

**MODERNITY AND MARGINALITY: A STUDY
ON THE FISHER FOLK OF
COLONIAL MALABAR 1800-1947**

Thesis

*Submitted to the University of Calicut
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY

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DECLARATION

I, Dilsoosa N.P., do hereby declare that this thesis entitled '**Modernity and Marginality: A Study on The Fisher Folk of Colonial Malabar 1800-1947**' is a bona fide record of research work done by me under the supervision of Prof. (Dr) Godwin Samraj D.P., Controller of Examinations, University of Calicut and Research Supervisor, Research and Post Graduate Department of History, Malabar Christian College, Calicut, for the award of the degree of Doctor of philosophy in History. I also declare that this thesis or part thereof has not been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma.



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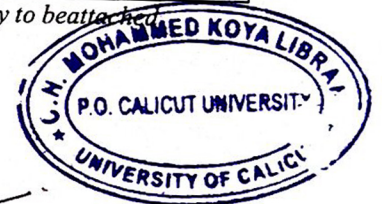


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I have always been deeply moved by the struggles and resilience of marginalized communities, especially fishermen whose lives I closely observed during my academic and personal experiences. Witnessing their daily challenges and the socio-economic hardships they endure inspired me to explore their historical trajectories, particularly during the colonial period. This research reflects my dedication to understanding the socio-economic transformations, marginalization, and enduring agency of fisherfolk within the broader context of colonial modernity.

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Dilsoosa N.P

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Modernity and Marginality: A Study on The Fisher Folk of Colonial Malabar 1800-1947

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Abstract

This research investigates the complex relationship between modernity and marginality through a critical historical study of the fisherfolk of colonial Malabar from 1800 to 1947. By situating the coastal communities within the broader context of colonial governance and capitalist expansion, the study interrogates how modern reforms, institutional interventions, and evolving economic policies impacted the traditional social structures and livelihoods of fisherfolk. It particularly examines how the logic of colonial modernity, while framed as developmental, often operated to reproduce marginality, displace indigenous knowledge systems, and intensify socio-economic inequalities.

Drawing upon an array of archival documents, fisheries department reports, petitions, and oral traditions, the thesis traces shifts in caste hierarchies, occupational patterns, gender roles, and education among fishing communities. It highlights the ways in which colonial interventions in fisheries—such as licensing, taxation, regulation of coastal spaces, and the establishment of fisheries training institutes—altered traditional forms of livelihood and governance. particular significance is the critical engagement with the 1919 Fisheries Training Institute in Malabar, seen both as a site of empowerment and colonial control.

Structured across six chapters, the thesis covers themes such as ritual and caste traditions, economic transformations, institutional education, and subaltern resistance. The final chapters examine the emergence of community-led responses, including cooperative movements, legal petitions, and socio-political assertions against capitalist and colonial hegemony. Through a nuanced engagement with theories of colonial modernity, subalternity, and capitalist dispossession, the research argues that the fisherfolk were not passive recipients of change but active negotiators of their social and economic realities.

Overall, the study offers an original contribution to South Indian social history by centering a marginalized community and critically analyzing how they navigated the forces of modernity and empire.

Primary Keywords: Colonial Malabar, Fisherfolk, Colonial Modernity, Marginalization, British Colonialism, Fisheries Policy, Socio-economic Transformation, Subaltern Communities, Indigenous Resistance, Livelihood Disruption

Thematic Keywords: Environmental Governance, Coastal Economy, Colonial Knowledge Systems, Fisheries Education, Petitions and Bureaucracy, Development Discourse, Traditional Fishing Practices, Caste and Occupation, State Intervention, Maritime Labour

Modernity and Marginality: A Study on The Fisher Folk of Colonial Malabar 1800-1947

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സംഗ്രഹം

1800 മുതൽ 1947 വരെയുള്ള കൊളോണിയൽ മലബാറിലെ മത്സ്യത്തൊഴിലാളികളുടെ ചരിത്രത്തെ വിമർശനാത്മകമായി പഠിച്ചുകൊണ്ട്, ആധുനികതയും പാർശ്വവൽക്കരണവും തമ്മിലുള്ള സങ്കീർണ്ണമായ ബന്ധത്തെക്കുറിച്ചാണ് ഈ പഠനം അന്വേഷിക്കുന്നത്. കൊളോണിയൽ ഭരണത്തിന്റെയും മുതലാളിത്ത വികാസത്തിന്റെയും വിശാലമായ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ തീരദേശ സമൂഹങ്ങളെ പ്രതിഷ്ഠിച്ചുകൊണ്ട്, ആധുനിക പരിഷ്കാരങ്ങളും, സ്ഥാപനപരമായ ഇടപെടലുകളും, വികസന സാമ്പത്തിക നയങ്ങളും മത്സ്യത്തൊഴിലാളികളുടെ പരമ്പരാഗത സാമൂഹിക ഘടനകളെയും ഉപജീവനമാർഗ്ഗങ്ങളെയും എങ്ങനെ ബാധിച്ചുവെന്ന് ഈ പഠനം പരിശോധിക്കുന്നു. കൊളോണിയൽ ആധുനികതയുടെ യുക്തി, വികസനപരമായി ചിത്രീകരിക്കപ്പെട്ടപ്പോഴും, പലപ്പോഴും പാർശ്വവൽക്കരണം പുനരുൽപ്പാദിപ്പിക്കാനും, തദ്ദേശീയ വിജ്ഞാന വ്യവസ്ഥകളെ സ്ഥാനഭ്രഷ്ടമാക്കാനും, സാമൂഹിക-സാമ്പത്തിക അസമത്വങ്ങൾ വർദ്ധിപ്പിക്കാനും എങ്ങനെ പ്രവർത്തിച്ചുവെന്ന് ഇത് വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നു.

അനേകം ആർക്കൈവൽ രേഖകൾ, ഫിഷറീസ് വകുപ്പ് റിപ്പോർട്ടുകൾ, അപേക്ഷകൾ, വാമൊഴി പാരമ്പര്യങ്ങൾ എന്നിവയെ ആശ്രയിച്ച്, ഈ പ്രബന്ധം മത്സ്യബന്ധന സമൂഹങ്ങളിലെ ജാതി ശ്രേണികളിലും, തൊഴിൽ രീതികളിലും, ലിംഗഭേദപരമായ റോളുകളിലും, വിദ്യാഭ്യാസത്തിലുമുണ്ടായ മാറ്റങ്ങൾ രേഖപ്പെടുത്തുന്നു. ലൈസൻസിംഗ്, നികുതി പിരിവ്, തീരദേശങ്ങളുടെ നിയന്ത്രണം, ഫിഷറീസ് പരിശീലന സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളുടെ സ്ഥാപനം തുടങ്ങിയ മത്സ്യബന്ധന മേഖലയിലെ കൊളോണിയൽ ഇടപെടലുകൾ പരമ്പരാഗത ഉപജീവന മാർഗ്ഗങ്ങളെയും ഭരണ രീതികളെയും എങ്ങനെ മാറ്റിമറിച്ചു എന്ന് ഇത് എടുത്തു കാണിക്കുന്നു. 1919-ൽ മലബാറിൽ സ്ഥാപിച്ച ഫിഷറീസ് പരിശീലന ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ടുമായുള്ള വിമർശനാത്മകമായ ഇടപെടൽ ഇതിൽ സവിശേഷ പ്രാധാന്യമർഹിക്കുന്നു. ഇത് ശാക്തീകരണത്തിന്റെയും കൊളോണിയൽ നിയന്ത്രണത്തിന്റെയും ഒരു കേന്ദ്രമായി ഒരുപോലെ കാണുന്നു.

