CHAPTER 4

AGITATING PEASANTRY

Organised peasant movements started in South Canara as a part of national movement in the 20th century. These movements culminated as an inspiring force for the social and economic transformation apart from freedom struggles. The most important aspect of the peasant struggles, which started in the 1930's was influenced by political ideology. So the struggles were transformed in to broad-based social movements which were directed against landlordism and caste system on one hand and imperialism on the other.

As Bipan Chandra stated

The establishment of British power in India was a prolonged process of piecemeal conquest and consolidation and the colonialisation of the economy and society. This process produced discontent, resentment and resistance at every stage. This popular resistance took in three broad forms: civil rebellions, tribal uprisings and peasant movements.

These sort of rebellions occurred in various parts of South Canara in the 19th century. The Koots rebellions of 1810-11 and 1830-31 and the rebellion of Kalyana Swami (1837) were important.

**Early Resistance Movements**

In the history of colonial India, insurgency of the peasantry is as old as colonialism itself. In South Canara there arose peasant movements during 1810-11 and 1830-31. It should be analysed in the light of peasant discontent and frustration on account of economic grievances. There was no highly developed political and national consciousness behind it.

Along with the colonialisation the company introduced strict control over the economic surplus. So the revenue regulations and commercial agreements enforced on the agrarian class resulted as the major cause of the two uprisings. They resisted the company's rule, demanding the redressal of specific grievances caused by the colonial exploitation. The peasant uprisings of these period could be considered as tax rebellion.

**The peasant unrest of 1810-11**

The official records did not furnish necessary information's about the nature, organisation and leadership of the peasant unrest of 1810-11. Alexander Read, the then collector of Canara in his letters to the Board of Revenue made some references about economic causes of the unrest. However the government did not give much importance to the unrest of 1810-11.

The peasants refused to pay to kist (installment of revenue) to the government in 1810-11. The main reason for this non payment of kist was that

the over assessment of revenue which was a part of the colonial exploitation. The official records states\(^1\) that the koots (assemblages) joined together and announced the refusal to pay the kist to the government and sought remission in the revenue assessment. The demand for remission by the cultivators was made in 1809. In his letters dated on 30\(^{th}\) April and 11\(^{th}\) May, 1809, Alexander Read\(^2\), the Collector complained that he experienced more difficulty than formerly in making his collections, that of late, he saw no signs of improvement.

The ryots of different parts of the district joined together with a view of obtaining reduction of rent. This was reported by Read\(^3\) in his letter on 29\(^{th}\) December 1810 to the Board of Revenue that, anticipating large demands for remission in settlement of that year arising out of a spirit of combination in the part of the ryots over the whole province. Read recommended\(^4\) the publication of a proclamation in the name of the Board, declaring that unreasonable claims to remission would not be allowed and specifying those cases in which indulgence on that respect would be granted.

The ryots complained\(^5\) about the introduction of new heads of revenue. They hated the introduction of salt and tobacco monopoly. Same way they also opposed\(^6\) the introduction of the British judicial system or law courts and the use of stamp paper.

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Another reason for the unrest was the economic depression experienced in the district. Due to this, the prices of agricultural crops had fallen considerably. The prices of the principal crops like rice, coconut, pepper, betelnut, cardamom etc had fallen. Because of the fall of market prices, the commutation rates of the crops had created great harm to the ryots. The cultivators were forced to pay all most all of their crops as the rent. Thus the impoverishment among the ryots caused the resistance of 1810-11.

Even though the protest was weak, comparing with the protest movement of 1830-31, it directed against the revenue administration of the company. Alexander Read(1) himself admitted that the assessment was too high and he thought, the inhabitants were beginning to feel the effects of over assessment more and more every year. Even though they admitted the fact of over assessment they did not take any permanent measures to help the ryots. The government granted temporary remissions in land revenue only which resulted in the peasant uprising of 1830-31.

Peasant Unrest of 1830-31

The over assessment and the crisis in the market prices compelled the ryots to resist the revenue policies of the government in 1830-31. The British administrative records referred this uprising as Koot. It was a strong protest of the peasants of South Canara against the British supremacy.

There were many causes for the disturbances. After the unrest in 1810-11 the government did not make any changes in the excessive

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revenue collection. There was an acute depression\(^1\) for some years after 1820 in trade, commerce and agriculture of the region and resultant low prices of the agricultural products. Thus the depression caused considerable fall in prices of commodities especially rice and also coconut, pepper, cardamom etc through which they earned their livelihood. Apart from the low prices, there was considerable discrepancy that prevailed\(^2\) in the government rate of commutation of the value of agricultural products. Thus the low market prices and the high commutation rates of the products seriously affected the economic condition of the peasantry.

The ryots opposed\(^3\) the disastrous affects of the salt and tobacco monopoly and the expenses involved in attending the courts, the expenses of stamps, the stamp laws, ferry farms, and the abkary. The Fasli 1240 saw the failure of crops in Canara, thus the production of the food grains were decreased and there was acute scarcity of food grains. The Huzoor jummabundy\(^4\) in November 1830 was concluded in a harsh and hasty manner without considering the opinion and accounts of the condition of the ryots. The considerable fall in produce and the adverse market together had reduced the living standards of the people considerably.

Stokes\(^5\) had written about the Huzoor jummabundy that,

No hope of future enquiry was held out to the ryots and they

1. Karnataka State Gazetteer, South Kanara District, (Bangalore, 1973), p. 68.
5. Ibid, p. 28.
were left to consider the settlement as fixed and irrevocable, they had no reason to suppose otherwise no revised settlement had ever taken place.

N.S. Cameron the Collector of Canara remarked that the ryots were dissatisfied with the settlement and little attention had been paid to their representations. In this circumstance the ryots sent arzees or petitions requesting the government to revise the settlement and grant uniform remission in their collection. When peasant representatives had gone to give petition at Mangalore, they were not able to see the collector because he was out of station. So they had petitioned in harsh words. Stokes had mentioned that,

Having no means to pay the jummabundy we had resolved to present to you an arzees stating our circumstances at the time you came to make the jummabundy; but as you settled it expeditiously and returned to Mangalore; and as it makes 10 days (or sometime) to do, in concert, a business where all the ryots were concerned; and as on our coming in to Mangalore, we found that you were gone in the direction of Moodabidry for jummabundy; unable to follow, we have addressed this petition to you from this place (probably Mangalore).

The orders on these arzees were dated on 27th December 1830 that,

1. Reports of John Stokes on Revision of Assessment and Disturbances Known as Koots in Canara, (Mangalore, 1885), p. 28.
2. Ibid, p. 28.
to these arzees the same reply was sent, viz, that the requisite investigation was made at the Huzoor jummabundy, which having been finished, no further orders would be issued. The first stage of the unrest that was sending petitions was over with this.

The second stage was the beginning of koots or assemblages were the organised combinations among the ryots or union of leaders and active supporters of the peasant movement. They held meetings and discussed their problems and the ways and means to solve it. The first report of a koot, received by Dickinson\(^1\) was from the Tahsildar of Bakel on 3\(^{rd}\) January 1831.

The ryots representatives in various parts of South Canara, Bakel, Bundual, Manjeswar, Kumbala, Mulky, Mogral, Udeyawar, Bakura, Talapadi, Uppinangady, Vittal, Kadri, Brahmarwar, Madhur, Coondapoor, Kumbala, Pady and Kasaragod were the important centers of the koots. The koots extended to North Canara also.

Temples had become the important centers of the koots. Manjunatha temple at Kadri was the major centre of the peasant uprisings, where the "Grand Koot" was organised\(^2\) towards the end of January 1831. Number of ryots from Bakel and Bantwal joined the meeting at Kadri. The Venkataramana Temple at Basur, the Mahamayi temple at Mangalore, the temple at Manjeshwar and the temple at Wamanjur were some of the important centers of the koots.

During the Mappila rebellion of Malabar, the Mosque and Madrassah played important centers of the revolters. The Tangals, Mausaliyars, Khazis

1. Reports of John Stokes on Revision of Assessment and Disturbances Known as Koots in Canara, (Mangalore, 1885), p. 30.
and other important religious leaders of the Islamic faith had actively co-operated in the rebellion. In the Koot resistance the temples became the meeting centre of the ryots but at the same time the Hindu religious leaders never had any link with the peasant uprising.

In order to organise(1) the koots the ryots maintained one potail and one head ryots in each of the village. There were separate headman for the maganes. Further each of the Koots had its own leaders and all of them met and discussed at the 'Grand Koot' (Kadri)(2). They also organised 'secret council'. It comprised of two or three Mukesars (Head Ryots) of each magane. The object of this council was to maintain the secrecy of the whole organisational affairs of the koots. The secret council played the role of linking and organising body of these peasant uprising.

The ryots determined to refuse the kists to the government until fresh settlement was made. The koots were well organised and there existed unity among the ryots which enabled them to resist the British rule. Same way, the natives who served as the revenue officials had taken the leading role of the koots.

During the period, the government received the news that the koots continued to increase and that required some assurance in writing, to induce them to disperse. Dickinson on the 2nd February 1831 issued(3) a proclamation, stating that he had received all the petitions of the people, was convinced of their losses and would grant them liberal remissions. But, he warned them

3. Reports of John Stokes on Revision of Assessment and Disturbances Known as Koots in Canara, (Mangalore, 1885), p. 113.
that if they did not disperse, he should be forced to recommend the government for the introduction of Martial law. But the koots were not ready to obey the declaration and argued\(^{(1)}\) that they were not in arms against the government and they were not liable to be punished under Regulation VII of 1808.

On 13\(^{th}\) March 1831, M.S. Cameron became the collector of Canara. It was after his promise to the ryots the unrest came to an end. Cameron\(^{(2)}\) promised that their petitions would be considered and remissions would be made after an examination of the losses to redress their hardships. On the other hand the ryots then decided to stop the organising Koots.

Stokes\(^{(3)}\) made inquiry up on the complaint of the ryots against the native Christians and took certain action. The native Christians who were in the revenue department at the end of February 1831, a few days before Cameron took charge, three of them had been dismissed, three had been induced by harsh treatments to resign, two were dead and one who temporarily employed had been relieved; so that there now remained only thirteen. And also decided that no one had been promoted or newly entertained by Cameron.

Some of the important leaders of the Koots were serving\(^{(4)}\) the government, in the Revenue Department. Soorupa who was the Head Moonshee of Dickinson's Cutcherry at Brahmawar, Krishna Raw who was the Head Serishtadar, Ranga Rao (brother of Krishan Rao) who was the serishtadar of

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1. Reports of John Stokes on Revision of Assessment and Disturbances Known as Koots in Canara, (Mangalore, 1885), p. 113.
2. Ibid, p. 113, 117.
the Mangalore taluk, Vyasa Raw who was the Serishtadar of Bakel (Kasaragod) taluk, etc were the important officials, who participated the koots and they had become the leaders of the unrest. Generally the British Government appointed only the landlords or the upper class persons in these posts. Thus the koots unrest was led by upper class or the landlord class. They had the same problems of the ryots, for which they sought redressal.

Even though it was led by the landlord class the middle class ryots and the poor ryots also participated. The reason was that the economic condition became worst and the middle class ryots could not meet the government demands. Same way the poor ryots who cultivated their lands by themselves could not bear the enhanced assessment. The landless labourers who occupied the bottom of the social strata, did not participate in this resistance.

