CHAPTER V

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ORIGIN
OF THE FISHERMEN’S MOVEMENT

This chapter deals with the factors that gave rise to the fishworkers’ movement in Kerala. It examines whether the movement was a sudden outburst or a gradual development. This is done by examining the participation of fishworkers in the struggles in other social sectors and in the fishworkers’ unions of political parties. The main factors of the fishworkers’ movement are mechanisation of fisheries in Kerala, and intervention of voluntary organisations.

Participation of Fishworkers in the Struggles in Other Sectors

As was shown in the 3rd chapter on the situation of Kerala, many socio-political movements took place during the pre-independence period in the state. This section touches upon a few social movements in relation to the fishworkers.

The Ezhava movement of Sree Narayana Guru is one of the important social movements in Kerala. But it did not influence the fishworkers substantially as they did not belong to Ezhava caste. Yet Pandit Karuppan, a social reformer, inspired by Sree Narayana Guru, brought about some reforms among the ‘vala’ cast of fishworkers in Kochi. He founded an organisation called ‘Jnanodayam Sabha’ in 1916, which succeeded to remove many
social evils like child marriage and extravagant festivals. The fisherwomen started covering their breast, a practice which was forbidden for lower caste women in many parts of Kerala. After the death of Karuppan the 'sabha' continued the social and educational services to the community. But the reforms of the 'sabha' were confined to one locality in Kochi, and the whole community was not involved in the organisation and process of change. (Parameswaran, Platinum Jubilee Souvenir 1993)

The movement among Dalits especially in south Kerala did not have much influence on fishworkers since they did not belong to the Dalit castes. The educational efforts of Christians and Hindus also did not touch the fishworkers as their benefits largely went to the high class sections.

Two important historical events in which fishworkers in Kerala had some indirect involvement were the 'Punnapra-Vayalar Uprising' and the 'Mapila Rebellion'. As explained in the chapter on socio-economic situation of Kerala, the Punnapra-Vayalar Uprising was organised in Alapuzha in 1940's as part of the Communist movement in Kerala against the socio-political establishment. During the uprising, Simon Asan, a prominent Communist leader, organised fishermen into a trade union against the oppression of the fishworkers by the feudal landlords and got them involved in the rebellion. There were about half a dozen fishermen 'captains' in the Communist army though none of them rose to a prominent positon in the party. The revolt
which took place in 1946 was ruthlessly suppressed by the government. Consequently, the union of fishworkers also collapsed. (Kaleekal 1988) The impact of the uprising on the fishing community was minimal as it was short-lived and very few fishworkers participated in this struggle. Yet it probably worked as a psychological and cultural background for the fishworkers' movement and made them politically conscious. "Although these struggles did not get carried further, the fishworkers of Alapuzha district have a keener sense of class consciousness than fishworkers elsewhere...There is also a keen sense of history among the workers of the district... (Dietrich 1989:125)

The 'Mapila rebellion' in north Kerala (1836-1921) was another pre-independence uprising which was a peasant revolt mixed up with religion and politics, against the British. Like all categories of workers, some fishworkers of Malabar also participated in the rebellion to protest against the imposition of tax on fishing nets by the British, as they did "on every necessity of daily life." (Panikkar 1989:16) Apart from a few legal cases filed against some of the fishworkers, there was no repercussion of the revolt on the fishing community. (ibid.)

Participation of Fishworkers in the Unions of Political Parties

A long gap after the Punnapra-Vayalar rebellion, CPI(M) and CPI separately tried to organise fishworkers in late 1970's
with their affiliated trade unions of Centre for Indian Trade Unions (CITU) and All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) respectively. But they were active only in certain pockets of coastal areas. The reason was that fishworkers were fully under the control of religious or caste authorities. So the atheistic ideology of the Communist parties were totally unacceptable to them. Besides, the Communists considered fishworkers as unorganisable group compared to the workers in the organised sectors.

In 1980’s when KSMTF took up the basic issues of mechanisation in fisheries, the communist parties either supported them or organised their own agitations on the same issues. In fact, it was the Left Front Government which for the first time banned monsoon trawling. (Kaleekal 1988)

In 1970’s Mr. K.V. Thamarakshan of Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) and a member of fishworkers’ community established units of United Trade Union Congress (UTUC), its affiliated trade union, in Alapuzha district. But the union was active only in certain areas due to lack of fund and cadres. As a Left Front partner UTUC always cooperated with KSMTF in its struggles.

The Malsya Thozhilali Congress, the trade union wing of the Congress party for the fishworkers was not very active in organising fishworkers on their basic issues, though Mr. Hariharan Master, the president of this union for a long time,
assiduously worked to get some benefits for them from the government. But fishworkers in general especially the Catholic fishworkers were votebanks of the congress party. This was because of the close relationship between the Congress and the official church. (Kaleekal 1988)

Among the Hindu fishworkers of south and north Kerala, 'Dheevara Sabha', a caste organisation, had some influence. Mr. K.V. Dinakaran did commendable work for unifying various caste groups among the Hindu fishworkers in Alapuzha district under one umbrella union of 'Dheevara Sabha' and for getting many governmental benefits for them. Later he became the president of Malsya Thozhilai Congress of the Congress party.

In north Kerala it was Muslim league which was influential among the Muslim fishworkers who constituted the majority there. But the Swathantra Thozhilali Union (STU), the trade union wing of the party, did not have any organisational work worth the name among the fishworkers even in 1980's

From the above analysis it is clear that the fishworkers did not participate seriously in any movements or struggles in other sectors. Neither were they organised by political parties. The reason was that they were outside the mainstream history of Kerala. Speaking about the impact of socio-political movements of the 19th and 20th century on the fishing community in Kerala, John Kurien says, "The end result
of this was that, with the exception of a few pockets in central 
Kerala... the progressive, democratic political processes had 
little influence on these communities." (Kurien 1994:23) So 
they remained an unorganised group till 1970. Thus the 
fishworkers' movement was not a continuation of the earlier 
social movements but an outcome of the factors of recent past.

