

Workers' Mobilization in Malabar Fishery a Study of Fishers' Struggle of 1984

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The present paper is an attempt to analyze the nature of the fishers' struggle of 1984. This struggle was a historic one that lasted for fifty days. This struggle was mooted by a combination of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the trade union, Kerala Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation (KSMTF), floated by the Jesuit Fathers. Even after two months' struggle the organizers had to call it off without fetching any considerable result. This is not to argue that this struggle was a failure. Instead, this paper examines why this strike fanned the flames of primordial loyalties and sectarian identities among the participants and observers. Thus, it failed to create an atmosphere of class contest. Along with this, this paper also looks into the question of the hampered development of class consciousness among the fishers. This strike also manifested the limitations of labour mobilization by the NGOs among the fishers of Kerala.

Key Words: Malabar, Labour, Fishery, Struggle, Class, community, West Coast

Introduction

The major conflicts at Marad, a small fishing hamlet in Kozhikode district, in 2002 and 2003 was between the member of the same labour cluster. So, the condition of labourers being communalized was a pertinent question to be interrogated into. There could have been many variables influencing this. Here the exploration of one such

variable, labour mobilization, is take to study it. It could only be studied against their organization and labour mobilization and the struggle of 1984 found to be an appropriate site. Hence this paper is about the first historic struggle organized by Kerala Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation (KSMTF), a Church led trade union of fishers in 1984. This study primarily looks into whether any unintended happened as an output of this struggle in Malabar area that comprises the fishing hamlet of Marad. The major objective of this study is to examine how the reinforcement of the discourse of communalism and mutual antipathy took place in the context of a labour struggle. The paper also tries to find answers to the questions viz., does it indicate that the class formation of the fisher-folk had been interrupted by their affiliations with the primordial entities like caste and religion? Or the primordial identities in the modern forms are the ways of organizing class given the precarious state of affairs in Kerala Fishery? As a corollary to the latter, another question is regarding the role of the State in developing the schismatic tendencies within a class. This is explained mainly with the help of data collected by field work and from Socio Religious Centre (SRC) and their Beach Blossoms Documentation (BBD). There is a file named Fishermen Struggle (FISS) as part of BBD. The information from these will be documented as BBD. This data is analysed from a labour history perspective to examine whether there are factors preventing the *class* articulation of the fishers here. Further, it is an illustration of a struggle, that had a pan-Kerala appeal, at the local level to answer the above questions. The response of the political parties, media, and other stakeholders to this struggle are given in the notes, wherever necessary.

The General Background of the struggle

The fisher's agitation in Kerala had to be studied in the background of the introduction of mechanization in Kerala fishery. It was during 1950s that the initiatives towards mechanization started in Kerala. Within a decade, fishing trawlers were brought to the scene. The 1970's witnessed export orientation and the in-flow of capital to the sector. The 1980s were crucial as the motorization drive in the artisanal sector started. During this period, the use of destructive gears like the purse-seines also started (Silas, 1980:1-9). By this time, the

fishery resource had encountered the problem of depletion because of mechanization and overcrowding of the seas. In this context, the Government of Kerala passed the Kerala Marine Fishing Regulations Act (KMFRA) in 1980. This was a notable achievement of KSMTF (Gregory, n.d.:5). The Act had many suggestions. The important among them were (i) restricting mechanized trawling to waters beyond the distance of about 10 km (ii) to impose a ban on purse seining, night trawling, ring seining, mid-water trawling and pelagic trawling (iii) to impose a temporary ban on monsoon trawling except at Sakthikulangara - Neendakara coastal area (iv) enhancing the minimum mesh size of the cod end of trawl nets to 35 mm. and (v) motorization of artisanal crafts and so on (PKLA, 1980: 1297) In 1981, Dr. Babu Paul Commission was appointed by the Government of Kerala to study the feasibility of a complete ban on trawling during monsoon season (June-August). In 1983, the central government also issued some directions regarding the fishing limits. The area up to 10 km from the shore was exclusively for the country crafts; beyond 10 km up to 23 km was reserved for motorized and small-mechanized boats; the fishing trawlers having a length of 20 meters should fish beyond 23 km. limit from the shore. Thus, the directions of both the State and the Central Governments parceled the territorial waters¹ among the different technological varieties of fishing crafts. In fact, it created confusions and concern over 'boundaries' in the period of resource depletion and increasing competition over it. Scholars are of the opinion that during the 1980's the fishermen have lost their rights over the sea as commons (Kurien, 2003:22). It was in this background that a major fishermen struggle took shape in Kerala in 1984.