Stokes\(^{(1)}\) observed that the koots rebellions were the conspiracy of the Brahmin servants of the company who opposed the native Christians and to restore the Brahmin ascendancy in the Cutcherry. He also put forward his view that the ryots had no opportunity of stating their cases before the government. But he tried to defend the revenue system. Even though Stokes expressed\(^{(2)}\) the remissions were actually small, the loss of the second crop proved heavy and extensive and in third crop, there was a general failure, but they could not be foreseen and provided for the settlement.

The leaders of the second koots rebellion was punished by the government. Krishna Rao was dismissed\(^{(3)}\) from service on 8th December 1831.

1. Reports of John Stokes on Revision of Assessment and Disturbances Known as Koots in Canara, (Mangalore, 1885), p. 109.
2. Ibid, p. 108.
Dickinson directed the Tahsildar of Mangalore to attach the property of some of the defaulters\(^1\). He also issued warrants for the apprehension of 16 persons who were considered to be the ring leaders of the Koot and the Tahsildar of Mangalore was entrusted with the execution of the warrant. Some important officers, Ranga Rao, Namappa, Ballappa, Madhav Row, Surappa, Vyasa Row, Sarvottam Row, and Attavara Ramappa were dismissed from service\(^2\). The rebel peasants were interrogated and released after signing a Moochilka (an agreement in writing), in which they agreed that they would not organise the Koot, but begged that they might not be called upon for the second, until the Jummabandy should have been fixed\(^3\).

The British authorities did not introduce any permanent measure to help the ryots and instead recommended the remissions only. He also recommended\(^4\) the continuation of tharao assessment at an attainable standard to encourage agricultural improvement and put an end to annual fluctuation in the settlement. Though the movement failed to achieve its aim, it put forward the defects of the revenue policy and administration of the company and same way it exposed the undesirable condition of the peasantry. The unrest became an important landmark in the history of the peasant movements in South Canara.

**The Rebellion of Kalyana Swami, (1837)**

Kalyana Swami's rebellion may be looked as one of the early cases of resistance against the British. The establishment of British supremacy and

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1. *Reports of John Stokes on Revision of Assessment and Disturbances Known as Koots in Canara, (Mangalore, 1885)*, p. 112.
colonial policy disturbed the traditional land relation and also the economic and social privileges which the chieftains and the landlords enjoyed. They were converted into subordinate position under the British. Thus the objective of the movement was the restoration of old political, socio and economic order. The rebellion had certain features of peasant uprising also. The rebellion of Kalyana Swami had become a part of folklore in the region. This rebellion may was popularly known as Kalyanappa Katakayi (Katakai means disturbances).

Chikka Veerandara Wodeyar (1820-34) was the last Raja of Coorg. In 1834 he objected the increasing interference of the company in the internal administration of Coorg. When the Raja protested, the British deposed him by using force and appointed a company officer, a superintendent, to administer Coorg. A part of territory which were below the ghats were joined to Canara. They gave rise to serious dissatisfaction in these parts.

Prior to the establishment of British rule in Coorg, the ryots paid rent in kind, but after that they were forced to pay rent in cash. As a result of this the ryots were forced to sell their products in low prices and approach the money lenders. This created great hardship up on the ryots which caused resentment against the British rule.

As a part of colonial administration they monopolised salt and tobacco, the revenue system was transformed, judicial system and law courts were introduced and new method of export of grain was also introduced. The

people opposed these sort of the reforms. In the letter send by M. Lewin(1) the collector of Canara to Charles Robert Cotton, he appealed him a reduction of the monopoly price that would be acceptable to such part of the community.

The people below the ghats were in fact waiting(2) for an opportunity to rise against the British and to overthrow their rule such an opportunity came to them after the disposition of the Coorg Raja, and in Kalyana Swami, who declared himself as the only surviving heir to the Coorg throne, being the second son of Appaji, the uncle of Raja of Coorg.

When he proclaimed himself as the Raja of Coorg people in large numbers joined with him. Kalyana Swami issued a proclamation to the people of Canara and Coorg appealing for their support to overthrow the companies rule. This was the same type of proclamation made by Veluthambi Dalava, the Divan of Travancore at Kundara against the British in 1809.

The actual rebellion(3) took place during March and April 1837. In Bellore (29th and 30th March), the insurgents attacked the government office and looted the treasury. On the night of 30th March a report reached(4) the Collector addressed by the Sheristedar of Bantwal that about 2000 people had assembled in arms at Bellary pett and taken possession of the Peishcar's Cutcherry, and placed the Head Sheristedar, the Tahsildar and other principal servants in confinement.

From Bellore, Kalyana Swami and his followers marched to Puttur. At Puttur they attacked public offices and looted the treasury. Under the leadership of the Collector, the British army reached at Puttur, but the company’s army was easily routed by Kalyana Swami and his followers and the Collector fled to Mangalore on horse. The Collector M. Lewin himself remarked that, from Puttur they returned to Bantwal in darkness, in Bantwal they found the place almost deserted and left Bantwal taking Gurpur road and reached Mangalore in the evening without further opposition.

Then the rebels marched to Bantwal on 2nd of April 1837. At Bantwal Lakshmappa, the pensioned descendant of an old feudal chieftain of that place and Manjappa Hegade of Dharmastahala openly supported them. When the main force was at Bantwal a small troop was sent to Kasaragod on 2nd April and they looted the treasury there.

On 6th April, the rebels marched to Kumbala and were active there. From Bantwal, the rebellion spread to Uppinangadi and Mulki. The forces of Kalyana Swami marched from Bantwal to Mangalore on 3rd April and in the meantime Subrava Hegde of Tenku Kumbala Kote was marching with an army towards Mangalore to help Kalyana Swami. But one of the descendents of the Kumbala Raja brought this to the notice of the British at Tellichery. Soon the British took steps to prevent the Hegde from crossing the river Netravati.

1. Karnataka State Gazetteer, South Kanara District, (Bangalore, 1973), p. 70.
2. Report of M. Lewin, on the internal administration of the province of Canara, Dated 18th December, 1837, (Mangalore, 1911), p. 3.
The rebels were thrown into the sea and made to drown.

Hearing the news of Kalyana Swami’s march towards Mangalore the English officials got frightened and left for Tellichery by sea route. After entering the city, Kalyana Swamy broke open the prison gates and freed the prisoners, took over the treasury and set fire to the houses of the English officers at Mangalore. For nearly a fortnight Mangalore was under the possession of Kalyana Swami and his flag flew on the present light house hill in place of the company’s flags.

The success of Kalyana Swami was short lived. The British troops advanced from Tellicherry and suppressed the ill-disciplined and poorly armed followers of Kalyana Swami. They suppressed the rebellion and captured the leaders. The government proclaimed martial law in the district. The British succeeded in suppressing the rebellion and re-established their control by the end of April 1837 and the martial law was withdrawn by the end of June. Kalyana Swami, Lakshmappa and some other prominent leaders were hanged, while the rest were deported to Singapore for life.

The economic burden inflicted by the British caused the peasantry to think the restoration of the Haleri rule and to support Kalyana Swamy. On march 30th 1837, Kalyana Swami proclaimed that if he became the ruler he would stop the collection of revenue for the first three years and he would abolish the duties on commodities of day today consumption. The high exaction of land revenue, salt and tobacco monopoly introduction of law court

1. Karnataka State Gazetteer, South Kanara District, (Bangalore, 1973), p. 70.
2. Ibid, p. 70.
4. Ibid, 171.
were the subject of criticism of the ryots. The old economy was disturbed and had provoked anger and resentment. Thus the peasantry supported the rebellion. Ill-organised and poorly armed followers of Kalyana Swami were not able to resist the well established colonial rule. The rebellion was a failure. But it was a powerful early colonial protest against the British in the history of South Canara.

The Peasant Movements In South Canara District

The class organisation of peasant, the Raitha Sangha (peasant organisation) brought the national movement to the lowest stratum of the rural society and added new dimensions in its anti-imperialist struggles. During the second half of 1930 and 1940 the agrarian classes joined the national movement and played pressure tactics on government for tenancy legislations. The nationalist movement and the organised struggle of Malabar peasantry had been largely responsible(1) for awaking the peasants in Kasaragod taluk of the South Canara District.

The salt satyagraha paved the way for the development of national consciousness in South Canara District. Some of the peasants, who were attracted towards the movement, actively participated in salt satyagraha and other programmes. Their participation was not a collective organisational action but of individual. The organization of the Kerala Congress Socialist Party (1934) brought radical changes in the political situation of Malabar and it affected the adjoining Kasaragod taluk of South Canara. On the basis of the decision of the Congress Socialist Party the peasants were organised in Malabar

The peasant movements in the northern part of present Kerala (including Kasaragod taluk) was much related in every respect to the wider political movement\(^{(1)}\) or freedom struggle of Kerala. Some of the Congress men attracted towards Communism and Socialism. Thus the study of the peasant movement in this area is the study\(^{(2)}\) of growth of communism also.

The emergence of the peasant movements known as the Kasaragod Taluk Karshaka Sangham in 1937 marked a new turn in the history of the freedom struggle in the district. Within a few years the Karshaka Sangham spread political and national awareness among the weaker sections and promoted strong nationalist sentiments among them.

Prior to this South Canara witnessed a series of social reform movements\(^{(3)}\) between 1852 and 1905. The branches of the Brahmasamaj, the Araya Samaj and the Theosophical society started their social reform activities in Mangalore as early as 1870’s. They carried propaganda for the upliftment of women and untouchables. The introduction of English education and early vernacular news papers\(^{(4)}\) namely Mangalore Samachar (1842) and Kannada Kegari (Manjeshwar, 1885) paved for the spread of nationalism among the educated people.

Swadeshbhimani (1907) marked the first political journalism in the

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3. K. G. Vasantha Madhava, Trends In Karnataka Historical Research, (History Department, University of Calicut, 1996), p. 89.
district. Navayuga, Tilaka Sandesh (1919), Kantheerava (1919), Satyagrahi (1921), Rashtrabandhu (1928) etc continued the tempo. These aspects had influenced\(^1\) the freedom struggle of South Canara, which became active in the second decade of the 20th century.

The Home Rule Movement of 1916 had little effect in Mangalore. From 1919 onwards the freedom struggle made its impact on South Canara and Mangalore and became the centre of Anti-Rowlat Act. In 1922, an All Karnataka Political Conference was held\(^2\) at Mangalore under the presidency of Smt. Sarojini Naidu and this gave a fillip to the national movement in the area.

The nationalist movement had constant ideological transformation in the second decade of the 20th century. The socialist and Communist ideology began to spread in India during this period. Politically this force and energy found reflection in the rise of left wing inside the Congress. Nehru, Subash Chandra Bose, the Congress Socialists, the Communists and other left-minded socialist groups and individuals made effort to turn\(^3\) the nationalist movement to a socialist direction. The effect culminated in the organization of trade unions, Kisan Sabhas, youth and students organizations. Thus the formation of peasant organisations and their struggles for the upliftment of the peasantry on ideological basis were the significant features\(^4\) of the period from 1930 to 1947.

The depression years (1929-33) had caused great sufferings to the ryots

by large scale eviction, rack-renting and indebtedness caused by the steep fall in agricultural commodities. The resettlement and new land revenue assessment of 1934-35 had further enhanced the rate of land tax. The landlords in the district passed their burden of the increased land revenue to their tenants by increasing the land rent.

