Chapter - Five

Farmers Association in Dakshina Kannada District
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Introduction

This chapter seeks to highlight a phenomenon, probably not peculiar to the Dakshina Kannada district, which however has not received the kind of attention in the academic literature as farmers' movements. I refer here to farmers' associations, that is, associations set up by farmers to further their agricultural prospects. These are both formal, non-formal groups and often focus on certain crops like rubber, coffee, areca nut, cocoa, vegetables. Henceforth, I refer to them as farmers' associations. The formal farmers' associations are registered under Societies Act, and function like the cooperatives, although they are not set up by the government and are primarily self-initiatives on the part of farmers. Non-formal farmers' associations are usually small groups, comprising of 8 to 10 farmers in a particular locality to facilitate each other's common agricultural enterprise. These associations are not homogenous. The associations have different features and operations; however, here all the members are both owners and users. Farmers’ Associations have two distinctive divisions; firstly, associations or groups that perform economic or commercial roles like marketing, procuring agricultural inputs, technical and extension service, research and development. Secondly, associations promote general and social interest of the farming community. Associations may be formed by a simple informal need to interact, and discuss issues facing the agrarian community in a locality/region.

Farmers’ associations are the foundation for the farmers' collective in Dakshina Kannada district, which I argue emerged with the development of the market economy that made it difficult for individual farmers, particularly small and marginal farmers, to cope with the demands and conditions of the ever-growing agricultural market. Organic farming milieu has provided me a chance to explore the farmers’ association and their contribution to an agrarian economy in the district. In Dakshina Kannada, the introduction of organic farming project has contributed towards the development of organic farmers’ association namely, Varanashi Organic Farmers Society (discussed in Chapter- 4). This chapter would elaborate on three formal farmers' associations - Vanilla growers’ association, beekeeping association and water users' association - other than discussing one non-formal association called Pragathi Bandhu. I do so primarily to highlight the
important role they play in the lives of farmers in Dakshina Kannada, in the routine
decisions, choices and investments within agriculture. In addition, they elaborate on the
context of their emergence, as well as how farmers have collectively sought to deal with
regular insecurities of the market even as they adopt new crops and technology to keep
pace with the changing market patterns. Farmers' Associations in this sense present
farmers in a different light, when compared to their representation in the literature on
farmers' movement, such as Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS) in Karnataka. The
ideology of the KRRS is far removed from the rationale that drives these farmers' 
association and form the basis for their popularity. Unlike KRRS, farmers' associations
primarily facilitate farmers' access to the market, and equip them to maximise returns
from the market. Assadi describes them as the 'capitalist farmers' in the context of his
discussion on farmers' suicides and agrarian distress. Even though, for Assadi, the
capitalist farmers are a product of the farmers' movement, which according to him is a
collective of farmers that is engaged in commercial agriculture and seek to bargain with
the state for better remunerative prices, technology and accessible markets. However, the
ideology of the farmers' movements such as the KRRS is essentially anti-state and anti-
commercial agriculture, beckoning the farmers to turn towards organic farming and which
stands in contrast to farmers' association that does not ostensibly or otherwise seek a
retreat from commercial farming. Farmers Association therefore represents the modern
farm culture that dominates much of South Canara. Unfortunately, there is hardly any
discussion on the capitalist farmers in India in social science literature, with much of the
focus being on farmers' movements and the class character of the Indian agrarian
structure.

In the succeeding sections, I provide a brief summary of how the literature on
farmers' movements has depicted farmers’ issues, and thereby representing the nature of
farming as well as the farming community in India. I would like to argue that these
representations are partial and inadequate, in that they fail to capture the region specific
and diverse responses to changes within agriculture in India. The case of Dakshina
Kannada helps in further illustrating this argument. While farmers in Dakshina Kannada
have actively mobilised around agriculture, their participation in the farmers' movements
in the state has been abysmal. In the second section, I would provide a background to
cooperation in Dakshina Kannada, in the case of 'Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing
and Processing Cooperative Limited' (CAMPCO), which unfolds the dynamics of
collective mobilisation in the region and it also has served as a successful model for future collaboration among farmers. CAMPCO majorly influenced the formation of different formal and non-formal farmers associations in the region. The third section would discuss existing farmers' associations in Dakshina Kannada district, both formal and non-formal, their organisation, and main objectives as well as present a profile of its members. Here, I would also discuss Shree Kshetra Dharmasthala Rural Development Project (SKDRDP), a religious organisation that is actively involved in farming issues and is quite influential in the area of my field study. Termed as Pragathi Bandhu, their initiative towards rural development, concentrates on helping small farmers in procuring loans, subsidised equipments etc, besides mobilising a sense of collective within the farming community. This association of farmers is quite prominent in the area and has been discussed as a successful model, even as it has been criticised for its religious intent and purpose. The last section is on farm journalism, an aspect that is neglected in the discussion on farming in India. Its relevance in modern farming practices cannot be underestimated as it illustrates the presence of a strong literate class of farmers who not only share personal experiences of farming, but also reflect on the larger issues that concern agriculture and farming practices in the region. Farm journalism therefore is another instance through which I seek to reiterate the need to overcome the stalemate within the social sciences in acknowledging the advent of a new class of farmers that is not only educated but also seek to associate with each other through newer means of communication such as the print media and through the internet.

Farmers’ Movements in India

Studies on farmers’ movements have dominated much of our understanding of the dynamics of agriculture in India. The earliest references to peasant struggles dates back to colonial times. India witnessed 77 peasant uprisings (Gough, 1974) and these include Sanyasi rebellion (1770), Santhal rebellion (1855), and Indigo revolt (1859). These revolts were in response to the introduction of taxes, colonial atrocities, Zamindari system and forceful act on the part of British for the production of Indigo instead of paddy and other crops in the agricultural land. In these rebellions, the protesters used violence and

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1 Sanyasi Rebellion was organised by the sanyasis (Hindu) and fakirs (Muslim) Murshidabad and Baikunthapur forests of Jalpaiguri in Bengal region. The Santhal rebellion was organised by Santhal tribal leaders - Sindhu, Kanhu, Chand and Bhairav in the present day Jharkhand, against the British colonial authority and corrupt upper caste Zamindari system. The Indigo revolt was organized by the Indigo farmers against the indigo planters. (Gough, 1979)
plunder against what was considered as the symbols of oppression. The main technique was to target moneylenders, burn their account books, demolish government offices, and police stations.

In the mid 1930s, Indian National Movement tried to bring the peasant movement within the national movement of India’s’ independence. In 1946, a militant campaign was initiated in Bengal by the Kisan Sabha, which is today known as the Tebhaga movement. In Bengal, the tenants had to give half of the produced crop to the landowners, but peasants demanded to reduce the share given to landlords to one third. In some parts, agitations were aggressive and violent, in many areas landlords had to flee from the countryside leaving behind their property. The Telangana Rebellion (between 1946 and 1951) was a peasant revolt, took place in 1946 at Nalgonda district and soon spread to Warangal and Bidar (present day Karnataka) districts. Peasants and labourers revolted against the local feudal landlords who were known as jagirdars and deshmukhs in the region. These movements were against the monopoly ownership of land by landlords and demanded for the redistribution of land to the poor and landless. In this movement, the communists took an interest in mobilising the agricultural labourers and small farmers with short-term demands like increase in wages, employment opportunity, better working conditions and long-term demands for equal land distribution. In the 1960s, while the Naxalbari region of West Bengal, experienced armed peasants uprising with the slogan of ‘land to tillers’ the Bhoodan movement introduced by Vinoba Bhave was a non-violent movement which was launched in response to the violent land grab agitations of the Telangana movement (Mehra, 2008: 6).

With the abolishment of land tenure system (Zamindari, Mahalwari, Jagir, Inam,) the Indian government introduced land reform to redistribute land to the tiller and bring more parity in the agrarian structure. Almost around the same time, the new government brought in the green revolution, with the intention of boosting agricultural productivity, which was seen as necessary to ensure food self-sufficiency. Land reforms and the green revolution were to reconfigure not only the future of Indian agriculture but also the politics that were to follow. Many scholars given its varying performance in different states (Damle, 1993; Aggarwal, 2010, Agarwal, 1994, Joshi, 1999) and questioned the efficacy of both land reform and green revolution.
There is significant literature on land reform and green revolution, which discusses the intent and impact of both these initiatives at various levels. The land reform brought prominence to a section of the agricultural class who went on to dominate farmers’ movements in India. The green revolution initiated the process of modernisation of Indian agriculture. The main thrust of the green revolution was to introduce new technology in terms of HYV, chemical fertilisers, modern irrigation facility to boost agricultural productivity and to orient farmers towards producing for the market.

It would not be a stretch to argue that while the ‘land question’ central to land reforms has been extensively debated and written upon within the social sciences and same cannot be said about the green revolution. Within the social sciences, references to the green revolution have been largely in the context of farmers’ movements in the critique that it offers of the green revolution (e.g. KRRS) as well as how the green revolution mostly benefited rich farmers (as argued in the case of BKU, Punjab). The green revolution has transformed not only the nature of agriculture in India but also how farmers across classes relate to and practice farming. There are few studies on how the green revolution has transformed the attitude and perspectives of the farming communities in India (Gupta, 1998; Epstein, 1973; Bayliss & Wanmali, 2009). Farmers Associations in Dakshina Kannada are a clear example of how modernisation of agriculture has changed farmers’ outlook, orientation to farming as well as forms of organisations to further their interest in the agricultural market. In this chapter, I describe farmers association in Dakshina Kannada with the intention to decentre the categories class, caste and state in the analysis of farmers’ collectives and instead focus upon the importance of agricultural commodities and crops in the formation of these collectives. But, before I present an overview of farmers’ collectives in Dakshina Kannada, I would briefly present three cases of farmers movement, to illustrate the concern raised above.

\[\text{The reference here is about other backward classes who uniformly are set to have benefited from land reforms. Within Karnataka, the main beneficiaries of the land reform had been the Okkaligas in North Karnataka and they dominated in the KRRS movement. In Dakshina Kannada, land reform did not benefited a single community instead it distributed the land among different tenants such as, Mogaveera, Naika, Patalis Ganigas, Billava, Devadigas and region had mostly absentee land lords belong to the upper caste, i.e. Brahmin and Bunt and Gowda (Damle; 1989: 85).}\]
Three cases of farmers’ movements

_Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) Movement from Punjab._ In late 1970s and early 1980s, the green revolution belt of Punjab, Haryana and Western parts of Uttar Pradesh (Gill; 1994) witnessed farmers’ mobilization under Bharatiya Kisan Union (henceforth referred as BKU). It was a strong political lobby of the farmers’, which later came to dominate Punjab state politics. Punjab farmers experienced the fruits of modern technology that increased the agricultural production and dominance of the rich peasants in the agrarian economy. The sudden changes in the Punjab agriculture created a condition for farmers to unite as a collective force in Punjab, as they became increasingly dependent on the state and the market for their sustenance in agriculture. With the conditions of market failure in the 1970s, there was a general unrest among farmers as to their fate. It is around this time, in 1972, that 11 local peasant groups in Punjab came together and formed the 'Punjab Khetibari Zamindari Union' or PKZU (ibid, 1994). By the 1980s, the group changed its name to 'Bharatiya Kisan Union or BKU'. It mainly organised on the issues of improvement of infrastructure such as electricity, support price for agriculture production, institutional rural credit facility and agricultural inputs at subsidised prices for farmers. The movement became stronger by the end of 1980s and it strategically focused on individual leaders and parties at the state and local level to consolidate its base. According to Gill (1995: 203), BKU has used the 'dual track approach' to achieve its political interest. In Punjab, BKU created political alliances with Akali Dal party and allowed its political leaders and supporters to be the members of BKU. It restricted the Akali Dal party members from holding office positions in BKU, to control the party members from contesting in state elections, however encouraged BKU members (who are not political leaders) to contest in local panchayat and cooperative elections in the state. Thus, it sought to collectively mobilise the farmers to work as an independent pressure group outside state politics.

There was a contradiction between its stated ideology and the composition of its organisation. It ideologically wanted to bring social transformation through the mobilisation of rural peasantry beyond the categories of class, caste, religion to reduce

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3 The movement had collective and political voice in state election as it demonstrated as how farmers’ groups could bring changes in state politics through its alliance with government. Movement supported Akali Dal party, which formed state government; however, when government was unable to meet farmers’ demands BKU in the next state election (1980) withdrew its alliance from the government and supported the Congress (I) which achieved victory in the election. In 1989 state election, Akali Dal party received a majority and emerged as ruling party as it was supported by BKU in Punjab.
exploitation and social discrimination. However, even though the early phase of the movement had representation from the heterogeneous rural peasantry, later it came to be dominated by capitalist rich and medium farmers. In peasant studies, the ideology of the movement was a much-debated issue, as scholars analysed BKU’s organisation, the contents of its agitations, participation of farmers, and its demands. Gupta (1988) has referred to it as rich farmers’ mobilisation. While BKU was populist in its politics, policies, agitations and demands specifically addressed the concerns of the rich and medium farmers (Gill 1995). From 1980s onwards, the movement moved beyond agriculture, market, labour, wage issues and ethnic identity became very strong within the movement. The movement introduced the Sikh identity and symbolic use of its idioms in BKU brought out disagreement between the Sikh and Hindu peasantry. Religion and Identity have became the crucial dividing force within the BKU and this actually ultimately contributed to the downfall of the BKU movement in Punjab.

**Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS).** H.S Rudrappa in Shimoga started Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (henceforth referred as KRRS) against the exploitation of sugarcane farmers; later it took the shape of collective farmers’ agitation. In 1980, the movement focused on remunerative prices, crop insurance, waiving cooperative bank loans, reduction in electricity bills, marketing and credit facility. In 1987, the movement entered state electoral politics as it felt that mass agitation and protests against state led development was not sufficient to bring policy changes within agriculture. They acknowledged that the movement had less chance to influence the policy makers and people in power if they are not a part of the government.

Under the leadership of Prof. Nanjundaswamy movement has received the global recognition for its rally and protest against the introduction of anti-GM crops in India. The populist members became sceptical about the material opportunities in the GM industry. This ideological conflict within KRRS over the GM crops has lead to the split in

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4 KRRS as a movement has originated and gained popularity in the Naragund-Navalgund agitation that took place on July 21, 1980, in the Nargund talk of the present Gadag district, against the government imposed betterment charges for irrigated lands.

5 KRRS organized ‘Cremate Monsanto Campaigns against the Bt. Cotton industry from 1998-2001, aimed to eliminate the GM crop trail from India. It attracted the public opinion and international activists’ attention when it burned the first GM Field trial of Monsanto’s Cotton in 1998 in Karnataka. It opposed the use of GM production in India from ecological, biodiversity issues and over dependency of farmers on multinational corporations for agricultural inputs and loss of traditional methods of farming.
the movement.\(^6\) The political interest of the members and denial of existing class struggle in the movement has resulted in splitting the farmers' movement.\(^7\) The KRRS is still active although not as vibrant as it was in the 1990s and is concentrated only some parts of Karnataka.

Over the past four decades, KRRS has conducted various agitations, and campaigns around various agro-based problems. The movement campaigned against local and global issues in terms of access to markets and livelihood. E.g. Trade liberalization, Intellectual Property Rights, WTO, MNCs such as Monsanto-BT Cotton, Dunkel Draft, GATT, farmers’ suicides, and against seed patents in the country. KRRS was one of the pioneering movements that propagated the practice of nature farming and traditional techniques of farm practices. In this regard, it introduced programs like Sita (principle of organic farming to reduce dependency on chemicals), Mahkheri Sheti (village level food processing) and Lakshmi Mukti (division of household property between spouses) to benefit rural women (Omvedt, 1993). In agriculture, they supported sustainable or alternative forms of technologies that assist farmers as well as consumer ecological safety. KRRS expressed that

‘The criteria for the acceptance or rejection of technologies in KRRS are not related to their age; they are related to factors such as whether the technology can be directly operated and managed by the people who use it, whether it is labour-intensive or capital-intensive, and other political criteria’ (KRRS document, n.d).

In the beginning, the movement followed the Gandhian ideology of non-violence and 'village republic'. It recognised social institutions through direct democracy, economic-political autonomy, self-reliance of community and democratic participation of the actors, stakeholders in the decision-making, and practice of non-violent approaches in solving the agrarian problems. However, with time it has changed its way of protesting to direct actions against the multinational corporations.\(^8\)

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\(^6\) At the other end, Sharad Joshi the leader of Shetkari Sanghatana had different ideological views about GM crops and Monsanto. He supported the use of GM product with the view that it would allow the farmer to earn larger income and provide higher yields in agriculture.

\(^7\) KRRS today active in Mandya and Shimoga district and Chukki lead one group and Puttannaiah leads another division of KRRS movement in Karnataka (Hebbar, 2010).

\(^8\) The protesters demonstrated direct action against the companies by destroying their properties, materials etc. In an incident, more than 1000 protesters from KRRS marched against biotech giant Cargill unit office in Bangalore and physically dismantled the office and threw all the equipments and made a bonfire.
In KRRS, the basic unit of administration is the village; it has the decision-making power, finance, and plans and programmes, some of which are mentioned above. It did not believe in the sectoral development of agriculture, worked beyond the specific issues of farmers, and determined to bring social transformation in the agrarian social structure. KRRS has been protesting on issues that are impacting the farmers at the local level such as loans, manures, subsidies, minimum support price, forcible land acquisition by the banks on non-payment of loans, electricity for rural areas, ecological issues like thermal power, mining, quarrying etc. The movement has provided special preference for the formation of women's associations to involve women in the process of change as well as seek their support for within the movement. KRRS played a significant role in pushing for reservations for women in the panchayats, and passing minimum reserved seats for women in the parliament.

**Shetkari Sanghatana (SS) from Maharashtra.** Maharashtra saw the emergence of the farmers’ organisation Shetkari Sanghatana in the late 1970s under the leadership of Sharad Joshi. Shetkari Sanghatana organised agitations demanding remunerative prices for onion, sugarcane, tobacco and cotton. Shetkari Sanghatana consider itself to be a farmers movement based on non-political, non-communal, non-violent and non-pastoral union of peasants with the single point programme of securing remunerative prices for the agricultural produce (Joshi; n.a). The movement supported the economic development of the farmers. The philosophy of the Shetkari Sanghatana was based on the price incentives in agriculture and it showed its favours towards the process of capital accumulation that driven by the agriculture rather than industry. According to the movement, it would easy for the industries to confiscate the agricultural surplus from the farmers for low price through the mechanism of market fluctuations. The movement showed its interest towards the development of an uncontrolled market in agriculture produce and international free trade for inputs and output of agriculture. The movement was against the introduction of negative subsidy towards agriculture and farm inputs like electricity, water, fertilisers that has benefited many middlemen in the process but it not benefited the actual stakeholders

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9 Meanwhile there exists taluk, district and state level organisational model; state has the executive committees with members from the active districts in the state.

10 From its inception, KRRS moved its path towards cultural change and for achieving their task, condemned caste hierarchy, promoted elimination of social injustice, encouraged farmers to conduct simple weddings as an alternative to lavish weddings.

11 In 1993, Panchayat Act, Karnataka government amended which provides 33% reservation for women in Panchayat elections and it became the first state in the country to introduce this in the state.
that, is farmers for whom it was originally meant in the development process of the country. In January 1982, Shetkari Sanghatana organised its first conference in Nashik District, more than 18 thousand delegates attended, and in the rally, over a lakh of farmers from across the Maharashtra participated. From then onwards, the figure of one lakh has become an standard number to gauge the success of farmers agitations and rallies in the country (Joshi; n.a )

While Omvedt (1980) called it as rich capitalist farmers' movement, Lenneberg (1988) argued at the movement largely derived its support from the middle peasants, a position that was supported by the Rudolphs (1987). Dhanagare argues that Rudolphs and Lenneberg extend the category middle peasants to accommodate the small, marginal and middle peasants within it. This according to Dhanagare is compounded by the fact that they do not distinguish between irrigated areas from rain fed areas in understanding the dynamics of class in their analysis. For Dhanagare (1995), Shetkari Sanghatana and its ideology demonstrated a form of hegemony exercised by the dominant rich farmers over middle and small peasantry in Maharashtra. According to him, rich farmers with substantial landholding and marketable surplus have received the benefit of remunerative prices for wheat, sugarcane, cotton, tobacco or any other form of agricultural produce. This has provided them with the political clout to influence the state and market in the region. (ibid: 73)

The leader of Shetkari Sanghatana, Sharad Joshi disagreed with these views (of scholars Omvedt, Lenneberg, and Rudolphs) about the ideology of the Shetkari Sanghatana and argued that it was a conspiracy by the Indian elite to create a division within Bharat by categorising the farmers as big, medium and small, as there exists no such contradiction between farmers when it comes to the remunerative prices in agriculture (Dhanagare, 1995; 83). The main thrust of the Sanghatana has been to challenge unfriendly government policies, the corruption in the administration and many other related issues. The general demand was for increase in public investment in agriculture, low input cost, and higher cost for agricultural produce, remunerative price or minimum support price, easy availability of institutional loans and of late guaranteed procurement of farm produce. All these demands focused on creating a better position for

12 She highlighted that movement was primarily existed in the Nashik, Pune and Ahmednagar districts where small landholdings outnumber big land areas and grow variety of cash crops. In this area, more than 45 to 60 per cent of cultivated area came under the production of sugarcane, vegetable, wheat and rice; along with the cash crops, that has less than three hectares of landholding in the region (Dhanagare, 1995).
farmers in the market than was not directly addressing the concerns of the small and poor farmers.

