries Development In Kerala. Development Department, Government of Kerala, 1973 (mimeo), pp.17-20.

³ *KMKUV, Op. Cit.*, p.9.

⁴ T.J. Job and G. Asokan, *Op. Cit.*, p.17.

Kiddi Prawn (*Karikkadi*), Flower tail Prawn (*Poovalan*), Indian white-prawn (*Naran*), Giant tiger Prawn (*Kara*) etc. are some of the important shrimp varieties. Mackerel (*Ayala*), Sardine (*Chala* or *Mathi*), Pomfrets (*Avoli*), Bronze croaker (*Kora*), Cuttle Fish (*Kanava*) are some of the popular fish items found here. The proximity to the Wadge Bank famous for fish wealth is another important factor that influences the productivity. The zones like the Quilon Bank, Chettuva Bank and the Ezhimala Bank where fish could be seen in abundance are also along the Kerala Coast.

This high productivity and the presence of wide varieties of fish have accounted for the high concentration of the fishers along the Kerala Coast. Out of the 8.43-lakh total population, 1.79 lakh people are active fishermen⁵. There are 222 fishing villages in Kerala⁶. If we examine the statistics of the last 50 years (1950-2000), we find that the state's marine fish production has increased from 1-lakh tonnes to 6.6 lakh tonne⁷. The 3% of the Kerala State's income is from the fishing sector. The state is earning more than 1000 Crores of foreign exchange from the export of sea products. This amounts to the 20% of the foreign exchange earned from the export of sea products in India⁸.

There has been significant growth in fish production in the country in the recent years. India is now the third largest producer of marine fish and

⁵ *Marine Fisheries Statistics of Kerala, 2005*, Statistical Cell, Vikas Bhavan, Directorate of Fisheries, p.4. (Hereafter, *MFSK – 2005*).

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *65 Divasathe Sampoorana Malsya Bandana Nirodhanam Malsya Samrakshana Paripalanathinu Anivaryamo?* (Mal), KSSP, Thrissur, May 2003, p.7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.2.

second largest producer of fresh water fish in the world⁹. Production during the year 2004-05 was 63.04 lakh tonnes comprising 27.78 lakh tonnes of marine fish and 35.26 lakh tonnes of inland fish¹⁰. There has been steady growth in the export of fish products. During 2004-05, the country exported 4.37 lakh tonnes of marine products, which resulted in export earning of Rs. 6188.92 crore. Efforts were being made to boost the export potential through diversification of products for export. The country has now started exports of frozen squid (*Koonthal*), Cuttle fish and variety of other finfishes¹¹. The export through the ports of Kerala during 2003-04 was 76627 metric tonnes, which is 18% of the India's export for the year¹². It brought 18.04% of the total value of Indian export¹³.

But despite the increase in the fish catch and the foreign exchange it earns, the fishing sector is in crisis. We have a high rate of development in other economic fields. Still, the fishing field is away from the mainstream and has turned into a poorer sector¹⁴. To understand the causes of this lumbbersome development, a cursory note on the socio economic trends of fisheries of the past half-century will be helpful. These changes were

⁹ www.dahd.nic.in

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² MFSK – 2005 *Op. Cit.*,.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Asutrana Sahayi 4, Matsya Meghala Janakeeyasootrana Prasthanam* (Mal), State Planning Board, Fisheries Department, Government of Kerala, 1998, p.5 (Hereafter *Asutrana Sahayi 4*); John Kurien, "Kerala Mathrukyum Theeradesavum", in T.T.Sreekumar and S. Sanjeev (ed.), *Katha Ithuvare Kerala Vikasana Samvadangal* (Mal), D.C. Books, Kottayam, 2003, pp.161-164.

inextricably linked with the modernisation of the Kerala fishery sector that started with the Indo Norwegian Project (INP), and proceeded through the introduction of big trawlers and purse-seine nets, the motorisation of country crafts and a thrust on the export of the high valued fish varieties. This was also linked with the Laws and Acts passed in the State, National and International level. These developments had their multifarious impact on the fishing profession and the lives of the fish workers of Kerala. Below is an attempt to explain these changes historically.

The Modernisation of Kerala Fishery

The INP was introduced in 1953 following a tripartite agreement signed in New Delhi between the United Nations, the Government of Norway and the Government of India¹⁵. This agreement was finalised on January 24th 1953 in New Delhi¹⁶. This agreement had extensive plans to improve the methods of fishing, life conditions and sanitary and health facilities in the region¹⁷. This project was essentially limited to the erstwhile Travancore Kochi State, to be specific, to the three fishing villages of Kollam namely Sakthikulangara, Neendakara and Puthanthura. In the first ten years

¹⁵ For details on the INP see, John Kurien, "Technical Assistance Projects and Socio-Economic Changes: The Norwegian intervention in Kerala's Fisheries Development Experience", Working Paper (WP) No.205 (Mimeo), Centre for Development Studies (CDS), Thiruvananthapuram, 1985 (Hereafter, Technical Assistance Projects); *The Impact of the Indo-Norwegian Project on the Growth and Development of Indian Fisheries*, Agricultural Division Studies – 4, State Planning Board, Kerala, 1969 (Hereafter The Impact of...)

¹⁶ *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, 25th January, 1953.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

of its implementation, i.e. from 1953-'63, this project was confined to these three fishing villages. In 1963, it was extended to Kannur¹⁸. Later, in the second phase from 1963 to 1972 this project got enmeshed with the fisheries programmes and policies of the state government¹⁹. Indo Norwegian Project was renamed as Integrated Fisheries Project (IFP) in 1972²⁰. At this stage it concentrated on the development of technologies for harvesting and post-harvesting of marine fish resources²¹. The entry of Norway into Indian fisheries attracted the attention of many to the new *unfished* area of economy. The Indian monopoly like Tata Company had a plan to enter into a long-term agreement with the Tokyo fisheries company of Japan in the deep-sea fishing²². Even in its first phase i.e. after the formation of the state on the linguistic line on 1st November 1956, the government relied on the INP to extend mechanisation to the other parts of the state. It coincided with the second five-year plan. There was considerable weight given to the fishery sector in the second Five Year Plan. In 1957, the Kerala government, declared many projects to be included in the second five year plan, for the development of fishery sector. Some of them aimed "To give long term loan to fishermen co-operative societies with low interest rate to buy crafts and gear; to give fishery instruments at a concession rate; to make brake waters to

¹⁸ PKLA, 1st session 17th January, 1968, Vol.XXII, No. 3, 99 (44), p. 316.

¹⁹ From 1963 onwards it started to function in Kannur also, *ibid*.

²⁰ T.J. Job and G. Asokan, *Op. Cit.*, p.i.

²¹ www.dahd.nic.in

²² *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 17th March, 1953.

facilitate fishing even at the time of coastal erosion; to make facilities, at important fishing centres to keep the fish untainted; to establish beacon lights to help the fishermen coming after fishing to recognise their villages; to build mechanised boats and distribute it among the fishermen at a lower rate; to establish fish processing plants to scientifically cure fish; to train the youths of fisher folk in using of mechanised boats; to organise the fisher folk on a co-operative basis etc.²³ During this period the steps to rejuvenate the fishing sector included the gradual mechanisation of fishing, encouragement of credit co-operatives, different welfare activities and the promotion of fish processing industry etc. And these were efforts to organise the industry for the welfare of the fish workers.

The accessories and background amenities were very low in this sector in 1957. For instance, there were only two cold storages in the state, one at Thiruvananthapuram and the other at Kozhikode. Some honourable members of the assembly had opined that this absence might be a possible reason for the backwardness of the fishermen because they were not able to sell the fish untainted²⁴. To make improvements in these directions the government repeatedly answered on the floor of the assembly that it was taking much effort to bring the different projects in the fishing sector in to reality. In the budget speech, the then finance minister Achutha Menon made it clear that the government's thrust was on mechanisation and the

²³ PKLA, 2nd Session, 28th August 1957, Vol. II, No.6, 217(4), pp. 513-14.

²⁴ PKLA, 2nd session 31st August 1957, Vol.II, No. 8 252 (21),pp 753-54.

government relied on the INP to avail boats and issued it to the fishermen and the cost would be realised in installments; and the government also initiated co-operative societies²⁵. In 1957, Central Institute for Fisheries Technology (CIFT) was established to design better crafts for fishing. This was a continuation of the modernisation of the crafts initiated by the INP.

The efforts of the government for the total mechanisation of the Kerala fishing sector, at times, was arrested by the shortage of foreign exchange but at the same time, private individuals acquired boats from foreign countries and the license from the government of India²⁶. There were 500 mechanised boats owned by private parties operating in 9 ports of Kerala as against the 329 boats provided by INP and the state government in 1964²⁷. Such conditions gave the private individuals an upper hand in the possession of boats and the members of the Kerala Legislative Assembly (KLA) complained that the mechanisation made the fishermen coolies in fishing boats²⁸. In 1976, the fisheries department Minister admitted the fact that a major share of the mechanised boats accrued by the co-operative societies reached in the hands of private individuals²⁹.

Thus the mechanisation programme at the beginning itself made the fishing sector a free play zone of those who had capital and fixed the nature

²⁵ PKLA, 1st session 7th March 1958, Vol.IV, No. 11, p. 734.

²⁶ PKLA, 2nd session 5th November, 1963, Vol. XVII, No. 23, pp. 2181-82.

²⁷ PKLA, 2nd session 30th March, 1964, Vol. XVIII, No.34 *921 (11), p. 3018.

²⁸ PKLA, 1st session 19th March, 1964, Vol. XVIII, No.29, p. 2565.

²⁹ PKLA, (4th Assembly) 14th session 27th February, 1976 Vol. XL, No. 11 *254(260), pp. 872-74.

of the subsequent proceedings. The state tried to control the entry of the capitalists by several measures. Government issued the boats to fishermen groups involving both trained and untrained members³⁰. Later, the Matsya Utpadaka Co-Operative Societies (MUCS) were given priority in the distribution of boats. The government gave boats to those who had completed training and joined the near-by societies and had applied for boats through the societies. The applications for boats were considered as per recommendations of the regional committees³¹. To get the boat for a fisherman, government has set many criteria such as the training, membership in a fishermen group, membership in a co-operative society and the advance amount to be paid etc. But the individuals who had money entered the domain without any control.

Change of Right Over the Sea and Export Boom

The 1960s witnessed the export boom in the Indian fishery. The demand for prawns in the international market changed the Kerala fishery also. The introduction of the new technologies in the Asian waters also was the result of the shortage of prawns in the world market due to a ban on prawn export from China to U.S., Japan and South East Asia following the Communist Revolution in China in 1949³². Prawns were discovered in the coastal waters of India, Thailand, Indonesia and other countries and new

³⁰ PKLA, 1st session 4th March 1963, Vol. XVI, No.18 *592 (22), pp 1589-90.

³¹ PKLA, 1st session 17th January 1969, Vol. XXIV, No.9 *191 (235), p 695-696.

³² John Kurien, *The Blessing of the Commons: Small-Scale Fisheries, Community Property Rights and Coastal Natural Assets*, WP 349, CDS, August 2003, p.22. (Hereafter *The Blessing of the Commons...*)

crafts, gears, and processing facilities were introduced³³. In other words, huge investments came to the field both in the form of technologies and money to support the export demands.

By this time there took place the change of right over the sea and its resources. As we have noted earlier, the ocean and its living resources were regarded as *commons* in earlier periods. Commons is an economic resource or facility subject to individual use but not to individual possession³⁴. Right from the 1930s the demand for nations' possession right over the sea was there on the agenda of the colonial powers. At the 1930 League of Nations conference on the codification of international law, nations raised issues regarding jurisdictional frontiers in the sea with an eye to claim the living and non-living resources of the oceans including minerals. In the post Second World War period we could see a number of attempts by the United Nations to frame a law of the sea. The first and second United Nations Conventions on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS I & II) held in 1958 and 1960 respectively. It was at this time that the much-debated article *The Tragedy of the Commons* was written in 1968 by Garret Hardin in *Science*.³⁵ In this article, Hardin discussed how the additional inputs by a group of Herdsmen in a commons resulted in the depletion of that particular resource and how state

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ John Kurien and T.R.Thankappan Achari, *On Ruining the Commons and the Commoner The Political Economy of Over Fishing*, W P. No.232, CDS,Thiruvananthapuram, December, 1989,p.1 (Hereafter On Ruining the Commons...)

³⁵ Garret Hardin, 'The Tragedy of the Commons', *Science*, 162 (December 1968) pp.1243-48. quoted in H.Gary Knight, *Managing the Sea's Living Resources Legal and Political Aspects of High Seas Fisheries*, Lexington Books, Toronto, p.2.

or individual control would help in such situations to manage the resource and there by avert the *tragedy*.³⁶ He argued for the change of community right into individual possession rights. Hardin criticised the community right in this way: “Each man is locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit – in world that is limited. Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own interests in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons. Freedom in a commons brings ruin to all.”³⁷

This essay turned the attention of the scholars to the management of the resources that were considered to be commons or community properties to avert the *tragedy*. Hardin suggested state control as the only way to protect the commons from ruin. Under UNCLOS III, started in 1973 and concluded in 1982, coastal states were given sovereignty over a large patch of sea -measured out from the coastline up to a distance of 200 nautical miles (1 nm = 1.85 km) - termed the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)³⁸. In the EEZ, the costal states had sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting, conserving and managing the marine resources, whether living or non-living. From shore up to 12 nautical miles was considered as the territorial sea. But these regulations went contrary to the expectations of Hardin who demanded the state control for the maintenance of the commons. When the state began

³⁶ H.Gary Knight, *Managing.. Op. Cit.*, pp.2-5.

³⁷ Garret Hardin quoted in H.Gary Knight, *Ibid.*, p.3.

³⁸ John Kurien, *The Blessing of the Commons, Op. Cit.*, pp.19-20.

to interfere, the consequences were even more tragic for the ordinary fishermen who used fishery resources as commons. Their community right was transformed into possession right and it facilitated the unrestricted entry of the individual non-fisher operators who exploited the resources for profit. As we could see, this changing sea tenure since the 1960s helped the export orientation and facilitated the Blue Revolution. In 1950s and 60s food security was the main concern of the planners. In the 1970s the thrust was changed from food security to export. The fishing formerly confined to the inshore areas by the fishermen community members with their crude technologies was replaced with big monopolies operating with modern technology.

In the case of Kerala, a leading maritime state in India, the large investment come to the scene, the infra structural and organisational changes and the proliferation of crafts etc. have to be seen in this backdrop. The plan to establish two boat-building factories at Azheekod and Kannur and a marine diesel engine factory with the co-operation of Norwegian Agency for International Development and M/s Seshasai Brothers Ltd., were indicative of the government priorities³⁹. The mechanised boat building, nylon thread distribution, fishery training, construction of landing centres and harbours etc. got prominence in the government agenda on fisheries⁴⁰. A notable change had taken place in the mid sixties with the attempt to attract the members from the non-fishing community to fishing and to institute new

³⁹ PKLA, 1st session 1st meeting 27th February, 1964, Vol. XVIII, No. 14 * 435 (23), p.1210.

⁴⁰ PKLA, 2nd session 20th July, 1967 Vol. XXI, No.22 * 901 (2), P 2531-35.

courses to teach the technical aspects of fishing⁴¹. Whatever was the success of this plan, the members from other fields with capital entered the field, to fish without getting the hand wet.

The huge sums in subsidies spent in the mechanised sector made it dominant and powerful. Till 1971 June, Rs. 40 Lakhs was given to 1193 boats as subsidies and this subsidy was given to big companies⁴². This subsidy was given during the third plan period and a lion's share of this amount was disbursed during 1963-66⁴³. The period between 1963-'79 show a growth of large and medium vessels in Kerala⁴⁴. This subsidy regime and the proliferation of large and medium vessels were not accidental developments, but the much needed infrastructure boon for the export boom in that period⁴⁵. The *pink gold rush* started in that period reflected in the export and catch trend⁴⁶. According to a government report, 'the mechanised boats have hardly entered the field of canoe for oil sardine and mackerel. In fact, their

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, * 906 pp. 2543-44

⁴² PKLA, 3rd session 25th August 1971, Vol. XXIX, No.31 * 1257 (1307) pp 3672-73.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Ramakrishnan Korakandy, *Technological Change and the Development of Marine Fishing Industry in India*, Daya Publishing House, Delhi, 1994.p.147.

⁴⁵ In the view of Derek Johnson, In India, 'it was by the third and fourth five year plans of the 1960s that the emphasis had shifted to increasing production for export through increased trawler subsidies and improved port facilities. Rapidly rising international prices for prawns was an important factor in this shift. And this resulted in dualist development in most of India's coastline as the artisanal fishing sector was neglected in favour of subsidies and infrastructural support to the industrial sector', "Wealth and Waste Contrasting legacies of Fisheries Development in Gujarat since 1950s", *EPW Review of Agriculture*, March 31, 2001.

⁴⁶ "All round efforts must be made to boost our export trade in fish and fish products to the maximum extent in view of the imperative need for foreign exchange. The U.S. market can be fully exploited by exporting more and more prawns. Dried prawns were in great demand in Burma and salted fish in Ceylon, the increasing demand for fish meal in Germany and Netherlands has to be met", *An Economic Review*, Kerala, (*ERK-*) 1962, Thiruvananthapuram, 1963, p.32,

preferences were to go for export varieties like prawns. Apparently, the landings of prawns increased by about 500% over the years 1957-'58 to 1963-'64⁴⁷. Simultaneously, an increase in the export was also recorded. Instead of the 500 tonnes in 1950, 1462 tonnes of frozen shrimp was exported in 1961⁴⁸. And a complete shift of the tradition-bound and hesitant fishermen to mechanised fishing took place and they made great clamour for small trawling boats and trawl gear⁴⁹. This export orientation was obviously mirrored in the government decision to enter into deep sea fishing and trawling. Some scholars remarked that it was with the prawn boom by the early 1960s that the aim of the INP, which was started as a community development effort as well as a supplier of small mechanised boats in the project area, shifted to the promotion of large expensive trawl boats of harvesting Kerala's rich prawn resources for export to the world market⁵⁰. INP started commercial trawling in the year 1960⁵¹. The charting of a new fishing ground of approximately 1000 sq. miles between 150 fathoms and 200 fathom off the Quilon coast in Kerala that yielded catches even up to 800 kg. per hour by the INP was a milestone in the quest for new fishing grounds in the region⁵². The establishment of the Kerala Fisheries Corporation in the

⁴⁷ ERK -1964, p.19.

⁴⁸ Mathew Aerthayil S.J., *Keralathile Malsya Thozhilali Prasthanam Samoohika Sastraparamaya Oru Visakalanam* (Mal), DC Books Kottayam, February, 2002,p.31.

⁴⁹ John Kurien, *The Impact of... Op. Cit.*, p.3.

⁵⁰ Holly M Hapke, "Development, Gender and Household Survival in a Kerala Fishery", *EPW Review of Agriculture*, March 31, 2001.

⁵¹ Ramakrishnan Korakandy, *Op.Cit.*, p.138.

⁵² ERK-1967, p.32

year 1967 to facilitate a coordinated approach to fish production and export by bringing all the boat building yards, ice factories and refrigeration plants under it was also an important step in this regard⁵³. The government distributed Nylon thread to the fishermen as the gear types also changed from the traditional cotton and coir from the 1960s⁵⁴.

The Kerala government in 1969 formulated a project for deep-sea fishing to be implemented by the end of fourth Five Year Plan period⁵⁵. The project was proposed to operate 31 trawlers in government sector during the fourth plan period; but the government admitted that there would be 169 trawlers in private sector by that time⁵⁶. In 1970, the India government allotted 6 trawlers to Kerala⁵⁷. Kerala proved an attractive destination for the trawlers⁵⁸. Besides the 8 trawlers under Fisheries Corporation, the central government institutions, semi government institutions and private institution etc. employed their own trawlers in Kerala waters⁵⁹. By 1974 there were 32 trawlers working in Kerala's deep sea⁶⁰. In the 1980s the government

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ PKLA, 1st session 27th March, 1967, Vol. XXI, No.5, 42 (9), p. 354.

⁵⁵ PKLA, 1st session 13th February, 1969, Vol. XXIV, *422 (515), p. 26.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ PKLA, 1st session, 1970, supplement part I, Vol. XVI, *284 (168), p. 37.

⁵⁸ A government report in 1973 is as follows: 'The shelf in Kerala, has an average width of 50 km., ranging from 20 km off Trivandrum to 60 Km. off Calicut, and is estimated to have about 36,000 Sq. Km. of fishable area. Of this, only about 1/3 viz 12,500 sq. Km. extending up to 50 m depth is at present fished'. T.J. Job and G. Asokan, *Op.Cit.*, pp.10-11 also see pp.17-20 of this report.

⁵⁹ "Lured by the prawn export business, monopoly houses like the Tatas, the Birlas, Union Carbide and Indian Tobacco have now entered the field of fisheries in a big way and their activities off the coast of Kerala are naturally viewed with grave concern lest it should snuff out the medium and small units who have pioneered the development of the fishing industry in the State from scratch to the take off stage", *ERK-1973*, p.68.

⁶⁰ PKLA, 10th Session 5th March, 1974, Vol. XXXVI, No.21, 831(962) pp. 2251-52.

prepared some measures to collect the fish wealth in Kerala coast in an increasing rate. It aimed that 1300 boats of 30ft. and 36ft. to catch prawn would be distributed among the fishermen. A project was designed to provide purse seine boats to fishermen groups⁶¹. By this time, the Pelagic Fishery Project from 1971 to 1978 carried out extensive surveys for the important fish resources of the southwest coast of India. These surveys using echo sounder, sonar and echo integrator estimated the biomass of the standing stocks of different fish resources⁶². Thus the change in the community rights over the sea, high export orientation and the subsequent changes in the administrative level in the form of the project for the deep-sea fishing, introduction of trawlers and purse seines, new surveys for the fishing grounds etc. made radical changes in the fishing profession and had brought high capital input into the sector.

Capital Formation in the Sector

By this time high amounts were spent on production-oriented schemes and the attitude that sea is a subsistence medium has changed with mechanisation and it was began to be considered as a profitable business

⁶¹ PKLA, (6th assembly) 2nd session 1st April Tuesday 1980, Vol. L No.11 * 262 (270) pp. 1285.

⁶² S. Natarajan et. al, 'Echo Location of Fish', in *MFIS*, No.17, March, 1980, pp.1-10; Use of echo sounders and sonars for fish detection and scientific studies in Indian waters was initiated in the late fifties by the vessels of the Indo-Norwegian project. Also see *ERK-1974*, which says that "the combined aerial and marine surveys carried out by the Pelagic Fisheries Project, Cochin 1973 and 1974 have indicated high resource potential of pelagic fisheries in the waters off the South West Coast of India. An interim estimate of this potential was placed at 1.7 million tonnes in 1973 which comprised mainly anchoviella, mackerel and oil sardine." p.87.

arena⁶³. A number of outsiders came to invest in the fishing sector. In Kerala, a large number of coir and cashew nut merchants entered the fishing and processing industry. The opening of the sea for all and the possibility for the development of capital might be the reasons behind their entry to this area. Moreover, the decade 1975-'76 to 1985-'86 was considered as one of agricultural stagnation when compared to the decade, 1962-'63 to 1974-'75⁶⁴. This might have compelled the merchants of agro-products to turn to the lucrative fishing and processing industry. These non-fishermen came to the helm of the official fishermen bodies. Thirty percent of the total memberships in the Matsya Board were from other (non-fishing) sector⁶⁵. Naturally, the pressure over the sea was increased as the result of the emergence of a new class who were not fishermen but fish operators as the result of the capitalist development. In the seventies and eighties there was stagnation and fall in fish catch but at the same time the investment to the sector became pretty high, especially in mechanisation. Capital formation in fisheries between 1953 and 1968 expanded rapidly. As against Rs.0.5 million in 1953, the

⁶³ John Kurien underscores that, "the prawn export euphoria has its immediate effect on state policy reflected best in the state's plan expenditures during the period 1961-1969. Of the total Rs.110 million spent on fisheries development during this period Rs. 82.5 million (75 per cent) was spent on production oriented schemes. Rs. 54 million of which went for financing mechanised boats equipped primarily to fish for prawns and Rs. 20 million for supporting infrastructure and training facilities. As much as Rs.20 million (18 per cent) was used to finance processing and marketing oriented schemes out of which Rs.18 million was directed towards creating facilities and organisations which were explicitly export oriented or directly facilitating the export drive", *Blessings of the Commons, Op. Cit.*, p.30.

⁶⁴ K.P. Kannan et.al., "Agricultural stagnation and Economic Growth in Kerala: An Exploratory Analysis", (Mimeo), W.P.No.227, CDS, June, 1988, p.7.

⁶⁵ A.P.Jayaseelan, "Sampoorna Malsya Bandhana Nirodhanavum Malsya Thozhilikalum" (Mal), MCITRA, *Souvenir*, May 2003, p.1.

investment in 1963 was Rs.3.43 million and in 1968 Rs.12.45 million⁶⁶. The number of the mechanised boats during 1979-80 was more than the double the number in the beginning of the 70s⁶⁷. And this investment increased in the 1990s but it did not generate a proportionate output.

Table – I: Marine Fish Produce and Investment

Year	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Marine Fish Produce (Lakh Tonnes)	5.75	5.68	5.32	5.72	5.70
Total Investment in the Fishing Sector (Crores)	1202.83	1320.16	1804.74	2297.75	1960.22

Source: *Asutrana Sahayi 4*, P.26.

New companies for fish processing started. In the processing field there were 111 companies in 1971⁶⁸. In 1993, Thirty-three new companies and seven processing units were also got registered⁶⁹. The revenue income from the export of the fish is recorded as Rs, 570.36 crore in 1993⁷⁰. The export companies registered a growth rate of 18.33 % and processing units shown that of 6.93% in 1994⁷¹. As in the case of the other states, there were arrangements to tin the fish products in Kerala also. There were 12 such units working in this state in 1996⁷². Complaint was raised even earlier that the companies that existed in the processing sector monopolised the fish

⁶⁶ John Kurien, *The impact of...Op.Cit.*, p.17.

⁶⁷ Technical Assistance Projects, pp. 34-35.

⁶⁸ PKLA, 3rd Session-1971, 17th August, Vol.XXIX, No.25, *1009(1112), pp.2293-94.

⁶⁹ PKLA, (9th Assembly) 8th Session 21st February, 1994, Vol.XC, No.15, 5(2781), pp.32.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² PKLA, (9th Assembly) 15th Session 15th March 1996, Vol.XCVII, No.11, 58 (1651), p.69.

resources and appropriated the catches by cheating the government⁷³. In this process, one could see that in the initial years, the government directly supervised the mechanisation. The capitalist class had suddenly overpowered the state interventions in the sector by investing in trawling boats, mechanised boats and processing units. The possession rights over the sea and the export orientation facilitated this. With their entry, the fish worker became a coolie on the one hand but did not develop class-consciousness on the other. Another tragedy of the commoner, the primary producer of the field, was that they were marginalised without being permitted to fix the future direction of the changes in the sector. At the same time, the non-fishing class tightened their hold over the fishing and the traditional processing industry also underwent changes and the modern processing units come to the scene with high capital investment from the part of the non-fishermen operators.

Motorisation of Country Crafts (1980)

The quarter century of development activities in the fisheries invariably ended in the generation of two parallel streams in the sector viz. the capital-intensive mechanised and the labour-intensive traditional sectors⁷⁴. To help the traditional fish worker, the government of Kerala planned to motorise the country crafts of Kerala in 1980. The Scheme of motorisation of the country crafts was started in 1980 under the auspices of

⁷³ PKLA, 3rd session-1971 28th July, 1971, Vol.XXIX, No.11, p.1324.

⁷⁴ John Kurien elaborates, “the investments in harvesting and processing using technologies and artifacts having their origin in the developed world resulted in the creation of a broad technologivcal dualism in the fish economy-traditional and modern, introduction, *Small scale fisheries in the context of Globalisation*, WP.No.289, CDS, October, 1998.

the State Fishermen's Welfare Corporation⁷⁵. Later, when Matsya Fed was formed the implementation of the scheme was handed over to that agency. In that discussion in the KLA the fisheries minister cautioned the members about the entry of the monopolies like DCM and TATA in to the field and the resulting threat⁷⁶. According to this scheme Kerala Fishermen Welfare Corporation gave financial assistance to fishermen groups to buy Out Board engines⁷⁷. This scheme was arranged in the manner that 25% as subsidy, a particular percentage beneficiary contribution and the rest of the amount was given as bank loan. In villages Rs.2000 and in urban area Rs.3000 was the income ceiling, those who were below this income were eligible for engines⁷⁸. Another important decision of the government in 1980 was to assign the Puramboke lands to the land less fishermen⁷⁹. How did this scheme for the motorisation of the country crafts affected the ordinary fisher folk will be discussed along with the discussion of the general results of these industrialising endeavours that is attempted below.

The Inevitable Outcome

The industrialising efforts, naturally, were intertwined with technology and capital build up and it brought a number of social results: the overcrowding of the sea, resource depletion, ecological damages, problems of finance mobilisation and resultant social conflicts. These were the major fallout of the *developmental* approach towards the sector.

⁷⁵ *Kerala Fisheries an Overview – 1987*, Department of Fisheries, Kerala. p.54.

⁷⁶ PKLA, (6th Assembly) *Op.Cit.*, p 1288.

⁷⁷ PKLA, (7th Assembly) 2nd session 28th March, 1983, Vol.LVII, No.16, * 254 (281), p. 2078.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p 2081.

⁷⁹ PKLA, (6th assembly) 2nd session 25th March 1980, Vol. L, No.6, * 119 (122), pp. 572-75.

Over Crowding of the Sea

Table II: Fishing Crafts Operating in Kerala (in Nos.)

Sl. No.	Category of Crafts	1988-89	1998-99	1999-'00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
1	Mechanised	3548	4040	4194	4150	4150	4510
2	Motorised	9914	27094	28829	29144	29395	29395
3	Non-Motorised	20545	21598	21751	21854	21956	21956
	Total	34007	52732	54774	55148	55501	55501

Source: *Economic Review, Kerala 2003*.

The table testifies to the proliferation of all categories of crafts in the decade between 1989-1999. There was a phenomenal increase in the number of the motorised country crafts in the decade resulting in the swelling of the overall number of the fishing crafts. The increase in the number of the motorised crafts implied the high operational expense and a competition for the operational area in the inshore waters. It was also a sign of the increase in the craft capacity for the catch of the high valued varieties in the background of the export drive and the resultant competition over the resources. The trawling and the fishing with the active gears raised the concerns over resource depletion.

The Resource Exploitation and Depletion

Mechanisation facilitated offshore as well as inshore fishing. The most exploited species of Kerala was prawn. A CMFRI report says that:

“Mechanisation of the fishery along the Kerala coast has progressed considerably, resulting in an increase of the exploitation of ground fishes and prawns inside the 80 m. depth contour to a significant level. Based on the facilities available for landing and disposal of catches, the operation of these mechanised boats is concentrated in certain centres along the coast, like Vizhinjam, Neendakara, Azhikode, Cochin, Beypore etc.”⁸⁰ This study concentrates on the prawn fishing of the Kerala coast, but this remark could be applied to the other centres and other species also. The over fishing both economic and biological were referred to by the different experts. Economic over fishing occurs when the marginal cost of an additional unit of fishing effort is higher than marginal revenue and biological over fishing occurs when the marginal yield of an additional unit of fishing effort is negative⁸¹.

The modernisation of crafts inevitably led to the innovation in gears. The old coir and jute nets were replaced with nylon nets. The nylon trawl nets suited for pelagic trawl, midwater trawl and bottom trawling were introduced. Even the motorised country crafts preferred the nets suited for mini trawl operation. Active gears replaced the passive gears⁸². Gill nets and lobster traps were passive gears and Trawl net is an active gear⁸³. The ring-

⁸⁰ M.J. George et.al, *A case of over fishing: Depletion of Shrimp resources Along Neendakara Coast*, CMFRI, Kerala, Cochin, No.18, 1980, pp.1-8

⁸¹ John Kurien and Achari, *On Ruining the Commons*, *Op. Cit.*, pp.7-8.

⁸² “Fishing gear is passive if it is used in a manner whereby fishermen wait for the fish to get entangled on them... When fish are chased, disturbed or encircled, the gear used is generally classified as active”, John Kurien, ‘Trawling and Bans Economics and Politics’ (Mimeo), CDS, in the file Fishermen’s Struggles (FISS) FISS-10, Socio Religious Centre (SRC), Calicut.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

seines and purse seines also are important active gear varieties⁸⁴. The mechanised boats generally used the nets with small mesh size.

The resource depletion was aggravated by the use of new gears like the Purse seine. With the introduction of the purse seiners, even the fishing calendar of the fishermen changed. With respect to the Oil Sardine fishery, “The traditional fishing season commences by August and continues till March along this region (i.e. between Alleppey and Karwar). With the development of purse seine fishery, the season has been extended even up to June”⁸⁵. In Karnataka, the catch by the indigenous gears were severely affected by the purse seines⁸⁶. Again it should not be forgotten that the use of this gear made much harm to the resources elsewhere in the world⁸⁷.

⁸⁴ Kattumaram, Plank Canoe, Dugout canoes, and Mechanised boats are the major craft varieties of Kerala. The major gear varieties are, Encircling Net (*Koruvala* or *Thanguvala*) Boat Seines (known as *Kollivala* in Kozhikode-Cannanore region) Shore Seines or Beach seines, Gillnets (this is of different types Netholivala, Konjuvala, Chalavala etc.), Drift Nets, Cast nets, Hook and Line and Trawl nets, for details see, John Kurien and Rolf Willmann, *Economics of Artisanal and Mechanised Fisheries in Kerala A Study on Costs and Earnings of Fishing Units*, A Regional FAO/UNDP Project, Madras, July, 1982, pp.4-8.

⁸⁵ V. Balan, et.al, ‘The Indian Oil Sardine’, in *MFIS*, No.14, December 1979, pp.1-13.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ E.G.Silas et.al., underscores, “The problem has to be viewed in the proper perspectives in view of the heavy catches by this gear (purse seine). In this context, we are reminded of the intensive and indiscriminate purse seine fishery of the pelagic fish stocks in other parts of the world, which have resulted in the partial or complete depletion of some of the major pelagic fish resources. Good examples are the Californian sardine fishery, the herring fishery of the North Sea and the mackerel fishery of the North Sea and the British waters. It is suspected that intensive fishing pressure combined with an environmental aberration in the form of *El Nino* current has been responsible for the catastrophic destruction of the Peruvian anchovetta stocks in the early seventies. At present, strict voluntary closed seasons and restrictions in purse seine fishery for tunas such as the young ones of yellow fin, albacore and skipjack tuna in the Pacific have helped the rational exploitation of the stocks. Regulation of the purse seine fishery for the Barrent Sea capelin is yet another example worthy of mention here.” “Purse seine Fishery – Imperative Need for Regulation”, in *MFIS*, No.24, October, 1980, pp.1-9.

Another CMFRI report on the mackerel fishery of Malabar area anticipated: “The increasing efficiency of the mackerel fishery by way of increasing size of the net and decreasing mesh size, increasing speed of the crafts, range of fishing operations and landing facilities do not seem to move in the right direction. These are used only for harvesting the stock early and fast. In the absence of proper management and the open access system the present motorised indigenous fishing fleet is bound to increase. The fall in catches after August is very sharp indicating an early decline of stocks available to the fishery. The present growth-over fishing can soon develop into recruitment over fishing and the stock would collapse”⁸⁸.

The harm done by the trawlers to the fish wealth was also a matter of concern. Bottom trawlers not only caught the target species, but the juveniles and the non-edible organisms, which are necessary for the maintenance of the marine ecology. “The excessive fishing pressures exerted by the mechanised/ motorised sector in a climatically limited coastal habitat up to a depth of about 50 m have not only affected the sustenance of some easily vulnerable resources, but also challenged the very existence of some shell fishes, fin fishes and bottom organisms, including the biota which are non-edible to man but vital in the food web of all exploitable resources.”⁸⁹ Hence the

⁸⁸ T.M.Yohannan et.al, “Changing Patterns in the mackerel Fishery of the Malabar Area”, in *MFIS*, No.156, September 1998, pp.11-16.

⁸⁹ P.Bensam,et.al., “Need for protecting the non-edible Benthic Biota of the Inshore Waters for The Benefit of the Coastal Resources and The Fishing Industry”, in *MFIS*, No.128, April-May, 1994, pp.1-5.

modern fishing methods resulted not only in the resource depletion but also in harming the coastal and marine ecology.

The trends in the overall fish catch since the formation of Kerala showed fluctuation. A significant feature of the 1960s was that during 1961-69 there was a high output in the artisanal sector when compared to the mechanised sector⁹⁰. This trend gradually picked up by the end of sixties⁹¹. The total marine fish catch by both mechanised and non-mechanised vessels along Kerala coast touched a peak 4.48 lakh tonnes in 1973, but declined thereafter to reach disquietingly low level of 2.79 lakh tonnes in 1980⁹². The total marine fish landings in Kerala has declined from 3.31 lakh tonnes in 1979 to 2.79 lakh tonnes in 1980 registering a fall of 15% over the year⁹³. In the initial years of 1980, this condition was aggravated.

There were opinions that after the 1980s, fishing with the mechanised boats with active gears resulted in the resource depletion and it affected the traditional fishermen for the worst⁹⁴. By the mid 1970s the mechanised fleet began to encroach upon the inshore territory of the artisanal sector damaging its gear and competing for its catch and it reflected in its share of harvest⁹⁵. In the 1980s the fish catches in the artisanal sector declined and reached its

⁹⁰ John Kurien, Technical Assistance Projects..., *Op. Cit.*, pp.30-31.

⁹¹ *ERK*-1970, p.21.

⁹² *ERK*- 1981, p.57.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *ERK*- 1987, p.26.

⁹⁵ Holly M Hapke, *Op.Cit.*

lowest ebb⁹⁶. To put it clearly, up to 1983, the traditional sector somehow managed to maintain its contribution (in 1969,90.44% and in 1982 54.44%)⁹⁷. In 1983 they produced 51% of the total produce, where the mechanised sector got 45% of the catch⁹⁸. But this statistics would not be complete without taking the number of people involved in each sector into account. The traditional and motorised sector comprises 86% of the total fish workers where as the mechanised sector has only 14%⁹⁹. Thus the per capita distribution of fish and income in each sector varies considerably and a minority reaped the benefits of mechanisation. With the fishers reacting to the declining catches by fishing species lower down on the food chain, the chance of recovery from this vicious circle was rendered difficult and the technological inputs become wasteful¹⁰⁰. Another annoying fact was that the catch of high valued varieties like seer fishes, pomfrets and prawns diminished in 1990s. Moreover, there was a drastic decline in the production of Oil sardine, the most important variety consumed mainly by the poorer sections of the society. The production of oil sardine was 1,06,263 tonnes in 1991. It declined to a mere 13,328 tonnes in 1995¹⁰¹. Thus on the one hand, the traditional fish worker was expropriated from the traditional community

⁹⁶ T.R. Thankappan Achari, *Emerging Trends in Small Scale Fisheries*, Fisheries Research Cell, PCO, Trivandrum, 1986,p.3.

⁹⁷ Mathew Aerthayil, *Op.Cit.*, p.36.

⁹⁸ Yohannan, in *Souvenir*, Sampooma Malsya Bandhana Nirodhanavum Malsya Thozhilikalum (Mal), MCITRA, May 2003, pp.3-4.

⁹⁹ Mathew Aerthayil, *Op.Cit.*, p.36

¹⁰⁰ Derek Johnson, *Op.Cit.*

¹⁰¹ *ERK*- 1996, p.56.

rights over the sea and resources and due to over exploitation as a result of the technology build up he was deprived of the limited resources on the other. Out of desperation what the fish worker could do was to increase the size of the gear, reduce the mesh size of the gear and to increase the efficiency of the craft. These attempts had two adverse effects. First was that it resulted in the overcrowding of the crafts and the biological and economic over fishing and second was the economic indebtedness of the fish worker in the competition to increase the efficiency of the fishing implements.

KMFRA and Commissions on Fisheries Sector

The government of Kerala tried to resolve the problem of resource depletion and over fishing by an Act known as Kerala Marine Fishing Regulations Act (KMFRA) 1980. The Act suggested (i) restricting mechanised trawling to waters beyond distance of about 10 km. (ii) to impose a ban on night trawling, purse seining, ring seining, pelagic trawling and mid-water trawling (iii) to impose temporarily a ban on monsoon trawling except at Sakthikulangara-Neendakara area (iv) enhancing the minimum mesh size of the cod end of trawls to 35 mm. and (v) motorisation of artisanal crafts and so on¹⁰². The ban on purse seine in the Kerala Waters was up to 22 nautical miles¹⁰³. Then this limit was reduced to 10 nautical miles following High Court Judgment in 1983¹⁰⁴. And there were directions from the central government regarding the fishing limit; the area up to 10 km.

¹⁰² PKLA, (6th Assembly), 29th December, 1980, Vol. LII.No.11, * 262(293), p.1297.

¹⁰³ PKLA, (7th Assembly) 1st Session 9th August, 1982, Vol. LVI, No.10, 414(470), p.1011.

¹⁰⁴ PKLA, (7th Assembly) 3rd Session 24th June, 1983, Vol. LVIII, No.5, 157(194), pp.564-565.

from the shore was exclusively for the country crafts, beyond 10 km. for motorised and small mechanised boats and the fishing trawlers having a length of 20 metres should fish beyond 23 km. limit from the shore¹⁰⁵. The KMFRA was considered as a brave step towards the conservation of the fishery resources. But it had to work within the broad frame of the international guidelines on the Law of the Sea. Hence these regulations were mainly brought within the territorial sea that is 12 nautical miles. Beyond that the foreign trawlers had free access. For instance, the Charter Policy (1980) of the Central Government allowed the chartered fishing fleet to exploit the resources in the Indian EEZ. It was an agreement entered into by India Government with the foreign ship owners for deep-sea fishing with anticipation that within five years the Government of India would become the owners of foreign fishing ships. According to a study conducted by the Fisheries Survey of India in 1987, the 95% of the fish caught by these chartered ships from Porbandhar was from the inshore area and Government of India could not own a single boat so far¹⁰⁶. Moreover, the partition of the 12 nautical miles among different technologies made the crossing of the boundary for resources frequent in the Kerala Sea¹⁰⁷. This crossing resulted in the conflicts between the fishermen of traditional and mechanised boats.

To enquire more into the problem, government appointed many commissions of enquiry. D.Babu Paul Commission (1981) Kalawar Commission (1984), and Balakrishnan Nair Commission (1989) were the

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Alakal* Fortnightly, World Fishermen Day Special Issue, November 1998.