I. Mechanisation of Marine Fisheries in Kerala

Mechanisation of marine fisheries in Kerala was the most 
significant factor for the emergence of the fishworkers' 
movement. Thus the principle that the economy is the 
determining factor for socio-political changes, was true for 
the fishworkers' movement. The traditional fishing sector had 
only a limited surplus production of fish for internal market. 
When the mode of production changed from traditional instruments 
of production operated by human energy to mechanised boats 
operated by motor engines, the production increased manifold. 
The greater surplus of fish and prawns found their external 
market in foreign countries. In this process, a new capitalist 
class of boat owners and merchant capitalists emerged. With the 
entry of big business houses and foreign companies who 
represented the modern monopoly capitalists, in deep sea 
fishing, the traditional fishworkers all the more got 
marginalised. (Kurien, Economic and Political Weekly, 
1978) As the class contradiction between these two classes got
sharpened the traditional fishworkers became victims of exploitation by the new class (Dietrich 1989). Being conscious of this exploitation the fishworkers organised themselves against the capitalist class giving rise to the fishworkers' movement. This section discusses the impact of mechanisation on the fishworkers and the fisheries sector. It has two parts—the process of mechanisation in the fisheries sector in Kerala and the effect of mechanisation on the fishworkers.

1. The Process of Mechanisation

The mechanisation of fisheries in Kerala should be seen against the background of modernisation process undertaken by the government of India through its Five Year Plans. Modernisation at that time meant western model of development by means of capital intensive technology. In this process western countries were ready to help the developing countries by supplying their technology. Thus the Norwegian government offered its technical assistance for the modernisation of Indian fisheries. "The Norwegian intervention into Kerala came in the form of an Indo-Norwegian Project (INP) for fisheries Community Development in the states of Travancore-Kochi and took effect in January 1953 following a tripartite agreement signed in New Delhi between the United Nations, the Government of Norway and the Government of India. The INP was the world's first development project of its kind inspired as a part of the UN Expanded Programme for Technical Assistance which was seen as an
avenue for postwar reconstruction and development assistance to
the newly independent developing countries.” (Kurien 1985:13)

The objectives of the project agreed upon by all
concerned were to bring about an increase in the return of the
fishermen’s activity, an efficient distribution of fresh fish,
an improvement of the health and sanitary conditions of the
fishing population and a higher standard of living for the
community in the project area.” (Kurien 1985:15) The project
was to be implemented in two phases. In the first phase a
project area covering three fishing villages of Saktikulangara,
Neendakara and Puthenthura in the district of Kollam would be
chosen to introduce pilot project covering a period between
1953-’63. In the second phase the project area was to be
extended to Karnataka and Tamilnadu during the years between
1963-72. The project in Kerala was to be administered by the
government of Travancore and supervised by the union governmnet,
in consultation with the representatives of Norwegian
foundation.

The approach of the government of Travancore-Kochi was
to raise the productivity and standard of living of fishworkers
by upgrading the existing technologies and gradually introducing
the new ones. With this objective the government had provided
wood for the traditional crafts, nylon nets, processing
facilities like curing yards and ice plants, and cooperatives
for marketing of fish. In keeping with the thrust of the policy
of the government, INP tried to introduce outboard motors for
country crafts and to improve fish processing technology. But
after some experiments these efforts were given up. Some
important events which changed the course of INP, occurred at
this time. In 1956 Kerala state was formed and in 1957 the
Communist party was voted to power in the state. Secondly,
there grew a great demand for prawns in the international market
especially from USA and Japan, and the government of India was
keen to promote export for the much needed foreign exchange.
Thirdly, the INP found that the rich prawn resources of Kerala
coast could be exploited by using bottom trawling nets in
mechanised boats.

In the new situation INP changed its strategy and
switched over to harvesting of prawns. It produced mechanised
boats of 32 foot size in its own boatyard and trained fishermen
in the use of trawl nets. It also introduced purseine nets
which could catch fish in large scale, first in Kollam and later
in Kochi coast. Thus by 1960 INP was catching about 12% of fish
landed in the project area.

Once the export of prawn expanded, private individual
and companies also entered the scene for the 'pink gold', a name
given to prawns due to its great price in foreign market. A new
class of merchant capitalists who either operated mechanised
boats or were involved in the export of prawns and fish, grew up
in Kerala with the technical and financial support of INP and
the government. As a result, 1462 tonnes of prawns were exported in 1961 compared to 500 tonnes in late 1950’s, with the price of Rs. 4000/ per tonne in place of Rs. 150/ per tonne in the internal market.

In 1963 the Indo-Norwegian Project in three villages in Kerala was handed over to the government of Kerala. The project was established in three other villages in Kochi, Karwar (Karnataka), and Mandapam (Tamil Nadu) under the name of ‘Integrated Fisheries Complexes’, to provide mechanised vessels, and facilities for processing and marketing of fish. The complex in Kochi was later taken over by the government of India.

After the Norwegians left the fisheries project, the government of Kerala gave all-out assistance and encouragement to mechanised boats for their prawn harvesting. It spent most of its plan allocation for the mechanised sector and its infrastructural facilities. To give the benefits of mechanisation to traditional fishworkers, the government distributed mechanised boats to the cooperatives of traditional fishermen with subsidies and loans. Hundreds of such cooperatives were formed in the state, and they got mechanised boats at concessional rate. But slowly most of them were taken over by business class. The reason was that the technology of mechanised boats was too high and expensive for traditional fishermen to own and operate them on economic line. People from
outside the fishing sector were brought as workers in mechanised boats and processing plants. Thus two distinct sectors emerged in the fisheries in Kerala - modern sector with capital intensive mechanised boats, processing and marketing of fish, and traditional sector with labour intensive country crafts, processing and marketing of fish.

By 1970 the modern sector developed so much that it accounted for 12% of the total fish landed in Kerala. Fish and prawn landings reached a record level of 4,4800 tonnes and 84,700 tonnes respectively. Export of marine products of which prawn had the highest share, increased from 22,792 tonnes in 1969 valued at Rs.277 million to 31,637 in 1979 valued at Rs. 1096 million. In 1975 there were 99 registered exporting firms in Kerala accounting for an export turn over of Rs.464 million (Kurien 1985).

The modern sector which was represented by big business class, capitalists and financiers got most of the benefits from the modernisation process of the government. The traditional fishworkers hardly got any benefit from mechanisation and the planned development. Instead they were exploited by the new sector and were brought to a deplorable economic situation.
2. The Impact of Mechanisation

There were disastrous effects of mechanisation on the fisheries and fishermen of Kerala. They are the economic and ecological destruction, fish depletion and decrease in fish production, decline in the share of traditional fisheries sector, effect on the consumers, and finally effect on the standard of life of the traditional fishworkers.