ആറ് അധ്യായങ്ങളിലായി ക്രമീകരിച്ചിരിക്കുന്ന ഈ പ്രബന്ധം ആചാരപരവും ജാതീയവുമായ പാരമ്പര്യങ്ങൾ, സാമ്പത്തിക പരിവർത്തനങ്ങൾ, സ്ഥാപനപരമായ വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം, കീഴ്ന്ന വിഭാഗങ്ങളുടെ ചെറുത്തുനിൽപ്പ് തുടങ്ങിയ വിഷയങ്ങൾ ഉൾക്കൊള്ളുന്നു. മുതലാളിത്ത, കൊളോണിയൽ ആധിപത്യങ്ങൾക്കെതിരെ സഹകരണ പ്രസ്ഥാനങ്ങൾ, നിയമപരമായ അപേക്ഷകൾ, സാമൂഹിക-രാഷ്ട്രീയ വാദങ്ങൾ എന്നിവയുൾപ്പെടെയുള്ള സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ നേതൃത്വത്തിലുള്ള പ്രതികരണങ്ങളുടെ ഉദയം അവസാന അധ്യായങ്ങളിൽ പരിശോധിക്കുന്നു. കൊളോണിയൽ ആധുനികത, പാർശ്വവൽക്കരണം, മുതലാളിത്തപരമായ കൈയേറ്റം എന്നിവയെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള സിദ്ധാന്തങ്ങളുമായി സൂക്ഷ്മമായ ഇടപെടലുകളിലൂടെ, മത്സ്യത്തൊഴിലാളികൾ മാറ്റങ്ങൾക്ക് നിഷ്ഠിയമായി വിധേയരായവരല്ലെന്നും, മറിച്ച് അവരുടെ സാമൂഹികവും സാമ്പത്തികവുമായ യാഥാർത്ഥ്യങ്ങളെ സജീവമായി ചർച്ച ചെയ്തവരാണെന്നും ഈ പഠനം വാദിക്കുന്നു.

മൊത്തത്തിൽ, ഒരു പാർശ്വവൽക്കരിക്കപ്പെട്ട സമൂഹത്തെ കേന്ദ്രീകരിച്ച്, ആധുനികതയുടെയും സാമ്രാജ്യത്വത്തിന്റെയും ശക്തികളെ അവർ എങ്ങനെ നേരിട്ടു എന്ന് വിമർശനാത്മകമായി വിശകലനം ചെയ്തുകൊണ്ട്, ഈ പഠനം ദക്ഷിണേന്ത്യൻ സാമൂഹിക ചരിത്രത്തിന് ഒരു മൗലിക സംഭാവന നൽകുന്നു.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The topic "Modernity, Marginality: A Study on the Fisherfolk of Colonial Malabar, 1800-1947" focuses on the intersection of two key themes—modernity and marginality within the specific context of fisherfolk communities in Malabar during British colonial rule. Numerous studies have been conducted to examine the socio-economic aspects of this community from various perspectives; however, none have explored this specific angle. Here seeks to understand how colonial modernity shaped the lives of the fisherfolk while also analyzing their marginalization within the broader socio-economic and political landscape of the time.

Modernity refers to the transformation of societies through the processes of industrialization, urbanization, and new forms of governance, often brought about by the colonial encounter. In the context of colonial Malabar, modernity was introduced through various British policies, administrative reforms, and infrastructural developments aimed at transforming traditional sectors like agriculture and fisheries. For the fisherfolk, modernity was experienced through changes in fishing techniques, market structures, and attempts at education and modernization introduced by colonial authorities, such as the establishment of fisheries schools. These reforms were part of a broader attempt to integrate traditional economies into the colonial capitalist framework, with the intention of boosting production and generating revenue for the British Empire.

However, the imposition of modernity was uneven and often disrupted the traditional livelihoods of the fisherfolk. New fishing technologies and market demands altered the rhythms of their work, while colonial environmental policies sometimes restricted access to fishing grounds, thus impacting their sustenance. Moreover, the introduction of modern education and the fisheries schools brought

new forms of knowledge and skills but also created tensions with traditional practices.

Marginality refers to the process by which certain groups are pushed to the edges of society, economically, socially, and politically. In colonial Malabar, the fisherfolk were historically marginalized due to their lower caste status, economic vulnerability, and exclusion from decision-making processes. Colonial modernity often reinforced this marginality. The fisherfolk, despite being an essential part of the coastal economy, were subjected to exploitation by traders, moneylenders, and colonial administrators, which limited their upward mobility and deepened their marginalization. Their low caste status further entrenched their position on the margins of society, restricting their access to resources and opportunities available to more dominant groups.

The combination of caste-based discrimination and colonial economic policies contributed to the fisherfolk's continued marginalization. While modernity brought some material benefits, such as improved infrastructure, it also exacerbated social inequalities. This study aims to explore how the fisherfolk negotiated their marginality amidst the pressures of modernity and colonial exploitation, focusing on their resilience, resistance, and adaptations in response to these forces. This study tries to analyse how modernity and marginality were intertwined in colonial Malabar, shaping the fisherfolk's socio-economic conditions and cultural identity from 1800 to 1947.

The establishment of British colonial authority over Malabar in 1792, following the Treaty of Seringapatam, marked a profound shift in the socio-economic landscape of this region. During 1820s, the British had solidified their control through the creation of administrative and legal frameworks, facilitating resource extraction and economic restructuring. While princely states like Kochi and Travancore remained under indirect British rule, the entire region was significantly influenced by colonial policies. The introduction of a cash economy, agricultural reforms, and the development of plantations transformed Kerala's economy, bringing about unprecedented social change.

Many British observers characterized Indian customs as uncivilized and its institutions as corrupt and antiquated, fostering the perception that India was inherently incapable of achieving progress without external guidance or intervention. This imperialist mindset was commonly employed to justify the political and economic subjugation of the Indian populace, asserting that such control was necessary to foster development. However, a small yet notable group of British reformers emerged, often referred to as radicals, who challenged this reductive narrative. These individuals applied the humanistic and rational principles of Western thought to the socio-political realities of India. They argued that all societies possess the potential for progress based on the principles of logic and science, and they genuinely aspired to advance the conditions of life for the Indian people. Among them, figures such as Frederic Nicholson, the Director of Fisheries, sought to integrate modern Western science into colonial policy, shaping curricula that included scientific subjects aimed at enhancing the skills of local fisherfolk.

Efforts of Federic Nicholson the director of fisheries along with those of other officials like James Hornell and F.B. Evans, represented a radical departure from the prevailing imperialist attitudes. They recognized the value of scientific knowledge and it's potential to transform traditional livelihoods, particularly in the fisheries sector. Their investigations into Indian fisheries, advocated for educational reforms and practical training initiatives, emphasizing the need for modern techniques to improve fishing practices. This progressive agenda sought to address the challenges faced by fisherfolk in colonial Malabar, aiming to uplift their socio-economic status while simultaneously aligning their practices with Western standards.

However, radical discourse on modernization in colonial India was marked by a complex interplay between reformist aspirations and paternalistic attitudes¹. While some radicals genuinely sought to improve the lives of Indian communities, their proposals often remained entangled in paternalistic frameworks aimed at

¹ Helen Gilbert and Chris Tiffin(eds.), *Burden or Benefit? Imperial Benevolence and Its Legacies*, Indiana University Press, 2008, p.120

governance rather than empowerment. British authorities grappled with a fundamental dilemma: while modernization was deemed essential for sustaining British interests, its comprehensive application risked awakening forces that could challenge colonial authority. Consequently, British modernization efforts in India were constrained by the priority of maintaining control, resulting in a selective and often superficial implementation of reforms². The narrative of modernity in colonial Malabar, particularly concerning fisherfolk, reflects this intricate balance of aspiration and limitation, as well as the enduring impact of imperialism on social and economic transformation during this critical period.

The rise of a salaried middle class, primarily urban and educated, was another consequence of colonial interventions. However, this transformation also catalyzed political mobilization among marginalized groups, as evidenced by the formation of organizations like the Arayavamsodharini Mahasabha and the Akhila Kerala Navika Thozhilali Sangam, among others. These movements, inspired by liberal and rational thought, reflected the intellectual currents of the nineteenth century, in which social and economic reforms were pursued within the colonial framework. The colonial state's "civilizing mission" aimed to reshape society by introducing Western concepts of progress, which often led to the rationalization of economic practices and the erosion of traditional social structures. This system divided people into categories such as ruler and ruled, Western and Eastern, modern and traditional, further entrenching hierarchical distinctions.³

Max Weber's concepts of rationalization and the 'spirit of capitalism' offer a theoretical lens to understand these changes. The British colonial administration, akin to the Calvinist ethic described by Weber, imposed a system of rationalized economic practices on the region⁴. Fishing communities in Malabar, such as the

² Bipan Chandra, *Modern India*, Orient Blackswan, 2020, p.p 27-31.

³ Gyan Prakash (ed.), *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements*. United Kingdom, Princeton University Press, 1995. p.p. 3-4

⁴ Max Weber. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Translated by Stephen Kalberg, Taylor & Francis, 2005, p.p. 26-31

Mukkuvas and the Mappilas, who had previously been divided along religious and caste lines, started prioritizing economic pragmatism over religious and caste-based affiliations. The increasing collaboration between these communities, such as the Mukkuvas seeking financial assistance from the Mappilas, reflected the growing secularization of economic life, motivated by mutual economic benefit rather than religious or caste obligations. Weber's concept of inner-worldly asceticism, which emphasized the privatization of religion and the rationalization of economic life, is evident in the changes in Malabar, where economic necessity began to outweigh religious considerations.

