CHAPTER FIVE

PEASANT ISSUES IN MALABAR
FROM 1930 TO 1947

Generally speaking, the peasant struggle in Malabar had passed through different phases. In the first phase, the Mappilas of south Malabar had fought the struggle alone which finally culminated in the Malabar Rebellion of 1921. In its second phase, the leadership was snatched by the Nair kanam tenants, who utilised it for securing their own special interests. It is interesting to note that while the peasant struggle was originally by the verumpattam tenants to prevent the encroachment into the customary rights, its leadership in its second phase was spearheaded by the kanam tenants. The agitation of this phase was not a mass movement in the full sense of the term, the overwhelming majority of the verumpattam tenants were kept out of its purview and the demands were mainly confined to those that concerned the kanamdars. The demands of the kanamdars were taken up by the national movement leaders in their efforts to enlist the support of the workers and peasants into the struggle for independence. Thus the passing of the Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930, which while curbing the rights of the traditional janmis,
created a new class of landlords and marked the close of the second phase of the peasant struggle in Malabar. Nevertheless it was this agitation which gave the Malabar peasants the first elements of class consciousness—the consciousness that they should unite as a class and fight against their enemy, the *janmi*.\(^1\)

This class-consciousness was put into practice in the third phase with great zeal when the peasant struggles were carried forward mainly by the vast majority of *verumpattamdars* who remained the meek camp followers of the *kanamdars*. Thus the Malabar case clearly contradicts the initial vanguard and the initial lethargy and the later revolutionary zeal attributed to small peasants.

In contrast to the first two phases, the peasant struggles in the third phase were stronger in north Malabar. In this phase the peasant struggles were no longer confined to an interest or caste group, but look to the nature of a well organised class struggle, with interests of the lower peasantry at the fore and the *verumpattam* tenants in the forefront. As the struggles got politicised they were transformed into a broad-based social movement directed against landlordism and caste system on the one hand and imperialism on the other. The role of *verumpattam* tenants belonging to the lower strata of Hindu society in particular to the Tiyya caste, became especially spectacular in this fight

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against social evils. The tenants' association sought to organise all categories of tenants, particularly the Tiyyas against enhancement of rent, illegal exactions and renewal fees and extended its base in north Malabar. This period of tenancy agitation also witnessed the formation of caste organisations like the Nair Service Society (NSS) of Nairs, the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam of Ezhavas and others. It was the formation of the caste organisations of these sections of people that together with the tenancy movement laid the first basis for the rising peasant movement. So, the peasant movement of this phase was based on the small *kanamdars*, *verumpattamdars* and the agricultural labourers. Though there were Nair leaders also, the bulk of the second level leadership came from the Ezhava caste, who also formed a sizeable section of the actual cultivators.

It may, however, be pointed out that the Mappila small peasants were located in south Malabar and the Nair middle peasants were located in North Malabar and that these two categories were not involved in the same struggle. Be that as it may, it is not true that the small peasants of north Malabar were initiated into collective action because of Nair middle peasantry. In fact, the small peasants, Tiyya *verumpattamdars* of north Malabar got involved in the peasant movement not simply to ameliorate their economic condition. Theirs were a cultural revolt [being
untouchables], a political mobilisation [being part of the national movement] and a movement for economic settlement [being economically deprived]. It is of capital significance to recognise this fact because given the existential conditions of the rural masses and the political context, it was impossible that an exclusive peasant movement involving the totality of peasantry irrespective of caste and pursuing a unilinear goal, could have taken place in Malabar, may, anywhere in India, at that time.

In a sense the national consciousness and the growth of an organised national movement appeared rather late in Kerala unlike in Bengal or Maharashatra. The south in general and Kerala in particular was slow to react to these impulses. Consequently, the Congress and the national movement started late in Malabar. But in the case of Malabar a section of the political activists had paid serious attention to the agrarian problems from the very beginning of the national movement. Moreover, the Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930 exposed the tenants at the bottom to competition and had to become tenants not only of the traditional landlords (*janmis*) but also of such protected tenants (*kanamdars*). Their position became worse in the agrarian hierarchy since the migration from other sectors increased the number of people who sought their livelihood in agriculture. On the whole, therefore, it must be stated that tenancy reforms did not constitute a change in basic economic
relationship. They only reshuffled the upper levels of the tenurial hierarchy and exposed the tenants at the bottom, to competition and exploitation. They had no protection of law with regard to fixity of tenure and fair rent. The Congress Socialist Party [CSP] and the left wing leaders made a conscious effort to mobilise the poor peasants on class basis. As a result village level units of the peasant union were formed throughout Malabar by 1937.

The sustenance of a militant peasant movement which emerged in 1930's with its major anchorage in north Malabar was possible as it was 'ideologically and organisationally linked with the anti-imperialist struggle and led by radical political leadership. The continuous linkage between peasant mobilisation and the agrarian programmes of the Indian National Congress (INC), the Kerala Congress Socialist Party [KCSP] and the Communist Party of India [CPI] gave the peasant movement an ideology and an organisational base. This is equally true of the movements of agricultural labourers in Travancore and Cochin since 1930's. As we have already pointed out, the tenancy movement was dominated by intermediary group of *kanam* tenants who represented the upper strata of tenants, the years 1934 to 1940 witnessed the rise of workers and peasant's organisations consequent on the formation of the Congress Socialist Party. This period also witnessed the growth of a revolutionary ideology of
scientific socialism in Malabar, and the emergence of a generation of revolutionary cadres who gave enthusiastic leadership to the peasant masses consisting of *verumpattam* tenants and other inferior tenure holders.²

It is true that this was a mass movement in the full sense of the term, since its demands were confined to those that affect the *kanamdars*; the large mass of peasants, the *verumpattamdars*, were kept out of the purview of the movement. It was, however, a mass movement in a general way, since the target of attack by the agitators was the *janmi* - the common oppressor of the entire peasantry³. The leaders of the movement did, of course, subsequently (after 1930) join hands with the *janmis* against the mass of peasantry, but they did the preliminary job of making the struggle against the *janmis* a national and popular movement. Hence, though the organised peasant movement of the last three decades has had to content with the treachery of the original leaders of the tenancy movement and evolve a new leadership there is no doubt that it was the tenancy movement that gave our peasants the first elements of class consciousness.⁴

kanamdars (who are a privileged minority among tenants) than with the demands of all tenants. The Tenancy Act that was passed in 1930, therefore, did not give any real relief to the majority of tenants. The fixity of tenure granted to verumpattamdars was so conditional, and the rate of 'fair rent' fixed for them was so high that their position remained more or less the same before. The demand was, therefore, formulated that all tenants including verumpattamdars should get full and real fixity of tenure, that the rate of 'fair rent' should be reduced and that other changes should be made in the provisions of the Act. Malabar taluk and local peasant conferences were held to formulate these and other demands and peasant organisations of district, taluk and local levels were formed. The socialist led Congress committees and Congress conferences also supported to these demands. Thus was brought about that co-ordination of the independent class organisations of the peasantry with Congress committees which laid the basis for a real anti-imperialist united front with the peasantry as its main driving force.

