

# HISTORY OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION IN NORTHERNMOST KERALA: A STUDY ON THE ENDOSULFAN ISSUES IN KASARAGOD

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**Abstract:** Kasaragod, the last formed district in Kerala, is famous for the cultural symbiosis and use of seven local languages. The pluralistic cultural background of Kasaragod is reflected in various art forms and also the lifestyle of the people. The place was one of the major centers of foreign invasion, freedom movement and also the migration of different religions particularly Jainism, Islam and Christianity. But, nowadays it is famous for the violation of human rights with the use of a pesticide known as Endosulfan. The pesticide sprayed in the cashew plantations of Kasaragod from 1978 onwards which ultimately caused for many health issues to the people including the new born babies in this area. It resulted in diseases ranging from physical deformities, cancers, birth disorders and damages to brain and nervous system. People are still dying from the after-effects of the pesticide and hundreds of people are now living in utter misery. It destroyed not only the dreams and desires, but also the right of a group of people to live without fear. The environment activists generally considered it as an utter violation of the human right mainly for protecting the needs and interests of the Plantation Corporation in Kerala.

**Key Words:** - Endosulfan, Pesticide, Plantation, Health Issues, Human Rights Violation etc.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Geographically, the entire area of present Kasaragod, Kannur and Wynad districts and Vadakara and Quilandy Taluks of Kozhikode district are generally known as 'North Malabar'. It was one of the major centres of foreign trade, British colonialism and freedom movement in Kerala. Kasaragod, the northernmost region of Malabar and an integral part of erstwhile *Tulunadu* (Tulu Kingdom) is famous for its pluralistic and composite culture. As a border area of Kerala and Karnataka, the people of this region living with a peculiar cultural background, which does perhaps the mixture of many cultures that exists in both states. The confluence of religions, castes, languages, rituals, ceremonies, customs and traditions etc.; made Kasaragod a land of diversity within a common culture. But, one of the tragic episode faced this land is the so-called 'Endosulfan Problem'. It was an utter violation of the principles of human rights. It destroyed not only the health and dreams but also the right of the people to live without fear.

Endosulfan is a pesticide that was used in the cashew plantations of Kasaragod by the Plantation Corporation of Kerala (PCK) Ltd. which is the largest plantation company in the public sector formed in 1962 by the Govt. of Kerala. The purpose for the establishment Plantation Corporation of Kerala was to accelerate the agro - economic development of Kerala. It was set up at the time of the starting of the so-called Green Revolution. Under the supervision of the PCK; Endosulfan was sprayed in the cashew plantations of Kasaragod from 1978 onwards regularly three times every year. It was sprayed aerially by using helicopters and small planes. Aerial spray of Endosulfan using helicopters was recommended by the Government scientific bodies to cut cost of manual labor. Aerial spraying of Endosulfan since 1978 in the cashew plantations spread over 4500 hectares around 15 villages in Kasaragod district. As the plantations are mostly in mountainous areas, the pesticide drained and got washed down the slopes during rains into drinking water below. The consumption of this water by the people and animals resulted in diseases ranging from physical deformities, cancers, birth disorders and damages to brain and nervous system.

By 1990s health disorders of very serious nature among the human population came to the lime light. Children were found to be the worst affected with congenital anomalies, mental retardation, physical deformities, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, hydrocephalus etc. Men and women were also affected with various chronic ailments, many irreversible and difficult to treat. People are still dying from after-effects of the pesticide, while more than 1000 live in utter misery.

The health of more than 9000 persons has been impaired by the pesticide used by the State-owned Plantation Corporation of Kerala at its cashew plantations. From the mid of 1990's, the community living near plantations started complaining against the spraying of Endosulfan, finally realizing that the pesticide might be the reason behind the anomalies.

By 2000 AD, some social and environmental activist raised the problem seriously and wanted the government to study the matter regarding the violation of human rights happened at Kasaragod due to the pesticide. In 2003, the campaigns against Endosulfan became very strong and the people raised the slogan 'Endosulfan Quit India'. As a result of the series of protests, Govt. of Kerala and Govt. of India had appointed 11 various commissions to inquire about the issue. Certain private organizations also made some studies at their own level. Most of the studies revealed the hazards of Endosulfan use and its impact on the food, water and beverages. These enquiry reports in one way or other infer that Endosulfan pesticide is responsible for the miserable condition of the people. From 2000 onwards committees of various departments, Non-Governmental Organizations, Indian Council of Medical Research and other agencies conducted visits to the area and submitted reports to the Government regarding this issue. Smt. Leela Kumari Amma, one of the victims, approached Hosdurg Munsiff Court at Kanhangad in 2001 and the Court temporarily issued orders to cancel aerial spraying of Endosulfan in cashew plantations. In 2003, the High Court of Kerala upheld the order of lower Court and it permanently stopped Endosulfan spraying. Since then, the Government of Kerala imposed a ban on the use of Endosulfan within the State.

Endosulfan is one of the cheapest pesticides available in the world market. The European Union, the USA and other developed countries have already banned the use of Endosulfan in their countries. Though the Government of Kerala demanded for a worldwide ban on Endosulfan, the performances of the government to make a complete solution to the issues of the affected people have been disappointing. The Govt. failed to make arrangements for the victims even in the case of water supply and hospital facilities. The attempts of government to provide medical care and ensure rehabilitation of the affected people was often delayed and failed to achieve much. Though a relief and remediation cell was formed at Civil Station Kasaragod, its activities are very slow by the absence of funds and other problems. There is no complete remedy arranged even today for the protection of the victims and their families. Though the use of Endosulfan banned in Kerala, the authorities can't relieve from the responsibility of the violation of human rights happened in the case of Endosulfan victims in Kasaragod.

## II. CONCLUSION

It has already proved that Endosulfan is a harmful pesticide. It has caused heavy damage to human being, animals and the environment in Kasaragod. The Pollution Control Boards and Environment Protection Agencies of various countries have certified this fact. It is currently totally banned in at least 88 countries, with the others partially banning its use and following plans to completely phase out its use. It needs to think about ways to replace harmful chemical insecticides like Endosulfan and move towards organic, environment-friendly methods of agriculture, which will ensure and preserve the richness and fertility of the soil for the coming generations. It is also important that the authorities must take all the remedial measures to protect the victims of the Endosulfan pesticide in Kasaragod as early as possible.

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