British colonialism also introduced new Western ideologies of progress and civilization, particularly through Christian missionary efforts by the London Missionary Society, Church Mission Society, and Basel Mission. These missions spearheaded social reforms, advocating for education, health, and hygiene, while also playing a key role in the abolition of slavery and forced labour. Such reforms were part of a broader colonial agenda that sought to reshape Kerala's society by promoting Victorian moral values, especially concerning women's rights. However, as Avijit Pathak argues, this 'colonial modernity' was characterized by upheaval and cultural disorientation, as the imposition of Western values often undermined local identities and created a sense of cultural loss⁵.

The impact of colonial modernity extended beyond economic and social changes, influencing nationalist movements in India. Partha Chatterjee contends that Indian nationalists employed their cultural and spiritual distinctiveness as a form of resistance to colonial domination, using these aspects of identity to assert their agency⁶. However, as MSS Pandian critiques, this nationalist framework often obscured internal power dynamics within India, particularly the marginalization of lower castes, women, and regional minorities. The promotion of a unified national

⁵ Avijit Pathak, *Indian Modernity: Contradictions, Paradoxes and Possibilities*. United Kingdom, Aakar Books, 2023, p.p.15-17

⁶ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. India, Princeton University, 1993.p.7

identity, rooted in a specific cultural tradition, could reinforce existing hierarchies and perpetuate oppression⁷.

In the case of Malabar's fishing communities, the changes brought about by colonial modernity reflect the complex interplay between tradition and modernization. While British policies fostered economic pragmatism and secularism, they also disrupted long-standing social structures, creating new opportunities for some while marginalizing others. The emergence of a secular, market-driven society among fishermen, particularly in the formation of cooperative societies, underscores the broader shift towards a rationalized, economically motivated mode of social engagement. Yet, as Chatterjee and Pandian remind us, this process was not uniform. The legacy of colonialism in Kerala, as elsewhere in India, remains marked by both progress and inequality.

1.2 Research Problem

The research problem addressed in this thesis is how British colonial policies reshaped the socio-economic and cultural lives of fishermen in Malabar from the early 19th century to the mid-20th century. Malabar's fishing communities, deeply rooted in traditional practices, faced significant disruptions due to the imposition of colonial governance and the rise of capitalist interests. Colonial policies gradually shifted the management of fisheries from communal ownership to private control, favoring capitalist entrepreneurs over local fishermen. This shift not only impacted the economic structures of these communities but also altered their social organization and cultural practices. The fishing communities, historically reliant on shared access to marine resources, suddenly found themselves marginalized as the state enforced privatization, leading to widespread economic disempowerment.

One of the major challenges faced by the fishing communities in Malabar was the introduction of fisheries taxes, private rights over coastal lands, and government-controlled curing yards. The traditional fishing practices, which had

⁷ Pandian, M. S. S. One Step outside Modernity: Caste, Identity Politics and Public Sphere. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37(18),2002, p.p.1736-37

been based on sustainable use of marine resources and communal access, were undermined by the British government's capitalist agenda. Fishermen, particularly from lower castes, were compelled to operate within a system that privileged wealthier merchants and landowners. The commodification of fish, the introduction of government regulations, and the enforcement of taxes all contributed to a loss of autonomy for the fishermen, who increasingly became indebted to moneylenders and middlemen. These policies not only changed the way fish were harvested and sold but also entrenched exploitative labour relations that affected both men and women in these communities.

The privatization of fisheries also had far-reaching social consequences. The caste dynamics within the fishing communities were exacerbated by colonial policies that reinforced socio-economic hierarchies. For instance, the Mukkuvar fishermen, who were predominantly lower caste, were disproportionately affected by the imposition of new taxes and government regulations, which limited their ability to engage in profitable fishing activities. The colonial government's favouritism towards upper-caste traders and merchants, who had better access to resources and political influence, further marginalized these fishermen. This division deepened existing caste inequalities within the fishing community, with upper-caste and wealthier non-fishermen exploiting the fishing industry through predatory lending and control of markets. As a result, the fishermen's economic mobility was stifled, and their social status remained precarious under colonial rule.

The introduction of modern technologies and capitalist fishing practices posed additional challenges for the traditional fishermen. The mechanization of fishing through the use of outboard engines and modern nets gradually replaced the artisanal methods practiced for generations. While these technological advances were intended to boost productivity, they primarily benefited wealthier fishermen and merchants, leaving traditional fishermen struggling to adapt. Furthermore, the shift from subsistence fishing to a market-oriented industry put immense pressure on the natural resources, leading to overfishing and environmental degradation. Traditional fishermen, who had relied on a sustainable approach to fishing, found

themselves increasingly sidelined as larger fishing enterprises dominated the market. This ecological strain further threatened the livelihoods of the fishermen, compounding the economic challenges they already faced under colonial policies.

Cultural erosion was another significant consequence of colonial intervention in Malabar's fishing industry. The communal identity and cultural practices of the fishermen, which were closely tied to their relationship with the sea, began to disintegrate as their traditional ways of life were disrupted. Rituals, beliefs, and social structures within the fishing communities were profoundly affected by the capitalist drive for profit. For instance, women, who played a crucial role in fish processing and marketing, were increasingly marginalized as the fishing industry became more commercialized. The introduction of private ownership and capitalist interests led to a weakening of communal ties and a loss of collective management practices that had sustained these communities for centuries. This cultural disintegration was exacerbated by the fishermen's growing economic dependence on external entities, leaving them with little control over their own destinies.

The study highlights the multi-layered impact of British colonial policies on Malabar's fishing communities, with economic exploitation, social marginalization, and cultural disruption forming the core challenges. By examining the intersection of these factors, which provides a detailed exploration of how traditional fishermen were systematically disempowered under colonial rule. At the same time, it underscores the resilience of these communities in resisting capitalist encroachments and preserving their cultural identity despite the immense pressures they faced. Understanding these historical dynamics offers valuable insights into the broader processes of colonial exploitation and the enduring struggles of marginalized communities in the face of external economic and political forces.

1.3 Hypothesis

The traditional coastal communities of colonial Malabar were unable to integrate fully into the colonial cultural framework due to their socio-economic marginalization and cultural isolation. Despite the transformative processes initiated by colonialism, such as infrastructural development and education, these

communities continued to be viewed and treated as subalterns. This lack of integration was both a cause and a consequence of their continued marginalization, which limited their access to modern educational, economic, and social opportunities.

The "civilizing mission" of colonial powers often aimed to reform indigenous practices, but within these coastal communities, religious and ritualistic practices rooted in their traditional worldview persisted. These practices reflect their resistance to cultural homogenization and their resilience in maintaining communal identity, even as they interacted with colonial systems.

The approach of colonial government to the fisheries education was primarily vocational and non-infiltrative, focusing on imparting practical knowledge and technical skills without significantly disrupting the socio-cultural fabric of these communities. This pragmatic method enabled fishermen to enhance their livelihoods while avoiding overt cultural imposition. Initiatives such as training programs and technical support in fisheries were examples of colonial strategies that prioritized economic productivity

While the colonial administration facilitated the development of surrounding port towns through infrastructural improvements, trade, and administrative reforms, the societies of fishermen in these areas did not experience similar levels of advancement. The economic growth spurred by colonial policies often centered on the ports themselves, which became hubs of commerce, trade, and modernization. In contrast, the fishing communities remained largely isolated from these developments. Despite their proximity to these growing port towns, fishermen continued to face socio-economic marginalization, with limited access to the new economic opportunities that emerged in these urbanized centers. The focus of colonial policies was predominantly on the extraction of resources and the establishment of a market-oriented economy, which largely bypassed the traditional fishing communities. As a result, while the port towns thrived as colonial nodes of commerce and infrastructure, the fishermen's societies were left with minimal

support, further entrenching their socio-economic isolation and hindering their overall development.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of this thesis revolve around investigating the profound transformations that British colonial policies brought to the fishing communities of Malabar, with a particular focus on colonial modernity and its role in altering traditional livelihoods. The primary aim is to study how colonial economic reforms reshaped the life conditions and fishing styles of these communities as they were integrated into an emerging capitalist environment. British colonial modernity, characterized by the introduction of market-driven resource management and economic restructuring, imposed significant changes on the fishing communities, who had previously relied on communal resource-sharing and sustainable fishing practices. By exploring the socio-economic disruptions caused by privatization, fisheries taxes, and government monopolies on key resources like salt, this thesis seeks to understand how traditional fishermen, including the Hindu Mukkuvas and Puslan (Puthu Islam Mappila) fisherfolk, navigated the challenges of modernity