In the discussion, so far the analyses of farmers’ movements bring out one dimension of agriculture, which is the critique of state led development that they have espoused. One of the reasons as to why the study of Indian agriculture in the social sciences have focused on farmers movements is probably because of its visibility and the directness with which many of the movements espouse their grievances against the state. Analyses of the movements also reveal the internal tensions and dynamics within these movements, on how the ideology of these movements are constrained by other social dynamics such as class and caste, in that in the movements discussed above, certain castes have tended to dominated the movements and the agrarian politics in their respective regions. In fact, there is a strong case to argue that, the main constituency of these movements is the class that gained the most from state agricultural policies and legislations introduced by the government. E.g. in Mysore the caste that dominates KRRS is the Okkaligas, a caste that emerged as a significant lobby with Karnataka politics post land reforms. Okkaligas are the dominating community in KRRS. The BKU has always been dominated by the Jat community (Banaji, 1995: 231) that flourished post green revolution, but kept up their slogan Jai Jawan Jai Kisan to gain support from middle and small farmers in lobbying for greater benefits from the state. Sharad Joshi, the founder and one of the main leaders of Shetkari Sanghatana, popularised the slogan Bharat vs. India. These slogans symbolised the existence of two Indias- rural and urban, with rural India being a true representative and repository of Indianness unlike the urban, that was cosmopolitan and westernised; Bharat was according to this postulation neglected, while India thrived at the expense of the latter. 'Bharat is the indigenous name for India with positive connotations, while India is the westernised name which symbolized exploitation' (Lindberg, 1995: 96). According to Omvedt, this distinction of Bharat and India is not between town and country, as there is Bharat in cities (pavement and slum dwellers) and India in villages (farmer leaders depending on the state for their wealth and power) (1995). Thus, the focus of farmers’ movements in the 1980s and 1990s was less on the issue of class and more on the existing contradiction between the urban and rural.13

13 In this direction, Dhanagare observes that, from historical time, rich land owning classes in the farmers' movements have avoided violence as a means of collective protest as such action would affect their production and they lose more in the violent mass agitations (1995:73). The peaceful nature of the farmers'
KRRS presents an interesting case. The KRRS in its critique of Green revolution has not been able to gain support beyond Mysore, Mandya, Shimoga, although the KRRS has offices in different districts and villages across the state. KRRS is the strong supporter of organic farming. However it has not managed to collaborate with local seed networks, such as Annadana Soil and seed saver network (spread across the state), Vanastree (Sirsi, Uttar Kannada), Green foundation (Bangalore), Janapada Veda trust (Maelkot, in Mandya), Institute for Cultural Research and Action (Bangalore), which have objectives similar to Varanashi Research Foundation, which I have discussed in my earlier chapters, is into promoting of organic farming in Dakshina Kannada. It would be interesting to research as to why KRRS, which is known internationally for its support to organic farming, has not been able to develop a collective across the state of individual initiatives and collective networks that are actively engaged in promoting organic farming. Could it be that identity and regional politics predominates over the concern for organic farming? It would be difficult to answer this question without proper research, but clearly KRRS then is not representative of the farmers’ collectives in the state. There are other forms of organisation and association, that employ alternative strategies in engaging with the state and the market in the context of organic farming. My research in Dakshina Kannada is a case in point. It also serves as an important case study for understanding forms of farmers’ collectives other than farmers’ movements.

Dakshina Kannada District: Recent Farmers Agitation

Dakshina Kannada district is criticised for its inactive role in the farmers’ movement. But contrarily, the coastal districts of Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Uttar Kannada were known for their active involvement in environmental movements. These three districts lies in the heart of Western Ghats region, today it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and recognised as one of the eight “hottest hotspots” of biological diversity in the world. The 1600 km long mountain chain starts at the border region of Gujarat and Maharashtra and runs through the states of Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. In Dakshina Kannada, the concern over environmental issues emerged during the last quarter of 1980s, as the region observed changes with the introduction of massive industrialisation, which had an adverse impact on the marine fishery, and ecology of the

movement through peasant and mass mobilisation in the Indian context justifies the above argument and Dhanagare (1995) puts it explicitly that ‘it is a class character; an argument that is essentially deductive in form and not wholly untenable empirically’ (73).

14 The estimated membership in the movement is 10 million although it does not maintain a register.
region. Multiple groups and communities organised protests against the Karnataka state, industries and companies in the region. However, the environmental movements within the Dakshina Kannada district were issue based, concerned to a particular locality or region, therefore these struggles did not receive the visibility similar to movements such as the Narmada Bachavo Andolan. Nevertheless, these agitations were very effective, e.g. campaigns against Cogentrix thermal plant at Nadikur, Tannir Bhavi power plant and were over environmental issues.\textsuperscript{15} Conservation activists have been protesting against mining in Kudremukh region, which is recognised as ‘Global 200’ by the World Wide Fund (WWF) for conserving the ecological landscape and biodiversity of the region (Nagarika Seva Trust, 2001 cited by Assadi; 2002; 4898). Kudremukh issue was a major concern as, state government made five reserved forests into national park for tiger reserve(under the Global Tiger Conservation Priority-I, developed jointly by Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and World Wide Fund) and displaced the tribal communities, leased ecologically sensitive area to Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Ltd. (KIOCL), a profit making mining company. Assadi (2002) highlights that movement in the process has become “the issue of identity, culture, capitalism, life after modernity and environmental cries”(4898). Due to the efforts of the different movements organised across the state by various ideological groups such as Dakshina Kannada Parisarasktara Okkuta, Environment Support Group, Wildlife First, Kalpavriksha, Environment Action Group, Green Watchers Association, the Supreme Court verdict in 2002 went against the KIOCL and mining was completely stopped from 2005.

Netravati river diversion project is known as Netravati - Heanvathi link that was proposed with the intension to divert the 188 Mcum of surplus water from Netravati river to irrigate an areas of about 33,813 hectares which are under the Hemavati Irrigation Project in the drought prone districts of Tumkur, Hassan and Mandya districts of Karnataka. The water policy of the government such that, it want to turn the west flowing river to east and this has been criticised by various organisations, as it would be disastrous to Dakshina Kannada, as it depends on river for irrigation and drinking water. There are criticisms about the project from all corners of the society. Environment activists, farmers, NGOs, and people’s organisations and political parties are protesting against the state and its anti- environment development policy that is hampering the ecological

\textsuperscript{15} Cogentrix is a US based company, signed in MOU with Karnataka was the production and supply of thermal power. It was a multinational company that would ‘create a threat to indigenous and local capitalism including the commercial capitalism’ (Assadi; 1996:2129).
balance in the district and Western Ghats. The scientist from IISC expressed that, “the project had been conceptualised without taking the topography of the region into consideration. The project aimed at directing water against gravitational force, and made it flow towards Bangalore “by making a hole in hills, much like a making a hole in a wall” (Hindu, October 2010).

In recent times, Mangalore Special Economic Zone is in news not only for the investments that are pouring in to the region, but also for the peoples’ protest against the land acquisition of fertile paddy land and plantations in the area.\(^\text{16}\) Government of India in April 2000 introduced SEZ policy to develop domestic enterprises and manufacturers to compete globally, to increase foreign investment and promotion of export from the country. It recognised the SEZ regions as a foreign territory for trade operations.\(^\text{17}\) In Karnataka, Mangalore region as geographical feature of the city was considered as an ideal site for development, with proximity to seaport, international airport, network of national, state highways, well-connected railway and an already developed ‘industrial estate’ in Baikampady. Given that it is also the hub for higher education institutions, the required skilled personnel for the industry and trade would also be easily available in the region.

Mangalore SEZ has received formal approval to acquire 1453 acres in the Dakshina Kannada district in November 2007.\(^\text{18}\) MSEZ is located eight kms east of the New Mangalore Port, and close to MRPL. Baikampady, is situated in the South-West of MSEZ and the nearest airport is 5 kms to the Southeast of MSEZ. The district has huge investment in industrial development like Mangalore Refinery & Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL - a subsidiary of ONGCL), Kudremukh Iron Ore Company (KIOCL) / Kudremukh Iron & Steel Company (KISCO), Mangalore Chemicals & Fertilisers (MCF), BASF. In addition, IT giants like Infosys, Wipro and Mphasis have their office in this region. Permude, Bajpe and Kalavar villages are the primary locations of the MSEZ. The

\(^\text{16}\) A Special Economic Zone (from now on SEZ) is a geographical region with liberal laws than country’s economic laws A single SEZ can contain multiple specific zones in its boundary and uses variety of institutional structures from public (Government operators developers and regulators) to private (private operator, developer and regulator).

\(^\text{17}\) In 2005, the Government of India passed a special economic act, framed policy, and ensured acceptable facilities for developers and companies, which are setting up units in the SEZ. In 2007, there were more than 500 SEZ being proposed and 220 were being implemented in different locations.

\(^\text{18}\) The government of India notified this zone as a Petroleum and Petrochemical sector. In the MSEZL document, they are allotted with 3985 acres of land for the development and currently 1800 acres of land is in possession with the company.
resident farmers and tribal communities such as the Koragas and Kudubis have been protesting against the MSEZ.