A. Economic and Ecological Destruction

The mechanisation introduced by INP and developed by private capitalists was destructive for the sea and its resources. Mechanisation as such need not be harmful because there are mechanised gears like gill-nets used by mechanised boats on the surface of the sea and therefore, are not destructive. But mechanised trawling and purse-seining, two techniques introduced by INP were destructive for the marine resources. To understand the destructive nature of these nets, their technology is to be explained.

Mechanised Trawling: There are three types of mechanised trawling - surface trawling which is used on the surface of the sea, mid-water trawling, and bottom-trawling. The third variety is used to catch demersal fishes like prawns which live in the mud at the bottom of the sea. Bottom trawling which was first used during the second World War to remove mines in the sea, is the most destructive of all the three varieties.
A BOTTOM TRAWLING NET WITH A MECHANISED BOAT
The trawl net, as shown in the picture, is cone-shaped and is open wide on the one side and closed on the other. It is hauled through the bottom of the sea by powerful mechanised boats. The iron chain attached to the open mouth make it sink in the mud and ' tickle' out the prawns from the mud. In the process the net churns the bottom of the sea and carries eggs and juvenile fish along with prawns and big fishes. While the latter is picked up for sale, the former is thrown out as trash. It is estimated that each trawling boat throws out 25 kilograms of small fish everyday. When the quantity of its full grown size is calculated, the trawling boats destroy 15,000 tonnes of fish daily in Kerala. (Lyenger, Economic and Political Weekly 1985) Thus trawling destroys fish resources causing economic damage to the sector.

Trawling technology also causes environmental degradation. As the trawling nets scrapes through the bottom of the sea, it destroys the sea bed with its plants, foliages, and coral formations causing damage to the marine ecology. This affects the habitat and nurseries of all living being in the sea. Since many species of fish breed in the coastal waters, their regeneration gets adversely affected. Thus mechanised trawling is not only an economic issue but also an environmental issue which was taken up by the fishworkers' movement.

Because of its destructive nature, trawling nets were totally banned in Norway already back in 1936, while the same
technology was imported to India as part of Indo-Norwegian project. Indonesia also banned it totally in 1980 to "facilitate better resource management, to stimulate the growth of the traditional small scale fisheries, and to prevent social friction and unrest." (Kurien ISI, ed. 1987: 42) Philippines made an evaluation of the ban on trawling and remarked, "This result clearly shows that the imposition of a trawling ban is a suitable tool in tropical waters to protect the heavily exploited fish stocks." (Juergen quot. Vijayan, ISI edit. 1987:68) A World Bank expert also found trawling largely responsible for decrease in fish production. "Indiscriminate trawling hauls up everything in its path." (Emersion quot. ibid. 1987:63) U.K. Gopalan, a fisheries scientist from Kerala points out the ecological damage caused by trawling. "Constant sweeping of the sea bottoms destroys the living organisms of the benthic zone." (ibid.)

Purse-seining: It is another technique introduced in Kerala by INP for large scale fishing. After the net is cast by the mechanised boats, it converges like a purse trapping all the fish on its way. (page No.143-A) The net is very large measuring 500-600 meters in length and 50-60 meters in width with a mesh size ranging from 13-20 millimeters. It catches fish, big as well as small, in a large area covering a few kilometers and thus destroys a lot of juvenile fish. Over exploitation is the main disadvantage of purse-seine nets. In contrast to trawling nets, purse-seine nets catches pelagic fish
No. 2

A PURSE-SEINE NET WITH A MACHANISED BOAT
like sardines, mackerel and white baits which live on the surface of the sea. Purse-seine boats operate in the inshore waters where the traditional fishermen also do the fishing operation. They started their operation in Kochi in 1979. They increased their fleet to 75 within a few years, after they were found to be highly productive and successful at Mangalore coast.

Purse-seining proved itself to be destructive in other countries also. Californian sardines and herring fishes of the North Sea and British Wales were almost wiped out by purse-seine nets. Due to its destructive nature and the pressure from the fishworkers, the government of Kerala restricted its operations beyond twenty fathoms of Kerala coast. But this legal demarcation was not enforced, with the result of many clashes between fishermen and purse-seine boats. The issue also was taken up by the fishworkers' movement. (Korakandy, Economic and Political Weekly, 1984)

B. Fish Depletion and Decrease in Fish Production

The main effect of mechanisation through trawling and purseining was the depletion of fish with the result of drastic decrease in its production. After reaching its peak production with 448,000 tonnes of fish and 84,700 tonnes of prawns in Kerala in 1973, the fish production declined by 6% in 1974-'76. "Oil sardines and mackerels, once the mainstay of the fishery plumped to all time low levels. From a peak of 250,000 tonnes
in 1968 the combined harvest touched a low of 112,000 tonnes in 1975 and reached a rock bottom of 87,000 tonnes in 1980."

(Kurien 1985: 34)

Table No.5

| Fish Production Trend in Kerala and India over the Years (‘000 tonnes) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Period | Kerala Production Quantity | Rest of India Production Quantity | All India Production Quantity |
| Index | | Index | Index |
| 1951-55 | 131 | 435 | 566 |
| 1956-60 | 259 | 504 | 763 |
| 1961-65 | 264 | 471 | 735 |
| 1966-70 | 349 | 582 | 931 |
| 1971-75 | 406 | 794 | 1200 |
| 1976-80 | 332 | 999 | 1331 |
| 1981-85 | 348 | 1191 | 1539 |
| 1985-86 | 295 | 1421 | 1716 |

(Source: Achari,PCO edit. 1987:3)

It is a fact that fish production increased after the introduction of mechanisation. The average fish production during 1951-55 was 131,000 tonnes. It rose to an all time average record of 406,000 tonnes in 1971-75, an increase of three times in 20 years. But in 1976-80 production declined to 332,000 tonnes, about 18% decline compared to the previous years of 1971-75. Though it made a modest recovery in 1981-85 it remained much below the 1971-75 average. The table also shows
that in other states of India fish production was steadily increasing over the years. In fact, by 1981-85 they went ahead of Kerala in fish production, while it was the leading maritime state of India earlier. (Achary, PCO edit. 1987) "The very fact that fish catches during 1976-85 stood below 1971-75, despite substantial increase in the number of high and medium technology production inputs points to an alarming situation in the sector." (ibid.1987:2) The graph (Page No.145-A) also shows the decline of fish production in Kerala compared to that of other states where it was increasing.