One of the key objectives is to examine the role of fisheries schools established under British rule, which were designed to introduce new skills and technologies to the fishing communities. These schools were part of a broader colonial mission to rationalize and modernize the industry, ostensibly aiming to "empower" the coastal communities by providing education and training in modern fishing techniques. However, this objective includes a critical assessment of whether these institutions genuinely empowered the fishermen or instead facilitated their integration into a capitalist system that primarily benefited wealthier traders and merchants. The analysis will explore how these schools influenced the younger generation of fishermen, altering their economic opportunities and potentially distancing them from traditional fishing practices. The study also aims to investigate how the establishment of fisheries schools and other colonial interventions helped

shape distinct urban identities in port towns, yet failed to make significant improvements in the socio-economic status of the fishing communities

Another significant objective is to explore the contributions and responses of the Mukkuva and Puslan fishermen to the forces of modernity and capitalism. Both these communities, which were traditionally divided by caste and religion, found themselves navigating a shared economic reality under colonial rule. The study aims to highlight how these communities, though marginalized by colonial policies, developed strategies to adapt and resist the economic pressures imposed on them. This objective includes examining the role of cooperative societies that emerged among these fishing communities as a response to the capitalist exploitation of marine resources, and how collaboration between Hindu Mukkuva and Muslim Puslan fisherfolk reflected a pragmatic shift away from traditional caste and religious divisions towards economic survival.

Furthermore, this research aims to investigate the status of women within the fishing communities of Malabar, particularly in the context of both colonial rule and the emerging egalitarian ideals of nationalist movements. Traditionally, women in these communities played a critical role in fish processing and trade, but the colonial transformation of the fishing industry, along with the shift to capitalist markets, altered their roles significantly. This objective will assess how these changes impacted the economic and social standing of women, examining the extent to which they were marginalized as the industry became more commercialized. Moreover, it will explore how the post-independence nationalist movements, which often promoted egalitarian ideals, influenced women's roles in these communities, and whether they achieved greater economic and social equality in the independent state.

Another aim of this study has to explore the creation of separate urban identities in Malabar's port towns and their impact on fishing communities. The development of urban centers like Calicut and Cochin under British colonial rule created distinct socio-economic zones that were often disconnected from the traditional fishing communities. This objective focuses on how these towns

developed unique identities driven by trade and commerce, yet failed to meaningfully uplift or integrate the fishing communities into the urban economy. By investigating the reasons behind this disconnect, the study seeks to understand how the fishing communities remained on the margins of these emerging urban spaces despite their proximity to the coastal trade that drove urban growth.

1.5 Review of literature

The literature review for this research draws from a diverse range of primary and secondary sources that provide historical, cultural, and socio-economic insights into the fisherfolk communities of Kerala, particularly in Malabar. Primary sources, including colonial administrative reports and archival materials, illuminate the governance and industrial policies that shaped the fisheries sector under British rule. These documents reveal both the developmental initiatives and the systemic neglect of fundamental community needs. Secondary sources, comprising academic publications, Ph.D thesis, and regional studies, offer critical perspectives on caste dynamics, cultural evolution, and the socio-economic transformations experienced by fisherfolk. Together, these works highlight the intersections of caste, colonialism, and community resilience, while emphasizing the multifaceted challenges and opportunities that have shaped the livelihoods of Kerala's fisherfolk over time. This extensive engagement with primary and secondary sources lays a robust foundation for analyzing the complex socio-historical realities of fishing communities during colonial Malabar.

The foundation of this study is significantly strengthened by an analysis of primary sources. Archival materials, particularly those preserved in the Regional Archives, Kozhikode, offer a wealth of historical insights. These include key administrative and industrial reports, which provide a detailed understanding of fisheries governance and development during the colonial period.

- **James Hornell's** *Madras Fishery Investigation 1920 Administration Report (Bulletin No. 12)* and *Madras Fisheries Administration Report 1922-23* are pivotal documents. They detail the colonial fisheries policies, education initiatives, and the

practical training imparted to fishermen, offering a comprehensive picture of the fishing industry under British rule.

- **Innes Charles, Evans F.B., and Krishna Swami K.** edited the *Madras District Gazetteers (1906)*, which includes detailed accounts of socio-economic aspects of fisheries in the Madras Presidency.
- **Frederick A. Nicholson's** *Fisheries Investigation Report (1909)* sheds light on the early efforts to institutionalize fisheries resource management and improve industry efficiency.
- **B. Sundara Raj's** series of reports, including the *Madras Fisheries Administration Report 1924-25* and *Madras Fisheries Industrial Reports 1923 and 1924*, provide essential data on the economic and industrial aspects of fisheries, focusing on challenges faced by fisherfolk.
- **Rao Bahadur V. Govinda's** *Statistics and Information: West and East Coast (1916)* captures a comparative analysis of fisheries across India's coasts, emphasizing regional disparities and resource utilization.
- **James Hornell F.L.S.** *The Madras Fishery Investigation 1920 Administrative Report - Bulletin No. 12* -A number of creative programs in the area of fisheries education were launched by the colonial government. These included evening classes to improve learning opportunities and reservations for fishermen's children to have access. The Madras Fishery Investigation 1920 Administrative Report - Bulletin No. 12 by James Hornell F.L.S. is a useful primary source that provides unambiguous proof of these efforts. However, these initiatives frequently disregarded the community's basic requirements, such enough food and infrastructure, even while they sought to improve society via education. Furthermore, the fishermen put rebuilding their livelihoods ahead of their educational endeavours during times of crisis, such pandemics. This illustration demonstrates a colonial strategy that ran counter to the Marxian idea of base and superstructure, which holds that material and economic requirements serve as the cornerstone for the advancement of society.

The secondary sources referenced in this study provide a rich and diverse foundation for understanding the historical, cultural, and socio-economic dimensions of fisherfolk communities in Kerala. These works span ethnographic accounts, historical analyses, and studies of caste and community dynamics, offering critical insights into the lived experiences of marginalized groups. By engaging with these scholarly contributions, the literature review situates the fisherfolk within the broader context of Kerala's social history, tracing their evolution from traditional roles to their interactions with modernity. This comprehensive engagement with secondary sources forms the basis for analyzing the intersections of caste, community, and colonial interventions that shaped the socio-economic realities of fisherfolk in Malabar.

The selected literature offers a comprehensive understanding of the socio-historical dynamics of caste, community, and the lives of fisherfolk in Kerala. Edgar Thurston's *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* provides a foundational ethnographic account of caste-based occupations, including fishing communities. P.K. Balakrishnan's *Jathi Vyavasthithiyum Kerala Charithravum* analyses Kerala's caste system and its historical evolution, highlighting the marginalization of certain groups, including fisherfolk. K.P. Padmanabha Menon's *A History of Kerala draws on Visscher's letters to trace the socio-political transformations in Malabar*, shedding light on maritime communities. Rajesh Chirapad and Rajesh K. Erumeli's *Dr. Velukutti Arayan* and N.R. Vishalakshi's *Arayanmar* focus on the contributions of the Arayan fisherfolk and reformers, emphasizing their social struggles and resistance. K.S. Singh's *People of India* offers a broader anthropological perspective on Kerala's diverse communities, including fisherfolk. M.G.S. Narayanan's *Calicut: The City of Truth Revisited* situates the fishing communities within the larger historical and economic framework of Malabar, emphasizing their role in the region's maritime heritage. Collectively, these works illuminate the intersections of caste, culture, and colonialism in shaping the lives of Kerala's fisherfolk.

The lives of fishermen have been examined by some academics from the perspectives of caste or religion. In his work from 1978, *The Mappila Fisherfolk of*

Kerala, P.R.G. Mathur offers a thorough examination of the connections between the Mappila fishermen of Malabar and their environment, technology, economics, society, and culture. The Mappila fishermen are identified by Mathur as a separate social group inside the Muslim community using an anthropological method. He highlights how closely their fishing technology and economic endeavours are linked to the water and the coastal areas they call their homeland.