¹⁰⁷ PKLA, (8th Assembly) 8th Session 14th June, 1989, Vol. LXXVII, No.5, 30 (395), p.765.

three important commission of enquiry on the Kerala Fisheries. Later in 1990 once again N. Balakrishnan Nair was appointed as commission to study the impact of the ban on trawling in Kerala. Dr.P.S.B.R.James committee (1993) and Dr.E.G.Sailas Committee (1994) and the Balakrishnan Nair Committee (1998) were some other enquiry commissions of importance. Babu Paul commission had specifically enquired into the institution of banning the trawling during the monsoon season. It could not take a unanimous decision on the question of adopting a closed season as a management measure¹⁰⁸. Report maintained that Kerala Marine Fishing Regulation Act 1980 was sufficient to conserve the resources¹⁰⁹.

In 1984, government of Kerala appointed an expert committee with Dr. A.G. Kalawar, fisheries adviser to the government of Maharashtra as Chairman, to study the need for ban on shrimp trawling during June, July and August or during any other part of the year in the interest of conservation of resources, to suggest measures for the conservation of shrimp and fish resources and to suggest measures by which the productive capacity of the traditional sector in marine fishing can be enhanced¹¹⁰. In 1988 the government of Kerala banned trawling throughout the territorial waters of Kerala during the monsoon period¹¹¹. The Balakrishnan Nair Committee

¹⁰⁸ *Report of the Committee to study the need for conservation of Marine Fishery Resources During Certain Seasons of the Year and Allied Matters*, Kerala Legislature Library, p.71. (Babu Paul Committee- 1982)

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.62-63.

¹¹⁰ *Kerala Report of the expert Committee for Fisheries Management Studies*, Kerala Directorate of Fisheries, Vikas Bhavan, Thiruvananthapuram. P.8. (Balakrishnan Nair Committee - 2000)

¹¹¹ PKLA, 5th Session 23rd June, 1988, Vol. LXXIV, No.4, p.109.

appointed in 1989 recommended that a total ban on trawling by all types of vessels be enforced in the territorial waters of Kerala during the months of June July and August and the impact of this measure on the conservation and optimum utilization of the resources be examined in detail¹¹². After a decade of ban on trawling, government constituted a committee with Prof. Balakarishnan Nair as chairman. This committee found that marine fish production increased in the post ban period¹¹³. It recommended that ban on trawling during monsoon months of June, July, August shall be adopted since it is found to be an effective measure for the enhancement of production of marine fisheries of Kerala and as a suitable management tool for the sustenance of the fishery¹¹⁴.

Thus, the Government Acts divided the territorial waters among different technologies and craft sizes. It made the plight of the traditional and motorised fish workers more precarious. The commercialisation made the sea a business arena and the traditional fishermen were deprived of their customary rights and self-imposed restrictions (by the institutions like *Kadakkodi* etc.). At the same time they were dispossessed from the operational space in the sea provided by the modern laws, for even their nominal area of operation was continuously encroached up on by the mechanised crafts. And the policy makers and reform commissions always took 'ban' or 'restrictions' or 'regulations' as effective devices for overcoming

¹¹² See, Kerala Report of the Expert Committee on Fisheries- 1989. (Balakrishnan Nair Committee - 1989)

¹¹³ Balakrishnan Nair Committee – 2000, *Op. Cit.*, pp.58-59.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.58-59.

crises. At this point we could say that what all measures were taken by the government to reorganise the fishery sector on a capitalist line like the mechanisation, export orientation, marine fishery regulations etc. went against the traditional or the ordinary fish worker and the motorisation of the country crafts and the Regulation Acts could not alone save them from this pitiful conditions.

Coastal Regulations Zone

The trawling had already affected the marine ecology and thereby resource magnification. Likewise, by the 1990s there were serious encroachments on the fragile coastal ecology. The pressure from the east and the construction activities pushed by the tourism drive seriously affected the coastal surroundings. A number of new hotels and resorts were built within the coastal zone. Many of these multi star and economical hotels/resorts were just close to the beach line or in the Islands¹¹⁵. In Malappuram, Kozhikode, Kannur, Ernakulam, Kasargode, Thiruvananthapuram, Alappuzha etc. such constructions could be seen¹¹⁶. Mineral and sea-sand mining was another activity detrimental to the coastal ecology¹¹⁷. The sand mining at cheriyazheekkal at Kollam was found to be detrimental to the houses of the fishermen¹¹⁸. Coasts around the world were experiencing higher rates of population growth, urbanisation and industrialisation which contribute to

¹¹⁵ See www.keralatravels.com

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *KMKUV, Op. Cit.*

¹¹⁸ PKLA, 2nd session 22nd August, 1957 Vol.2, No. 1 2 (3), p.2.

rising pollution levels¹¹⁹. Reclamation of Backwaters was yet another threat to ecology. As in the case of fishing, tourism, sand mining, land reclamations etc. also became new areas of investment. The culture fishery that got its prominence in the background of the resource depletion in the sea was adversely affecting the coastal ecology¹²⁰. To produce one tonne of prawn industrially, its ten times of sea fish has to be used as manure and it created many socio-cultural problems among the coastal people¹²¹. Another threat to the coastal ecology came from the processing industries. The waste from fishmeal plants which contain the body fluids of fish, often cause severe pollution which may even lead to deterioration of coastal beaches¹²².

The damage to the coastal ecology became a serious concern among the activists, government and the fish workers. And another body of legislations introduced by the Central Government namely the Coastal Regulations Zone (CRZ) notification in 1991¹²³. These regulations were to be treated as an important body of regulations to protect the sea and the coastal

¹¹⁹ Kirstin Dow, 'Caught in the Currents: Pollution, Risk, and Environmental Change in Marine Space', *Professional Geographer*, Volume 51(3), August 1999, www.blackwellsynergy.com.

¹²⁰ Sreenand Jha, "Meen Piduthakkark Paniyillathakunnu", (II part of the Article, Matsya Sampathinum Videsathuninnu Bheeshani), in *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, 15th February, Sunday, 2004.

¹²¹ *Ibid*; A study conducted in Philippines underlines the general ill effects of Shrimp Culture. They are, harmful socio-economic effects including the Loss of mangrove systems, goods and services; Land conversion, privatization and expropriation; Salinisation of soil and water; Food insecurity; Marginalisation rural unemployment and migration of fishermen and Social unrest and conflicts. This study also site examples from India. See, J.H.Primavera, "Socio-economic impacts of shrimp culture", in *Aquaculture Research*, 1997,28,815-827, www.blackwellsynergy.com.

¹²² K.Vijayakumar et.al., "Pollution from fishmeal plant discharge at Mukka beach, north of Mangalore", *MFIS*, No.192, June 2007, pp.9-11,

¹²³ *The Draft Coastal Zone Management Notification 2007 – A Response*, MCITRA Study Series – XII, Kozhikode, 2007 (Hereafter DCZMN). Also see, *Theeradesa Niyanthrana Mekhala Vijnhapanavum (CRZ) Theeradesa Mekhala Paripalanam Karadu Vijnhapanavum (CZM) – Tharathamya Padanam*, MCITRA Study Series – XIII, Kozhikode, 2007.

ecology. They constitute another important milestone after the KMFRA and the ban on Trawling. The CRZ were aimed at the treatment of the coastal resources and the protection of the bio-diversity and coastal ecology. The Government of Kerala published such a CRZ in July 1996, following such a regulation by the Central Government in February 1991¹²⁴. This notification classified the coastal area into four zones and prohibiting certain activities in each of the zones. The four zones were: CRZ –1, which included ecologically sensitive areas and areas falling between the low-tide and high-tide lines; CRZ - 2, which included area that had been already been developed up to or close to the shore line; CRZ – 3, which included areas that are relatively undisturbed and that do not belong to either of the first two zones; and CRZ – 4, which covered coastal stretches of the Andaman, Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands and small islands elsewhere¹²⁵. Later, in 2007 the concept of Coastal Zone Regulation was changed to Coastal Zone Management (CZM). Critics say that this change from *regulation* to *management* implies a radical change in the perception of the coastal ecology and that would endanger its existence¹²⁶. This CRZ regulation pointed to the fact that there was increasing threat to the coastal ecology and environment.

The profit-motivated individuals created these threats. For instance, the

¹²⁴ Ramakrishnan Korakandy, “State of the Environment in Kerala What Price the Development Model?”, *EPW* Commentary, May 27-June 2, 2000.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, also see *DCZMN*; PKLA (9th Assembly) 15th Session, 15th March, 1996, Vol.XCVII, No.11, 58 (1651), pp.59-60.

¹²⁶ *Theeradesa Niyanthrana Mekhala Vijnhapanavum (CRZ) Theeradesa Mekhala Paripalanam Karadu Vijnhapanavum (CZM) – Tharathamya Padanam, Op.Cit.*, pp. 19-24. Also see, *Keraleeyam* Monthly, July 2008, Thrissur, pp.4-35.

tourism/resort business along the coastline further shortens the space in the foreshore area that was meant for the various purposes related with profession of the fishers. The fishers saw encroachment in to the seashore area as a dangerous threat even to their existence. Their habitation space also was shrinking as a result of this. The urban wastage and the waste from the fish processing units cause the environmental pollution. The sand mining was also proved detrimental to the coastal eco-system. The trawling had already been proved as one that damage the sea bottom and thereby the eco-niche of the fish species. Hence these were problems directly related with the life-world of the fishers. And in the CRZ regulations many loopholes were there to evade the law.

The CCRF

Later in 1995, the problems of the fishery sector were comprehensively addressed by the FAO. In 1995 October 31, FAO of United Nations ratified the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF)¹²⁷. This Code of Conduct was prepared to meet the multifarious problems faced by the fish resource all over the world¹²⁸. It is found that all the countries were not able to utilise the fish resources within the EEZ and some of the varieties of the fishes and the coastal ecology was facing multiple problems. It was to find solutions to these problems that the Code of Conduct was issued and it gave

¹²⁷ *Utharavadithwapara Matsyababdhana Perumatta Chattom* (Malayalam Translation of Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries), Director, CMFRI, Kochi, 2002, p.ix.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.vii-ix.

the individual countries freedom to contemplate their own measures for the conservation and management of the resources¹²⁹. Taking the true spirit of this Code of Conduct, the Government of Kerala constituted a Task Force in 1997 to suggest appropriate strategies, policies, programmes and investment in support for promoting sustainable livelihood security for the fishing communities. The report of the task force demanded the immediate implementation of the fisheries Development and Management Policy, adopted by the Government of Kerala in 1993, the first of its kind in the country, but not implemented till 1997¹³⁰. The Task Force recommended that the livelihood security of the fishing communities of the state could be ensured only if the communities had a voice and effective participation in the making, implementation and monitoring of the development programmes¹³¹. The report envisaged Matsya Bhavans (MBs) as the local level nodal links between the fishing community and the governmental structures¹³². An Aquarian Reform Regulation Act (ARRA) was passed by the government and proposed to commence in the Ninth Plan Period (1997–2002). ARRA proposed to control the investment in fisheries in the form of mechanised boats and some motorised units. The implementation of the ARRA would make a considerable amount of the present investment in the fishery,

¹²⁹ *Ibid*,

¹³⁰ Report of the Task Force on Livelyhood Secure Fishing Communities, State Planning Board, Thiruvananthapuram, (Mimeo) June 1997, p. 16. (Hereafter Report of the Task Force...)

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p.18.

¹³² *Ibid.*

particularly of mechanised boats and some motorised units, “illegal”. The owners of such “illegal” investments might be given the option to phase out their fishing units in three years or accept a compensation decided by the government, which would be a percentage of the estimated stream of incomes over three years. These physical investments could then be allotted to bona fide owner-workers or utilised innovatively in creating a village-level sea safety and resource management fleet. They could even be sunk to create good artificial reefs and /or trawler barriers¹³³.

This was to check the overcrowding of the crafts and the entry of the non-fishing operators into the sector. This proposal of the Aquarian reform was severely criticised by scholars¹³⁴. The criticisms were around the issue of the *community right*¹³⁵ of the fishermen over the sea and the resources. In effect neither the CCRF nor the ARRA strongly recommended restoration of the community right of the fishers over the resource. Hence, these were not capable enough to solve the problems in the sector. John Kurien was of the opinion that the EEZ has affected the traditional rights of the fishermen by negating the community rights of the fishermen over the sea. Instead of community rights the laws of the sea made it an *open access*¹³⁶ domain. And the open access regime was continued even after the promulgation of the

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p.23.

¹³⁴ Ramakrishnan Korakandy, “Kerala Aquarian Reform: Will ‘Actual’ Fishermen Benefit?”, *EPW*, September, 22, 2001.

¹³⁵ *Community rights* means a group of people as a community maintain property rights over the resource.

¹³⁶ *Open access* means that the entry to the seas became open to the respective nationals.

CCRF, and beyond the territorial waters, the foreign trawlers pursued unobstructed exploitation of the marine resources. In the era of Globalisation, the intensity of exploitation was increased beyond leaps and bounds.

The Impact of Globalisation

So from the 1950s to the close of 1980s, the Kerala fisheries sector underwent many structural changes and they brought their own results on this sector of the state. From the 1990s these changes were accelerated with the Globalisation policies. There were already state policies facilitating this. For instance, the proclamation of the policy on deep sea fishing in 1991 by the Central government that the Indian seas thrown open to the Mechanised Boats, Trawlers and Factory Trawlers owned by Multi National /Supra National Companies for fishing¹³⁷. The exploitation of the fish resources become aggressive with these policies. For instance, a factory ship *Oriental Angel* anchored at the Kochi Port after deep sea fishing in the Kerala waters as part of this policy found to have fished a quantity equal to that would be caught by 1500 trawling boats¹³⁸. The permission was given to 2630 such ships to operate in the Indian waters. The effect of the powerful trawling operations in the seabed badly affected the fish wealth of India. With globalisation, the fishery economy got a strong link with the international market and economy and the slight fluctuations were potent enough to make lasting repercussions. It was in the 1996, July 26th that the European

¹³⁷ Sreenand Jha, "Matsya Sampathinum Videsathuninnu Bheeshani", in *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 14th February, 2004.

¹³⁸ *Deshabhimani* Daily, 15th November 1994.

Economic Union imposed sanctions on the Indian import¹³⁹. The sanction was due to the hygienic reasons. The detection of typhoid bacteria was also a major reason¹⁴⁰. This was a disastrous result of the urban wastage merging in the sea¹⁴¹. This was coupled with the reduction of the cost of fish exported from India to China by 40%¹⁴². The sea became 'dry' due to the operation of the foreign trawlers, unscientific fishing etc¹⁴³. It was at this time of test that the price of Diesel got increased and this was a serious problem for the fish workers and they observed a hartal in protest against the price rise¹⁴⁴. The price of the Kerosene also hiked because of the reduction in the permit quota to the artisanal fishermen¹⁴⁵. Instead of the Rs.2.59 per litre, they have to pay Rs.12 to 16 in black market¹⁴⁶. The gravity of the issue was as large that many a small-scale boat owners (Individual and collective) suffered badly in this crisis¹⁴⁷. The reduction of the Kerosene permit limit from 1000 litres to 350 litres for the motorised boats also was a problem¹⁴⁸. At Vellayil, Koya Road, Puthiyappa, Beypore regions in Kozhikode district, the fishermen were forced to sell their Mackerel at a loss of Rs.1000¹⁴⁹. At the same time, the ban

¹³⁹ *Madhyamam* Daily, 17th August 1997; *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 12th September 1997.

¹⁴⁰ C.I Gopinath, "Theerakkadalile Malinyam Matsyangalkku Bheeshani", *Malayala Manorama* Daily, 17th August 1997.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 12th September 1997.

¹⁴³ *Kerala Kaumudi* Daily, 8th December 1997.

¹⁴⁴ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 12th September 1997.

¹⁴⁵ *Madhyamam* Daily, 15th April 1997.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 12th September 1997.

¹⁴⁸ *Kerala Kaumudi* Daily, 3rd November 1997.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

on the sea products to Europe and America adversely affected the industry¹⁵⁰. It especially affected the Prawn variety exports and brought a loss of 1000 Crore of which 75% loss was incurred by Kerala State¹⁵¹. The Central Government had entered in a joint-venture agreement with Thailand in 2003 and it raised a serious concern among the fishermen about the seafood industry and the harvest of the high valued varieties of fishes¹⁵². The ‘anti-dumping Act’ of America that imposed a tax on the fish exported from the developing countries adversely affected the export from India¹⁵³. The Central government gave licence for 30 foreign companies to fish in the Indian waters in 2003¹⁵⁴. The Kerala fishermen resented this move with a hartal¹⁵⁵. Global warming is an impending threat to the fish workers that it may cause a considerable reduction of the fish wealth in the sea¹⁵⁶. These developments showed that despite the rhetoric on the responsible fisheries and the security concerns for the fishing communities, the state was preoccupied with the commodity approach to the fisheries sector.

The worst sufferer of these export oriented globalisation policies was the ordinary traditional fish worker who found it very difficult to cope up

¹⁵⁰ *Madhyamam Daily*, 2nd August 1997.

¹⁵¹ *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, 5th August 1997.

¹⁵² *The Hindu Daily*, 11th December 2003.

¹⁵³ *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, 19th November 2003.

¹⁵⁴ *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, 22nd December, 2003.

¹⁵⁵ *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, 23rd January, 2003.

¹⁵⁶ “In 2002, total capture fisheries production amounted to 93.2 mt. Preliminary estimates indicate that global marine catches decreased in 2003 by about 3 mt. compared with 2002. Marine capture fisheries production in 2002 was 84.5 mt, representing a decline of 2.6 percent with respect to 2000”, Y.S.Yadava, *Global warming and fisheries*, www. Akuastrateji. Sumae. Gov.tr.; Also see, *Are We putting our fish in hot water?* assets.panda.org.

with the changing trends and Government policies and it accelerated their impoverishment. The above discussed modernisation, motorisation, Laws, Regulations and Policies and environmental degradation collectively made subtle changes in the life of them that they could not comprehend easily. In effect, in the sea they had to fight each other for the space of operation and in the shore they were deprived from their dwelling places by many external elements. In fact the most important external element was capitalism itself which sought to capture the entire oceanic resources through advanced technologies and imposed these technologies on the traditional fishermen as instruments of fishing for their own livelihood. Thus the traditional fishermen had no other option than to organise their fishing for the large fishing companies or to compete with the fishing companies using new gear and equipments. Thus, the fishermen were pitted against other fishermen in the break-neck competition for resources. The Tragedy of the commons became the tragedy of the fishermen who were denied the rights for their subsistence as the entire sea came to be divided among the new generation of oceanic entrepreneurs. In these circumstances the traditional fish worker was also exposed to some concrete and physical problems related with the operational expenses of the craft, sale of fish and capital mobilisation, in the background of fluctuating and decreasing fish catch.

The Role of Government Agencies and Economic Indebtedness of the Fish Worker

Motorisation gave some advantages to the artisanal fishermen. It helped the ordinary fishermen to reduce the hard physical labour of craft operation, and the speed of the craft was increased and the traditional fisherman was able to fish in the far away grounds. It further helped the traditional fisherman to compete with the in-board engine holders and the trawlers, however, on unequal terms. The significant out come was the facility to drag or pull the net through the water by the country crafts with the aid of engines, which was unimaginable to the traditional fishermen until recently. The rural economy, once destroyed at the onslaught of the mechanisation got revived with this. The heavy catch with the help of motorisation generated fresh professions in the fishing villages. “The accessibility to new fishing grounds beyond the traditional areas seemed to be the main reason for the higher catch rates of motorised crafts.”¹⁵⁷

Along with the increase in the unit wise profit, the fixed as well as operating cost also increased. The components of fixed cost included depreciation on boat, engine, and net and other fishing equipments, license fee and insurance of craft and gears. The operating expenditure was the aggregate of expenses on fuel cost, labour charges, cost of preservation, and marketing and transportation costs. The costs of kerosene, petrol, lubricant and mobile oil were included in the fuel cost. Under labour charges, the wages of active fishermen and charges of loading/ unloading of catch figured

¹⁵⁷ G.Gopakumar and P.S.Sadasiva Sarma, “The Present Status of Coastal Tuna Fishery at Vizhinjam, Trivandrum Coast”, in *MFIS*, No.97, July 1989, pp.1-7.

as the major expenses. Salting and icing charges come under the head of preservation cost. Commission and marketing charges etc. formed the components of marketing expenses. Transportation cost included the expense to take catch from landing centre or auction place or market. Like wise, the repairing charges (expense of repair and maintenance of boats, engine, net and other fishing implements) and miscellaneous expenditure such as purchase of baskets, buckets, ropes, lantern, poles and floats also increased to a considerable level. 'These developments have considerably eroded the operational profit of the fishing units. Besides, it generated an unhealthy competition between fishing units in terms of competitive hike in H.P., and size of the gear.'¹⁵⁸ The Techno Socio Economic Survey of fisher folk in Kerala revealed that, "there is large scale underemployment and unemployment among fishermen. In the marine sector productivity has become low while the operating cost increased enormously as a result, the returns have been diminished"¹⁵⁹.

This increase in the operational cost and the diminishing returns exert much financial pressure on the fish workers. Here it would be interesting to note the development of the co-operatives in the fishery sector. We have noted the colonial attempt to organise co-operatives in Malabar in the early years of the 20th century. In the newly formed Kerala, there were immediate

¹⁵⁸ Mathew P.M. et.al, *The Economics of Energy in Marine Fisheries A Study on the lower south west coast of India*, Cochin, India, n.d. p.67 (mimeo).

¹⁵⁹ *Techno Scio Economic Survey of Fisher folk in Kerala*, Department of Fisheries, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1990,p.77.

steps taken to organise the fishery sector on a co-operative basis to support the fish workers in crisis. In the first decade there were some 326 fishermen co-operative societies in Kerala¹⁶⁰. During 1970-71, the number of the societies increased substantially to 1000¹⁶¹. But all these societies did not function properly. Between the years 1971-72, out of the 236 MUCS in Kozhikode zone, only 79 societies were actually engaged in fishing and in Kannur zone 44 out of 88 societies functioned¹⁶². And by the mid seventies there occurred a steady decline in the number of the co-operative societies. Not only the overall number declined but the number of the societies engaged in fishing also experienced steep decline. Thus, during 1978-79, the number of total societies was 605; out of this 492 were MUCS where only 154 actually engaged in fishing¹⁶³. The total number of the co-operatives decreased from 558 in 1979-80 to 472 in 1980-81¹⁶⁴. This was a common phenomenon for all districts. Grasping the gravity of the problem, the Economics and Statistics department brought out a report in 1981 which says:

“It is observed that one of the reasons for the failure of the fishing co-operative societies as whole were the absence of a suitable agency to meet the credit requirements of the fishermen. Again, the fishermen being

¹⁶⁰ *Administration Reports of the Department of Fisheries 1963-64*, Kerala Fisheries Department, p.30. (ARKFD)

¹⁶¹ *ARKFD 1970-71*, p.25.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *ARKFD 1978-79*, pp.48-49.

¹⁶⁴ *ERK 1981*, p.61.

extremely poor, the co-operatives organised by them cannot raise sufficient funds among themselves to meet the needs of the members. Many banks including the District Co-operative bank even today are very shy of giving advance to fishermen societies. So the credit societies could not raise any funds with the result that the members lost their faith in these organisations and straightaway approached the moneylenders to satisfy their requirements”¹⁶⁵. Hence, the entry of the moneylenders to finance the traditional fisherman in the post-motorisation period was a crucial development. From the British period itself, there were the references about the moneylenders or *sawcar* who exploited the fish worker. The traditional money lending system also was not free from exploitation. But in the new system especially after the motorisation and the export boom new interested parties come and invested in the field by different means.

The preamble of the Kerala Fishermen Welfare Societies Bill, 1980 states that ‘the fishermen are to a large extent indebted to the money lenders who are exploiting the economy of the fishermen community in general; and whereas, the boats, crafts and nets used for fishing are not owned by fishermen, but by others who exploit the fishermen by expropriating the major part of their earnings as rent of such implements and other charges in respect there of; and whereas, the fishermen are also exploited by money lenders and middle men by purchasing or otherwise depriving them of their

¹⁶⁵ *Man Power Involvement in the co-operative Sector of Fishing Industry*, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Trivandrum, 1981,p.2.

catches without payment of the due price therefore, either by advancing money or by any other method;...' and proposed the formation of fisheries villages and to form fishermen welfare societies in these villages¹⁶⁶. In 1984 government formed Matsya Fed (Co-Operative Fisheries Development Federation) to organise the activities of the corporations of the fisheries sector¹⁶⁷. This was the part of a move to organise the fishermen on a village basis. And 222 fishermen villages were identified. Under the direct supervision and control of Matsya Fed, 81 Fishermen Welfare and Development Co-Operative societies began to function¹⁶⁸. The aim of these societies was to save the fishermen from the clutches of the middlemen by making them the owners of their means of production and bringing the sale of catch under their direct control by making the beach level auction the responsibility of the society¹⁶⁹. But the earlier established fishermen co-operative societies continued to decline in number and activity. And during 1986-87, the number reached 122.¹⁷⁰ With the aid of financial agencies, Matsyafed also undertook house construction activities for the fisher folk apart from the marine fishing development projects¹⁷¹. But the Matsyafed did not have sufficient loanable funds to meet the full requirements of the members and therefore they had to continue borrowing from the middlemen

¹⁶⁶ Sixth KLA, Bill No.60, The Kerala Fishermen Welfare Societies Bill, 1980 Sixth KLA Bills –Part Nos. 1-62, Government of Kerala, Legislature Library.p.1

¹⁶⁷ *ARKFD* 1984-85, pp.55.

¹⁶⁸ *ARKFD* 1989-90,p.38.

¹⁶⁹ PKLA, (8th Assembly) 11th Session, 15th June, 1990, Vol. LXXX, No.10.

¹⁷⁰ *ARKFD* 1986-87, pp.42-43.

¹⁷¹ *ARKFD* 1988-89, (Mal.) pp.44-45.

and merchants¹⁷². Thus, the middlemen, fish contractor or the moneylenders came to the scene as the financing agencies of the fishermen while the government agencies failed to extend the expected financial support and the ordinary fishers of Kerala were in perennial debt trap.

To have a luculent understanding of the results of the above described development pattern of the fisheries sector, it would be interesting to take note of some development indices also. There was an alarming disparity between the annual per capita income of the state and that of the fishing sector.

Table III: Per Capita Income: State Average and the Fishermen Average (1980-'81 – 1994-'95)

Per Capita Income	1980-81	1990-91	1994-95
Fishing Sector (Rupees/Year)	994	1023	1008
State (Rupees/Year)	1508	1815	2113
Difference	514	792	1105

Source: *Asutrana Sahayi* 4,p.9.

The annual income and expenditure of the fishermen households would show the standard of life the fishers have in our state. The statistics shows that the majority of the fisher population has an annual income and expenditure below 5000¹⁷³. This was a crucial economic index showing the near poverty of this people. A Government report says that when compared to other groups, the coastal people were living in utter poverty and subject to

¹⁷² Report of the Task Force..., *Op. Cit.*, p.25.

¹⁷³ *Socio Techno Economic Survey of Fisher folk in Kerala 2004 (STESF – 2004)*, Department of Fisheries, Thiruvananthapuram, p.34.

exploitation. By poverty we mean a condition where the primary needs like shelter, water, hygiene, health, primary education, minimum clothing and food were not met properly.

The 1980-81 census reports reveal that when the general literacy rate was 85% in the State, it was only 66% among the fishermen¹⁷⁴. A study by MCITRA¹⁷⁵ reveals that dropping out of schools has been a major reason for the educational backwardness of the fishing community of Malabar. Majority of the coastal villages were *well outside mainstream of development* and any benefits of *Kerala Development Model* did not reach them. The normal density of population in Kerala is 749 per sq. km. But the picture in the coastal villages was different. At Kasaragode the density was 1118 per sq.km, Thiruvananthapuram it was 3342 per sq.km, and at Vizhinjam Poonthura and Anchuthengu the density was between 5000-7000 per sq.km. And the average density in fishing villages was 2162 per sq.km¹⁷⁶. This placed enormous pressure on the coastal belt. The high density of population and the lack of water and other hygienic conditions caused health problems also.

The statistics of the ownership of land and the habitation facilities also show crucial disparities between the fishing sector and Kerala in general. A recent statistics show that 22 percent of the fisher folk have no land. Majority of the fisher folk have land less than 5 cents (48.99%). 30.5 percent have 6-

¹⁷⁴ *Asutrana Sahayi 4, Op.Cit.*, p.9.

¹⁷⁵ *Educational Development of Marine Fishing Community of Malabar*, Unpublished Report, (MCITRA), Calicut, 2001,p.3.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.6.

10 Cents of land, 19.03 percent have 11-50 Cents of land, 1.17 percent have (50-100) Cents 0.3 percent have 100-500 Cents and 0.01 percent have 500 Cents and above¹⁷⁷.

Table IV: Habitation Facilities (in %)

	Small Huts	Huts with Partition Walls	Habitable Homes	Availability of Electricity	Latrines	Availability of Water
Kerala	24	4	72	24	19	61
Fishing Sector	48	36	16	10	5	33

Source: *Theeradesa Daridrya...*p.3.

This table shows that with respect to habitation facilities, the coastal population was far behind the people of Kerala. The coastal marine villages suffered also from inadequate access to safe drinking water and poor sanitation facilities¹⁷⁸.

The above-discussed structural changes proved to be a contradictory process. On the one hand it made a class of investors wealthy and powerful and fishers were pauperised and proletarianised on the other. It is in the background of this contradiction involved in the capitalist development that we search the root of communalisation. The modern communities took shape in the coastal social space in the first half of the 20th century, began to articulate their communitarian/communal aspirations in the second half. This

¹⁷⁷ STESF – 2004. *Op. Cit.*

¹⁷⁸ ERK- 1997, p.44.

was primarily because of the restructuring of the coastal society that led to the decline of the traditional social regulatory institutions and the birth of new institutions to handle the duties once discharged by these traditional institutions. The simultaneous communal developments happened outside the coastal area also contributed for this. This trend of communalisation influenced the labour who was caught in the current of a cumbersome capitalist development. The increasing conflicts along the coastal Kerala since the 1980s have to be seen in this backdrop. These conflicts took many forms. Sometimes mechanised boatmen and traditional fishermen fought each other. Sometimes conflicts took regional lines. And sometimes it took a clear communal colour and it was the most harmful and produced long lasting effects in the society. These processes are discussed in the following chapters.

CONCLUSION

So far, we have been analysing the changes that had taken place in the fishery sector of Kerala in the past 50 years. The initial years of 1950s were the starting period of mechanisation of the Kerala Fishery. The Modernisation and innovation in the Kerala fishing sector in the post-independence period started with the INP in 1953. The technological modernisation in the Kerala Fishery sector was done in three different phases. It touched the introduction of big trawlers, mechanised fishery boats with improved facilities, fixing out-board engines to country crafts and the introduction of big nylon nets for fishing. These measures had tremendous impact on the Kerala fisheries. This

invoked a response in various spheres of the sector. Resultantly, the crafts were modified and country crafts were motorised. The gear types also underwent changes. New gear craft combinations were experimented. New markets were opened and capital flow become intensified. Very soon, the private capitalists appropriated the state sponsored initiatives like INP and lunched it from its objectives.

The government could not prevent the entry of the private capital and the capital of the multi-national corporations to the sector. The production for the market was the motto. The foreign trawlers in the deep-sea continued their unobstructed fishing operation throughout the year. The laws of the sea abetted this by making the sea an open access domain. The traditional fishermen left behind in this onslaught of capital was finally solaced by the government by motorising the country crafts in the 1980s. By this time the resource depletion was already started and the competition between the three contenders – the mechanised boats, country/motorised crafts and the foreign trawler in the deep sea - made some regulations inevitable. The KMFRA of 1980 and the ban on the monsoon trawling initiated in 1988 were attempts in this direction. But it was, to say using the advantage of the hindsight, too late. The mechanised boats and the motorised crafts were gradually increasing the capacity of the gear and the H.P. of the engine. Both were using the more dangerous active gears to catch the fish. A picture of fishermen in search of the resources taking on other fishermen was an unfortunate fall-out of this trend. The policies of Globalisation made the situation worse.

For the increase of efficiency both the parties depended for capital on the moneylenders and the middlemen. With the government enterprises like the co-operatives failing to meet the demands of the financial needs of the fishermen, they became more dependent on this class. Further, the non-fishing groups also owned fishing vessels and the fishermen sometimes became coolies. The catch selling system was also not favourable for the fishermen. The contractor-middlemen nexus also controlled the marketing field. Thus, this class was consolidated and influenced the fishing process from the purchase of a craft to the disposal of the catch. The whole affairs completely went out of the government's hand. Confusion prevailed in the field about the future course of action. By the 1980s tensions and communal conflicts began to be reported from the coastal Kerala that had a direct bearing on the retarded development of the sector. While the fishery sector was witnessing the impoverishment of the fish worker, due to the awkward development in the field since the 1950s, the pressure of this manifested in the Malabar coast in many ways. The next chapter probes into the developments of communalisation that took place in and around the coastal Malabar in the post-independence period.

CHAPTER III

GROWTH OF COMMUNALISATION IN THE MALABAR COAST

The community formation and communalisation in coastal Malabar cannot be taken in isolation from the trends developing in other parts of Malabar. Since the caste system and religiosity enveloped the entire Malabar, trends of transition from caste to a communitarian identity developed everywhere. The present chapter does not wish to outline the entire process but only focuses upon the trends of communalisation in Malabar, which directly had an impact on the fishermen. The conversion, cow-slaughter, and procession before the worshipping centres were the major three themes around which the community discourses were revolved in Malabar in the period immediately following the independence. These were some specific discourses that performed its auxiliary functions in the communalisation of Malabar Coast. The relevance of these discourses to the coastal area was that, from the major towns and suburbs associated with coast these developments percolated to the coastal life also. At the same time there were some changes that took place in the structure of the coastal life as we saw in the previous chapter. These changes along with the communalisation were reflected in the decline of the *Kadakkodi* and the growth of new agencies that were closely

associated with the modern communities. Hence, this chapter probes in to the developments inside and outside the coastal life.

Conversion, A point of Mobilisation

Prof. K.N. Panikkar says that from ‘the latter part of the 19th century onwards, conversions became a controversial issue among the Hindus, who were seized by an apprehension about their declining number... and social liberation, however, is a powerful motive as evident from the conversions in Kerala’¹. In the later half of the 20th century, this conversion discourse fuelled the consolidation of the communities. Because, the colonial law, census operations and the colonial modernity had tightened the community boundaries and conversions became much more controversial than that happened in the earlier period. The petition of one Amandara Keloth Appukkutty Nambiar to the Chief Minister of Madras on 30.7.1948 stated that the Maunathul Islam Sabha (MIS), established in 1900 in Ponnani, a coastal settlement of Muslims, is effecting conversion of Hindus to Islam². Another petition by one P.K. Sankaran, along with a long list of the

¹ K.N.Panikkar, “introduction: Defining the Nation as Hindu” in K.N. Panikkar (Ed), *The Concerned Indian’s Guide to Communalism*, Penguin Books India, New Delhi, 1999, pp.vii-xxxv. It means the conversion question was linked with the social liberation of the oppressed; ‘Potheri Kunhambu, the author of the *Saraswativijayam*, advocated conversion to Christianity as a cure for the social evils besetting Hinduism though he did not convert himself’, says Dilip M Menon, “Religion and Colonial Modernity Rethinking Belief and Identity”, *EPW* special Article, April 27, 2002. Both the authors take the conversions in the late 19th century as a way to social liberation. In that period, the individual was relatively free to take a decision on his/her religion. In the second half of 20th century, the picture changed and the organised religions, Hinduism not excluded, began to physically interfere in the conversion issues and thereby in religious freedom.

² Pub. (General A) Department. G.O.No. 265 (confidential.) dated, 5.2.51, KRA.

‘notorious activities’ of the MIS, cautioned that it was to the “menace, shame degradation and the gradual extinction of the Hindus and its culture...” that Sabha was doing all these things³. Later on 30.8.1952, there was a complaint in this nature with 128 Hindus signed in it⁴. It was reported that, to avert the questioning and attacks from the Hindus and Arya Samajists, the Sabha was reported to have formed escort parties to escort the persons proposed for conversion to the Sabha from the outskirts of Ponnani town⁵. A Muslim League volunteer organisation was reported to have formed in Ponnani and the members were being trained in the use of sticks⁶. This move from the part of the Muslim league was considered as an effort to defend the RSS⁷. Thus, the propaganda over conversion mobilised the Muslim and Hindu section to a point of aggressive articulation. The relevance of this controversy over conversion question was that it seemed affecting the secular parties in the 1950’s. A Fortnightly Report (FNR) said, “K.A.Ibrahim, Secretary of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, took exception, at a meeting held on the 3rd April, to a statement of Kelappan, ex-president of the Congress Committee, to the effect that Hindus should take steps to prevent the conversion of Harijans to Islam. Ibrahim stated that the interference with peaceful conversion, unwarranted as it was, would compel him to do

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ FNR for the I half of April, 1952.

⁶ FNR for the II half of April, 1952.

⁷ A FNR said that the Muslim League formed a volunteer organisation at Manathala and giving training in *Kalari* to counteract RSS, FNR for the I half of May 1952.

propaganda in favour of his religion. A section of the audience protested against this and other speakers also criticised the statement”⁸. In a meeting held at Kozhikode for communal harmony K.Kelappan expressed his disagreement with some speakers who appealed to the Hindu youths to organise and strive for *Akhanta Bharat* ⁹. Kelappan also incidentally referred to the activities of the MIS and his reference was resented and criticised at a subsequent meeting held at Ponnani¹⁰. Muslims have continued to protest in Malabar against K.Kelappan’s references to the activities of the MIS and a resolution was also passed at an annual conference of the Jamiat-ul Ulema to this effect¹¹. Kelappan continued to criticise the MIS while speaking at the anniversary of the Arya Samaj centre at Ponnani¹². While this polemics was going on, rumours spread rampant that RSS had planned an attack against Muslims, but these rumours were found as highly exaggerated¹³. In a public meeting of Muslims held at Ponnani, the speakers condemned the alleged intervention of the local police in the peaceful conversions and decided to constitute a committee to protect the interests of the agents employed by the MIS and to take adequate measures against unnecessary interference by the police in this connection¹⁴. As a counter movement to this, a new

⁸ FNR for I half of April,1950.

⁹ FNR for II half of April,1950.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ FNR for I half of May,1950.

¹² FNR for II half of May,1950.

¹³ FNR for I half of April, 1950.

¹⁴ FNR for I half of October, 1950.

organisation called the *Hindu Dharma Samrakshana Samiti* (Hindu Religion Protection Council) was formed in Ponnani with the objective of safeguarding the Hindu religion and preventing forcible conversions, especially by the MIS¹⁵.

A Fortnightly Report (FNR) said, “there are indications that the Muslims in Malabar are making renewed attempts to secure conversions of Hindu girls to Islam (and) two cases reported from Payyannur and from Kozhikode”¹⁶. Very soon news in a vernacular daily read that a Muslim named Assan Kutty abducted a girl named Sujatha and the case was in the court¹⁷. This news might have had considerable effect on the Hindu section. The *Abhala Samrakshana Samiti*, a women organisation under the control of the RSS decided to rise in protest against this incident. There was a clash on August 3rd 1952 between the Hindus and Muslims before a mosque at Halwa Bazar in Kozhikode town¹⁸. This incident took place when the procession under the *Abhala Samrakshana Samiti*, protesting against the attempts of conversion of the Hindu women, by deceitful means, reached before a mosque at the spot¹⁹. At that time some Muslims prevented the procession and it resulted in a physical encounter between the two groups. In connection with this, 28 persons including T. N. Bharathan (Secretary, Mankavu *Abhala Rakshasamiti*), Sankara Govinda Sastri (RSS Pracharak) and some Muslims

¹⁵ FNR for II half of October 1950.

¹⁶ FNR for the II half of June 1952.

¹⁷ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily dated 24th July, 1952.

¹⁸ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, dated, 5th August, 1952.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

were punished²⁰. Prior to the procession a public meeting was held by the Arya Samajists in the name of the *Abhala Samrakshana Samiti* with the objective of protesting against the conversion of Hindu women and children by Muslims²¹. Here we could see that, it was the conglomeration of different Hindu cultural organisations that made the issue of conversion a matter of concern among the general public. The situation in Malabar was so tense that the communist leader A.K.Gopalan sent a Memorandum to the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru criticizing the activities of RSS. He wrote that, “it was not a stray or accidental incident that happened in Kozhikode, it was the result of the continuous and systematic propaganda that RSS had been conducting”²². The press media also played its role in heightening the pressure by continuously reporting such issues. The allegation that there took place an incident of an abduction and conversion in Dharmadam created a tension in Tellichery and its suburbs²³. One lady from Punnayoor Amsom was reportedly abducted by two Muslim youths to convert to Islam²⁴. The Christian Missionaries also took up the issue of conversion. A meeting held at the Mangalapuram Catholic Club expressed their protest in the statement of the Indian Home Minister Dr. Katju regarding conversion and the meeting demanded for the freedom of religious activities²⁵. Interestingly, the Hindu

²⁰ *Mathrubhoomi Daily* dated 23rd August, 1952.

²¹ FNR for the I half of August 1952.

²² *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, dated, 13th August, 1952.

²³ *Mathrubhoomi Daily* dated 30th April, 1953.

²⁴ *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, dated 19th February, 1954.

²⁵ *Mathrubhoomi Daily* dated 15th May, 1953.

Conference held at Kollam appreciated Dr. Katju's statement in the parliament against the Christian missionary activities²⁶. A Nair girl aged 20 was reported to have come to Guruvayoor along with two Muslims and the RSS activists took her to the residence of one N.Narayana Menon²⁷ and later, she was taken to Calicut by the Arya Samajists²⁸. This was a major issue in the Hindu cultural discourse. The Hindu cultural conference held at Guruvayoor urged for a restructuring of the religion by eradicating caste system²⁹. It also made a plea to make the temples the centre of Hindu renaissance and to enquire in to the reasons why Hindus were converted to other religions and the advisability of the conversion of other religionists to Hinduism and the ritualistic unification of different Hindu sections into one etc.³⁰ Women were also brought under the Hindu ideological purview³¹. As a result of this propaganda, the different Hindu cultural organisations began to unite and to talk in the same language and the situation became ripe enough to be politically utilised by the RSS.

The RSS supremo M.S. Golwalker came to Calicut on January 18³². He emphasised the need to regain national unity and warned the people against the plan of the Christian missionaries to establish a Christian state by

²⁶ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily dated 2nd May, 1953.

²⁷ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily dated 21st June, 1953.

²⁸ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily dated 26th June, 1953.

²⁹ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily dated 3rd July, 1953.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ At Kozhikode the organisation *Mahila Bharatha Sangham* conducted *Harikatha Kalakshepam* (the didactic presentation of the stories of Krishna) for women, *Mathrubhoomi* Daily dated 7th July, 1953.

³² *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, dated 19th January, 1954.

conversion³³. He made his speeches all over Kerala. At Thrissur he said that Christians and Muslims came to India as invaders and they never accepted India as their motherland³⁴. “The Christians are trying to have a Christian *Sthan* (land) extending from Goa to Nagapatanam and the organisational attempts of the Muslim and Christian communities were never viewed as communalism by the secular state. But if the Hindu tries to organise it is considered as against the secular state.... therefore Hindus should unite”³⁵. This curse on the Muslims and Christians was abundantly spread using the issue of conversion as a cover. Sumit Sarkar's essay on conversions records how the fight against Christian missionary activity was an early plank of the Jan Sangh³⁶. This fight was extended against the Muslims also. These controversies happened in the coastal towns like Ponnani, Kozhikode, Dharmadam, Thalassery, Payyannoor, Guruvayoor etc.