The shrimp production which was 15,000 tonnes during 1956-60 period rose to 59,000 tonnes in 1971-75. It slumped to an average level of 30,299 tonnes in 1981-85. It touched the lowest minimum of 22,428 tonnes in 1981. It was shrimp production which was worst hit by excessive mechanised trawling. (Gopalan, PCO edit. 1987)

The decline in production of fish is also due to biological overfishing which is indicated by the size of fish and the catch per unit of effort. The size of prawns caught in Kerala was decreasing over the years. At Neendakara, the biggest centre for prawns landing in Kerala, the catch per unit effort declined from 83 kilograms in 1973 to 20 kilograms in 1984. (George 1988) "This can largely be attributed to excessive or destructive fishing—particularly the use of trawlers." (Kurien, Economic and Political Weekly, 1990:2014)
3. The decline in the Share of Traditional Fisheries Sector

With large scale mechanisation in fisheries especially by private entrepreneurs and big business houses, the traditional fishing and the fishworkers were relegated to the background. The share of fish production by mechanised sector increased, while that of traditional sector decreased.

Table No. 6

Fish Production in Kerala in Traditional and Mechanised Sectors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total (tonnes)</th>
<th>Mechanised sector</th>
<th>Traditional sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(in tonnes)</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>(in tonnes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>294,787</td>
<td>28,177</td>
<td>9.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>392,880</td>
<td>52,571</td>
<td>13.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>445,347</td>
<td>47,291</td>
<td>10.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>295,618</td>
<td>38,648</td>
<td>13.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>448,269</td>
<td>93,659</td>
<td>20.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>420,257</td>
<td>101,412</td>
<td>24.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>420,836</td>
<td>180,111</td>
<td>42.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>331,047</td>
<td>58,717</td>
<td>17.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>345,037</td>
<td>107,424</td>
<td>31.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>373,339</td>
<td>117,571</td>
<td>31.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>330,509</td>
<td>94,779</td>
<td>28.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>279,543</td>
<td>134,783</td>
<td>48.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>274,395</td>
<td>95,331</td>
<td>34.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>325,367</td>
<td>148,240</td>
<td>45.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>424,718</td>
<td>142,551</td>
<td>33.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Achari 1986: 35)
NO. 1

Fish Production in Mechanised & Non-mechanised Sectors in Kerala

[Bar chart showing fish production data for mechanised and non-mechanised sectors from 1969 to 1984.]
As the table indicates in 1969 the share of traditional sector was 90.44% of the total fish landing while that of mechanised sector was 9.56%. It increased to 45.56% for mechanised sector while traditional sector decreased to 54.44% in 1982. As the diagram (Page No.147-A) shows the share of traditional sector was decreasing over the years. In the mechanised sector fish landing in 1969-71 was on an average of 42,680 tonnes, while that of traditional sector was 334,992 tonnes. In 1980-82 mechanised sector increased its share three times to 126,118 tonnes while the traditional sector decreased to 166,984 tonnes—a decline by half from the production of 1969-71.

The data reveal that the traditional fishworkers lost their predominant position in the fisheries sector. This is all the more serious since the mechanised sector employed only 14% of the workforce, while the share of traditional sector was 86% in 1980. Thus it can be rightly said that the benefit of mechanisation in the fisheries sector went to a small minority of business class. (Achari, PCD edit. 1987)

C. The Effect of Mechanisation on Fish Consumers

When the fish production decreased in Kerala, fish was less available for consumption to the common man. What was available was costly.
Per Capita Availability of Locally Consumed Fish in Kerala (1956-82)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Availability (in kg/year/person)</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Kurien, PCQ edit. 1987:91)

Per capita availability of fish decreased from 19 kilogram in 1971-72 to 9 kilogram in 1981-82. The rate of increase in price of fish was much higher than that of other food items during the same period. This means that the ordinary people were unable to get their cheap source of protein, while those of higher income switched over to other sources of protein. "Fish was at one time considered to be the poor man's protein in Kerala. It is no more so. Viewed from the perspective of the fish eating population of the state more investment for fisheries development have yielded less fish for domestic consumption." (Kurien, Economic and Political Weekly, 1990:2014)

Mechanisation of fisheries had its effect not only on fishworkers but also on the fish eating people of Kerala. The fishworkers' movement which took up the issue was not only concerned about the interest of fishworkers themselves but also of the fish consumers of the state.
D. The Effect of Mechanisation on Living Standard of the Traditional Fishworkers.

As a result of mechanisation the productivity, income, employment and quality of life of fishworkers were adversely affected. The productivity of fishermen decreased considerably due to overfishing, as the table shows.

Table N.8
Productivity and Income of Fishermen in Kerala.
(income per capita in 1960-61 prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fishermen on Trawlers</th>
<th>Artisanal Fishermen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Productivity (tonnes/yr)</td>
<td>Income (Rs.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>3.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969-70</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>10.04</td>
<td>2700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-80</td>
<td>7.54</td>
<td>2630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>7.70</td>
<td>1560</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Kurien, Economic and Political Weekly, 1990:2016)

Fishermen in mechanised boats harvested 10.04 tonnes in 1974, while their share declined to 7.07 tonnes in 1982. The artisanal fishermen harvested 3.20 tonnes in 1974, while their
FISHERMEN AND BOATOWNERS

YOU'RE FISHING IN SHALLOW WATERS YOU'LL KILL US TRADITIONAL FISHERFOLK!

THAT'S THE WHOLE IDEA!

TRAWLER OWNERS

THE WHOLE TRUTH
share declined to 1.62 tonnes in 1982. The per capita income of artisanal fishermen declined from Rs.630/ in 1974 to Rs.420/ in 1982. The cartoon (Page No.150-A) depicts how the traditional fishworkers were being swallowed up by the sharks of mechanised trawlers.

Compared to other states in India, Kerala has greater level of social development in the form of higher literacy, health, life expectancy, and low infant mortality and birth rate. But "the coastal villages of Kerala, even after three decades of planned development and increased export earning, are far below the all Kerala standard with respect to quality of life." (Kurien, PCU edit. 1987:90) Though the literacy rate is 62% among fishworkers, hardly 2% reached the level of SSLC and above. Housing and health facilities of fishworkers were also very poor. (ibid.) "The living conditions of the fisherpeople of Kerala are miserable despite repeated pleas for welfare measures, and worsening in the face of rising costs and decreasing incomes." (Iyenger, Economic and Political Weekly 1985: 2154)

E. Emergence of the Fishworkers’ Movement

The analysis given above has shown that mechanisation of fisheries really changed the mode of production in the fisheries sector in Kerala, and that it had its reflection on the socio-political situation of the fishworkers. How has this historical
process led to the emergence of fishworkers' movement? In two ways it served as a cause for the fishworkers' movement—historical necessity of fishworkers to struggle for their survival and emergence of class consciousness.