During this period the nationalist leaders were released from jail after the suspension of civil disobedience movement. This movement had created a new trend of political enthusiasm in the region and a number of young men entered into the national movement. Thus, the so called 'uppina satyagraha' (In Kannada the salt satyagraha was called as uppina satyagraha) was enthusiastically(1) resorted in the coastal towns from Kasaragod to Bednur. The suspension of the civil disobedience movement created frustration among the political activists. Many of them began to think of an alternative and that was the emerging trend of socialist and Communist ideology.

On coming out of jail(2) after the salt satyagraha every satyagrahi set himself in his village and started a small reading room. This was one of the major reason for the development of ideological basis of socialism and communism in Malabar district and Kasaragod Taluk. The young men of the locality would gather every day, read the dailes and discuss political matters. They would also tell them what they learned in jail, whom they met, what they talked and what they decided to do. The reading room became the center of political activity.

The Kerala Congress Socialist Party decided to mobilize the peasant,

1. K. G. Vasantha Madhava, Trends In Karnataka Historical Research, (History Department, University of Calicut, 1996), p. 89.
small farmers and workers and had begun to support their economic interests and aspirations. These efforts aroused\(^1\) the working class and peasants and brought them in to the main stream of the national movement.

The Kasaragod taluk of the South Canara District witnessed a severe anti-landlord movement in the second half of the 1930's. At the same time, in other parts of South Canara, the peasant organisations were founded in the second half of the 1940's. There existed a wide gulf in the nature and function of the peasant organisations in the Kasaragod taluk and other parts of South Canara.

In order to study the organisation and the movements of the peasants in the district in a historical perspective, it is necessary to analyse on the movements of the entire Malabar region and Kerala as a whole. The movement on the Malabar region was strongly influenced by the nature and function of the peasant organisation of Kasaragod. The leaders of Malabar and also Kerala like E. M. S. Namboodiripad, P. Krishna Pillai, A. K. Gopalan, K. A. Keralleeyan, Vihnu Bharateeyan, K. P. R. Gopalan, E. K. Nayanar, A. V. Kunhambu and A. K. Pillai were prominent, and their activities paved for the ideological basis of the organisation of peasantry in particular and the Communist Party in general in the Kasaragod Taluk.

In 1927, even before the emergence of the Congress Socialist Party in Kerala and the Malabar Karshaka Sangham, voices were raised against the oppressive attitude of the government towards the peasants in Kasaragod Taluk. A meeting of landlords at Hosdurg taluk office, presided by the Tahasildar,

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which sought to introduce an agrarian law to safeguard the landlords and also for informing the interests of the peasants. A. C. Kannan Nair\(^1\) of Hosdurg (he belonged to the landlord family) strongly opposed it and the proposal was withdrawn. This was an instance of even individual resistance of opposing the landlords who in turn opposed the peasants. But the peasants were not united before the spread of Kerala Congress Socialists and Karshaka Sangham activities.

**Kadakam Satyagraham (1932-33)**

This was a protest against the interference of the British administration in the traditional way of life. The development of nationalism mainly by the civil disobedience movement, particularly salt satyagraha held at Payyannur had inspired the nationalists of this region. To a great extent the causes of the Kadakam Satyagraha and the Leaves and Fire Wood Agitation or the Tholum Virakum Agitation of Cheemeni (1946) were identical. At Kadakam, the traditional rights enjoyed by the common people were prohibited by the British Government at the same time at Cheemeni it was prohibited by a private individual with the support of the government.

The Government prohibited\(^2\) the collection of fire wood and other materials from the forest. This was the rights enjoyed by the adivasis and other people from time immemorial. Under the leadership of the Congress a satyagraha camp was opened at Kadakam, of Karadukka grama. The satyarahi's entered the forest and cut down the sandal wood trees to show their protest.

2. K. K. N. Kurup, Swathantra Samaram Kasaragod Talukil (Mal), p. XXIV.
The satyagraha volunteers came from Malabar\(^1\) and Kasaragod taluk. The police and the forest officials arrested the satyagrahi's and they were taken to the police station. During the night they were taken to long and unknown places in vehicles and dropped there. Thus the satyagahi's had to walk a long distance in the night to reach the camp. This was one of the mode of punishments introduced by the authorities.

Advocate Umesh Rao, Manjunath Hegde, his son Rama Hedge, A. V. Kunhambu, Narandatta Krishnan Nair, Krishan Manolithayal, K. Madhavan were the important persons\(^2\) who participated in the satyagraha. The visit of P. Krishna Pillai gave inspiration to the volunteers. The potail of that Grama, Vishnu Kadambalithaya had given all assistance to the volunteers. He was arrested and sentenced to six months imprisonment and a penalty of Rs. 75. He was also dismissed\(^3\) from the service and he returned back to service in 1937 when Rajaji ministry came to power. Many volunteers were arrested and imprisoned.

The Congress Socialist Party

The South Canara District Congress Socialist Party was formed in 1935, as an opposition with in the Congress. The Karnataka Provincial Congress Socialist Party was organised in May 1935\(^4\), when the conference of the Karnataka Provincial Congress Party was held at Mangalore. Socialist Youth League, Shirva

2. Ibid, p. 346, See also K. K. N. Kurup, Swathantra Samaram Kasaragod Talukil (Mal), p. XXIV.
was organised(1) in South Canara. This league was started the sole object of establishing the idea of equality.

The government of Madras had shown serious concern in the organisation of the congress socialist party in South Canara District. In a confidential letter(2) of the Inspector General of Police, Madras to the Chief Secretary of Government of Madras remarked that the congress socialist party had been formed in Andra, Kerala and South Canara and a Congress Socialist group in Madras. While the party of Kerala formed various labour unions and organised strikes in six different centers between February and March 1935. So he requested the Governor for the renewal of temporary legislation to deal with these movement called as subversive movements. The constitution of the South Canara District Congress Socialist Party contain almost the complete programmes of the Communist International(3). The constitution did not advocate violent methods for the achievement of the objects.

The news paper, Rashtra Bandhu(4) of Mangalore observed the social and economic condition of the district through an article, under the heading "The Ryots are the owners of the country"

There are tillers of the soil, who have never known rest and happiness...... However deplorable be the condition of the urban labour, it is still a thousand times better than the misery of the rural ryot. Our ryots have no thought for anything outside these


2. Confidential Letter from the IG of Police, Madras to the Governor General, Dated 24th May, 1935, USS files, Home Department, Dated 1-9-1935.


three questions. What to eat? How to pay the assessment? How to discharge the debt? .... So far our district (South Canara) is concerned the congress authorities pay no attention to the ryots problem ....... if the country's leaders should forget the ryots and workers of the land at this juncture these can be not greater misfortune to the country.

The resettlement of 1934-35 had enhanced the land revenue to an unbearable limit. The District Congress Committee protested and decided to observe the first week of May 1935 as anti resettlement week.

The South Canara District Congress Committee had passed a resolution to observe the first week of May as an anti re-settlement week in South Canara in order to create an awareness among the public in regard to the distress and suffering caused to the ryots, by the enhancement of the land tax that this burden had exceeded all limits of patient endurance, as it would develop the ryots to constant starvation(1). The object of the anti-resettlement week was to make it clear to the public how the interests of the ryots were being ignored in order to promote the unhindered the supremacy of the British rule in India. It also aimed to put in to light, how the ryots were kept in a half-starved condition and exploited for the comforts of the British Army.

In July 1935, a peasant organisation, Kolacherry Karshaka Sangham(2) was founded at Naniyur in Kolacherry in the Chirakkal taluk of Malabar District. The president and secretary of the unit were V. M. Vishnu Bharateeyan and K. A. Keraleeyan respectively. In the last part of 1935 the peasant

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organisation called Samyukta Karshaka Sangham\(^{(1)}\) was formed at Karivellur. It included the villages of Karivellur, Peralam, Vellur (belonged to former Chirakkal taluk of Malabar District) and Kotakkat (in Kasaragod taluk of South Canara District). A. V. Kunhambu was the president and M. P. Appu was the secretary.

Prior to the formation of the Samyuktha Karshaka Sangham, Abhinava Bharat Yuvak Sangham, a youth organisation was formed at Karivellur\(^{(2)}\) on 13\(^{th}\) April 1934. Its leaders were A. V. Kunhambu, V. V. Kunhambu, M. P. Appu, P. Kunhiraman and others. It was a politically oriented association with definite programme of social services including social reforms. This youth association was responsible for the formation of Samyukta Karshaka Sangham at Karivellur. The Yuvak Sangham helped in mobilizing the peasants of Kasaragod taluk. Although the economic grievances of the peasantry played an important role in the mobilisation, nationalism as an ideology considerably followed by them.

The Kotakkat Karshaka Sangham

In 1935 the Kotakkat Karshaka Sangham\(^{(3)}\) was formed. This was the first unit of the Karshaka Sangham in Kasaragod taluk and also in South Canara District as a whole. The influence of the Abhinava Bharath Yuvak Sangham and the Samyukta Karshaka Sangham of Karivellur contributed the organisation\(^{(4)}\) of the Kotakkat Karshaka Sangham. It was organised to resist the eviction of a tenant named Pariyaran Kunhiraman Nambiar by the landlord Neelamana of Puttilot.

4. Ibid, p. 54.
Peasant leaders like A. V. Kunhambu, K. A. Keraleeyan and T. S. Tirumumb attended the meeting. Payyatakkan Kunhikanna Nair and E. Narayanan Master were elected as the President and Secretary of the Sangha. The villages of Krivellur, Vellur, Pilicode, Peralam and Cheruvathur were included in the Kotakkat Karshaka Sangham. Karshaka Sangham units were consequently formed in Kayyur, Madikai, Pullur, Rawaneshwarm etc. In 1935 a special conference of peasants was convened(1) at Karivellur, presided by A. K. Gopalan. This was the first conference attended by the peasants in Kasaragod taluk.

The organisational work among the peasant was a crucial task. For centuries(2) the peasants suffered insults and injuries by the landlords. The tenants were afraid of their landlords to co-operate with Karshaka Sangham's activities. No body dare to attend the meeting or to give any financial help to the sangham. The peasant leaders used the religious and temple festivals of every region for gathering the peasants and politicalising them in national and socialist ideology. The ideological base of the movement was laid through study classes organised by the peasant leaders.

The peasantry of the region was suffered mainly by economic grievances and it played one of the major reasons for the mobilization of the peasantry. The leaders of the peasantry(3) came mainly form the middle class peasants and teachers. They enjoyed considerable freedom and were not entirely depended on the landlords. Thus they could give necessary leadership to the peasants. The rich peasants who belong to the high caste Hindus

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2. Ibid, p. 11.
also joined in the movement and turned as the leaders of the peasant organisations.

The Karshaka Sangham opposed caste system. The Sangham made its effort to organise the peasantry irrespective of caste restrictions. The activists of the sangham, who belonged to the upper castes made frequent visits to the houses of peasants especially to the lower castes. This caste restrictions did not prevent the peasants and workers from uniting for a common purpose.

Indebtedness of the ryots and harsh treatment by the landlords drove all classes of peasants to the field of the sangham. The Sangham was conscious of the grievances of the different classes of the peasants including the agricultural labourers. Karshaka Sangham effectively utilised the prevailing discontent among the peasants and their opposition to the caste orthodoxy, landlords and the government. The progressive literature of the times and popular songs and dramas gave them a message of unity.