In order to initiate and sustain an intense process of mobilisation the concerned collectivity should be experiencing acute distress. The Depression years of 1929-'32 provided such a context characterised by large scale evictions, rack-renting and

5 Ibid., p.150.
6 Ibid.
indebtedness due to steep fall in the prices of agricultural commodities, and the constant rise in the revenue rates due to the resettlement undertaken in 1929. A.R. Mac Ewen, the District Collector of Malabar recommended the upward revision of the revenue and it was enhanced by 18.75 percent for wet lands and gardens. The assessment of waste land cultivators was also doubled. The increase in the revenue resettlement was also due to the reclassification of lands. The reclassification of 'dry' plots as 'garden plots' resulted in a ten fold increase in the revenue rates of garden plots in north Malabar. This particularly hit the subsistence farmers as they were engaged in converting the dry lands and cultivating the fruit bearing trees.

The tenants and agricultural labourers were the immediate victims of economic depression of 1929-32. The depression greatly added to the miseries of the people. The years preceding depression being 'boom period', people tended to spend money in converting 'dry' into 'wet' and in making improvements. The prices of commodities continued to decline steadily for five or six years.\(^7\) This also increased rural indebtedness. The revenue enhancement combined with the economic depression led to an increasing improverisation of the peasantry. Since the tenancy bill did not offer as much benefit to north Malabar as it did to the south, the

\(^7\) V.V. Kunhikrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.78.
total number of renewals and melcharths also varied in those two regions.⁸

This situation brought about significant changes in the nationalist movement in Malabar. Though Kerala as a whole played a prominent part in the anti-imperialist struggle, it was in Malabar that intense activities were launched. It is interesting to note that a large number of young men belonging to the traditional land owning families were attracted towards the freedom movement.

In the absence of any land reforms, the *janmis* continued to maintain their ownership in vast estates running into thousands of acres. The real problem was not scarcity of land, but the land, including forest, fallow and pasture lands, was under private ownership of the *janmis*. This constrained the peasants in many ways bringing more lands under cultivation, cutting green manure from private forests, collecting wood for fuel, grazing the cattle, etc. In all these contexts, the *janmis* interfered and used social and legal sanctions, against peasants who were recalcitrant. The Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930 was very limited in its scope; it could only safeguard the interests of *kanamdars* who constituted the upper crust of the tenantry. The Act did not confer fixity of tenure on non-cultivating inferior tenants and declined the right of

⁸ *Report of the Malabar Tenancy Committee*, No.15, p.103.
renewal to superior tenantry which tend to be known as mere mortgagers. While the Act did not confer security on inferior tenants such as cultivating verumpattamadars, the most popular category of tenantry, the influence of the families wielded over bureaucracy and the law courts nullified the benefits of the Act in practice. Thus in the absence of any substantial peasant mobilisation and due to collusion of landlords, bureaucracy, law court and political power structure the domination of the janmis was total and absolute. The overwhelming majority of the janmis were Namboodiris, Nambiars and Nayanars. Being superior castes they had a natural advantage over their tenants – they were ritual, cultural and social superiors in society. Not only did they own vast estates but they lived in big mansions, maintained elephants, practised polygamy and kept several concubins.9

In the beginning the struggles were against social restrictions and for social freedom and then against economic exploitation. Anti-landlord struggles were also anti-imperialist struggles. The Congress resolution passed at Karachi in 1931 identified the masses with the Congress and adopted a basic policy declaration which provided for tenancy reforms among other things.

9 T.K. Oommen, From Mobilisation to Industrialisation, the Dynamics of Agrarian Movement in Twentieth Century Kerala (Bombay, 1985), pp.40-44.
On the model of the famous salt satyagraha launched by Gandhiji with the historic Dandi March on 12 March, 1930 a jatha [procession] under K. Kelappan started in Malabar on 13 March, 1930 from Calicut to Payyannur. The whole of Kerala was stirred by this incident.\textsuperscript{10} The Civil Disobedience Movement [CDM] in Malabar brought to the forefront a group of people experienced in the actual political struggle but disillusioned with the Congress for its compromises and with no faith left in the efficacy of Gandhian methods for wresting independence from the British. It was at this time when the middle class of India were attracted to socialism as a result of world economic crisis. The influence of socialist ideology led them to perceive the class divisions and contradictions in society. This coupled with the feeling that the CDM was a failure mainly because it was not broad based enough to include different sections of society like the workers and peasants led them to organise these sections in different class organisations.\textsuperscript{11}

**Formation of the Congress Socialist Party**

The decision of Gandhi to drop the CDM in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Gandhi Irwin Pact signed on 5 March, 1931 created discontent among his followers. The young

\textsuperscript{10} V.V. Kunhikrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.80.

political workers who were imprisoned in Cannanore central jail in connection with the CDM had established contacts with the Bengal revolutionaries, who were in the same jail, instilled in their minds a new political philosophy radically opposed to the Gandhian ideas. They felt that the Congress had not approached the masses in the right way by mobilising workers and peasants. The agitation against high rates of land revenue provided an opportunity to the Congress activists to study in depth agricultural debts, landlord-tenant relations and economic and social conditions of peasantry. The attempt of these young radical political activists in search of an alternative for wrestling independence from the British culminated in the formation of the Kerala unit of the Congress Socialist Party [CSP] in May, 1934.12 Their programme was to organise the workers and peasants, thereby ensuring mass participation in the freedom struggle.13 The imbibing of the socialist ideology led these radicals to view society as made up of classes. Hence they decided to organise the peasants and workers in separate class organisations. Consequently peasant organisations developed in Malabar. The CSP with its units in Malabar had the main aim of making the Congress an instrument of struggle. The decision to form the Kerala Congress Socialist Party [KCSP] was taken under the presidentship of Sri. K. Kelappan

12 Mathrubhumi, Calicut, 11 May, 1934.
at the Congress meeting at Calicut on 12 May, 1934. C.K. Govindan Nair was elected as President and P. Krishna Pillai as Secretary. After the formation of CSP, its members began touring the countryside forming Karshaka Sanghams [Peasant Associations]. Earlier demands centred around issues like high rent, heavy land tax and debt. It was to fight against such social oppression and exploitation that Karshaka Sanghams [KSs] emerged at the village level from 1935, which spread to the whole of Malabar in the next three years.\textsuperscript{14}

**Organization of Karshaka Sanghams**

As early as in 1933, when Gandhiji visited Kerala, the Congressmen had organised in Walluvanad taluk an agitation against the enhancement of land tax following the resettlement. A committee was formed to pressurise the government to revoke the tax enhancement. E.M.S. Namboodiripad was one of the secretaries of this committee constituted for agitation.\textsuperscript{15}

Meanwhile, a public meeting held at Calicut in November, 1933 presided over by Manjeri Ramaiyer, and where about fifty persons participated, including U. Gopala Menon, M Govinda Menon, T. Hassan Koya Mulla and E.M.S Namboodiripad resolved to form the

\textsuperscript{14} K. Gopalankutty, Movements for Tenancy Reform in Malabar: A Comparative Study of Two Movements, 1920-1939 in D.N. Panigrahi (e.d.,), *Economy, Society and Politics in Modern India* (New Delhi, 1984), p.150.