A group of farmers (together these farmers had 2035 agricultural acres) who also have the support of ‘Krishibhoomi Samrakshana Samithi’ a civil society organisation from Mangalore have been against the 2nd phase of MSEZ environmental clearance given by the Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board (KIADB) for land acquisition. The agitation intensified when developers forcibly took 15.34 acres belonging to Kudubi tribes, for MSEZ 2nd phase, on the pretext of constructing a rehabilitation colony for the community. In December 2009, people’s audit conducted in Bajpe village in Mangalore Taluk clearly highlighted the problems of the Project Affected families (PDF) of MSEZ. Dakshina Kananda has always experienced constant ecological threat from different industrial developments, even prior to MSEZ. Mr. Jairam Ramesh the Minister for Environment and Forest in 2009 had stressed the importance of identifying the Western Ghats as an ‘ecologically sensitive zone’ (The Hind, November 2009). Land and land acquisition have been the main issues in the context of MSEZ. Industrial development project has displaced farmers from their agricultural lands and many of the farmers have not received proper compensation from the company for their land. The MSEZ development in these regions has affected the people’s livelihood, increased air pollution levels; loss of fertile cultivable land has raised concerns over the food security in the region. Over utilisation of water has already created a situation of water shortage in the district (Hindu, March 2013). MSEZ will displace those families that are living in the four villages and families mainly depend on cultivation, plantation, dairying and other economic activities. It is difficult for farmers to survive without the land, which was regarded as the ‘security for life’ and engage in new forms of livelihood. There are mainly four NGOs and a few activists who are raising their voice and supporting the anti-MSEZ movement in the district. The collective farmers’ agitations are becoming weak,

19 On February 14th 2010, a farmer who was a Grama Panchayat member who fought single-handed for three weeks against KIADB that demolished his ancestral home and MRPL who wanted his agricultural land for industrial expansion. When he protested against KIADB, he became an inspirational figure in the locality and activists, NGO’s, media, writers supported his decision.

20 In 14 February 2013, a farmer from Dakshina Kannada committed suicide as feared of crop loss after he failed to get water in the newly drilled bore well. Before water was available at 270 ft but now at 450 ft also water is not available in many parts of the district. In district 43 villages are recognised as over exploited (Groundwater Assessment Report 2009 by the Karnataka Watershed Development department).

21 The four NGOs are KrishiKara Vedike - Karnataka, Dakshina Kannada Parisaraskthara Okkuta, Karavali Mahila Jagruti Vedike and Nagarika Seva Trust.
inactive and getting politicised as they are unable to stand up to the financially and politically powerful in the areas.

Dakshina Kannada farmers have been involved in number of agitations; some of them have been discussed above. In Dakshina Kannada, none of these agitations and protests have been referred to as farmers movements, probably because they did not pertain to issues that are conventionally associated with the farming community, such as land reforms or government support prices, better market facilities, subsidies from the government etc. The concerns raised by the farmers have been primarily environmental. The incidences connected with endosulfan (as discussed in Chapter 3), the presence of chemical residues in the soil, the dumping of industrial waste in the sea, land acquisition for constructing highways, the depletion of underground water table with the shift in cropping pattern, and mining etc have impact on the environment, as well as on the practice of farming in the district.

One of the possible reasons for the absence of farmers’ movements in the district particularly in the post land reform could be related to what Beteille (1974) proposed in his study of Tamil Nadu. Wherein he points out that large number of agrarian revolts have taken place predominately in the paddy growing areas, especially in areas where the social relations of production was highly stratified, as was the case in his study of Tanjore (Thanjavur). However, Dakshina Kannada, according to this postulation, had the conditions for the emergence of farmers’ movements, but this has not been the case. It would interesting to delve deeper as to why this is so. Assadi (1996) highlights that, Land Reforms Amendment Act of 1970s took away the zeal of agitational politics as it made large number of tenants owners of the lands they tilled (2129).

Interestingly, Dakshina Kannada has the highest number of small landholdings in the state, indicative of the extent of land redistribution in the district. In fact, this led to many farmers giving up paddy cultivation and converted their lands into plantations. Around the same time, farmers’ cooperatives came up in a big way in 1970s and 80s such as the district observed the setting up of cooperative banks, Milk cooperatives, Honey cooperatives etc. The most known and successful them is the Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative Limited or CAMPCO (a cooperative society of areca growers), which is still active and running successfully in the district. CAMPCO becomes significant in the context of Dakshina Kannada to understand farmers’
perspectives on farming in the region, as it was the first major initiative of plantation farmers to tap the market potential of their agricultural produce. Some of the other cooperatives that came up along the same lines include The Areca Processing And Sales Cooperative Society Ltd or APCOS (1973) functioning in three taluks of Shimoga District i.e., Soraba, Sagara and Hosanagara. Malnad Areca Marketing Cooperative Society Ltd., or MAMCOS (1939) and it is functioning in Shimoga Chickmagalur and part of Davangere district, i.e channagiri and Honnali taluks, COMARK is a muti-state cooperative registered in 1992 for the procurement, process and marketing of Coffee. Cardamom produced and it is situated in Karnataka Kerala and Tamil Nadu (Department of Cooperation, Government of Karnataka). CAMPCO, it can be argued, laid the foundation for the emergence of farmers’ associations during the 1990s, i.e. post liberalisation, to compete within the commercial agricultural market. Therefore, in order to understand the different route taken by farmers in the district in order to address collective concerns vis-a-vis farming, labour, agricultural market, and technology through the formation of farmers’ associations, it would useful to first briefly understand the beginnings of farmers’ collectives in the district.

**Farmers Collective in Dakshina Kannada**

In this section, I would first describe the emergence of cooperatives in Dakshina Kannada during 1970s and 80s by particular, focusing on CAMPCO. In the second section, I would directly discuss about the three formal and one informal farmers association that have emerged during post 1990s due to the one or more felt needs of the farmers to cope up with liberalised commercial market in the local level. In the last section, I would be discussing about the farm journalism where I would narrate as how farmers are benefited from the use of local farm magazine and how they are gaining awareness about the different experiments that are ongoing in different farms, information about different crops, post harvest managements and national, international market trends in agriculture. The local farm journal such as Adike Patrike provides an illustration as how nature of farming is changing and in the process as how farmers are adopting to new technology and innovation in farming.
Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative Limited (CAMPCO). In 1970s, Dakshina Kannada was going through a phase of transformation. There was a shift from the self-sustainable paddy cultivation to market driven plantation farming. Arecanut cultivation became lucrative as more farmers slowly converted their land to plantations and started the cultivation of arecanut, coconut, cocoa and betel nut crops in the district. In the 1970s, arecanut price in the international market went down alarmingly and plantation farmers’ economy in coastal Karnataka and Kerala came to a standstill. In 1970-71, areca growers saw a sudden decline in demand for arecanut in the market and got worse in 1972 when growers could get only half of the price (Rs 3 on one kg). The farmers have given four reasons for the market fluctuation, they are: intervention of the government, uncontrolled import policy on arecanut, overproduction and role-played by the agents or brokers. For resolving arecanut issue, Karnataka government constituted a Committee, which recommended a establishment of central agency in the public or cooperative sector. In Karnataka and Kerala, few elite farmers took the leadership of establishing a co-operative for areca growers and with the financial support from the Karnataka and Kerala government established CAMPCO in Dakshina Kannada. It was an initiative taken by the farmers for the benefit of the plantation farmers.

In Dakshina Kannada, arecanut cultivation has an inseparable relationship with caste as majority of areca growers belong to Brahmin (Havyaka) and Bunt communities. In 1970s, two political factors influenced the setting up on arecanut economy in the district. Primarily, Dakshina Kannada Brahmin community did not receive any state patronage in agriculture and allied sectors. Secondly, the district had highest number of tenants under Brahmins and Bunts in the pre- land reform phase. However, at the end of the 1970s, the district underwent two phases of land reforms. Land reforms took away the major paddy fields from Bunts and Brahmans and redistributed the land to farmers who worked as tenants. Some of the communities, which gained land during land reforms, were from the tenant class belonging to castes such as Mogaveeras, Naikas, Patalis, Ganigas. The Brahmins and the Bunts were quick to respond to the changes brought in by the land reforms. They went in for the commercialisation of agriculture, by converting paddy fields into plantations to retain their agricultural lands. Many farmers

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22 The first phase was initiated in late 1950s and early 1960s wherein it abolished the principal intermediaries who existed in between the landowners and tenants and direct tenurial relation was established between owner and farmers. In the second half of 1960s focus was given in providing security for tenures and fixation of fair rents.
also evicted tenants to directly cultivate the land and avoid transfers. Areca nut plantation came to dominate farming in the region from then on. Interestingly, as two dominant castes in the region, historically the Brahmins and the Bunts have maintained social distance from each other and in fact have been competitors in various fields of politics as well as business. However, in the case of CAMPCO, the two communities came together to set up the cooperative in Dakshina Kannada, and which is still running successfully not just in Dakshina Kannada but also across the country.

Areca nut is an internal crop with coconut in the coastal belt of Dakshina Kannada, Uttar Kannada and Maland district of Shimoga for centuries. Every year farmers experience loss of yield, due to kole roga (decaying) which is a common phenomenon in areca farms during rainy season. The modern methods of farm practices have increased the cost of arecanut production over the past ten years and as discussed earlier, more than 85 percent of the growers are having marginal and small land holdings in the district. Ramachandra (80 years), a small farmer, expressed financial difficulties farmers experienced in the pre-independent India, as follows.

“During pre-world war time (1937-38) country was going through price crisis and this affected badly the agriculture market [...] In post British rule the introduction of chemical fertilisers in the village has created curiosity about the agricultural productivity and big farmers have used them in their farmland. There were less demand for arecanut products, constant diseases such as Koleroa reduced the agricultural yield, and we (farmers) had huge losses from agriculture. This is not a staple food or pluses; consumption of arecanut is limited to a small number of people in the world. If production exceeded the demand of the product, lack of good transport system, hording of the commodity by intermediaries or agent can affect the arecanut market. The same situation happened with us [...] (Field Notes 2009).

‘CAMPCO’ is a known name among Dakshina Kannada households. CAMPCO stands for ‘Central Areca nut Marketing And Processing Cooperative Limited’. It was registered on 11th July 1973 under section 7 (Registration) of the Karnataka Cooperative Societies Act 1959. The main objective of CAMPCO is procuring arecanut, from the members, marketing raw materials and products in national and international market. It promotes and develops areca and cocoa cultivation, marketing and processing in the country. Initially it started with a handful of procurement centres in Karnataka and

23Farmers of Dakshina Kannada, Shimoga and Uttara Kannada looked arecanut as a way of life and not observed this as commercialization until emergence of CAMPCO. With the price hike in arecanut, farmers attracted by the price converted the low yield paddy lands to areca gardens (particularly in Dakshina Kannada) and this resulted in the higher production of the crop in the region.