Labour Organization among the Fishers in Kerala

Kerala has a history of labour movements and unionization. Since the 1930's we could see belligerent trade unionism in Travancore and Malabar. The organization of the labourers of different sectors could be seen. Weaving, agriculture, beedi and cigar workers, and tile factory workers etc. were organized. But the proper fishery sector was neglected. E. K. Aboobacker organized workers of Dhow (Port Cargo Workers Union) in the late 1950s' under CPI in Ponnani and another organization was STUC by Praja Socialist Party (PSP)

(Lathika, 353). Beyond that no concerted effort has ever been made by the mainstream political parties including the left to organize the fishers of Kerala. At the same time Congress, Communist, Socialist, and Muslim League sympathizers were there among the fishers.² But in terms of organizational structures these parties did not have much control over the population on the shore. On the contrary one could see the consolidation of caste/religious institutions on the coast by the close of the first half of 20th century. Different Samajams, and Sabhas, were there to control the social life of the caste groups like Arayas, Mukkuvas, Mogaveeras, Valan, and Nulayan etc. Pudu-Islam Fishers were controlled by the Mahallu Committees and Latin Catholic Fishers by the Christian Church. In the southern Kerala, the Christian church was in control of most of the fishing hamlets.

In day today life, the fishers had their own specific problems. The usury, middlemen, moneylenders, sales, the durability of craft and gear etc. were imminent problems of this group. After the implementation of Indo-Norwegian Project (INP) the problems doubled. The co-operative system sponsored by the Government also was a colossal failure. It was in these circumstances that the Christian Church began to organize the fishers in 1960. (for details see Halfdanardottir, 1993; Gregory, n.d.; Ramdas, 2009: 175-178). They started the experiment with fishermen-run co-operative societies to manage sales and to buy the implements of production. Later, an apex association, South India Federation of Fishermen's Societies (SIFFS), was formed in the early eighties. In the meanwhile, the Church took initiatives to amalgamate different fishing labour unions (both marine and Inland) of the Districts of Kollam, Kottayam, Alappuzha, Thiruvananthapuram and Ernakulam, working under the aegis of it to constitute the Latin Catholic Matsya Tozhilali Federation in 1977 and later it became KSMTF in 1980. National Fish workers Forum (NFF) was established on a national level in 1978 and registered as a trade union in 1985. KSMTF began to function under an NGO, Programme for Community Organization (PCO) established in 1977. So, the local, south Indian and national level organizations were formed by the year 1980. In this regard the mainstream political parties were far behind. It was in the 1980's that left organizations tried to organize and take-

up the issues in the field. By 1980, a quarter century had passed after the implementation of INP. Amidst this, Dheevara Sabha was formed in 1975 as a joint platform for the castes like Arayas, Mukkuvas, Mogaveeras, Valan, and Nulayan etc.

For the NGO led movements, scholars were giving justification by saying that *Social Movement Unions* were the specific contributions of class struggles in the traditional and informal sectors (Dietrish, 2002: 3-4). They also held the view that fishing communities initially collaborated with a *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) (Dietrish, 2002:5). What they meant was, the mainstream political parties abetting the state-imposed *transition*, eventually jeopardized the artisanal fishermen. Hence, these parties, who have been part of the ruling fronts in Kerala and thereby the modernization, will not come for the rescue of the artisanal fishermen and they do not have the political propriety either. Hence, we need a *transformation*, for which a 'neutral' and 'independent' political position and approach is needed. It is this semblance of 'independence' that attracted many, including those who have active in the political parties, to their fold. Moreover, the troubled scenario of the eighties in the fishery field could not properly be explained by the political parties to their rank and file. This is how the NGOs and social movements became the sole spokespersons of the artisanal sector. This vindication of the artisanal sector had a popular appeal and the NGOs could make the fishers believe that the actual 'class struggle' ought to be between the mechanized sector and artisanal sector. In Malabar, their work was concentrated in Kozhikode and surroundings.