Kerala Karshaka Sangham [Kerala Peasants Union] in the whole of Malabar, with taluk and village sanghams as its units for safeguarding the interests of the peasantry and to immediately appraise the government of their hardships due to the increase in revenue rates. It also formed a working committee authorised to enrol more members.\(^{16}\)

Following this the first conference of the Malabar District Karshaka Sanghan was held at Pattambi in March 1934.\(^{17}\) This conference was presided over by Prof. N.G. Ranga, the General Secretary of All India Kisan Sabha and it marked the beginning of an organised peasant movement in Malabar. It appointed an economic committee under the charge of E.M.S. Namboodiripad to study the problems faced by the peasants. This was followed by the formation of a Kerala Peasants' Association (KPA). E.M.S. was its President and C.K. Govindan Nair, the Secretary. The immediate attempt of the peasant union was to oppose the exploitation by the \textit{janmis} such as illegal extortions, the threat of evictions and the unsympathetic attitude of the Madras government to the genuine demands of the Malabar peasants etc.\(^{18}\) The task of the peasant union was the difficult one of

\(^{16}\) \textit{Mathrubhumi}, November, 1933.
\(^{17}\) \textit{Ibid}.
organising the working class and the peasants. These sections were brought to the union by slow and painstaking methods.

The situation was ripe in 1935 to form Karshaka Sanghams. It was to fight against such social oppression and exploitation that Karshaka Sanghams [KSs] emerged at the village level from 1935, which spread to the whole of Malabar in the next three years.\textsuperscript{19} The formation of village units of KSs followed the touring of villages by groups of peasant activists. This was then followed by taluk level consolidation. The taluk committees held periodic meetings and organised annual conferences.\textsuperscript{20} With the formation of the All Malabar Karshaka Sagham [AMKS] in 1937 the KS became a three tier organisation with the village KS as the smallest unit, the taluk KS above it, and AMKS as the apex co-ordinating body.\textsuperscript{21} The progress of the peasant struggles during the years 1935-40 was closely bound up with the emergence of the KS as a strong peasant organisation. In organising its activities the KS fully utilised the prevailing discontent among the peasants and their oppression by the \textit{janmis} and the government.

The Faizpur Congress in 1936 adopted a resolution recommending 'fixity of tenure with heritable rights for all tenants'.

\textsuperscript{19} K.A. Keraleeyan, "Keralathile Karshaka Prasthanam", (Mal.) (Peasant Movement in Kerala in \textit{Prabhatham}) (Calicut, 1929).
\textsuperscript{20} K. Gopalankutty \textit{op.cit.}, pp.203-204.
The CSP activists undertook to intensive propaganda work among the peasants who regarded themselves as a low status group. Their caste, social position, economic status and illiteracy made them subservient to the landowners. Thus both peasants and workers were organised in class basis. The primary school teachers, unemployed youths, women and writers were all organised.

It was in Kolancherry amsom of Chirakkal taluk that the first unit of the KS was formed. It was the first village KS in the whole of Malabar. It was a major event in the peasant struggles of this period. To put an end to all kinds of illegal practices practised by a local janmi and encroachment upon the properties of their tenants about 28 peasants of that village organised a meeting in the house of Vishnu Bharatheeyan, one of the founding fathers of the peasant movement in Malabar under the presidency of Pattathil Padmanabhan.22 A working committee of eleven members was constituted. Bharatheeyan was elected as the President and Keraleeyan as Secretary of this unit.23 This was but a logical development which indicated the arrival of the political stage in peasant struggles as this and subsequently local level peasant unions were explicitly supported by the KCSP. In the same year an

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inter village peasant union covering four villages was also formed. This was followed by the establishment of a network of peasant unions in the neighbouring villages in the same taluk. With this the peasant struggles took a different turn from the general and abstract enemies, imperialism, colonialism, capitalism and feudalism, peasant mobilisations came to be anchored around concrete issues and specific enemies, the more rapacious and oppressive janmis and bureaucrats.

The first taluk level conference of the KS of Chirakkal taluk was held at Parassinikkadavu near Cannanore in November 1936 at which the Chirakkal taluk KS was formed. It was the first taluk KS in the whole of Malabar. It was presided over by barrister A.K. Pillai. Following this conference numerous peasant conferences were organised at the village, taluk and regional levels throughout Malabar, including Kasaragod taluk which was then part of South Canara. There was a tremendous growth of KSs in the next two years. Before the commencement of the II World War there were more than 150 village KSs and a taluk sanghan in each taluk. This Chirakkal taluk conference urged for an effective tenancy legislation. The conference made as its aim the starting of a KS in every village and a member for it in every family.

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24 Mathrubhumi, 4 November, 1936.
Similar taluk level conferences were held to highlight the economic hardships of the Malabar peasantry. The Kasaragod taluk KS was formed in 1937 under the leadership of Kisan leaders like K.A. Keraleeyan, V.V. Kunhambu, T.S. Tirumumbu, N.S. Namboodiri and K. Madhavan. In 1939 the Kasaragod taluk KS's second annual conference was held in a big way at Kottakkal. This conference was presided over by N.G. Ranga and inaugurated by Moidu Moulavi, an eminent KPCC leader. The leftist leaders like A.K. Gopalan, P. Krishna Pillai, K.A. Keraleeyan, P. Narayanan Nair and K.P.R. Gopalan also attended the conference. With this peasant movement was galvanised in the whole of north Malabar.

After this taluk level consolidation the All Malabar Karshaka Sangham [AMKS] was officially formed in May 1938 by convening a meeting of the representatives of all local KSs. P. Narayanan Nair, the CSP activist who had participated in most of the early taluk level conferences was elected President and K.A. Keraleeyan its Secretary. At first the office of the AMKS was fixed at Kozhikode but later shifted to a central location at Kalliaressi.