These discourses in the post-independence period contributed for the consolidation of the modern religious communities in the period. This community consciousness soon surfaced in the form of the resistance offered to the constructions of the worshipping centers of other communities. Interestingly, such instances were reported from the coastal areas. For instances, in Kizhariyoor Amsom, Quilandy, some Hindus objected the

³³ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, dated 20th January, 1954.

³⁴ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, dated 26th January, 1954.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Sumit Sarkar, “Hindutva and the Question of Conversions”, in K.N. Panikkar (Ed.), *The Concerned Indian's Guide to Communalism*, Penguin, New Delhi, 1999, pp.73-106.

construction of a Muslim worshipping centre and they sent a petition to the Malabar Collector and Deputy Tahsildar in this regard³⁷. At Moonnupeedika in Nattika, the construction of a Mosque was objected and the natives complained that the construction might cause unfortunate happenings in the locality³⁸. The petty cases between the community members were also indicative of the animosity between the sections. The Ponmanikkudam Juma't Mosque committee of Perinjanam complained against the erection of a rice and Oil Mill in its vicinity by one Mumpu Veetil Chathunni³⁹. The committee feared that the jerks and shocks caused by the rice mill might harm the structure of the Mosque⁴⁰. The conversion propaganda influenced the leaders of the secular political parties as we have seen in the case of K.I.Ibrahim and K.Kelappan. At the same time it gave great political mileage to the communal organisations like RSS and All India Muslim League. The slogans of the RSS began to be accepted even by the people residing in the coast. The best example was the anti-cow slaughter propaganda of 1952. This propaganda ended in a conflict in Payyoli in 1952.

Problems at Payyoli (1952)

A unit of the RSS started in Malabar in 1943⁴¹. The RSS Malabar Branch conducted the anti-cow slaughter propaganda all over Malabar in

³⁷ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily dated 22nd June, 1952.

³⁸ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, dated, 3rd August, 1952.

³⁹ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily dated 14th September, 1952.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ FNR for II half of June 1943.

1952⁴². It later demanded the banning of cow slaughter by a law⁴³. This meeting was presided over by V.K. Eradi, the president of *Divyajeevanasangham*, a Hindu cultural organisation working at Kozhikode⁴⁴. This was followed by a series of such meetings at different places in Malabar. The coastal areas or the areas adjacent to coast, where such meetings were held merit special mention. They were, Thalassery, Dharmmadam, Vatakara, Cheruvannor, Payyoli,⁴⁵ Guruvayoor, Orumanayoor, Manathala, Kadapram⁴⁶ etc. In Pallippuram and Ponnani also there were anti cow slaughter meetings⁴⁷. These meetings had the potential to unite the Mukkuva fishers under a Hindu banner. The Payyoli events testified to this. At Payyoli, a small coastal town north of Calicut, there a group of Muslims slaughtered a calf near the anti cow slaughter meeting of the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) on 26th October, 1952⁴⁸. It soon swelled into a clash and one man was murdered by the Muslims⁴⁹. The strained relations extended to nearby places like Iringal, Ayanikkad, Meladi, Trikkottoor etc⁵⁰. The Mukkuvas of the near by beach and the Muslims of the above said regions were involved in the clash⁵¹. The combined life in the beach was strained and a number of Muslims were

⁴² *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, dated, 16th October, 1952.

⁴³ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, dated, 28th October, 1952.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, dated, 30th October, 1952.

⁴⁶ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily dated, 2nd November, 1952.

⁴⁷ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily dated 5th November, 1952.

⁴⁸ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily dated 1st November, 1952. Also see FNR for the II half of October 1952.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily dated, 2nd November, *Op.Cit.*

⁵¹ Thellichery Sub Collector's Record, List I, 1113, MC 74/53 & 163/52.KRA.

forced to flee from Payyoli with their belongings⁵². The mutual apprehension between the two communities grew to such an extent that during night Hindu and Muslim Houses of Meladi, Kizhoor and Thikkody were occupied by one or two additional families of the same community⁵³. It was feared that the problems were spreading to southern part of coastal Malabar like Chavakkad⁵⁴. As a precautionary measure two platoons of Malabar Special Police were dispatched to the spot⁵⁵ and five persons were arrested⁵⁶.

After this incident, the organised activity of RSS became very strong in Payyoli⁵⁷. The incident at Payyoli was later capitalised by the Hindu politicians with the help of the organisations like Arya Samaj. They used the circumstances to extend the Hindu community feeling to the outlying sections like scheduled castes. In the Parakkool Temple near Payyoli, owned by scheduled castes, the Arya Samaj leader Budhasingh made a speech on the *Hindu Dharma* in connection with the temple festival⁵⁸. After the campaign of the RSS against cow slaughter, the Muslim League in Malabar was showing increasing activity and there were reports that Muslims in different centres opened training centres for imparting instructions in physical training as a counter move to similar training imparted by the RSS⁵⁹.

⁵² *Mathrubhoomi* Daily dated 4th November, 1952.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily dated 8th November, 1952.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily dated 9th November, 1952.

⁵⁷ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily dated 2nd February, 1953.

⁵⁸ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily dated 8th April, 1953.

⁵⁹ FNR for I half of November, 1952.

Further, it was reported that Malabar district Muslim League under Baffaqui Thangal started to raise funds to defend the Muslims accused in the criminal cases of the Payyoli incident⁶⁰. It should also be noted that this incident had such an impression in the minds of the people that it caused a physical conflagration later in Payyoli in 1954⁶¹. The relevance of this incident was that the RSS conducted their propaganda all over the Malabar especially the areas close to the coastal area. And this was used as an effective way to communalise the people. The Muslim league functioning in Malabar had to defend it and they were also brought into the vortex of this communal discourse. It did great harm to the community relations of the period. Further, as we have noted in the case of the conversion discourse, this also contributed for the speedy consolidation of communities. Similarly, the procession issues also surfaced in that period.

The Troubles at Naduvattam (1954)

It was at this time that a marriage procession with music was intercepted before the Palayam Mosque at Calicut⁶². In another procession issue at Naduvattam, on 28th March 1954, two men died in the firing before the Mosque of Naduvattam⁶³. *Mathrubhoomi* Daily reported that, “Police fired on a group of Muslims who attempted to block and attack a procession heading from Naduvattam to a temple near the Kallayi *SreeRamakrishnasramam*,

⁶⁰ FNR for II fortnight of December, 1952.

⁶¹ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, dated, 21st January, 1954.

⁶² *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, dated 26th March, 1954.

⁶³ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 29th March, 1954.

when the rioters tried to oppose the police as the police used force to disperse them”⁶⁴. The report further explained that “there were rumours from the morning that the procession would be prevented; that many a people crowded before the mosque; that Revenue Divisional Officer Mr. Kutty Krishnan, Dy.S.P. Gopalan; Collector Mr. Pazhaniyappan, and D.S.P.,Ramanujam etc. reached the spot; that discussions were held with the parties demanding the peaceful passage of the procession; that the mob did not comply; that there was discussion with the mosque authorities; that there was pelting of stones; and the District Magistrate ordered to fire”⁶⁵. Naduvattam was a small town in the Beypore Panchayath in Kozhikode district. This issue was also indicating to the formation of communities that posited the other communities as enemies. The people from other parts made the Naduvattam incident a frame of reference to analyse the developments in their locality. A reader wrote in the column, ‘complaints and opinions’ that the “construction of a mosque at Painkannoor on the Kuttippuram Valanchery Road will harm the communal harmony, because the Naduvattam incident shows that the Mosques on the public roads cause Hindu Muslim clashes as the Muslims will prevent the processions and will try to make tension with the peace loving Hindus...”⁶⁶. The Naduvattam incident of 1954 largely communalised the people of Beypore Panchayath and the coastal population that the coast dwellers still *remember* the incident as one emanated from the *Moplah*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, dated 9th June, 1954.

*defiance*⁶⁷ or from the *Hindu highhandedness*⁶⁸. It is also believed by some that the Naduvattam incident of 1954 had its roots in the clash of vested business interest between the two elites of the locality – Narimukkil Ahammed Kutty and Thambi Muthalali⁶⁹. The Muslim and Hindu sections rallied behind them in the procession issue. Later, some events which happened in the adjacent areas in Beypore Panchayath also widened the gap between the Hindu and Muslim communities. A marriage procession from Puthiyara to Panniyankara was prevented in 1954 from proceeding by the Kallayi Mosque and one Koyatti was arrested⁷⁰. A case of preventing a *Kavadi* procession at the Payyanackal Beach and assaulting the members of the procession on March 15th came before the First Class Magistrate, Calicut on May 15th 1954⁷¹. During the same year Panniyankara became the scene of communal tension following the obstruction of a marriage procession before the Panniyankara Mosque; thirteen people were injured in stabbing and pelting of stones⁷². Pinnanath Damodaran of Naduvattam amsom was arrested in a case of setting fire to the thatched house of Manakath Alavi of same amsom⁷³. The places like Naduvattam, Panniyankara, Payyanackal lies very close to the Marad costal hamlet in the same Panchayath. These incidents are still in the memory of the people of the area.

⁶⁷ Periyambra Sreedharan(75), Beypore, interview on 28.12.2008.

⁶⁸ Alappatt Bhaskaran(63), member CPI(M), interview on 25.12.2008.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, dated 10th May, 1954.

⁷¹ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, dated 16th May, 1954.

⁷² *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, dated 24th May, 1954.

⁷³ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, dated 22nd October, 1954

Problems at Manathala (1959 and 1961)

The problems started at Manathala near Chavakkad in Thrissur district on the question of a procession by the Manathala Juma-at-mosque. The Hindu section under the leadership of RSS demanded the right to lead procession through the public road⁷⁴. The procession was intended to the Viswanatha Temple⁷⁵. It soon became a law and order problem and the police declared prohibitory order under section 144 in the region⁷⁶. The Hindus continued to court arrest during the prohibitory order⁷⁷. When the Muslims decided to lead a procession to Guruvayoor, the famous Hindu temple of Kerala, which is very close to Manathala, the situation reached a boiling point⁷⁸. This resulted in the clamping of prohibitory order under section 144 in Guruvayoor also⁷⁹. The tension spread to other coastal areas like Engandiyoor, Vadanappalli and Thalikkulam⁸⁰. The issues brought serious communal tension all over the state⁸¹. In 1961 once again the such issues were revived and a lathy charge took place inside the Manathala Mosque, Manathala⁸².

⁷⁴ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 27th March, 1959.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 2nd April, 1959.

⁷⁸ PKLA, 1st session, 1st April, 1959, Vol. VII, No.30, pp. 2578-80.

⁷⁹ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 22nd April, 1959.

⁸⁰ PKLA, 1st session, 12^h May, 1959, Vol. VII, No.50, pp. 4055-58.

⁸¹ "...it is an unfortunate situation we have in Kerala, an unfortunate trend to fan up communalism. But I hope this will not swell into a conflagration" said V.R. Krishna Iyer, then home Minister, *Ibid.*

⁸² PKLA, 1st session, 27^h February 1961, Vol. XI, No.2, pp. 62-63.

The Riot at Thalassery (1971)

The coastal town of Thalassery in North Kerala witnessed a riot on December 29th 1971⁸³. The problems started when there was a dispute in relation with a *Kalasam* procession to a temple⁸⁴. The temple in question was *Muthappan Kavu* or Meloot Matom, a small temple at Narangappuram in Thalassery town, where the principal deity was Muthappan. There were instances to assume that the fish workers and fish merchants of the Thalayi and Dharmadam coast also participated in the troubles at the town. Ayikkalil Abdu Rahman (fishing), Pressvalappil Razak (fishing), Asilayil Assu (fish merchant), Kallarakkal Abu (fish merchant) were brought to book in connection with this incident⁸⁵. Kunchandavide Dasan (Hindu-Araya fisherman), Parammal Manoharan (Hindu-Araya fisherman)⁸⁶; Kunchiparambath Eramu (fish merchant), Elathamkandy Abdulla (fish merchant)⁸⁷ etc. were also there in the list of the accused. Meenoth Raman (Hindu-Thiyya, fishing) and Maniyath Nanu (Hindu-Thiyya, fishing) were arrested on the ground of disseminating ill feeling towards Muslims⁸⁸. The participation of the fish merchants and the fishers may be due to the loyal relation the fishers had with the merchants. Further, it was a clear case of

⁸³ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 30th December 1971.

⁸⁴ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 30th December 1971.

⁸⁵ Thalassery Sub Collector's Record, List- I (TSCRL-I), 1398 MC. 1/72, KRA.

⁸⁶ TSCRL-I, 1399-5196 MC. 3/72, KRA; For Hindu-Mukkuva participation see TSCRL-I, 1401MC. 5/72; 1407 - 5204MC. 12/72, KRA.

⁸⁷ TSCRL-I, 1400-5197 MC. 4/72, KRA; Also see TSCRL-I, 1404-5201 MC. 9/72; 1406-5203 MC. 11/72, KRA.

⁸⁸ TSCRL-I, 1402-5199 MC. 6/72, KRA.

communalisation of the coastal area. The Thiyya, Araya and Mukkuva fishers were registered as *Hindu* in the official records. The influential people outside the coast took these accused on bail. In the case of the accused Muslim fishermen, one A.N.P. Moidu and Chovvakkaran Keloth Puthiya Maliyekkal Cheriya Mammukkeyi stood as surety for the bail⁸⁹. Thus, in the first two decades after the independence there were increasing communalisation of the Malabar that was reflected in the coastal life also. During this period some specific developments happened in the coast that might be regarded as the process and product of communalisation.

The Decline of the *Kadakkodis* and the growth of communitarian Institutions

The nature, structure and functions of *Kadakkodi* were explained in the First chapter. Here an analysis of its decline is attempted. A socio-historical evaluation, naturally, cannot overlook the transformation of the Kerala Fisheries in the past one-century. If we trace the beginning of these changes, the attempts of the colonial authorities at the onset of the 20th century might well be the starting point of its decline.

The British tried hard for the ‘modernisation’ of the fishing sector. These attempts were detailed in the First Chapter. New type of crafts and gears were experimented. The allied industries like fish curing and fish oil production were started. They brought commercialisation to the coast.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Actually, the aim of the British was to help the development of merchant capital, however small it would be, by encouraging trade and local entrepreneurship. With this aim, the local people were compelled to start fish oil factories and fish curing centres. In this process, the indigenous fisher people who carried on the fish trade and traditional fish curing suffered badly. The introduction of the salt tax imposed some control over the traditional fishing and trading groups. The new traders who were not actual fishermen gradually took up the fish trade, formerly done by the anglers on a small scale. The entry of the new systems and the new class to the shore negatively affected the thriving fishing population. This happened in the first three decades of the 20th century. The decline of the economic fabric coincided with many other changes. The brisk transfer of the foreshore lands to the non-fishing groups was important among them⁹⁰. This transfer created ecological impact on the one hand and the social impact on the other as explained in the first chapter. The gradual socio-economic transformation continued by the colonial authorities facilitated the upward mobility of some section of the fisher folk. The members of the *Kadakkodi* families sought appointments in the government posts like teachers and as officials in administrative circles. The growth of the indigenous capitalists like Unichoyi referred to in the 1st chapter was another example for the diversification brought in by the colonial authorities. The cultural tools and amenities of

⁹⁰ The British revenue records of the first decade of the 20th century testify to this. In the first chapter this process is explained.

modernity like technology, education, the co-operative endeavours etc. heralded a process of social diversification. This diversification created a *non-fishing* fisher group along the coast of Malabar. Hence, it was not surprising that British administrative records gave some clues for the decline of the caste Panchayaths even in the opening years of 20th century. Regarding the Baikal fishing hamlet, the report in 1916 said: “At one time there was a strong caste Panchayath among these people but in recent years it has lost its power.” the report continued, “they are beginning to understand the value of education and those who can afford it send their children to school. A few of them have also invested money in other industrial concerns” ⁹¹. Thus, the education and the industrial interests gradually brought diversification to the fishermen community and it begun to move away from the traditional ways of social regulations.

Incidentally, those who became advantageous in that process were the affluent among the fisher population. The *kadakkodi* families or the *tharavads* fell in the upper strata of the fishing population. The *kadakkodi* families began to abandon the fishing profession as a result of the upward mobility. Gotz Hoeppe says that; “During my field work I realised that most *kadakkodi* families had not had active fishermen *for generation* (emphasis added). Indeed, many of them had long turned into petty landlords, holders of

⁹¹ Madras Fisheries Bureau Bulletin (MFBB) No.9, Madras, 1916, p.50.

small government posts and teachers in the state in “fisheries schools.”⁹² This aloofness with the fishing profession was a glaring example of the change of social positions brought about by the change in living conditions.

Along with the *kadakkodi* families many other fishing families also might have experienced this upward mobility. The entry of colonial modernity ushered in *new* tendencies which affected the *traditionality* of the marine life on the one hand and transformed the old traditional institutions like *Kadakkodi* to those protecting the colonial interests. The colonial authorities introduced a ban on the sardine fishing in 1947 with the help of the *Kadakkodis*⁹³. This was against the will and traditional understanding of the fisher folk. Here, certain degree of ambivalence entered in the character of this institution. This ambivalence was the result of the ambivalence in the coastal life brought by the new conditions. Here the *kadakkodi* had to take even the state law into consideration and to become the mouthpiece of state policies. The resultant dichotomy of the knowledge systems of state and people emerged in this situation and the *kadakkodi*, because of its ambivalence, could not further the fish workers’ aspirations. This happened in the pre-independence period and from this massive shock on its credibility, this institution could not recover completely. At the same time, it could not shed its ambivalence either. Actually, with the affluent section of the fishing

⁹² Gotz Hoeppe, “Knowledge against the State, Local Perceptions of Government Interventions in Fishery (Kerala, India)”, in Gunnel Cederlof and K.Sivaramakrishnan (Ed), *Ecological Nationalisms Nature, Livelihoods, and Identities in South Asia*, Permanent Black New Delhi, 2005,pp233-254.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

population, especially the *kadakkodi* families, taking non-fishing professions, this ambivalence became greater. When an issue of starting an advisory committee for fishery development came to the Director of Industries and Fisheries Department in 1936, he remarked, “An Advisory Committee to be of any use should be composed of persons who are competent leaders of the community. There are some educated fishermen who might lead the fishermen community, but they evince little or no interest in their community and are practically out of touch with them”⁹⁴. This was a sign of the emerging non-fishing fishermen among the fishermen community who were detached from the fishermen life-world. These *non-fishermen* controlling the actual fishermen’s life might not have appeared reasonable for many.

In the post-independence period, the technological modernisation and the structural changes generated a new socio-cultural milieu, which made the functioning of these institutions even more difficult. The sea courts could not solve the new boundary disputes, instead fights in the sea resolved it. Further, the state police and revenue system at times hesitated to take the *Kadakkodi* as a legal body. V K Prabhakaran who has studied the functioning of the sea courts explained that “it was around 15 years ago that the sea court in his village decided to disband when the police refused to recognise it as a legitimate set-up in a dispute. The incident was an eye-opener: There was a dispute over the landing of catch at the local beach, as the sea courts had unanimously banned fishing at night in order to ensure the regeneration of

⁹⁴ D.Dis No.1497 - /36 dated 15th September, 1936. TNA.

the species. One particular group of fishermen from outside the area violated the ban and members of the sea court seized their catch. But the police decided it was a law and order problem and ordered the sea court to release the catch, forced it to discontinue its activities”⁹⁵. This shows that the dissonance between the state law and the traditional practices considerably harmed the ‘legality’ of the *Kadakkodis*. In a period of increasing instances of encroachments, violation of traditional sanctions, the maintenance of the *statusquo* was cumbersome for the *Kadakkodis*.

The resorting to the State systems in solving the problems of this marginalised community also did not fetch much result. Actually the law courts also could not take a decision on the boundary disputes in the sea. When there was a problem of trespassing of the allowed limit by the boat men of Kulachal in the sea (it was 22 km. from the shore for the mechanised boats according to the KMFRA but later it was reduced by the High Court to 10km.) and a fight with the local fishermen of Puthiyappa in the sea, the Collector refused to interfere *legally* in the matter⁹⁶. Because, *legally* it was not a clear case of encroachment, as the state through its legislative and judicial powers had fixed certain fishing limits as embodied in the KMFRA and in the later revision of the fishing limits by the High Court. Hence this superimposition of the state law on the conventional practices made the

⁹⁵ N.P.Chekkutty, *Democracy at Grassroots: Kerala’s Sea Courts*, chespeak.blogspot.com.

⁹⁶ PKLA, (7th Assembly), 4th session, 5th December, 1983 ,Vol. LIX, No.7, *108 (115), pp 18-21.

situation further clumsy. Because resorting to *practice* also could not have solved the issue, as the ‘encroachment’ was ‘legal’. Hence, in both the cases, the ‘authenticity’ of the traditional institutions was seriously questioned. Moreover, the *trespasser* could easily deny his act since it is not possible to fence the boundary in the aqua world. It, on the other, reinforced the communitarian organisations⁹⁷. Some times, the fight soon took a communal colour and the opposing forces rallied round their community fellow men.

The formation of new fishing companies especially in the artisanal sector made the old community management impossible. According to Nalini Nayak, “In the early 60s when the trawlers were introduced in Kasba, after initial operation the community decided when and where the trawlers would operate as compared to the traditional nets. Thus, an understanding was achieved regarding the exploitation of the fish resource and in cases of social conflict. But no such communitarian control seems to have followed when the OBMs and the ring seines were introduced. Even in Nattika, where the community realised the need for shares while investing in large craft and gear the objective of the “companies” has been to acquire more working units”⁹⁸. Thus in the changed scenario, where profit become important, the social regulatory institutions found it very difficult to enforce their regulations. The

⁹⁷ Darshini Mahadevia. pointing out the inefficiency of the state to discharge the welfare duties may bring in the casting of communal space over the life space. “Communal Space over Life Space Saga of increasing Vulnerability in Ahmedabad”, *EPW* Special Article, November 30, 2002.

⁹⁸ Nalini Nayak, “Continuity and Change in Artisanal Fishing Communities A Study of Socio-Economic Conditions of Artisanal Fishing Communities on the South-Wes Coast of India Following Motorisation of Fishing Crafts”, (Mimeo), PCO and SIFFS, Trivandrum, 1993, pp.36-37.

fishermen in some coasts were resorted to some dangerous fishing methods⁹⁹. These problems were not properly resisted, because in the fishing sector survival became the most important problem. The developmental efforts in the past half-century and its results (the introduction of new mechanised crafts and active gears, resource depletion, pauperisation of the artisanal fishermen etc.) made the fish workers to think in these terms. Hence, in the changed milieu, the moralistic decisions by the *Kadakkodi* on such acts were not binding on the new generation. The youths were the most defiant among this population. There was a usual complaint against the youth that they were not observing any of the traditional norms of the coast¹⁰⁰. Scholars also opined that the educated youth question the authority of elders¹⁰¹. Hence, either in conflict resolution or in controlling the undesirable fishing styles or in maintaining the ritualistic relations within the community, the *kadakkodi* could not function as it was expected.

In a dramatic shift of the events, *kadakkodi* itself was transformed into a space where the communal scores could be settled. The recently established (in the year 2000) *kadakkodi samrakshana samiti* (Sea Court Protection Council) of Puthiyangadi, near Kozhikode, a sea court in which majority of its members were Muslim fishermen, tried to establish a vertical networking in expansion after the Marad massacres of 2002 and 2003, despite its claim

⁹⁹ There were complaints about the plotting of artificial reefs in the seas.

¹⁰⁰ A Group of researchers, “Marad Kalapam Oru Anweshanam” (Mal), in *Marxist Samvadam*, EMS Seminar Special Issue, Thiruvananthapuram, AKG Study and Research Centre, Vol. 23-24, January-June, 2003, pp.60-88. (Hereafter, Marad Kalapam...)

¹⁰¹ John Kurien, “The Socio-Cultural Aspects of Fisheries: Implications for food and Lively-Hood Security – A case study of Kerala state, India”, Thiruvananthapuram, www.fao.org.

of protecting the *kadakkodis*¹⁰². Thus, once started as a resource management and conflict resolution system, the *Kadakkodi*, failed to with stand the pressure of change and reincarnate only to become a farce.

In the second half of the 20th century, as a result of the communalisation that took place out side the shore and the structural changes within, the earlier 'give and take' in the sphere of belief gradually gave way to religious exclusivism. In older period, there were special *avakasam* (rights) for the Muslims in the *Kavus* worshipped by others. Now this was gradually being made as exclusive spaces for the respective worshipping groups. In fact, many Hindu temples owned by coastal people like Mokayas had established customs like special *avakasams* or rights for Muslim families. For example, a mokaya temple at Vatakara had observed a tradition in which Muslim families in the vicinity were making ceremonial offerings like betel leaves and areca nuts on the occasion of the annual festival¹⁰³. From the Marad fishing hamlet, there were many instances of this inter community mutuality. The natives remember the days when the members of both the communities lay on the extended sandy beach engaging in light talks in night

¹⁰² C Ramachandran, "Conflict resolution or *Sui generis* co-management?", in *Teaching not to F(in)ish?: A Constructivist Perspective on Reinventing a Responsible Marine Fisheries Extension System*, Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Kochi,2004. Annexure 1,pp.83-102.

¹⁰³ N.P.Chekkutty, "Communal strife in coastal regions, Coastal Tensions in Kerala: One", chespeak.blogspot.com; Musaffar Assadi also reports similar case from the Karnataka Coast that 'In Udyavar (Manjeshwar), the temple festival begins with a visit to local mosque. This is called 'Sekmmas' visit. In many temples, the drum beating or playing 'Nadaswara' or 'Vadye' or 'China Vadye' is assigned to the local Baerys, a group of Muslims. But recently, these mutual ritualistic relations are dying out', "Karnataka: Hindutua Policies in Coastal Region, Towards a Social Coalition", EPW,June,8,2002.

after the hard physical labour of the daytime¹⁰⁴. In Marad, all the Hindus attended the Mouleed function in the mosque and they had the food from there, or the *Muslims* would take the food to the *Hindu* houses, says T. Suresh¹⁰⁵. He added that, ‘There was no *Hindu* child who did not tie the amulets sanctified by the *Mollakka* (the Muslim priest) and no *Muslim* child who did not visit Avathan Muthappan to cure the fever’¹⁰⁶. The *Arayas* bore the expense of conducting the *Mouleed* to get more catch¹⁰⁷. The Milad-i-Sherif and the Mandala *vratam* (Observance of spiritual rules for 41 days in connection with the pilgrimage to Sabarimala temple) were celebrated by Muslims and Hindus jointly. The Araya Samajam sent items for the preparation of ghee-rice to the Pudu-Islams and they gave their due to celebrate the Mandala Period¹⁰⁸. The Pudu-Islam fishers crowded at the precincts of the Vettakkorumakan Kavu to celebrate the *Utsavam* (temple festival) and to collect the pieces of coconut after the ritualistic ceremony of coconut throwing¹⁰⁹. These practices were getting weak in the present society. This could be read in association with the exclusivism practiced in the work pattern. The intercommunity co-operation in fishing had been gradually loosing on the shore.

¹⁰⁴ T. Suresh, Marad, General Secretary Hindu Aikya Vedi, Interview on 10.1.2009.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ T. Sreedharan, Fisherman, (54), Marad, Interview on, 10.1.2009; T. Suresh, Marad.

¹⁰⁸ Zeenath C.K., (32) Kappakkal, Activist, Interview on 28.12.2008..

¹⁰⁹ Seemamuntakath Ali, (59) Marad, former fisherman, interview on, 25.12.2008.

Further, in the 1960's Mukkuva, Mokaya, Araya, Vala, Nulaya etc. were jointly referred to as Dheevara. For administrative purposes, these groups were clubbed into one—the dheeveras—through a Government Order in 1961, giving them the Other Backward Community status (OBC) because of their social and educational backwardness¹¹⁰. The birth of the lateral organisations like the Dheevara Sabha in the 1960's might have considerably reduced the importance of the *Kadakkodis* because after the formation of Dheeverasabha, it was this organisation that managed many of the affairs of the coastal life especially in the southern part of Kerala. It was the close affinity with the Hindu deities that might have propelled all the non-Muslim fishermen communities to unite under the banner of All Kerala Dheevara Sabha. This lateral unification of the non - Pudu Islam fishers weakened the local arrangements like *Kadakkodi*.

The fishing profession once organised in a *secular* way has now proved to be a *communitarian* one as a result of the above discussed developments. This categorisation of the working class into religious and community groups was a sign of the intensity of mistrust generated among them in the last few years. The fishermen had active involvement in all the communal conflicts in coastal towns, discussed above. This and the subsequent incidents proved that the homogeneity of the population was lost that was manifested in later developments like the decline of *Kadakkodi* and

¹¹⁰ N.P.Chekkutty, "Communal strife in coastal regions, Coastal Tensions in Kerala: One", chespeak.blogspot.com.

the emergence of communitarian institutions in this place¹¹¹. This cleavage in the social solidarity and civil life prevented them from resorting to collective deliberation and decision making for solving public issues. In short, a gradual but steady casting of 'communal space over life space' took place on the coast. The religious forces got an upper hand in the social life of the coast, where strong religious signs were dominating the quotidian life. In Marad, near Kozhikode, the Araya fishermen used saffron flags and the Pudu-Islam fishers used green flags in the crafts to identify their fellow men in the sea¹¹². This caste/religious exclusivism naturally resulted in the emergence of some communitarian institutions in the place of the *Kadakkodis* to regulate the coastal life. Thus, in the 1960s the Araya Samajam (AS) and the Mahallu Committee (MC) began to emerge as the problem solving agencies in Malabar.

The decline of the *Kadakkodis*, however, did not lead to the direct handling of affairs by the AS and MC. There was an experiment with another platform, the Council of Elders (CE) (*Karanavakoottams*). This *karanavakoottams* were particularly functional in the multi-religious fishing

¹¹¹ Madhu Sarin has argued that smallness of size and the homogeneity of social composition are factors that facilitate the efficient management of resources by community institutions and their survival. Madhu Sarin quoted in Niraja Gopal Jayal, "Democracy and Social Capital in Central Himalayas Tale of two Villages", *EPW* special Articles, February 24, 2001,; Satyakam Joshi points to the positive correlation between the community solidarity existed in the Dang District of Gujarat and the effective functioning of the community institution like the *Punch*. As the members of the adivasi tribes embraced Christianity this solidarity lost and a subsequent Hindu communalisation took place and that rendered these organisations defunct. Satyakam Joshi, "Tribals Missionaries and Sadhus Understanding Violence in the Dangs", *EPW* Special Articles September 11, 1999.

¹¹² Peethambaran P., (40), Marad, Member, Beypore Grama Panchayath, interview on 23.1.2009.

villages. This council was neither a formal body nor a sea court. But it was constituted with the elders of the different caste/religious communities of a particular coastal village. Equal number of members from different religions were selected to constitute this body. Hence the functioning of this system was even more crucial than the *Kadakkodis*. The *kadakkodi* had some religious affiliation in its functioning. But the council of elders was more secular and had a positive role to play in the hamlets having a populace of different communities. It is notable that these councils were functional up to the early seventies along the Malabar Coast. It functioned, for example, in the different hamlets of Kozhikode district like Marad, Chamundi Valappu etc.. They solved the problems related with work as well as the disputes in the sea or land. They also put some regulations on the fishing activities. By the early seventies, this body also ceased to function. This period marked the ascendance of the AS and MC. For some time the Council of Elders functioned along with the AS and MC. But these Councils could not go ahead for a long time in the changed communally charged atmosphere where the coastal population had selected AS and MC as their legal and natural protectors.

Structure and Functions of *Mahallu* Committee

The members of the MC are the families of a *Mahallu*. The *Mahallu* is normally organised around a Mosque. The *Mahallu* Committee is actually

the committee to govern the affairs of the mosque. There will be a Secretary, President, Treasurer and a *Mukri* or the religious teacher in the committee. The general body comprising the male members of the Mahallu elects this committee. The MC's decisions and sanctions are binding on the whole members of the *Mahallu*¹¹³. The MC of a coastal village has certain regulatory functions¹¹⁴. The MC specified the fishing time, the seasons, day etc. The Pudu Islam fishers were not allowed to go for fishing on Friday¹¹⁵. The MC collected a contribution from its members that was utilised as the Madrassa fee of the fishermen students and monthly subscription to the Mosque¹¹⁶. And they advance money to fishermen without interest¹¹⁷. Now youngsters have come to the helm of MCs.

Structure and Functions of Araya Samajam

The AS is formed in a fishing village with predominantly Araya population. The male Araya section constitutes the general body of the *Samajam*. The general body annually elects a governing committee. The governing committee consisted of nine members. A President and Secretary

¹¹³ At Koottayi, in Tirur, the *Mahallu Committee* ex-communicated those participated in a love marriage. Those who are cast out of the Mahal were not even allowed to be buried in the burial ground attached to the mosque, M. Bapputty, Kootayi (42), District General Secretary, Malappuram District Malsy Thozhilali Union (CITU), interview on 19.11.2008.

¹¹⁴ The Mahallu Committee of Kappakkal interfered when the fishers from Kulachal, a fishing hamlet near Kanayakumari, tried to fish near Chamundi Valappu by plotting artificial reefs using the bunch of coconut spikes, Sajira C.K., Kappakkal, (26), Activist, interview on 22.12.2008.

¹¹⁵ The Muslim fishermen were forbidden from going to sea in the after noon of Thursday and Friday morning, C.K Zeenath, Kappakkal.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ A Group of Researchers, Marad Kalapam, p.67.

were elected from among them. Every adult member of the general body was supposed to contribute a subscription to the AS. Each motorboat or the *Odam* also supposed to contribute a fixed percentage of the daily income to the AS. The AS also has the function of money lending. The AS announces a holy day if there is a festival in the local temple or on the days of the *sankramam*. This body discussed the important matters related with profession and daily life. The AS is potential enough to employ sanctions on the members if it found they went against its directions. As the MC, this body also lend money with low interest or free loans.

This money lending function become very important when the loan needs are very high in the coastal area. There was a report finding that 86.35% of people of a Malabar's fishing villages were below the poverty line¹¹⁸. The Thayyil village in Kannur district have a total debt of one crore rupees¹¹⁹. A study by MCITRA revealed that the fishers of Malabar depend on the hawala and 'blade' institutions (the money lending institutions that levy very high rates of interest) for credit¹²⁰. Because the Government financial agencies could satisfy only 3% to 4% of the credit needs of the fishers¹²¹, so these blade institutions, middlemen, contractor etc. levy cutthroat interest for the money advanced. And the fishers become permanent clients of these agencies. The economic condition of the fishermen of

¹¹⁸ "Thayyil Samoohya -Sampathika Survey Report" MCITRA.Kozhikode,1998.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.8.

¹²⁰ "Malabar Theeradesa Paramparagatha Matsya Thozhillikalude Saktheekaranam: Prasnangalum Samghataka Sadhyathakalum", (Mimeo), (Mal), MCITRA, May, 2002,p.21.

¹²¹ "Cherukida Matsya Thozhillikkulla Vaypa Paddhathikal: Kazhchappadum Bhavi Sadhyathayam", (Mimeo), (Mal), MCITRA, n.d. p.4.

Kozhikode district was also found as depressing¹²². In Kozhikode there was the high range of average debt dependency among the Malabar fishing villages. It would not be a wonder that in these circumstances the fish worker searched for interest free loans. The AS and MC lend such free loans to the fishers.

The fishers of this coast face other serious problems that cemented the impoverishment and indebtedness of the fishers. There were complaints that the trawlers cause serious damage to the fish wealth of Malabar¹²³. This report also said that there was a considerable decrease in the catch of Seer fish, Mackerel, Squid, and Sardine and there were criticisms against the Ring Seines and Purse Seines¹²⁴. This was also noted that the Malabar coastal areas were lagging behind with respect to education in the past few years¹²⁵. One of the major reasons for this backwardness was the economic difficulty of this population¹²⁶. The decentralised development plan also failed in the fishery sector¹²⁷. The scarcity of drinking water was a serious problem everywhere in

¹²² Theeradesha Mekhalayil Nilavilulla Sampathika Prathisandhiyum Karanangalum - Kozhikode Theera Paschathalathil Oru Anweshanam, (Mimeo), (Mal), MCITRA, October, 2005, pp.3-8.

¹²³ Report in *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, MCITRA Dossier.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ “Malabar Matsya Mekhala Vidhyabhyasa Pinnokkavastha Pathana Report Prakasanavum Vidhyabhyasa Seminarum” (Mimeo), (Mal), MCITRA, Kozhikode, July, 2000, pp.3-9; “Theeradesha Vidyabhyasa Sthithivivarangalum Visakalana Nirdhesangalum (Kozhikode Corpoation Paridhiyilullathu)”, (Mimeo), (Mal), MCITRA, Kozhikode, n.d. pp.2-5.

¹²⁶ Comment of Mr.Raghavan, Office Bearer of Thayyil Araya Samajam, to the above mentioned report by MCITRA, July 2000, *Ibid.*, p.4, and the major finding of the report and the general feeling of the experts participated in the discussion also runs in this direction.

¹²⁷ See, J.B.Rajan and Haribabu, *Fading Images of Decentralisation in Kerala Study With Reference To Marine Fisheries in 10th Five-Year Plan*, MCITRA, Kozhikode, July 2005; Baby John (Gen.Ed.), “*Janakeeyastuhranam Matsyamekhalayil*”, MCITRA, Kozhikode, 2003.

the coastal belt of Kerala. The Malabar region also was not an exception¹²⁸. In the multiple problems faced by this sector, the experts and social organisations highlight the lack of seriousness in the approach of the politicians and political Fronts in Kerala towards the issues¹²⁹. These general pictures of misery were attempted to be solved by these communitarian institutions directly.

The social institutions, which propagated formal secularism, were replaced with communitarian platforms. They emerged as the major players in the coastal civil life as a result of the political and economic changes of the coast in the post-fifties. This stage actually involved a quest for the resolutions of religious contradictions that developed in the civil life. The failure of the traditional institutions like the *Kadakkodi* to take such solutions signified the changed scenario that called for *new* institutions having *adaptability* to the changed situations. It was in these circumstances that the *mahallu committee* and *Araya Samajam* began to exercise the functions once attended to by the *kadakkodis*¹³⁰.

MC is the traditional social organisation of the Muslims. AS and MC, were having local footing among the Araya and Muslim fishermen

¹²⁸ *Deshabhimani* Daily, May 1st, 2004.

¹²⁹ “NiyamaSabha Therancheduppu – 2006, Matsya Mekhala Prasnangalum Prakatana Pathrikakalum – Oru Visakalanam”, MCITRA, Kozhikode, pp.4-16. The Analysis of the election Manifestos of the two dominant fronts. i.e., United Democratic Front (UDF) and Left Democratic Front (LDF) are done by T.Y.Vinod Krishnan Anthropologist, Centre for Excellence, Kozhikode), Sanjeev Ghosh (Joint Director Fisheries), K.P.Devadas (Retd. Assistant Director, Bhasha Institute), and Baby John (Director, MCITRA).

¹³⁰ Moideen Koya (52) Kappakkal, fisherman, interview on 31.12.2008. He is the president of the Mahallu Committee and he is of the opinion that the interference of these *Committees* and *Samajams* in the labour issues is not advisable, such issues are to be solved by the trade unions.

respectively¹³¹. To be precise, these institutions were local in character but made contacts with the lateral political and communitarian institutions like the IUML and BJP. The MC leaders of Marad were also active IUML workers. Similarly, the AS leaders of the same hamlet had strong organisational links with BJP and RSS. These organisations' 'proximity' with the individuals' lives helped them to regulate it continuously¹³². These organisations interfere when occasions of conflict arises. They act as arbitrators and settle the issues. This was a prerogative of the *kadakkodis* in the earlier period. Member ship in these organisations were mandatory, at the same time, they impose an amount as subscription fee. The AS and MC levy a particular percent of the daily catch from the community members. From every craft of the community members 5% of the daily income is set part for these organisations¹³³. These contributions made these organisations extremely rich. Some argued that they had even the role of financiers, in the otherwise indebted life of the ordinary fishermen¹³⁴, a function, not usually carried out by the *Kadakkodi*. "Samajams and Committees help the poor. They extend financial help for the marriage of the poor, provide loan if the boat is lost, give presents for the students who got high marks in the

¹³¹ These organisations are not of recent origin. However, many of the functions they discharge are comparatively new.

¹³² The Araya Samajam is powerful enough even to excommunicate its members if it finds fault with any. At Cheriya Mangad near Quilandi, *Araya Samajam* excommunicated a family. Since 17 years they and those who supported them were forbidden from taking part in the social life, *Madhyamam* Daily, 27th August 2003.

¹³³ A Group of Researchers, Marad Kalapam, *Op.Cit.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

examination, some times help the funeral ceremonies'¹³⁵. This money lending activity was crucial in making these institutions popular among the fishers. In the background of the economic indebtedness of the fishers and the failure of the government agencies in redressing this, these organisations ensure the loyalty of the ordinary fisher through financing them. As the AS financed the Arayas and the MC the Pudu Islam fishers, the material condition was set for the vertical mobilisation of these two groups. The power of these organisations over the lives of the fishermen was evident from the role these organisations played in the first riot of Marad Beach¹³⁶. In that sense these institutions reproducing ritual or cultural symbolism, and here capitalism or capital provided a platform to construct a religious identity¹³⁷. This is done by directly intervening in the actual life issues of the ordinary fishermen.

Thus, the decline of the *Kadakkodi* system signified the collapse of the social order that maintained a formal secularism in the coastal society and the emergence of new communitarian organisations to occupy the vacuum created by its disappearance.

CONCLUSION

In the second Chapter, we discussed the background of a competition for resources ushered in along the Kerala Coast in general. And found that the capitalist development completely took over the sector. In this chapter we

¹³⁵ Prabhakaran, Beypore.

¹³⁶ A Group of Researchers, Marad Kalapam, *Op.Cit.*

¹³⁷ This will be explained in the Sixth Chapter.

had a close look at the communalisation of Malabar Coast in the backdrop of the earlier discussion. The discourses on conversion, cow-slaughter and the procession before the worshipping centres etc had communalised the coastal Malabar since 1950. The indebtedness, lack of education, shortage of drinking water, resource depletion etc. became a normal feature of the fishermen life of Malabar. By this time, new communitarian institutions like AS and MC began to emerge in the Malabar Coast replacing the *Kadakkodis*. These institutions had some new roles as different from those of the *Kadakkodis*. To escape from the indebtedness, the fishermen began to rely heavily on these institutions. The earlier caste identities began to take closed contours and capital had a silent role in effecting a subtle change in this direction.