The KSMTF and their activities in Malabar

KSMTF took up the problems of depredation of the resources by the Mechanized sector and the ecological problems associated with it. Majority of the fishers of Malabar were artisanal fishers. A sizable trawler sector was yet to take form here in Kozhikode. Here, SRC acted as the nodal point where fishers having different opinions, be it religious or political, could come together. A favorable political

condition had been set by the perilous situation in the fishery field following mechanization, resource crunch and the official interference of the State with Laws. This situation was utilized by employing different organizational arms at different levels. The Beach Blossom Project (BBP) contrived by SRC emotionally influenced the majority of the fishers at different levels of social status. SRC and its Beach Blossom Project were inspired by the Liberation theology (George, 1980: 1-3). They adopted some fishing villages in Kozhikode to implement the project³. In 1981 another collective of fishers, Kozhikode Theera Desa Sanghatana (KTDS), came into being under SRG⁴. Here, one cannot ignore the fact that KTDS tried to address the labour aspect of fishers' life rather than their caste/religion. Thus, the KTDS did the labour mobilization while Beach Blossoms concentrated on the conscientization of the fisher folk. Together BBP and KTDS worked as a community development platform. Through continuous programmes they were able to reach out to the real-life problems of the fishers. There were many traditional Congressmen and Communists on the Coast (Safiya K.P., personal communication, December 31,2008).⁵ They were either slowly co-opted into the new wave unleashed by the BBP - KTDS combination or became silent.

An educated section among the fish workers was the early supporters of the NGO political organization. The prominent men on the coast who had the philanthropic approach cultivated by religious ethics⁶ and the Left co-travelers who saw the uplift of their fellowmen their aim also extended their support to these NGOs (Moideen Koya, personal communication, December 31,2008)⁷. The NGOs found such educated and socially oriented well-wishers of the fisher community as the *animators* of their movement. The NGO activists expressed a deep concern for the problems of these labouring poor. They addressed the immediate problems besetting the Fishery. The problems were the resource depletion and the low harvest; heavy expenditure needed for fishing and the growing indebtedness etc. Their propaganda, tireless work and commitment to the cause of the poor fishermen attracted many to their fold. They tried to ameliorate the condition of the ordinary fish workers by establishing village level co-operative societies (Zeenath C.K and Baby John, personal

communication, December 31,2008; MCITRA, n.d.:6). They also conducted Neighborhood meetings and portico discussions to ‘politicize’ the fishers (Safiya K.P.).

At the same time, the works of the Jesuit Fathers invited a counter movement from the religiously oriented *Muslim* and *Hindu* fishers. They soon unleashed a propaganda and warned the activists who are associating with the ‘Christians’ that they would be converted to Christianity at the end (Safiya K.P. and Zeenath C.K.). The Mahallu Committee also was inimical to the Muslim activists who supported the NGOs (Safiya K.P. and Zeenath C.K.). The Hindu organizations was also not an exception. Thus, the suspicion over the religion started in the form of rumors and misgivings. Narratives loaded with communal concerns ran parallel to labour mobilization. It was a fact that the Jesuits did not try to proselytize the people of the Malabar Coast. Instead, they were quite sincere and open in their approach to the problems in the fisheries sector. But the counter activities of the Hindu and Muslim organizations were enough to create a *self/other* dichotomy. These counter activities were called for because of the Christian shade this deployment had.⁸ This state of affairs become more pronounced during the fishermen agitation of 1984.

The first Strike by KSMTF (1981)

KSMTF had been continuously working among the fish workers advocating criticisms on mechanization and its negative impacts. The Kerala government outlawed trawling on the whole Kerala coast on May 24, 1981, during the monsoon season. However, ten days later, the Neendakara area, which was home to the greatest number of motorized boats, was allowed to resume. The KSMTF objected to this action, and on June 12th, fifty fish workers were arrested after breaking into the Fisheries Director’s office. Fisheries workers picketed outside the Fisheries Minister’s home for the next five days, and on June 25, Father Thomas Kocherry and Joychen Antony began an indefinite fast. Thousands of fish workers joined them and besieged the Kollam district collectorate on July 4. Ultimately, on July 13, the Fisheries Minister invited KSMTF representatives for a discussion and agreed to organize an expert committee to investigate mechanical

trawling. Ultimately, the Babu Paul Commission recommended a number of steps to safeguard traditional fish workers but did not advocate outright prohibition of monsoon trawling. Even still, many of the recommendations were not followed by the government. Yet, this was viewed as a triumph of the tactics of KSMTF and naturally, this strike gave them ample reasons for the next in 1984. The struggle of 1984 was conceived as a state-wide event with the help of the other like-minded unions in the fishery sector including the left.