The methods and techniques used by the KSs included pamphleteering, touring villages in small batches and holding meetings, jathas (processions) were undertaken to the houses of

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28 K.K.N. Kurup in *The Kayyur Martyr's Memorial Souvenir* p.3.,
29 P. Narayanan Nair, *op.cit.*., p.177.
janmis for seeking redress of grievances and the submission of petitions to the government.\textsuperscript{30} Massive peasant conferences at the village, taluk and regional levels, processions of peasants and youth singing revolutionary songs and shouting rousing slogans and organisation of hunger procession were more or less regular features of its programmes. The demands of the peasantry remained more or less the same throughout. These included ceiling on rent, abolition of feudal levies and illegal exactions, use of standardised measures instead of fake ones, and amendment of the MTA of 1930 in a comprehensive way.\textsuperscript{31}

One of the techniques of peasant mobilisation was jathas to the houses of almost all prominent janmis for the redress of grievances.\textsuperscript{32} From 1936 onwards KSs led peasant jathas to the houses of local janmis demanding the withdrawal of illegal exactions. Thousands of peasants participated in such jathas taken out at various places in Malabar. For instance, one such jatha which started from a place called Bakkalam in Chirakkal taluk to the house of a local janmi of Karakkattu Veedu situated about 20 miles away, is recorded to have been participated by no less than 7,000 peasants.\textsuperscript{33} Such processions were taken out to almost all the prominent janmi families in north Malabar including the

\textsuperscript{30} K. Gopalankutty, \textit{op.cit.}, p.151.  
\textsuperscript{31} P. Radhakrishnan, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.92-93.  
\textsuperscript{32} K. Gopalankutty, \textit{op.cit.}, p.204.  
\textsuperscript{33} T.V. Krishnan, \textit{Kerala's First Communist: Life of Sakhavu Krishna Pillai} (Trivandrum, 1975), p.82.
Vengayil Nayanar, Chirakkal Kovilakam, Kottayam Kovilakam, Koodali House, Kurumattur Nambiar etc.  

These jathas were given enthusiastic receptions on the way by the local units of the peasants' union. These jathas also helped to an extent to the spontaneous display of brotherhood and comradeship among the peasants which in turn, also helped to cut across the barriers of caste. The slogans raised in these jathas were of both anti-feudal and anti-imperialist in nature. The leaders of the KPCC who led these peasants in this period were out and out leftists.  

While the peasants and the working classes in the country were becoming militant on the political zone, two powerful trends were emerging. The first was the gradual slipping away of the Congress organisation into the hands of the leftists and the second was a logical outcome of it, the formation of the Congress Socialist Party [CSP]. In Kerala, the socialists always had an upper hand and this was maintained till the formation of a Communist party by the end of 1939.  

Massive inter caste dinners for which the peasants carried head loads of vegetables and rice were unique and recurrent feature of the conferences organised by the KSs, which went a long way in weakening inter caste barriers and promoting class solidarity. Staging of plays with revolutionary themes often

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highlighting the evils of landlordism and exploitation of the peasantry was another method for weakening inter caste barriers. It is therefore, hardly surprising that in north Malabar where peasant struggles were the most powerful, caste distinctions have all but disappeared except in the case of Namboodiris and the Harijans.36

The All India Kisan Sabha [AIKS] which was organised in April 1936 at Lucknow was responsible for laying the formation of the KS units in different parts of India. Its aim was complete emancipation of the peasantry from economic exploitation. This gave a filling to the peasant struggles in India. Following this hunger jathas were organised in different parts of the country. In this context, a hunger jatha led by A.K. Gopalan deserves special mention. Early in 1936 he had organised a hunger jatha of the unemployed from Kuthuparamba to Tellicherry to see the Sub-Collector.37 Stirred by the success of this venture he had organised another jatha from Cannanore to Madras on foot in July 1936 for presenting a memorial to the government regarding rural poverty. After the fashion of the hunger march to Madras, taluk level marches were organised in Chirakkal, Kottayam and Kurumbranad taluks between September and October 1936. Peasant activists

37 A.K. Gopalan, "In the Cause of the People" (Madras, 1973), p.15, in V.V. Kunhikrishnan, *op.cit.*, pp.88-89.
like K.A. Keraleeyan and K.P.R. Gopalan took upon themselves the task of singing 'hunger songs' which had a profound mass appeal.

The year 1937 was very significant as far as Malabar KS was concerned. The pretension of championing the cause of the peasantry, as announced by the Congress in the Faizpur session of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) in 1936 and in its election manifesto was fully exposed. The peasants had great expectations from the Congress and they pinned their hopes on it. The peasant leaders engaged in propaganda work for the Congress and exhorted peasants, workers and middle class people to join the Congress for strengthening the main stream of the nationalist movement.\textsuperscript{38} The peasants began to view the Congress as "their own organisation". They worked for the success of the Congress candidates in the 1937 elections.\textsuperscript{39} When the Congress party backed by the peasants and workers' organisations won the provincial elections and formed a ministry in Madras in July 1937 under C. Rajagopalachari, raised high hopes in the minds of the peasants.\textsuperscript{40} After the installation of the Congress ministry, the demand for amending the MTA of 1930 was raised in the peasant meetings all over Malabar. This was evidently due to the faith in the Congress ministry and the new hopes raised by their

\textsuperscript{38} P. Radhakrishnan, \textit{op. cit.}, p.95.
\textsuperscript{39} K.K.N. Kurup, \textit{op. cit.}, p.12.
\textsuperscript{40} A.K. Gopalan, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 85.
assumption of office. But the ministry failed to provide any relief to the peasants other than the mere passing of the "Agricultural Debt Relief Act". The passing of this Act was welcomed by the various units of the KSSs.\textsuperscript{41} Peasants used to go to the houses of the Congress activists rather than the village officers to know the details about the Debt Relief Act.\textsuperscript{42} Complaints against \textit{janmi} atrocities began to be lodged with the Congress members.\textsuperscript{43}

But the betrayal on the part of the Congress leadership disappointed the leftists within its ranks and alienated the entire body of peasantry which soon came to realise that any improvement in their conditions was possible only through their own organised strength. Consequently, towards the end of 1938, movements for amending the MTA of 1930 were organised by the KSSs. Later on, this agitation for the amendment tended to be more and more militant. On 1 September, 1938, which was observed as All India Peasants Day, the KSSs throughout Malabar passed resolutions in support of the amendment. They observed 6 November, 1938 as Malabar Tenancy Act Amendment Day (MTAAD), when a uniform resolution with demands for amendments was passed.\textsuperscript{44} The AMKS appointed a committee with R. Ramachandran Nedungadi as Convenor to enquire into the

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Mathrubhumi}, 22 December, 1937.
\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Ibid}, 26 March, 1938.
\textsuperscript{43} Vishnu Bharatheeyan, \textit{op.cit.}, p.113.
tenurial problem. This committee submitted its recommendations for amendments and these demands were endorsed in the KPCC meeting at Calicut as 20 November, 1938. The government was asked to bring in land legislation incorporating these demands. The second annual conference of the peasants held in 1938 in Chirakkal taluk passed resolutions demanding the amendment of the tenancy act. Simultaneously such resolutions were passed by the ninth Kerala Political Conference. On this occasion a draft bill incorporating all the amendments demanded until then was printed and circulated.