The Karshaka Sangham had formulated different programmes to mobilize the peasantry. The peasants of Malabar organised a 'hunger-jatha' under the leadership of A. K. Gopalan from Malabar to Madras in July 1936, to present a memorial to government regarding the poverty of the people. P. K. Narayanan Nambiar of Nileshwar was included as the member of the jatha of 32 members.

The first meeting of the Chirakkal Taluk Karshaka Sangham was held at Parassinikadavu in November 1936. This was attended by peasants of Malabar and Kasaragod taluk. The conference decided to organise an All Malabar Karshaka Sangham. After the Parassinikadavu conference peasant meetings were held at various parts of Kasaragod taluk like Bovikkara, Perla, Mulleria, Bader and Manjeshwar. The first week of September 1936 was observed as Kisan week throughout Malabar and Kasaragod and resolutions were passed on the basis of the Kisan Charter. This was followed by "no tax campaign" as the beginning of organised peasant struggles.

The All India Kisan Sabha was organised(1) at Lucknow on 11th April 1936. The founders were Swami Sahajananda, Karyananda, Muzafar Ahamed, Acharya NarendraDev, Rahul Sankrityayan and Indulal Yujnik. The organisation was an anti-imperialist front of all leftist political group, form progressive congressmen to Communists. The object(2) of Kisan Movement was to secure complete freedom from economic exploitation and achievement of full economic and political power for the peasant and workers and all over the exploited classes.

With in eight months after the formation of the All India Kisan Sabha, the National Congress had its annual conference at Faizapur. The Indian National Congress adopted its agrarian programme at the Faizapur session(3) of the Indian National Congress and the political solidarity of the two organisations were declared.

The All Malabar Karshaka Sangham was organised\(^1\) in 1937 with Narayanan Nair as the president and K. A. Keraleeyan as the Secretary. In 1937, the Indian Communist leaders like S. V. Ghate had organised a nucleus\(^2\) of Communist group in Kerala consisting of P. Krishan Pillai, E. M. S. Namboodiripad, N. C. Sekhar and K. Damodaran.

In the provincial election of 1937 Congress won in the Madras Province with the support of the peasants and workers organisations. The ministry was formed under C. Rajagopalachari. The peasant had great expectations from the Congress Ministry, because as a continuation of the Faizapur session of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) in 1936, they included agrarian programmes in their election manifesto.

But the ministry failed to prove any relief to the peasants other than the mere passing of the Agriculture Debt Relief Act. Their betrayal in the part of the congress leadership disappointed the leftist and alienated the entire body of the peasantry which soon came to realise that any improvement in this condition could not be possible through the government but through their organisational strength. This paved a new turn in the history of the peasant movement in Malabar and also Kasaragod. They resorted to organise massive and militant struggles against the landlords and also against the government.

Kasaragod Taluk Karshaka Sangham

The formation of the Kasragod Taluk Karshaka Sangham was mainly due to the leadership given by K. A. Keraleeyan, A. V. Kunhambu, V. V. Kunhambu,

\(^1\) C. Achutamenon, Kissan Patana Pusthakam, (Trissur, 1960), p. 259.

\(^2\) E. M. S. Namboodiripad, How I Became A Communist, (Thiruvananthapuram, 1976), P. 211.
Vishnu Bharatheeyan, T. S. Tirumumb, N. S. Namboodiri and K. Madhavan(1).

The first conference of the Taluk Karshaka Sangham was convened in April 1937 at Kottachery, Kanhangad.

It was presided over by K. P. R. Gopalan. He vehemently attacked the system of the ‘akramapirivukal (illegal exactions), eviction and non-issue of payment of rent. He explained the miseries of the agricultural labourers and adiyens or slaves. He warned the landlords against continuance of these practices. He also pointed out that there were 17 villages which were exempted from payment of debt according to the Debt Relief Act of 1938.

A. K. Gopalan, Vishnu Bharateeyan and Keraleeyan were important speakers. K. Madhavan moved a resolution for extension of Malabar Tenancy Act to Kasaragod which was opposed by the Hindu, Muslim landlords. But A. C. Kannan Nair, Kodoth Narayanan Nair and Barrister M. K. Nambiar, belonged to the landlord class supported this resolution.

The other major resolutions(2) were

1. To give permanent occupancy right to tenants including chalageni tenants
2. To fix one-fourth of the produce as rent keeping aside seed and other expenses.
3. To seek the tax exception for the low income groups and to levy gradual tax.
4. To reduce or write off 50 per cent of the debt and allow the balance to be paid in two installments with interests not exceeding 13 percent and
5. To provide for issuing receipt for payment of rent.

One of the important aspects of Malabar and Kasaragod was that the congress and Karshaka Sangham organised joint meetings and the speeches were made exhorting the peasants and anti landlord movements. The congress leaders like K. Kelappan appealed the public to extend help and cooperation for peasant movements.

A joint agitation was started by the Congress, Congress-Socialists and the Karshaka Sangham for joining Kasaragod taluk with Malabar District. The president of that politically oriented movement was M. K. Nambiar. A conference regarding this agitation was convened at Nileshwar in April 1938. It was presided over by Abdul Rahiman Sahib, the prominent KPCC leader and inaugurated by Minister Kongattil Raman Menon. In that conference the eminent peasant leader K. Madhavan, moved a resolution demanding permanent occupancy right to the tenants in this region. Some of members of the Gandhi Sangham (followers of Gandhian ideology) belonging to landed aristocracy objected the introduction of the resolution. However the, resolution was passed as the congress socialist like Kodoth Narayanan Nambiar and others supported it. These supporters themselves belonged to landlord families. Thus this conference became a landmark regarding the tenancy problems in Kasaragod taluk.

The agrarian movements associated with the nationalist movements became more intensified in Hosdurg sub-taluk during the end of 1938. The activities undertaken by the Karshaka Sangha and Abhinava Bharat Yuvak

Sangham were attaining good results in this area. It succeeded in attaining unity among the working class and promoting strong national sentiments among them. They started night classes in different parts of the area as a part of creating ideological basis for the movement.

A joint conference(1) of the Yuvak Sangham and the Karshaka Sangham was held on October 1938 at Kovval in Cheruvathur. Some of the members of the Gandhi Sangham demonstrated with black flags in front of the conference. But they were threatened by the members of Karshaka Sangha and forced them to run away.

The second conference of the Akhila Malabar Kisan Sangham, which was held at Calicut, decided to start two jathas from Karivellur and Kanjicode to submit a memorandum to the District Collector of Malabar. As a counter part of these activities of the Malabar Kisan Sangham, the Kasaragod Taluk Kisan Sangham organised a jatha consisting of 130 members to Mangalore. The march was started from Olavara, the southern part of the Kasaragod taluk to Mangalore for presenting a memorandum to the District Collector. This jatha was under the leadership of T. S. Tirumumbu, president of the Kasaragod taluk Karshaka Sangham. The jatha was seen off by A. V. Kunhambu and K. A. Keraleeyan the leaders of Malabar Karshaka Sangham. Koyyan Kannan was the treasure and K. Madhavan was the pilot, for arranging food and accommodation for its members.

The jatha was given reception in Cheruvathur, Nileshwar, Kottacheri, Uduma, Chittari, Madiyan, Bellekoth, Pullur, Rawaneshwaram and Perumbala.

The members of the jatha shouted the slogan

Down with imperialism,
Down with landlordism,
No criminal extortions,
Land for peasants.

At Kasaragod the jatha was received by M. Umesh Rao, the president of South Canara District Congress Committee. The memorial was submitted on December 1938. The memorialists wanted the prohibition of illegal extortions and demanded for the extension of the proposal tenancy legislation to Kasaragod Taluk. They also demanded for separation of Kasaragod taluk from South Canara and its amalgamation with Malabar on account of the linguistic problems faced by the Malayalees who formed 72 per cent of the population of the taluk. They also demanded records to tenants to prove their claim of possession and issue of receipts for rents to the tenants.

After submitting the memorandum the members of the jatha held a public meeting in Mangalore, organised by various trade unions. S. N. Holla presided over the meeting and T.S. Tirumumb, P. C. K. Adiyodi, N. S. Namboodiri, E. Narayanan Namboodiri, E. Narayanan Nambiar and N. K. Kuttan all from Hosdurg sub taluk spoke on the occasion and exhorted the workers and peasants to unite and organise for their common end to free themselves from the exploitation of landlords and imperialism. The jatha created a sense of awareness among the people of the miseries and hardships of peasants. The most intensifying fact of the jatha was that most members of the jatha were from high castes and relatives of landed families.

The receipt of the memorandum made rapid response of the authori-
ties. The District Collector of South Canara sent the report to the Madras Government, and issued a public leaflet, a 'Red Notice'\(^{(1)}\) setting the people against landlords and for abandoning the policy of non-violence.

**Kotakkat Conference**

It was decided to conduct the second annual conference of the Abhinava Bharat Youvak Sangham on 14\(^{th}\) January 1938 and the fourth annual conference of the Kasaragod Taluk Karshaka Sangham on 15\(^{th}\) January 1938 at Kotakkat. Separate reception committees were organised for this purpose. E. Narayanan was the president and T. V. Sankaran was the secretary of the reception committee of Yuvak Sangham and T. S. Tirumumbu and P. C. Kunhikrishanan Adiyodi were the president and secretary of the Karshaka Sangham committee respectively. Koyyan Kannan was the treasurer of both of the reception committees.

A. Kameshwara Rao of Andhra presided over\(^{(2)}\) the Yuvak Sangham Conference on 14\(^{th}\) January and it was inaugurated by Mohammed Abdul Rahiman Sahib, MLA. N. G. Ranga, the general secretary of the All India Kisan Sabha presided over the conference of the Karshaka Sangham and was inaugurated by Moidu Moulavi eminent K. P. C. C. leader on 15\(^{th}\) January.

The planning and organisation of the conference made a new chapter in the history of the peasant in the district of South Canara. The conference was turned into as great festival of the region. The peasant and workers had given a memorial reception to N. G. Ranga when he arrived the near by railway station at Cheruvathur. One of the unique features of the conference


was that, they collected all the materials for food through house to house campaign and carried head loads of vegetables and rice. A common feast was arranged in the occasion for all participants. This had its significance in a rural atmosphere where caste formalities had been strictly observed so far and interdining was not permitted. Therefore the conference broke(1) the barriers of caste and tradition and declared the solidarity of the working class. Thus, this conference became a landmark for uniting the rural population under the Karshaka Sangham and eventually the Communist movement through its fight against caste system.

Women conference, which was arranged in this occasion was regarded as an important event connected with the conference. The women belong to the working class, peasant and even aristocratic families participated in the meeting in hundreds. Previously women were not permitted to cover their breast. The women participants attended the conference violating the long standing custom by wearing blouses. The most important result of the conference was that it inculcated a new spirit of confidence among the peasantry on their fight against landlordism, caste system and colonialism.

Karshaka Sangham continued its struggles against landlords and also against the imperial government. With this purpose the Karshaka Sangham units were strengthened in all parts of Kasaragod taluk. Sangham intensified its activities by leading jathas to the landlords of respective areas and presenting grievances and demands of peasants before them. These jathas inspired the rural population against the landlordism and a large number of peasantry participated.