The Struggle of 1984, The Malabar Scenario

The KSMTF presented a 17-point demand before the Kerala Government on 10th April 1984.⁹ When the government was found to be lazy towards these demands, the agitation started on a pan-Kerala scale on 19th May 1984¹⁰. Though the demands of KSMTF included the issues of land and pension, the thrust of the struggle was the problems faced by the artisanal fishers (also named as ‘traditional’ fishers) with regard to fishing by purse-seines and the encroachment by the mechanized crafts into their fishing area in the sea. In Kerala, Trivandrum, Kollam Aleppey and Kozhikkode were the important centres of Strike. Hunger Strike, hartal, processions and road blockade were the important stratagems of the strikers. In fact, the Left led organizations like CITU, AITUC and UTUC etc. co-operated in this struggle; but here the ground was already stolen by the KSMTF. Below is a description how it worked in the Northern centre of this strike, Kozhikode. In Kozhikode, the fishing hamlet Vellayil and its surroundings, by virtue of being the area of operation of Beach Blossoms, become the storm centre of the agitations in Malabar¹¹. The groundwork done by the SRC and the Beach Blossoms attracted a large number of artisanal fisher-folk to the agitation¹². Very soon it got momentum and various strategies like hunger-strike, rail blockade, and processions etc were sought. In Kozhikode, Mr. K.K. Velayudhan, district president of the KSMTF, and Sister Alice, its state council member started hunger strike (*Malayala Manorama Daily*, 27th May, 1984, BBD). Gradually, the strike collapsed into the use of force by the agitating fishers. The agitators even seized those mechanized trawlers that violated the limits in the sea legally set by various laws for fishing (*Malayala*

Manorama Daily, 27th May, 1984, BBD). Even before the strike started, the artisanal fishers began to charge the purse-seine boatmen. In some areas, the agitators' anti-purse seining attitude resulted in the open clash with the mechanized boatmen who operated this fishing gear (*Indian Express Daily*, 1st June, 1984, BBD).¹³ News of scuffles and altercations between the mechanized boatmen and the artisanal fishers were reported from Vadakara, Azhiyoor, Quilandy and Kozhikode. At this juncture, there were two discussions between the Chief Minister of Kerala and the representatives of KSMTF on June 8th and on the 21st June 1984. But these discussions failed (*Mathrubhoomi Daily*, 9th June, 1984, *Kerala Kaumudi Daily*, 22nd June, 1984, BBD). Abruptly, the leaders of KSMTF decided to call off the strike. Thus, the 50 days old strike was called off 'against a back ground of the CM's [Chief Minister's] refusal to entertain the idea of a seasonal ban on trawling throughout the coast of Kerala'.¹⁴

The anti-strikers' propaganda

The strike ended without fetching its aims, albeit the discussions fan fired by this has been serving some undesirable results in the public sphere. While the struggle was getting momentum, a group of fishermen were engaging in an anti-strike propaganda in Malabar. The most scathing criticisms against the struggle were those pertaining to the foreign link¹⁵, conversion attempts and communalising impact of the Movement.¹⁶ Contrary to the experience of southern Kerala, in Malabar, Mahallu Committee, Araya Samajam and Dheevera Sabha etc. were managing the social life of the coast. Hence, the coming of an organization with Christian colour might have created worries in the minds of the fishers here. The media and other organizations soon joined the fray¹⁷. An article in *Chandrika Daily*, the ideological organ of Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), shaking away its earlier reservations in attacking the struggle, vehemently criticised the agitation and the way of organized.¹⁸ *Janmabhoomi*, the organ of BJP, also followed suit.¹⁹ The congress led union of fishers also held such a view.²⁰ Their official meeting pointed out that it was unscientific to determine the fishing limits in the sea. The communal propaganda in Kozhikode had its logical conclusion in the arrival of a

group of *Samnyasis* (monks) from the Viswa Hindu Parishad (VHP) to visit the fishing hamlets of Vellayil, Puthiyangadi, and Puthiyappa to 'solve the problems of fishermen and to find socio-economic remedies for their grievances' (*Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 17th June, 1984). Anyway, they did not suggest anything as solution. From the course of the strike and the associated discourses narrated above, we could realize that the fracture inflicted by the anti-strike propaganda among the fishers was deep rooted. Was it because the fishers were trapped in the primordial/pre-capitalist loyalties of caste and religion?²¹ Were there problems with the labour mobilization by the NGOs? What was/is the role of the State in it? Now let us analyze the above events using the advantage of hind-sight.

