

ON THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE OF “KADAKKODI” (SEA-COURT) IN MALABAR REGION OF KERALA: EXPERIENCE FROM FOUR COURTS OF KASARGOD DISTRICT

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“Sea Court” locally called as “Kadal Kodathy” in Malayalam language further shortened as “Kadakkodi” is a local community-based judiciary system, functioning among the coastal fisher folk in the Malabar Coast of Kerala, India. The current paper discusses the traditional self-governing system (Kadakkodi) which mediates the conflicts among the fisher folk both on land and at sea, especially focusing on the gender perspective. This system is believed to have a history of more than 500 years and is still prevailing in some of the regions of Kasargod District with varying levels of effectiveness. The different units of Kadakkodi presently active in Kasargod District are Kasargod, Keezhoor, Koottikkulam and Bekkal and enact the rules and regulations followed by generations and enforce them carefully to ensure the fair distribution of benefits to various sections of resource users. The paper examines and analyses the present status of the various Kadakkodi units, the changing nature and current relevance of this traditional court system with the case data collected for a period of ten years from 2004 to 2013. From the study, it is understood that among the four existing Kadakkodi in Malabar region; Kasargod, Bekkal and Keezhoor are still active in settling conflicts and intervening effectively in the day to day activities of the fisher folk. The Kasargod Kadakkodi took up 57 cases during the period of 2004 to 2013, out of which 28 cases fell under family conflicts with women involvement, while 26 were concerned with anti-social activities, 14 were related to asset dispute and 5 were connected with fishing and fish marketing-related conflicts. In Keezhoor, 72 cases were considered during the period, out of which 54 cases were of anti-social nature, 4 cases were falling under family conflicts involving women and other 2 cases were on disputes on assets, 12 cases were related to fishing and marketing conflicts. In Bekkal, 25 cases were settled during the period out of which 11 were of anti-social nature, 8 cases fell under family conflicts, 4 cases were on disputes on assets and 2 were related to fishing and marketing. In Koottikkulam, the judiciary role of Kadakkodi is no more active and the court system has changed into mere *Karayogam* where the temple executive committee mainly concentrates on the conduct of temple rituals including the annual festival.