**Historical Necessity of Fishworkers to Struggle for Their Survival**

The fisheries in Kerala faced a crisis of depletion of marine resources and subsequent pauperisation of traditional fishworkers, due to mechanisation. The government did not take any action as its policy gave emphasis on the foreign exchange earning of the sector, and had its political clout with the powerful boat lobby in the state. The fisheries scientists in the government-run research institutions did not see the depletion of marine resources as a problem since most of them supported the policy of the government. In such a situation the traditional fishworkers had no other option but to seek a solution by their own effort.

Apart from the depletion of fish and decline in their income, the fishworkers also were facing physical attack from the mechanised boats. Many crafts and nets were regularly destroyed by mechanised boats since they were also fishing in the coastal waters set apart for traditional fishermen. Between 1970-’85 at least fifty fishermen were killed and hundreds of them injured in the collision or conflict between mechanised
boats and country crafts in the Kerala and Kanyakumari coast. (Vijayan, ISI edit. 1987) In their frustration and anger fishermen found boatowners as their real enemy who were destroying their means of livelihood. But soon they realised that violent conflict would not solve the basic problem, and that they had to get legal protection through collective action. In the beginning they formed organisations at the district levels and later at state level under the banner of Kerala Swathantra Malsya Thozhilali Federation which spearheaded the fishworkers' movement. (Kurien, Economic and Political Weekly, 1990)

In their effort at getting organised, the fishworkers were helped by social workers and fisheries scientists to have a critical consciousness about their exploitative situation. They learned that the monsoon season of June, July and August was the breeding season for many varieties of fish in Kerala coast and that mechanised trawling destroyed their eggs and young ones causing destruction of marine resources. The solution, as suggested by scientists, was a ban on mechanised trawling during the breeding season. Thus the fishworkers formulated their basic demand and slogan to the government: "Put a ban on monsoon trawling during the spawning season of June, July and August in Kerala coast." Since trawling was the most widespread and most destructive of all fishing techniques it became the core issue around which KSMTF organised fishworkers throughout the state.
Later, for all its agitations, KSMTF raised this basic demand before the government. Thus the issue of mechanised trawling became the most significant and objective factor which gave rise to the origin of the fishworkers' movement.

**The Emergence of Class Consciousness**

Mechanisation was also a cause for a class based organisation of fishworkers and its movement. As mentioned above, mechanisation brought about two sectors in the fisheries of Kerala — traditional and modern. This economic division based on the mode of production had a reflection on the social division among fishworkers. The traditional fishworkers emerged as a working class, while the boat owners together with the merchant capitalists represented the capitalist class. They owned the mechanised means of production. When the class contradictions got sharpened the traditional fishworkers got organised as a working class. The organisation was named as Kerala Swathantra Malsya Thozhilali Federation, an organisation of 'malsya thozhilali' meaning fish workers or proletariat. It was a significant development since fishworkers were earlier named after their caste like 'mukkuvas' and 'marakkans'. Even when the fishworkers in some districts were organised on trade union style, they were known by their particular caste like 'Dheevara sabha' or by religion like the 'Latin Catholic fishermen Union.' "It was, therefore, clearly the introduction
of capitalist mode of production in Kerala society which both dethroned the caste system as the organiser of the relations of production and also started the chain of consequences, some of which provided the conditions necessary for the birth of many social movements." (Lemercinier 1974: 229)

The change from the caste organisation to a class organisation had a psychological and social effect. Socially the fishworkers were able to go beyond the confines of caste to the awareness as a working class. Secondly, the caste name was associated with low or even polluting status. So the fishworkers were ashamed to mingle with other sections of people. Once the name of 'Thozhilali' was affixed to their organisation they felt proud of their status and dignity. This was expressed by fishworkers in their interview with the researcher. To a statement given in the interview schedule, "Fishworkers got an identity as a working class and became an organised strength", 98% of the respondents expressed agreement and admitted this change as an achievement of the fishworkers' movement. Once KSMTF popularised the name 'Malsya Thozhilali', the government and the general public accepted and recognized it as the legal and official name of fishermen in Kerala.

Thus the change of name of fishworkers from a caste to a class name was the outcome of their consciousness as a 'working class'. The consciousness was based on the class division
between traditional fishermen and mechanised boat owners. This social division was based on the economic division between the traditional and mechanised fishing sectors. This division was due to the mechanisation process in the fisheries of Kerala. Thus mechanisation was the basis of class consciousness which contributed towards fisherworkers' movement. The process could be shown in a chart form.

Mechanisation of Fisheries in Kerala

Traditional sector → mechanised sector

Traditional fishworkers → Capitalist boat owning class

Consciousness as a working class

Organisation of fishworkers (KSMTF)

Fishworkers' Movement
II. The Intervention of Voluntary Organisations and Social Workers

As explained in the first chapter on theoretical frame, many voluntary organisations were instrumental in preparing people for non-party political organisations or movements in India in 1970's. Fishworkers' movement which also emerged in the same decade has many voluntary organisations and social workers to prepare its background. They were thus a significant factor for the fishworkers' movement. By voluntary organisations we mean non-governmental organisations which do any social work and which are recognized and registered by law. "Voluntary organisations are private, non-profit organisations dedicated to the design, study and implementation of developmental projects." (Kothari, Man and Development, June 1995: 37) There were many voluntary organisations working among the traditional fishworkers in various districts of Kerala. This section examines how far their educational and developmental work paved the way for the fishworkers' movement. To do this a brief description of voluntary organisations which had some impact on the fishworkers' movement, together with some analysis on them are given. There were six such organisations which had some impact on the fishworkers' movement. They are Programme for Community Organisation, Fishermen's Development Programme and Studies Centre, Beach Blossoms Centre, Mochaka Jeevaka Munnettam,
Development Programme for Inland Fishermen Community, and Fishermen Community Development Programme.