CHAPTER IV

THE FISHERMEN

STRUGGLE IN MALABAR (1984) AND AFTER

The mechanisation programmes brought the trawlers to the sector in the 1960s itself. The following years were very crucial in the history of Kerala fisheries. The 1970s were important with respect to the export orientation and the flow of capital to the sector. The 1980s witnessed the motorisation of country crafts and the use of destructive gears like the purse seines. By this time, the resource depletion had started and the overcrowding of the seas also posed a serious threat to the fishery resources. The beginning of the 1980s was also noted for the loss of the fishermen's rights over the sea as commons. In this context, the Government of Kerala passed the KMFRA in 1980. Babu Paul Commission was appointed by the Government in 1981 to study the feasibility of a trawling ban during monsoon season in Kerala. The KMFRA banned purse seining in the territorial waters of Kerala. And there were directions from the central government in 1983 regarding the fishing limit; the area up to 10 km. from the shore was exclusively for the country crafts, beyond 10 km. upto 23 km. was reserved for motorised and small-mechanised boats and the fishing trawlers having a length of 20 metres should fish beyond 23 km. limit from the shore. This direction parcelled the territorial waters between the sectoral varieties and it created confusions and concern over boundaries in the period of resource depletion and increasing

competition. It was in this background that a major fishermen struggle took shape in Kerala in 1984. The fishermen struggle of 1984 is analysed in this chapter with a view to interrogating the nature of labour mobilisation in the context of the overall developments of the sector were discussed in the previous chapters. Further, the motorisation of the country crafts became more capital intensive in the post-struggle period. And it effected some changes in the ownership pattern and work organisation prevalent in the fisheries sector. Hence, the developments in the post-struggle period are also attended to in this chapter.

In the 1980s, the fishing technology began to change in Malabar. The country crafts were fitted with OBMs. The Boat seines were in popular use though the use of the purse seines and large Nylon nets were also in vogue in the motorised sector. There was a developed trawler sector in the area. But at the same time, the symbols of traditional fishing styles and the variety of nets were continued to be the hallmark of Malabar fishery. This did not mean that experiments were absent. Fibre canoes along with purse seines were introduced as a part of motorisation. But the large *Chundan Vallam*- ring seine combination was yet to enter the scene. But the traditional fishermen worked in the motorised sector also. They also worked in the mechanised boats as fish labourer.

Trade Union Activities

The post 1960 period witnessed the growth of political parties and labour mobilisation along the coast. The political mobilisation along the

Kerala coast took a peculiar turn in this period. It was the *social movements*¹ through which the political aspirations of the fish workers were expressed and articulated in Kerala. The social movements were some times designated themselves as Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Scholars were going to the extent of saying that *Social Movement Unions* were the specific contributions of class struggles in the traditional artisanal and informal sectors². They held the view that fishing communities initially collaborated with the *transition* (a change imposed from the above). But later they started to resist transition and sought for *transformation* (a balanced growth without hampering ecology and socio-cultural scenario) and as the part of resistance they had developed a consciousness and an organisational process. In this process the social movements occupy a prominent position³. The social movements include co-operatives, welfare associations, trade unions, and caste or communal associations. The *Marianad* experience (1961), the trade union, *Kerala Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation* (KSMTF – 1980), the NGO, Programme for Community Organisation (PCO-1977) etc. were some important organisations worked under the social movements.

In the early 1960s a team worked under the auspices of clergy to emancipate the fishermen from the nexus of exploitation. Inspired by the call

¹ Since much of their activities are political these are socio-political movements.

² Gabriela Dietrich and Nalini Nayak, *Transition or Transformation? A Study of the Mobilization and Emergence of Consciousness Among the Fish Workers of Kerala, India*, Department of Social Analysis, Madurai, March, 2002, pp.3-4 (Hereafter *Transition or Transformation*).

³ *Ibid.*, p.5.

of Second Vatican Council, the then Bishop of the Latin Catholic Church at Thiruvananthapuram, Bernard Pereira founded a model-fishing village in 1961⁴. At *Alillathurai*, a coastal spot in Thiruvananthapuram, they brought people from the adjoining villages and a community was forged there. The village was known as *Marianad*. There they built a church collecting 5% of income from each fisherman. Soon it became the first co-operative to be controlled by the fishermen under the aegis of the Church⁵. In 1973, a Redemptionist Priest moved to Poonthura, where the modernisation project was in progress. The local fishermen were being sold poor quality boats for which they took out loans and were then cheated by the moneylenders. Father Thomas Kochery started to organise an informal trade union, The Latin Catholic Malsya Thozhilali Federation, there in 1977⁶. It was a community organisation. It was a confederation of Matsya Thozhilali Unions of six districts. They were Ashtamudykayal Matsya Thozhilali Union (Kollam), Aleppey Matsya Thozhilali Union (Alappuzha), Vijayapuram Roopatha Matsya Thozhilali Union (Kottayam), Thiruvananthapuram District Matsya Thozhilali Union (Trivandrum), Alappuzha district Inland *Matsya Thozhilali Union*, Kochin area Matsya Thozhilali Union⁷. As the name indicated, the Christian Church had a control over these organisations.

⁴ “National Forum of Fish Workers A Spiritually Inspired Movement for Alternative Development”, see, www.wfdd.org.uk, p.2. (Hereafter, National Forum of Fish Workers...)

⁵ Gabriela Dietrich and Nalini Nayak, *Transition or Transformation, Op.Cit.*, pp.82-109.

⁶ National Forum of Fish Workers, p.5

⁷ Mathew Aerthayil, *Keralathile Malsya Thozhilali Prasthanam, Samoohya Sasthraparamaya Oru Visakalanam* (Mal), DC Books, Kottayam, February, 2002, p.42.

Some wanted to project it as a Latin Catholic Organisation. Some others including the leftist clergy wanted to drop the word *Latin* from the name. Accordingly, the Kerala Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation (KSMTF) was registered as a trade union in 1980⁸. The tussle within the organisation persisted and it underwent a split in 1983. The KSMTF pioneered many struggles in Kerala, mixing the liberation theology and labour issues and led many agitations⁹. In the early 1980s South India Federation of Fishermen's Societies (SIFFS), a federation of local level societies came into being. Further, the Christian Church had launched a NGO, PCO in 1977. Thus the Christian Church controlled the important movements along the Kerala coast especially in the South. It was after the activities of KSMTF that the mainstream political parties began to organise the fish workers of Malabar¹⁰.

The Fishermen Mobilisation in Malabar

In Malabar, the NGO Socio Religious Centre (SRC) provided the leadership in organising the fishers. Under the auspices of SRC, Beach Blossom Project was started in 1975. Monograph of the Beach Blossoms

⁸ Gabriela Dietrich and Nalini Nayak, *Exploring the Possibilities of Counter Hegemonic Globalization of the Fish Workers Movement in India and Its Global Interactions*, see www.ces.fe.uc.pt/emanicipa/research/en/ft/fishworkers.html.

⁹ *Indian Express Daily*, 28th May 1984.

¹⁰ The CITU under CPI (M) was working on the coast but was not able to pioneer the organization of the working class on the coast, it was in the 1970s that the left parties tried to organize the fishermen; In a pamphlet, published in 1947 by the AITUC urging for a trade union strike there is no mention about the fishers or the fish allied activities, Public (general – B) (1947) deptt, M.S. Series G.O.No.1453 dated 16.5.1947.RAK.

Project explained this: “The Beach Blossoms Project is a well-contemplated project for the conscientisation and liberation of the coastal proletariat of Kerala. It started in 1975. This project is a clear move of the SRC at Kozhikode... The philosophy of SRC can be summarised like this. ‘The world that we live, especially India, is a society where the orgy of deep-rooted injustice takes place. Here a minority of people are wealthy. Nevertheless, the proletariat who form majority of population are being subjected to inhuman exploitation. The injustice in and out of the society can be fully eradicated. It should be eradicated! Thus a new society founded on justice should be evolved...’¹¹. The major areas come under the project were Chappayil, Vellayil Thodiyil, Vellayil, Puthiya kadavu west, Puthiya kadavu east, Thoppayil west, Thoppayil east, Kamburam, West hill west, West Hill east, Puthiyangadi West, and Puthiyangadi East in Kozhikode District¹². In 1981 Kozhikode Theera Desa Sanghatana (KTDS) was established with the objective, ‘to promote social, economic, educational, cultural, vocational, and moral welfare of the Beach dwellers of Kerala irrespective of race, community, caste, or creed, sex, or political party association, by working in collaboration with the Beach Blossoms Project of the Socio-Religious centre, Calicut (S.No.102/81)’¹³. There were political activists along the coast. There

¹¹ Fr. Dominic George S.J., *Beach Blossom Project*, (Mal) Beach Blossoms Documentation - I, 1980. pp.1-3 (Hereafter TDABBD-I)

¹² TDABBD-II, *Op.Cit.*,p.2.

¹³ Rules and Regulations, Kozhikode Theera Desa Sanghatana (S.No.177 of 1981) (Mimeo). P.2

were many traditional Congressmen and Communists on the beach¹⁴. But a secular trade union and political activism seemed absent along the coastline of Malabar.

The NGOs worked convincingly in the beach. The educated section among the fish workers was the early supporters of the NGOs. The prominent men on the coast who had the philanthropic approach cultivated by religious ethics¹⁵ and the Left co-travellers¹⁶ who saw the uplift of their fellowmen their aim also extended their support to these NGOs. Or the NGOs found such educated, socially oriented well-wishers of the fisher community as the *animators* of their movement¹⁷. This section had a deep concern for the problems of the artisanal fish workers. The NGOs in the coast addressed the immediate problems of the hour like the resource depletion and the low harvest, heavy expenditure, the growing indebtedness etc. This created the expectation of deliverance and it attracted the youngsters of the community. They tried to ameliorate the condition of the ordinary fish workers by establishing village level co-operative societies. “There were no facilities for the sale of the fish. Beach Blossoms established such societies at PuthiyaKadavu, Thoppayil, Nainan Valappu, Kappakkal etc. They appointed

¹⁴ K.P. Safiya, Activist, Vellayil, interview on 31.12.2008. She says that her father Hussainar was a staunch congressman. The father of Adv. Zeenath was a Communist. Mr. Moideen Koya whom the researcher interviewed was a member of Communist Party of India (CPI) and later left the party.

¹⁵ Father of K.P.Safiya was such a prominent man who had a deep knowledge in Islam and its tenets.

¹⁶ Moideen Koya of Kappakkal was a CPI activist who extended his support to the NGO activities in the Beach, interview on 31.12.2008.

¹⁷ TDABBD-10, p.3.

their auctioneers and conducted auction. The auctioneer, after the auction, would give the bill for the money, this bill could be transferred at the society at the convenience of the fish worker, and the money would be paid on the same day. Later these societies were handed over to the committees and there arose some problems and they failed”¹⁸. Mrs. K.P.Safiya, an activist recollected, “They worked for the downtrodden. When the Beach Blossom Project was started, I was in the 9th standard. They conducted Neighbourhood Meetings (*Ayal Yogangal*) and Portico Discussions (*Kolaya Koottangal*). Then I took part in almost all the struggles conducted by the KSMTF”¹⁹. The works of the Jesuit Fathers created a counter movement from the Muslim fundamentalists. The Jama-at-e-Islami soon unleashed propaganda and warned the Muslim activists associating with the ‘Christians’ that they would be converted to Christianity at the end²⁰. The Mahallu Committee also was inimical to the Muslim activists²¹. “They convened the Sunday Jama-at²² under the auspices of Muslim Educational Society (MES) to discuss my matter”, says Mrs. Safiya. Thus, the suspicion over the religion started in the very beginning of the labour organisation. The labour mobilisation, which otherwise was a secular endeavour, became an arena of communal bargaining. It was a fact that the Jesuits did not try to mobilise the Christians

¹⁸ Zeenath. C.K.(32) interview on 28.12.2008; Baby John(50), Director, MCITRA, interview on 31.12.2008. Also see, “Sannadha Mekhalayil Matsya Thozhilali Sahakarana Prasthanam Prasakthiyum Bhavi Sadyathakalum”, (Mimeo) (Mal), MCITRA, Kozhikode, n.d.p.6.

¹⁹ K.P. Safiya Vellayil.

²⁰ K.P. Safiya and Zeenath C.K., Kappakkal

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² An assembly of the representatives of all the Muslim organisations to discuss important matters concerning the religion.

of the Malabar Coast. But the counter activities of the Muslim organisations were enough to create a *self/other* dichotomy. These counter activities were called for because of the Christian shade this mobilisation had²³. These states of affairs become more pronounced during the fishermen agitation of 1984.

The Struggle of 1984, The Malabar Scenario

The fishermen struggle of 1984 was organised by the KSMTF in all Kerala level. The KSMTF put forward a 17-point demand before the Government on 10th April 1984²⁴. They demanded the implementation of Babu Paul Commission Report, a complete ban on Purse Seine net, allow pension for the fishermen, and to bring service and payment norms for the workers of the mechanised boats²⁵. The KSMTF organised the people from Thiruvananthapuram in the south to Kozhikode in the North. Naturally, Vellayil and its surroundings, by virtue of being the area of operation of Beach Blossoms, become the storm centre of the agitation in Malabar²⁶. The groundwork done by the SRC and the Beach Blossoms was helpful in

²³ 'The Beach Blossoms Project was conceived in 1975 by a group of students who are the members of All India Catholic University Federation (AICUF). And this was led by the Jesuit Fathers of SRC', TDABBD-10, *Op.Cit.*,p.1

²⁴ . The demands were 1. Implement a ban on the mechanized trawling of June, July an August 2. Ban night fishing, 3. Ban purse-seining, 4. Effect a ban on trawling in the 20 kilometer limit of inshore waters, 5. Bring pension schemes for the fish workers. 6. Implementation of Babu Paul Commission Report, 7. Avoid middlemen from fish marketing 8. Grant pattah for the dwelling places of the fish workers etc. were the demands. Mathew Aerthayil, *Op.Cit.*, p.52; For details see Appendix-1

²⁵ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 27th May, Sunday, 1984, in Beach Blossoms Documentation, July 1984. (Hereafter BBD)

²⁶ Thoovapara Beach, Mukkadi Beach, Kappad Beach, Puthiyakadavu Beach, Kappakkal Beach, Konnadu Beach, Mukhadar Beach, Chaliyam Beach, Nainamvalappu Beach, Azhiyoor etc. were the centers where KSMTF concentrated their work. See the Kerala Fishermen Struggle, 1884 Malabar Events Chronology (mimeo) in FISS, SRC, Calicut. BBD

mobilising the fisher people to the agitation²⁷. This struggle was a specific avenue through which the communal propaganda got a new vent along the Malabar Coast.

The agitation started on 19th May 1984. Kollam was the major centre where the state secretary of the KSMTF, A. Joseph was in a hunger strike²⁸. In support of this the Kozhikode District president of the KSMTF K.K. Velayudhan and the state Council Member Sister Alice started hunger strike²⁹. The news that a nun was engaged in the hunger strike for the fishermen soon caught the columns of newspapers. Sister Alice declared that the hunger strike was in congruence with the tradition of Mar Maria Eugene, the founder of the Church and with the pro poor ideology of the Church³⁰. The Districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Ernakulam, Alappuzha, Kozhikode witnessed strong agitation³¹. The agitators even seized those mechanised trawlers that violated the fishing limitations³². On May 28th, Father Dominic George and his associates were arrested while picketing the Office of the Fisheries Assistant Director at

²⁷ “The organisation and conscientisation of the Malabar fishermen began in July 1983. It started off with localised struggles for the enforcement of the zoning regulation of the Marine Fisheries Regulation Act of 1981. Local groups of traditional fishermen began to take direct action against the encroachment of mechanised trawlers into the fishing zone exclusively reserved for country rafts fishermen...”, *The Malabar Fishermen Struggle of 1984: Report*, (Mimeo), FISS 8, SRC, Calicut. BBD.

²⁸ *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, 27th May, 1984, BBD.

²⁹ *Malayala Manorama Daily*, 27th May, 1984, BBD.

³⁰ *Kerala Kaumudi Daily*, 28th May, 1984, BBD.

³¹ *Deepika Daily*, 28th May, 1984, BBD.

³² *Ibod*.

West Hill, Kozhikode³³. Gradually, the agitation gained momentum all over Kerala.

The fasting *satyagrahis* of Calicut were arrested and removed to hospital. But others took up the hunger strike. One Sister Filo led the fishermen of Kozhikode and picketed the rail³⁴. On June 8th 1984, a meeting of the Chief-Minister and the representatives of the 18 fishermen organisations took place at Thiruvananthapuram. In this meeting, the Chief Minister gave the representatives the assurances that the night trawling would be banned; the government would go for an appeal against the High Court verdict reducing the purse-seining limit from 22 km. to 10 km.; the amount of the lump-sum grant to the fishermen students would be increased; the government would ensure the availability of 580 kilo litre kerosene for boats; and the old age pension for the fishermen would be instituted as a part of the welfare schemes³⁵. But these assurances were not enough to bring the struggle to an end. The KSMTF decided to continue the struggle as the Chief-Minister followed a negative attitude towards the serious issues raised in the discussion³⁶. At this time, the centre had decided that area up to 10 km. in the sea should be reserved for fishing by non-mechanised boats and beyond 10 km. up to 23 km. for mechanised boats³⁷. Once again there was a discussion between the CM and the fishermen representatives on the 21st

³³ *Malayala Manorama Daily*, 29th May, 1984, BBD.

³⁴ *Calicut Times*, 6th June, 1984, BBD.

³⁵ *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, 9th June, 1984, BBD.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *The Hindu Daily*, 16th June, 1984. BBD.

June. But this discussion also failed³⁸. Abruptly, the leaders decided to call off the strike. Thus, the 50 days old strike was called off 'against a background of the CM's refusal to entertain the idea of a seasonal ban on trawling throughout the coast of Kerala'³⁹. According to Father Jose Kaleekkal, the reasons for this decision were, First, more preparation and propaganda were required to impress those concerned that fisheries resources should be conserved; Second, a number of prominent men had been telling them that the government should be given some time to settle the issue; and Third, the agitators had gone through a lot of hardships during the last two months⁴⁰.

By that time, the agitators' anti-purse seining attitude resulted in the open clash with the mechanised boatmen who operated purse seines⁴¹. This was a crucial dimension of the fishermen struggle of 1984. The struggle was actually intended to organise the fishermen as a class against the Boat owners and their vested interests. In the Malabar region the labourers who fish in the motorised traditional sector also used to go in mechanised boats according to the season⁴². The boundary issue, which was a crucial question around which

³⁸ *Kerala Kaumudi Daily*, 22nd June, 1984. BBD.

³⁹ *Indian Express Daily*, 22nd June, 1984. BBD.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Indian Express Daily*, 1st June, 1984. BBD. "The specific form this struggle took shape was the capture of encroaching mechanised trawlers by traditional fishermen and entrusting the boat to the government authorities for action according to the M F R law. Such incidents took place periodically in various costal villages of Calicut district during the period July 1983 to March 1984", FISS 8 *Op.Cit.*

⁴² The compatibility of both the sectors in Malabar is reported in an Economic Review. It says that the mechanised boats are used for dory fishing in off-season, *ERK- 1982*,; A study on the Chaliyam fishing village also brings such a result, *Livelihood of Fish workers: Participatory Action Plan*, Kerala Institute of Local Administration, Thrissur, November, 2006, p.9.

the whole agitation was developed⁴³, contributed for the fracturing of the self perception as a member of the working class developing among them. Because, the leaders of the agitation tried to push this issue through the use of coercion and conflicts in the sea rather than convincing the state the gravity of the situation by other means. Of course, the fast, hartal and rail blockades were tried but there were frequent occurrences of conflicts in the sea. These conflicts caused the development of animosity among the labour force that worked for the daily food. Soon the issues were subverted and the scenario changed into traditional fisherman fighting against the mechanised boat fisherman. This weakened the struggle internally and divided the workforce on the basis of technology. The issue of crossing of the boundary and the need to use the gears like purse seines become particularly important in the time of lowered catch in the 1980s⁴⁴. This condition of scarcity was the background of the agitation. Naturally, it found Boat owners as its enemies. But the boat owning class had not developed in the northern part of Kerala as in the case of the southern areas of Kerala. The major pattern in the motorised purse seine sector in the early eighties in Malabar was that of the owner-worker pattern. At times these fishers who worked in the above sectors came to the non-motorised-boat seine sector also. And the labour

⁴³ “In 1981 January, as a result of the epic struggles of the fishermen in the Southern districts of Kerala, the Nayanar government has passed the Marine Fisheries Regulation Act of Kerala. One of the stipulations of this government law concerned the zoning of the area for fishing. According to this law, the mechanised trawlers are not allowed to fish in waters less than 10 fathoms (60 feet) depth on the Malabar region. Now roughly, 10 fathoms is about 9 kilometres from the shore in Malabar.... So the mechanised boats used to fish merrily in the inshore waters with impunity, rendering the traditional fishermen helpless onlookers of this illegal fishing”. A letter from Dominic George S.J., Socio Religious Centre, Calicut, 28.1.1984, File FISS 25, BBD.

⁴⁴ This aspect was discussed in the Second Chapter.

unions other than KSMTF frequently tried to raise the issue that there was no fisherman who perennially depended upon either of these technological varieties. Further, the interests of the boat owners never come to the fore as an object of attack, on the contrary, the fish workers themselves engaged in fighting one another. The actual labourer became a goonda in other's eyes. While the struggle brought a fracture in the class-consciousness, it had also contributed for the communalisation of the Malabar Coast, because the criticisms levelled against this struggle had pronounced communal overtones.

The most catching criticisms were those pertaining to the foreign link, conversion interest and communalising impact of the Movement. C.P. Madhavan, the General Secretary of the BJP led Kerala Pradesh Matsya Pravarthaka Sangham alleged that the KSMTF was not representing the entire traditional fishermen of the North zone and the members of the Federation were not wholly traditional fishermen; and according to him, the allegation of Chief-Minister that there was foreign fund behind the agitation only strengthened this argument⁴⁵. The BJP State President K.G. Marar also demanded that the Chief-Minister must clarify, from which country they received the foreign fund and he added that this agitation was part of the conversion attempts⁴⁶. The RSS led a procession from the Kamburam beach to the Nagaram Police Station in Kozhikode shouting slogans against Sr. Alice, K.K.Velayudhan and Father Dominic and alleged that Dominic and

⁴⁵ The name of the Daily is not clear from the Documentation, BBD, p.24.

⁴⁶ *Chandrika Daily*, 4th June, 1984, BBD.

associates trying to disturb the communal harmony of the coast⁴⁷. They also said that we would not allow the 'cross harvest' of the high range areas in the coastal region⁴⁸. *Janayugam* Daily reported that the RSS was trying to pave the way for a tension in Vellayil by giving the fishermen agitation a communal colour⁴⁹. *Sthiratha*, another local newspaper alleged that the struggle was the attempt of the Fathers to woo the people of Vellayil-Puthiyappa area; and trying to split the fishermen on the basis of the crafts they use⁵⁰. The office bearers of the Malabar Traditional Fishermen Mechanised Boat Organisation (*Malabar Paramparagatha Matsya Thozhilali YanthraValkrutha Boat Samghatana*) also had the opinion that the agitation was to facilitate conversion by dividing the fishermen of the coastal area and they further stated that even the division like country craftsmen and the boat men was irrelevant to this region because there was no wealthy, single individual owner here on the one hand and it was the very persons who fish with country crafts were using the boat also⁵¹. A meeting of Matsya Thozhilali Congress at Mukhadar Beach opined that the agitation of KSMTF under the leadership of the Clergy aided by the Naxalites was not for the benefits of the fish worker but for religious conversion⁵². An article in *Chandrika* Daily, shaking away its earlier reservations in attacking the

⁴⁷ *Janayugam* Daily, 7th June, 1984, BBD.

⁴⁸ *Chandrika* Daily, 7th June, 1984, BBD.

⁴⁹ *Janayugam* Daily, 7th June, 1984, BBD.

⁵⁰ *Sthiratha* Daily, 7th June, 1984, BBD.

⁵¹ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 8th June, 1984, BBD.

⁵² *Al-Amin* Daily, 9th June, 1984, BBD.

struggle, vehemently criticised the agitation. Referring to the past history of Beach Blossoms, the article said that the Beach Blossoms Project was indifferent to achieve the genuine right of the fishermen guaranteed by the government schemes; but attracted people by conducting colourful *Gramamelas* (Village Festivals) and the agitators were not keen in resisting the boats from Kollam operating on the Kozhikode coast because they were neither of Raman or Ahmed nor of Muhammad or Krishnan; and the interest behind these efforts were religious conversion⁵³. *Janmabhoomi* said that the conflicts occurred at Azhiyoor, Vatakara, Quilandy, Vellayil, Mukhadar Beypore etc. were the examples that this agitation made the Malabar coast a tense area; further, there were attempts to bring Christian fishermen from Kolachal to settle at Malabar region⁵⁴. The fishermen of congress led organisation held a procession at Kozhikode and warned against ‘the attempts of some who came for service and now trying to split the fishermen’⁵⁵. The meeting that followed pointed that it was unscientific to determine the fishing limits in the sea. The propaganda in Kozhikode had its logical conclusion in the arrival of a group of *Samnyasis* from the Viswa Hindu Parishad (VHP) to visit Vellayil, Puthiyangadi, and Puthiyappa to ‘solve the problems of fishermen and to find socio-economic remedies for their grievances’⁵⁶.

⁵³ *Chandrika Daily*, 10th June, 1984 BBD.

⁵⁴ *Janmabhoomi Daily*, 13th June, 1984.

⁵⁵ *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, 17th June, 1984.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

It would be appropriate to infer from the above discussion that the Indian National Congress (INC), IUML and BJP strongly opposed the fishermen agitation of 1984 in Malabar region. The most resorted strategy was to communalise the agitation and to oppose it. But in the course of this strategy they also raised some issues related with the form of ownership existing in the Malabar Coast and the peculiar nature of fishing here. The agitation tried to bring the issue of the fishermen rights over the sea as commons. But this issue did not come to the fore on the contrary the traditional fishermen were pitted against the mechanised boat labourers. The struggle had not fetched its declared aims. This struggle was notable for two reasons. 1. It was incapable of handling the fracturing process already started within the labour force because of its own communitarian character. Thus it hampered the process of the development of secular consciousness based on the unity of fishermen's interests as a class and provided spaces for communalism and 2. The direct communal propaganda by the political parties further strengthened the communalisation of the coastal life. Still, secular organisations are weak in coastal politics. "If we take the case of the political affiliation of the fishermen of the Malabar Coast, then majority of them got affiliation with the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), given the predominance of the Muslim Community in the Malabar Coast. Next comes the Bharatheeya Janatha Party (BJP). Congress and Communist party exist only in some pockets"⁵⁷. Hence, the fishermen struggle of 1984 very well

⁵⁷ Baby John, MCITRA,

revealed the ambivalence of the working class consciousness and it made the fishers susceptible to the communal ideology.

The Post-Struggle Scenario

As we discussed in the previous chapters, the mechanisation and motorisation made many changes in the craft-gear combination in Kerala. A study conducted at Tuticorin, in Tamilnadu reveal the disappearance of many traditional nets.⁵⁸ And in Goa, mechanisation resulted in the complete disappearance of the traditional ways of fishing by the mid-1990s.⁵⁹ The fishers of the Malabar Coast also testified to this fact⁶⁰. In Malabar, the motorisation of the existing dugout-Boat seine combination could not go much to deeper areas and hence the fishers experimented with modifications in the crafts and gear. According to one study by CMFRI on the developments at Kozhikode: “With the introduction of out board engines, the traditional dug-out canoes were replaced by plank-built boats with transom stern for effective use of engines. Subsequently, many of these boats were coated with fibreglass. In September, 1988, ring nets were introduced here which slowly made other important gears, that were in operation, obsolete.”⁶¹

⁵⁸ “A preliminary investigation in Tuticorin region indicates that *chalavalai*, *valavalai*, *paruvalai*, *thirukkaivalai*, *sinkiralvalai*, *thallumdi* and hooks and line, are the prominent gear operated by sail boats. During the last few years, the traditional gears like *madiivalai* and *ralvalai* have gone completely out of operation and the utilisation of shore-seines declined drastically. The emerging new gears in recent years in this area are *thallumdi* and disco nets.” R. Sathiadas, ‘Comparative economic Efficiency of Sail Boats Operating Different Gears in Tamilnadu’, *MFIS*, No.97, July 1989,pp.8-16.

⁵⁹ “In this state traditional way of marine fishing has almost disappeared. About 96% of the total marine fish catch of the state was accounted for mechanised fishing comprising purse seiners and trawlers. About 3% of the catch was through motorized country crafts and only 1% by non-motorized traditional sector” K.K.P.Panikkar et.al.”An Economic Evaluation of Purse Seine Fishery along Go Coast”, in *MFIS*, No.127 February-March, 1994, pp.4-8.

⁶⁰ Prabhakaran, 60 years former fisherman, Beypore, interview on 25.12.2008

⁶¹ T.M.Yohannan and M.Sivadas, “Impact on Ring Net on the Mackerel Fishery at Calicut”, in *MFIS*, No.119, January, February - 1993, pp.1-3.

At the same time, many traditionally used gears were either replaced or modified.

The ring seine was a much expensive active gear type that could catch all varieties of pelagic fishes⁶². The Ring seine (Valachil Vala) was popular among the fishermen of Nattika in Thrissur District, Parappanangadi, Ponnani and Koottayi in Malappuram District, Chaliyam, Marad, Chombala, Puthiyappa, and Beypore in Kozhikode District, Kasba in Kasargode District etc⁶³. At Kannur also ring seines replaced the old *kollivala*⁶⁴. In Kasargode this gear type was known as *Rani Vala*⁶⁵. The 1991 Census by the South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies (SIFFS) named the region north of Neendakara up to Manjeswaram as the *ring seine belt*⁶⁶. This gear underwent many modifications through the period. When it was introduced it was of 100-125 metres length and this was operated from the Wooden or Plank-Built traditional Canoes, popularly known as *Chundan Vallam* in Kozhikode region⁶⁷. These *Chundan Vallams* were fitted with O B Ms (Out Board

⁶² Moideen Koya, Kappakkal.

⁶³ Zeenath C.K., Koya, (55), Koottayi fisherman, interview on 3.1.2009. and Mathai V.D., *Malabar Fisheries An over view*, MCITRA, p.5. (Mimeo)

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ There are local variations in the operation style of this gear. In Kasargode, this gear is used in combination with more than two dug out canoes, whereas, in the areas south of Kasargode, two motorized boats jointly does the operation and when it comes to the southern Calicut and south of Calicut, single motorised boats assisted with a carrier boat is used for operation. For details see, *A Census of the Artisanal Marine Fishing Fleet of Kerala 1998*, (CAMFF-1998), SIFFS, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development (KRPLLD), CDS, September, 1999, pp.21-23.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.19.

⁶⁷ The *Chundan Vallam* is a modified form of *Thanguvallam* of Neendakara, interview with Sidhique Chaliyam, Manager, Malabar Federation of Fishermen Societies (MFFS), Calicut. on 16.1.2009.

Motors). It was not a matter of wonder that new experiments in the crafts and gear took place and new ones replaced the older ones. A gradual increase in the length of the ring net took it from the old 100-125 metres to a nearly one km length by the close of 1990s⁶⁸. In Kozhikode, by the 1990s fibreglass coated plywood boats have become the main craft instead of dugout canoes and flat bottom plank built boats⁶⁹. With the increase in the size of the gear, there was corresponding increase in the power of the engine also. The increase in the horsepower was not only related with the size of the gear but it was more crucial in the chasing and the encircling operations in the fishing ground. In the hauling operation of this big net, the technology of winches introduced by the mid-nineties,⁷⁰ greatly helped the fish worker. Now this gear is used in crafts measuring up to 60-70 ft length that carry 32 to 40 people with IBMs (In Board Motors) that costs up to 40 to 50 Lakhs⁷¹. They catch sardine, Mackerel, Pomfret, Prawns, and Big-jawed jumper etc. This was the most popular gear type used in the Malabar region. Ring seine was regarded as a response by the traditional fishermen to the increasing competition they face from the mechanised fishing fleet. It was also proved a danger to the fish resources⁷². Along with this, gillnets, cast nets etc. were also used⁷³. The ring-seine unit was assisted with two carrier boats. This was

⁶⁸ Thekkethodi Devadas, Marad, Fisherman, interview on 30.1.2009.

⁶⁹ M.Sivadas, "Present Status of The Drift Net Fishery at Vellayil, Calicut", in *MFIS*, No.127, February-March, 1994, pp, 1-4.

⁷⁰ CAMFF-1998, *Op.Cit.*, p.23.

⁷¹ Zeenath. C.K., Kappakkal.

⁷² *The Hindu*, 8th June 1999.

⁷³ Koya, Koottayi.

to take away the catch to the shore. Because the main craft carried the gear and the crew and there would not be any space left for the storage of the catch. Further, it was not possible to beach the main craft and that would be anchored in the sea. The profit was often divided 40:60 between capital and labour.

Motorised Non-Ring Seine Sector

In the different coastal districts of North Kerala, the old dugout canoes were replaced with the mechanised or motorised crafts and the modern types of active gears⁷⁴. The prevalence of the motorised non-Ring seine sector was also found as a complementary sector that would provide employment opportunities for the fishers when the ring seines were not operated⁷⁵. Still, at some centres the prevalence of traditional dug out canoes and gill net combination could be seen. At Kappakkal, in Kozhikode there were 20 dug out canoes operating with the traditional nets⁷⁶. These were small out board units of 8 H.P. operating with 2 to 4 people. The advantage of this fishing unit was that when compared with the Ring Seine it needed only low investment⁷⁷. These units used a wide variety of nets viz. Ayilavala (Mackerel Net) Mathivala (Sardine Net), Choodavala and Avolivala (Pomfret net) etc⁷⁸. Elathur was another region where the fishing practice was found to be predominantly traditional⁷⁹. At Mukhadar and Nainam Valappu villages in Kozhikode Coast also there was a concentration of fishermen using

⁷⁴ Mathai V.D., *Op.Cit.*

⁷⁵ CAMFF-1998, *Op.Cit.*,p.23.

⁷⁶ Sajira. C.K. (26),Activist, Kappakkal. Interview on 22.12.2008.

⁷⁷ Moideen Koya, Kappakkal.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ ERK- 1982, p.53

traditional craft-gear combination⁸⁰. The traditional fishing was comparatively safe in the era of technology and capital build up because the market fluctuations would not affect this sector in a considerable way.

Mechanised Trawling Boats

The other dominant sector of the fishing in Malabar was the Mechanised trawling boats. This sector was dominant in the major fishing hamlets having fishing harbours like, Beypore, Puthiyappa, and Mappila Bay etc. This was not a part of the artisanal fishery. But many a fishing hamlet switched over to this technology. The trawling boats are of different types. There were big trawlers conducting multi day fishing and small boats for single day fishing. The big boats cost around Rs.45,00,000. The trawler boats needed more investment and they were more income returning. A boat returning from the sea after multi day fishing may bring the fish cost up to 5 to 6 lakhs. It mostly catches the high valued demersal varieties.

Hence, by the close of the 1990s, the major pattern in the fishing technology of the Malabar region could be summarised like this, the *Chundanvallam*-ring seine combination come to the fore as the dominant craft-gear combination seconded by the trawling boats. The non-motorised gillnet fishery existed there as a complementary sector for both the above. It was also notable that there was a polarisation within the traditional sector that along with the traditionally used passive gears, new active and dangerous

⁸⁰ "Theeradesha Mekhalayil Nilavilulla Smpathika Prathisandhiyum Karanangalum - Kozhikode Theera Paschathalathil Oru Anweshanam", (Mimeo), (Mal), MCITRA, October, 2005,p.6.

gears like the Ring Seine and Mini trawl nets were also introduced and become dominant and popular in the general condition of the decreasing fish wealth⁸¹. The increase in the number of nets and crafts did not ensure prosperous life for the fish worker. In contrast, the fish wealth was decreasing and the fishing technology was adversely affecting the fisher population⁸².

Money Mobilisation

The amount for a ring seine unit was mobilised by share. Four or five people take Rs.1, 00,000 each and then some amount would be collected as loan from the middlemen popularly known as *tharakans*⁸³, of the different shores where there was a possibility of the catch being landed. The *tharakans* were financiers or moneylenders who did the fish trade also. The fishers received loans from the *tharakans* on condition of advance mortgage of catch⁸⁴. They purchased the catch at a rate lower than prevailing in the market. Some amount would be collected as *Panku* share. This was a peculiar share that the shareholder was not going for fishing and claimed a share from the labourer's due but was not entitled to the share as the owner. Usually, Rs. 1,00,000/ was regarded as one *Panku*. That meant each day after fishing, one

⁸¹ "Matsya Mekhala – Matsya Thozhilali Samudaya Vikasana Vedi – Kerala, Nayarekha", (Mimeo), (Mal.) Trivandrum, 1997,p.4.

⁸² *Deshabhimani* Daily, 22nd October 1995.

⁸³ Musthafa, Field Worker, MFFS. Interview on 16.1.2009. Tharakans are also known as *Kuttikkar*.

⁸⁴ When the fish is landed, the arrival of the moneylender directly or his men to the sea shore will remain one of the picture given by David Hardiman of the Baniya usurer coming with carts to their client's threshing floors to demand the grains in return for the amount previously advanced. See David Hardiman, *Feeding the Baniya Peasants and Usurers in Western India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1996, p.1.

share from the labourer's due has to be set apart for the investment of Rs. One lakh. If there were *Panku* investment in a fishing unit amounts to Rs 25,00,000/ then it would be assumed at the time of profit sharing that 25 additional labourers were there. This type of share, some times, formed more than half of the total investment because the investment for the crafts and gear has become very high today. *Panku* was a traditional system of shareholding in a fishing unit. Then the fishers who were unable to go to fishing were generally held this type of shares. But now, the *panku* holder, generally speaking, is a fish operator who did not go for fishing. Some times he would have no relation with the fishery field at all. There were opinions that the businessmen from the jewellery field now come and invest in the crafts and gear in the fishing field⁸⁵. The hotel and textile owners also entered the fishing sector⁸⁶. They could have entered in the sector as owners. But they could not break the traditional ways of work organisation straightaway. Hence, the traditional spaces were utilised to get an entry to the field. These new trends show a changing pattern in the ownership and work organisation existed in the coast. But in effect, the traditional ways of work organisation was gradually changing while at the same time maintaining its traditional contours. Hence it would be contextual to take a note on the shifts in the nature of ownership and work organisation among the fishers.

⁸⁵ T. Suresh,(50), Marad, General Secretary, Hindu Aikyavedi, interview on 10.01.2009

⁸⁶ Musthafa, MFFS.

The Nature of Ownership

From the beginning of the 20th century onwards, there existed a collective ownership over the means of production- the dugouts and the Boat seines. The British actually did not interfere in the ownership pattern of the means of production and the attempts to modernise the fishing practices were eschewed halfway in the 1930s. But their attempts to interfere in the trade related aspects proved successful. This was for this purpose that they imposed a tax on the salt and then started fish curing yards; guano and oil factories etc. these measures had their implications on the life of the fish worker as have seen that it brought internal stratification within the fishing population. This internal stratification and social dislocation made some fishing groups the clients of moneylenders and it favoured some to consolidate themselves as moneylenders and the industrialists along the coast.

The usual practice was a collective ownership over the dugout and boat seine. This pattern more or less continued up to the 1970s. About the fishermen of Tanur, P.R.G. Mathur said that, “a fishing unit is owned either by a single individual or by a number of persons. The general pattern is the joint ownership.”⁸⁷ One could be a partner in a fishing unit by providing anything that was an essential material for fishing like oar, net, coir etc. His share would be calculated accordingly. The shareholders in a fishing unit were called *pakutikkar*. Majority of them worked in their units as fishing labourers. If such a shareholder could not go for fishing, then he was

⁸⁷ P.R.G. Mathur, *The Mappila Fisherfolk of Kerala A Study in inter-relationship between Habitat, Technology, Economy, Society and Culture*, Kerala Historical Society, Trivandrum, 1977, pp.29-32., p.183.

supposed to provide as many labourers as his partnership demanded. For instance an *arakkal pakuthikkaran* (owner of 1/8th share in a fishing unit) has to provide one labourer, *ara pakuthikkaran* (owner of 1/2 share in a fishing unit) four labourers and six labourers by *Mukkal pakuthikkaran* (owner of 3/4 share in a fishing unit) and so on⁸⁸. A *Karanavar*, who have invested more money on the unit supervised the judicious distribution of the catch among the differently graded shareholders, would manage the unit. Hence a type of redistributive sharing economy with some gradation existed on the coast. A family jointly owned, some times, the means of production.

The labourers were selected by giving an advance payment. This advance made the labourer a permanent member of the crew. If the labourer wanted to leave the present owner, he had to pay off the debt. This was usually done on some particular days. Normally the labourer getting into agreement with another owner demanded an amount in advance from the would-be owner and pays off his debt to the old owner. This was known as *mattakayattam*⁸⁹. The labour would also get a share of the catch. The fisher was not a ‘worker’ (*Thozhilali*) at this point but a member or a part of a mutually protecting system. For instance, John Kurien had discussed the income and fish sharing patterns that existed in the southern coast of Kerala⁹⁰. The fish-sharing pattern was a deeply instituted practice of care and

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.183-84

⁸⁹ Ayyappetty, (70), Mndalam kundu beach, interview on 3-6-2007. He remembers that in older times *mattakayattam* was on *karkidaka samkraram* i.e the last of the malayalam month of *mithunam* (May-June). But now it is observed in the mid *Edavam*(April-May).

⁹⁰ John Kurien, “The Socio-Cultural Aspects of Fisheries: Implications for food and Lively-hood Security – A case study of Kerala state, India”, Thiruvananthapuram, www.fao.org. (Hereafter, Socio-Cultural Aspects.)

concern. The first charge of fish brought ashore from fishing trip was for those who are not able to go to sea. These include persons such as widows, those physically and mentally handicapped. The next priority was for the fish consumption needs of the crew and the shore workers attached to the fishing unit who help in launching and beaching the craft⁹¹. The fishermen of Puthankadappuram testified to the existence of such a practice in the northern coast also⁹². But now this practice could not be seen in any of the hamlets in the northern part of Kerala except in Kasba village in Kasargode District.

It was with the introduction of the modern technology that there occurred a change in the collective income sharing or redistributive system, which invariably affected the earlier ownership and work organisation. With the motorisation, the old craft-gear combinations were replaced with new ones. This change was a capital intensive one. More capital was spent on the means of production for the sake of survival and out of expectations of better catch especially in the atmosphere of depleting resources and increasing competition. But the increased capital input did not generate a corresponding profit. At the time of the introduction of new type of craft and gear the capital input needed was as low as could be raised by a group of fishers and the contribution of the non-fishing owner was around 20% in 1988⁹³. But

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Interview with the fishermen, Puthan Kadappuram, Parappananagadi, 24-10-2003.