A substantial body of scholarly work exists on the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental aspects of fisherfolk communities in Kerala, both in English and regional languages like Malayalam. The following doctoral theses contribute significantly to this domain:

Padmanabhan K, *Uttharakeralathile mukkuvarude jeevithavum samskaravum*, University of Calicut, 2000, this work employs folk techniques to delve into the social and cultural dimensions of the Mukkuvar community in North Malabar. It provides an in-depth exploration of their settlement patterns, social norms, habits, behaviors, religious beliefs, and traditions.

Jacob Mani, *Traditional Fishermen Community in Kerala: A Study on the Problems of Marginalization* (University of Kerala), unpublished PhD thesis provides a critical analysis of the socio-political and economic marginalization of the traditional fisherfolk in Kerala. It explores the interplay of environmental degradation, resource depletion, and capitalist encroachment on common property resources, emphasizing their cumulative impact on the livelihood and cultural identity of these communities. The thesis highlights the challenges posed by mechanized fishing, inadequate political mobilization, and ecological concerns, underscoring the failure of both governmental and non-governmental interventions to address these issues comprehensively. Through detailed fieldwork and empirical analysis, the study identifies the need for sustainable development models that integrate community participation, address systemic inequalities, and preserve traditional ecological practices, thus advocating for the empowerment and rehabilitation of marginalized fisherfolk.,

Another unpublished PhD thesis of Alavikutty P.M, *Socio economic problems of fishermen in Kerala with special reference to malabar region* critically examines the socio-economic challenges of fishermen in Kerala, focusing on the Malabar region. The study highlights the community's historical marginalization, compounded by seasonal income fluctuations, indebtedness, and limited access to education and basic amenities. It also explores the impacts of mechanization, revealing disparities between traditional and modernized fishermen in terms of income and opportunities. Employing a descriptive methodology, the research analyzes primary data collected from 800 households across five coastal districts, supplemented by secondary sources. The findings underscore persistent issues such as unscientific fishing practices, exploitation by middlemen, and inadequate government interventions. It proposes targeted measures, including improved access to credit, education, and infrastructure, to enhance the social and economic well-being of the fisherfolk in Malabar.

Ramdas P, *Socio-economic roots of communalisation in coastal Malabar (1950-2005)*, University of Calicut, unpublished PhD thesis provides an analytical foundation for understanding the transformation of Kerala's caste-based social hierarchy under colonial modernity. It traces how British policies, including census classification and education reforms, reshaped caste identities into broader community frameworks (samudayams), fostering new collective identities while retaining traditional influences. The thesis critically examines the interplay of social reform movements, capitalist transformations, and emergent civil society structures in enabling upward mobility and community consolidation, highlighting the ambivalence of modernity in perpetuating both empowerment and fragmentation. Ramdas's work situates these processes within Kerala's distinctive socio-political mobilizations, offering insights into the historical trajectories of caste, community, and the complex evolution of societal frameworks in colonial and post-colonial Kerala.

Unpublished PhD thesis, of Vinayan T titled *Socio-Economic Transformation of Fishermen Community in Kannur and Kasaragod Districts Since*

Independence (Kannur University), offers an exhaustive exploration of the socio-economic and cultural transformation of fishermen communities in North Malabar. It traces the historical evolution of these communities from their stratified caste-based structures during the pre-colonial and colonial periods to their gradual mainstreaming and integration into Kerala's socio-political fabric. The thesis highlights the impact of colonial interventions, technological innovations, and post-independence governmental policies on their livelihoods and social mobility. Furthermore, it provides a detailed analysis of the ecological and economic challenges faced by the fishing industry, emphasizing the role of education, social reform movements, and cooperative initiatives in empowering the fisherfolk. By employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the study examines the dynamic interplay of tradition and modernity, underscoring the complexities of transitioning from a subsistence-based existence to a more sustainable and inclusive developmental framework.

1.6 Methodology and Sources

The methodology adopted for this study is primarily analytical and descriptive in nature. A broad spectrum of both primary and secondary sources was collected from archival repositories, libraries, and other relevant institutions. Primary sources predominantly consist of archival records, official government correspondence, reports, autobiographies, interviews, and letters. These materials were accessed from the Tamil Nadu State Archives (TSA), Kerala State Archives (KSA), Thiruvananthapuram, the Regional Archives Kozhikode (RAK).

The primary sources cover an extensive array of documents, including correspondence and administrative reports from the departments of fisheries, public works, health, and education, as well as joint commissioners' reports, court records, revenue department files, and documents from local self-government departments. Additionally, the Madras Fisheries Bulletin and other governmental publications were consulted.

Secondary sources were gathered from multiple libraries, including the K. N. Raj Library at the Centre for Development Studies, the Library of the Kerala

Council for Historical Research, the Kerala University Library, the M.G. University library, the Kerala Sahitya Academy Library, and the Appan Thampuran Library in Thrissur. Further resources were accessed from C. H. Mohammed Koya Library. And Online resources, A comprehensive account of all such documents is provided at the end of the thesis.

1.7 Organisation of Study

The work is structured into six chapters, including Introduction and Conclusion. The first chapter is the introductory chapter which addresses the research problem, outlines the methodology used, and presents the overall framework and structure of the thesis.

The second chapter, titled "Caste Dynamics and Ritual Traditions among Fisherfolk of Malabar", delves into the intricate social, cultural, and historical dynamics of Kerala's fisherfolk communities. It explores the geographical and cultural diversity of these communities, including their caste composition, traditional occupations, and unique socio-religious practices. The chapter underscores the interplay between caste and community institutions in maintaining fishing rights and governance, examining how shared traditions and rituals have historically shaped the collective identity of fisherfolk in Malabar. Additionally, it provides insights into the influence of communal and identity politics in altering religious practices and societal structures within these coastal communities.

The chapter also offers a detailed historical perspective, tracing the roots of fisherfolk communities like the Mukkuva, Araya, and Parava, while discussing their connections to the Saindhava culture and the Indus Valley civilization. It highlights their occupational evolution, including maritime trade and fishing, and analyzes the impact of colonial encounters, religious conversions, and social reforms. Furthermore, the study addresses how the intersection of caste, community rituals, and traditional occupations continues to influence the socio-economic and cultural landscapes of Kerala's fisherfolk, illuminating their enduring resilience amidst changing political and social contexts.

The third chapter This chapter, titled "The Struggles and Aspirations of the Fishermen: Navigating Colonial Dynamics and Seeking Empowerment", examines the socio-economic realities of fishing communities under British colonial rule, with a focus on their efforts to navigate systemic challenges and secure empowerment. It explores the intersections of caste, labor dynamics, and gender roles, highlighting how entrenched hierarchies shaped economic opportunities and limitations. The chapter further analyzes the disparities between the well-developed fishing industries of Great Britain and the rudimentary practices in colonial India, emphasizing the lack of institutional support and the reliance on government initiatives for growth.

A critical aspect of the chapter is the economic exploitation within the fishing industry, including predatory practices by moneylenders and the unequal treatment of marginalized communities. It delves into the roles of women in sustaining household incomes through fish processing and sales, as well as the impact of mechanization and market developments on traditional practices. The narrative also sheds light on the resilience and adaptability of fishing communities in the face of colonial administrative reforms and external pressures, such as the establishment of fish curing yards and the imposition of salt taxes.

By drawing from historical records and socio-economic analyses, the chapter underscores the complex realities of colonial governance and its impact on fisherfolk. It traces the community's struggle for equitable resource access, resistance to exploitation, and efforts to sustain traditional livelihoods amidst evolving political and economic landscapes.

Chapter Four, titled "*Navigating Colonial Currents: The Rise of Fisheries Education in Malabar*", explores the transformative role of fisheries education during the British colonial period. It critically examines the establishment and impact of fisheries schools and training institutes, particularly the Fisheries Training Institute of 1919, in empowering fishing communities. The chapter delves into how colonial interventions shaped vocational training and education, addressing the

unique needs of fisherfolk while simultaneously advancing the colonial state's economic interests.

It highlights the dual objectives of these initiatives: the promotion of socio-economic upliftment through education and the integration of fisherfolk into the capitalist framework. The narrative captures the curriculum's practical orientation, including training in fishing techniques, navigation, carpentry, and cooperative management, while also acknowledging the challenges of inadequate staffing, limited resources, and colonial economic priorities. The chapter concludes by critiquing the ambivalence of colonial educational efforts.