One of such jathas\(^{(1)}\) had gone to the illam of Ilaneer Madam Keshavananda Bharti, the prominent landlord of the taluk. More than five hundred people participated in the jatha from Muliar, Perubalam etc. A. K. Gopalan had led the jatha and it put forward the demand to give receipt for their payment, before the landlord and at once the demand was admitted on the spot.

Massive and militant jathas were undertaken throughout Malabar and Kasaragod taluk. According to reports\(^{(2)}\) received from the District Magistrate of South Canara, the Kasaragod Taluk Peasant Association and Malabar Socialists have been asking people not to pay land revenue and at the time of attachment and distraint to cause as much obstruction as possible to the authorities.

The District Magistrate of Malabar reports\(^{(3)}\) a no rent campaign which had carried on for some time in that district, was achieving considerable success and that in the absence of any original opposition in some parts undermining the authority. He feared that, the landlords were not able to collect their rents and it would effect seriously land revenue collections which was going to start from the coming month. There was a similar agitation reported from the southern part of South Canara, where activities of the peasant union had led to some disturbances. The government was considering some action to counter this development.

Apart from this Karshaka Sangham adopted social boycott to those landlords who tried to suppress the peasants. Previously the social boycott

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was a weapon used by the landlord against the tenant who was disliked by him. So through the social boycott, the sangham effectively prevented the villagers from supporting the landlords. Thus, the Karshaka Sangham emerged as a powerful organ to oppose the domination of the landlords.

Alarmed by these agitations taking place, the Collector of South Canara asked the people to report to the potail (the village head man) any action of social boycott or violence or the activities of the peasant organisation. The headman in turn was ordered to send daily report to the nearest police station regarding such cases. Mr. Vellodi the Collector of South Canara visited the Kasaragod taluk to appraise the situation. The collector of Malabar also visited the northern parts of Malabar towards the end of 1938. The peasantry considered the government action as a conspiracy to suppress the peasant movement.

Apart from the peasant struggles labour unrest also developed in the district. In 1940 a strike of the weavers and factory workers were organised under the leadership of the South Canara District Weavers Union, in Marmanikattee and Kankanady factory. This strike resulted in so many violent incidents. The strike was organised under the leadership of S. N. Holla, Malinga Shetty, Venkappa, Laxmuana Kottari, Keshava Kamath, Sabastian D'Souza and others. The police registered so many cases and fourteen persons were sentenced for imprisonment from one to six months and also fined as penalty. Through arbitration the strike was settled and the arbitrators sent a request

1. Mathrubhumi Daily, Calicut, 22nd December, 1938 and 27th December, 1938.
for the withdrawal of all the cases charged connected with the weavers strike. The government had withdrawn\(^{(1)}\) only three cases out of six pending cases and was not ready for the revision of punishment in the disposed cases.

The Communist leaders tried to organise the labourers in various parts of Mangalore. But the government had taken harsh measures against them. A number of Communist leaders had been arrested either with a view to detention under Rule 826 of the Defense of India\(^{(2)}\) Rules or where possible for prosecution for some specific offence.

\*Struggles During the Second World War\*

The second world war broke out on 1\(^{st}\) September 1939 and it created an intensified ideological struggle between the left and right wings inside the congress. The leftists stood\(^{(3)}\) for an unconditional resistance to an inherently unjust war and they considered it an occasion for the independence of India from the British. The 'rightist' group of congress men openly criticised\(^{(4)}\) the leftist controlled KPCC and formed a separate organisation called Kerala Gandhi Seva Sangham, with K. Kelappan as its leader. The war situation created scarcity of food grains which paved for black-marketting of essential commodities. Thus the life of the millions were on the verge of starvation.

A crucial and secret meeting of some 90 prominent workers of Kerala

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1. G. O. No. 4280, Dated 21\(^{st}\) October 1940, Home Department, M. S. Series.
2. Fortnightly Report (Confidential) for First Half of June, 1941.
Congress Socialist Party met at Pinarayi in Tellichery to consider the formation\(^{1}\) of the Communist Party in December 1939. They decided the formation of the Communist Party and on 28\(^{th}\) January 1940, the formation of the party was declared.

The government introduced strict vigilance against the Communists and Congress Socialists. The government even decided to detain and examine the postal articles of Communist and Socialist leaders of the Madras Presidency. The direction\(^{2}\) states that in the interest of public safety and tranquility of Madras Presidency, the Governor in council directed under section 26(1) of the India post office Act 1898, that all postal articles addressed to or emanating from persons should be intercepted in the course of transmission by these post and detained and delivered to the Superintendent of Police Special Branch CID, Madras for his examination. Among the names enclosed the active congress socialist and important political labour agitator of South Canara District, Kamala Devi Chattopadhya was included. It also included the names of E. M. S. Namboodiripad, P. Krishna Pillai, S. V. Ghate, Rash Behari Bose, K. Damodaran etc.

The movement gave rise to tensions between the peasants and landlords which was well reflected in report\(^{3}\) of Malabar Tenancy Committee.

Relations between landlords and tenants in this area have long become strained and we consider that they should be put in proper

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1. K. K. N. Kurup, Modern Kerala, Studies In Social And Agrarian Relations, (Delhi, 1998), p. 3.
footing as soon as possible.

On account of these agitations and representations, the Malabar Tenancy Committee proposed\(^{(1)}\) the extension of the legislation to include all villages, south of the Chandragiri river and two villages Bedadka and Bandadka in the north of Kasaragod taluk. This was a heavy blow to the vested interests of the landlords who resisted the extension of the act and was an achievement for the peasants of Kasaragod taluk.

Hoarding and black marking during the period of second world war created great misery in the life of millions of people who were on the verge of starvation. The activities of the peasant organisation reached at the grass root level of the society. So the hostility between the landlords and peasants were further intensified.

Kayyur Riot

The militant role\(^{(2)}\) of the Karshaka Sangham under the Communist Marxist-Leninist ideology contributed to the Kayyur Riot. Most of the people of Kayyur village lived on agriculture. Many of them were illiterate peasants and agricultural labourers.

The anti repression day observed on 15\(^{th}\) September 1940 culminated violent activists in Morazha and Mattannur of Malabar District. So police resorted to continuous repression against the Communists and the leaders of peasant organisation and they were compelled to go underground. The village unit of congress as well as Karshaka Sangham was founded\(^{(3)}\) in April 1937. T. V. Kunhambu, K. P. Vellunga, P. T. Ambadi Kunhi, T. V. Alias, K. V.

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Kunhiraman and T. Pokkayi were the leaders of the Kayyur Karshaka Sangham and P. M. Kannan Panikar was the secretary and Malayauthu Veluthambadi was the President\(^{(1)}\) of the Kayyur unit of the Sangham. This unit became a powerful organ of the Sangham and no landlord was dared to evict even under the decree of a court.

The villagers of the Kayyur opposed the traditional practice of the landlord who was the trustee of the Kayyur shrine of taking the donations to the shrine. They demanded to spend it for the temple alone.

When the Revenue Divisional Officer of Puttur\(^{(2)}\), halted at Cheruvathur for collection towards war fund the Karshaka Sangham made a big demonstration before him shouting slogan against imperialism and war.

After the violence of the anti repression day the Sangham was banned and the landlords again found an occasion to take repressive measures against their tenants and members of the Sangham. A secret meeting was organised at Kayyur which was attended by P. Sundarayya. The meeting decided to open two Communist cells, one at Kayyur and T. V. Kunhambu and the other at Kookkot under P. T. Ambadi.

On 12\(^{th}\) March 1941 the Communists in Kayyur organised a demonstration at Kayyur against the landlord and government and also its wartime activities they shouted following slogans\(^{(3)}\).

\textbf{Let British rule perish,}

Let landlordism perish,
Let peasants succeed,
Let Revolution succeed,
Let Soviet Rule Triumph,
Do not pay rent,
Do not join the Army,
Do not contribute the war fund.

They also demanded the release of the prisoners connected with the Morazha and Mattanur cases. The revenue inspector who was at Kayyur happened to see\(^{(1)}\) the jatha while he was returning to Nileshwar. He noted down the names, of the leaders and the next day he reported to the authorities. The Hosdurg police charged a case against the leaders of the jatha under the Defense of India Rules and the District Magistrate issued a warrant of arrest against the leader of the Communist cell of Kayyur.

On 26\(^{th}\) March 1941 a police party arrived\(^{(2)}\) in Kayyur at 3 AM to arrest the accused. While really in Kayyur they unleashed a reign of terror and arrested T. V. Kunhambu, and T. V. Kunhiraman the two accused in the case and they were taken to Hosdurg. By 27\(^{th}\) morning the news spread and the party workers and the villagers in the surrounding area decided to hold a protest meeting and demonstration on 28\(^{th}\) afternoon at Pookandom in Kayyur.

On 28\(^{th}\) March people assembled\(^{(3)}\) at Pookandam about 1 PM and marched to Cheriyakara showing slogans like

\textit{Inquilab Zindabad},

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1. V. V. Kunhambu, Kayyur Samaracharatham (Thiruvananthapuram, 1974), p. 67.
2. Ibid, p. 64, See also K. K. N. Kurup, Kayyur Ryot (Calicut 1978), p. 44.
British Rule perish and
Let Landlordism Perish and
Let Soviet Rule Triumph.

They saw the police constable Subbaraya from Chandera police station, who took the leading role in the lathicharge and the arrest of two workers while the march was returning. The youngsters in the procession demanded him to join the jatha and hold the flag. He refused initially but was compelled to join the jatha and hold the flag. The constable tried to escape, when the jatha reached Edathil Kadavu, he broke the flag stick and beat one Palayi Kottan who was just in-front and ran away along the foot path. At that time, Potavara Kunhabu Nair accompanied by five or six persons came from the opposite direction. Seeing the constable followed by the volunteers, Kunhambu Nair tried to stop him. There was a hillock on one side and river on the other. So he was forced to jump into the water with the hope of swimming across the river. The mob pelted with stones and he was drowned.

The fortnightly reports\(^1\) states that, there had been a serious disturbance in South Canara District when the Karshaka Sangham organised an attack on police constable which had resulted in his death. After the crime had committed all those who had taken part fled to the surrendering jungle and it had been necessary to call out the reserve police and three platoons of the M.S.P. to come out and the jungle on search of the culprits, so far as 34 had

\(^1\) Fortnightly Report (Confidential) for the First Half of April, 1941.
been arrested.

The days of Terror

An armed police contingent left(1) Nileshwar at 4.30 AM, on 30th March by a country boat for Kayyur. Temporary police camps were organised in different centers of Hosdurg sub-taluk. The government decided(2) to increase the police strength in South Canara. The British government reports(3) about the reign of terror and the days of terror continued for several weeks in Kayyur and also near by villages. As a part of political motive the authorities wished to utilize the occasion to suppress the Communist and Karshaka Sangham activities in the sub-taluk.

A non-official resolution(4) was brought before the District Board of South Canara by C. K. Raghavan Nambiar against the police excesses. The South Canara District Board had appointed an enquiry committee(5) consisting of two right wing congress men and an English businessman, an influential Muslim leader and one other to make an enquiry to these allegations. The government had ordered the District Magistrate to take up enquiry by himself and did not await the action of the committee, whose existence had no legal status or sanction.