⁹³ Nalini Nayak, "Continuity and Change in Artisanal Fishing Communities A Study of Socio-Economic Conditions of Artisanal Fishing Communities on the South-Wes Coast of India Following Motorisation of Fishing Crafts", (Hereafter, Continuity and Change) (Mimeo), PCO and SIFFS, Trivandrum, 1993, p.32.

gradually, subtle changes took place in the partnership system and the income sharing etc. New companies began to be formed with 40 or more persons that constituted a unit. They followed a division of labour and share among themselves and maintained a worker-owner pattern of the older period. But it also created problems. Nalini Nayak observed on the condition at Parappanangadi during 1988 that, “But this pattern of share-holding in Parappanangadi has created its own problems... While introduction of the larger crafts, especially the new Alleppey crafts, has led fishermen to adopt the pattern of shared ownership, these shares are not equal. There are some who have a 1/10 share or even a 1/5 share, but there are others who may have a 1/20 or 1/23 share. This makes for big differences when the share is divided 40:60 between capital and labour. The young group call this the coming of capitalism because now there are also non-fishing owners with big shares. This leads to what they call ‘unemployment’. The bigger shareholders have the right of employing the labour they like”⁹⁴. Thus, the fishers had an objective self-perception that they were the part of a capitalist system and hence constituted a class. But this newly emerging capitalist system, incorporated some traditional elements from the coastal life with it. For example, the size and type of the craft and gear and the number of persons employed in one unit etc were changed. The old sharing system continued, but it was found ineffective as it incorporated new elements in fishing such

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.37.

as the moneylenders and shareholders (pankukar). The new form of sharing was not equitable or even rational, as a major part of the returns would go to the major shareholder or moneylender. This would also lead to disguised unemployment, as all members of the settlements cannot be accommodated in the new system. That is there would be a section of fishermen who neither provide money nor provide the necessary craft and gear, and remain as necessary accessory labour for fishing. Moreover, the ritualism of the traditional castes also was incorporated within it. Further, the fish worker had a relative autonomy in deciding the fishing season, time, the type of craft and gear to be used and in fixing the share pattern (the old share pattern is retained in many cases) etc. This relative autonomy and the elements of tradition helped the fish workers in the capitalist structure to think of themselves as 'traditional fishermen', though they were in the process of being incorporated into the capitalist system as they themselves observed. Further, the new system was found ineffective in creating a surplus for every shareholder. These physical realities prevented them from subjectively perceiving themselves as members of a working *class*. In other words, the capitalist relations incorporated the fish worker to its fold with the traditionalism among them. The traditional caste identities predominant among them facilitated the formation of the modern community identities like Araya, Mukkuva or Dheevara and Pudu Islam or Muslim etc, in spite of their increasing incorporation into the capitalist framework. Hence one could

see a contradictory process in the development of the class-consciousness. Objectively they become the part of a working class but subjectively they retained their community identity. The old collective rhythm of life and the redistributive sharing system were retained at an emotional level through the articulation of modern community. This helped the communal forces also to exploit the fish workers for their purposes.

With the substantial increase in the size and design of the craft, the investment also increased substantially. For instance, the ring seine at the close of the 1980s cost Rs. 4 to 6 lakhs. In the subsequent years a number of alterations were made in the craft with respect to its size, length of the gear, HP of the motor, the material, the conveniences available in the boat etc. By the year 2005, the cost of a ring seine unit was between 35 to 40 Lakhs⁹⁵. With this increased investment, the instruments of production were actually owned by the non-fishermen because the share of the fishermen became low. The need of the high rate of capital helped the non-fishing owner to improve their position on the coastal area and he consolidated himself as the *Panku* holder. As the *Panku* share was always above that of the actual fishers, he claimed a larger share from the labourer's due. It naturally eroded the amount of share of catch due to the actual fisher and pointed to the increasing proletarianisation in the sector. The *Panku* holder, at times, appointed his own supervisor or fish agent on the coast. And sometimes, he entrusted

⁹⁵ Musthafa, MFFS.

labourers even from outside the fishing sector. The actual fisher once had a holding right over the means of production now changed in to a wage labourer or a coolie but without sufficient consciousness about his class identity. In this process of evolution, the class of financiers, the *tharakans* also underwent changes. It was the *tharakans* who advanced the daily working capital to the fishers. New financiers came to the scene, who took loans from the banks to finance the fishers. Some times they emerged from the fishermen themselves⁹⁶. *Tharakans* actually were not owners of the means of production but were, in most cases, the technical owners of the catch. And they claimed a share of the catch and 5% commission as auctioning charges.

In the mechanised trawling sector, there have been a clear divide between the owner and the worker because, the capitalist trend was even more clear there than in the motorised sector. Since 1960, it was the moneyed capitalist who invested in the trawling boats directly making the fisher a wage labourer. Hence the class difference was very pronounced in this sector. But in the motorised sector, certain degree of ambivalence existed with respect to the class position. They themselves perceived as ‘traditional fisherman’ but actually were transformed in to a fish worker. A further comment may also be made here that the motorisation disrupted the clear division between the modern and traditional sectors. Moreover, in the initial

⁹⁶ Komukkutty of Chaliyam was an earlier fisherman but later turned to financing the fishers, Mohammed Shias, (40), Chaliyam, Teacher, interview on 15.2.2009.

years of motorisation, the fish worker worked in both these sectors according to the season and nature of the climate. However, at the same time the different categories of technology as discussed earlier affected the cohesiveness of the fishers as a *class* and a feeling of fragmentation grew with the growth of technology.

While the intensification of the new technology resulted in the fragmentation of the self-perception of the fishermen as workers on the one hand, on the other, the capital input into the sector showed another trajectory. New fishing units were put into the sector with the help of the outside investors group. Fishermen also contributed their nominal share to these units. As the capital was shared between the investors and the fishermen, the profit was also shared among them. This sharing was not the old redistributive system. But it was a clear profit sharing on the basis of the pre-arranged agreement. Here theoretically, the fisher became a fish worker because the old mutual protective economy gave way to a wage labour system. With respect to the *production*, the increased input need not fetch a corresponding output. The fisher was increasing the efficiency of the craft and gear for the increase of catch and profit. That is why the more active gears were employed by the fishing units in the place of the old passive gears. But this active gears and capital input did not ensure the catch. Hence, it was natural from the part of a fishing unit to prevent the coming of the additional units to the fishing ground to ensure and increase their catch. This

actually was a form of negative competition. Hence the advent of technology not only brought fragmentation of the class perception of the fisher but it also generated a negative competition for the scarce resources.

Fish Marketing

The money mobilising system on the coast involving the *tharakan*, *Panku* holder and the fish worker was closely related with the fish marketing. There were a number of markets in these regions. Earlier, runners took the fish to the markets. The old runners were not seen now. The lorries and the auto rickshaws now took their role in transportation. 'The fish caught was straightway taken by the agent (*tharakan*) waiting on the shore. Since the owners of the craft and gear bought advance from the agent, the owner has to surrender the catch to the agent. The agent has the privilege to fix the price of the catch. From the gross amount he will deduct his 5% commission and buy the fish. In this system there is no actual auction of the fish'⁹⁷. This statement shows that the fish caught did not belong to the fish workers who caught it. But it belonged to the *tharakan* with whom the fishers as a group had some kind of economic indebtedness because the fishers took money from him as the daily working capital. This resulted in the alienation of the fish worker from the labour process. The fish worker went for fishing with the working capital borrowed from the *tharakan* for interest or in the boat primarily

⁹⁷ Prabhakaran Beypore; Moideen Koya, Kappakkal.

owned by the *Panku* holder. He was a mere dependent of those who invested money. These factors extend the degree of alienation of the fish worker.

Even the right over the first sale was taken away from the fish worker by the catch selling mechanism prevailing on the coast. Government organised Co-Operative societies to help the fish worker to conduct the first sale of the catch through the Societies. But this system, as we saw, also not working. Another comment on the auction runs as follows, 'Here proper auction is absent. The auction procedures are controlled by the capitalist and the societies are not getting opportunities to conduct it because in some way the fishermen are indebted'⁹⁸. Some say that the fish worker is not getting the actual price for the fish caught. 'This affects the income of the fish worker adversely. The net amount due to the fish worker is not wholly paid on the spot. He will give something to the fish worker. The rest will be given later. The fisherman does not know what is his debt and what is his due'.⁹⁹ A fish trader said, 'we advance Rs.50, 000 to Rs.2, 00000 to boats. A boat with 5 men in the crew may bring average catch ranging from Rs. 5000 to 10,000. We will get 5% as commission from each boat. We advance money without any agreement. Sometime we will act as the intermediary between the boat and the wholesaler. Today there is no open auction. The buyers will whisper the amount in the ears of the fish worker'¹⁰⁰. A report on Quilandy says of the

⁹⁸ S. Sheeja, (40)Secretary, Manathala Matsya Thozhilali Vikasana Kshema Co-operative Society, interview on 19.6.2008.

⁹⁹ Zeenath. C.K., Kappakkal.

¹⁰⁰ Udayan, (42), fish trader, Beypore. Interview on 7-1.2009.

fish workers that, ‘they are also, like other labourers put in the trap of the middlemen and capitalists...their helplessness is exploited by the *tharakans*, middlemen and usurers....at the same time, as the fish workers take loan to buy craft and gear from the capitalists, they are trapped in another way. They have to give a sum as the share of the profit to the capitalists’¹⁰¹.

The auctioneers or the commission agents took the fish from the fish worker and then handed it over to the wholesaler. They consigned a good deal of the export varieties like Prawn, Cuttle fish and Squid to the processing companies of Mangalapuram and Kochi¹⁰². The other varieties like the sardine and Mackerel etc. were taken to the market through the retailers. Then it was taken to the fish markets by vehicles. In this transaction to the wholesaler and the processing or export units these agents acted as middlemen. In this activity also, they got some commission. Finally the wholesaler and the exporter sale or export the fish at a good rate and reaped a good amount of profit. This profit seldom returns to the sector for the fish workers’ development. In the area between Kozhikode and Mangalore, the maximum sales took place during the months of August, September and October and minimum sales of fish take place during May, June and July¹⁰³, because the monsoon and pre-monsoon periods were lean months for the fish workers. The Government institutions like the Matsya Fed could not intervene in the issue effectively. In majority of the Co-Operative Societies

¹⁰¹ “Koyilandyile Nirdhishta Matsya Bandhana Thuramukham, (Parimitikalum Sadhyadakalum)”, (Mal) (Mimeo), MCITRA, Kozhikode, 2005. p.2.

¹⁰² Prabhakaran Beypore.

¹⁰³ Joju J. Mangaly, “A Research Study on Fish Trade In North Kerala”, (Mimeo), A Beach Blossoms Documentation Paper, October, 1983, pp.1-26.

under the Matsya Fed beach auction was not taking place. At some places the private commission agents have strong relations with the political parties and they prevent the initiatives taken by the societies for beach auction¹⁰⁴.

Thus, the fish worker was exploited in different layers. First, the money advanced by the commission agent was not practically interest free though theoretically it appeared to be so. Because, the commission of the agent was a type of interest while the principal remains unpaid. Secondly, the worker was not getting the actual price of his catch and the third party fixed the price of the catch. Some observed that auction was a type of cheating¹⁰⁵. Thus, a middleman-contractor-moneylender nexus did the financing for the industry. The ordinary fish worker was always compelled to modify the craft and the gear in the wake of the resource depletion and competition. This made the fish worker a dependent of the money lending class. Some observe that the creation of the *haves and have-nots* in the fishery sector was direct result of the modernisation; it made the sector tension ridden¹⁰⁶.

The post-mechanisation, post-motorisation period brought many changes in the fishery field. The effect of these changes on the labourer was multifarious. It fragmented the developing class identity of the labourer, the new changes alienated the labourer from the labour process and finally a form of negative competition was brought into operation. The fragmentation

¹⁰⁴ M.Bapputty Koottayi(42), District General Secretary, Malappuram District Matsya Thozhilali Union (CITU). Interview conducted on 19.11.2008.

¹⁰⁵ Baby John, MCITRA.

¹⁰⁶ See the conclusions, "Utharavdithva poornamaya Matsya Paripalanam Pankalitha Silpa Sala", (Mimeo), (Mal), MCITRA, n.d.p.4.

of the self perception of the fisher as a member of the working class was not only the outcome of the ambivalence regarding the class existence, but also fallout of the categorisation of the technological varieties into different fishing limits and zones. The KMFRA and the later legislations in the fishery sector allotted different spaces for different technologies in the sea. This was the beginning of the loss of property right of the fishers over the sea and the coming of the non-fisher operators to the scene that was coincided with the tragedy of the commons. This pursued the labourer of a traditional craft to see the labourer of a *ChundanVallam*-Ring seine unit as an *enemy*. The same was the relation of the *ChundanVallam*-Ring seine labourer vis-à-vis the trawler labourer. This helped for the development of solidarity based on the sectoral varieties rather than a class solidarity cutting across it. The alienation of the fish worker was evident from the fact that the catch brought ashore technically belonged to the moneylender or the middleman. Further, the overwhelming nature of the *panku* share expropriated the labourer even from the meagre subsistence share entitled to him as labourers. This accelerated the process of proletarianisation of the labourer. In these circumstances, the unit wise catch and income dwindled because of the depletion of resources and the overcrowding of the crafts in the sea. The one and only way sought by the fishers to overcome this situation was to increase the craft effectiveness and the number of fishing units. The formation of fishing companies by the artisanal fishers testified to this fact. This maximisation of technology for the maximisation of catch need not improve the competing

power of the unit. The absolute increase in the catch might not keep a positive correlation with the additional investment the investor made. Since the new entrepreneur cannot hope to ensure profit through normal competitive methods because of the peculiarity of the marine produce, the fish, that they are not standard factory products, the competition always involved the denial of resources to the other. The profits in the competition over a renewable natural resource like fish are not only related with the investment one makes but it is also related with the number of other units in operation for the same resource. Hence, the feature of this negative competition was the negation or prevention of the other fishing units from fishing.¹⁰⁷

For the proper functioning of this competition, it needed a platform. The class ideology could not be used as a platform because of many reasons. On the one hand, there was ambivalence and fragmentation in class-consciousness as we saw. The same fragmentation exists among the capitalists also, as one is always forced to be at the throats of the other. On the other, the supposed class enemy, the capitalist or the investor in the sector could camouflage himself as a fisher, or otherwise he would not be present on the shore or in the fishing ground. Moreover, the labourers of other fishing units, the *class allies*, were seen as threat to one's catch. Hence, this negative competition had to evoke the fishermen autonomy and related

¹⁰⁷ Scholars characterised the same phenomenon as economic and biological over fishing, John Kurien and T.R.Thankappan Achari, *On Ruining the Commons and the Commoner The Political Economy of Over Fishing*, W P. No.232, CDS, December 1989,pp.7-8.

concepts like the territory or the fishing zones, technology, ecology etc to forge a platform. The fight between the mechanised purse-seiners and the traditional fishermen on the issue of fishing space is an example of the development of a fighting/competing platform on the basis of fishing zone and technology. Some times this fight took the form of regionalism. Or it used the traditional ritualistic relations of jatis in the modern premises to form communities and a competition would be ensued on the community basis. When the technological divide coincides with the community divide, community becomes the platform of the fight. The hampered development of the class-consciousness encouraged the swing in favour of the modern community identity. The alienation experienced by the fish worker was yet another factor that distorted the real perception of their actual existence. As a result the communitarian institutions emerge as solace and solutions. It was at this juncture that the organisations like the AS and MC emerged as suitable communitarian platforms. Both AS and MC used the traditional *Araya* and *Pudu-Islam* identities through the rituals related with the temples and the mosques. Certain traditional bans and sanctions on certain days and festivals etc were example of this mechanism. At the same time, they led the competition for the modernisation of fishing crafts and gear and financially aided their clients in this. The alienated fisher found an *ideal* climate of protection and mutual cohesion in these communal solidarities rather than in class solidarities. The result was the gradual loss of the fuzziness and the

emergence of discrete communities as proved by the recurrences of tension and conflict on the Kerala Coast. That means the negative competition could take any of the platforms that are discussed above. A further comment may not be out of place that all the conflicts along the coastal area were not class conflicts *per se*, many of the conflicts had an intra-class nature. The best example was provided by the incidents of conflicts happened in connection with the fishermen struggle of 1984.

The role of the capitalist or the owner outside the beach was not one of assuaging this condition of dangerous competition but in abetting this negative competition over scarce resources. The labour agitation of 1984 among the fishers was important because it surfaced the latent contradictions within the fishers of the Kozhikode region. And the later developments increased this contradictions and the fisher became susceptible to the communalist ideologies. The fragmentation of the coastal life and the alienation of the fishers from the labour process facilitated this. In disseminating the logic of *community*, in the coastal area, the role of the social classes on the coast also merits attention.

The Role of Social Classes

We have already mentioned the *non-fishing* groups that had its origin in the colonial period from among the fishermen community. The emergence of this class in the colonial period as the result of the emergence of the new

opportunities provided by the colonial rule like education, reservation in political bodies and the opening up of the new industrial endeavours accelerated the social diversification in the coastal society. Those who entered the public sphere became the advocates of the communitarian demands like occupational and educational reservations. In the post-independence period, these groups became more prominent in the coastal area. We could classify them broadly into four different categories. 1. The educated generation who abandoned fishing and took to the professions like advocates, teachers etc; 2. The money lending class who occupied some important position in the communitarian organisations like the AS and MC; 3. A merchant class with small-scale capital who switched over to fish trade in the Urban/port areas and 4. Boat owners who did not engage in fishing activities¹⁰⁸. These groups often co-operated with the communitarian institutions and the NGOs working on the coast and it rendered the political mobilisations of the fisher folk in a particular way. The role of the SRC in the fishermen mobilisation in the agitation of 1984 was the example of this. As we have explained the educated section of the fisher community co-operated with them. Further, the other three sections extended their support to the neo-communitarian institutions

¹⁰⁸ To cite some examples, the family of Advocate Zeenath and Ms. C.K. Sajira (she is also pursuing her studies in Law at Calicut) was one depending on fishing. Mr. Sidhiq of Chaliyam, who is at present the Manager of the regional Office of SIFFS, is also belonging to the community. These three came to the social life as activists of the NGOs like Beach Blossoms and MCITRA. T. Suresh of Marad, the former Secretary of the AS and P.P. Musthafa, Marad former president of MC, were also known for their money lending activity; P.P. Moideen Koya, Marad, who had a technical qualification from the ITI, was also the president of the MC and abandoned the profession; Udayan of Beypore is a Fish trader who came to the scene in 1980s and after the First riot of Marad he shifted residence from Marad to Beypore; Many Arayas of Marad are now not engaging in fishing directly but manage their mechanised trawling boats.

because they were the products of a historical process that intertwined ‘development’ and ‘underdevelopment’ within it. The ambiguity thus created pushed them to take shelter in the communitarian enclaves.

Further, the ideological approach of the NGOs towards the problems of the fishing sector also needs to be explored. The NGO politics at times prevented the class mobilisation of the fisher population, though they did some commendable works to collect data and its documentation¹⁰⁹. A Trivandrum based joint platform of the NGOs (Fisheries and Fishing Development Forum – Kerala) published a policy document (*Nayarekha*) in 1997 that publicised their approach towards the problems besetting the fishery field¹¹⁰. They perceived the caste contradictions as primary in the sector; and the need to understand the revolutionary possibilities of this contradiction was more important than the ‘class’ issues. The policy document added that there are three important sections depending upon fishing they are Latin, Dheevara, and Muslim sections¹¹¹. But this position carried some degree of ambiguity. Because they claimed that there was a caste contradiction that was not understood by the *thinkers of revolution*, (emphasis in the original)¹¹². When it came to the discussion of the ‘castes’, they always referred to the modern *communities*. Did any of these categories

¹⁰⁹ The services of SRC and MCITRA in this regard are particularly memorable in the context of Malabar.

¹¹⁰ “Matsyamekhala – Matsyathozhilali samudaya vikasanavedy – Kerala (Sannaddha Sanghatanakaludeyum Janakeeya Prasthanangaludeyum Samyuktha vedy) Nayarekha”, Trivandrum, 1997.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.8-11.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p.9.

they referred to – Latin/Dheevara/Muslim – connote to a caste? We know that the answer is an emphatic *No*. It meant that the understanding of the jati by these NGOs was devoid of conceptual clarity. They took jati as the basic unit of social organisation but confused it with the modern organised religions. In that sense they refer to the modern *communities* and not the traditional *Jati*. Dheevara is a common word (in Sanskrit) used for a number of fishing caste groups and thus a superimposed category. They also declared that the class issues were secondary. They were reluctant to see the fishermen as a class and treated them as members of different religious communities. This restoration of the modern communities instead of traditional Jatis was done with three theoretical objectives. First was to by-pass the historical process of transformation under-went by jatis, which would help them to treat jati as a category in cold storage rather than an organic social unit. The second was to reify the community identity in the name of jati, which was more acceptable in a society like India. The third was, a corollary of the earlier two, to underplay the category like class and to ensure the hegemony of the *community* as a monolithic, umbrella entity that subsumes all internal differences. They took the church, Mahallu Committees and Araya Samajam or Dheevara Sabha etc. as the authentic spokesmen of the fish workers. Thus knowingly or unknowingly, this community consciousness was circulated to the ordinary fish workers given their grass root level connections in the coastal area. The NGOs who constituted this platform (Fisheries and Fishing Development Forum – Kerala) from Kozhikode were SRC, MCITRA,

Theeradesa Mahila Federation (TMF), Calicut District Fishermen Development Federation (CDFDF) etc.¹¹³.

The same difficulty was seen in the analysis of the communal conflicts of Kerala Coast by a group of authors, promoted by the NGOs¹¹⁴. The tracing of communal roots in Kerala Coast failed to bring anything substantial because the analyses were not going beyond the opinions of different persons and extracts from holy texts and newspapers and finally found a scapegoat in political parties as the *cause* behind communalism¹¹⁵. Interestingly, this was a conscious effort to depoliticise the entire Kerala coast by abstaining from bringing the present problems (most of the problems were about class contradictions and not about caste contradictions) of fishery sector to such an analysis.

CONCLUSION

The above discussion shows that after the 1980s notable changes took place in the Malabar fisheries. The fishermen agitation of 1984 raised some serious issues regarding the fishing sector. But the fallout of this struggle was not positive as expected. The anti-purse seining attitude of the agitators divided the fishing population on the basis of technology. The critics utilised this as an occasion to question the ideological position of the Jesuit fathers who gave leadership to this struggle. This type of criticism eventually led to

¹¹³ See the list of the General Body, *Ibid*.

¹¹⁴ E.J.Thomas (Ed.), *Vargheeyathayo Matharashreeyathayo? Keralathinte Marunna Mukham*, (Mal), St. Joseph's College, Kannur, 2007.

¹¹⁵ See *Ibid*.

perceiving the struggle as religiously motivated and the analyses were communally framed. Hence the struggle had multiple effects on the Malabar Coast that it brought technological differences in to limelight, at the same time it also communalised the sector. This was the weakness of this movement. In the late eighties, with the introduction of new technologies from the southern part, the investment become high and the ownership pattern and work organisation began to change. These changes, however, did not effect a total alteration of the fishing into a capitalist form. The objective reality of the fish worker forced him to realise himself as a member of the working class. At the same time the subjective reality tied him to the traditional bonds and work pattern. This ambiguity over one's own identity gave enough space for the community identity to develop as an alternative for the lost protection of the traditional redistributive socio-economic system. But the newly ushered in capitalistic relations did not develop into the production of relative surplus as the capital input and the technology could not *produce* better fish as in the case of a factory. Hence the production of surplus always remained at the absolute level, generating a negative competition for the scarce resources in the case of a natural resource like the fish. Here, the earlier concepts of the traditional communities come to the fore as a platform to prepare the fishers for the competition. The developments of the 1980s like the fishermen struggles and the NGOs in the coast were helpful in reifying the community logic. The decline of the social

regulatory institutions and the emergence of the institutions like the AS and MC further abetted this process in the period of high capital need for they lend money for free interest. These developments amply facilitated the maturing of the community concepts into communal in the wake of the competition for resources and coastal space.

CHAPTER V

GENESIS OF SOCIAL CONFLICTS ALONG THE KERALA COAST

We have seen in the previous chapter how the changes in the social and economic relations in the coast resulted in the fragmentation among the fishermen and provided the material basis for the formation of community identities. Now we have to look into the way in which the social conflicts emerged along the coast. In this brief chapter, we intend to provide an overview of the social conflicts, which will be followed by another chapter in which we attempt a more detailed examination of the recent out break of communal conflicts in Marad beach near Kozhikode.

After the 1970s, there were frequent tensions in the sea and the shore of Kerala. The export orientation and the capital inflow to the sector in that period altogether changed the scene. The motorisation of the traditional sector altered the work organisation and the ownership pattern. The non-fishers came to the sector as investors and the ordinary worker was made a wage labourer. The protective-redistributive traditional system was changed into a capitalist system that generated a negative competition in the sector. While such a process was happening, the ordinary fisher was expropriated from the traditional customary rights over the sea and the sea became an open

access domain. The construction activities and the tourist-resort business etc resulted in the shrinking of the coastal space. In these circumstances conflicts and clashes erupted in the Kerala seas. Vizhinjam (Thiruvananthapuram–1980, 1982, and 1994), Valiathura (Thiruvananthapuram – 1982), Poonthura (Thiruvananthapuram – 1970, 1978, 1980 and 1992), Marad (Kozhikode, 2002 and 2003), Thaikkal (Alappuzha – 2002), Korman Beach (Malappuram – 2002), Perumathurai (2003) were some important spots of riot.

Could we trace the genesis of the communal conflicts along the coast in the politico-economic developments of Kerala fishery sector? Here is an attempt to find an explanation for this question by analysing some of the conflicts that took place along the Kerala coast. We have already seen how the life of the fisherman was affected by the twin processes of emerging community identity and incorporation in to capitalism. It could be seen that the issues that lay at the basis of the conflicts were precisely generated by this process of incorporation. As we have noted earlier, the Globalisation policies also went against the ordinary fish worker. The motorisation of the country crafts made some initial benefits but the rising operational costs reduced even the meagre profit of the profession. Instead of empowering the fish worker, the changes promoted the moneylender and the contractor. Instead of developing in to individual entrepreneurs, they were alienated and their experience/ labour was made a commodity that could be hired only to

support the technology. In this viscous circle, *community* emerged as the solution for all problems, be it environmental, economic or social.

In 1962, there was a conflict between the Muslim and Christian sections at Vizhinjam¹. The Vizhinjam incident of 1980 was not a typical case of conflict between two communities; it was a tussle with the Police at the time of the Assembly election in that year and one died in the police firing². But the unlawful assembly and the belligerent attitude towards the police were to be seen against a deteriorating political economy of the 1980s. In 1982, the conflict was between the Christian and Muslim sections. On 3-9-1982 the police opened fire killing two people³. The coastal space of Vizhinjam was divided between two communities - the Muslims and the Christians. The southern part of Vizhinjam coast was occupied by the Christians and the Northern part by the Muslims. This spatial division between them on the basis of communities constantly made issues of encroachment of space. Further, Vizhinjam is a place where coastal erosion takes place frequently. This normally happens at the southern part of Vizhinjam coast, and the Christians were forced to move to the northern part for space to keep their crafts and to spread their net and for drying fish.

¹ PKLA, 2nd session 16th October, 1962, Vol.XV, No.8, pp. 742-44.

² "Report of the Commission of Enquiry in H.C. 2/1980 by M.M. Pared Pillai (Selection Grade district Judge) Regarding Police firing at Kottappuram in Vizhinjam Police station limits on 21.01.1980 Resulting in the Death of One person", Government of Kerala (Mimeo), pp.7-17.

³ "Report of the Commission of Inquiry by N.Kanakadas B.A., B.L., District and Sessions Judge (Retd.) regarding the police firing at Vizhinjam on 3.9.1982 resulting in the death of two persons", Government of Kerala, (mimeo).

Eventually, such encroachments into the ‘alien’ territory results in mutual conflicts.

In 1970 and 1978, there were sectarian clashes in Poonthura between the Araya and Christian fishers and police opened fire in 1970 and 1978 and in the latter incident two persons died⁴. The events of 1978 started in connection with the festival in a Sastha (Ayyappan) temple controlled by the Arayas. It was amidst this celebration that the mutual conflicts started on 3.1.1978. The incident turned violent when the Arayas reportedly attacked the Parish priest. Then both parties destroyed the coconut trees planted by the rival parties. It soon followed by the arson of houses and fishing implements⁵. To control the situation, the police opened fire on 7-2-1978. Tension was prevailing in the area for a month. While reviewing this incident, the Enquiry Commission made a crucial observation that; there was a dispute between these two communities since 1977. The dispute was about the ownership and possession of the compound of Sastha temple controlled by the Arayas⁶. This dispute triggered the problems at Poonthura in 1978. The religious institutions like the Church and the lateral fishermen organisations like Dheevara Sabha etc. came to the scene to support the Christian and Araya fishers respectively in this dispute. In this way the

⁴ “Report of the Commission of Enquiry by Justice P.Govinda Menon (Retired) regarding the Police firing at Poonthura on 7-2-1978 Resulting in the death of two persons”, Government of Kerala (mimeo), p.6.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*,p.12.

competition over space eventually becomes a legal issue and then very soon it turns into a communal issue. In 1980, there were Hindu-Muslim clashes at Poonthura⁷. Many houses were attacked and set to fire by the RSS⁸. At Poonthura the riot in 1992 lasted for four days and claimed five lives⁹. These incidents at Poonthura in 1992 were directly related with the all India communal developments in connection with the Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhoomi controversy. The Muslim fundamentalist organisation Islamic Sevak Sangh (ISS) and RSS had played their role in the communal conflicts at Poonthura. Following the incidents at Poonthura, a state-wide apprehension over the communal disturbances spread¹⁰. A pan Kerala Muslim platform, *Muslim Aikyavedy* came into existence with Jama-at-e-Islami at the helm. This platform consisted of 15 Muslim organisations including ISS¹¹. Instead of urging the government to take stiff action against the anti-social elements, the *Muslim Aikyavedy* suggested that a solution for the Poonthura incident should be sought by a joined meeting of the leaders of different religious sections¹². This platform could not think beyond a solution brought by the religious leaders to a social issue.

At Thaikkal (Alappuzha) there were tensions between the fisher folk of Christian and Hindu communities in March 2002. Three persons were

⁷ PKLA, (6th Assembly), 4th session, 12th December, 1980 Vol. LII, No.3.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 21st July, 1992.

¹⁰ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 23rd July, 1992.

¹¹ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 29th July, 1992.

¹² *Ibid.*

killed in this clash between the Christian and Hindu communities¹³. The tension started between the workers of *Theera Sangh*, a fishermen trade union under the control of KSMTF and the Christian clergy, and the workers of Bharatiya Masdoor Sangh (BMS) under Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on the issue of loading and unloading of fish baskets¹⁴. The Latin Christian and the Ezhava populations of this area were communally mobilised under the clergy and the BJP respectively. In 1964 also, issues were reported from this place and the police took measures to avoid a communal conflict between the Latin Christian and Ezhava population there¹⁵. These conflicts clearly showed a communal propaganda and mobilisation that resulted in perceiving the fish workers of other communities as enemies.

At Perumathurai (Thiruvananthapuram), it was the Christian and Muslim fishers who clashed in January 2003. The problem started when the motorised vessels encroached into the area allotted to the traditional boats¹⁶. But there were reports suggesting that the riot was engineered by a group of moneylenders, majority of them were Christians, who were apprehended when the traditional Muslim fish workers began to repay their debts. In this coastal area, there was a strong influence of the moneylenders who lend money at high rates of interest. They had distributed huge amounts among the ordinary fish workers who used traditional crafts to eke out their living.

¹³ *Malayala Manorama Daily*, 18th March, 2002.

¹⁴ *Kerala Kaumudi Daily*, 17th March, 2002.

¹⁵ PKLA, 1st session, 23rd March, 1964 Vol. XVIII, No.31, pp.2746-48.

¹⁶ *Madhyamam Daily*, 31st January, 2003.

The fluctuations in catch made them permanent clients of this money lending class. The fish workers began to repay their debts as the catch proved advantageous for them. This meant a loss of business for the usurious moneylenders. To maintain their business, the money-lending group provoked the mechanised boat labourers to cross the limit. This resulted in mutual conflict. This conflict turned advantageous to the moneylenders, as the means of production of the traditional fishers got destroyed. The Country crafts and nets were burned and the loss was estimated as around Rs. 40 lakh¹⁷. The traditional fishermen had to take more loans from this money lending class to repair and replace their fishing crafts and gears¹⁸. To turn the boat labourers against the traditional fishers, the money lending class also exploited the superstitious beliefs that existed in the coastal area. The moneylenders spread rumours that the traditional fishers were doing black magic and this was the reason for the recent high catch for them. The Christian boat labourers were persuaded by the moneylenders to believe that the black magic done by the traditional fishers is the cause for the decrease in the catch of boat labourers. The decrease in the catch of the boatmen was interpreted in relation with the relative increase in the catch of the traditional fishermen. This propaganda revealed the hegemonic relation that existed between the moneylenders and the clients of the same faith. What was interesting in this incident was the vertical division of the fish workers on the basis of technology. The Muslim fishers used traditional crafts and gears and

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

the Christian fishers used mechanised technology. This technological division on the basis of community, a contribution of the modernising efforts, helped the money lending class to materialise their agenda. Here the technology build up was instrumental in hampering the development of the working class identity and positing a community identity. This was an outcome of the alienation the fishermen group underwent in the course of modernisation. This divide made the communal mobilisation easy.

Poovar, a coastal hamlet which lies 32 km south of Thiruvananthapuram, was a densely populated area. There were many communal problems since 1952. In 1968, 1972 and 1982 this coastal hamlet witnessed communal problems. The major players in these conflicts were the Muslim section and Christian fishers. In the month of February 2005, there took place a serious communal conflict between the Muslims and Christians¹⁹. Here the wealthy Muslims who resided outside the beach controlled the fish trade and other economic activities. The ordinary fishermen were mostly Christians, who were the earlier clients of the Muslim merchants, but now gradually making their position comfortable by eliminating the middlemen in fish trade obviously with the help of the Church. The Muslim elite, who made a profit out of the fish trade, did not like this rising position of the Christian fishers. The ordinary Muslims, who were casual labourers of the wealthy Muslims domiciled in a colony named EMS colony that was close to the sea. The

¹⁹ E.J.Thomas (Ed.), *Vargheeyathayo Matharashreeyathayo? Keralathinte Marunna Mukham*, (Mal), St. Joseph's College, Kannur, 2007, p.102.

whole problems of 2005 started when the Block Panchayath decided to make a road connecting Poovar Catholic Church and the nearby river. The proposed road passed by the EMS colony. “This proposal was acceptable to the seagoing Christian section, because they could use this road to easily access the river for bathing after fishing. But the Muslims did not like this. Because they thought that the road close to their colony would harm their private life especially that of the women. And they demanded that the road had to be made one meter away from their colony, that meant it came close to the sea. The Christian fishers did not accept this suggestion because they said that they have to use the shore for the *Karamadi* (shore Seine) operation and hence the westward movement of the road would make inconveniences for them. The Church committee and Priest accepted the proposal for the road and when there was a change in the plan of the road as a result of the pressure from the Muslim section, they went for compromise talks with the Muslims and the discussion soon slipped into oral conflagration and scuffles”²⁰. The arson and conflict followed as usual. Many houses of the EMS colony were torched. The above description provides a lot of information regarding the trajectory of the development of the conflict. At the first instance, there existed an economic relation between the Muslim fish traders and the Christian fishers. In this relation the dominant position was maintained by the wealthy Muslims that was later challenged by the Christian fishers. In this Christian fishers got the support of the Church. This

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.103-104.

economic competition became clear when the Church prevented the Christians from all sort of economic dealings with the Muslims including that connected with the Muslim grocery shops after the conflicts²¹. The shrinking space in the coast was also a potential factor in triggering off the communal hatred. The EMS colony is situated in the encroached lands on the coast, and the Muslims were poor but not fishers by profession. Their encroachment might have affected the fisher population there. The high density over the coast rendered the habitation and the fishing operations difficult. When new roads were built along the coast, it hampered the existing minimum equilibrium there. The anxiety of the fishers over the habitation and profession was soon manifested in the form of communal divisions and communal conflicts. Moreover, the colony dwellers made their living by sand collection from the near by river that was not liked by the Christian fishing population who used the river for their bathing etc, nor did the Muslim section like the shore seine operation of the Christian fishers before the EMS colony. Moreover, the Christians had Pattah on their lands but the Muslims did not have this. So they were deprived of any governmental support for making permanent homes there. It was said that the houses of the EMS colony were put to fire by the Muslims themselves, utilising the troubled situation, to get government aid for the construction of houses. The Church Committee and Jama-at Committee could not really understand this complex situation and they took strong communal positions by banning even the

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp.111-112.

remaining relations between the religious groups. This insensitivity was because they were operating from the community platforms. The fishers who became mere clients of these institutions had no other way but to regress to their community shells. These Committees were very important and potential actors in the coastal life that the coastal problems were primarily discussed and solved by these Committees and only with their permission that even police could interfere in the issues of the coast²².

Conflicts in Malabar

In the post-independence period, up to the 1970's, the struggles rocked the coastal towns like Payyoli (1952), Naduvattam (1954), Manathala (1959), Thalassery (1971) etc. in Malabar. In the post-1970 period, the conflicts began to be reported from the proper coast in Malabar. In the background of the resource depletion and the policies of Globalisation and liberalisation, conflicts in the sea become common. If we take the case of Malabar, a number of conflicts could also be seen here. Migration of fishermen from other areas to Kozhikode was common during the peak seasons and it often invited conflicts. In 1983, the entry of the Purse-seine boatmen from Kulachal, Kanyakumari, had resulted in a fight in the sea near Puthiyappa in Kozhikode district²³. The presence of the migrant fishermen created much concern in the minds of the native fishermen as the migrant fishermen used the purse seine for fishing. After the passing of the KMFRA

²² *Ibid.*, p.102.

²³ PKLA, (7th Assembly), 4th session, 5th December, 1983, Vol. LIX, No.7 * 108 (115), pp 18-21.

in 1980, the purse-seining limit was fixed as beyond 22 km from the shore. But in a later Court Order this limit was reduced to 10 km. This gave more operational space for the purse seiners and reduced the space for the traditional fishermen. Given the negative competition existing in the sector, the traditional fishermen had no other way but to forcefully resist the migrant purse seiners. In Kannur District, in the sea near Thalassery, two sections of fishermen confronted on the issue of the use of trawl net²⁴. In this incident, on June 21st 1988, a group of traditional fishermen blocked four fishing boats that were fishing within the five km from the shore and destroyed the fishing implements in the boat including the gear²⁵. In this issue also, the question of the fishing zone could be seen. It was during this period that the traditional fishermen of Malabar were attracted to the more expensive and active fishing gear, like the Ring-seine. It was in this way that they resisted the incursions made by the mechanised purse seiners who fish within the 10 km limit. At Thalassery, there were conflicts between the fishermen who collected mussels from the Sea²⁶. Such cases of conflicts and torching of crafts were often reported²⁷.

In 1989, there was a communal tension in the fishermen village of Chalil in Thalassery. This tension developed between the Christian and Muslim fishermen who occupied two different colonies there. The Christian fishers live in the colonies named Pallivalappu and Fathima. The Christian

²⁴ PKLA, (8th Assembly), 5th session ,23rd June, 1988 Vol. LXXIV, No.4, pp. 117-18.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Madhyamam Daily*, 24th November 1996.

²⁷ PKLA, (8th Assembly), 5th session 24th June, 1988 Vol. LXXIV, No.5 * 25 (145), p. 40.

Church established these colonies. The Muslim section occupied a different colony named Nayanar Colony. The Christian fishers used more advanced technology in fishing than the Muslim fishers. This often created problems of boundaries between these two sections while fishing. There was a case reported in 1988, that one Christian fisher Chalil-Gopalapetta was attacked by Muslim fishers in the sea²⁸. In 1990's also Chalil became the scene of communal tension on the issue of drying of fish. The issue started when one group reportedly encroached upon the drying space of the other group.

In the background of the national level Mandir-Masjid controversy, the 1990's were characterised by communal frenzy all over India. Since 1987, there were increased communal conflicts reported from different parts of the Kerala state. During 1987-'88 there were 15 conflicts; during 1988-'89, it became 16; in the period 1989-'90 it raised to 24 and between 1.4.1990 and 30.11.1990 the frequency of communal conflicts increased and reached an alarming number of 108²⁹. The murder of a Moulavi by RSS men in a Mosque at Kattoor, a place close to the coastal area in Thrissur district was a result of a continuing fight between the RSS and the Muslim section there³⁰. This created much uproar in the state. Two people were killed at Mattancheri and one at Kulathupoozha when police resorted to firing at two protest marches³¹. In the month of November 1990, Karakkamandapam,

²⁸ PKLA, 23rd June, 1988 *Op.Cit.*

²⁹ PKLA, (8th Assembly), 12th session, 17th December, 1990, Vol. LXXXI, No.1, p.63.

³⁰ PKLA, (8th Assembly), 12th session, 27th December, 1990, Vol. LX XXI, No.6, pp 96-98.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp 115-116.

Pappanamkode, Anchangadi, Ganeshamangalam, Vadanappalli Beach etc. became centres of communal conflict³². It was in these circumstances that the demolition of the Babri Masjid took place on the 6th December 1992. This shocking incident was followed by the resurgence of communal conflicts in the different parts of the country. The communal tendencies of the eighties became strong. The ISS and RSS activists were arrested with explosives and weapons from different parts of the Trivandrum District³³. In Malappuram District, explosions took place at the coastal areas of Tanur and Chettippadi on 1993 September 6th and 7th respectively³⁴. In Thrissur also the coastal areas of Mathilakam, Valappad and Nattika witnessed serious law and order problems³⁵. The other important fallout of the Demolition was the transformation of the ISS into People's Democratic Party (PDP) in 1993. The National Development Front (NDF), an ultra communal and fundamentalist organisation in Islam was also formed in 1993. The NDF has floated its own student wing, Campus Front (CF). This showed a pattern that the national level religious controversies created commotion in the already troubled coastal hamlets. That the modern communities formed in the coastal areas turned into communal in the light of the increasing pressure of the globalisation policies on the one hand and the developing communalisation of the life space on the other.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ PKLA, (9th Assembly), 5th session, 27th January, 1993, Vol. LX XXVII, No.3, 180 (303), pp 158-59.

³⁴ PKLA, (9th Assembly), 8th session, 14th February, 1994, Vol. XC, No.10, pp. 117-18.

³⁵ PKLA, (9th Assembly), 15th session, 12th March, 1996, Vol. XCVII, No.8, pp. 115-16.