24The cultivation has confined to Karnataka (40%), Kerala (25%), Assam (20%), Tamil Nadu, Meghalaya West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Andaman islands. Areca nut (referred as betel nut or supari) is a crop that has
Kerala and adopted a policy for purchasing commodities directly from the farmers and marketing.

During the last quarter of the 1970s, CAMPCO encouraged growers to take up Cocoa cultivation in the areca plantations, as a supplementary or intercrop. In early 1980s, the sudden withdrawal of buyers of Cocoa from procurement centres because of the collapse of international market came as a shock to the cultivators of cocoa. With the request from Karnataka and Kerala governments, CAMPCO started cocoa procurement to help the farmers in distress. In the early phase, CAMPCO had exported Rs 4 crore of cocoa beans to European countries. To compete with world markets, CAMPCO played a significant role in establishing a name for Indian Cocoa on the world map.\(^{25}\) To create a permanent demand and steady market, CAMPCO established a chocolate manufacturing unit at Kemminje village in Puttur Taluk in Dakshina Kannada district.\(^{26}\) This factory produces chocolates under the brand ‘CAMPCO’.\(^{27}\) This factory are in industrially backward region; however, significant feature is that it is situated in the middle of the cocoa cultivating region, so was easily accessible to the producers. Recently, CAMPCO proposed to both the central and state governments to fix a Minimum Support Price for arecanut products based on the recommendations of the Arecanut Research and Development Foundation (ARDF) committee. On March 2010, CAMPCO entered into the rubber market and is now purchasing rubber from the farmers. The increased price of rubber in the market made many farmers shift to rubber plantations, which has an adverse impact on the soil quality and the water table. Today, farmers increasingly feel that arecanut that provided profits in the 80s and 90s will not be able to continue to do so in future. While members continue to sell their crop to CAMPCO, they are also now exploring private markets (agents) for their crops to get higher prices.

socio-religious and cultural significance in the Indian context. Its production exists in 9 Asian countries and India has largest area (400 thousand hectares) under arecanut cultivation in the world (Indiastat, 2010).

\(^{25}\)CAMPCO still had the problem as in limited internal market and unprofitable export market. To overcome this problem and to increase the internal consumptions of cocoa and to export value added products it bought Cocoa Pods from growers. Later, it adopted scientific processing methods to market standards, released dry cocoa beans matching in quality in the world market to that of Ghana, Brazil and other leading Cocoa cultivating nations.

\(^{26}\)Financial assistance was provided by Karnataka and Kerala government, Industrial Development Bank of India [IDBI], Industrial Credit Corporation of India [ICICI], and Industrial Finance Corporation of India [IFCI]. The factory was constructed within four years. During that time, it was the largest chocolate unit in South East Asia with most modern equipped machineries imported from Europe. Then President of India, Mr. Giani Zail Singh inaugurated the factory on 1st September 1986.

\(^{27}\)It has been producing various products - semi finished items like Cocoa Mass, Cocoa Butter and Cocoa Powder and finished products in moulded line, count line, chocolate drink.
The CAMPCO management has 17 members as the Board of Directors. Havyakas’ and Bunts are the dominating caste communities who enjoy the position of president and directors in the cooperative. The founder president Varanashi Subraya Bhat belongs to Havyaka community and his 3 terms (1973-78, 78-83 and 84-90) as president of CAMPCO has given a strong foundation and developed it as a major cooperative in agriculture. He had taken the initiative of starting the chocolate factory to provide a market for coca products in the region. As far as caste dynamics in areca marketing (CAMPCO) is concerned, many directors are from upper caste and class category. Directories are elected through a democratic process. On paper, anybody can contest elections, however given the scale of operation of the cooperative, farmers without influence and standing would find it difficult to gain support within the cooperative. It is a farmers’ cooperative run by the farmers for their benefit in the international market. CAMPCO maintains a quality check of the commodities while purchasing from the farmers. Quality price is quoted in the market every day, based on the quality of the product. CAMPCO as a market oriented cooperative, works towards providing market access to the farmers in the locality.

Different studies (Worsley & Allen, 1971; Apthorpe, 1972) have recognised the significance of the power struggle in cooperatives across the world. The principle of cooperative is to keep cooperative detached from politics. However, the creation of political neutrality is a difficult and unrealistic expectation. CAMPCO has linkages with the state and central government for smooth functioning of arecanut market. However, the government is unable to dominate the management of cooperatives. Since the late 1990s’, different controversies have plagued CAMPCO had affected its popularity in the district. CAMPCO has developed as a-politicised farmer group as it is not associated with any political party but still has a certain level of political influence and it provides support to those who aspire to become a political leader in the village. Keshava Bhat, a farmer from the village observes that,

‘Today cooperative is a base of the rural economy. [...] Societies provided financial loan, agriculture market and political position to the farmers in rural areas. Political aspirant in the village first contests in society elections as it is associated with agriculture and later to Panchayat and bigger positions in the hierarchy of politics. However big political leader he may be, they try to keep a healthy relationship with

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28The Directors were elected according to the rules of Bye Laws. The day-to-day activities have been conducted by the Managing Director. The Executive Committee and the Business Committee devote more time to scrutinise and decide about the financial and business transactions of the institution.
cooperatives/societies, Panchayat and farmers, as they are the vote banks of the politics. The leaders attend cooperative programs; cooperative have good relations with political party leaders to lobby for agricultural market related issues with central and state government. They both work together for mutual benefit and do not be surprised if CAMPCO is part of this political power play’ (Field Notes, 2009).

CAMPCO has a society in every revenue village of Dakshina Kannada that facilitates the procurement and collection of crops, as well as attends to farmers’ requirements such as subsidies and loans through their societies. It has a direct contact with the members (farmers) and it provides a market for arecanut, coco and rubber products in the region. CAMPCO over the years has expanded across the district as well as in the neighbouring state of Kerala, and gradually opened branches across India.

Farmers Association in Dakshina Kannada:

CAMPCO is the first farmers’ collective and it can be argued that it set the way for and served as a ready example for future farmers’ collectives to emerge in the region. The formation of Farmers’ Associations has been similar to how CAMPCO came up in the 1970s. Just as CAMPCO emerged in the context of land reforms and the fear of the dominant classes of being marginalised in the new agrarian set up, farmers’ associations also came up post 1990s when the state withdrew its support to farmers and exposed them to the vagaries of the international market. The farmers’ associations organised around specific crops and products brought various farmers across the district to form a collective in order to deal with the everyday concerns of farming as well as to collectively demand appropriate prices for their products. In the previous chapter, I have discussed how Varanashi Organic Farmers Association, which emerged as a part of organic farming project, has over the years promoted organic farming through its 300 members, but also worked towards marketing their products internationally. As a collective, it has, as a collective, managed to negotiate better prices for the products in the international market. It has also benefitted through this exposure in terms of learning about the new technologies within organic farming. In the rest of the section, I provide a profile of different farmers associations in Dakshina Kannada, on how farmers across the district have regularly formed collectives to address immediate concerns of farming. I take three examples- Vanilla Growers Associations; Bee Keepers Associations; and Water Users Associations. The Vanilla Growers Association came up around 2003-04, to capitalise on the international market for vanilla. However, after the collapse of the international demand for the Indian vanilla, the association also became inactive. The Bee Keepers
Association is emerging as an important collective, particularly after the popularity of organic farming and honeybee keeping as an important allied farming activity among farmers. The third example, i.e. the Water Users association, has traditional roots in that the association has revived an old system of water sharing and management through collective initiative of farmers in different localities. The associations have grown over the years in that increasingly the farmers realise the need to conserve water for cultivation, given the water crisis in the region.

**Vanilla Growers Associations**: In 2000, Madagascar and Indonesia have undergone natural cyclonic calamities; this destroyed the vanilla vines, and caused a huge shortage in the supply of vanilla in the world, which resulted in increased prices dramatically. India entered the vanilla market around the same time, at the time, of Madagascar’s crop failure. Madagascar supplied to nearly 75 per cent of the world market and the ban on synthetic vanilla in the United States increased the demand for vanilla in the international market resulting in price rise. Indian vanilla, according to industrial sources, is as good as Madagascar vanilla in terms of both content and quality. This made the importers trade with India, to meet the demands of natural vanilla. In the year (2003-04) India exported 26 million tonnes of cured vanilla beans at 36.06 crores, which registered phenomenal annual average growth rate to 92% from 1999 to 2003. The export of vanilla from India posted a 90% increase in the quantity, increased the average price of vanilla in Dakshina Kannada than in Madagascar (Spice Board, 2005). In 2003-04, India became an International player in the vanilla market with an annual growth of 50 MT and currently has more than 100 MT of cured beans. There was a demand for Indian vanilla in the U.S.A, Japan and Western European countries like France, Germany, Netherlands and UK. During this period, Spice board encouraged vanilla cultivation as an intercrop with coconut, arecanut, coffee and other species in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. It became an important crop for a short period, in the five districts of Karnataka namely, Shimoga, Uttara Kannada, Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Chickmagalur. Vanilla is a commercial crop; growing of vanilla beans is complicated and labour intensive, and its processing is a slow process that requires skills. In 2003, there was a steady increase in the vanilla price within a short time and farmers of Dakshina Kannada were able to make maximum profit in a commercial crop. In recent times, the Dakshina Kannada farmers

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29 To overcome the shortages of vanilla, companies switched to synthetic vanilla substitutes. Meanwhile, there was decreased demand for the vanilla vines and the resurgence of vanilla production has caused prices fall up to 90% since 2005.
showed interest in spices and growers in Karnataka especially from Malnad districts formed an association called Indian Spice Associates at Puttur in 1988-89 for exchanging the knowledge on cultivation and processing, for production of planting materials and for protecting their interest in black pepper, cardamom, nutmeg and recently vanilla. Vanilla Development Trust (VDT) – a body of vanilla growers sponsored by the Syndicate Agriculture foundation, Hiriadka - came into existence in 1994-95. At present, the Trust has 408 members from over seven districts of Karnataka and some of the members from Goa, Kerala and Maharashtra. The Trust has been providing technical services regarding the cultivation, supply of plant material, training in pollination, curing and assisting the growers in finding a suitable market. Many more growers associations, self-help groups have come into being in recent years.