South Canara District committee of Congress organised a public meeting(6) at Mangalore on 10th May 1941 to convey the public about the

1. V. V. Kunhambu, Kayyur Samarachararthram (Thiruvananthapuram, 1974), p. 69.
3. Fortnightly Report (Confidential) for First Half of May, 1941.
5. Fortnightly Report (Confidential) for First Half of May, 1941.
situation prevailed on Kayyur and also Kasaragod taluk as a whole. It was presided by T. Ranga Rao. The meeting marked strong protest over the so-called atrocities of the M.S.P. in the taluk and demanded to call back the M.S.P. to Malabar.

All these developments put an end to the atrocities of the police and finally the special police was withdrawn from the villages by the government. Sixty one persons were accused in the charge sheet. The government appointed Special First Class Magistrate at Mangalore to register the case against the accused. It was argued that the M. B. Shankar Rao, the special Magistrate had been quite partial in his trial(1).

After the preliminary trial the case was committed on 27th September to the Sessions Court, Mangalore. The trial by the Sessions Judge commenced only 1st December. The Sessions Judge found (2nd February 1942) Madathil Appu, (1st accused) Potavara Kunhambu Nair, (13th accused) Koyithattil Chiruvandan, (31st accused) Choorikkadan Krishan Nair (32nd accused) and Avokar or Aboobaker (51st accused) as volunteers belonging to the inner group who acted in concert and participated in the murder by dragging, beating and throwing the constable in to the river and pelting him with stones. He found them alone guilty(2) of murder under section 302 and sentenced them to be hanged by the neck till they died.

Out of five persons who were sentenced to death Choorikkatan Krishann Nair was exempted from death sentence considering he as a minor (at that

1. V. V. Kunhambu, Kayyur Samarakarathram (Thiruvananthapuram, 1974), p. 70.
time he was 17 year old) 8 persons were punished for 5 years of rigorous imprisonment, seven were punished for two years of rigorous imprisonment, two were sent to senior certificate school for three years and 38 persons were acquitted(1). Appeal given by the accused was rejected by the High Court.

On 26th July 1942 the ban order enforced on the Communist Party was lifted by the government. A meeting convened at Calicut Town Hall, requested the government to show clemency in the Kayyur Case. Petitions of mercy were also forwarded to the government by the close relatives of the condemned prisoners. Through the jail authorities, the prisoners submitted joint mercy petitions to the Governor and the Governor General.

It was the period of the Quit India Movement, thus the political atmosphere was crucial. The Governor General refused to interfere in it. Appeal before the Privy Council was also rejected. On 16th October, Mohan Kumaramangalam(2), the council for the Kayyur prisoners, filed a petition before the government for special leave for appeal. They obtained the free service of D. N. Pritt, the renounced Council Lawyer to present their case before the Judicial Committee. V.K. Krishna Menon assisted them. However, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council rejected the appeal.

The report of 4th March from the Judicial Committee came before the Kings Bench, at the court of Buckingham Palace, the highest court of criminal justice in the British Empire on 11th March and it was dismissed. On 12th March Mohan Kumaramangalam again filed petition before the Provincial Government and the Governor General on behalf of the Kayyur prisoners. Again on 15th March,

2. Ibid, p. 67-68.
he filed another petition before the provincial government as the counsels for
the petition in London had asked to file a mercy petition before the crown.

The Government rejected the mercy petition on 12th and 15th March
filed by Mohan Kumaramangalam. The order for execution was received on
26th March in the jail. At 6 AM, on 21st March everything was ready for the
execution of the death sentence passed on the four brave sons of Kayyur.
They walked to the gallows with firm steps shouting slogans.\(^1\)

\begin{itemize}
  \item Inquilab Zindabad
  \item Communist Party Zindabad
  \item Let imperialism Perish and
  \item Let Landlordism perish.
\end{itemize}

The Kayyur riot was a significant episode in the history of the peasant
struggles and the Communist movements in South Canara in particular and
India as a whole. The British government used all its repressive measures
after the Kayyur riot in order to arrest the accused. But actually they were
afraid of the rising tide of the Communist ideology in these areas and de-
cided to curb it by using all sort of repression.

**Harvesting of Crops Struggles or Vilakoith Struggles**

The activities of the Karshaka Sangham suffered a lot due to the arrest
of the peasant leaders and the banning of Karshaka Sangham in the area in
March 1941. As a result of this ban a new peasant union called Kisan Sangham
was organised in Malabar with E. Kannan as the president and P. Narayanan
Nair as the Secretary, to take up relief works especially among the peasantry
of Malabar and Kasaragod.

In South Canara\(^{(1)}\) there was some fear of a shortage of rice during the coming monsoon and the collector had appealed the government on the question for a special shipment of the rice to the port of Mangalore before the monsoon sets in. District Relief Committee for food and famine were constituted by the peasant organisation and decided to assess the surplus paddy with each landlord in the village. It created a public opinion to procure surplus paddy and compelled the government to distribute the same at a fair price. The Kisan Sangham demanded the introduction of informal rationing.

Thus the second world war had created great sufferings to the people. Hoarding and black marketing were common. The landlords had resorted to all sort of repression against the peasantry. Thus the peasant organisation resorted new method of agitation against the landlords and the British. Thus they started the Vilakoith Struggle or the struggle of harvesting the crops.

**Thimiri Harvest**

The first harvest struggle\(^{(2)}\) in Thimiri was in February 1941. C. P. Gopalan, the landlord tried to evict his tenant Kutirummal Appu. Appu gave a complaint to the Karshaka Sangha and the Sangham workers assisted him for the harvest. A case was registered against six persons, but it was rejected. Again, after the harvest when the tenant tried to sow the field the landlord opposed but the tenant, succeeded with the help of the Sangham.

In the history of Kasaragod taluk the women\(^{(3)}\) were accused and

1. *Fortnightly Report (Confidential) for First Half of April, 1941.*
charge sheeted for the first time in the Thimiri harvest case which was held in 1948, out of 28 accused 8 were women. The Communist and peasant leader Unniyatan Narayanan Nair was in Jail as detinue prisoner. In his wife’s house there was only four ladies. Unnikrishnan Tirumumb tried to capture the crops which they harvested. Sangham resisted the activities and Unnikrishnan Tirumumb failed to capture the crops.

**Palai Harvest**

This agitation\(^{(1)}\) was in February 1942. Alyala Valappil Kunhikrishnan Nambiar or Vellur Kunhikrishan Nambiar was the landlord and the tenants were Tandalath Ambadi and Kovvalil Ambadi. The landlord had secured a court order to harvest, the lands of these tenants because of rent arrears. When the landlord started the harvest, the Sangham workers protested and harvested the crops. Landlord filed a petition against ten sangham workers.

**Madikai Harvest**

The Madikai harvest was on\(^{(2)}\) 26\(^{th}\) January 1942. The landlord, Echikkanam Kelu Potail evicted his tenant Vayakodan Kannan without any reason. The land was sowed first by the landlord then by the tenant. But all other activities of cultivation was done by the landlord. But the Sangham decided to harvest. Because of fright Kannan was not ready to assist the Sangham, but the Sangham harvested. A case was registered against 21 persons.

These sorts of struggles were organised by the Karshaka Sangham in many parts of Kasaragod taluk. In Alayi\(^{(3)}\), Kukkala Valappil Kottan Koottayikaran was the tenant and Kakkat Tekkayillath Vasudeva Pattari was the landlord. By

3. Ibid, p. 129.
influencing the landlord, Koran Nair had taken the land through Kuzhikanadharam. But under the leadership of the Sangham, the peasant regained the land. In Udinur, C. M. Kunhikannan Nair was the landlord of that area and he tried to evict his tenant Kumhambu Nair. The land was given to another person to cultivate. When the time of harvest approached, the Sangham harvested the crops.

At Perumbala, Mayin Chemmanad was the prominent landlord(1) and he tried to evict his tenant P. Koman Nair. Karshaka Sangham interfered and harvested the crops. In Kannan Vayal of present Pallikara Panchayath of Kasaragod Mukkutil Kunhambu Nair of periya was the landlord. He tried to evict his tenant, Kuliyan Marathinkal Kannan Nair. Sangham interfered and harvested the crops. In Bollore, the landlord Erial Vazhunnor tried to evict four of his tenants. Bammatakotan Kannan Maniyani was one of them. So with the help of Sangham he sowed the land. The agitation was a success and the landlord did not try to evict the other three tenants. In Attenganam, Olakkara Kelu Potail(2) was the landlord and Onakkan Kannan was the tenant. The land which Kannan was cultivating had given to another person for cultivation. When the time of harvest was appeared the Sangham harvested the crops. Landlord of Muzhakoth(3) at Cheruvathur, Kannankulath Ambadi was the tenant. The landlord enhanced the rent, which was four times greater than normal rate and was evicted through a court order. No body was ready to take the land for cultivation, because of the resistance of the Sangham. At last Ambadi started cultivation with out paying the enhanced rent.

1. Kasaragod, Charithavum Samoohavum (Mal), (ed), Kasaragod District Panchayath, 2001, p. 372,
Agrarian conflict in the post war period

The post war crisis had completely torn the rural life\(^{(1)}\) in to acute poverty, agony and distress; thus millions of people faced scarcity of food and reached at the verge of starvation. The purchasing power of the rural population was considerably deteriorated. Hoarding and black marketing were common. So the post war crisis spread to social unrest not only among the peasants and workers but also among the people as a whole. Thus post war period marked a new turn in the history of the peasant struggles in South Canara District.

In all parts of South Canara the condition of the peasants and workers were worst. The capitalists and the landlords tried to make a good fortune out of the situation. The landlords introduced more repressive measures. Thus the political and economic condition were very much favourable for the advancement of the peasants and workers. The Collector reported\(^{(2)}\) that in South Canara District the Communists were reported to be increasing their hold on labour in Mangalore and Hosdurg areas. At the same time the Collector\(^{(3)}\) also reported that the Communist influence in the Kasaragod area was being counter acted successfully by the Congress propaganda. The circumstances developed during the post war period was favourable for the advancement of the peasant organisations in South Canara District as well as in Kasaragod taluk.

In April 1945 a Raitha Sangha (peasant organisation) was founded\(^{(4)}\) at

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2. Fortnightly Report (Confidential) for Second Half of April, 1945.
4. Joshi G. V. Dasina Kannada Jilleta Raith Horattar (Mangalore University, 1989, p. 10.)
Bantwal of South Canara district. This was the first peasant organisation, formed in South Canara District other than Kasaragod taluk. The prominent leaders were the freedom fighters and Communist leaders like B. V. Kakkillaya, M. H. Krishnappa, S. N. Holla, A. Krishna Shetty and Ammu Shetty. The Chalageni tenants took membership in Raitha Sangha. They organised meetings near the settlement of the landlords.

The Raitha Sangha did not put forward any radical demands, in its initial stages. They demanded receipts of the rent paid, so that they could have some records of their land or to get some documents for their dealings. The landlords objected to it. The Sangham started struggles for securing this relief. The peasants objected the eviction or forcible harvest. Some times, there were clashes between the peasants and landlords. Especially in Bantwal taluk, there were many clashes of this type. In the initial stage, the movement did not gather enough strength because all the important leaders were imprisoned\(^{(1)}\) for a period of six years.

Many of the Congress leaders of the South Canara District were landlords, merchants, tile factory owners etc. They wanted to safeguard their own class interests, so they never supported the peasant organisation.

It was reported\(^{(2)}\) that the antagonism between the Communists and the Congress was increasing in South Canara District. The Magistrate reported that the feelings between the two parties continue to be very strained.