The consequent Chapter five titled "Resistance and Resilience: The Struggle of Traditional Fishermen Against Capitalist Interests in Colonial Malabar" delves into the profound socio-economic transformations experienced by the fishing communities in Malabar during the colonial period. It explores the colonial policies that shifted fisheries management from communal access to private ownership, leading to a confrontation between traditional fishermen and capitalist forces. The chapter discusses the economic exploitation faced by fishermen through the imposition of taxes, licensing systems, and privatization of coastal resources, which disrupted their ancestral livelihoods and cultural practices. It highlights the resilience of these communities through legal challenges, cooperative movements, and the emergence of socio-political organizations, despite the formidable influence of capitalist interests. Additionally, the chapter examines the role of colonial governance, detailing the marginalization of fishermen within the framework of economic and social policies that favoured capitalists while undermining traditional rights. It also reflects on the larger colonial agenda of integrating Malabar into the global capitalist economy, illustrating how these policies perpetuated economic dependency and underdevelopment while eroding the socio-cultural fabric of fishing communities.

The last chapter of the thesis is the 'Conclusion' which fields the findings of the study and the thesis ends with a detailed glossary, bibliography and appendices.

CHAPTER 2

CASTE DYNAMICS AND RITUAL TRADITIONS AMONG FISHER FOLK OF MALABAR

The coastal regions are home to a distinctive group known as the traditional fisherfolk. These individuals exhibit diverse cultural practices within their respective fisherfolk communities and share a profound connection with the sea and the environment. Their geographic proximity plays a vital role in forming strong social bonds and shaping their way of life. Consequently, the preservation of sustainable fisheries becomes imperative for the survival and well-being of Kerala's fishermen community. Members within this community engage in meaningful interactions, sharing common beliefs, preferences, needs, and interests, which contribute to their collective identity. Despite cultural and religious disparities, the fisherfolk communities in Kerala have successfully coexisted for centuries, establishing robust social and economic ties while responsibly managing the ocean's resources. The fisherfolk community exemplifies cultural diversity as it comprises various social groups that have come together based on customs, traditions, language, religion, food, clothing, and other cultural aspects, each contributing to their unique cultural heritage.

Kerala's fishing community is composed of various castes from different religious backgrounds. These castes include Mukkuva and Anjootty, Dheevera etc among Hindus, and Pooislan among Muslims. In the southern and central regions of Kerala, there is a significant population of Christian fishermen, predominantly affiliated with the Latin Catholic community., Muslims specifically refer to their fishing community as Kadappurathukar or "beach men." Latin Catholic Christians are most prevalent in the southern districts, while Hindus and Muslims have smaller populations there. In central Kerala, the Arayar or Dheevera caste is prominent among Hindus, whereas the northern districts are predominantly inhabited by the

Mapila community of Muslims. Within the Hindu communities, there are also sub-castes such as Mukkuvar, Mogaya, Ezhava, and Velava. It is worth noting that the caste distinctions are more significant among inland fishers within the religious groups.

Despite these differences, fishing communities in Kerala share certain commonalities. They have established community institutions to govern local affairs and advocate for equal fishing rights, which are specific to certain fishing communities in the region. These communities maintain their distinct identities and have diverse religious practices. However, there has been a recent trend of communal consolidation among them, influenced by the impact of communal and identity politics in coastal areas. As a result, there have been changes in religious worship, with traditional mother goddesses like Kurumba Bhagavathy being replaced by new deities like Vettekkorumakan, reflecting a shift towards a patrilineal societal structure from the previous matrilineal system.

From a positive perspective, the existence of community institutions and the pursuit of equal fishing rights among fishing communities in Kerala demonstrate their collective efforts to ensure fair representation and opportunities within their profession. Additionally, the historical diversity of castes within these communities reflects the pluralistic nature of Kerala's society. However, the recent trend of communal consolidation may have both positive and negative implications. On one hand, it can foster a sense of unity and solidarity among the fishing communities, enabling them to effectively address common challenges. On the other hand, it may lead to potential divisions and conflicts as identity politics and communal influences can create tensions among different religious groups.

Arayar - in Indian history

The history of Kerala explores into the origins of the Arayas in connection with the Saindhava culture. The Arayas are believed to have existed since the time of the Indus Valley Civilization (3000 - 1500 BC). Inscriptions (Painting) found in Mohenjodaro provide evidence that the Minas or Minavas and the Pravas or Parathuvar, who were influential and played a significant role in nurturing the Indus

culture, were among the settlers in the Indus Valley. The Mukuvas, Arayas, and various other groups are believed to be descendants of the Meenava-Paratava clans.

According to the history of Kerala, there were four Local Nadu in ancient India, namely Meenad, Arayanad, Maram Kothinad, and Earalnad. The primary occupation of the people in the first two regions was fishing and maritime trade, and their flags were shaped like fish.

The primary fisherman in Tamil Nadu's coastal areas are Pattanas and Chempadas. The Pattanavas are thought to be the ancestors of the Meenavas, who established the Vellore-based Meenava Kingdom. The "pattana" in Madras has the authority to transport the idol for the festival at the Tiruvilakanni Temple and other locations.

The purported prehistoric connection between the Arayas and the Meenavars and Paravars has not been scientifically proven. The terms Meenar and Paravar are associated with fish and the sea. Communities that have traditionally relied on fishing have been known by different names over time and in various regions. Considering this perspective, we can see that the relationship between the Arayas and the Indus culture appears logical. It is believed that Dravidian tribes such as Aryars, Valars, and Paravars settled throughout India before the Arayan invasion in 500 B.C.¹

The Dravidian people, who migrated to India from West Asia through Persia and Afghanistan, had already established their presence across India a thousand years prior to the arrival of the Arayans on the banks of the Indus River. During that period, numerous tribes resided in South India. The following tribes, namely Kammalars, Nadars, Pallikals, Paravars (Parathavars), Arayars, Valars, Channars,

¹ N.R. Vishalakshi, *Arayanmar* (Mal.), in Kerala Charithram vol. 1, Kerala History Association, Kochi, 1973, p. 992.

Ezhavars, Kukars, Panars, Vannars, Vedars, Kanikars, and Thodars, belong to this particular category.²

According to one of his characters in the renowned novel "Chemmeen," Takazhi Shivashankaran Pillai describes the Arayas as comprising five castes: Arayan, Valakkaran, Mukuvan, Marakkan, and a Panchamajati (the fifth caste). Additionally, there is a group called valan. In this context, the term Mukuvan is employed to denote a sub-caste within the Arayan fishing community. In another novel titled "Chuvanna Kadal," the novelist Thikotian interchangeably uses the terms mukuvan, arayan, and marakan³.

Arayas are Dravidian tribes residing in various regions of India, these tribes include Ambiga, Gabbits, Kharvis, Pagis, Harakantrans, Mogayars, Kuberars, and others, who are primarily involved in fishing and seafaring along the coast of Karnataka. The Ambis rely on fishing from both the sea and inland waters as their main livelihood. However, the Bhois, in addition to fishing, are also engaged in manchal carrying and agriculture. Gabbit, Kharvikar, and Pagi are fishermen who have migrated from other areas. Harakantars, in addition to fishing, have taken up rope making as a secondary occupation in Karnataka. The Mogairs are skilled in fishing and, in some regions, they dress like Brahmins and wear poonool. They are generally well-educated and have a stronger emphasis on cleanliness compared to other castes. Kuberans, who are considered outcasts from the Bhoi caste, are involved in agriculture and small trades alongside their fishing activities. Kolis are the main fishermen on the Maharashtra coast. Besides them there are Gabbits, Kharvis and Bhois. Kolis are believed to be of Nishada clan.

In ancient times, they held dominion over these regions. Mohenjodaro and other civilized inhabitants of the Indus Valley were displaced from their lands due to unfavorable circumstances. Consequently, the prominent Kolis migrated to Gujarat and the Konkan coast, while another group known as the Paravars embarked on a

² Melangath, Narayanan Kutti. *Sangasahithya Charithram* (mal.). Kerala Bhaasha Institute, Trivandrum, 2003. pp. 3-4.

³ Thikkodiyan. *Chuvanna kadal*, Eyebooks Kerala, 2018, p.p 21-24

sea journey to South India. As these settlers established themselves, they compelled the tribal communities to retreat into the forests. The Arayans community differentiates itself from other groups, such as the Tamil Arayans who engage in fishing, and practice devil-dancing. According to Thurston's 1909 account, the Parvans engage in shell collecting, and lime burning, with women often serving as midwives. They hold titles like Kurup, Varakurup, and Nurankurup (nuru meaning lime). The Arayans community primarily resides in the Neyyattinkara taluk of Trivandrum district⁴, but can also be found in early Quilon, Kottayam, and Ernakulam districts. The 1981 census reported their population in Kerala as 42,884, with a higher female-to-male sex ratio of 1016 females per 1000 males. They speak Malayalam and utilize the Malayalam script for communication within their kin groups and with others. As non-vegetarians, their diet includes beef, pork, fish, and eggs, with rice being their main staple, often supplemented with various pulses⁵.