The fishermen from Tamilnadu came to the coast of Beypore and they had continuous physical conflict in the Beypore Sea with the natives³⁶. The problems at Beypore were settled by an agreement to control the number of fishing boats at Beypore, Chaliyam and Vellayil by the District Collector³⁷. There was a decision to control the number of fishing boats and to implement a control on the night fishing by the mechanised/motorised boats³⁸. Hence the problem here was not just the migrant fishermen, but also the heavy fishing in the inshore area and the night fishing with the mechanised boats or the ring-seine operators. There were constant complaints from the non-motorised fishermen that the night fishing caused serious damage to their gear with the propellers of the mechanised boats³⁹. The social regulatory institutions which effectively regulated the night fishing formerly, became defunct and the formation of the new fishing companies bred the ethics of maximum profit with maximum fishing units. These factors adversely affected the fortunes of the non-motorised fishers who cast their net to eke out a living. The migrant fishermen totally upset the *statusquo* prevailed there. And it was no wonder that Beypore was an area where there were frequent clashes between the local fishermen and the boatmen coming from outside. The boatmen from Kollam, Kochi, Kulachal etc. complained that the fishers at Beypore raised

³⁶ *Madhyamam* Daily, 12th September 1996.

³⁷ *Malayala Manorama* Daily, 8th March 1996.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ John Kurien et.al., "Technological Change in Fishing: Its Impact on Fishermen", (mimeo), CDS, March, 1982, p.30.

the sons of the soil theory to prevent them from anchoring there⁴⁰. But the Araya Samajam office bearer said that the objection was raised only against the boatmen from Kulachal⁴¹. In this dispute, sometimes, the middlemen took a pro-outsider stance⁴². This was because of the fact that the more fishing crafts anchor at the Beypore port, it meant more catch and more business for the middlemen and then out of his economic interest he usually supported the outsiders. This usually divided the fishermen into two groups. During such incidents, it was very easy to communalise the people either on the basis of religion or region. The differences of opinion would soon develop into physical conflicts as a result of the instigation from a third party, who had some vested interest in keeping the fishermen divided. These phenomena of conflicts in the sea were to be seen in the general background of decline in the fish related industry.

A fine example of how the fisher people get organised in a belligerent way to protect their livelihood could be seen in the experience of the Mussel pickers of Vatakara. According to a News paper report, “Life has turned bitter for a large number of residents in Chombala in Vatakara taluk who make their living as mussel pickers, owing to the disappearance of Mussels due to the removal of nearly two acres of stony surfaces in the water for the construction of the fishing harbour. They had then gone to the neighbouring

⁴⁰ *Kerala Kaumudi Daily*, 3rd October 1997.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Kerala Kaumudi Daily*, 6th October 1997.

mussel growing places like New Mahe, Edakkad, Muzhuppilanagad and Punnool but had to turn back in the face of hostility from Mussel pickers there who considered them to be a threat to their own livelihood. Incensed by the hostile attitude, the Mussel pickers of Chombala have threatened to use the sons of the soil theory against the large number of fish vessels and fishermen from distant places who were making use of the facilities of the Chombala mini fishing harbour”⁴³. At Chombala, the harbour construction activities had done serious harm for the growth of mussels in the area. It was this scarcity of mussels that drove the mussel pickers to the nearby areas to collect the mussels. The negative competition existing in the field drove them out of Mahe, Edakkad, Muzhuppilanagad and Punnool, where they tried their fortunes. Hence we have a picture of decreasing resources, increasing financial indebtedness and proliferating conflicts in the coastal life. The non-fishermen coming out of the fishermen community or the secular political parties or the State could not play their historical role in solving this dilemma. In the inner layers of this dilemma community feeling and communalism developed as a solution and the communitarian/communal institutions and solidarities emerged as their natural protectors. The Marad conflicts (2002 and 2003) were the best examples of this process that may represent the developments, which were taking place in the other hamlets also.

⁴³ *The Hindu Daily*, 10th December, 2003.

In the competition for resources and better crafts and gears, the religious institutions or the money lending agencies extended financial and moral support to them. In this process, the emerging bourgeoisie played their role with their capital in order to protect their economic interest as in the case of Perumathurai. It was the moneylenders who engineered the communal conflicts at Perumathurai for the multiplication of their capital. The question of operational space as in the case of Poonthura (1978) and the Poovar conflicts showed that the fishers deal such primary issues related with the common environment in a communal way. In resisting the purse seiners or the migrant fishermen, in plucking the mussels, in the disputes over the space for drying the fishes, everywhere the community enters either as a shield or as a weapon. Along with the crisis in the fishing sector, the overall communalisation of the rural India that happened in 1980's and 1990's also contributed for the communalisation of the coastal Kerala. After the 1950's, particularly around 1980's, the communitarian existence was turned into communal. The conflicts along the Kerala coast testify to this fact.

To this peculiar scenario, the religious institutions like Church, Mahallu Committees, Araya Samajams etc. enters capitalising on the precarious condition prevailing on the coast on one hand and the ritualism on the other. These institutions established relations with the political parties like BJP, RSS, IUML etc. In some coastal pockets of Kerala, these institutions had much control over the lives of the fish workers. The Poovar

and Thaikkal experiences proved that the fishers were under the hegemony of some communitarian institutions or communal political parties. In some curious cases these institutions wedded themselves with the capital as we could see in the case of Poovar and Perumathurai. In the case of Marad this is more glaring and this will be discussed in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER VI

SOCIAL CONFLICTS IN THE MALABAR COAST: THE CASE OF MARAD

Marad is a small coastal village lying to the southwest of Kozhikode town and west to the Beypore town. This hamlet is known in old documents as Marat Muckati in Naduvattam of Beypore Amsom¹. It lies in between Kappakkal in the North and Beypore fishing port in the south. It is included in the present Beypore Panchayath that came into existence in 1936 comprising of the Cheruvannur, Naduvattam and Beypore villages². It was an old fishing hamlet not having any particular importance in the history of Kozhikode. It was not a busy fishing center either³. This fishing hamlet suddenly came to the headlines not because of its scenic beauty, but because of the barbarity occurred there twice in consecutive years, first in the January of 2002 (Marad I) and second in the May of 2003 (Marad II). In these two incidents fourteen lives were lost. Houses and fishing materials like boats, Yamaha engines, nets etc. were burned, and many became jobless and refugees. The incidents

¹ D 1423/p.17 dt.11.9.1917. KRA. According to this record there were 83 active fishermen then in this hamlet.

² R 5582/36 dated. 1.4.1938. KRA.

³ It is said that the major occupation of the Marad people in older times was coir making. The coir is measured in 'Mar' and this is the root word that gave this hamlet its present name *Marad*, Peethambaran P.(40), Marad, member Baypore Grama Panchayath, interview on 23.1.2009

affected the inter community relations even outside the beach. *Marad* became a signifier of acute communal tension.

The incidents at Marad – January 3rd 2002, Thursday.

The first terrible riot at Marad occurred on the 3rd of January 2002. When the people of Kerala were celebrating the new year of 2002, the Marad natives had been witnessing or partaking in an unprecedented communal carnage. The events started in relation with the New Year celebration. In the New Year eve there was a cultural programme at Marad. It is alleged that amidst this programme, a boy touched a girl⁴. Later on Thursday evening there were some wordy altercations between the youths of either community and this issue was swelled and taken up by the adults, and the clash took place between the two groups⁵. Another report said that ‘since the 6th December 2001, there were some uneasy relations between two communities.

However, in the first conflict of January 2002 (this would be hereafter signified as Marad I) the riot took five lives in two days. Many injured and houses and fishing materials were burned. Shimjith, son of Marad Thekkethodi Krishnan, Kunchikkoya of Arakkinar P.P.House, Marad Chattikathodi Kunchumon, Younus son of Pallithody MoidenKoya were killed on January 3rd⁶. On January 4th another person named Thekkeppurath Aboobacker was also killed while he was going to the Mosque to take the

⁴ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 4th January, 2002.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 4th January, 2002 and *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 5th January, 2002.

graves for the dead⁷. Houses and boats were burned. Nine houses were burned fully⁸. The fishing boats anchored in the sea also put to fire. Six boats were completely spoiled⁹. The majority of the fishing boats burned belonged to the Nashath-Safeenath Company¹⁰. There took place extensive robbery from the houses before torching¹¹. As the conflict started, the miscreants took up deadly weapons and inflammables to engage in mayhem and arson. The Kerosene to be used in the boats was widely used for arson¹². A huge number of deadly weapons including long daggers were recovered in the raid conducted by the police after the riot¹³. These weapons were kept under the beach sand and in some houses¹⁴. Weapons were also reported to have kept in boats that were anchored in the sea¹⁵. These instances pointed to a massive preparation from both parties, days before the incident. The total loss on account of the damaged houses alone is calculated as 40 lakhs¹⁶. Following the incident, Police Act was declared in four districts of Malappuram, Kozhikode, Thrissur and Palakkad¹⁷. The government under took relief works by forming a joint relief committee¹⁸. ‘But actually the Araya Samajam

⁷ *Kerala Kaumudi Daily*, 5th January, 2002.

⁸ *Madhyamam Daily*, 4th January, 2002.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Deshabhimani Daily*, 5th January, 2002.

¹² *Chandrika Daily*, Editorial, 5th January, 2002.

¹³ *Kerala Kaumudi Daily*, 5th January, 2002.

¹⁴ *Deshabhimani Daily*, 6th January, 2002.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Kerala Kaumudi Daily*, 6th January, 2002

conducted a camp for the Arayas and the Mahallu Committee conducted their own camp there at the near by Madrassa. And these two camps conducted in an apparently sectarian line were aided by the government while a joint relief camp organised at the house of Kommadath Balaraman, former President of the Beypore Grama Panchayath was not given any financial assistance by the government'¹⁹.

The Immediate Provocation

A national and international issue rendered the socio-political climate of the December 2001 cloudy. The national issue was the observance of the Babari day on December 6th 2001. It was the 9th anniversary of the Babari Masjid demolition by the hindutva forces. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) declared hartal on that day. There were law and order problems extending over the whole of Kerala²⁰. At Ramanattukara, Feroke and Cheruvannoor, the adjoining places in and around the Beypore Panchayath, the hartal resulted in mutual conflict and pelting of stones²¹. In Cheruvannoor, The National Development Front (NDF) activists blocked the Sabarimala devotees and RSS came to their rescue and law and order problems were created²².

¹⁹ Peethambaran P., Marad. Also see *Samakalika Malayalam varika*, 2002, January, p.40.

²⁰ In the districts of Kasargode, Kozhikode, Malappuram, Wynad, Kannur, Thrissur, and Kollam the hartal acquired dangerous proportions. Even the vehicles of the Sabarimala devotees were attacked, *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, 7th December, 2001.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Peethambaran. P, Marad.

A hartal was declared by the BJP and Hindu Aikya Vedi on December 10th protesting against the unfortunate events happened at Pathanamthitta in connection with the observance of the Babri Day. This hartal also contributed for the intensification of the already troubled political environment in Kerala. At Ramanattukara, not very far from Marad, Rapid Action Force was deployed to control the situation²³. In the Beypore Panchayath, the RSS torched the retail fish vending stalls at Beypore Cheruvannoor Road junction and Marad²⁴. These incidents of tension near the Beypore Panchayath might have acquired strong communal colour in the Beach of Marad.

Further, there was an international issue that influenced the Muslim fundamentalist organisations in Kerala. The issue was the Afghan invasion by America and it created a sense of ‘religion in danger’²⁵ among them. The convergence of the Babri Day and the lamentation over Afghanistan made the situation communally charged and it was expressed in a communal way at Pathanamthitta on December 6th 2001. These incidents at a Southern District, where the most famous Hindu pilgrim centre of South India, Sabarimala, situated might have influenced the Hindu communal organisations like the RSS²⁶.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Peethambaran. P, Marad.

²⁵ Mr. A.K. Antony, then Chief Minister referred to this in a press conference. He said that, “There is a climate of tension in the whole country. The grief and miseries started when the Afghan war began. The condition in the boarder is one of anguish. And we have to solve the stray incidents rather than trying to balloon it up”. *Chandrika Daily*, 6th January, 2002.

²⁶ Mr. K.Muralidharan, then President of KPCC alleged that the NDF and the RSS are the organisations behind the communal problems in Kerala.

The Muslim communal organisations like NDF, PDP and the Hindu Communal Organisations like RSS had their own work and propaganda in the Marad Beach and these organisations championed the cause of their respective communities and started the stockpiling of weapons. ‘A few days before the riot, PDP put a board with the picture of their leader Abdu Nasr Ma’adani who was in the Coimbatore Jail, with the caption, “will come like a storm”. The RSS very soon put another board that stated, “Temporary storms cannot break mountains”²⁷. This shows the symbolic fight existed on the coast during the month of December 2001. There were also some opinions from the beach dwellers that strangers came to the beach during night in the month of December²⁸. This was a sign of secret propaganda and the preparation for the conflicts. How such a communalisation that led to the loss of confidence in the co-workers and co habitants took place? Was it a mere out come of the simple incidents at the New Year celebration? Whether there was a history for this? These are some of the serious questions seeking explanation. We will take up these questions later.

2nd May 2003, Another Black Day

Kerala received the second shock on the 2nd May 2003 (Hereafter referred to as Marad II). Nine people were massacred on the beach of Marad in the evening glow. Eight of them belonged to the Araya section²⁹ and one

²⁷ Peethambaran P., Marad.

²⁸ A Group of researchers, “Marad Kalapam Oru Anweshanam” (Mal), in *Marxist Samvadam*, EMS Seminar Special Issue, Thiruvananthapuram, AKG Study and Research Centre, Vol. 23-24, January-June, 2003, pp.60-88. (Hereafter, Marad Kalapam...).

²⁹ Choychantakath Chandran, Choyichantakath Madhavan, Arayachantakath Krishnan, Gopalan, Dasan, Thekkethodi Priji, Thekkethodi Santhosh, and Pushparajan were the Araya fishermen. In this the dead body of Priji was found in the next day on the beach. See, *Deshabhimani* Daily, 3rd May, Saturday, 2003 and *Varthamanam* Daily, 4th May Sunday,

was Askar Ali who was a member of the group of assassins³⁰. About Marad II, Justice V.R.Krishna Iyer wrote like this, “it was Friday, May 2. A group of simple Araya fishermen slipped and sat in the cushioned sand dunes, enjoying idle conversation. The temple on the other side, at lamp-lighting time, found a few devotees around and otherwise nature was calm. And then swooped on the innocents a savage brood of Islamic extremists with sharp weapons like swords or long-curved knives with blood-thirsty blitz to unloose murder most foul, most treacherous, most barbaric. From more than one direction rushed this rabid rascal gang, with lethal arms and killer plan, stabbed the defenceless Araya gossip group, a devotee returning from the temple and a neighbouring petty tea shop dealer and spread terror by throwing bombs which did not explode”³¹. Immediately after this incident the assailants dispersed to different directions. Some of them took refuge in the near by Mosque³². Getting this news the Araya section also collected there with arms at their disposal and rushed towards the mosque where a number

2003; “The injured Krishnan, Gopalan, Chandran, Madhavan, Santhosh, Dasan, Pushparajan and Asker Ali were brought dead to the medical College Hospital, Kozhikode from Marad on 2-5.2003 itself. The injured Preeji was brought dead to the hospital in the morning of 3-5-2003”, Judgement in The Court of The Special Additional Sessions Judge (Marad Cases), Kozhikode, Sessions Case Nos.555 of 2003, 701 of 2003 & 446 of 2004, p.56. (Hereafter Judgement, Marad II).

³⁰ Thomas P Joseph Commission Report (TJCR), pp.11-12, 30-31. It should be mentioned here, parenthetically, that the Thomas P. Joseph Commission appointed by the Government of Kerala to inquire about the different aspects of the Marad II has made a serious mistake by omitting the name of Thekkethodi Pushparajan, s/o Rajan from the list of the murdered in Marad II. And while describing the events led to the death of Shimjith, the nephew of Pushparajan in the Marad I, the Commission made a casual comment that “...Latheef and others attacked the house of Pushparajan, an RSS Worker (he was later murdered, allegedly by CPI (M) activists) in their attempt to kill Pushparajan and killed his nephew shinjith”. But this is not true; perhaps Commission might have relied on some interested testimonies. Thekkethodi Pushparajan was killed in the Marad II.

³¹ V.R. Krishna Iyer, The Marad Massacre, in *The Hindu Daily*, 31.05.2003.

³² *Deshabhimani Daily*, 3rd May, 2003.*Op.Cit.*

of people including women and children of Pudu-Islam section assembled³³. But the timely intervention of the Police, under the City Police Commissioner T.K. Vinod Kumar avoided another one-sided carnage and three injured in police firing³⁴. In the next day some people torched many boats at Puthiyappa, a busy fishing harbour lay north of Marad³⁵. Nine fibre boats were destroyed in this torching and lose of 2 crore was estimated³⁶. In the Hartal followed there were stray law and order problems³⁷.

The City Police Commissioner T.K. Vinod Kumar made it clear that what happened at Marad was a pre-planned guerrilla attack³⁸. When the police tried to raid the Mosque, immediately after the incident, many a Pudu-Islam women prevented the police from the same³⁹. Blood stained daggers, swords and Jalatin bombs seized from this mosque⁴⁰. In the subsequent days also the raid continued and many weapons unearthed from different points of Marad exposing the weakness of the Police and administration in curtailing the weapon transit⁴¹. More than 100 long daggers and swords, the bombs and the axes would not reach the beach in one single night or day. The government took the Mosque into control for 15 days on condition that this state would continue if the conditions at Marad prevailed without change;

³³ *Mangalam Daily*, 4th May, 2003.

³⁴ *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, 4th May, 2003; C.K. Vijayan, Beypore. Interview on 28.12.2008.

³⁵ *Deepika Daily*, 4th May, 2003.

³⁶ *Deshabhimani Daily*, 4th May, 2003.

³⁷ *Mangalam Daily*, 4th May, 2003 *Op.Cit.*

³⁸ *Madhyamam Daily*, 4th May, 2003

³⁹ *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, 4th May, 2003.

⁴⁰ *Mangalam Daily*, 4th May, 2003.

⁴¹ *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, 8th May, 2003; *Deepika Daily*, 9th May, 2003.

and those members of the Mahal without criminal background could use the Mosque with special permission of Tahsildar⁴². But the next Friday, nobody came to this Mosque for Jumua Namaz⁴³. Finally, however, the mosque was taken over by the Waqf Board⁴⁴.

The Marad II severely affected the community relations of the state. The cabinet team headed by the Chief Minister A.K. Antony had to drop the Muslim Ministers from his group to enter the affected areas and to visit the houses of the victims⁴⁵. But Kerala showed its presence of mind by jointly denouncing the developments at Marad. The leaders of different political parties and communities condemned the heinous activity of the extremists⁴⁶. Nevertheless, these soothing words were not enough to cool down the anguish of the inhabitants of this coastal spot. Above 500 families left their dwellings with the belongings that can be carried in a bag and so on⁴⁷.

The whole Pudu-Islam families of the 1st 16th and 19th wards of the Beypore Panchayath deserted the houses and some Araya families also followed suit⁴⁸. All these deserted houses were robbed and desecrated or

⁴² *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 9th May, 2003; *Deepika* Daily, 9th May, 2003.

⁴³ *Deepika* Daily, 10th May, 2003; As per the Police report, the District Collector extended the statusquo to one more week, *Madhyamam* Daily, 24th May, 2003; on 29th May, the IUML leader and sitting MP, E.Ahmed visited the houses of the victims of Marad and entered the closed Mosque (E. Ahmed, obviously was not a member of the Marad Mahal) with the permission of Tahsildar and the City Police Commissioner and performed the Namaz, the first to enter the mosque after May 2nd. Later with the permission of the authorities, the SKSSF (Samastha Kerala Sunni Student Fededration) activists cleaned the Mosque and started the prayer, *Madhyamam* Daily, 30th May, 2003.

⁴⁴ *Madhyamam* Daily, 3rd June, 2003

⁴⁵ *Deepika* Daily, 5th May, 2003.

⁴⁶ *Varthamanam* Daily, 4th May, 2003. *Op.Cit.*

⁴⁷ *Deshabhimani* Daily, 6th May, 2003.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

destroyed by the RSS elements of Marad⁴⁹. Two relief camps were opened; one at Kappakkal⁵⁰ and the other at Chaliyam⁵¹. These two camps were under Muslim League control⁵². At the Chaliyam camp, there were 1344 persons including 445 women from 185 families; at Kappakkal there were 320 inmates from 100 families; and there was another camp at Chaliyam conducted by CPI (M) in the houses of A.Hassan and C.V.Sulaiman with 75 people from 24 families this also included some Araya families⁵³. Later, these camps were taken over by the government⁵⁴. The rehabilitation of these families rendered difficult by the stiff opposition from the part of the Araya section especially the women⁵⁵. The International Secretary of Viswa Hindu Parishad, Praveen Thogadia asserted that the Muslims would not be permitted to come back to Marad, because, the ‘Hindus came to Marad as they found it difficult to live in Malappuram’⁵⁶. This was a constant complaint from the Sangh Parivar that the Hindu fishermen were cast out of the Korman beach of Tanur in Malappuram District 1964 and they migrated to the coasts of Marad, Puthiyappa and Beypore etc⁵⁷.

⁴⁹ M. Raghunath, “Marad: Mathabheekarathayude Nadukkadalil”, *Deshabhimani* Daily, 8th May, 2003.

⁵⁰ *Madhyamam* Daily, 27th June, 2003.

⁵¹ *Madhyamam* Daily, 28th June, 2003.

⁵² P.P.Saseendran, “Kudippakayil Kidappadam Nashtapettavar-4”, *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 3rd August, 2003

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 14th September, 2003.

⁵⁵ *Madhyamam* Daily, 26th June, 2003; *Madhyamam* Daily, 27th June, 2003.

⁵⁶ *Madhyamam* Daily, 9th July, 2003.

⁵⁷ P.P.Saseendran, *Op.Cit.*

Amidst the criticisms against the government on account of the security lapse in the wake of some intelligence reports suggesting a possibility of extremist attack in Marad⁵⁸, and the charge sheets of Marad I were still pending⁵⁹, the government entrusted the responsibility of investigation to the Crime Branch⁶⁰. The Crime Branch identified one jeep in which some of the assassins escaped from the spot and found that there were people from the nearby fishing hamlets like Kadalundi and Chaliyam included in the attack⁶¹. The NDF activists from Tanur were also found to have participated in the action⁶². Crime Branch (CB) released the photos of 15 suspects in two phases⁶³. Among them, Muhammed Ali was the brother of the Thekkeppurath Aboobacker who was killed in the Marad I and Bijili (Vijili) was the son of said T. Aboobacker. According to the paper reports, the Marad II was the revenge of the relatives of the T. Aboobacker who was killed in the Marad I⁶⁴. Earlier, the preparations were held twice to attack the

⁵⁸ The Report given by the Calicut Intelligence (State Special Branch) Superintendent in the month of April clearly indicated the possibility of an imminent attack at Marad by the relatives of the deceased Aboobacker in the Marad I. And it is reported that this report mentioned the names of Bijili, s/o Aboobacker and Muhammed Ali, the brother of Aboobacker as making preparations for the revenge, *Deshabhimani* Daily, 8th May, 2003; This news about the intelligence report later corroborated by the Thomas P. Joseph Commission and the Commission says that the District Civil Administration and Police Administration were properly informed about these preparations including the collection of the weapons by both sides in time by the Kozhikode District Special Branch Unit, TJCR, pp.38-42.

⁵⁹ *Deepika* Daily, 4th May, 2003.

⁶⁰ *Deshabhimani* Daily, 6th May, 2003.

⁶¹ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 9th May, 2003.

⁶² *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 10th May, 2003.

⁶³ Rizal, Bijili, Delhath, Marsook, Akbar, Haroon Rasheed, Muhammed Ali, Naseer, *Deepika* Daily, 13th May, 2003. and Shinab, Hussain Koya alias Noushad. Manaf, Haris, Haneef, Sakkeer, Harshad, *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 16th May, 2003.

⁶⁴ *Madhyamam* Daily, 9th May, Friday, 2003

culprits of Aboobacker murder case⁶⁵. The CB also reached this conclusion and found that the prime culprits were the relatives of the murdered Aboobacker⁶⁶. CB prepared a charge sheet listing 150 as accused; many of them were the relatives of Aboobacker including Mohammed Ali and Bijili.⁶⁷ It also included P.P.Moideen Koya, Memembr of Beypore Grama Panchayath, and Sadakkathulla the *Khatheeb* (the priest) of the Marad Juma-at-Mosque⁶⁸. They were arrested on charge of providing help for the action and permitting the stocking of weapons in the Mosque⁶⁹. It was also found that the suspects conspired at different places under the leadership of Mohammed Ali, the brother of Aboobacker and their targets were Pushparajan, Priji, Chandran and Santhosh; they mobilised the money for the weapons by local collection⁷⁰.

If the reports could be believed, there could be some elements of planning. The presence of some strangers in the houses of north and south Marad and the evacuation of the ladies of those houses point to that direction⁷¹. The day selected for the attack was a Friday. Most of the Araya fishers would go to the sea whereas the Pudu-Islam fishers would remain in their homes usually⁷². In the calendar seized from Marad Juma at Mosque,

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Madhyamam Daily*, 12th May, Monday, 2003.

⁶⁷ *Madhyamam Daily*, 31st July, Thursday, 2003.

⁶⁸ *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, 15th May, Thursday, 2003

⁶⁹ *Deshabhimani Daily*, 15th May, Thursday, 2003

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, 4th May, 2003

⁷² *Madhyamam Daily*, 4th May, 2003.

the date 2.5.2003 was marked with red colour and the Commission of Enquiry took it as a sign of prior planning⁷³. Some witnesses revealed before the Marad inquiry Commission that there were discussions in the Marad Juma-at- Mosque twice in March and April of 2003 about avenging on the Arayas⁷⁴. In this attempt they got help from outside and in this the finger points to the NDF⁷⁵.

The government declared a fast track court to deal with the cases. A Judicial commission enquiry was also declared. The Hindu organisations were not satisfied with these steps. They insisted on enquiry by Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the matter. They returned the amount they received as economic relief from the government⁷⁶. Finally, the government decided to settle the issue by direct discussion between the Hindu and Muslim Organisations⁷⁷. The government made it clear that besides the community organisations, BJP and IUML representatives alone would take part in the discussions and that a representative or mediator from the part of the government will not be there in the discussion!⁷⁸ A compromise was reached at according to which there would be a partial CBI enquiry, 10 lakh as compensation to the families of the dead, government job for one

⁷³ TJCR, *Op.Cit.*, p.170; “During the search, a *Chandrika* calendar of the year 2003 and another calendar of Samastha Kerala Sunni Students Federation State Committee were seen in the first floor of that mosque. The date 2nd of May 2003 in both these calendars were seen encircled by sun signs with red ink”, Judgement, Marad II. *Op.Cit.*, p.43.

⁷⁴ TJCR, *Op.Cit.*, p.37-38; also see *Madhyamam* Daily, 9th May, 2003.

⁷⁵ *Madhyamam* Daily, 9th May, 2003.

⁷⁶ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 23rd September, 2003. Eight families were given one lakh each by the government as financial aid.

⁷⁷ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 2nd October, 2003.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

dependent, 5 lakh compensation for the injured, and the rehabilitation procedure will be started immediately⁷⁹. On October 10th, after 162 days of uncertainty and hardship peaceful rehabilitation started in Marad⁸⁰ and this was completed on 24th October⁸¹. Most of the Pudu-Islam families of South Marad sold their homestead for cheap rates to the Arayas and left⁸². The Special Court to deal with the cases of Marad II started functioning on 9th January 2004⁸³. The trial procedures started on 20th December 2004⁸⁴. Out of the 150 accused 139 persons faced trial⁸⁵. 63 were found guilty, of which 62 given life sentence and one 5 years imprisonment and each had to pay the fine of Rs.25, 000⁸⁶.

These incidents of 2002 and 2003 have been analysed by different scholars in different ways. This have been viewed as the result of an Araya community formation⁸⁷; machinations by the political parties⁸⁸; the result of a shrinking public sphere; and the inherent weakness of the process of secularisation itself⁸⁹ and a much more important theorisation came from Dr.

⁷⁹ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 6th October, 2003.

⁸⁰ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 11th October, 2003.

⁸¹ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 25th October, 2003.

⁸² Arayachantakath Lakshmanan, (60), fisherman, interview on 25.12.2008.

⁸³ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 6th January, 2004.

⁸⁴ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 16th January, 2009.

⁸⁵ Separate trial will be conducted in the case of two, who are accused as given shelter to the culprits, five were minors at the time of the incident and they will be tried by the Juvenile court, there are two as absconding accused, one accused was murdered, and another accused became approver, *Ibid*.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*.

⁸⁷ A group of Researchers, Marad Kalapam, *Op.Cit.*, p.63.

⁸⁸ E.J.Thomas (Ed), *Vargheeyathayo Matharashreeyathayo? Keralathinte Marunna Mukham*, (Mal.), St. Joseph's College, Pilathara, October, 2007.

⁸⁹ K.N. Ganesh, "Navothana Samasyakal Maradinu Sesham", in, *Marxist Samvadam*, AKG Centre for Studies and Research, Thiruvananthapuram, pp.134-140.

K.N.Panikkar that this was a sign of the increasing communalism and communalisation rather than communitarianism⁹⁰. These arguments are important and need to be examined.

The thesis of the Araya community formation as a cause for the riot at Marad poses a number of questions. What was the process that eventually resulted in the formation of a discrete Araya community? How was a subordinated group like the Arayas developed a community consciousness that was inimical to the similarly subordinated Pudu-Islam section? Did it mean the absence of community feeling among the Pudu-Islam section? How was the *Araya section* defining its relation with the larger 'Hindu' community and the Pudu-Islam section with the larger 'Muslim' community? Below is an attempt to find out answers for these problems.

The Technological and Political Divide

Let us first look into the changes in the life world of fishers of Marad as a whole. The fishers of Marad used the old Odam with its traditional type of nets. The Araya and the Pudu Islam fishers jointly conducted their fishing operations. The non-religious names of the fishing units testify to this unity⁹¹. The mechanisation of the Malabar fishery in the 1950's also affected the Marad Beach. In 1950's many a fishermen of this beach got training in the Engine operation and Net making at the Training Centre started at Beypore.

⁹⁰ K.N. Panikkar, Communalising Kerala, article in *The Hindu*, www.thehindu.com.

⁹¹ *Akasavani*, *Goods*, *Odasangham*, *KTC* etc. were some names of the old fishing units, Peethambaran P., Marad.

The Government distributed 25 ft. long boat with 10 H.P. engines. The majority of the fishermen who got training and the mechanised boats were Arayas. Arayachantakath Kesavan⁹² and Thekkethodi Sukumaran were among those who got early training. Those who got training were given the title F.T.C. (Fishermen Training Course). This training in the boat operations was an envious position in the fishing hamlets. The Pudu Islam fishers, for want of qualification, were not attracted to the F.T.C.⁹³. The Arayas who got the training gradually moved away from the profession and concentrated on the supervision of the net making and boat operation etc⁹⁴. Obviously, the Pudu-Islam section lagged behind with respect to fishing technology.

Even from the late 1950's that the Arayas were very eager to receive the modern techniques in fishing. We have noted that many of them got training in the mechanised fishing at different spells. It was in the 1970's that a large number of Araya fishers took to trawling boats leaving the traditional Odams. There were many reasons for it. 'The work in the Odam was tiresome and the trawl boats are more convenient than the Odams'⁹⁵. While

⁹² Arayachantakath Kesavan was the first among those who got trawl boat and training at Marad, A.Kesavan(78), former fisherman, interview on 10.1.2009.

⁹³ To get training, a minimum qualification was fixed. The fishermen who completed the 5th standard were given training. There was an apprehension that this criterion will negatively affect the Pudu-Islam section of fishers, PKLA, 1st session, 22nd January, 1963, Vol.XVI, No. 11, *326 (14), p.932.

⁹⁴ Arayachantkath Kesavan who got training in the early 60's become an expert in the net making and engine repairing. He also actively took part in the ARC programme of distribution of mechanised boats in the Puthiyappa region and fixed the specification of boats in tenders.

⁹⁵ T.Suresh(50), Marad, General Secretary, Hindu Aikyavedi, interview on 10.1.2009. He started fishing with Odam in 1972 and shifted to Trawler in 1977.

going to the sea, the only possible thing to carry along was water, that too, in a minimum quantity. The passive gears did not ensure the catch. And the export varieties were not caught in plenty by the traditional gears. The most important reason was the availability of capital to the Arayas. In 1960's and 1970's the export opportunities were gradually developing and it needed deep-sea fishing and trawling. This opportunity was made use of by the Araya section of Marad.

The mechanised sector became very strong in Marad with constantly increasing the length and H.P. of the craft. These types of crafts possessed modern amenities for storing the fish in large quantities and carrying the food with them. Along with this, the modern technologies like G.P.S. (Global Positioning System), Echo Sounder and Fish Finder were also used in these boats. Naturally, heavy investments were needed in this sector. Not only the investment for the craft that mattered, the expense incurred for the fishing venture was also very high in this sector. The mechanised boats usually fish in the deep sea. They catch the high valued export varieties of demersal fish. They engage either in the stay fishing that lasts for one or two weeks or in one day fishing. This depends on the size of the motorboats. Small boats engage in one-day fishing and the large sized boats engaging in the multi day fishing. Naturally, the Arayas became prosperous and this prosperity helped them to make necessary alterations in the fishing boats to catch more. Those

who got early training emerged as the local moneylenders. This development of a predatory capitalism made a large section of the Arayas affluent.

The new generation from among the Pudu-Islam section tried to compensate for the historical lag in fishing technology. It was in the mid-seventies that the gulf money and the local capital were used for this purpose. The 1980's was a period of transformation with respect to the artisanal fishing technology in Kerala in general. As the traditional Dugout-Boat seine combination could not go far from the shore, the Malabar region experimented with the *thanguvallam*–ring seine combination of the Central region⁹⁶. This experiment started in 1983-85 and reached a point of completion during 1988-'91 in Kozhikode⁹⁷. There is another opinion that ring nets were introduced to Kozhikode only in September 1988⁹⁸. They built wooden plank built *Vallams* (*Chundan Vallam*) and fitted Out Board (OB) engines. These *vallams* carried 20 workers at the beginning. Later, the material was changed to Plywood. Again modifications were done in the material. The craft was coated with fibre. Now that they use Fibre Glass *Chundan Vallams* with In Board (IB) engines. This crafts carry 40 men on board. The increased power of the engine helped them reach the fishing

⁹⁶ “Motorisation of Fishing Units: Benefits and Burdens Techno-Economic Analysis of Motorisation of Fishing Units Along the Lower South-West Coast of India”, Fisheries Research Cell, Programme for Community Organisation, Trivandrum, India, September, 1991, p.9.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 9-10.

⁹⁸ T.M.Yohannan and M.Sivadas, “Impact on Ring Net on the Mackerel Fishery at Calicut”, in *MFIS*, No.119, January, February - 1993, pp.1-3.

ground immediately as well as in chasing the fish school and in encircling them. These crafts were the fibreglass crafts combined with ring seine gear (*Valachil Vala*) were suited to catch the pelagic fish species. They went to the sea in the evening and returned to the shore by the next morning. This type of vessels also had the modern technologies of G.P.S., Echo Sounder and Fish Finder. This was also an arena of high investment. The daily fishing expense was also high.

The non-motorised country crafts using traditional gears were virtually absent in the Marad area. There were out-board fibre coated boats there. But their number was quite low. The entire fishing population was divided into two – the trawling boat owners/workers and the fibreglass-ring seine owners/workers. In this classification the Araya fishermen used the trawling boats and the Pudu Islam fishermen were the major group to use fibreglass - ring seine combination⁹⁹.

While the modernisation of Kerala fishery has been a great success in terms of wealth generation and employment creation, through the 1980s growing ecological and social limitations to modernisation were apparent. The perception of the fishers on the fishery wealth reached a break-even

⁹⁹ In Marad fishing hamlet, there are three traditional boats providing job for 10 men; three in-board motor boats providing job for 150 labourers and 145 trawl boats giving job for 835 labourers directly, *Kozhikode Jillyile Mathsyabandhana Yanangalum Sajeeva Mathsyathozhilikalum – Thottennal Survey*, MCITRA Study series – XV, Kozhikode, 2007 pp.8-9. This survey was conducted in 2007 December and hence did not strictly represent the pattern in the pre-Marad I and Marad II scenario. After these two incidents, there was a decrease in the number of the crafts used by the Pudu-Islam fishers and an increase in the number of the Araya owned trawling boats.

point during this period. They felt that the once abundant high valued species were not coming to the net as it did in the past. The anxiety over the declining catch inspite of increased effort became manifested in the run for better crafts and gear. The already existing uncertainty in this sector added its own share into this race. In this race, as we noted, the Marad fishermen vertically split into two styles. This difference in style persuaded them to approach the problem of depletion from two standpoints. While the *Chundan Vallam* –Ring Seine owners put blame on the trawlers for the declining resources; the trawlers saw the factory trawlers permitted by the Government of India as the reason for the troubles and they further say that these factory trawlers are operating in the sea even during the monsoon season, the spawning season of many of the fish varieties. This technological fault line between the Arayas and Pudu-Islam fishers heightened the symbolic inter-community tension that began to spill out since the eighties. Thus the modernisation resulted in the fragmentation of the coastal solidarity in Marad¹⁰⁰.

The resource depletion and the race for the modification of the means of production and a simultaneous failure of the government institutions in extending financial aid to them, made these working people the permanent clients of middlemen and money lenders; they were satisfied if the *fellowmen*

¹⁰⁰ Derek Johnson points to this process of fragmentation in Gujarat fishery. He says that ‘Far from bringing fishers together on a common path to greater wealth, modernisation of the fishery of Gujarat has brought tensions over marine resources between the most productive segments of fishers in Gujarat. In some cases technological divisions have split castes, particularly along rural-urban lines’, “Wealth and Waste Contrasting Legacies of Fisheries Development in Gujarat since 1950s”, *EPW Review of Agriculture* 31st March, 2001.

of the community could extend that. The trading and money lending class consolidated around the ports of these regions. From the Araya section, fish merchants emerged after the 1980's who had relations with the urban centres and trans-local capital¹⁰¹. Among the Pudu-Islam fishers also men with capital emerged and they formed new fishing companies. The youth section of the Pudu-Islam group thus established the Nashath-Safeenath Company. "After returning from Gulf, K.V. Ummerkoya bought a Boat, later Puthen Peediyekkal Musthafa and K.V. Rasheed etc. jointly bought boat on a share basis¹⁰². Some of them had gulf connections and some had the real estate business among them¹⁰³. Their financial support in the modification of the means of production was very much crucial to the fishers in the light of the competition and uncertainty ushered in the sector since the 1980's. It was this financing class, who came to the key-positions of the AS and MC in the period of competition. They came to these positions replacing the elder groups of their respective sections. 'After 1976, the leadership of Mahallu Committee was under the control of the youngsters, the case of Samajam also was not different'¹⁰⁴. Moreover, they had connections with communal organisations. T. Suresh, the former Secretary of the Araya Samajam and now the General Secretary of *Hindu Aikyavedi*, had established his relations

¹⁰¹ Udayan was an enterprising Araya fish trader who has connections with the fish factories of Mangalore. He is a follower of the Swamy of Chengotukavu, Koyilandy. Interview with Udayan (42), Beypore, interview on 7.1.2009.

¹⁰² Seemamuntakath Ali (59), Marad, interview on 25.12.2008.

¹⁰³ Seemamuntakath Ali says that, P.P. Musthafa and K.V.Rasheed who are partners of this fishing company had this financial background.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

with RSS from his school days itself. He was active in the struggle led by the RSS against the Emergency.

The enterprising Araya fish workers were caught and made the office bearers of BJP or the Parivar Organisations. This was a tactic of the Parivar Organisations to *Hinduise* the once marginalised section like the Arayas. Formerly, this was done by the RSS. The presence of the Pracharaks like Madhavji was seen on the coast as early as the late sixties¹⁰⁵. This recruitment of the Arayas to the Hindu ideology greatly influenced this section in believing that they are Hindus. They are placed at the helm of the Parivar Organisations like the *Matsya Pravarthaka Sangham*, BJP, and the *Hindu Aikya Vedi*. Most of these moneyed men were non-fishing fishermen. T. Suresh, the secretary of Araya Samajam was also known for his money lending activity.

P.P. Musthafa, one of the partners of the Nashath-Safeenath fishing company, was the former secretary of the MC and he had relations with the real estate business and also a moneylender. P.P Moideen Koya, who was the member of the Beypore Panchayath during the Marad I and Marad II, was also was the secretary of the MC. He was arrested on charge of conspiracy in the Marad II. He was a Jama-at-e-Islami sympathiser and had considerable sway over the Pudu-Islam population of the Beach. They take a pro-Muslim

¹⁰⁵ The Arayas regard Madhavji in high esteem. The Arayas says that, 'It was he who encouraged us to compete with the Muslims who indirectly controlled the fishing field. They imposed a ban on fishing on Fridays at their fancy and maintained an upper hand in the marketing system. Whenever we tried to enter into this domain, the Muslims discouraged us. This picture began to change with the entry of the RSS. Madhavji had much concern about the fishermen, our unsystematic life, and the lack of vision on our future etc. He had worked among us in the 1960's', T. Suresh, Marad; Udayan, Beypore says that Madhavji was the inspiration behind the establishment of the AS.

League position in the politics and led the Pudu-Islam section in politics and the social affairs.

This control of the neo-rich and the neo-communitarian organisations on the ordinary labourers was executed with the help of capital¹⁰⁶. The need for loan became more intense in the lean months and the pre-monsoon period. The MC and AS of Marad Beach acted as money lending agencies in the background of the competition for scarce resources in general and in the lean months in particular. This economic protection they offered made the fishers of Marad beach permanent clients of their respective community institution.

The present physical realities of the fishing field especially the negative competition for resources and the need to improve the fishing technologies subjectively influenced the fishers to think that *community* is the reality and the leaders of the AS and MC as the leaders of the respective communities. In the pre-monsoon period, sometimes, there would be continuous absence of catch. For example, an absence of catch for 7 months was felt in some hamlets in Malabar prior to the Marad II¹⁰⁷. It was notable that majority of the communal problems or conflicts were reported from the coastal areas in the pre-monsoon period¹⁰⁸. At Marad, the intermediary crafts

¹⁰⁶ 'Whatever difficulties you have, you approach the (Araya) Samajam. Samajam will help you', A.Prabhakaran(60), Marad, interview on 25.12.2008. It is not just a eulogising comment but a reality. It is a fact that the court expenditure for the Court proceedings of Marad I and Marad II were managed by the AS and MC with the help of other communitarian institutions like the BJP and the IUML.

¹⁰⁷ *Madhyamam* Daily, 1st May, 2002.

¹⁰⁸ Both the Marad I and Marad II occurred in January and May respectively. The Perumathurai Conflict took place in January 2003, at Thaikkal conflict between Theerasangh and BJP happened in March 2002, the riot at Poonthura in 1978 occurred in

that are using motors with H.P. between 8 and 25 and above 25 are totally absent¹⁰⁹. That is, the two extremes of technology were being used at Marad and both were highly capital intensive. On the one end we have the traditional non-motorised boats. On the other, there are the in-board crafts and the trawling boats. And majority depends on the in-board and the Trawling boats. This meant that majority of the fish workers come under the trawling ban in the monsoon period. They became virtually jobless during this period. This was a period of heightened economic transactions in the coast. The needy labourers took loans from their community leaders or their community institutions in this ban period. This race for the resources and the better means of production assumed serious proportions in the 1980's and 1990's in the background of the overall communalisation took place in India. It was in the same period that the negative competition over the resources became intense. This competition was manifested in the allocation of craft and gear among the different sections of Marad, which later consolidated into Araya and Pudu-Islam groups, with trawlers owned by the Arayas and Chundan Vallam owned by the Pudu Islam section respectively.