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peasants as a part of the Green leaves and fire wood struggle or the so called 'tolum virakum' agitation in 1946.

The local landlords(1) like Tazhakkatmana and Kuttamath Kunniyur owned large areas of dry land on Cheemeni and Thimiri villages. The peasantry residing in the surrounding villages collected fire wood, thatching grass, green leaves etc, form the above land for domestic use and agriculture. Many people made this collection as an occupation. George Thomas Kottukappalli, a capitalist planter of Travancore, got 6036 acres of land for lease from these landlord families in 1942 on a mere payment of rent for starting a cashew plantation.

After receiving the estate, George Thomas Kottukappalli did not permit the peasantry to enter and collect materials from the area which they enjoyed as a traditional right. They were also denied the collection of materials from the government waste lands situated in the surrounding areas of the estate. These sorts of lands were also monopolised by the estate management especially in Kotakkat village.

The estate management had adopted all sorts of atrocities(2) towards the peasantry particularly upon the ladies who had gone for collection of materials. In this circumstance the Karshaka Sangham decided to mobilise people to protect their traditional rights. Thus the agitation was started(3) on 15th November 1946. The peasants from surrounding villages like Cheruvathur, Thimiri, Kotakkat, Klayicode, Kayyur etc. participated in this agitation.

The peasant leader K. A. Keraleeyan stayed at Cheruvathur and gave leadership to the agitation.

The peasantry trespassed into the estate and forcefully collected the fire wood, leaves etc. The trespassers consisted of both men and women. The police interfered in this struggle and unleashed all types of oppressive measures against the peasantry, but the peasantry enthusiastically participated in the agitation. Women took part in the agitation actively. Among them Chattichi Paru, Marathi parvethi, Edatam Veetil Madhavi, Meethale Veetil Lakshmi, Vannathi Cheria, M. V. Chariya etc were prominent. An interesting marching song composed by K. A. Keraleeyan was recited by the activists of the Kisan Sangham. Some of the lines were

We will procure leaves and fire wood.
Even if the god of death comes.
The forest is like an ocean,
And planted and nurtured by none.
The sickles that we carry in our hands,
Are not for reaping leaves alone!

Before the sub divisional Magistrate at Puttur, the police charged a case against T. S. Tirumumb, C. Krishnan Nair, T. K. Chandan, Unniyatan Narayanan Nair. T. K. Kammaran and Nappayil Kunhambu.

Because of the strong protest of the peasantry against the estate, the management realised that, it was difficult to get hired labour for the estate from the local peasants. Thus, they came forward for compromise and restored many of the traditional rights of the peasantry. The management

2. Ibid, p. 38.
withdraw the case against the peasant leaders. This was one example of unity and self-determination on the part of the peasantry under the Sangham’s leadership against landlordism and imperialism.

**Madikkai intimidation and revival of court cases**

Even after the Madikai crop's harvest agitation the landlord of that area, Achikkanan Janmi continued his repression towards the peasants. The peasant ladies collected leaves from the forest areas to make compost and for cooking. But the landlord compelled them to put the leaves first in his own fields and then only they were permitted to take the leaves for their needs. On the other side the police took all sorts of measures to suppress the peasantry.

A. K. Gopalan reached Madikai for collecting funds(1) for the party newspaper Deshabhimani, in October 1946. The police received the news of A. K. Gopalan’s arrival at Madikai. So two policemen followed him when he had gone house to house for the collection of funds. He was not able to tolerate this and intimidated them for this vigilance. As per the report of the policemen more police constables were sent to Madikai. The peasantry under the leadership of A. K. Gopalan led a procession against the police. Then a case was charged(2) against him and K. Madhavan, Ganapati Kammath, K. R. Kunhikannan and others. The case was withdrawn after independence.

At the same time another case(3) was charged against K. Madhavan, Ganapati Kamath and others assuming that they constituted a parallel or rival

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2. Ibid, p. 38.
court in Madikai and tried local cases in which K. Madhavan acted as judge and Kammath as prosecutor. The case was tried by the First Class Magistrate, Kasaragod and ended in their discharge, with the exception of K. Madhavan, who had absconded. At last he was arrested in connection with the same case and he had to spend the night in police custody when India celebrated the day of independence.

The Karivellur Incident

The Communist Party observed 13th October 1946 as anti-repression day throughout Malabar and Kasaragod. Post war sufferings accompanied by hoarding and black marketing increased the miseries of the people. So a meeting of the Communist Party was held at Calicut. It was decided to implement the agitation against black marketing and also to detect surplus food grains available in the areas. The Kisan Sangham organised various demonstrations against hoarding and black marketing.

Rama Varma Valiya Raja of Chirakkal was one of the absentee landlords of Karivellur village. He procured nearly 10000 seers of paddy from his tenants and kept it in the granary at Kuniyan. It was the period of scarcity of food grain and famine. The Raja obtained a permit on 4th December 1946 to transport paddy from Karivellur, a deficit area. The Kisan Sangham represented the Raja for handing over the entire quantity of paddy for distribution to the villagers at a fair price mainly because it was a deficit area, but the Raja did not agree.

On 20th December 1946, the Raja tried to remove the paddy with police protection. A big crowd resisted the transportation of paddy. This
resulted in the police firing and death of two Sangham volunteers, Thitil Kannan and Keeneri Kunhikannan.

Following this incident there was great oppression in Karivellur and surrounding areas including the Southern part of the Kasaragod taluk. In the militant action of the Sangham at Karivellur, Kisan Volunteers from Cheruvathur, Pilicode, Kayyur and Nileshwar had participated and out of the 75 accused\(^1\) 32 were from the Kasaragod taluk. This shows the involvement of Kisan Sangham of Kasaragod in the Karivellur incident, even though Karivellur belonged to the Chirakkal taluk of the Malabar District.

**Militancy and Repression**

On 5\(^{th}\) August 1946, through a resolution known as "Forward to Final Struggle" the Communist Party stated\(^2\) that the India freedom movement had entered in its last phase. The working class strikes, the Royal Indian Navy revolt and the peasant uprisings in different parts of India had heralded a period of mighty battle which might lead to the end of the imperialist feudal reign in India and the dawn of Indian freedom.

The Quit India Movement had paved for rapid uprising in Malabar and Kasaragod taluk. This invited immediate attention of the government to the problems of maintenance of law and order. Thus on 23\(^{rd}\) January 1947, the government of Madras promulgated the Madras Maintenance of Public order ordinance\(^3\).

This was for preventive detention, imposition of collective fines, control and

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certain other purposes. Vast powers were given to executive authority against
the individuals. Under the provision of this ordinance the government started
repression against the Communists.

Thus Communist leaders of Malabar and South Canara were arrested
and sent to Vellur Central Jail. S. N. Holla, B. V. Kakkillaya, K. P. Kesava
Kammath, Haridas Maniyani, N. K. Kottan, K. T. Kunhiraman Nambiar, N. S.
Namboodiri and Shantarama Pai of South Canara District\(^{(1)}\) were arrested and
put in to jail. The Communists filed a Habeaus Corpus writ petition before
the High Court of Madras, but it was rejected.

The Fortnightly reported\(^{(2)}\) that the food situation continued to give
certain amount of anxiety to the news papers. The swadesamitram urged the
Government to formulate short term proposals for increasing agricultural pro-
duction and to take action in regard to the Kisan troubles.

Culcutta Thesis

The general conference of the Communist Party was held at Culcutta
from 28\(^{th}\) February to 6\(^{th}\) March 1948. Under these circumstances, the party
decided to involve through armed revolt with Guerilla tactics and suggested\(^{(3)}\),
"Telungana Model" every where in India to capture power and establish Peoples
Democratic Republic. After adopting such a revolutionary programme the
leaders and peasant activists went under ground.

From South Canara District, T. S. Tirumumb and P. Ambu Nair were the
two delegates who attended the Culcutta party congress. K. Madhavan was

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1. K. K. N. Kurup, Agrarian Struggles In Kerala (Thiruvananthapuram, 1989), p. 44, See also


also a delegate but he was detained by the party for underground activities. After their return a secret meeting was organised at Ravaneshwara which was attended by one hundred representatives of the party to discuss the implementation of the Culcutta thesis.

Accordingly they decided to approach the land owning houses and to take paddy forcefully by the mobilisation of the peasantry. They also decided to give the market price to the landlord for the paddy. Thus the paddy purchasing struggle or the paddy lifting struggle was started in Kasaragod taluk by the Communist Party. The Communist propaganda\(^1\) in the districts of Malabar and South Canara was concentrated on the decontrol policy of the government and they made full use of the fact that there was some local shortage of food grains.

Because of the suppression act introduced by the Madras Government, the Communists of the district went underground. Thus it was reported\(^2\) that in South Canara District considerable improvement had been reported in the labour situation as a result of the disappearance of the Communist leaders from the labour field. The situation was rather bad in Malabar, South Canara and Krishna Districts.

Considering the Communist activities in South Canara the government had taken harsh measures. The Inspector General of Police, Madras, reported\(^3\) to the Chief Secretary that in South Canara the Communists had organised a 'Peace Brigade' of about 55 volunteers in Mangalore where they were being

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2. *Fortnightly Report (Confidential) for First Half of April, 1948.*
trained in physical drill and marching exercises. Some police officers were
the target of attack by the Communists. It was thus seen that the Communists
were pursuing a policy of unrest among labourers and Kisans rending the prob-
lem of maintaining law and order difficult.

In view of the above activities it was considered that deterrent
action\(^{(1)}\) was necessary against the Communists. A list of important
Communists of South Canara District to be detained was enclosed. They were
T. Subrahmanyan Tirumumbu, S. N. Holla and B. V. Kakkillaya. It was also very
essential that their party organ "Deshabhimani" "prayasakti" and "Janasakti"
should be banned.

Immediately, on the receipt of the report the Chief Secretary took
measures to arrest the Communists. He sent a cipher telegram\(^{(2)}\) to all District
Magistrates to take immediate action against the Communists. Orders had
been issued\(^{(3)}\) for the detention of important Communist’s in all districts, but
many of them had gone under ground.

Paddy Procurement Struggle

In the post-war period food shortage and economic crisis were deep-
ened, the peasants organised Paddy Procurement Struggle or the so called
‘paddy purchasing’ from principal landlords, with a view to prevent hoarding
and black marketing. Batches of peasants and Communists volunteers went
from place to place for forceful purchase. The paddy so taken was distributed
among the poor villagers. The granaries of Ilanir Madam in Kasaragod,

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1. Inspector General Of Police of Madras, Report to The Chief Secretary, The Special Criminal
   Investigation Department Madras, 161/M Dated, 5-2-1948, p. 4.
Kundilayur in Pullur, Kakkaothayar in Madikkai, Karinthalam Raman in Karinthalalm. Kottayil Raghavan Nambiar in East Eleri, Vishnu Bhasmarithiya in Klayikkode, Puthilot Neelama Embranthiri, Kanhirappalli Illam, Alakkantan Raman and Kunnath Illam in Kotakkat were opened by the peasants for distribution of paddy.

According to official reports(1) that in South Canara the Communists had been organising peasant raids and peasant marches, mode of attack being, collect men, women, children on the promise of getting them rice and to take them to the house of landlords who were reputed to have some paddy and to take delivery of the paddy by threatening the landholders with violence.