The Paravans, a community of fishermen, reside in both Tamil Nadu and Kerala, especially in South Travancore. Historically, they held significant influence and even had their own principality near Quilon called Paravoor. Renowned for their exceptional navigation skills, they claim descent from the union between an Ezhava individual and a woman from a higher caste. The term "Parava," which signifies their caste, is derived from the Sanskrit word "Para," meaning "other" or "foreign." As mentioned in the southern regions of Kerala, the Paravas engage in shell collection from the backwaters and participate in lime burning activities. They commonly adopt the surname Kurup, which is shared by several other castes. Additionally, they partake in regular fishing endeavors in lakes and backwaters, all the while gathering shells for lime production.

Accepting foreign influences and undergoing special training and educational programs designed by the Portuguese and British, the Parava community integrated into western culture and embraced modernity. They settled in urban areas and assimilated new cultural ideas into their surroundings. Some

⁴ Kerala District Gazetteers, Trivandrum, Superintendent of Government Presses, 1962, p. 264.

⁵ K. S. Sing, *People of India*. Anthropological Survey of India, Calcutta, 1992, p. 1064

members of the community migrated to Sri Lanka and adopted new business techniques, which resulted in their expansion of wealth. Foreigners in Kerala, including missionaries, made similar contributions; however, the locals, particularly the Muslim community, were hesitant to accept the foreigners due to their anti-colonial stance. This was primarily because the Portuguese were considered enemies of Muslims due to their historical invasion. Sheikh Zainuddin responded to this historical hostility by promoting jihad or holy war through his work, *Tuhfatul Mujahideen*⁶.

The conflict led to a resistance against the colonial culture and the methods of governance and education they imposed. Initially, this resistance was embraced by both Muslims and lower-caste Hindus. However, over time, the lower-class non-Muslim population started accepting the British education policy.

While social reforms, such as those witnessed among the Paravar fishermen, were not replicated in the Hindu and Muslim communities of Kerala, particularly in Malabar this can be attributed to their strong sense of nationalism and anti-colonialism. However, Hindu and Muslim religious ideas and organizations played a role in fostering these anti colonial beliefs, facilitated by the religious devotion of the fishermen.

The lack of modern development in Kerala, especially in the Malabar region, is due to the fishermen's adherence to their traditional religious practices. They were reluctant to embrace new educational methods and the broader world beyond their specific habitat. Consequently, this resistance hindered their progress. In contrast, the Parava community in Tamil Nadu embraced modernity, adopting new educational systems and diversifying their occupations. This shift was instrumental in their economic growth. However, in Kerala's coastal society, transitioning to different occupations or deviating from the traditional fishing community was

⁶ Sheikh Zainuddin, *Tuhfatul Mujahideen* (The Gift of the Warriors), trans. K. M. Seethi, New Delhi, Islamic Book Service, 1989.

discouraged, considered taboo due to their reverence for Kadalamma⁷, a deity representing the sea.

In Orissa, the fishermen were known as Keiths (Kaivarthas) Katia⁸, also referred to as Kotia Kaibarta and Keuta, are a traditional fishing community living in the Puri and Cuttack districts of Orissa. Locally known as Goghakar, Seular, Thiyar and Naliyar. The name Kalibarta is derived from the words "ka" meaning water and "vrta" meaning livelihood, which reflects the fact that their livelihood is dependent on water due to their occupation as fisherfolk. It should be noted that the Katia community in Madhya Pradesh is distinct from the Katia community in Orissa. *Katia* speaks Oriya, an Indo-Aryan language, and use the Oriya script. Although they are non-vegetarians, they do not consume buffalo meat. Their primary cereals are both rice and wheat⁹

Fishermen in Bengal are also known as Kaivartars. Some of their predecessors had established dynasties and ruled. Their successors who lost power became zamindars. They are also known as Mahishyars. The information about the Kaivartha kings who ruled for twenty-five years from 1075 AD comes from the Sanskrit work 'Ramacharitam' written by Sandhyakaranandi. The Kali temple in Dakshineswaram was built by Rani Rasmani, who was born into a kaivartha family in Calcutta¹⁰. There where A Brahmin priest named Gadadharan was appointed, who later known as Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa¹¹.

History of Tamil language and literature by S. Viyyapuri Pillai Referred about the Tamil poem 'Naladiyar' which mentioned About Mutharayar. The places

⁷ Mini Chandran, and Suchitra Mathur. Textual Travels: Theory and Practice of Translation in India. Taylor & Francis, 2015, p.72.

⁸ Rebati Mohan Sarkar (ed.,) Through the Vistas of Life and Lore: Folkloric Reflections of Traditional India. India, Punthi Pustak, 2000.p.573.

⁹ K.S Singh, *Op. Cit.*, p.700.

¹⁰ Richard Sisson, and Stanley Wolpert (ed.), Congress and Indian Nationalism: The Pre-Independence Phase. University of California Press, 2024, p,63.

¹¹ Rajiv Mehrotra, Thakur - Sri Ramakrishna: A Biography. India, Hay House, 2011.

addressed as Muttarayar must be the Head of Meenavar and Parathavar who were Neithal residents¹². When discussing About the Formation Caste system of Arayar the brahmin patriarchal powers are trying very hard to destroy the communities that arise from the tribal system. It is also an attempt to make the Kerala society a part of the social order based on Brahminism and Janmi system which has grown up all over India. Caste system is the result of this. The occupational classes that grew up in Brahmin villages and temples became castes. Efforts are being made to include the people of the economic sector, which are not under the direct control of the Brahmins and the temples, into the caste hierarchy. While caste determination in the food grain sector was a form of division of labour, caste was used as a means of socially and ideologically oppressing the people of other divisions. It is said that a section of the Dravidian people who migrated from the banks of the Indus to Kerala after the Aryan invasion came to Kerala. Thirayar who had trade relations with Kerala came to Kuttanad. The Parathas also reached the banks of the river Nila. They got the name Thiraiyar from their ability to cross the waves and return with merchandise.

A section of the Saindhavas who had to flee with the migration of the Arayans came to their familiar Kerala through trade relations. The Parathaas and Tirayar here became fishermen and traders, the Later who served as assistants to the foreign traders. latter they became the fishermen, as the Mukuvas, and descendants of the Saindhavas. so, the Transformation had been occurred Through this Process among the Caste system. Hence There is no one who establishes a caste. Fish were visible to those who lived by rivers and other bodies of water. Where there is Chaturvarna arrived, the task that each of them was doing catch and consume fish was transformed into their traditional work. Those who performed the fishing work were exalted to the caste of Mukkuva.

The Meenavar, who were dominant among the inhabitants of the Indus Valley, were the makers of primitive boats. Among them was a group of explorers

¹² Es Vaiyapuri Pillai, Vaiyapuripillai's History of Tamil Language and Literature: From the Beginning to 1000 A.D., New Century Book House, 1988. p.143

who connected the archipelagos of Polynesia, Indonesia and others with South India. The Meenavars, Thiraiyars and Parathavars of the South Indian coasts have adapted their lifestyles according to the particularities of the place of residence.¹³ The inhabitants of Neithal and Thina in Sangam age were known as Meenavar and Parathavar. Chola, Chera and Pandyas were the three dominant powers of Tamil Nadu and the Pandyas originated from the Parathavas. The clan deity of the Pandyas who ruled from Madura was Madura Meenakshi and their flag was a fish.

The coastal population of Sangha age consists of three communities such as Meenavar, Valayar and Parathavar. They had small boats called thimils for fishing. Along with fishing, salt making was the main industry along the coast. The work, tools and methods of production and exchange of the weavers are discussed in the history of Kerala

Historical writings use the word "Arayan" in three different senses. Casteism is one. The second is represented by the local authority of organisations like Marakkan, Mukuvan, and Valan. Thirdly, related caste groupings such as Arayan, Valan, Mukuvan, and Nulayan are referred to as Arayan among Hindu fisherman. As a result, even taking into account other Dheevera clans, it is difficult to track the Arayans through history. The Dheevera castes, which were dispersed throughout Kerala, shared some lifestyle traits but remained mostly segregated until the Renaissance. The history of the Araya community also encompasses the history of similar castes. Fishermen are skilled workers who inhabit the seacoast. The Valans and Arayans, who operate in the backwaters, have traditionally relied on fishing for their livelihood. They belong to Kerala's historically marginalized Dheever community. Castes such as Nulayan, Valan, Mukuvan, are also part of this community. In contrast to the Mukkavars, who work as porters, transporting goods for travelers, the Arayars also earn their living as boatmen. Some of them are also known as Marakkans. The term "Mukkuvar" primarily referred to the fisherfolk

¹³ V, Subramanian, Historical Heritage of the Tamils, International Institute of Tamil Studies, 1983.p.243.

community and was interchangeably used with the term "Kathalarayanmaar"¹⁴ in popular usage, which resulted in confusion and inaccuracies in demographic data.