“Vanilla Development Trust (VDT), Hiriyadka, quoted Rs 2,775 a kg for the first grade green vanilla beans, whereas a pharmaceutical company's agent in Sullia taluk of Dakshina Kannada district was buying it at Rs 2,650 a kg. The second grade green vanilla beans fetched Rs 1,825 a kg, whereas the private players were offering Rs 1,850 a kg in Sullia market” (Business Line Oct 07, 2003).

In 2001, dry beans fetched Rs 9,000 and by 2003-04, it reached Rs. 22,000 a kg in the state. The sporadic price fluctuation in vanilla was created by the competition between the buyers in the international market. They procured vanilla and hoarded the crop to create shortage of vanilla in national and international market. The price hike in the market benefited a few farmers in getting premium prices as many of them had sold their product by the time when price increased. Hence, only a few farmers could make maximum profit.

“The price hike has created an interest about vanilla among everyone. Many farmers have showed interest in the cultivation of vanilla vines. As there was huge demand for the crop in the market, it automatically increased the demand for the vanilla vines in the district. Many nurseries were opened with the vanilla vine; each vine went for Rs 100, and a few farmers who saw the market for vanilla much before its emergence in the district, who were able to make huge profit. Big landholders were able to survive market fluctuations in growing vanilla.. […] Today, vanilla is no more considered to be profitable and no one is producing it in their land. Many farmers have cleared the vanilla vines and used it as green manure in their agriculture land.” (Field notes 2009)

After 2005, the prices of vanilla started declining and growers who had processed stocks of dry vanilla had to sell them at the lower price. Later on, buyers stopped fixing a price for dry vanilla and some of them purchased the beans without making payments and made payment after selling the product in the international market. The vanilla crop cultivation penetrated the market very fast and within 2-3 years, this product disappeared from the agriculture lands of Dakshina Kannada. The news media played a significant
role in popularising vanilla cultivation as the remunerative prices for vanilla flashed in the news magazine made farmers to turn into vanilla cultivation.

**Dakshina Kannada Beekeepers Association**: Beekeeping in the Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka was a thriving industry until 1980s. The honey (*Apis cerana indica*) produced was from the extra floral nectar abundantly available in rubber plantations in the nearby areas. The honey industry received a severe blow in the 1990s due to the Thai sacbrood disease in bee colonies. Thousands of bee colonies perished causing severe losses to the beekeepers. Consequently, some of them left beekeeping for other avenues of income. Several beekeepers, however, persisted with the indigenous bees, took divisions from the surviving colonies and slowly re-established their apiaries. Dakshina Kannada Beekeepers' Society situated in Puttur is a co-operative society, which became active in providing assistance and supports to its members. At the grassroots, there are many informal groups throughout the district, which are active in providing assistance in honey farming. The society procures honey from its members and from other beekeepers in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts and markets it after processing under its brand name 'Madhuri'. More than 7000 members are registered with the association, however more than 18 thousand families are practicing apiculture farming and produce more than 450 quintals (2010-11) of honey every year. In Beekeeping, we do not find any class-caste dimensions; it is associated with the skill and practice of the small, big farmers, landless labourers or villagers in the district. Many of them are not part of the association; instead, they have created their own informal network of consumers for their products in the village or city. Beekeeping was considered a hobby and a farm practice in the agriculture fields. As a collective association, it provides scope and market for the produced honey and organises workshops, training programs for the members and public for the promotion and development of apiculture. The introduction of organic farming has contributed to the promotion and development of apiculture farming as farmers have taken interest in the production of honey as it provides an alternative income. A few farmers in Dakshina Kannada have taken apiculture as a lucrative occupation as many of them made profits through this farm practice.

**Water users Associations**: Traditional technology is part of traditional knowledge, which the farmers have been using over generations and which is in tune with local agricultural conditions. Here I would be discussing a unique form of water conservation, Katta that
has been traditionally practiced in the coastal belt of Karnataka for centuries. From time in memorial the katta has been constructed in the villages though active participation of the people. Each village had its own expertise in Katta construction.

These kattas are temporary check-dams and have to be constructed annually after the rain to hold store water irrigation during summer months. For many years, government did not support this practice of irrigation and nor did it provide financial support for farmers to carry out the construction of Katta. From 2009 onwards, the government has allocated funds through the National Rural Employment Generation Act for the construction of Katta. Community kattas are more environment friendly than the government barrage, which is constructed with wood and cement. Through these are permanent pillar constructions across the river, the farmers have not made use of these barrages primarily because of regular complains of seepage and unsuitable locations. Today these barrages narrate the failure of government programmes in the district.

Katta is successful in many villages, particularly where it is constructed and maintain through local collective action. Each katta has about 5 to 15 beneficiary families. They share the cost of construction. Generally, one family takes up the responsibility of construction and management. Others contribute in cash. The water is shared. A village called Mithabagillu alone had 75 recognised kattas, approximately 60-70 kattas are constructed every year, and more than 20 kattas are providing water to the farmers thought out the summer until the arriving of monsoon (Doodamni, 2008).

Formation of Katta was a cultural practice of the people and many families share their names with katta such as Katadakorikaru, Katekaru. Today, with the modern methods of farming and arrival of electricity, different irrigation methods and bore wells in the villages, the practice of Katta farm practice is almost in the verge of disappearing from the district. Nonetheless, individuals and farm journalism is promoting and propagating the concept of Katta and many farmers are still practicing old traditional water conservation method which is environment friendly. The villages like Yethadka, Mithanadka are examples of the collective actions for the preservation of traditional source of water conservation system that provides irrigation to paddy and plantation crops during the post monsoon season. Katta construction is for agriculture irrigation and traditionally paddy is the main crop that requires sufficient water sources. So, after the monsoon, farmers used to construct these barrages across the river in the village.
Within the district, farmers are becoming aware of the importance of Katta, they are giving importance for the conservation, development, and innovations are ongoing in improving the traditional techniques of Katta construction. Katta construction is a very labour intensive work and it needs cooperation and collective action from the beneficiary groups. From November onwards, villagers in Dakshina Kannada and Kasargodu district are busy in the construction of Kattas as they are the source of water for irrigation in the winter and summer for agriculture. In regional level, there exist groups that formed informally for the construction, maintenance of Public katta. In many locations, water distribution from katta takes place as per the traditional oral agreements. The water users association although created for the felt needs of water for irrigation; however it has contributed to the preservation of vanishing culture in the society. The collective collaboration of the people is the main reason for the protection and preservation of the traditional techniques of the region. This activity indirectly contributes to the development of collective feeling, environmental consciousness among the farmers.

In the next section, I discuss Shree Keshtra Dharmasthala Rural Development Project or SKDRDP an organisation associated with the famous Shree Dhamasthala temple, which has a project in my field area. The organisation is consider to be efficient and has a significant presence in the villages in Dakshina Kannada.

**Shree Kshetra Dharmasthala Rural Development Project (SKDRDP):** Shree Kshetra Dharmasthala Rural Development project or SKDRDP began as an informal institution in 1982, under the leadership of Shri. Veerendra Heggade. In the post land reform phase, the SKDRDP, proactively provided basic resources (agricultural implements, seeds and fertilisers) and financial supports to the beneficiaries of the land reforms to cultivate their land. Many of these farmers would have gone back to daily wage labour if not for the assistance they received from the SKDRDP.

It assisted the small farmers with knowledge, capital, seeds, tools and fertilisers for the best use of them in their agriculture land. Understanding the existing poverty in these families, temple extended its charity and provided them with all basic requirements for a household like from food to utensils. In 1991, SKDRDP became a legal, permanent institution and was registered as a charitable society.

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30 I did my MSW from SDM Ujire, which is under the administration of Heggade, and during my fieldwork I do remember people narrating the story as how whole truckload of rice was purchased from the market
Soon in 1990s, it realized that charity does not allow the SKDRDP to grow and reach out to poorest sections of the society. That is when micro-finance became popular in the development sector, and Self-help Groups (henceforth referred as SHGs) came up in villages in a significant way. In Bantwal, SKDRDP started functioning from 2004 and today it is functioning in 10 *karyakeshthra* (working areas) within the taluk. Rangaraj is a sevaniratha ('at your service') or field animator in my field village, who is most respected by the villagers. This position has given him many responsibilities other than those assigned by the SKDRDP. He is an important person for the village. Villagers meet him for suggestions, discussions on legal issues, family disputes, financial constraints etc. In meetings, he takes up the role of an advisor, counsellor and provide his time and service free of cost to the people. To quote him,

“From past three years, I am working as a Sevaniratha [...] we don’t have any time limit for work, from morning till night we give our service [...] I manage 50 to 60 groups in the area and the whole week I am busy in meetings. I am a well-educated person and I opted for this service voluntarily. I get a personal satisfaction as I am giving my service to SKDRPD [...] Compared with other jobs, it is low paid, but for me this not a profession but a service to the people” (Field Notes 2009).

All the projects of the organisation were introduced through SHGs. The initial project that emerged in the early phase of the SKDRDP is the *Pragathi Bandhu*, an alternative approach to the farmers’ crisis in the region. It is an innovative concept that was introduced in 1992. These groups were formed when poor and marginal farmers were unable to hire labour for agricultural purposes. *Pragathi Bandhu* in Kannada refers to the group of people who are partners for progress. It is the name given to the group which works collectively to improve their situation. This can include labour sharing by groups and distributed among the small and marginal farmers in the village. Many people expressed that ‘Who will give you kgs of rice? This generosity can only be seen in Veerendra Heggade.’

31 Today it has engaged in Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Uttara Kannada, Coorg, Shimoga, Chickmagalur, Dharwad, Haveri, Gadag, Tumkur and Belgaum districts spread over in 8000 villages and benefiting more than 17,50,000 families. Understanding the existing poverty distress in the urban sector it is working in the six coastal towns under Karnataka Urban Development and Coastal environment Management Project. It is effectively implementing developmental activities in these regions through the community development programs.

32 At that time, microfinance was a new subject in development sector and the Bangladesh experience of Joint Liability Groups (JLBs) influenced for the emergence of SHGs

33 In the taluk administration, there are 50-60 field workers, a supervisor is in charge for every 6-8 field workers, and a taluk project officer is in charge in the taluk.