The community divide become so clear and thick and one community began to view the other community as the cause of their miseries. But the internal contradiction developing within the *community* was also a problem

January-February At Unnial near Thirur in Malappuram District, two sections of Sunnis collided in March 2002. The only exception is the conflicts in Poonthura that took place in July 1992.

¹⁰⁹ Kozhikode Jillyale Mathsyabandhana Yanangalum Sajeewa Mathsyathozhilikalum – Thottennal Survey, *Op.Cit.*, pp.8-9.

to be dealt with. There were people who questioned the AS in their decisions¹¹⁰. Among the Pudu-Islam fishers, the sectarian divide following the two factions of the Sunni sects finally resulted in the division and the erection of another Mosque in Marad. These problems of internal contradictions developing within the community were resolved by the construction of the *other* and by the construction of the *abstract threats*¹¹¹. In this process mediated by capital, the help of the communal forces developing outside the coast were also sought.

By this time the communal organisations working outside the coast found Marad a proper niche for them to operate. There were people coming from outside in the dead of night to take secret classes for the fishermen. In this situation, the local, national and international issues soon resonated in this small hamlet¹¹². This process proved successful as it could communalise the rank and file of even the secular parties. Majority of the Marad natives were illiterate and living by daily work. The increasing uncertainties of the economic aspect left them vulnerable to the vagaries of capital. The communalisation could easily organise the entire Araya and Pudu-Islam fishers vertically and each section thought the other as the cause of their miseries and grievances. This mutual contempt and disregard was seen in the

¹¹⁰ Thekkethodi Devadas(42) ,Marad, fisherman, interview on 30.1.2009.

¹¹¹ “It was P.P. Moideen Koya who made the affairs this worse. There was no communalism in this Mahallu. He was a Jama-at-e Islami man. He emerged as a leader by making a false propaganda that the communists are trying take over the Mahall”, Seemamuntakath Ali.

¹¹² The Afghan invasion of America and the issues related with the observance of the Hartal in connection with the Babri Day explained at the beginning are examples.

ridiculing of the labelled cultural expressions¹¹³. The Muslim and Hindu communal outfits conducted centres of martial arts like *Kalari* and *Shakha* in and around Marad. Thekkeppurath Aboobacker was killed while on the way to the burial ground of the Marad mosque to dig graves for the murdered. There was another opinion that ‘he had connections with the NDF and conducted Kalari for the Pudu-Islam youths; (the RSS already had their Sakha training in and around Marad) and he was heading to the mosque to collect the weapons to attack the Arayas; he was a former worker in the left organisations and changed his platform after returning from the Gulf country’¹¹⁴. Any way he occupied a good position among the Pudu-Islam fishers of the Beach¹¹⁵.

This community vendetta was better manifested in the stock piling of weapons in and around Marad. In Marad I, both parties were equally prepared and easily got hold of the weapons kept *for* their neighbours/friends. The main targets of the mob were the houses and fishing implements of the other section.

The Inquiry Commission appointed by the Government of Kerala to probe into the Marad II said that, besides the activities of the communal

¹¹³ In the fateful New Year Celebration of December 2001, it is reported that the Araya section pooded when *Kolkali* (usually associated with Muslim cultural milieu) was presented and the Pudu-Islam section did the same when there was a *Thiruvathirakkaly* (usually associated with Hindu cultural milieu), P. Peethamabaran.

¹¹⁴ K. Balaraman said that; “Aboobacker maintained good relation with ISS and he was the explosives expert of the Organisation...when ISS was banned, he became NDF activist”, K. Balaraman(60), Beypore, former president, Beypore Grama Panchayath, interview on 23.1.2009. *Deepika Daily*, 7th May, 2002.

¹¹⁵ He was referred to as *Ustad/Gurukkal* because he had conducted *Kalari* to give martial training to Pudu-Islam youths.

organisations like RSS-BJP combination and NDF-PDP-IUML propaganda, the efforts of the secular parties like CPI (M) to fish in the troubled water has also made the situation worse¹¹⁶. The communalisation in the Beach was so high that even the rank and file of the secular parties fell a prey for it¹¹⁷. And the anti-fascist propaganda of CPI (M) might have had an anti Araya tinge in the peculiar context of Marad, where majority of CPI (M) members belonged to Pudu-Islam Section. Further, the Muslim communal outfits like NDF were working in a clandestine style¹¹⁸. It was also indicative of the shrinking of the liberal space in the coastal life.

The Marad Inquiry Commission has the opinion that “the massacre at Marad Beach on 2.5.2003 was not merely a retaliation for the murder of the three Muslims at Marad Beach on 3.4.2002. Instead, the Muslim fundamentalist/terrorist elements taking advantage of the communal divide in the area and the revenge some of the relatives of Aboobacker (killed on 4.1.2002) had in his killings attacked the Hindus at Marad Beach on 2.5.2003. Evidences, facts and circumstances revealed that (apart from the

¹¹⁶ TJCR, *Op.Cit.*, pp.94-111.

¹¹⁷ TJCR suggests instances of communal thinking among the top officials like the District Collector T.O.Sooraj. City Police Commissioner Sanjeev Kumar Patjoshi alleging T.O.Sooraj as communal, TJCR, *Op.Cit.*, p.201,p.68. There were reports that Assistant Police Commissioner (South) M. Abdul Raheem’s activities were partisan, *Deepika Daily*, 10th May, 2003 and *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, 30th November, 2004. It shows that the current of communalism sways even the so-called *educated and cultured cream* of the society. Then what to talk of the illiterate and ignorant fishermen who were taken by the machinations of the communal out fits like RSS and NDF.

¹¹⁸ The strategy of NDF is to work within the secular organisations to further their agenda of communalising the people. ‘NDF is not restricting their rank and file from working in other organisations. That means they permit dual membership’, Jacob George, “Ottappedunna Theevravadam”, in *India Today* (Mal), January 16, 2002, pp.40-41.

accused already booked) there were other forces behind the conspiracy and the massacre. The N.D.F. and I.U.M.L. were involved in the conspiracy and massacre”¹¹⁹. This finding of the Commission was a rejection of the ‘revenge theory’ found by the C.B.¹²⁰ and advanced by NDF immediately after the occurrence¹²¹. The spread of the hawala money in support of the fundamentalist activities of the coastal people were reported¹²². In the Marad II large funds were pumped to collect weapons and bombs and training. While hearing the appeal for leniency on punishment, the accused in Marad II stated their precarious familial and economic condition including their financial indebtedness before the honourable Court¹²³. In this circumstance, the monetary support from the outer agencies counts a lot.

Regarding the money flow for the Marad II, the Commission of inquiry referred to an intelligence report, “that a person called “FM” (Finance Minister) who came to Kozhikode from the Gulf Countries on 2.5.2003 was the source of the money behind the massacre, that two Ministers in the Cabinet of DWI (Chief Minister A.K.Antony) had “Unimaginable connection” with the ‘FM’ and that the Government may be in trouble if the

¹¹⁹ TJCR *Op.Cit.*, pp.174-175: At the time of interrogation, some accused revealed that the incidents at Marad happened were with the knowledge of some IUML leaders including M.C. Mayin Haji and Ward Member P.P. Moideen Koya, *Deshabhimani* Daily 8th May, 2003; *Deepika* Daily 8th May, 2003.

¹²⁰ *Madhyamam* Daily, 12th May, 2003, *Op.Cit.*

¹²¹ The NDF leaders A. Saeed, Nasaruddin Elamaram, and E. Aboobacker declared in a press conference that the ‘reason for the carnage at Marad may be the unilateral attack on the Muslims made by RSS in the last year’, *Deshabhimani* Daily 6th May, 2003.

¹²² Manoj K. Meppayil, “Theerangalil Sambavikkunnathu” – 5, *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 9th April, 2006.

¹²³ Judgement, Marad II, *Op.Cit.*, pp.611-636, 643.

C.B.I. Investigated the case at a time when the B.J.P. was (then) in power at the Centre”¹²⁴. The reference to FM was an indication of the outer agencies with mafia connections using capital for the purpose of dividing the people in the era of globalisation¹²⁵. In a reply given in the Parliament by the Home Ministry, it is stated that Rs. 700 crores flowed to Kerala during the last some years¹²⁶. It would not be accidental that a number of incidents of smuggling and the transit of hawala money had been reported during this period and in most of the cases had coastal areas as the hub of operation¹²⁷.

The Ideological dynamics of the divide

To have a clear understanding of the ideological dynamics behind the formation of the Hindu and Muslim identities among this subordinated groups of Marad, we have to go a bit back in time. There were many Kavus in the Naduvattam Amsom of Beypore Panchayath. The Karimakan *Kavu* of

¹²⁴ TJCR, *Op.Cit.*, p.186.

¹²⁵ There are newspaper reports that some reports prepared by the Customs authorities made it clear that V.B. Mohammed Kutty alias Hilal Muhammed alias F.M., had extensive relations with smuggling, Hawala money net work, *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 4th October, 2006.

¹²⁶ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 22nd October, 2004; In connection with the another incident of hawala transaction, one Abdul kareem, a native of Chavakkad was arrested by the Crime Branch. There were two more in this group, one Latheef and one Jayaprakash. The police said that Latheef had relations with NDF, *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 11th December, 2004.

¹²⁷ From Chavakkad Rs. 47 lakh and 3 kg of smuggled gold have been seized. The report continues that the gold smuggled from Saudi Arabia and Dubai were delivered at Chennai and taken to Thrissur via Coimbatore, *Deepika* Daily, 10th May, 2003; *Madhyamam* Daily, 11th May, 2003; After one month, the police again seized a sum of Rs. 47 lakh from the alleged carriers of hawala money purported to Kerala from Chennai, *Madhyamam* Daily, 7th June, 2003; A youngster allegedly trying to carry 10 lakhs of hawala money to Kerala was arrested at Chennai. The police said that 2.5 crore money has been seized in the last ten months and most of the arrested were from Malappuram district, *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 6th December, 2003; At Tanur, the pipe money of 5 Lakhs seized by the police, *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 31st January, 2004; Two persons arrested by the police confessed that they have so far carried 237 crores to Malappuram district, *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 4th March, 2005.

Beyepore was the important *kavu* of the area. The *Kalagam* (the pot with holy water to sanctify the precincts of the worship center on important occasions) to the neighboring *kavus* was taken from this shrine. There were Thiyya Shrines and Nair Shrines here. The Nair shrines were not taking *Kalagam* from the Karimakan *Kavu* because they had permanent Namboodiris to offer *pooja* (worship). But in the thiyya shrines there were no Namboodhiris and hence to sanctify the temple and its premises they had to take holy water from the Karimakan *kavu*. And the *Kalagam* was taken by a procession of the devotees. The narrow footpaths crisscross the western part of the Beyepore Panchayath connecting these little shrines and leading to the beach is the geographical peculiarity attesting to this feature. The Arayas of Marad beach also related with this *Kavu* network.

The Arayas had their worshiping centre at the *Sree Kurumba Bhagavathi Temple*. This temple was also known as *Vettakkorumakan temple*. This temple had some relations with the other *Kavus* in the Beyepore Panchayath. The Kurumba temple was under the direct supervision of the Araya community. There were ritualistic relations between the beach dwellers and the eastern people. The Araya people had to observe the *theendal* (pollution by access) with the high caste sections of the east. Among the people of the east, the Ezhava caste maintained some cordial relations with the fisher population. Among the little shrines of the Beyepore Panchayath, majority belonged to the Ezhava caste. It is said that the

Vettakkorumakan at the Sreekurumba Kavu was taken from the *sakthi* (power) of the deity of karimakan kavu¹²⁸. The Araya believed that their fore fathers who were arrested by the British police on the charge of drunkenness were liberated from the jail breaking the chains as a result of the blessings of the deity¹²⁹. And this deity was known as *chain breaker (Changala Poliyan)*¹³⁰. The Arayas still offer a day's *Vilakku* (lamp lighting) during the festival at this shrine as a token of gratitude¹³¹. Thus, the Araya group had developed a strong bond with these popular worship centres of the area¹³². The 'Kavu' network thus explained had a peculiar pattern. The Nair Kavus and the Ezhava Kavus functioned there with internal relations among themselves. The devotees of all the sections went to these worshiping places and in some of the Kavus the Araya fishers had certain rights (avakasams). At a certain point of time, these castes like Nair, Ezhava and Araya were horizontally incorporated to constitute a 'Hindu' population based on this Kavus.

The horizontal incorporation became easy with the unfolding of some incidents that had relations with their ritualism. Such incidents happened at Naduvattam in 1936 and 1954. Those incidents were precisely connected with the *Kalasam* processions. In 1936, there was an inter-community

¹²⁸ T. Sreedharan(54), Marad, fisherman, interviewed on 10.1.2009.

¹²⁹ A. Prabhakaran, Marad.

¹³⁰ T. Sreedharan, Marad.

¹³¹ A. Prabhakaran, Marad.

¹³² Among the Arayas, there was a belief that it was they who got the idol of Karimakan Kavus from the sea. A.Prabhakaran, Marad.

dispute at Naduvattam, Beypore in Calicut on the issue of passing of a Hindu *kalasam* (pot with holy water) procession by the Naduvattam Mosque¹³³. This issue fanned communal tendencies and tension and it prevailed for some two months there. This procession issue was amply aided by another incident of a controversy over 'the Muslim burial in a Hindu majority area'. This issue started in 1934 and remained unresolved in the locality up to 1938¹³⁴. The Beypore Panchayath Board President submitted a request to the collector in 1936 stating that Muslim burial could be had either at Marad Mosque or the Beypore Mosque. If it is difficult for the Muslims then arrangement shall be made at the seashore¹³⁵. In this way the coastal area was brought into the discussions on the emotional issues happening in the eastern part. The Muslims did not agree with this proposal perhaps because they did not want themselves to bury their dead in a Pudu-Islam area. A nine-member committee, consisting of six Hindus including the president, two Muslims and one Christian was set up to find out a suitable place for the burial ground. But this committee got divided on a Muslim-non-Muslim line when it met to find a solution for the question¹³⁶. However, the issue was protracted to 1st April 1938 to reach at a conclusion that permission was given to use a portion east of the Naduvattam Mosque as the burial ground of Muslims¹³⁷. It

¹³³ D. R, No.3799/36. dated, 21.5.1936, KRA.

¹³⁴ R.Dis.No. 5582/36. dated 1.4.1938, KRA.

¹³⁵ Letter from Beypore Panchayath Board President to the Collector of Malabar dated 24.11.1936. in *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ The Proceedings of the Meeting of the Beypore Panchayath Board held on 21-12-1936, in *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Order of the Collector in *Ibid.*

was true that the background of the procession issue of 1936 was set by this burial ground dispute.

Similarly, the Naduvattam incident of 1954 that led to police firing and death of two persons, also was one that developed around the dispute over a *Kalasam* procession. The relevance of these antecedents of 1936 and 1954 was that those incidents not only proved as causative factors for the communalisation of the local society in the period of happening, but it continued to function as a catalyst for communalisation in the succeeding decades also. The event of 1954 is still present in the memory of many. For instance, the names of Narimukkil Ahmedkutty and Thambi Muthalali, the persons who were considered as the protagonists of the Naduvattom incidents of 1954 represented the Muslim and Hindu sections respectively. They appeared either as villain or as hero in the current narratives of the said incident¹³⁸. All the narratives on this event serve one function or the other¹³⁹. The narratives with suspense and climax well threaded by a plot appeared to be a *text* that could be *contextualised* accordingly. This *text* is a ready-made form of knowledge that passes from generation to generation. Such incidents as these can survive as memory even after a long time span. The prevention of

¹³⁸ Periyambra Sreedharan(75), Bepore, interview conducted on 28.12.2008. Also see M.Balakrishnan, “54 le Naduvattam Sambhavam Thamaskarikkapedunna Yadharthyangal”, *Kesari Weekly*, 5th November 2006; P.Vasu(62), Bepore Beach, interview on 25.12.2008; Alappatt Bhaskaran(63), Marad, Member, CPM, Interview on 25.12.2008.

¹³⁹ “...there are strong possibilities that any narration of collective violence may be subjective, presenting a jaundiced view of the whole truth. Nevertheless, it is the current of the future potential of such a narrative as a weapon in the struggle for power, which makes it an interesting subject of study”, Riaz Ahmed, “Gujarat Violence: Meaning and implications”, *EPW* commentary, May 18, 2002.

the marriage procession at Kallayi and the *Kavadi* procession at Payyanackal near Kappakkal beach were also present in the memory of the people of the Beypore Panchayath¹⁴⁰. During the same year Panniyankara became the scene of communal tension following the obstruction of a marriage procession before the Mosque there; in this issue, 15 people including Narimukkil Ahmedkutty were punished¹⁴¹.

Some other issues like that of the burial ground contributed to this process. This burial ground dispute however, had a direct bearing on the coastal people. In 1955 there was a burial ground dispute between Hindus and Muslims at Kappakkal, the fishing hamlet that lies just north of Marad¹⁴². The problems started when Kozhikode Municipality gave permission to the Hindus to use a land adjacent to a *Srambi* (small Muslim prayer house) for burial purpose and it was resented by the Muslims. The petition of the Muslims warned that, “there is great resentment among Muslims against the decision of the Municipality and consequently the relation between Hindus and Muslims is strained...But if the burial has begun it is apprehended that it may lead to some undesirable incident and it will utterly jeopardise the Hindu-Muslim Unity”¹⁴³. This case took five years to reach at a settlement.

¹⁴⁰ these events were mentioned in the 3rd Chapter.

¹⁴¹ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, dated 19th August 1955. The names of the punished, P. Ibrahim, V.P.Kunhappu, K.Muhammed Kutty, P. Veeran Koya, P. Kuncheedutty, K.P.Saidali, Aboobacker, P. Moideen Koya, P.P.Veeran Koya, K. KunchiKoya, N. Koyassan, K.T.Muhammed, A.V. Moideen Koya Haji, Narimukkil Ahmed Kutty, N.C. Abdu Rahman.

¹⁴² See the file, R.Dis-18684/59 – dated, 30.3.1961,KRA.

¹⁴³ Petition of the Muslims to the Collector of Kozhikode in the file, *Ibid*.

We have seen in the First Chapter that the AJSSL and SKAMY, two communitarian organisations of the Arayas demanded for the well being of the total fishermen community. In the post-1950 period a Hindu consciousness developed among the Araya section of the coast as a result of the developments explained above. In the discourses like the *Kalagam* procession the Arayas section of Marad also had a stake. Then even the marriage and *Kavadi* processions generated disputes. Payyanakkal and Panniyankara where such issues erupted lies in the eastern boundaries of Marad beach. Similarly the burial ground dispute at Kappakkal beach also had a communalising impact on Marad. In this process some earlier taboos on the Arayas were removed¹⁴⁴.

During this period, the cases of conversion were also reported¹⁴⁵. A relative of Arayachantakath Kesavan, a female fish curer, fell in love with a Muslim and later converted to Islam¹⁴⁶. Many non-fisher respondents, made repeated references to the recurring instances of Arayas converting to Islam. They took it as examples of ‘religious tolerance’. But to the Arayas, it need not be so as their indifference to the questions on conversion would show. The anti-conversion propaganda outside the beach carried on by the RSS and the establishment of the Sakha (Physical Training centre) at Arakkinar in Beypore Panchayat in 1955¹⁴⁷ brought the Araya people close to Hindu

¹⁴⁴ Initially, there were some taboos for the Arayas that they could not enter in to the Kavay, but now it is possible. A.Prabhakaran, Marad.

¹⁴⁵ According to the version of Seemamuntakath Ali, A ‘Hindu’, female was first converted to ‘Islam’ and then reconverted.

¹⁴⁶ Theyikkutty was the father’s mother of A.Kesavan and received the name, Pathumma, A.Kesavan.

¹⁴⁷ Periyambra Sreedharan, Beypore.

identity. This peculiar process of a Hindu community formation had its impact on the political life of Marad Beach especially after the Naduvattam Incident of 1954.

Political distribution in the Marad Beach

In the period around the 1950s, the Praja Socialist Party had a strong control over the political life of the beach dwellers¹⁴⁸. The Indian National Congress (INC), Communist Party of India (CPI), etc. also were on the scene. But even at that period, the RSS held a sway over the Araya population. They worked as a non-political, national cultural organisation among the Arayas. The activity of the RSS in the Beypore Panchayath started with the Naduvattam Firing of 1954. The Cheruvannur area was a centre of RSS activities even before¹⁴⁹. The BJS and RSS leaders had frequent visits to the Kozhikode city¹⁵⁰. More important was that the house of Thambi Muthalali referred to in relation with the Naduvattam firing was at Gotheeswaram, a place close to Marad Beach. His presence might have influenced the Araya and Pudu-Islam sections¹⁵¹.

The CPI became a professed enemy of the RSS on the ground that they openly supported the Muslims in the Naduvattam issue. The stride of the

¹⁴⁸ The Praja Socialist Party took a Hindu partisan political position after the Naduvattam firing. It strongly denounced the Communist Party's position, (CPI had the opinion that the Naduvattam incident was planned by RSS) as 'poisonous', *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 7th April, 1954.

¹⁴⁹ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 20th March, 1953 and 28th June, 1953.

¹⁵⁰ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 4th December, 1953; *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 19th January, 1954.

¹⁵¹ P.Vasu and Alappatt Bhaskaran were of the opinion that he had relations with BJS.

RSS was already felt on the beach area. The pracharaks like Madhavji were active in the Beach area. He commanded such a great deal of support from the Arayas that they remember him as a permanent source of inspiration for their affiliation with the *Sangh* activities. *Matsya Pravarthaka Sangham*, the trade union of the fishermen affiliated in the Jana Sangh, had their oldest unit in the Marad Beach. In the late '60s, the question of land reforms and the *kudikidappu* struggle brought the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI (M)) into direct confrontation with the feudal elements of the region¹⁵². The Chembayil family, the leading landlords of the region freely supported the RSS. The trade union activities in the tile factories of the Panchayath from 1970's also provided a grip for CPM in the political life of the Panchayath¹⁵³. It was the tile labourers of the Panchayath who worked among the fisher population in the earlier periods¹⁵⁴. As a result of their work the CPM was able to make headway in to the political life of the Beach. But it never gave a lasting result. As the RSS continued to influence the Araya section of the Beach, the IUML, the "champions of the Muslims interest" in the Naduvattam incident became the party of the Pudu-Islam fishers of the Beach. With the advent of the IUML, the INC suffered a set back in the Beach.

¹⁵² In the KLA, Chathunni Master complained that in the Meenchanda police station limit, the landlord and his men beat a tenant named Kunchi moideen. The landlord was a rich Muslim and such activities are taking place in whole of the locality, PKLA, (4th Assembly), 1st session, 12th November, 1970, Vol. XXVII, No.13, pp 893-94.

¹⁵³ P.P. Beeran Koya(50), Arakkinar, former president, Beypore Grama Panchayath. Interview on 5.2.2009.

¹⁵⁴ Padmanabhan, a tile factory worker, who worked among the fisher folk in the 1970's,. Kommadath Balaraman, Beypore, former president, Beypore Grama Panchayath; and P.P. Beeran Koya, Arakkinar.

Now, all the Arayas, except a numbered few, subscribe to the Hindu ideologies of Sangh Parivar. The control of R.S.S. over them was very strong and visible. The Pudu-Islam fishermen rallied round the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML). IUML controlled the Mahallu Committee also. CPM also had a prominent role in the electoral politics of the Beach. After its emergence, the Islamic Sevak Sangh (ISS), a Muslim extremist organisation made much progress in this coastal area. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the political incarnation of ISS also gained much popularity among them. It is said that National Development Front (NDF), a Muslim ultra communal outfit, also is attracting the youths of this area.

The Community divide: The Araya and Pudu Islam

The material conditions in the form of the technological divide contributed for the growth of Araya and Pudu Islam identities in the post 1950 period. This process was assisted by the ideological factors like the procession disputes, burial ground disputes and issues related with conversion.

The establishment of the AS was an important step in the social movement of Arayas. The AS of Marad came into being in 1965¹⁵⁵. It was registered in 1971¹⁵⁶. To quote an activist of the Araya Samajam, “There was a committee known as *Desaseva Sangham* (National Service Society) in 1960s. The youngsters collected money and this money was utilised to

¹⁵⁵ Kelappantakath Dasan(65), Marad, President, *Araya Samajam*, interview on 10.1.2009.

¹⁵⁶ T. Suresh, Marad.

provide financial aids for the needy. Then we thought that there must be a common place for our elders to meet for the *Panchayath*. And we constructed a building collecting money from 14 boat owners. When it started to function, we gave it the name *Haindava Seva Sangham* (Hindu Service Society). Later we thought that this name should be changed and we gave it the name *Araya Samajam*. The AS of Puthiyappa came into being in 1955”¹⁵⁷. This testimony showed a conflict within the Hindu identity, the conflict first revealed by the AJSSL in their memorial. Whether they are Hindus or Arayas was a *dilemma* within the Arayas. The happenings around (like the Naduvattam incidents and conversion etc.) forced them to take a Hindu line but the seafaring profession compelled them to declare that they were Arayas. They swung between these two identities. At the beginning this AS functioned as a communitarian institution. The pioneers of this movement were the persons like Arayachantakath Kesavan, who was a representative of the generation that got FTC. The establishment of the AS was a milestone in the institutional and ideological incorporation of this subordinated group who were originally having a non-brahmanical culture, into the hindutva fold. It was not accidental that the Araya respondents remember the construction of a Madrassa during that time at Marad. And they consider the foundation of the AS was an effective way of people’s mobilisation to counter the Muslim style of socio-religious organisation¹⁵⁸. These developments converged when

¹⁵⁷ A. Kesavan, Marad.

¹⁵⁸ Arayachantakath Kesavan says that ‘when I returned from Kochi I found a structure there and when enquired I came to know that that is the Madrassa. Then we thought that we also should have something like that’. Satyakam Joshi, while discussing the communalisation among the tribals of Dang District of Gujarat, says that the christianisation of the tribals

the RSS started their activities among them after the Naduvattam incident¹⁵⁹. As later incidents proved their space of socio-political manoeuvre was restricted. Hence the politics of Hindutva appeared to many of them to be their politics and one of the few available avenues for their individual and collective advancement¹⁶⁰. The AS was extending financial help for the needy in the community¹⁶¹. Now the AS runs a school, Sree Bhadra Sisumandiram under a trust, Vivekananda Vidyalayam with CBSE syllabus and classes up to 7th standard.

The Pudu-Islam fishers cherished a community identity as a result of their self-perception vis-à-vis the RSS led Araya section. The mosque centered *mahallu* system and the socialisation through the Madrassas reinforced this self-perception. Unlike the Arayas, who were wedded with the Hindu religion as early as the 1950s, the integration of the Pudu-Islam with the scriptural Islam was a comparatively slow process. Because there were some taboos that prevented the *original* Muslims from mingling with the Pudu-Islam section. The Mappila landowners and the other Muslims of the eastern part of the beach, once denounced them as low class Muslims. But

initiated a counter 'church' like movement, Swaminarayan sect, among them to resist it. It shows that drawing the *model* from the *enemy other* is an accepted norm in communalisation. See "Tribals Missionaries and Sadhus Understanding Violence in the Dangs", *EPW* Special Articles, September 11, 1999.

¹⁵⁹ 'The Arayas were formerly CPI sympathisers and after the Naduvattam incident, they became RSS activists', Peethambaran P. Marad.

¹⁶⁰ Such incorporation of a non-brahmanical section is studied by Vijay Prashad in his work on the Balmikis, *Untouchable Freedom: A Social History of a Dalit Community* see the review article by Nonica Datta, "Hinduisation of Balmikis", *EPW* Reviews, October 7-13, 2000.

¹⁶¹ The AS meets the hospital expenditure of the ill and marriage expense of the poor. Sometimes AS extends aid as loan, some times as grant, T. Suresh, Marad.

after the 1970s, the picture began to change and marital exchanges took place between the *Original* and the Pudu Islam sections. This integration was crucial and instrumental in developing a community identity among the Pudu Islam sections. Now that the Arayas and the Pudu Islam sections are not addressed in these names, often they are addressed as *Hindus* and *Muslims*.

Thus one could see the development of an Araya and Pudu Islam identity and these identities were related with the mega religious identities hitherto lay out side their domain. But in this the important aspect was the self-perception they developed as the result of the conscientisation by the RSS and the socialisation through the mosque centered life. But at this stage, both the sections strove for the internal restructuring and economic self-reliance without completely distancing the other section.

But this divide was strictly communitarian. This was because of the nature of the work they did. Fishing was a collective enterprise that needed professionalism, co-operation, knowledge of the sea-ecology along with a craft to enter into the fishing ground and a gear to hunt the fish. All these ingredients were scattered in the fishing community. Those who had capital might not have the health and technical know-how to go to the sea. Those who had these qualities might not have a craft and gear. Hence for the combination of all these elements one had to overlook the religious or in-group criterion. Hence the collectivity was even more important than the

community identity they had. In other words, this mutuality and interdependence had a great role in maintaining the fishermen identity. But with modernisation, and mechanisation of the fishery sector, the traditional knowledge become obsolete and technology guided the fishing operation. Hence anybody irrespective of their knowledge in the fishing operation could be selected to the crew and naturally, in the changed social milieu, the selection criterion became community.

Turning Communitarian into Communal

The uncertainty that prevailed in fisheries sector in the pre-mechanisation period was very high. In order to over come this, the fishing community used to propitiate the Gods. The offerings to temples and conducting *mouleed* ceremonies (*Pattu*) were the popular ways of ensuring the catch. For the offerings to temple each boat collected a sum from the members of the crew. After mechanisation, and in the backdrop of resource depletion, these traditional ceremonies acquired new meanings. As the competition for resources started these ritualistic co-operation and communion between these groups began to decline. The Araya complaint was that while contributing to the temples, the Pudu-Islam fishers took proportionately low amount and that too as an offering to the devil¹⁶². The Arayas saw *Mouleed* ceremony as attempts of conversion. The songs describing the life and history of prophet Mohammed and the items of the

¹⁶² A. Kesavan and Kannante Purakkal Unni(50), former fisherman, interview on 10.1.2009.

subsequent feast like beef meat and *Pathiri* were seen with apprehension by the Araya section. They gradually abstained from these ceremonies and decided to contribute the money to the temples¹⁶³. These were the developments of the late sixties. This suspicion was the outcome of other social developments that made the Arayas more advantaged and the Pudu-Islam fishers more challenged in the profession. In the 1970s the land reforms in Kerala came in to effect and the fishers of this hamlet got land. The possession of land opened an avenue of mortgaging the land whenever money was needed. The lack of thrift from the part of the fishers was very popular. They had to take money from the moneylenders. Some times, the affluent Araya and Pudu-Islam fishers lent money receiving either the land or the improvements on mortgage¹⁶⁴. The Araya section had an upper hand in money lending. This practice made them even more powerful in the economic sector than the Pudu-Islam fishers. The mechanisation and the land reform were in effect turned in favour of the affluent among the Araya section¹⁶⁵. Thus, a climate of competition was slowly developing in the beach.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ 'During '72-74, we mortgaged our land for Rs. 300. Money advanced by an Araya moneylender', T. Devadasan, Marad.

¹⁶⁵ There were members of the Araya community who, even after completing the FTC, had to rely on the affluent Arayas for financial help. The family of Thekkethody Sukumaran is an example. His sons are still working in the *Chundan Vallams* of the Pudu-Islam friends. The Araya Samajam excommunicated him and his family from the community. This is a sign of the internal stratification taking place within the Araya community in the post-'50s.

Minor Conflicts - the Signs of Ushering in the Divide

The community formation in the beach life and the response to this slowly brought in some skirmishes in the beach. The Hindu community formation that took place in the 20th century had a direct bearing on the problems of Naduvattam in 1936 and 1954. Then such incidents began to occur frequently. In the nearby hamlet Vellayil, five people lost their lives in a conflict between Araya and Pudu-Islam fishers in 1962¹⁶⁶. There were some arguments and physical scuffles in 1973 over the parking of the country boats on the beach at Marad¹⁶⁷. There was no particular space to put the crafts after fishing. It was done in a “first come first served” basis. But some fishers insisted on the parking space at a particular place, and this led to the conflict in 1973.

The issue of the burial ground for the Pudu-Islam fishers could be seen in the same period. It triggered some communal consciousness in the region. The objection from the part of the Arayas to bury the dead body of a Pudu-Islam woman in 1982 took the issue to the court. In the next year when a Pudu-Islam boy died, again there was a dispute between these two groups. As a result of the intervention of the Court, the Pudu Islam group had to resort to the Kappakkal burial ground which lies North of Marad. As there was no space at Kappakkal they had to bury the dead at the Mathottam

¹⁶⁶ C.P.Balan Vaidyar, “Maradum Marxist Partiyum”, *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, 21st October, 2006; Prabhakaran, Beypore.

¹⁶⁷ Alappatt Bhaskaran, Marad.

Mosque, 1.5 k.m away from the Marad Juma Masjid¹⁶⁸. It was in these circumstances that a conflict occurred in 1984. In 1984, two country boats slightly collided in the sea while fishing. The boat of Usman Mooppan (his was a traditional Congress family) struck on the boat of Unni¹⁶⁹. Kinattungalakath Siddi and Kinattungalakath Cheriya were seriously injured¹⁷⁰. In connection with this incident the Muslims of Beypore beat some Arayas of Marad¹⁷¹. This incident triggered minor skirmishes in the area.

Thus the procession issues of Naduvattom worked as a major reason for the ideological division among the Hindus and Muslims of Beypore Panchayath. This affected the coastal area also. The establishment of AS signified the appearance of a distinct Araya identity that had its relation with the contemporary developments in the field of fishing technology. These factors were also responsible for the development of a Pudu Islam identity in Marad. The material and technological divide and competition was manifested through the ideological divisions between them as well as their self perception as members of discrete communities. As the competition matured as a result of problems like resource depletion, the communitarian feelings turned to communal. Small skirmishes developed from the 1980's onwards and finally culminated in the incidents of Marad. These events were exploited by the communal organisations and it affected the Kerala community in general.

¹⁶⁸ A. Kesvan, Marad.

¹⁶⁹ Alappatt Bhaskaran, Marad.

¹⁷⁰ Seemamuntakath Ali, Marad.

¹⁷¹ Kelappantakath Dasan, Marad.

In Marad II we could see communalism assuming gigantic proportions of a terrorist strike¹⁷². This proved that the communal divide at Marad made it a suitable hub for the ultra-communal forces to dwell and make their programmes successful¹⁷³. Such a situation was ripe enough to be utilised by any communal outfit at its whims and fancies. The Marad II happenings provided a springboard to the Sangh Parivar organisations to launch their communal agenda. It allowed the leaders like Praveen Thogadia to come over here and to speak for the cause of *Hindus*. They intensified their communal campaign placing the threat of *minority communalism* as a shield. For instance, the trident distribution, actually a plan of Viswa Hindu Parishad (VHP) was taken over by the other members of the Parivar organisations¹⁷⁴. A co-ordination of the different Hindu organisations was brought in under the auspices of Hindu Aikya Vedy and it decided to conduct a march by the Sanyasins and to distribute pamphlets bearing the stills of different scenes of Marad II¹⁷⁵. The Hindu Aikya Vedi also planned to take the funeral ashes of the deceased Arayas through different districts¹⁷⁶. At some places, this *Yathra* triggered conflicts¹⁷⁷. The contention of the Sangh Parivar ideologue P. Parameswaran that the

¹⁷² National Security Advisor M.K. Narayanan demanded an inquiry into the alleged relationship NDF had with the Pakistan secret investigation agency Inter Service Intelligence, *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, 16th May, 2005.

¹⁷³ In the Marad II, a group of NDF men from Tanur supported the relatives of the deceased Aboobacker, *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, 10th May, 2003.

¹⁷⁴ *Deepika Daily*, 10th May, 2003.

¹⁷⁵ *Deepika Daily*, 9th May, 2003.

¹⁷⁶ *Deepika Daily*, 15th May, 2003.

¹⁷⁷ In Palakkad district, Mepparambu, Melamury areas some skirmishes were reported in connection with this *yathra*, *Madhyamam Daily*, 2nd June, 2006

entire Pudu-Islam community of Marad has to be fined collectively before their rehabilitation could be effected was beyond the limit of the secular decencies cherished by Kerala society¹⁷⁸. Instead of healing the wound of Marad, the communal elements of the society fan fired animosity in this way. The ultra Hindutva organisation, Hindu Maha Sabha, started functioning in Kerala exploiting the communal polarisation of Kerala following the Marad II¹⁷⁹. But the attendance in the meeting was far below the expectation of the organisers¹⁸⁰. The *Marad Raksha March* (Save Marad March) organised by the Hindu Aikya Vedi toured all over Kerala¹⁸¹. It disseminated not the need of secularism or need of peaceful co-habitation but anxiety and fear.

Conclusion

The developments at Marad fishing hamlet indicated the general trend of communalisation of the Malabar Coast in the past fifty years. We saw the formation of the modern communities with humanitarian communitarian ethos in the British period. This approach underwent a change in the post-independence period because of many reasons. The structural changes in the Kerala fisheries and the resultant negative competition propelled the earlier formed communities along the coast into closed contours. The need for capital made the fishers permanently indebted to the moneylenders. The huge amount needed as fixed capital and working capital made some system for

¹⁷⁸ *Madhyamam* Daily, 2nd August, 2003

¹⁷⁹ *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 4th August, 2003.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Madhyamam* Daily, 21st August, 2003.

support inevitable. But the government systems could not rise to the occasions. It was at this juncture that the AS and MC emerged as institutions who supply free loans. The already existing technological divide among the Araya and Pudu-Islam sections accelerated the competition between these two sections. Situations of physical conflagrations prevailed there from the 1970's onwards. In the 1980's the number of conflicts increased in a climate of general resource depletion. The proper communal spirit entered the coastal area in this period. In the 1990's the policies of globalisation and the overall communalisation of the civil society intensified the communal tension. This available platform was made use of by ultra communal organisations out side the beach to further their agenda. This eventually led to the conflict of January 2002. At this stage, the accidental conflicts were turned to pre-planned lethal attacks. The increasing communalisation, the terrorist nature of attack and working style, the involvement of hawala money and the leaders of the political parties made this phenomenon even more dangerous. The terrorist attack of May 2003 was an example of this synergy. This shows a post-communalist stage in the history of communal conflicts in Kerala. Thus the tragedy of the commons becomes the tragedy of the commoners.

CONCLUSION

In history, one cannot see an autonomous nature that stands outside human endeavour. The expansions of human life and livelihood to the distant areas have changed the respective landscapes and the people who inhabited the area. The technology used may be 'traditional' or 'modern'. There is a risk involved in the mechanical use of the binaries like 'traditional' and 'modern' to connote either technology or the population/community or the practices. It contains an essential valorisation of the 'traditional' and a disregard for what is 'modern'. The social science analysis has to take the fact into account that there was a historical process which provided the forms and contours even to the 'traditional'.

If we take this cue, then the coastal ecology and life of Malabar at the beginning of the 20th century might well be a point in the scale of historical evolution with its own preceding and succeeding chapters. Given this fact the present study has taken the socio-political forms that existed in the coastal area in the early decades of the twentieth century as a product of the earlier changes and tries to explain the subsequent changes in the life, ecology and social relations in a historical manner. This analysis focuses on, the issue of how the coastal population transformed themselves, in relation to coastal nature as well as the population outside the coast, and the social results of

this transformation. Coastal zone is simply an extension of the land and the coastal area is regarded as the most important part of the ocean, since the two third of the world population resides here. And it is the area where most of the activities of traditional fishing are taking place. The coastal resources are considered by most of the countries as *commons*, which means that they come under the responsibility of the community associated with that resource and not under any individual or agency.

The Kerala coastal society had many traditional knowledge systems set by their ecology and life style. They lived by the sea, utilised the flora available around to make the means of production like the canoe and net and to make their huts for habitation. The free flowing rivers from the Western Ghats brought plenty of water and the food for fishes in the sea. The constant touch with the *kadalamma* (Mother Sea) sharpened their wisdom with enormous knowledge that made their profession an art and science par excellence. Without a compass, they set out for fishing and returned to the same spot from where they started. They carefully selected their gear suitable for the target species to see that no unwanted fishing is done.

They observed caste and community obligations without harming the interests of others. In each and every turning point of the life, like marriage, death, birth, puberty, boat making, net making etc. they propitiated the Gods and Goddesses like Bhadrakali and the ancestors. They went to the tomb of other religionists to ensure a bumper catch and to save themselves from the

hazards of the sea. The non-Muslim fisher communities observed *theendal* among them. And they were not considered as equal by the Hindu sections residing in the eastern part of the beach. The Pudu-Islam section also had a segregated existence from the Muslims of the eastern part. But both these sections of fishers jointly did the fishing operations. The fishers jointly owned the means of production. The fish caught was distributed among themselves and the rest was sold. Some times, the selling was done through the middlemen who advanced money to the fishers in the off-season. The coastal communities had their own separate form of social organisations and regulation systems. They had their social regulation systems like *Kadakkodi*. They unquestioningly obeyed their elders, paid the periodical subscriptions to the worship centres and helped each other in distress. This surrender to the nature, God and the elders has to be seen in the light of the hazardous profession they undertook and the uncertainty they experience in the harvest. The highly patriarchal and less differentiated society having a variety of worship systems and cosmological beliefs began to shatter as a result of the nascent capitalistic tendencies of the 20th century.

The first half of the 20th century was very crucial in changing the life and conditions of the fisher folk. This period witnessed the confrontation of a subordinated group with the institutions and technologies of colonial modernity. The British tried to introduce new technologies for fishing and started experiments on trawling. New fishing grounds were surveyed and

resources were estimated. But they were more successful in commercialising the sector by opening the fish curing yards and fish oil and guano factories. A food gathering society that did the hunting mainly for food gradually became producers for the market. The latter process of commercialisation helped the emergence of a trading class. A minority from the fishing community benefited from this change. But many of the members of this class had no relation with the fishing profession but had trade relations with the other countries like Colombo. When the income from the traditional type of fish curing and trading dwindled, the money for the better fishing equipments were met by loans from the *sowcar*. Besides these, the festivities like marriage, birth and occasions of death, house construction etc were some other occasions where loan became necessary. The loans were received on condition of advance mortgage of catch. This was straightaway subtracted on account of interest and the principal remained thereof. The fish worker, by virtue of the capitalist mechanism prevailed on the shore, could not make any profit for himself, the whole profit went to the fish trader. Any improvement in the means of production was made with the assistance of the moneylender. This vicious circle of debt still continues and shapes the seashore's impoverishment. The co-operative measures taken by the British officials to help the fishermen in economic distress did not work effectively. The prime reason for that was the indebtedness of the fishing people. The opening of the fish oil and guano factories gave opportunities for many, including those

from fishermen and outside, to rise up as entrepreneurs. This process thus started should have given some possibilities for the primary producer – the fishermen. But it did not result in that way. A kind of impoverishment set in. The reference in some administrative reports to the decline of the Mukkuva families and the decline of caste assemblies pointed to this direction.