Batches of peasants and Communists armed with available weapons went for forceful purchase of paddy. Many reactionary landlords registered their protest by not accepting any payment and some landlords received the payment and also filed case against the agitators. The paddies so taken were distributed among the poor villagers at a fair price. Slogans(2) like, 'Telangana way, our way' and 'land to the tiller and power to the people' were shouted by the volunteers.

Karindalam Procurement Struggle

Peasants under the leadership of T. S. Tirumumb marched in to the house of the landlord Karindalam Raman. When the rationing system was ended by the government the landlord utilised the situation for black marketing. Considering the situation the landlord had given ten para of paddy. The

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1. Fortnightly Report (Confidential) for Second Half of April, 1948.
agitators had given him the market rate but he was not ready to accept that. The agitators distributed the paddy to the poor peasants.

A case was registered\(^{(1)}\) against 54 persons. T. S. Tirumumb, N. Ganapati Kammath, C. Krishnan Nair and Choorikkadan Krishnan Nair were among the accused. No body was punished in the case. The peasants from Ntleshwar, Cheemeni, Pilicode, Kinannur, Thimiri, Kayyur, Kuttamath, Mozhakom etc. participated in the agitation.

**Madikai Procurement**

The peasant Marched to the house of the landlord Kokkothayar of Madikai. Understanding the intention of the volunteers he opened his granary and given paddy. The agitators gave him 2 annas per seer. But a case was registered\(^{(2)}\) against person like K. Madhavan, Madikai Kunhikannan, P. Ambu Nair and others.

The volunteers prevented\(^{(3)}\) the transfer of paddy from Alayi of Madikai to the landlord of Nileshwar. The agitators captured the paddy and gave 2 annas per seer. The paddy was distributed to the poor peasants. A case was registered against six persons.

**Putukai Procurement**

Narayana Kanathil was the landlord in Putukai, near Madikai. When he tried for black marketing\(^{(4)}\) of paddy, Sangham, protested. Sangham purchased paddy and gave 12 annas per one para and distributed the paddy to the peasants. N. G. Kamath was the leader of the agitation.

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2. Ibid, p. 381.
Raveneshwasram Procurement

Peasants marched to the Kundilayar’s house under the leadership of P. Ambu Nair and M. Haridas. They told the landlord about the sufferings of the people and the intention of their march. The landlord had given them 30 para of paddy and received the market price. The agitators distributed the paddy to the peasants. The paddy which received was not sufficient for distribution. So they had gone to the house of another landlord Maniyan Pattar. He was forced to give paddy. The police registered a case against 20 persons and resorted to repression.

Similar type of agitations were held at Madikai Udinur, Kuttamath and East Eleri. At Madikai, the Sangham decided to purchase the surplus paddy of the Keekkankod Illam. But the police resorted to repression. In Udinur they captured the paddy of the landlord called Ibrahim Kunhi and distributed it among the poor peasants. When Koran Nair, a tenant was taking his rent of paddy to the landlord, Nilamana Namboodiri of Kotakkat it was prevented by the Sangham workers. At last the landlord received the market price and settled. In East Eleri, the peasants marched to the house of the landlord Kottayil Kunhambu Nair and procured paddy and distributed to the peasants.

The fortnightly reports stated that a body of Communists who were hiding in the forests on the borders of South Canara, Coorg and Malabar were tackled by the MSP detachment as a result of which half a dozen Communists were killed and large part of the property of in the dacoitiers were recovered in addition to guns and Communist literature.

2. Fortnightly Report (Confidential) for First Half of May, 1948.
From south Canara, it was reported that\(^1\) bands of persons calling them selves Congress volunteers were going to villages in Hosdurg sub taluk saying that they were looking for Communists. The Congress volunteers started searching the Communists from the secret places. Many of them actually acted as the agents of landlords and police.

S. N. Holla, one of the peasant leader and one of the most wanted Communists of South Canara was arrested but he was rescued\(^2\) by a large group of Communists while he was taken to jail by train at Manjeshwar. The official report states\(^3\) that an important Communist of South Canara District, who had been arrested and was being taken to the jail was suddenly rescued and carried away by large party of Communists who overpowered the escort constables in the train.

Some Communists of Kuttamath, village of South Canara District forcibly harvested and removed paddy crops which had been attached by the civil court\(^4\). There were sixteen cases relating to paddy procurement from the Kasaragod taluk before the special court, Mangalore. The oppressive measures continued against the Communists in all parts of the district by the British Government. Thus, under these circumstances, one of the prominent Communist leaders of South Canara T. S. Tirumumbu decided to resign from the Communist Party. While he was arrested at Cheruvathur he handed over the resignation letter to the police and he had even given a detailed account of the activities of the party to the police.

The Congress leadership initiated lecture series(1) against Communism in Malabar and Kasaragod under the leadership of K. Kelappan, and others like Pamban Madhavan, Tayat Sankaran and Vishnu Bharatheeyan. In addition to this drive(2) against the Communists over hundred arrests were made, during the fortnight both for specific offences and for subversive activities. Under these circumstances the Government decided to ban the Communist Party. It was stated that(3)

when most of the active Communists were arrested and kept in the jail, and law and order were maintained under "shoot at sight" orders in most of the districts of the government of Madras decided to ban the CPI and its feeder association in this province with effect from 27th September 1949.

The Communist Party and its feeder associations functioned under ground during the period of ban. The economic condition prevailed during this period was favourable for this. Indebtedness, rack-renting, oppression by the landlords was accompanied by hoarding and black marketing. Thus the agrarian scenario became more crucial. So the rural population had more sufferings and acute poverty. This rural mass supported the Communists for their under ground activities, even though the government unleashed a reign of terror.

The Congress continued the propaganda against the Communists and spy work against them. This created tensions in the rural areas between these

2. Fortnightly Report (Confidential) for First Half of April, 1949.
3. USS Files, no. 110/49, Dated 16th December 1949.
two parties. In Klayikod of Kasaragod taluk, a pandal constructed by the Congress for its meeting was burnt by the local Communists in April 1950. The fortnightly reports\(^{(1)}\) that in South Canara District about 40 to 50 Communists suddenly attacked the organisers of village political conference in Mozhakoth village and set on fire the pandal erected for this purpose.

A procession was led by one Balakrishnan Nambar shouting Communist slogans on 29\(^{th}\) April in Muliyar Village. Another procession was reported from Perumbala village. A platoon of MSP had been posted and adequate precautions were taken. Thus even though the party was kept under ban it's activities continued in a changed form because it had deep rooted influence in the rural population.

The Communist Party engaged struggles during the years 1950 and 1951 against the ban. The party adopted constitutional methods on the basis of the new constitution. The situation created\(^{(2)}\) by the judgment (the Supreme Court and the Madras High Court) on cases regarding the detainees was reviewed by the government. These judgments partially restored the civil rights. Good number of detainees were released and by the end of 1951 a situation of normally was being restored.

The Malabar Kisan Council came into existence with effect from 26\(^{th}\) July 1951 with eminent leaders like K. A. Keraleeyan and A. V. Kunhambu. Very soon 79 local Kisan units were organised. The agitations of the peasantry were centered around the following demands\(^{(3)}\).

1. *Fortnightly Report (Confidential) for First Half of May, 1950.*
1. The Pattam (cash payment for garden land) and rent should be made one half of the existing payment.

2. Hut-dwellers should be given fixity of tenure.

3. Rent arrears should be cancelled.

4. Rent should be paid either in cash or kind.

5. Waste land should be given for cultivation with out rent.

6. The pepper rent should be made one for 10 trees or one year for 10 years.

7. The tenancy legislation should be extended to Kasaragod taluk.

Even though Kisan Sangham was deep rooted in almost all parts of Kasaragod taluk the Kodom village was taken aloof. In 1952, a Kisan Sangham unit was founded at Kodom with Narayan Nair the president and C. Shankaran the Secretary. The Communist Party decided to conduct a public meeting at Kodom, but the landlord opposed. The police interfered and prohibited public meeting by proclaiming Rule 144 in Kodom. But Sangham leaders like T. C. Narayanan Nambar MLA, K. Madhavan, Kodoth Narayanan Nair, K. M. Kumaran and V. Kunhiraman violated the prohibition and entered Kadakam. They were arrested and remanded. Afterwards the Sangham became more powerful in Kadakam, convened public meeting and the case was withdrawn by the government.

The South Canara District Raitha Sangha (Peasant organisation) was organised in February 1952. B. V. Kakkilaya was the first president of the organisation. The Raitha Sangha put forward three main demands

1. The tenants should not be evicted. Those who were cultivating the land should become the permanent cultivator of the land.

2. The Raitha Sangha demanded that rent should be reduced to one fifth of the gross produce.

3. Receipt for the rent.

The tenants of Udupi and Bandwal joined the movement with expectation of getting receipt for their payment of rent. The Raitha Sangha organised meetings and jathas in different villages. The landlords tried to suppress the attempts of the ryots with violence and goondaism.

The Karnataka Prantha Raitha Sangha was organised(1) in 1954. Venkidagiri Appa was the president and B. V. Kakkilaya was the secretary of the Sangha. The Sangha put forward the following major demands(2).

1. To give security of Tenure to the tenants
2. The eviction of tenants should be prohibited
3. Reduction of rent.
4. Rent should be based on the land revenue and not the produce.
5. Payment of receipt for the rent.

Owing to the ferocity of the movement the Madras Government announced a law to help the tenants. Thus the Madras cultivating Tenants protection Act, 1955 prohibited eviction of tenants in South Canara.

The Raitha Sangha also organised the toddy tappers. They demanded to permit them, toddy tapping for making jaggery and the sale of toddy. The

1. Interview With B. V. Kakkilaya On August 28th 2005, His Residence At Mangalore.
2. Ibid.
toddy tappers started their struggles with the support of the Raitha Sangha and the government permitted tapping for jaggiri purpose.

A memorable satyagraha, the Mulki Satyagraha took place on 1955-56 at Mulki a place between Mangalore and Udupi, the exact place was called Chithapur. This was against eviction of a tenant named, Chinna Poojari. The prominent leaders of the movement were B. V. Kakkillaya, M. H. Krishnappa, Krishna Shetty, Sanjeev Rai, Koragappa Rai, Virappa Saliya, Vishwatha Nayak, K. V. Rao, Ram Nayak, Abraham Karkade and others. The volunteers from different parts came in jathas to Mulki. The working class of the district shouted slogan "Mulki Challo". The police and goondas of landlords unleashed repression on the satyagrahi's. The satyagrahi's failed to resist and mobilise more peasants against the repression. Chinna poojari lost his land. But this satyagraha paved the way for the development of political consciousness among the peasants and the working class. There was also struggle against eviction in Bantwal taluk. Era and Balakpul were the particular place, where the struggle took place.

The economic exploitation of the colonial rule impoverished the peasantry and the rural population started resistance movements against British rule. Thus massive and militant peasant movements took place in Kasaragod taluk of South Canara District in 1930's with the influence of the Malabar experience. Similarly the Communist Party had strong holds in this taluk to co-ordinate and led the struggles. The Communists and the peasants fought
against caste system and landlordism on one hand and colonialism on the other. But in other parts of the district excluding the Kasaragod taluk, the formation of the peasant organisations started only in 1945 on wards and the spread of the peasant organisations were also very slow. The peasant movements were actually weak before independence in this area. Thus we can observe a contrast between the peasant movements in Kasaragod taluk of South Canara District and other parts of the district.