Social workers were either members of the voluntary organisations or those doing social work independent of them. Those who were not members of the voluntary organisation were mainly responsible for the formation of district level fishermen's unions. As Kerala Swathantra Malsya Thozhilali Federation (KSMTF), the state-level organisation of fishworkers which spearheaded the fishworkers' movement, was evolved from these independent unions, they prepared the background for the movement itself. So a little description of these district level unions is given, before the voluntary organisations are explained.

1. Organisations of Fishworkers Before 1977

The district level independent unions were started mostly by Catholic priests. The objectives and programmes of these organisations were not same for all. But all of them were motivated by the religious and humanitarian considerations for the suffering fishworkers. "It is the life of poverty, misery
and tears of the community we saw around us that inspired us priests and lay people to give a light of relief and hope." (AKSMTF Report Manuscript 1987) The unions thus developed are the followings:

a. Alapuzha District Inland Fishermen Union

This union was founded in 1963 by Fr. Christi Daniel, Mr. K.S.Celestine, and Mr.K.P. Kunju. It was functioning among the inland fishworkers living around the main rivers in the district of Alapuzha to wrest welfare benefits from the government, apart from its own welfare programmes.

b. Azhtamudi Kayal Malsya Thozhilali Union

Founded by Fr. Albert Parasivila in 1969 this union worked for the welfare of the inland fishworkers living around Ashtamudi and Sasthamkotta lakes in Kollam district. Mr. Kallada Lawrence, a school teacher, was its Secretary from its inception. The union organised many agitations for the needs of the fishworkers and against pollution of backwaters by the surrounding factories. When the union started its units among the coastal fishworkers it changed its name to Kollam District Independent Fishermen Union.
c. Alapuzha Catholic Fishermen Union

This union founded by Fr. Paul Arackal in 1970 was working among the Catholic fishworkers on the coast of Alapuzha district. The union initially took up issues of exploitation of fishworkers by landlords and organised welfare activities for them. Later when the mechanised boats constantly encroached upon the in-shore waters creating problems for traditional fishermen, the union took up the issue with government. When it gave a memorandum to the collector asking him to keep the boats away from the shore, he gave orders that the mechanised boats could operate only three kilometers away from the shore. But as the problem still continued 'hunger rallies' were organised by the union in 1972. Later in the same year three union leaders went on a hunger strike for three days to get free ration for the fishworkers. The government conceded to their demand and the agitation was stopped therewith. For the next few years the union was busy with social welfare programmes like saving schemes and arranging bank loans for fishworkers.

d. Thiruvananthapuram District Fishermen Union

This union was started in 1977 by a few priests and laymen. The union had its first name as Thiruvananthapuram Diocesan Fishermen Union. In 1978 another union of mechanised boats workers called 'Anjengu Boat Workers' Union was started by
Fr. Thomas Kocherry and Mr. Joychen Antony in the same district. When the project officer of the scheme for mechanised boats impounded eleven boats the union organised a 'dharna' in protest. As the problem was not solved, the union leader Fr. Thomas Kocherry declared an indefinite fast. Immediately the government accepted all the eight demands of the union, and the agitation was called off. Soon the name of both these unions was changed into Trivandrum District Fishermen Union.

Other two similar fishermen unions were Vijayapuram Diocesan Fishermen Union which worked among inland fishworkers of Kottayam district, and Kochi Area Malsya Thozhilali Union which functioned for the welfare of the coastal fishworkers in Ernakulam district.

The above mentioned unions were organised at local level by different persons. Though many of them worked to get welfare benefits from the government they helped fishworkers to be aware of their problems and rights, and of the importance of collective struggles. They created a proper background in which the unorganised fishworkers were prepared to take a step further towards a state-level organisation. (Kaleekal 1988)
2. Voluntary Organisations

The following are the voluntary organisations which were working among the fishworkers of Kerala:

A. Programme for Community Organisation (PCO)

Programme for Community Organisation was an off-shoot of Trivandrum Social Service Society (TSSS) of the Catholic diocese of Trivandrum. TSS started as a fishworkers' cooperative society in 1961 at Marianad, a fishing village in Trivandrum district. The objective of the cooperative was to free the fishworkers from the exploitation of middlemen in the marketing of fish. Later the society took up credit, health, education, and other aspects of life in an integrated way. With the help of a dedicated team of social workers and full participation of fishworkers, the society became the first successful fishermen cooperative in Kerala. Even the government of Kerala took it as a model for its own cooperatives for fishworkers.

When the cooperative society got expanded in its activities it was entrusted with an independent organisation called Programme for Community Organisation (PCO). Registered in 1977 under the Charitable Society’s Act, PCO set up its own centre in the city of Trivandrum, and started functioning without the patronage of TSS and the diocese of Trivandrum. The organisational structure of PCO is democratic. There is a
general body consisting of full time members, which decides on the policy matters. The managing committee elected by the general body looks after the administration. There is an election every two years. PCO gets fund for its activities from the government and non-government agencies. (PCO Tenth Year Review 1987)

Based on the belief that "working masses should form their own people's organisation if they are to become participants in their own development," (ibid.1987:11) PCO helped fishworkers to start their own organisations for women ('mahila samajams'), youth and children.

Fishworkers' cooperatives were an important form of people's organisation. In 1980 there were fourteen cooperative and service societies in Trivandrum district. The main objective of removing the middlemen in the marketing of fish was very much realised in the district through these societies. Later when PCO started focusing on conscientisation and educational work, the cooperatives were separated from PCO and formed themselves into another independent society called Trivandrum District Fishermen Federation in 1981. It worked as an apex body for the primary societies in Trivandrum district. Since other districts like Kanyakumari, Kollam and Kozhikode also developed cooperative societies, an apex body for these district societies was formed in 1985 with the name South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies (SIFS). This apex
society concentrated its activities on "technology development for small scale fishermen" (SIFS annual report 1988:) and popularised small plywood boats in Kerala through its three boat building yards. By 1988 SIFS produced about 750 plywood boats which were very useful for the traditional fishermen.

When the issue of mechanisation was raised by fishworkers in 1970, PCO concentrated its efforts on conscientisation and organisation of fishworkers through training programmes and seminars. They were helped to organise themselves under the banner of KSMTF to fight for their rights.