34 The field animator had appointed at the village level for effective implementation of project. Each animator is assigned with one village (500 families). It was their responsibility to educate, motivate the household members and get them involved in the local self-help groups which provides financial grants to individuals and group.
of small and marginal farmers who collectively handle the finance and help each other in the difficult phases.\textsuperscript{35} When SKDRDP adopts a new village within a district, it is the first intervention introduced for the development of the village. \textit{Pragathi Bandhu} group consists of 5-7 members who have small landholdings, and of a same age and who mostly belong to the same caste, class background. The upper castes are not a part of the project. As explained by the field animator.

“... Upper caste (Brahmin) people do not need to join the groups, as it is focused on the backward sections. But if they show interest to join these groups then we make them to be part of organisation activities and take their contributions in time of festivals and events organised in the village. If we put two different classes of people (rich and poor) then it will affect the group solidarity. If same class (poor and poor) groups are together then they can coordinate, understand each other’s situation and can work cohesively for the progress of each other ” (Field notes 2009).

The group meets once a week in a member’s house and contribute their labour in that members agricultural field, and in the following week they shift to another members field for work sharing.\textsuperscript{36} In this way, they help each other and they reduce the cost of labour involved in farming. Labour sharing is done on a rotation basis as they follow the order of the names registered in the attendance book; however, sometimes they share the labour based on work priority of the land and farmers by taking the consent of all the members of the groups. When a group member is unable to contribute his labour because of personal commitments, the group allows the person to send another person fill in for him. In every meeting, the group members save Rs 20 and on a rotation basis the member from the group deposit the money in the bank as it provides them an opportunity to understand on how the bank functions.

Over the years, these groups have became more flexible, expanded the scope of labour sharing from agriculture to other development activities like construction of infrastructure, house repair, and development of the village. Before, the group structure was restricted only for farmers and today, other people including women have been allowed to form the group.

Over the decades, SKDRDP was working only with male members (farmers). In 1996, they introduced the \textit{Janavikas Kendra and Swasahaya Sangha} (SHGs) for giving

\textsuperscript{35} This is a successful model which is reproduced in the special central Govt. Project i.e. SGSY Project.

\textsuperscript{36} It is the responsibility of the host member to provide the refreshment and lunch to other group members.
an opportunity to rural women to participate in their development initiatives. Janaviakas Kendara (JVK) is a group of 30 - 40 women members. The membership criteria is that member has to be 40 years old or above and make self-empowered. Swasahaya Sangha or SHG is a women group that has formed with the interest of savings and accessing the credit for different socio-economic purpose such as business, avail loans for gold purchase, marriage, infrastructure development, and housing. All three groups (Pragathi Bandhu, JVK and SHGs) in every village organise themselves into federations depending on the number of existing groups in the village. It is common to find more than 60 groups in a big village with more than 600 households. The decisions for village developmental, socio-cultural and religious activities have been identified in the federation meetings and through group participation these community activities are organised. Along with this SKDRDP has introduced many different programs such as Jana Jagruthi (mass awareness) an anti-alcoholism programme. Jeevan Dhama is the housing program, which provided credit facility for building and renovating houses, and houses were built on a grant basis for destitute families. Other programmes such as Suraksha is for the access of health and sanitation programs, Sampoorna Surakshya is an insurance policy scheme for emergency health care for the poor people in society.

In conclusion to SKDRDP, during 19th century, Karl Marx while discussing about religion has expressed that ‘religion is opium of the masses’ and in the case of Dakshina

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37 In 1993, Jnanavikasa group came into existence for empowering the rural women. Jnana means knowledge, Vikasa means progress or development and Kendra means centre. The whole phrase can be described as a centre for improving people’s knowledge for development. Under this, 10 to 15 women join together, form a group, meet every week in a particular place (school, primary health centre, Anganwadi etc). In the meeting they organise programs with the object of providing knowledge and creating awareness on different issues such as health, hygiene, education, childcare, family matters, home maintenance, nutritious food, traditional medications. They use credit for general purposes like purchase of gold, marriages, repayment of old loans.

38 At the time of inception, these women met every week at a common place in the village and conducted programmes with a view to improve their knowledge like awareness programmes and workshops on health and hygiene, education, childcare, family matters, home maintenance, nutritious food preparation, etc. JVK was observed as a centre of socio-economic empowerment of the uneducated and underprivileged rural women from subaltern section of society. However, over the time, JVK made modifications in its approaches and when SKDRDP introduced micro-finance women got involved in micro finance. New groups were formed with 10-20 women members and 4-5 such groups joined together and formed a JVK in hamlets and locality. Today there is no age restriction and focus was on income generating activity. Over a period of experience many groups have taken the credit for group enterprises in the village and are doing home based small business, nursery business, tailoring and other related activities in the district.

39 At federation level, there are executive and audit committees to look after the accounts of the groups. The responsibilities are in the hands of members and office bearers of these federations, who are selected by the group. Once in two years the leadership and membership of the groups and the federations has to rotate among members federation.

40 A group was established exclusively for the people who have undergone the alcohol de-addiction camp process of the Jana Jagruthi and who started a new life. This group is referred to as Nava Jeevana Samiti.
Kannada, religion and SKDRDP are acted as a opium for the progress of the SC and ST communities and as a religious organisation, it has made significant impact on the social institutions of Dakshina Kannada. It has used religion as a social capital to achieve the desired goal of reaching the people and influencing them to participate collectively in the regional development process and created faithful followers who are willing to work voluntarily for SKDRDP. The case of SKDRDP demonstrates that religion and spirituality have the ability to achieve collective actions and contribute in the progress of those communities which are been backwards even after the introduction of government welfare measures. Development in its general term considered as an economic development; however, here SKDRDP has given prominence for the economic empowerment of the people by introducing microfinance and it moved beyond and highlighted humanistic social, values of sharing and cooperation are the significant tool in the collective actions. Pragathi Bandhu can observe as a non-formal farmers’ association that based on the values of trust cooperation and work sharing. Within the farmers group, each member is inter-dependent on another for his/her survival. It looks beyond the concept of individualisation, which has created problem in the commercial agricultural setting and tried to create a chain of harmony, cooperation among people for their survival in farming. This simple concept today has reached thousand of small farmers and they are part of Pragathi Bandhu group and are able to overcome the labour crisis and practice traditional, modern, conventional or organic farming in the region, depending on their ideology and agricultural practice. The model of Pragathi Bandhu has today become a biggest solution for the labour problem in the district. Today, many of these big and upper caste landholders have created farmer groups to share their labour in each other’s agriculture land.

Farm Journalism

Farm Journalism is a formal or informal way of communication and information dissemination to the farmers about agriculture. The introduction of agricultural extension workers at the village level played a significant role in providing information about the government policies, programs related to agriculture, subsidy, irrigation, manures etc. They have immensely contributed in transferring the new technology and skills of package of practices on various crops, different subjects from scientists and specialists to farmers. In society, farm journalism, which is developed as a source of information, provided through newspaper and radio did not touch the farmers especially because it was
written or discussed in the scientific language by the scientists. Farm Journalism in post green revolution phase gave scope for the maximisation of the new approaches of the farming based on scientific techniques. The State government policies and programmes in agriculture did not discuss the felt needs of the farmers and universal application of programmes across the state has failed in capturing the populist interest.

The purpose of discussing farm journalism is unlike the farmers' movement from Karnataka and farmers associations from Dakshina Kannada. Farm Journalism in Dakshina Kannada provides a context for problematising the stereotype understanding of farmers and farming in agriculture. The discussion of farm journalism demonstrates that, contemporary farmers have moved away from the traditional notion of farmers as illiterate, ignorant class of people in the rural society. Through farm journalism, Dakshina Kannada farmers demonstrate how thoughts and practices of agriculture can complement each other and create a new class of contemporary farmers who have moved beyond the ideology, class, caste based conflicts and interested in maximising the market conditions for individual profit.

In the contemporary agrarian society, farmers are in need of a support system that can highlight the felt needs and raise voice for the collective mobilisation of farmers beyond a particular geography or locality. Here, mass media has played a crucial role in the dissemination of information and technology of agriculture from different sources to its ultimate users, i.e., farmers. The electronic media like T.V and Radio have played a major role in the audio-visual communication; print media are still providing its contribution to the development of farm literature. In the agricultural sector, there are journals published for the farmers benefit and the agricultural universities, scientists and experts in farming sector publish articles about agriculture methods, technologies and crop varieties. In India, approximately 500 agriculture related magazines are published in different languages. Along with the modern media, there exist traditional media like drama, dance, songs, plays that have brought farmers together for collective mobilisation; however today they are in the state of vanishing from the mainstream communications. In Karnataka, we find many individuals, groups and organisations that are still working for the development of this mode of communication in rural India. Radio covers 90% of the masses in India and FM Radio boom has again popularised the listening mode of communication. Today many community radios are active in remote areas of the country, which provide market updates to farmers. Mobile is also another mode of communication.
that is providing market information for farmers; fishermen in Kerala use mobile phones to find out the market price while still fishing at sea. Instead of selling their fish at beach auctions, the fishermen started exploring best price for their catch. This resulted in the elimination of waste and variation in prices fell dramatically (Jensen, 2007). In Karnataka, there are different farm journals such as, AdikePatrike, Annadata, Bharateeya Tengu Patrike (cocoanut), Jalasiri, Krushika, Krushi Mitra, Krushi Kamadhenu, Madhu Prapancha, Nirantara Pragati, Raita Dhvani, Sahaja Saguvali, Siri Samruddhi and Sujatha Sanchike all of which are published in Kannada. Along with Kannada, there are many English farm journals, which I have not included here, as I have given prominence for Kannada farm journals and their contribution in the region.

Kannada farm journals can classified on various ways. One way to classify is through a crop or allied agricultural sector. The journals such as Madhu Prapancha (English literal translation is Honeybee’s World) publishes articles related to ‘apiculture’ (that is honey farming) whereas, Krushi Kamadhenu provides information about animal husbandry, dairy farming and state policy, programs, incentives related to dairy farming. There are journals like Adike Patrike which brings the contemporary issues, problems, concerns, perspectives, innovations, experiments etc., of the farmers about different agricultural sector, market, new technology, farming approaches like organic farming, vegetable market etc. In this chapter, I am discussing about Adike Patrike as it is globally acknowledged for its pro-farmer initiative within the farm journalism.