The land assignments that became so frequent helped the extension of habitat and agriculture to the coastal areas. The British revenue policy and the macroeconomic trends (commodification of land and increasing demand for lands) resulted in the assignments of lands to different sections of people for the purpose of revenue generation. Thus, the once outlying places, *Government Puramboke* were assigned to the people. This policy resulted in the actual shrinkage of the habitation zone of the fishermen. The government measure to create fishermen reserves had to be seen in this background. This influenced the spatial distribution of the traditional fishermen on the Malabar Coast. Under the British, considerable extent of coastal land was converted into coconut plants and space for habitation. This might have been the first massive ecological impact on the coastal area. This ecological impact worked in combination with other administrative measures like the introduction of the salt tax and the opening of fish curing yards. These changes brought by the British administration might have had some negative effects on the sub-professions of the fishers, like coir making, small-scale agriculture, salt making etc. It also affected the allied professions like traditional fish curing. As a result the female section of the fishers was completely removed from

the fish allied activities like fish vending and curing. Hence these governmental measures acted as potential reasons, among many others, for the famines recorded in the 1950's along the Malabar Coast.

Further, the developments in the colonial period resulted in the emergence of a communitarian aspiration among the fishers. In other words, the public sphere developed during the colonial period contributed for the transformation of the traditional caste (*Jatis*) into modern communities (*samudayams*). The Temperance Societies established during the colonial rule functioned as the avenues of the communitarian spirit. The starting of schools by these societies and the propagation of new ethics and values like thrift, temperance, etc. were the manifestations of the modern mores developed among the fisher population. The reservation brought in for the fish workers in the Local bodies of administration and the opening of new Hindu and Moplah schools paved way for the growth of communitarianism among them. Further, the question of actual space in the coastal area was yet another factor that provoked communitarian demands. The fishers submitted memorandums in their community names for more space for occupation and for the regaining of burial grounds from the compound of the newly erected guano and oil industries. The decline of the fishing seasons in 1920's and 30's and the First World War conditions hampered the development of the curing industry and the fish catch. This heightened the community consciousness and direct communal divides were reported in the administrative records and co-operative societies were named after communities. However,

these developments did not affect the collective fishing activities conducted by the different community members. Because the traditional style of fishing demanded certain amount of knowledge and skill in the profession and hence it could not afford to select crew-members on the basis of community. And these communitarian institutions functioned on a broad humanitarian basis.

It was in these circumstances that the introduction of the new technology took place in the post-independence period. During the colonial period, there were some measures to modernise the fishing practices. But such attempts were not fully successful. What was successful during the British period was the promotion of the allied activities like the fish curing yards, fish oil and guano factories, preservation techniques etc. Hence, the *real* modernisation took place in the post-independence period. And the technology gradually altered the nature, society and history of the coastal Malabar. Theodore Schatzki observes: ‘Technology, meanwhile is not just useful products, and not just a mediation of society/history and nature. It also is (1) something through which humans manage social life and the nature that is part of it, largely by drawing nature into this site and thereby conjointly transforming society, technology, and nature in history; and (2) something that, overtime, plays an increasingly central role in the nexus where social life transpires. Through technology, in short, social-natural history takes form and advances’¹.

¹ Theodore R Schatzki, “Nature and Technology in History”, in *History and Theory*, theme issue 42 (Dec.2003), pp.82-93, Wesleyan University 2003, see www.blackwellsynergy.com.

The erstwhile colonies in Asia, Africa and Latin America followed a path of planned development after the independence. In the field of fisheries these countries blindly imitated the technologies of the temperate countries. In the case of India, the Norwegian interference in the form of INP was the best example. Modernisation of indigenous crafts and introduction of mechanised fishing boats have been accorded high priority for the development of marine fishery sector from the very beginning of our National Five Year Plans. The concept of planned development in the 1950's influenced the field of fisheries also. The Kerala Aquarian scene witnessed drastic changes from this period. In 1950's and 60's food security was the main concern of the planners. In the 1970's the thrust was changed from food security to export.

Once the mechanised fishing was found lucrative, many entrepreneurs from the non-fishing fields entered the fishery sector with the sole motive – profit. The export demand coupled with high unit value realisation of prawns added to the speed of the growth of mechanised fleets. The crafts and gears suited to the climate of the temperate countries were experimented in our waters. The Norwegians first introduced purse seine in India. The passive gears used by the traditional fishermen were substituted with the active gear types. Money began to flow. Alien operators, new technologies, crafts, gears, processing units etc. began to develop in Kerala. Gradually, the fishing sector, particularly the mechanised sector came under the control of these

non-fishermen operators making the actual fisherman a coolie. Simultaneously, the fish processing industry also strengthened and that too came under the men with capital who were non-fishermen. New employment opportunities were created with the processing industry. At the same time, the industrial opportunities could not act as the substitute for the jobs lost for the women section of the population who made some money by the net making, fish curing, fish vending etc. All along the coast, there was a shift from the traditional occupation to other non-fishing occupations like plumbing, construction works, and such activities. This shift from the fishing profession to other professions acts as entry point of the mores and values of the *outer* world. As a result of this process, the actual fishermen were pushed out of the mechanised sector and the processing field and they had to depend again on the traditional boats for fishing.

To help the traditional fishermen from this predicament, the Kerala government started the motorisation of the country crafts. For this project 81 new co-operative societies were formed and Matsyafed was constituted as an apex society. The motorisation of the country crafts in 1980 led to a technology build up in the fishing sector. The fishers in the traditional sector opted modern fishing strategies and technologies, which invariably pushed them to integrate with a new economy and ethics. In the pre-capitalist era, the production relations remained primitive and fewer surpluses were produced. The subsistence economy fed the people. With the introduction of the

emergence of capitalist production relations in the age of industrial capitalism, surplus was produced, but foreign trade was carrying it away. Thus, the capitalist process brought changes in the crafts and gear to suit their needs while kept the fish worker frozen in an early historical time – socially and economically. Export orientation and commercialisation simply played the second fiddle to this underdevelopment. Scholars question the neoclassical economic logic that commercialisation is a process that brings development². A.K.Bagchi argues: “commercialisation has been forced on many third world countries by using non-market coercion, and that the process of commercialisation has often resulted in an economic structure which has acted as a brake on economic development; further, the process of commercialisation generally led to the removal of surplus from third world countries”³. This was the case with the fish trade during the colonial period. With the introduction of more advanced technologies, production was augmented with a proportionate increase in the foreign trade, again resulting in the surplus extraction. This prevented the growth of a full-fledged bourgeoisie or a free workforce along the coast. The entry of capitalism gave rise to a class of contractors and middlemen who exploited the fish worker. This surplus extraction is the major cause of the poverty along the Kerala Coast. Because, the surplus removed from here did not return to the sector.

² Amiya Kumar Bagchi, *The Political Economy of Underdevelopment*, Orient Longman Limited, Hyderabad, 1982.p.18.

³ *Ibid.*

By this time, the government introduced the co-operative societies in the fisheries field. Matsya Utpadaka Co-Operative Societies (MUCS) and Regional Fish Marketing Co-operative Societies were formed with fish workers as members. There were more than 1100 such societies in 1970's. In the 1980's Matsyafed was formed as an apex society to help the traditional fishermen to conduct mechanised fishing and fish marketing. For this purpose, the state government sought the financial help of National Co-operative Development Corporation (NCDC). But this project also was a failure in its twin objectives – to help the fish worker to motorise the country crafts without being indebted to the moneylenders and to ensure the right of first sale to the fish worker. This failure of the co-operative system rendered the fishermen helpless in the era of cutthroat competition in the sector. The saga of indebtedness from the colonial period still continues as an unbroken thread in the coastal life. The rising fishing expenditure, cost of living and other accidental expenses were very difficult to meet.

The developments in the 1980's were crucial with respect to the history of the Kerala fisheries. The motorisation of the country crafts, the legislation of KMFRA, and the ban on monsoon trawling were some important events of the decade. It was in that period, the catch trend of the artisanal sector began to show signs of decline. It was considered that the mechanised boats with purse seine gear did harm to the fortunes of the traditional fishermen. The fishermen struggle of 1984 was the result of this

apprehension. In the Malabar region, this struggle caused the fragmentation of the fishers on the basis of technology and community. The NGOs played their role in popularising a political mobilisation on the basis of community. This struggle showed the latent fragmentation in the fisher class that became evident by the close of the 1980's. The introduction of the thanguvallam-ring seine combination from the southern Kerala demanded high capital investment. This investment transformed the work organisation into a capitalistic one. The capital input into the more costly fishing implements was done in Malabar with the help of the non-fishermen operators. These alien elements entered the realm of fishing by cleverly using the traditional avenues of share holding. For instance, the *Panku* share holder. This type of share existed there on the coast. This share was used for the convenience of the fisher who was not able to go for fishing. Then, he would take a share in a craft for a given amount that would ensure him a share in the catch without taking part in the labour process. With the coming of capitalist relations, this basic logic of *panku* share was utilised by the non-fisher operator to come into the field as shareholder. The need of high capital facilitated this. It virtually meant a considerable reduction in the income of the actual fish labourer. He got only a subsistence minimum. It delineated another aspect in the development of capitalism on the coast. For the convenient survival, capitalism made use of the traditional ways of work organisation and partnership systems of the coast. In this way, it maintained the relative

autonomy the fishers had in their life. This caused a certain degree of ambivalence in the development of a self-perception based on class among the fishers. The fisher objectively perceived himself as the member of working class but at the same time considered himself as a traditional fisherman. While discussing communalisation this ambivalence in the class-consciousness deserve special attention.

Further, the high technological input in to the sector obviously affected the nature of competition in the sector. The production became market oriented, and the fishing units always targeted the high valued species. The capital was used to increase the catching capacity of the craft and gear. But at this stage, the returns from the fishing operations did not always generate a profit for the fisher who had to share the same with the investor. Such profit could be accumulated only by cutting into the resources of other competitors. This brought in a negative competition in the field and that caused conflicts in the sea. This conflict could take different forms. The conflicts between the purse-seiners and the traditional craft men, the migrant fishers and the native fishers, the fishers belonging to one community and the fishers of another community and so on. In certain situations the community solidarity came to the fore as a platform. Especially in the background of the persisting traditional features in the profession, the evoking of the ritualistic bonds to forge a platform was easier. In such occasions where the community divide coincided with the divide on the basis of technological varieties, an automatic parcelling of the fishers to a community enclave takes place.

The growth of the intermediaries between the fisher and the consumer has to be noted. The auctioneer, commission agent, wholesaler, retailer, and the moneylender who attach himself with every face of the hunting process starting from the owner and reaching out to the retailer was also a strong class in the system. In this, the moneylender derived his income from the interest of the money, advanced either to the owner of the craft or the auctioneer or the wholesaler. Sometimes he engages in a no-interest agreement with the fish labourers. As per this agreement, the fisher is supposed to surrender the catch to him. He would give a price far below the current price in the market. In this case the normal auctioning of the catch did not take place. Moneylender by virtue of his position need not always be present on the shore and he sometimes has the position of an absentee landlord. This network of the intermediaries causes the alienation of the fish worker from the labour process.

This alienation of the fish worker was a result of his indebtedness. To escape from this, the fisher needs the help of some financing agencies. The government agencies were not a success in helping the fisher in his financial needs. At this time, some agencies that had relations with the world of fisher's life emerged as the financiers. The AS and MC were such agencies. They emerged in the coastal life, filling the vacuum created by the decline of the earlier social regulatory institutions like *Kadakkodis*. Along with the regulatory powers exercised by the *Kadakkodis*, they also perform the role of financing agencies on either low or free interest. They are also

communitarian institutions that lead the community to have more crafts and gear in the background of the negative competition existing in the field especially in a period of resource depletion. The already fragmented class-perception and the premise of negative competition attracted the fisher to take a comfortable position to withstand the competition. This comfort they found in identifying themselves with communities also provided the fisher with the illusion of retaining the lost collectivity and cohesiveness that was part of the old work pattern.

Thus, the changes in the life world of the fishermen by the end of the 20th century assumed two contradictory trends. On the one hand, the fishermen were being incorporated into the flourishing market economy through the mediation of the fisheries capitalists, contractors, middlemen, moneylenders, non-fishing shareholders etc., and through the incursion of different fishing technologies. These transformed the autonomous fishermen to wage workers or contract labourers and driven them to various stages of indebtedness. On the other, the same technology had broken the solidarity of fishermen as an occupational group basing themselves on redistribution of resources and certain traditional social order.

They had the option of being assimilated as a class within capitalism and develop a new kind of class-solidarity. But instead, they were fragmented by the forces of negative competition for resources into different congregates of labourers which consolidated in the communities as per their

self-perception. These communities facilitated both the subsistence and the ideological needs of the different groups and they were to be observed under the wider umbrella as 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' communities. The increasing tension generated by capitalism, struggle for resources and their own struggle for survival facilitated a distancing and conflicts among this community which rapidly transformed the coastal scenario where even trade union struggles came to be fought in terms of the community. In an atmosphere of rapid communalisation of the Kerala society as a whole, during the 1980's and 90's, the coastal fishermen had both the objective and subjective conditions for being transformed into openly communal entities. All the major conflicts in Kerala involve the coastal population to a larger or lesser extent.

Marad is a typical case for demonstrating this process. Marad is a relatively unimportant fishing village where capitalism made its entry only relatively recently. However, the impact of the incursion was rapid as a relatively docile fishermen community was transformed into conflicting entities led by the *Araya Samajam* and the *Mahallu Committee* which was facilitated by the technological and occupational divide such as the use of fishing implements like trawlers, ring-seine etc. The increasing tension assumed dangerous dimensions in 2002 and 2003 when not only two massacres occurred but also the entire population was practically rendered homeless and without occupation. A situation from which they are slowly recovering. But the factors that lead to the catastrophe are still prevailing at large. This is the case with most of the coastal villages of Kerala.

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APPENDIX- I

THE 17 DEMANDS OF THE KSMTF PUT BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT OF KERALA (1984)

1	Ban Mechanised Trawling during the months June, July and August.
2	Ban Night Trawling.
3	Ban Purse seining.
4	Ban Trawling within 20-kilometre limit of inshore waters.
5	Grant pension for the fish workers.
6	Grant lump sum grant for the children of the fish workers.
7	Prepare transport facilities for the female fish vendors.
8	Increase the compensation for death in accidents.
9	Grant economic aid for the maintenance of the boats.
10	Grant <i>pattah</i> for the dwelling places of the fishermen.
11	Conduct elections in the Village societies.
12	Include fish workers in the scheduled caste list.
13	Make the licence for the fishing implements compulsory.
14	Grant free ration during the lean periods.
15	Prevent pollution in the ponds and from the industrial concerns.
16	Avoid middlemen from the fish marketing.
17	Implement the suggestion of the Babu Paul Commission.

Source: Mathew Aerthayil, *Keralathile Malsya Thozhilali Prasthanam, Samoohya Sasthra Paramaya Oru Visakalanam* (Mal), DC Books, Kottayam, February, 2002, p.52.

APPENDIX II

MAJOR CRAFTS AND GEARS USED IN MALABAR - DESCRIPTION

Crafts

- 1 Dugout canoes: The dugout canoe, called *ottathadi vallam*, is made as the name implies by scooping out wood from a single log of soft mango or jungle jack. The keel portion is left thicker than the sides that are hollowed out so as to form internal stiffening ribs. It is used by the fishermen of the state from Kasargod in the north to Puthuvaipu in Ernakulam.
- 2 Plank Canoe: the plank canoe called a *kettu vallam* is a type of wooden boat. It is made by seaming together several planks of jungle jack with coir ropes. The inside of the canoe is then coated with pitch to make it watertight. This is used in the districts north of Neendakara. A variety of this is known as *Chundan Vallam*.
- 3 Mechanised Boats or trawlers.
- 4 Motorised Boats (OBMs & IBMs).

Gear

1. Ring-seine: This is a type of Encircling net. This is a close-meshed net of nylon yarn used in fishing fast-moving pelagic, shoaling type fishes like sardine and mackerel. This gear is used from a plank canoe or dugout canoe. While used with Plank canoe it is known as *Ring vala* and with the dugout is called *rani vala*. When a moving shoal is spotted, the crew row ahead of it, drop one end of the net and swiftly pay out the rest so as to

encircle the shoal. The bottom of the net is lifted and the whole net closes simultaneously. It is an active gear.

2. Boat seines: Boat seines are nets of cotton or nylon with a bag like shape and long wings or rope or netting attached to the sides. They are generally operated from two crafts, each craft handling the hauling ropes attached to one or other of the wings. The seine is towed behind the craft at a position equidistant from both of them, and when a shoal is spotted the crew row towards it in such a manner that the fish shoal enters between the craft; sometimes scaring devices re used to drive the fish into the nets; the wings shepherd the shoal into the bag end of the seine. Boat seines called *kollivala* are operated from dugout canoes in Kozhikode-Cannanore region. This is a passive gear.
3. Gill nets: Gill nets are a broad generic name for nets which are wall-like in nature and in which fish get caught when their gills get entangled in the meshes. This is a passive gear.
4. Mini-Trawl nets: An ordinary craft is sawn in the middle to convert it to trawl. Ropes ranging from 8-12 mm are used in place of warps and the gear is hauled up manually. Mesh size in the code-end is in the range of 10-12mm, though the suggested mesh size is 20 mm. This gear system contributes to the depletion of the finfish resources in the inshore belt. It is an active gear.
5. Cast nets (*Veesuvala*): Used manually from a country boat after reaching near a fish shoal. It is a passive gear.

- Source:**
1. John Kurien et.al, “Economics of Artisanal and Mechanized Fisheries in Kerala A study on Costs and Earnings of Fishing Units”, (Mimeo), FAO/UNDP, Madras, July 1982, pp.4-8.
 2. *A Census of the Artisanal Marine Fishing Fleet of Kerala - 1998*, SIFFS, Trivandrum, September 1999, pp.2-8

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APPENDIX III

Scientific, Common and Vernacular Names of Commercially Important Fin and Shell Fishes– Kerala

3. KERALA*

Groups/Scientific name	Common name	Vernacular name
1	2	3
FISHES		
ELASMOBRANCHS		
SHARKS		
<i>Chiloscyllium indicum</i>	Ridge-back cat shark	Etti, Udumbansravu
<i>Rhineodon typus</i>	Whale shark	Thimingalasravu, Pulli udumbu
<i>Stegostoma fasciatum</i>	Zebra shark	Zebra sravu
<i>Carcharhinus melanopterus</i>	Black-finned shark, Blacktip shark	Mookansravu
<i>Galeocerdo cuvieri</i>	Tiger shark	Palsravu
<i>Rhizoprionodon acutus</i>	Grey dog-shark	Palsravu
<i>Scoliodon laticaudus</i>	Yellow dog-shark	Pooyi sravu, Alupidiyan
<i>Eusphyra blochii</i>	Arrow-headed hammer-head shark	Kannankodi
<i>Sphyrna zygaena</i>	Hammer-head shark	Chattithalayan sravu
Skates		
<i>Rhinobatos granulatus</i>	Granulated shovel-nose-ray	Kalpoonthi
<i>Rhynchobatus djiddensis</i>	Guitarfish/White spotted shovel-nose-ray	Varithala
<i>Anoxypristis cuspidata</i>	Pointed saw fish	Makarasravu/Kompansravu
Rays		
<i>Himantura bleekeri</i>	Whip-tail sting-ray	Thirandi
<i>H. uarnak</i>	Marbled sting ray	Manalthirandi/ Pulliyanthirandi
<i>Hypolophus sephen</i>	Cowtail ray	Adavalanthirandi
<i>Aetobatus narinari</i>	Spotted eagle-ray	Pulli/Kakkathirandi
<i>Aetomylaeus maculatus</i>	Batray/Mottled eagle-ray	Kaniyanthirandi
<i>Mobula diabolus</i>	Lesser devil-ray	Komanthirandi/ Koormanthirandi
<i>Rhinoptera javanica</i>	Javanese cow-ray	Neithirandi
Shads & Sardines		
<i>Anodontostoma chacunda</i>	Chacunda gizzard-shad	Thodi

* Prepared by Joseph Andrews, C.M.F.R.I., Cochin 682 014.

1	2	3
<i>Dussumieria acuta</i>	Rainbow sardine	Kokkola chala
<i>Escualosa thoracata</i>	White sardine	Velloori/Chooda
<i>Hilsa ilisha</i>	Indian shad/Hilsa shad	Hilsa
<i>H. toli</i>	Chinese herring/Toli shad	Hilsa
<i>Ilisha elongata</i>	Bigeye ilisha/Slender shad	Puvali
<i>Opisthopterus tardoore</i>	Long-finned herring	Thada/Ambatta
<i>Pellona ditchela</i>	Indian pellona	Kannanmathi
<i>Sardinella fimbriata</i>	Fringe-scale sardine	Chalamathi/Karichala
<i>S. albella</i>	Short-body sardine	Parappanchala/vattamathi
<i>S. longiceps</i>	Indian oil-sardine	Neichala/Mathi/Nallamathi
Anchovies		
<i>Coilia dussumieri</i>	Gold-spotted granadier-anchovy	Kathimanangu/ Valamanangu
<i>Stolephorus bataviensis</i>	Batavian anchovy/Whitebait	Kozhuva/Netholi
<i>Thryssa malabarica</i>	Malabar anchovy	Kavumanangu
<i>T. mystax</i>	Moustached anchovy	Nedumanangu
Wolf herring		
<i>Chirocentrus dorab</i>	Dorab wolf-herring	Mulluvala
<i>C. nudus</i>	White-fin wolf-herring	Mulluvala
Milk fishes		
<i>Chanos chanos</i>	Milk fish	Poomeen
Lizard fishes		
<i>Saurida tumbil</i>	Greater lizard-fish	Aranameen/Uluvachi/ Veempili
Catfishes		
<i>Arius dussumieri</i>	Dussumier's cat-fish	Valiya etta
<i>A. jella</i>	Small-eye cat-fish	Vella etta
<i>A. sona</i>	Dusky cat-fish	Navetta
<i>A. thalassinus</i>	Giant cat-fish	Komanetta
Eels & morays		
<i>Gymnothorax fimbriatus</i>	Black eel/Dark-spotted moray	Kariaarel/Vlangu
<i>Congresox talabanoides</i>	Common eel/Indian pike-conger	Aarel/Pambumeen
Fullbeaks(Gar fishes)		
<i>Strongylura strongylura</i>	Round-tail alligator-gar	Kolan/Kola/Mural
Halfbeaks		
<i>Rhynchorhamphus georgii</i>	Long-billed halfbeak	Pookola/Kolan/Koyala
Flyingfishes		
<i>Cypselurus cyanopterus</i>	Blue-spot flyingfish	Paravakola
<i>Exocoetus volitans</i>	Two-winged flyingfish	Paravakola
Barracuda		
<i>Sphyraena jello</i>	Banded barracuda	Cheelavoo/Thinda/Poolavu
Mulletts		
<i>Liza parsia</i>	Gold-spot mullet	Malan
<i>Mugil cephalus</i>	Flat-head grey mullet	Thirutha/Soda kanambu
<i>Valamugil speigleri</i>	Speigler's grey mullet	Kanambu/Malan

1	2	3
Threadfins		
<i>Eleutheronema tetradactylum</i>	Indian salmon/Four-finger threadfin	Vazhameen/Thamuthi
<i>Polynemus heptadactylus</i>	Seven-finger thread-fin	Nurakudian/Vazhameen
<i>Polynemus indicus</i>	Indian thread-fin	Cheeral/Vazhameen
Sea perches		
<i>Ambassis commersoni</i>	Glassy perchlet	Nandan/Vadakken veloori
<i>Lates calcarifer</i>	Giant sea-perch	Narimeen/Kodumthala/Kalanchi
Reef cods		
<i>Epinephelus malabaricus</i>	Malabar reef-cod	Kalava/Varayan kalava
<i>E. melanostigma</i>	Spotted reef-cod	Kalava/Kadal karoop/Pullikalava
<i>E. morrhua</i>	Banded-cheek reef-cod	Morikalava
<i>Epinephelus tauvina</i>	Greasy reef-cod	Pannikalava
Tiger perches		
<i>Pelates quadrilineatus</i>	Four-lined tiger perch	Keeli/Keeri
<i>Therapon jarbua</i>	Crescent tiger perch	Keeri/Varayankeeri
Whiting		
<i>Sillago sihama</i>	Silver whiting	Kathiran/Kalimeen/Pooyan
Whitefish		
<i>Lactarius lactarius</i>	Whitefish/Big-jawed jumper	Parava/Adavu
Cobias		
<i>Rachycentron canadus</i>	Blank king-fish/Cobia	Kadalvaral
Carangids		
<i>Alepes djeddaba</i>	Djeddaba trevally	Ovupara/Vattapara
<i>A. para</i>	Golden scad	Para
<i>Atropus atropus</i>	Kuweh trevally	Kannipara
<i>Caranx sexfasciatus</i>	Dusky trevally/Six-banded trevally	Varayanpara
<i>C. melampygus</i>	Black-tipped trevally	Velapara
<i>Decapterus russelli</i>	Russel's scad	Champan/Kanniayala/Kozhuchala/Thiriyam
<i>Megalaspis cordyla</i>	Hardtail scad	Kanayan para/Vangada/Kanameen
<i>Scomberoides lysan</i>	Talang queen-fish/Leather skin	Palakameen/Palameen/Pola
<i>Selar crumenophthalmus</i>	Bigeye scad	Kanni/Champan
<i>Trachinotus blochii</i>	Snubnose pompano	Valavodu
Black pomfret		
<i>Parastromateus niger</i>	Black pomfret	Karuthavoli/Machan
Dolphin fish		
<i>Coryphaena hippurus</i>	Common dolphin-fish	Chainkaver/Neimeen
Snappers		
<i>Lutjanus argentimaculatus</i>	Mangrove red-snapper	Chemballi
<i>L. malabaricus</i>	Malabar red-snapper	Chemballi
Threadfin breams		
<i>Nemipterus japonicus</i>	Japanese thread-fin-bream	Kilimeen/Chenkalava/Puthiaplakora

1	2	3
Tripletail		
<i>Lobotes surinamensis</i>	Brown tripletail	Parrandee/Karuppatti/Aeri
Silverbelly (Ponyfish)		
<i>Leiognathus splendens</i>	Pony fish	Karal/Mullan/Nallamullan
Mojarra		
<i>Gerres filamentosus</i>	Whip-fin mojarra	Prachil/Pranjil/Prayal
Grunters		
<i>Pomadasys hasta</i>	Lined silver-grunt	Karukaruppan/Korkka
<i>Pomadasys maculatus</i>	Blotched grunt	Eruttumkora/Korkka
Croakers		
<i>Johnieops aneus</i>	Grey-fin croaker	Cherukora/Chemkuttan
<i>J. sina</i>	Sin croaker	Kora/Muttikora
<i>J. vogleri</i>	Drab croaker	Pallikora
<i>Johnius dussumieri</i>	Bearded croaker	Cherukora
<i>Otolithes cuvieri</i>	Lesser tiger-toothed croaker	Pallikora/Pallimeen
<i>Otolithoides biauritus</i>	Bronze croaker	Kora
<i>Protonibea diacanthus</i>	Spotted croaker/Jewfish	Katla
Emperor bream		
<i>Lethrinus frenatus</i>	Bridled emperor-bream	Chemballi/Pullivalameen/ Velameen
Silver bream		
<i>Acanthopagrus berda</i>	Picnic silver-bream	Aree
Goat fish		
<i>Upeneus sulphureus</i>	Yellow goat-fish	Keerimeen/Killivarandu
Spade fish		
<i>Tripteronodon orbis</i>	Common spade-fish	Thavanakary
Sickle fish		
<i>Drepane punctata</i>	Spotted sickle-fish	Painthi/Parinthumeen
Butter fish		
<i>Scatophagus argus</i>	Spotted butter-fish	Nutchara/Natchaka
Ribbon fishes (Hairtails)		
<i>Lepturacanthus savala</i>	Silver ribbon-fish/Small-head hair tail	Chunnambuvala/ Kasithalayan/Pampada
<i>Trichiurus lepturus</i>	Grey ribbon-fish/Large-head hair tail	Vellithalayan
Tunas, Mackerel & Seer fishes		
<i>Auxis thazard</i>	Frigate tuna	Elichooora
<i>Euthynnus affinis</i>	Little tuna	Chooora/Sooda/Kudutha
<i>Thunnus albacares</i>	Yellowfin tuna	Manjachooora
<i>Rastrelliger kanagurta</i>	Indian mackerel	Aiyala
<i>Scomberomorus commerson</i>	Narrow-barred seer-fish	Neimeen/Varimeen/Ayakora
<i>S. guttatus</i>	Indo-Pacific seer-fish	Varimeen
Sail fish (Marlin)		
<i>Istiophorus platypterus</i>	Sail fish	Olameen/Mayilmeen/ Olapadavan

1	2	3
Sword fish		
<i>Xiphias gladius</i>	Sword fish	Vallmeen
White pomfrets		
<i>Pampus argenteus</i>	Silver pomfret	Veluthavoli
<i>Pampus chinensis</i>	Chinese pomfret	Veluthavoli
Flatheads		
<i>Platycephalus indicus</i>	Indian flat-head	Eriyan/Orathal/Vettan/ Kaivetti
Flatfishes		
<i>Psettodes erumei</i>	Indian halibut	Ayirampalli/Paanjukadiyan
<i>Pseudorhombus arsius</i>	Large-toothed flounder	Nallamanthal/Vattathi
<i>Cynoglossus dubius</i>	Tongue sole	Nangu/Manthal/Elapatti
<i>C. macrostomus</i>	Malabar tongue-sole	Nangue/Manthal
CRUSTACEANS		
Penaeid prawns		
<i>Metapenaeus affinis</i>	Jinga prawn/Brown shrimp	Kazhanthan chemmeen
<i>M. dobsoni</i>	Flower-tail prawn	Poovalan chemmeen
<i>M. monoceros</i>	Speckled prawn/Brown shrimp	Choodan chemmeen
<i>Parapenaeopsis stylifera</i>	Kiddi prawn	Karikkadi chemmeen
<i>Penaeus indicus</i>	Indian white-prawn	Naran chemmeen/Vella chemmeen
<i>P. japonicus</i>	Kuruma prawn/Bamboo flower	Flower
<i>P. monodon</i>	Giant tiger-prawn/Black tiger	Kara chemmeen
<i>P. semisulcatus</i>	Green tiger-prawn/Flower	Kara chemmeen
Lobsters		
<i>Panulirus polyphagus</i>	Rock lobster/Banded spiny-lobster	Chittakonchan/Kadalkonchu
<i>Thenus orientalis</i>	Mud/sand lobster	Adippan
Crabs		
<i>Portunus pelagicus</i>	Reticulate crab/Blue crab	Kavalan njandu
<i>P. sanguinolentus</i>	Spotted crab	Kavalan njandu
<i>Charybdis cruciata</i>	Cross crab	Kurisu njandu
<i>Scylla serrata</i>	Green mud-crab	Njandu
Stomatopods		
<i>Oratosquilla nepa</i>	Mantis shrimp	Chelli
MOLLUSCS		
Gastropod		
<i>Xancus pyrum</i>	Sacred chank	Sankh
Bivalves		
<i>Crassostrea madrasensis</i>	Edible oyster	Muringa
<i>Villorita cyprinoides</i>	Black clam	Karuthakakka
<i>Meretrix meretrix</i>	Yellow clam	Manja kakka
<i>M. casta</i>	Yellow clam	Manja kakka
<i>Perna indica</i>	Brown mussel	Chippi
<i>P. viridis</i>	Green mussel	Kallummekaya
<i>Marcia opima</i>	clam	Poovankakka
<i>Paphia malabarica</i>	Textile clam	Poovankakka

1	2	3
Cephalopods		
<i>Sepia aculeata</i>	Needle cuttle-fish	Kallankanava
<i>S. pharaonis</i>	Pharaoh cuttle-fish	Kallankanava
<i>Sepiella inermis</i>	Spineless cuttle-fish	Kallankanava
<i>Loligo duvaucelli</i>	Indian squid	Koonthal/Olakkanava
<i>Doryteuthis</i> spp.	Arrow squid	Soochikkanava
<i>Septoteuthis lessortiana</i>	Palk bay squid/Bigfin reef-squid	Sikkandikkanava
<i>Octopus</i> spp.	Octopus	Neerali/Kinavalli

Source: *Marine Fisheries Information Service*, No. 134, CMFRI, Cochin, November, 1994, pp. 12-17.

APPENDIX IV

LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

No	Name of the person	Age	Date of Interview	Status
1	Fishermen, Puthan Kadappuram, Parappananagadi	-	24-10-2003	Fishermen
2	Fishermen of Ottummal Beach, Parappanangadi	-	25-10-2003	Fishermen
3	Janardhanan, CMFRI, Kozhikode	50	21-05-2007	Field Worker
4	Ayyapputty,K Mandalam Kunnu Beach	70	03-06-2007	Fisherman
5	S. Sheeja,Secretary, Manathala Matsya Thozhilali Vikasana Kshema, Co-operative Society	40	19-06-2008	Secretary, Manathala Matsya Thozhilali Vikasana Kshema Co-operative Society
6	Koya, Marad	75	24-08-2008	Fisherman
7	M.Bapputty, Marathingal House, Koottayi	42	19-11-2008	District General Secretary, Malappuram District Matsya Thozhilali Union (CITU)
8	Sajira. C.K., Chembum Kandi house, Kappakkal	26	22-12-2008	Activist
9	Seemamuntakath Ali, Seemamuntakath house, Marad	59	25-12-2008	Former Fisherman
10	Prabhakaran, Beypore	60	25-12-2008	Former Fisherman
11	A.Lakshmanan Arayachantakath house, Marad	60	25-12-2008	Fisherman
12	P.Vasu, (Kadukka Vasu) Pinnanath house,Beypore	62	25-12-2008	Mussel collection

	Beach			
13	A.Bhaskaran, Alappatt house, Marad	63	25-12-2008	Member, CPM
14	A.Prabhakaran, Arayachantakath house, Marad	60	25-12-2008	Fisherman
15	Zeenath C.K, Chembum Kandi house, Kappakkal	32	28-12-2008	Activist
16	C.K. Vijayan, Puthiyalath house, Beyypore	64	28-12-2008	Ex-Serviceman
17	P. Sreedharan, Periyambra house, Beyypore.	75	28-12-2008	Coconut Plucker
18	Baby John Director, MCITRA, Kozhikode	50	31-12-2008	Director, MCITRA, Kozhikode
19	Moideen Koya, Kappakkal	52	31-12-2008	Fisherman
20	K.P. Safiya, Vellayil	41	31-12-2008	Activist
21	Koya, Koottayi	55	03-01-2009	Fisherman
22	K.P.Udayan, Kannante Purakkal, Beyypore.	42	07-01-2009	Fish trader
23	T. Sreedharan, Thekkethodi house, Marad	54	10-01-2009	Fisherman
24	A.Kesavan, Arayachantakath house, Marad	78	10-01-2009	Former Fisherman
25	K.P. Unni Kannante Purakkal house, Marad	50	10-01-2009	Former Fisherman
26	T.suresh	50	10-01-2009	General Secretary,

	Thekkethodi house, Marad			Hindu Aikyavedi
27	K.Dasan, Kelappantakath house, Marad.	65	10-01-2009	President, Araya Samajam.
28	Sidhique Chaliyam, Manger, Malabar Federation of Fishermen Societies (MFFS), Calicut		16-01-2009	Manger, Malabar Federation of Fishermen Societies (MFFS), Calicut.
29	Musthafa, Field Worker, MFFS		16-01-2009	Field Worker
30	K.Balaraman, Kommadath house, Beypore	60	23-01-2009	Former president, Beypore Grama Panchayath
31	P.Peethambaran Ponnath house, Marad	40	23-01-2009	Member, Beypore Grama Panchayath
32	T.Devadas, Thekkethodi house, Marad	42	30-01-2009	Fisherman
33	P.P. Beeran Koya, Arakkinar	50	05-02-2009	Former president, Beypore Grama Panchayath
34	M.V.Mohammed Shias, Babu Manzil, Chaliyam.	40	15-02-2009	Teacher

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AICUF	: All India Catholic University Federation.
AITUC	: All India Trade Union Congress.
AJSSL	: Araya Jana Social Service League.
ARFDM	: Administration Report of Fisheries Department, Madras.
ARKFD	: Administration Report of Kerala Fisheries Department.
ARRA	: Aquarian Reform Regulation Act.
AS	: Araya Samajam.
BBD	: Beach Blossoms Documentation.
BJS	: Bharatheeya Jana Sangham.
BJP	: Bharatheeya Janatha Party.
BMS	: Bharatheeya Masdoor Sangh.
CAMMF	: A Census of the Artisanal Marine Fishing Fleet of Kerala, 1998.
CB	: Crime Branch.
CBI	: Central Bureau of Investigation.
CCRF	: Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.
CDS	: Center for Development Studies.
CE	: Council of Elders
CIFT	: Central Institute of Fisheries Technology.
CITU	: Centre of Indian Trade Union.
CMFRI	: Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute.
CPI	: Communist Party of India.
CPM	: Communist Party of India (Marxist).
CRZ	: Coastal Regulation Zone.
DCZMN	: The Draft Coastal Zone Management Notification 2007 – A Response.
EEZ	: Exclusive Economic Zone.
EPW	: Economic and Political Weekly.
ERK	: Economic Review, Kerala.
FAO	: Food and Agricultural Organisation.
FISS	: Fishermen Struggles.
FNR	: Fortnightly Reports.
FTC	: Fishermen Training Course.

GPS : Global Positioning System.

IBM : In Board Motor.

IFDKB : Integrated Fisheries Development Project For Kerala Beypore Project Report.

IFP : Integrated Fisheries Project.

INC : Indian National Congress.

INP : Indo-Norwegian Project.

IUML : Indian Union Muslim League.

KLA : Kerala Legislative Assembly.

KMKUV : *Kadal Manal Khananam Uyarthunna VelluVilikal*

KPCC : Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee.

KRA : Kozhikode Regional Archives.

KRPLLD : Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development.

KSMTF : Kerala Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation.

LDF : Left democratic Front.

LFN : Letter of Frederick Nicholson.

MC : *Mahallu* Committee.

MCITRA : Malabar Coastal Institute for Training Research and Action.

MFBB : Malabar Fisheries Bureau Bulletin.

MFDB : Madras Fisheries Department Bulletin.

MFFS : Malabar Federation of Fishermen Societies.

MFIS : Marine Fisheries Information Service Technical and Extension Series.

MFSK : Marine Fisheries Statistics of Kerala, 2005.

MIS : Maunath-ul-Islam Sabha.

MUCS : Matsya Utpadaka Co-Operative Societies.

NDF : National Development Front.

NGO : Non-Governmental Organisations.

NMML : Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.

OBC : Other Backward Community.

OBM : Out Board Motor.

PCO : Programme for Community Organisation.

PDP : Peoples Democratic Party.

PKLA : Proceedings of Kerala Legislative Assembly.

RCETD : Report of Commission of Enquiry, Tellichery Disturbances-1971.

RCFM : Report of the Committee on Fisheries In Madras, 1929.
RSS : Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh.
SIFFS : South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies.
SKAMY : Samastha Kerala Araya Mahajana Yogam.
SRC : Socio-Religious Centre.
STESF : Socio Techno Economic Survey of Fisher folk in Kerala, 2004.
TDABBD : Ten Descriptive Articles Beach Blossoms Documentation.
TJCR : Thomas P Joseph Commission Report.
TNA : Tamil Nadu Archives.
TSCRL : Thalassery Sub Collector's Record, List-
UDF : United Democratic Front.
UNCLOS : United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

GLOSSARY

- Amsam* : A revenue Village.
- Beppu/ chundakkar* : Fishermen who use hook and line.
- Chundan Vallam* : Wooden or Plank-Built traditional Canoes. Later that was built with materials like fibreglass and fitted with In Board Motors.
- Continental Shelf : The Ocean floor extending out from the land.
- Council of Elders : This is a conciliatory body in the coast comprised of the aged members of different communities. It discussed matters related with the life and profession in the coast.
- Desam* : A traditional category of Village used for Revenue purpose
- Janmabhogam* : Token amount collected by the *sirkar* or Jenmi for lands newly settled along the coast.
- Kadakkodi:* : An aberration of the Malayalam word *Kadal Kodathi* that means Sea Court (*Kadal* = Sea and *Kodathi* = Court), an institution existed along the coast of Kerala especially in Malabar. This institution has many regulatory, and dispute settling powers. The composition of this institution is normally mono caste or religion.
- In Board Motors : Engines or Motors permanently fitted in the big boats.
- Kalagam* : The pot with holy water to sanctify the precincts of the worship center on important occasions. Usually it is accompanied by a procession.
- Kanam* : Mortgage cum lease tenure.
- Kanamdar* : Holder of *Kanam*
- Karamadi* : Shore Seine.
- Karanavar/Mooppan* : *Elder who controlled the fishing unit, the family and the social life.*
- Kavu* : Small family shrines or sacred grove.
- Khatheeb* : Preacher.
- Kollivala* : Boat seines.
- Mattakayattam* : The practice prevalent among the fishers of changing the existing owner for a new one on some auspicious day.

<i>Moulavi</i>	: <i>Teacher of the Muslim religious institution, Madrassa.</i>
<i>Mouleed</i>	: Songs praising Prophet Mohammed.
<i>Mukri</i>	: The chief who looked after the religious affairs of the mosque.
<i>Odam</i>	: Large dugout canoe.
<i>Ottappathi</i>	: Very small dugouts.
Out Board Motors	: The engine fitted in the traditional wooden or fibre canoes to propel the canoes. These engines can be removed after fishing.
<i>Pakutikkaran</i>	: Partner or shareholder in a fishing unit.
<i>Panku</i>	: This was a peculiar share in a fishing unit that the shareholder was not going for fishing and claimed a share from the labourer's due but was not entitled to the share as the owner.
<i>Pantham</i>	: Gum obtained from the Payin tree.
<i>Pattah</i>	: Dead given to a land holder.
<i>Pattu</i>	: Songs in Praise of the Prophet or the Muslim Saints or Hindu Goddess like Bhadrakali.
<i>Polappu</i>	: Fish shoal
<i>Polappu kanuka</i>	: Shoal identification.
<i>Rajiam</i>	: Traditional concept of boundary of a fishing hamlet.
<i>Rani Vala</i>	: Local name of Ring-Seine in Kasargode District.
<i>Srambi</i>	: Small Muslim prayer house.
<i>Thalaiyali</i>	: Head man
<i>Thoni</i>	: Small dugout canoe.
<i>Tharakans</i>	: The middlemen in the fishing field who are engaged in fish trade from whom the fisher mobilise the working capital.