In view of the persistent agitations kept alive by the peasant association the government of Madras gave notice in October 1938 for the introduction of a bill in the Legislative Assembly to amend the MTA of 1930. This was not a new legislation intend to alter the agrarian relations of Malabar but only an attempt to remove certain difficulties experienced during the working of the MTA of 1930. As it did not touch the vital problems faced by the peasantry, they demanded the introduction of a new bill to implement their actual demands. The government had to withdraw the bill as it drew protests of peasantry from all over Malabar in the form of meetings and demonstrations.

45 Mathrubhumi, 10 May, 1938.
46 EMS Namboodiripad, A Short History of the Peasant Movement in Kerala (Bombay, 1943), p.22.
In the same year the Congress socialists secured an increased hold over the KPCC. The CSP activists urged complete disregard of landlords in several meetings.\textsuperscript{47} Joint meetings of the Congress and the KSs were organised. In the meetings of KSs, speeches were made exhorting peasants to rally round the Congress and strengthen the anti-imperialist movement.\textsuperscript{48} Peasants used to attend in large numbers the meetings organised by the village Congress committees.\textsuperscript{49} The leaders of CSP used to travel in the interior often forming village Congress committees and KS units. The Congress members were asked to extend help and co-operation to peasant movements.\textsuperscript{50} Resolutions condemning British imperialism were passed in these meetings. The British government was characterised as a staunch supporter of feudal elements. Likewise, the feudal lords were characterised as the "pillars supporting British imperialism". It was stated that in order to abolish the latter it was necessary to abolish the former. The appearance of police on the side of \textit{janmis} during demonstrations was pointed out by the KCSP activists as an example of this relationship.\textsuperscript{51}

It should be stated that the integration of the two movements one against landlordism and the other against

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Fortnightly Report} for the second half of November, 1938.
\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Mathrubhumi}, 29 June, 1938.
\textsuperscript{49} Vishnu Bharateeyan, \textit{op.cit.}, p.111.
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Mathrubhumi, op.cit.}
\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Ibid.}, 11 May, 1937.
imperialism was possible only because the KCSP members did not view the socialist ideology as opposed to the ideology of nationalism and also they did not view the national movement as a reactionary force. Apart from a strong and sustained campaign against payment of rent to the *janmis* and revenue to the government, social boycott which had until then been a powerful weapon in the hands of the *janmis* was now wielded by the peasants effectively and applied against the recalcitrant *janmis* and, for that matter, any villager who did not support the KS programmes. However, the Mappila tenants held aloof from the movement.\(^5^2\)

The peasant agitations for a comprehensive tenancy act had seriously strained the relationship between landlords and tenants in Malabar. The *janmis* viewed these agitations with great alarm and suspicion. In fear of these developments the *janmis* of north Malabar held a conference at Kottayam palace near Tellicherry on 22 January, 1939. In that meeting they expressed their tension about the tactics and techniques of the peasants and requested the Congress leadership to take action against those Congressmen who stimulated the peasants to the path of agitation.\(^5^3\)

In October, 1938, at a meeting of the KS, it was resolved to send a deputation to the District Magistrate of Malabar, in the

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\(^{52}\) *Mathrubhumi*, 22 and 27 December, 1938.

second week of December to demand amendments to the Act of 1930. Following this, there was the march of two jathas, each of five hundred red-clad peasants to Calicut representing the southern and northern regions of Malabar and a third jatha of a hundred and fifty persons to Mangalore, representing the Kasaragod taluk. The captain of northern jatha was Chandroth Kunhiraman Nair, the KPCC volunteer captain and of the southern jatha, E.P. Gopalan. The two jathas started their march on 11 December, 1938. The northern jatha started from Karivellur in north Malabar and the other from Kanjikode in south Malabar. They were given receptions en route by Congress committees, KSs, students and youth organisations. The two jathas converged at Chevayur near Calicut where the All Malabar Peasants' conference was in session. After the meeting, the jathas resumed their march to Calicut and a meeting was convened at the beach presided over by P. Krishna Pillai. Resolutions demanding the amendments to the MTA of 1930 were passed at this meeting. At the end of these jathas memorials containing the grievances of the peasantry were presented to the respective district Collectors. The merger of Kasaragod with Malabar and the extension of the MTA to Kasaragod were also demanded at the Kasaragod jatha.

54 *Fortnightly Report* for the first half of December, 1939.
55 *Ibid*.
56 *Marthubhumi*, 21 December, 1938.
meanwhile, the peasant association had already indulged in a signature campaign for the amendment of the tenancy act and altogether collected about two lakh signatures and sent them to the Revenue Minister of the Government of Madras.\textsuperscript{59}

As a result of this pressure, the government decided to consider the necessity for legislation of a more comprehensive nature. So, it did not introduce the bill for amending the tenancy act of 1930. In order to study the situation, the government deputed T. Prakasan, the Revenue Minister in the Congress Ministry to visit Malabar towards the end of December, 1938. Consequently, T. Prakasan visited parts of Malabar to see things for himself in the last week of December, 1938. The KS forwarded to him a copy of the memorandum sent to the Collector of Malabar and the draft of a tenancy bill prepared by them. The memorandum enlisted various grievances of the peasants.\textsuperscript{60}

Based on the report of the Revenue Minister in July, 1939, the Government appointed a 'Non-official' committee with K. Kuttikrishna Menon as Chairman and eight others as members. The committee thus appointed was to recommend reforms in the law and the system of tenancy in Malabar. The committee was asked to enquire into: (1) the working of the MTA, (2) the advisability of the abolition of the system of intermediaries with or

\textsuperscript{59} *Fortnightly Report* for the second half of December, 1938.
\textsuperscript{60} *Mathrubhumi*, 29 December, 1938.
without compensation, (3) fixing of fair rent and standardisation of weights and measures, (4) fixity of tenure and end of evictions, (5) compensation for improvements effected and (6) extension of the Act to cover fugitive cultivation also. 61 There was some kind of \textit{janmi-kanamdar} alliance in the committee. Their interests were fully represented, but those of the \textit{verumpattamdar} were not. 62 The committee had two \textit{janmi} representatives (who were the \textit{janmi} representatives in Madras Legislature) and a dozen others who represented the \textit{kanamdar}s, but not a single Malabar Karshaka Sangham representative. Three of the MLAs appointed to it were E. Kannan, a Harijan, KPCC President Muhammed Abdur Rahman Sahib and Secretary E.M.S. Namboodiripad, all left wing legislators, strongly supported the peasantry and the MKS. The appointment of this committee was welcomed by the KS units in various meetings. Though the MKS was dissatisfied with the composition, it decided to use it as a lever for building up a mass movement. The KS units were instructed to present memoranda and to submit evidence before the committee, to conduct meetings in every village to discuss their grievances and also to send protest notes to the Revenue Minister for not including a MKS representative in the committee. 63

\begin{flushright}
62 \textit{Mathrubhumi}, 19 December, 1940.
63 \textit{Ibid.}, 13 July, 1939.
\end{flushright}
The committee submitted its majority report in December, 1940. Its recommendations turned down the main demands of the peasantry, such as abolition of renewals to the *kanamdars*, abolition of one year's rent as deposit by the *verumpattamdars*, and reduction in rent rates. The three members supporting the peasantry appended dissenting minutes. Of them the dissenting note by E.M.S. Namboodiripad is still a valuable document. He highlighted the evils and irrelevance of landlordism as a social institution and strongly pleaded for its abolition as a pre-condition for any economic development. He dwelt at length on certain basic question of land tenure, such as 'whether landlordism as an institution serves any useful social function or whether it is parasitic in nature, whether its continuance is a necessity for society at large, or whether it should be ended with or without compensation. Even these recommendations, which fell short of KS demands, were not implemented as the II World War broke out and the British government found it convenient to postpone the issue till the end of the war. Due to the pressure from the *janmis* the government shelved the report for more than a decade.