Another important activity of PCO was organisation of fisherwomen. Several 'mahila samajams' were established in coastal areas to make the women aware of the exploitative situation in the society and family. These organisations under the banner of KSMTF successfully took up the problems of women fish vendors in transportation and sale of fish. To tackle the problem of unemployment among women, PCO took initiative in 1983 to start an independent organisation called Self Employed Women's Association. (SEWA)

Research was another contribution of PCO to the fishworkers' movement. A separate 'Fisheries Research Cell' was formed in PCO in 1979 to undertake people-oriented research and to disseminate the knowledge with people's organisations and government agencies. (Fisheries Research Cell leaflet 1980) In fact, even the officials of the fisheries department of Kerala
were making use of data and findings of PCO. Research and
studies of PCO and other voluntary organisations really helped
to give a scientific base for the fishworkers' movement. (PCO
tenth year review, 1987)

B. Fishermen's Development Programmes and Studies Centre (FIDES)

This voluntary organisation which started functioning in
1976 at Poonthura, a populous fishing village in Trivandrum, was
a collaborative venture of the All India Catholic University
Federation, an organisation of university students, and
Jesuits, members of a Catholic Religious Congregation, led by
Fr. Paul Valiyakandathil, S.J. The main objective of FIDES was
integral liberation of fishworkers through socio-cultural and
educational programmes. The centre gave emphasis on non-formal
education which made over 7000 adults literate. Other
programmes included remedial education for school drop-outs,
health education, documentation and library, youth organisation,
and employment guidance service. "Theerasabdam", a monthly
magazine, published at the initiative of FIDES did commendable
work to create awareness among fishworkers and others about the
vital issues affecting the fishworkers in Kerala, and thus
contributed much towards the fishworkers' movement. The
conscientisation work of the centre also played an important
role for the organisation of the fishworkers.
The organisational structure of FIDES is thoroughly democratic. The general body consisting of youth representatives from fishing community and eminent persons from various walks of life, was in charge of the management of the centre. The day to day administration was handled by a five member executive committee headed by the director, elected by the general body. The election took place every three years. In 1994 Fr. P. T. Mathew, director and successor to Fr. Paul M. Valiyakandathil, handed over the post of director to an elected lay leader paving the way for total participation of the local people in the management of the centre. (FIDES bylaw & brochure)

Other Agencies in Trivandrum District:

Through the interviews, the researcher was able to understand that there were three Catholic religious congregations of women working among the fishworkers without any formal organisational structure. The programmes conducted by them included non-formal and remedial education, organisational work, employment and health especially for women and children. Their work greatly helped to raise consciousness among fishworkers especially women towards organisation and collective action. Though not having directly helped the organisation of fishworkers, Loyola Social Welfare and Charitable Society, a voluntary agency centred at Poovar in Trivandrum district, greatly contributed towards the education of the fishworkers. Started in 1968 by Fr. Antony Manipadam S.J, a Jesuit priest,
the centre had at one time over 600 school children from 1st to 12th standards attending a systematic tuition programme outside the school hours. "The educational programmes of Loyola, Poovar, is perhaps, the single most significant factor in the social transformation process of this once sleepy village." (George, evaluation report, 1993:17) Other major programmes of the centre were 'mahila samajams', charka spinning scheme for women, technical training programme and family counselling.

C. Beach Blossoms Centre (BBC)

This centre was established in 1975 in Kozhikode in north Kerala by the Jesuits, as part of the social action programme of Socio-Religious Centre, a training centre with regular residential programmes. Beach Blossoms started its work among the beach dwellers of Kozhikode city comprising of fishworkers and people doing other jobs, with the objective of "conscientisation of masses of the poor and the organisation of the masses for conscientised action for change." (Beach Blossoms Documentation no.1:1)

The methodology of Beach Blossoms was inspired by the theories of Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educationist who popularised the concept of 'conscientisation'. The process of conscientisation consists of critical awareness of people about their exploitative situation, action for change of the unjust situation and reflection on their action for further action. Non-formal education was the key method for this process. All
the programmes of Beach Blossoms were implemented through planning, execution and evaluation by village committees elected by the people.

The first phase of the centre consisted of its work among 18,000 people living in 2700 households along the ten kilometer beach front of Kozhikode city. The main programmes were non-formal education for adults, remedial education for children, leadership training, health programmes, 'mahila samajams', skills development like tailoring classes, research and documentation. The village organisation also took up with the government some issues like drinking water and nursery classes.

The second phase of BBC starting from 1982 focused its work on fishworkers, as they raised the issue of mechanisation of fisheries together with fishworkers of south Kerala who were getting organised at this time. As a result of the conscientisation programmes of BBC, fishworkers of northern district of Kozhikode and Kannur formed an organisation called Malabar Swathanthra Malsya Thozhilali Union (MSMTU) which was later affiliated to KSMTF. In north Kerala, the fishworkers were mostly Hindus and Muslims, and so they gave a secular and all Kerala dimension to KSMTF. Thus BBC played a significant role for preparing the background for the fishworkers' movement.

BBC also took initiative to start fishermen's cooperatives in Malabar to eliminate middlemen in the marketing
of fish and to get the benefit of credit and saving habit for
the fishworkers. The leadership training programme of BBC
helped to form a good set of leaders for KSMTF in Kozhikode and
other districts as well. (SRC, BBC documentation, 1979)

The work of BBC was not limited to north Kerala alone.
It had an extension programme in the district of Alapuzha in the
central Kerala. Since there was no voluntary organisation in
Alapuzha district, BBC took up the responsibility of
conscientisation of fishworkers there. An organisation of women
and a charitable society named Coastal Educational and
developmental Society, with representatives of fishworkers and
social workers, were formed for its programmes. They took up
training programmes, remedial education for school children and
a book-binding centre to give employment for women.
With the help of these programmes the fishworkers of Alapuzha
district organised themselves into one of the strongest and
largest district units of KSMTF. (BBC brochure 1994)

BBC did not have a democratic organisational structure
since it was part of Socio-Religious Centre. So there was no
participation of people in its administration except through its
programmes. But lately BBC got separated from Socio-Religious
Centre and registered itself as a separate society with
representatives of people and social workers. BBC gets finance
from non-government and government agencies. (BBC
reorganisation document 1995)
D. Mochaka Jeevaka Munnettam (M.J.M Centre)

This social centre was started in 1978 at Mavelikara in Alapuzha district by a few Catholic priests of Kollam diocese. It worked for the educational and cultural awakening of inland fishworkers. It also published some scientific studies about inland fisheries. One speciality of M.J.M Centre was its focus on the analysis of religio-cultural life of the fishworkers, as a means of their socio-economic emancipation. For this, they tried to shape new art forms, religio-cultural symbols and celebrations. The conscientisation programmes of M.J.M Centre really helped the inland fishermen in Alapuzha district to get organised as part of KSMTF. (M.J.M Centre inauguration booklet 1986)

E. Development Programme for Inland Fishermen Community (DPIFC)

The interview of the researcher with one of the founders of this centre, revealed that it was started in 1980's at Padappakara near Kollam by the same group of Catholic priests who started the M.J.M Centre. The aim of the centre was conscientisation and organisation of inland fishworkers. At the initiative of DPIFC, a magazine called Organ for Radical Action (ORA) was being published to give a liberative analysis of religious faith in the light of the fishworkers' struggle. The work of the Centre was very much instrumental for the
organisation of inland fishworkers of Kollam district as part of
the fishworkers' movement.