**Adike Patrike - A Decentralized Farm Journal**

Until the early part of the 1990s, there existed a general understanding about the farm journalism is that, those people who never had the experience of doing farming in the agriculture land have wrote about the practice of farming. During that time, few exceptional cases like Adike Patrike has tried to contradict the above statement and it was successful in achieving the task of establishing a decentralized farm journal by the farmers, for farmers and through farmers. In mid 1980s, there was a periodic price fluctuation of areca market and farmers were in crisis. In this time, All India Areca Growers Association, Puttur searched for the cause and solution for this problem and they came out with an idea of introducing a newsletter for the farmers. A four-page newsletter that was introduced on an experimental basis today became one of the leading

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41 All India Areca Growers Association represents the interest of areca growers of costal Karnataka than the distant areca growing areas of India (Assam or West Bengal). This initiated in 1978.
farm journals of Dakshina Kannada. *Adike Patrike* (means areca magazine) was launched in November 1988 as a monthly magazine from All India Areca Growers Association (AIAGA) for the farmers. The general objective of this journal was to work as a channel of agro-communication, offer solutions to the problems of farmers, encouraging farm research and making the journal a medium of participation with special reference to the farming community. A farmer journalist Shree Padre who actively engaged in farm journalism successfully runs this farm journalism, farming and highlighting environment related issues like Endosulfan, creating awareness about rainwater harvesting and water management techniques. The magazine is a non-profit entity and it is registered as trust. From past 22 years constantly it is publishing stories, narrating different farm activities, farmer experiences, technological innovations, agriculture problems and solutions in its each issue. As the name suggests many farmers think Adike Patrike is associated with arecanut cultivation; but it has wide range of scope and it narrates different stories than arecanut such as paddy cultivation, coconut, cocoa, black pepper, jackfruit, vegetables, fruits, value addition for agriculture commodities etc. Fifty pages of the journal contain new information on different crops, new farm technologies, different variety of seeds, new recipe, eco-friendly patterns of houses (for rain water harvesting), all tested by farmers. When the journal was launched, in the initial years, there was lack of active participation of farmers and more than 80% of articles had to be rewritten as farmers did not have writing skills. The initiators were determined to make the farmers to write; they organised a few workshops for teaching the farmers farm journalism skills and with the success of workshop, many farmers started writing. The journal consists of a core group of 30-40 farmer journalists under whom it is actively engaged in bringing out transformation in farm journalism.

The magazine got interesting concepts like Kaige Lekhani (English meaning could be *Pen to farmer's hands*) and it is encouraging farmers to write and express views, ideas, and experiences of the farm practices. So here, the magazine is providing a platform for the dissemination and discussion of new ideas. As the magazine says “Krishikare Rupisuva Krishikapara Madhyama” (pro-farmers media conceptualized by the farmers themselves), this as a participatory journalism or self-help journalism (Padre, 2001), has democratic setup wherein it is published by the group of farmers for the benefit of the

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42 To look after the administrative, financial and publication requirements of the magazine a separate body was formed namely Farmers First Trust (FFT) in 1998.
farmers and it is written by farmers, edited, sold and read by farmers. Magazine has introduced innovative ideas such as plant friends in its columns. In plant friends, a farmer with surplus seeds, seedling and medicinal plants can share them with other farmers though the column and thereby preserve the gene diversity. It is similar to the idea of Beej Bachavo as seeds are exchanged between the farmers. It discourages the farmers from visiting the Krishi Bhavan (agriculture office) just for collecting some information, this will save the farmers money and time in travelling and visiting and there were high chances that farmers will not receive the accurate information. On the other, it encourages farmers to write their queries to farm journal and next edition of the journal would provide number of suggestion to the queries given by the farmers, scientists, professors and experts from the field. To promote farmer-to-farmer communication the journal features a question and answer section called ‘one drop makes an ocean’ in which farmers ask others for advice and experience. (Padre, Sudarshana, Tripp, 2003). Journal has a column for introducing the agriculture related books namely ‘Pusthaka Prapancha’. The ‘Mane Maddu’ (Kannada meaning is Home Medicine), gives detailed description of herbal plants, medicinal trees, and it explains the way in which these plants, trees extracted can used for the preparation of local, homemade medicines for diseases. ‘Rasa Ruchi’ introduces every month two local, traditional cuisine from wild leaf to local vegetables. The journal also publishes the achievements of the farmers, by this it provides recognition to the farmers, and educates, motivates and inspires fellow farmers to move ahead in agriculture.

This journal is green and environment friendly in its stance; however, it does not support any particular ideology i.e. conventional and organic agriculture. The journal provided training, workshop to the farmers to bring out the ground realities of their agriculture experience. This magazine takes the credit of popularising the organic farming, Rainwater harvesting and creating awareness about the importance of the farmer centred value addition in agriculture products.

According to Rajaram Bhat, a farmer from the field area;

“From past 10 years I am a regular reader of Adike Patrike Journal. Farmers have full confidence in this magazine and it provided information that has been field tested by farmers. It provides a platform for farmers to write their experiments and due to the efforts of journal, many farmers are wiring about the farm experiences. The journal takes up innovative and interesting issues related to farming and even non-agriculture persons can read this journal. Many farmers in the village have kept the back issues of the journal as a bound volume and indeed it is a great asset for the farmers” (Field Notes, 2009)
In the interview, Shree Padre expressed that:

‘In agriculture there exists a wide range of publications brought out by newspapers and research institutions which never gave emphasis on farmers’ actual experience. The agriculture article gives the information for the farmer but they miss the ground reality of farming. In the year 1995, we decided to provide top priority for Rainwater Harvesting. Initially we faced information vacuum on rainwater harvesting. This was so serious that a science graduate could not understand the concept or methods of rainwater harvesting by reading the scientific texts. Rainwater harvesting texts are never focused on people. We wanted to simplify this for the benefit of the farmers’ (Field Notes, 2009).

An interesting feature of the journal is that every month it brings out a new story across from the globe related to agriculture. One edition will narrate the story of farmers who have value added fruit products from Thailand, another on bamboo shoot cultivation from China, another on arecanut dehusking, brodo-mixture sprayer, Jackfruit festivals etc. The articles bring in wide variety of the information from across the different countries, production, practices, modern-traditional technologies etc. I have observed many farmers discussing about them and they eagerly wait for the next edition, which gives them different variety of stories in Kannada, and promote to encourage them to do experiments in their agriculture fields. In Karnataka, Centre for Alternative Agricultural Media (CAAM) is working towards the development of alternative communication and it gives importance for the development of pro-farmer ideologies and practice and promotion for the development of farmer centred agriculture research. With the help of farmers and experts it has taken the initiative of creating every year a group of farmers who can write their stories, local-global stories in the farm journal and contribute for the development of farm journalism in the state. In conclusion, it can be said that farm journalism is yet another alternative form of movement against the state and market as it creates social consciousness and growth of populism, which supports political interest of the farmers in the policy and programs. It emphasises on the farmer centred alternative developments in the society and effectively monitors the functioning of state, market and provides alternative markets and approaches to tackle the problems of the agriculture.

Chapter Conclusion:

In conclusion, Dakshina Kannada has farmers associations, across the region, district and these innumerable associations are functioning towards the betterment of farmers, agriculture and ecology. The significance of associations in agriculture is that, they bring collective action and create social consciousness among individuals, farmers about agriculture, irrigation and environment. Dakshina Kannada farmers associations
have created consciousness towards market economy in different crop varieties and provided better knowledge about the market. The existing regional association, cooperatives, national associations have brought democratic approach among the farmers to bring changes in the policy programs of the government in agriculture. Farmers associations have been united beyond the caste-class categories of the social structure when it is related with land, water and market, which have direct impact on their socio-economic life. The space, membership and functionality of these associations is limited to a few individuals, village, block and the region; however they try to develop their economy by contributing to the village economy where they are residing. It brings collective consciousness, democratic approach in their farm lobbying as they take the role of contributors and entrepreneurs for the development of the economy. In the district and the state, many farmers and non-formal farmer groups have engaged in the production of value added products. Many of these associations maintain nonpartisan, united front and support each other as they work for the betterment of the farmers in particular and the economy in general. Honey growers support organic farming, areca growers support coco production, farmers supported by environment protection groups and vice versa (MSEZ). The farmers associations although believe in collective action, but the members are the individual farmers who work for their economic development in the society. Farmers observe agriculture as a business or an economy to achieve their sustainability in society. It was a means through which they can gain access to the needs of family. It is essential to understand that farmer as a person holds the raw materials for the production of different commodities in the market. Farming is like a firm or a company where risk factor exists and farmers’ input–output profit depends on the market. The economic status and crop production depends on market; as when there is high demand for a product in the market, farmer cultivates that crop in his field. Therefore, it would not be wrong to point that farming is indeed a gambling between farmer and market, where market leads and farmer follows. Scholars critique this forum of development, as it is against the ideological understanding of the agrarian myth. Agrarianism or agrarian myth refers to the social or political ideology that gives value to rural over urban society and considers farming as a

43 Sugar cane farmers in North Kanara produce sugar cane in the field and make jaggery out of cane milk. Coffee farmers after post harvest process and produce local coffee.

44 A potent form of ruralism with roots in romantic and conservative notions of an organic society, the agrarian myth is an essentialist ideology, which in many contexts is defended with reference to mutually reinforcing set of arguments to do with the innate aspects of peasant-ness, national identity and culture (Brass, 2000; page-11).
way of life in the society. It respects the farmers for producing abundance to support the national food security than to make personal profit and consider them as the backbone of the nation. It considers agriculture as historical and foundation of social organisation in the community. It criticises industrialisation, urbanisation and modernisation for vanishing the rural way of life. Agrarian myth considers the influence of modern culture, market economy in the rural spaces as non-indigenous, inauthentic, not natural and internationalism imposed on an unwilling rural population by the ‘outside culture’ and that is responsible for the erosion of authentic local agriculture traditions, values, beliefs etc. Sociology and agrarian policies still locate the farmers in pre-conception notions of caste, class and their relations with agriculture as a source of livelihood. However, in agrarian society, culture that surrounding agriculture is not consistent; we believe it or not in reality, agriculture is and part of the rural economy and without the active economy village cannot sustain and move towards progress. Today we do not find rural agitations between the landless labourers and landlords as it was before in agrarian society. The contemporary Indian village is experiencing more agitations of the farmers against the state and market. The degree of agitation and approach towards these global forces has changed and caste and hierarchy are not considered as major threat for the politics of the development. Farm journalism have became an alternative tools though which farmers are protesting and contributing for the development of new famer- centred policies and developmental activities in the region.

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