The fisher society generally appear to be bound by Caste/Religion. It's because both in the work place and neighborhood one could see conservative symbols²². This outward appearance of a *traditional/conservative* fisher is deceptive. They are *rationally* engaging with the latest technologies of fishing, mediating with the money-lender/trader, discussing contemporary politics and crises of work and life and conflicting/consenting with her/his fellow-men. This varied relations the fisher entering into enables him/her to be the member of a class. This class formation among fishers is the part of their survival strategy that it can be ephemeral in one sense and enduring on the other. If the situation demands then they would opt to another strategy where some other identity may come to the fore but it does not mean an absence of class-consciousness altogether. Because there is a notion of class at the emotional level that is a product of the lived experience generated from the multifarious relations they enter into. Behind the struggle in question, National and Global influences were there. The struggle was actually intended to protect the rights of *traditional/artisanal* fishermen as a class against the Boat owners and their vested interests. But in the Malabar region the labourers who fish in the motorized traditional sector also used to go in mechanized boats as fishing season demands.²³ The formal categorization of the labouring poor in lines with the sectoral varieties of artisanal/motorized/mechanized was the essential result of the state sponsored modernization process. But these classifications will not

hold good when come to practical purpose. The boundary issue, which was a crucial question around which the whole agitation was developed,²⁴ contributed for the fracturing of the self-perception of the fisher as a member of the working class, developing among them. 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. This method, unfortunately, changed the scenario into traditional fisherman fighting against the mechanized boat fisherman. The issue of crossing of the boundary and the need to use the gears like purse seines became particularly important in the time of lowered catch in the 1980s. This condition of scarcity was the background of the agitation also. Naturally, it found mechanized 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. And the labour 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. It created a condition of confusion which was made use of by the conservative/communal organizations like IUML, INC, BJP, and RSS. It was these organizations who tried to fish out of the troubled water. From this it is possible to infer that the division of the worker into different sectors was arbitrary and artificial. But this division was objectified; not the actual existence of the worker. Hence, in placing the labour in this confusion, the State, abetted by capital played a crucial role. It shows that in this era the historical contingency is in a way determined by capital. Capital has the agency in fixing the contours of labourers' action in our times.

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 labor 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

on the one hand and provided spaces for communalism on the other and

2. The direct communal propaganda by some of the political parties and the press further strengthened the communalization of the coastal life. Hence, the fishermen struggle of 1984 very well revealed the ambivalence of the working-class consciousness and it was in a way manifested that the fishers are susceptible to the communal ideology.

Conclusion

The fishing industry had been a complex space crowded with many players. Apart from the labouring poor, the traders, craft owners, and moneylenders were there. These fishers were mostly hired/contractual labourers under the boat owner or trawler owner. The fish-workers were economically indebted either to the owners of boat or trawler or money-lenders. This indebtedness bred diverse forms of loyalties and ideological indebtedness among the fish workers. The specific forms and nature of these were fixed by the creditor. Quite often, the *community* solidarity played a crucial role in the relations between the creditor and the debtor. The restructuring of the industry after the formation of Kerala had classified the sea into various fishing zones and the workforce into different sectors of technologies like traditional, motorized and trawler. These physical realities prevented them from subjectively perceiving themselves as members of a working *class*. On the contrary, the traditional caste identities predominant among them facilitated the formation of the modern community identities and thus hampered the development of class identities. Sometimes fishing technology and fishing zones also become the sources of identities. Objectively they become the part of a working class but subjectively they retained their sectarian identities. While the struggle of 1984 brought the plethora of issues faced by the fisher section in Kerala to the public attention and demonstrated the fighting spirit of the fishers, it also demonstrated the vulnerable aspects in its organization, programmes and demands. The tension, scuffles and altercations it generated as well as the anti-strike propaganda with powerful communal overtones had divided the fishing labourers into

mutually competing identities. Thus, this struggle not only manifested the limitations of labor mobilization by NGOs among the fishers of Kerala but also exposed the existing contradictions and fuelled fissiparous tendencies among them.