F. Fishermen Community Development Programme (FCDP)

FCDP was registered as a charitable society in 1984 in
Kollam city by Catholic priests belonging to the Salesian
religious congregation. FCDP gave importance both to
conscientisation and development. The programmes included non-
formal education, literacy and nursery classes, youth training
schemes, women’s programmes, and fishermen’s cooperatives.

Fishermen’s cooperatives were an important programme of
FCDP. When nine primary cooperative societies in five village
centres were established, they were separated from FCDP in 1985
and were brought under an apex society called Fishermen Welfare
Society (FWC) which was to be managed by elected representatives
from each society. The cooperatives brought about tremendous
changes in the lives of the marine fishworkers in Kollam, like
elimination of middlemen, fair price for fish, credit
facilities, and fostering of saving habit. The uniqueness of the
fishermen’s cooperatives in Kollam district was that they were
functioning as complementary to the organisation of fishworkers.
The cooperatives supported the fishworkers to face the
challenges of mechanised trawlers and to fight for their just
demands, while the organisation used its collective strength to run the societies efficiently. They were thus mutually supportive and complementary.

Once the cooperatives became independent FCDP concentrated its work on educational and awareness programmes for fishermen, women, youth and children. Fishworkers of Kollam district were a powerful force for the fishworkers' movement mainly due to the systematic conscientisation and developmental programmes of FCDP. (FCDP annual report 1986, '89, & '94)

Analysis on the Voluntary Organisations

A close observation of the voluntary organisations shows certain differences and similarities. The nature of the voluntary organisations was different. While they belonged exclusively to Catholic religious congregations in Kozhikode, Kollam and Alapuzha districts, in Trivandrum they belonged to lay leaders, diocesan priests, religious congregations of both men and women. The voluntary organisations of inland fishworkers of Alapuzha and Kollam districts belonged to diocesan clergy only. Thus there were seven Catholic religious congregations of both men and women, diocesan priests and lay leaders who worked for the fishworkers' movement. The structure of these organisations was also different. Two of them were fully democratic, other two were partly democratic, and yet another was not democratic at all. Though they were different in their nature and structure, each made its own distinct
contribution to the social awakening of the fishworkers in Kerala. Thus the fishworkers' movement was the outcome of the collaborative effort of all the voluntary organisations.

The situation of fishworkers was different for the various voluntary organisation. While all the organisations in the south Kerala were working mostly among Catholic fishworkers, the Beach Blossoms Centre in the north was working among Hindus and Muslim fishworkers. This important difference had an impact on their approach too. Being a Catholic voluntary organisation, BBC had to face constant allegations of 'religious conversion' and related opposition to its conscientisation work. While voluntary organisations in the south started their work mostly with fishworkers, BBC began its work with people of various occupations and later only began to focus on fishworkers.

There were many similarities among the voluntary organisations. Practically all of them started their work in the mid seventies, when the phenomenon of similar organisations appeared all over India. Other similarities are the followings:

a. The goals and objectives of the voluntary organisations were broadly similar. All of them had similar understanding and analysis of society in India and the fisheries sector in Kerala. Their goals and ideologies developed over the years when they came together for various types of state-level seminars and training programmes. In fact, they were also responsible for
bringing together various district fishermen's unions in 1977 to form the first state level organisation of fishworkers in Kerala.

b. Practically all of them gave importance to both conscientisation and developmental programmes so that they were to complement and strengthen each other with the ultimate goal of organisation of fishworkers. While conscientisation programmes consisted mainly of educational nature, the developmental work consisted mainly of fishermen's cooperatives and employment schemes.

c. Approaches of the voluntary organisations were also similar. All of them gave emphasis on people's organisation and participation. Women's participation in all programmes was given special attention. All were ready to collaborate with similar organisations for the cause of the fishworkers and the poor in general.

d. All the voluntary organisations were legally, structurally and functionally different from Kerala Swathanthra Malsya Thozhilali Federation, (KSMTF) the state level organisation of fishworkers which led the fishworkers' movement. They were never identified with the fishworkers' organisation. The voluntary organisations prepared the fishworkers for the movement through their conscientisation programmes. But they were distinct from the movement itself. It is true that many social workers from the voluntary organisations were involved in
the movement, but they were withdrawing from the scene once the fishworkers were able to manage the organisation on their own.

The voluntary organisations were managed mostly by Catholic priests, nuns, teachers, and educated youth who were playing the role of the ‘intellectuals’ in the Gramscian terms. They did this by the conscientisation process of creating critical consciousness among fishworkers about their exploitative situation and structures. They analysed and articulated the ‘common sense’ knowledge of the fishworkers about the impact of mechanised trawling on the traditional fisheries, and suggested solutions to the problem by means of scientific data. They helped the fishworkers to organise themselves for collective action against the exploitation of mechanised trawlers. This process evolved itself into the fishworkers’ movement with the social workers playing the role of intellectuals. In short, voluntary organisations and social workers were a significant factor for the emergence of the fishworkers’ movement in Kerala.

Conclusion

The fishworkers were not involved in any socio-political movements in Kerala. They were not also organised by the trade unions of political parties. So the fishworkers’ movement was not a gradual development over other social processes but was the result of factors of recent past. They were mechanisation of fisheries in Kerala and the intervention of social workers
especially from voluntary organisations. The destructive mechanisation led to depletion of marine fisheries resources, which destroyed the livelihood of the traditional fishworkers. Social workers and their voluntary organisations made the fishworkers aware of the exploitative situation in the fisheries through their constant conscientisation programmes. As a result, they got organised first at district level and later at state-level to protect their livelihood and the fish resources. The fishworkers' movement evolved out of this process of organisation of traditional fishworkers in Kerala.