The basic thrust of the movement came from the small tenants and the *verumpattamdars*. In fact, they comprised a sizeable section of the KS members. There were village, taluk and

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district level leaders that the members were all actual cultivators. In the interviews before the committee they all emphasized that the amendments should benefit the 'actual cultivators'. At the same time it was stated that the abolition of intermediaries was only a distant dream and that 'it was not practicable now'. The landless labourers also participated in the movement. They were drawn in as a result of increasing politicisation and the propagation of the feeling of unity with the notion that "all the toiling masses were one". There were however, no movements for better wages or for better working conditions for the agricultural labourers.

The role of Malabar Karshaka Sangham which was formed in 1937 in organizing the peasantry against the imperialist rule and landlordism could not be underestimated. The Sangham was organised in order to redress the grievances of the peasantry, and to give a new political consciousness to them, the radical section of the Congress party also helped to make the sangham a popular movement.

The CSP played an important role in rousing the peasantry. As a result of their work KS units were formed in the villages. The All India Kisan Sabha was responsible for laying the foundation of the KS units in different parts of India. Even though these units were formed against landlordism it is interesting to note that a

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section of the landlords gave their wholehearted support to these movements. A group among the landlords who were dissatisfied with the *Marumakkathayam* system supported the peasant organisation. The other group who supported this movement was those who became liberal minded as a result of western education. The articles published in the nationalist papers like *Prabhatam* helped in propagating the ideas of sangham.

Between the years 1937 and '42 KS had become a powerful organization in Kerala. It initiated the peasants to awake from their long slunder. The government as well as the landlords used vigorous methods to suppress the movement. They charged forged cases against the members of the KS. But because of the co-ordinated action they were able to face every critical situation. The majority of the members of the KS were leftists. It was because of their influence that the sangham after 1939 turned out to be an association of the Communists. The members were greatly influenced by the new ideology of Marxism and Leninism.

When the II World War broke out, the KS rendered valuable service in helping the peasants. It was a great blow for the peasants when the prices of the articles rose up. They were not able to meet their expenditure with their small income. Sangham protested against this situation by participating in the observance of the 'Anti-Repression Day' organised by the KPCC. In this way
the KS was responsible to create political consciousness among the peasants of Malabar. Through its activities the nationalist movement was brought to the common people.

The crisis that was brewing within the Congress party since 1937 came into the open with the outbreak of the II World War. The radicals in the party were not satisfied with the mild protest of the CSP, which called upon its members to send to the district Collectors individual postcards opposing the war. An ideological rupture became obvious in KPCC by 1939 and the 'rightist' group of Congressmen openly criticised the leftist controlled KPCC. The rightists formed a separate organisation called Kerala Gandhi Seva Sangham (KGSS) with K. Kelappan as its leader. Against this, the leftists in December, 1939, held a crucial and secret meeting of about 90 prominent workers of the KPCC at Pinarayi in Tellicherry to consider the formation of Communist Party of India (CPI). They decided to think up the popular agrarian and working class struggles against economic crisis and suffering, brought out by the war with the fight for national independence.67 The formation of the party was declared through the writings in tar on walls etc, on 26 January 1940. All the prominent workers of the CSP attended this meeting and declared themselves as the members of Communist party in Kerala. Thus all the state branches of the CSP got itself

transformed into the Communist party. The ideological change following the inception of the Communist party made the KS a militant organisation.

In 1940, a war year and after the Congress ministry had resigned, witnessed a qualitative change in the peasant movements in Malabar. The first phase of organising the peasants under their own class organisations and leading them in the struggles for the redress of immediate grievances was over. This brings us to the second problem, the problem related to widening of the social base of the Congress by bringing the peasants into the anti-imperialist movement.

Thus the Kerala left leaders had succeeded in bringing up peasant-worker unity from the very beginning. The trade unions and Karshaka Sanghams joined hands on all important occasions like that of observing 'Demand Days' or 'Protest Days', etc. The leftist leaders during this period had understood the fact that if the anti-imperialist struggle had to be carried forward, they had to build up working-class and peasant movements throughout Kerala. The formation of the peasant and the trade union movements and the setting of Congress Socialist Party units throughout Malabar were all the result of this awareness.
Another important factor was the emergence of a powerful 'Teacher's Union' in Malabar along with the peasant and workers unions. In fact, the elementary Teacher's Union had started much earlier than any other unions in Malabar. But it was only after 1935 this union became a purely anti-imperialist force and got involved in the struggles waged against the British government. Gradually the Teacher's Union became a powerful state-wide organisation and it's cadres not only participated in the struggles against the government but also gave political study classes to the peasants and students and became their leaders.\textsuperscript{68} It was the Teacher's Union leaders, who mainly belonged to the middle class Nair and Namibiar families became the local peasant leaders and came forward to give leadership to the peasants in their struggles.

The refusal of Britain to give an assurance to grant independence to India after the II World War disappointed the freedom fighters throughout the country. On account of the underground activities of the Communists and the extraordinary situation created by war, the government strengthened its repressive measures everywhere against peasants, workers etc. The black marketing of essential commodities made life miserable for millions of people who lived on the verge of starvation. On 12 September, 1940, the District Magistrate of Malabar promulgated

\textsuperscript{68} A.K. Gopalan, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 99-100.
an order under the Defence of India Rules banning meetings, processions or assemblies in the district of Malabar. In these circumstances, the KPCC most consisted of the leftists decided to observe 'Civil Liberties' or 'Anti-Repression Day' on 15 September, 1940.\textsuperscript{69} In reality the programme was planned by the Communists. Following the ban, they gave a call for observing 15\textsuperscript{th} September, 1940, as "Protest Day". Defying the ban order this time, they organised public meetings and processions in several places. The attempts of the police to disturb and disrupt these meetings and processions resulted in police-public confrontations, clashes and riots in several places of Malabar such as Morazha, Mattannur, Payyanore, Cannanore, Tellicherry, Badagara, Trichur, Pattambi and Malappuram.