End Notes

- 1 From shore up to 12 Nautical Miles. (One NM = 1.85 Km)
- 2 Personal communication with Mr. Ayyapputti (70) Mandhalaam Kunnu Beach on 03.06.2007
- 3 Chappayil, Vellayil, Puthiya kadavu west and east, Thoppayil west and east, Kamburam, West Hill west and east, Puthiyangadi West and East in Kozhikode District, BBD-II.
- 4 Its objectives were, '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 affiliation, by working in collaboration with the Beach Blossoms Project of the Socio-Religious Centre, Calicut (S.No.102/81)', Rules and Regulations, Kozhikode Theera Desa Sanghatana (S.No.177 of 1981) (Mimeo). P.2
- 5 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.
- 6 K.P Safiya's Father had a deep knowledge in Islam and its tenets.
- 7 Moideen Koya of Kappakkal was a CPI activist who extended his support to the NGO activities in the Beach.
- 8 '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', BBD-10.
- 9 The demands were 1. Implement a ban on the mechanized trawling of June, July and 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. (Aerthayil, 2002:p.52) *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 27th May, Sunday, 1984, July, BBD.
- 10 Quilon was the major centre where the state secretary of KSMTF, A. Joseph was in a hunger strike, *Mathrubhoomi* Daily, 27th May, 1984, BBD.
- 11 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
- 12 "The organization 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.

- 13 “The specific form this struggle took shape was the capture of encroaching mechanized trawlers by traditional fishermen and entrusting the boat to the government authorities for action according to the KMFR law. Such incidents took place periodically in various coastal villages of Calicut district during the period July 1983 to March 1984”, FISS 8, BBD.
- 14 According to Father Jose Kaleekkal, leader of the struggle, 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 months, *Indian Express Daily*, 22nd June, 1984. BBD.
- 15 The allegation regarding the foreign funding was made by the CM himself. C.P. Madhavan, the General Secretary of the BJP led Kerala Pradesh Matsya Pravarthaka Sangham and the BJP State President, K.G. Marar, also demanded that the Chief-Minister must clarify, from which country they received the foreign fund and Marar added that this agitation was part of the conversion attempts pursuing by the Jesuit Fathers, BBD p.24; *Chandrika Daily*, 4th June, 1984, BBD.
- 16 The Rastriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (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 associates trying to disturb the communal harmony of the coast, *Janayugam Daily*, 7th June, 1984, BBD. Mr.K.K. Velayudhan was sarcastically referred to by the B J P men as ‘Alice Velayudhan’; They also said that they would not allow the ‘cross harvest’ [a euphemistic term to signify proselytization] of the high range areas in the coastal region, *Chandrika Daily*, 7th June, 1984, BBD.
- 17 *Janayugam Daily*, the mouth-piece of CPI reported that the RSS was trying to pave the way for a tension in Vellayil by giving the fishermen agitation a communal colour, *Janayugam Daily*, 7th June, 1984, BBD. *Sthiratha*, another local newspaper alleged that the struggle was the attempt of the Christian Fathers to woe the people of Vellayil-Puthiyappa area; and trying to split the fishermen on the basis of the crafts they use, *Sthiratha Daily*, 7th June, 1984, BBD; The office bearers of the Malabar Traditional Fishermen Mechanized Boat Organization (*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. 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. They also made it clear that it was the very persons who fish with country crafts on one day, become the labourers in mechanized boats on the other day, *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, 8th June, 1984, BBD; 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 conversion, *Al-Amin Daily*, 9th June, 1984, BBD;
- 18 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 conversion, *Chandrika Daily*, 10th June, 1984 BBD.
 - 19 It 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 region, *Janmabhoomi Daily*, 13th June, 1984, BBD.
 - 20 The slogans in their procession at Kozhikode had cautioned the fishers of 'the attempts of *some* who came for Service and now trying to split the fishermen', *Mathrubhoomi Daily*, 17th June, 1984, BBD.
 - 21 It is a predominant argument in Indian Labor History that Indian laborer is trapped in pre-capitalist loyalties, (Chakrabarty, 1996).
 - 22 The offerings to the different divinities to get a good catch, life centred around mosques, temples and churches etc. testify to this.
 - 23 The compatibility of both the sectors in Malabar is reported in an Economic Review. It says that the mechanized boats are used for dory fishing in off-season, *ERK*- 1982; A study on the Chaliyam fishing village also brings such a result, (KILA, 2006:p.9)
 - 24 "In 1981 January, as a result of the epic struggles of the fishermen in the Southern districts of Kerala, the [E.K.] 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 mechanized 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 kilometers from the shore in Malabar.... So, the mechanized 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.

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