**The Kayyur Riot**

Following the violent incidents of the 'Protest Day', the police force in Malabar turned trigger happy and unleashed assaults and atrocities on whoever they thought were against the British, spreading a wave of terror throughout the region. While the leaders of KS had either gone underground or been put in jail, the Communists were determined to retaliate and pull down the already shaky, British administration and along with it throw off its pernicious ally, landlordism. The historic 'Kayyur Riot' was but one

\textsuperscript{69} *Fortnightly Report* for the second half of August, 1941 and first half of September, 1940.
manifestation of this resolve. The militant role of the KS under the Communist-Marxist-Leninist ideology contributed to the Kayyur riot. Kayyur is a remote village in Kasargod taluk. Most of the people of Kayyur village lived on agriculture. Many of them were illiterate peasants and agricultural labourers. The Kayyur units of the KS and the Congress founded in April 1937 became a powerful unit of the sangham and no landlord was dared to evict even under the decree of a court.  

After the violence on the Anti-Repression Day, the KS was banned and the landlords again found an occasion to take repressive measures against their tenants and members of the KS. On 12th March, 1941 the Communists in Kayyur organised a demonstration against landlords and government and also its war time activities by shouting slogans against imperialism and war.  

Let British rule perish  
Let landlordism perish  
Let peasants succeed  
Let revolution succeed  
Let Soviet rule triumph  
Do not pay rent  
Do not join the army and  
Do not contribute the war fund.

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They also demanded the release of the prisoners connected with the Morazha and Mattannur cases. On 26th March, 1941, a police party arrived in Kayyur at 03.00 p.m. and arrested the two accused leaders T.V. Kunhambu and T.V. Kunhiraman. On 27th the news spread and the party workers and the villagers in the surrounding areas decided to hold a protest meeting and demonstration on 28th afternoon at Pookandom in Kayyur. On 28th March people assembled at Pookandom about 01.00 p.m. and marched to Cheriyakara showing slogans mentioned above. 73

While the march was returning they saw the police constable Subharaya from Chandera police station who took the leading role in the police atrocities. The youngsters in the procession demanded him to join the jatha and hold the flag. He refused initially but was compelled to join the jatha and hold the flag. The constable tried to escape, when the jatha reached Edathil Kadavu, he broke the flag stick and beat one Palayikottan who was just infront and ran away along the footpath. At that time, Potavara Kunhambu Nair accompanied by five or six persons came from the opposite direction. Seeing the constable followed by the volunteers, Kunhambu Nair tried to stop him. There was a hillock on one side and river on the other. So he was forced to jump into the water with the hope of swimming across the river. The mob

73 Ibid., pp. 66-68.
pelted with stones and he was drowned.\textsuperscript{74} The Fortnightly Report states that, 'there had been a serious disturbance in south Canara district when the Karshaka Sangham organised an attack on police constable, which had resulted in his death'.\textsuperscript{75} After the crime had committed all those who had taken part fled to the surrounding jungle and it had been necessary to call out the reserve police and three platoons of the MSP to come out. This led to a long and terrifying police manhunt in a number of villages and the arrest and trial of sixty persons, of whom eighteen were sentenced to imprisonment of varying periods and four (viz., Abu Backer, Madathil Appu, Koyithattil Chirukantan and Potavara Kunhambu Nair) were hanged to death at the Cannanore central jail on 29\textsuperscript{th} March, 1943.\textsuperscript{76} Four young patrons of Karshaka Sangham implicated in the case were later put on the gallows. Following these riots the All Malabar Karshaka Sangham and the Kasaragod Karshaka Sangham were banned. As a result of these riots the KPCC was also dissolved.

The British government used all its repressive measures after the Kayyur riot in order to arrest the accused. But actually they were afraid of the rising tide of the Communist ideology in these areas and decided to curb it by using all sorts of repression. While

\textsuperscript{74} V.V. Kunhambu, \textit{op.cit.}, p.69.
\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Fortnightly Report} for the second half of July, 1941.
\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Mathrubhumi}, 30 March, 1943.
the events of the Protest Day resulted in the dissolution of the KPCC by the AICC and the appointment of an adhoc committee, the Kayyur riot brought an indefinite ban on the AMKS and all its units. However, the formation of the All Kerala Kisan Sangham in 1942 with representatives from Travancore and Cochin areas as well clearly proved the inability of the government to crush the peasant struggles. Although the Karshaka Sangham was banned following the riots in Malabar, its units functioned actively and participated in anti-war propaganda in remote villages.

The Kayyur riot was a significant episode in the history of the peasant struggles and the Communist movements in south Canara in particular and India as a whole. The class struggle and the national movement came to a close affiliation under the Communist leadership. The strong anti-imperialist movement and the militant struggles as described above under the leadership of the Communists created a class solidarity and consciousness among the peasants.

Karivellur Incident

The post war crisis had completely torn the rural life into acute poverty, agony and distress. Thus millions of people faced scarcity of food and reached at the verge of starvation. The purchasing power of the rural population was considerably

deteriorated. Hoarding and black marketing were common. So the post war crisis spread social unrest among the peasants as a whole. Thus post war period marked a new turn in the history of the peasant struggles in Malabar. In all parts the condition of peasants and workers were worst. The capitalists and the landlords tried to make a good fortune out of the situation. The landlords introduced more repressive measures. Thus the political and economic conditions were very much favourable for the advancement of the peasants and workers.

Post war sufferings accompanied by hoarding and black marketing increased the miseries of the people. So a meeting of the Communist party was held at Calicut. It was decided to implement the agitation against black marketing and also to detect surplus food grains available in the areas. The Kisan Sangham organised various demonstrations against hoarding and black marketing. The activities of the earlier Karshaka Sanghams and other political parties were responsible for mobilising the peasants of this area in the anti-imperialist movement. Therefore, the peasants had been well organised against imperialists and the landlords. The middle, poor and landless peasants began militant struggles in 1946 against the rich landlords, black marketeers and hoarders.\footnote{V.V. Kunhikrishnan, \textit{op. cit.}, p.104.}
The Karivellur incident was an important example for the new militant attitude of the peasantry. Karivellur, the northern most village of Malabar had played a significant role in the nationalist and peasant movements in Malabar. This village was a deficit area in Malabar. Rama Varma Valiya Raja of Chirakkal was one of the absentee landlords of Karivellur village. He procured nearly 10,000 seers of paddy as rent in kind from his tenants and kept it in the granary at Kuniyan. It was the period of scarcity of food grain and famine. As per rules no food grains shall be transported without the written permission of the grain purchase officer or other officers authorised by him. Due to the acute shortage of food grains in that year (1946) the Kisan Sangham requested the Raja for handing over the entire quantity of paddy received by him as rent for the distribution to the villagers at a fair price through the local co-operative store. But the Raja did not agree. Instead, the Raja obtained a permit on 4th December, 1946 for the transportation of paddy from Karivellur to Chirakkal for domestic consumption. The Kisan Sangham tried to obstruct the transportation of paddy. In this circumstance, the Raja requested for police protection and it was granted. A big crowd assembled near the granary shouting slogans against the removal of paddy. The crowd and the leaders demonstrated against the removal of paddy and resisted the transportation. So, the special police fired

at them resulting in the death of two sangham volunteers viz., Thitil Kannan and Keeneri Kunhikannan on the spot. Following this some other minor cases were reported in places like Chirakkal, Malappuram, Kavumbayi, Kalankotta, Kandakai, Mangat Paramba, Kurumbranad, Hosdurg, Madikkai etc.

Following this incident there was great oppression in Karivellur and surrounding areas including the southern part of the Kasaragod taluk. In the militant action of the sangham at Karivellur, Kisan volunteers from Cheruvathur, Pilicode, Kayyur and Nileshwar had participated and out of the 75 accused 32 were from the Kasaragod taluk.80

On 5th August, 1946 through a resolution known as 'Forward to Final Struggle' the Communist party stated that the Indian freedom movement had entered in its last phase.81 The working class strikes, the Royal Indian Navy revolt and the peasant uprisings in different parts of India had heralded a period of mighty battle which might lead to the end of the imperialist feudal reign in India and the dawn of Indian freedom.

The Quit India Movement had paved for rapid uprising in Malabar. This invited immediate attention of the government to

the problem of maintenance of law and order. Thus on 23rd January, 1947, the government of Madras promulgated the Madras Maintenance of Public Order Ordinance.\textsuperscript{82} This was for preventive detension, imposition of collective fines, control and certain other purposes. Vast powers were given to executive authority against the individuals. Under the provision of this ordinance the government started a repression against Communists. The \textit{Fortnightly} reported that the food situation continued to give certain amount of anxiety to the newspapers.\textsuperscript{83} The \textit{Swadesamitram} urged the government to formulate short-term proposals for increasing agricultural production and to take action in regard to the peasant troubles.

The post war period had resulted in abnormal rise in the prices of the agricultural products and this eventually led to hoarding and black marketing. Rack-renting, indebtedness and large scale of eviction were the peculiar features of the period. This created crisis in the agrarian structure resulting in powerful conflicts. Under the leadership of the Communist party, the workers and the peasants started militant agitations in many parts of the Malabar district.

The government of Madras appointed Raghavendra Rao as the Special Officer to investigate the land tenure system in the

\textsuperscript{82} G.O.No.66, dt., 4 June, 1947 (Legal)
\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Fortnightly Report} for the second half of February, 1948.
ryotwari areas of the Madras Presidency in 1946.\textsuperscript{84} He studied the land tenure system of the ryotwari areas and recommended that the conditions of the small peasant proprietors should be improved by ensuring fair rent and freedom of eviction.\textsuperscript{85} As per the recommendations of this committee and the pressure from the agrarian classes, the government resorted to certain measures to protect the tenants from eviction which was the powerful weapon in the hands of the landlords. By this time the government of Madras was aware of the fact that the tenants needed some more protection from eviction. So in 1946 as a temporary measure, to help the tenants the Madras Ryots and Tenants' Protection Act was promulgated.\textsuperscript{86} This Act was to provide a temporary protection of certain classes of tenants and ryots in the province of Madras. The Communists were actively engaged in organising the peasants for bargaining their rights with the landlords in various parts of Madras state, particularly in Malabar.

In the same year a Malabar Kisan Congress (MKC) was formed under the leadership of Congress. Vishnu Bharatheeyan, a peasant activist was elected as the President and Ramachandra Nedungadi as its Secretary. The KPCC in April, 1947 had set up a tenancy sub committee to suggest amendments to be effected in

\textsuperscript{84} G.O. Madras, No. 403, Revenue, Madras Government, dt., 22 June, 1946.
\textsuperscript{86} V.V. Kunhikrishnan, \textit{op.cit.}, p.110.
the Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930. The recommendations made by this committee were placed before a special session of the KPCC. On 31st July, 1947, the KPCC approved the recommendations and drafted a tenancy bill in response to the wishes of the Malabar Kisan Congress. However, the Tenancy Amendment Bill was introduced in 1950 and it was enacted in 1951, effecting considerable alterations in the Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930.

After the II World War when the Congress Party came to power in April 1946 with T. Prakasan as Prime Minister in Madras, instead of bringing success to the suffering peasantry it tried to crush the peasant struggles in Malabar. The wave of repression, however, had only temporary success in putting down the peasant struggles which soon re-emerged in a more militant manner after independence. The Congress government even after the transfer of power in 1947 failed to ameliorate the conditions of the peasantry. The formation of Karshaka Sangham marked a turning point in the history of peasant movements in Malabar. It articulated the grievances of all actual cultivators and stood for safeguarding the interests of the peasants working in the land. The postponement of the issue of tenancy legislation owing to the intervention of the II World War set them ready for a vigorous struggle for future.
The Kerala state was formed on 1st November, 1956. The new Ministry came to power in 1957 led by the Communist party felt it necessary to remove the dissimilarities in the legislative provisions between the different districts. The Kerala Land Relations Act of 1969 was brought into force from 1st January, 1970. Thus from 1st January, 1970, the tenants became owners of land. This Act abolished both tenancy and landlordism not only in Malabar but also in Kerala.

The present study enables us to draw some conclusions about the forces behind tenancy legislations in Malabar and the different categories of tenants benefited by legislations at different stages. Anyway, the structural change effected by land reforms in Kerala is considerable as landlordism is abolished. The tenants were freed from the age-old feudal relics of rent-realising landlordism. New articulations in class formation were made possible by the reforms. Minimum wages had also been fixed for the agricultural labourers. Poor peasants and landless labourers attained more freedom and power in the society. This had its effects on rural power structure also, since land reforms served as an instrument of institutional changes.

Thus, land reform was one of the objectives declared by the Indian National Movement to mobilise the rural population in the main stream of the freedom struggle. 'Land to the tiller' was the
slogan of the land reforms but the tenant who cultivates the land by the sweat of his brow or aspirations of life, sharing either the crop or paying a fixed rent to the landlord was unlikely to achieve this goal. Resistance was bound to face for any such attempt in a feudalistic society on land ownership, land control and use of land continue with slight change in almost all Indian states even today. The success of the tenancy reform was the result of an increase in the awareness of the tenants brought by the tenancy movement. Thus, wherever powerful tenancy movements were organised, backed by political ideology, the slogan ‘land to the tiller’ was realised. Pre-independence and post-independence period marked agrarian discontent in various parts of India. Many provinces of British India passed tenancy legislation, which resulted in temporary relief to certain classes of the peasantry. Politically, economically and socially the peasantry was very weak to recognise their rights and also to insist on the rights. Various tenancy laws passed by the state contain loopholes and these loopholes were exploited by the landlords with the help of the bureaucrats.