Despite regional variations in customs and traditions, the fisherfolk of the state shared similarities with the Mukkuvar community in terms of lifestyle and occupations. The term "Mukkuvar" also has a semantic connection with the Kanarese term "Mogar," as both words contribute to the meaning of "to dive." In line with tradition, Mukkuvar and Thiyyas are referred to as migrants from Sri Lanka who settled in Kerala. They set themselves apart from other members of their own group by using four separate names, including Sankhan, Bharatan, Ammukkavan, and Mukkavan¹⁵. The first group consists of the Arayans, sometimes known as Katarayans (sea Arayans). The Bharatan tribe includes the Valans. Ammukkavans are a subcaste of Katarayans who serve as priests to both Valans and Arayans. They recognise four Illams or households among them, possibly clans.

Varthema observes, the fourth class is called Mechua, or mukkuva and these are fishermen. In Barbosa's case these Mukuva are fishermen and sailors who have no other business, and are also slaves of the king and the Nayars of the country. But he mentions another class, whom he describes as "mogurs," also known as moguer who carry the king's property from place to place when the king travel. He adds that they are sailors and fishermen and that they are slaves of kings, Nayas and Brahmins. There are some of them very rich men who have got ships with which they navigate, for they gain much money with the Moors. Another accusation was made by Barbosa against the fishermen that that They were fishing in winter but in the summer they plunder the property of those weaker than themselves at sea with bows and arrows. They swarm around any calm ship and plunder it. They share what they steal with the king of the kingdom.¹⁶ in the account of F.B Evans that Some of the fishermen known as Mugawan or Mugayan in the north of Kannur belong to the Mogayar community of the southern coastal district of Karnataka.

¹⁴ C. Achyuta Menon, *The Cochin State Manual*, Cochin Government Press, 1911.p.204.

¹⁵ L. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *The Tribes and Castes of Cochin*, Cosmo, India, 1981, p.261.

¹⁶ Duarte Barbosa. *Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar in the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century*. Hakluyt Society, London, 1866, p. 153.

Community Structure

An in-depth investigation of the idea of "Space," which includes both "Social Space" and "Geographic Space," is necessary to examine how marginalisation of fishermen has occurred. The identity of fishermen as a community that strongly relies on natural resources is shaped by these spatial features, which makes them more vulnerable and marginalised. Sociologists, geographers, and political philosophers are just a few of the academics who have thoroughly examined and defined the concept of social space. It refers to the social status that people, groups, or communities obtain or are given inside the hierarchical framework and transcends actual physical land. These several types of capital, specifically "social," "economic," and "cultural" assets, are how this position is built up.

Migrations have led to cultural diversity within the community. The Mukuva settlement centers of Kerala have come to exist today due to the migrations. The community structure of the Mukuvars in Northern Kerala varies according to their habitations. Thalassery, Dharmadam, Thayil, Azhikode, Kavvai, Nileswaram (Thaikkadappuram), Kanhangad, Bekalam, Kottikulam, Kasargod and Kumbala, Ponnani, Calicut are the main settlements of the Mukuva community.

Many of the royal families that flourished in the medieval period had their origins in tribal society, an example of this is the rise of the Pandya kings in South India. But the history of Kerala does not find a king over a territory from the Araya tribe. But when looking for the reason for this, it is the intervention of Brahmin culture that created the caste system which has been seriously discussed till recently. But the study of labor societies that emerged after the Sangam period points us in a different direction. The growth of resource accumulation and forms of distribution of production led to the fragmentation of earlier tribal societies.

The level of subordination will vary according to variations in production relations and the ideological and ritual structure of local-level associations. Once from among the Arayan, who were mere slaves of the Brahmins, Mootha Arayan, who had independent rights of justice, arose on this basis. The lower castes appeared in the food grain growing areas under the direct control of the temples, Brahmins

and Janmi-Naduvazhi castes. Among them the Pulayans had the characteristics of tribal communities. They had kinship groups and clan heads (tantra pulayan).

Parayan, Mannan, Channar etc. sections also had the flexibility of tribal communities. There are indications that the tenants and slaves far from the agrarian land where they lived in the plantations, coastal and forest land retained almost entirely the rights of tribal communities. In Venad, the Naduvazhis retained these rights of the chiefs of Channar, and Arayan

The idea of social formation implies that historical societies are thought of in terms of their dominance structures and production relations. It refers to sociocultural analysis that uses the idea of the mode of production as a point of reference to mark different stages of social evolution. focuses on the social structure that results from the forces and relations of production.

Primitive agriculture, animal husbandry, fine goods production, ploughing, and agriculture, were identified as the main forms of production. Relations of the dominant form of production are characteristic of social formation. Any rigorous analysis of past society must focus on both the material process of production and the social process of consumption to see how society was structured and dominated.¹⁷

While analyzing the production method, the fishing sector and its contribution as part of the social formation process is not given enough importance in the historiography. In the theory of social formation, while analyzing the mode of production, primarily the agricultural sector and its relations are given great importance.

In Tamil poem mentions the class of umanar, parathavar labour divisions. the parathavar main inhabitants engaged in fishing and salt manufacturing in the Terrain and they are mentioned in the poems as pearl fishers as well. the parathavar were

¹⁷ Rajan Gurukkal, *Social Formations Of Early South India*. Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 67.

engaged in gathering quench shells¹⁸. it is relevant to recall here that bangles made of quench shells are reported from South Indian megalithic burial and poems allude to their production as among the major economic activities of the terrain. besides a group of full-time salt merchants who frequently mentioned in the poems. These division of labor that developed in the fishing industry and economic growth were not considered as valid factors of the production process in social evolution. These can be taken as an example of the social inequality faced by the coastal people. But these time new technologies and knowledge were produced by other conventional industries in the late Middle Ages. It fell beyond of the Brahmins' purview of knowledge. It is important that it served as the foundation for new types of knowledge. But there was no such significant growth in the fishing industry. Being from a low caste prevents them from using the benefits of modern technology over the traditional way of life, which keeps them tied to their own cultural realm.

During the first half of the 20th century, efforts to modernize the fishing industry and improve the working conditions of fishermen were slow to take root. Consequently, fishermen continued to rely on their traditional methods of fishing and were often taken advantage of by middlemen who operated within the emerging fishing industry and commerce. The effects of colonial capitalism and the lack of a progressive land policy were felt across different castes and classes in the region, especially in Malabar. The lowest castes, who were largely involved in paddy farming and fishing, suffered the most as a result. Despite the emergence of a new colonial salariat composed of Nayars, Christians, and foreign Brahmans, large portions of society experienced significant impoverishment¹⁹. Despite this, the upper castes were not heavily involved in trade and commerce in urban areas, and they frequently disregarded the rules regarding pollution caused by proximity. However, the concept of pollution and the corresponding practices were prevalent among tribal and fishing communities. however, the fact that the fishing industry

¹⁸ Vijaya Ramaswamy, *Historical Dictionary of the Tamils*, United States, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2017.p.372

¹⁹ P. J. Cherian, (ed.), *Perspectives on Kerala History. Kerala Gazetteer*, state editor, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999, p. 482.

was close to the trading sector with no caste distinction, the fishermen were hesitant to collaborate with the commercial sector. For the fact is that they were not ready to leave the world of existence in which they reside for a variety of ritualistic reasons. Because they were quite content with their ecosystem, several cultural and economic advancements possible from the commerce sector did not arise in this community.

When taking Sri Lanka into account mukkuva were in higher status in society, several chieftains held power in different parts of country, including the Mukkuva chieftains of Batticaloa in the East, those in the North-West around Puttalam, the Vedda chieftaincies, and the Vanniyars on the Sinhalese side of the Vanni. These chieftains enjoyed significant autonomy and functioned as feudal lords, providing military assistance to those under their protection. They were known to align themselves with the major kingdom in power at the time, often the Jaffna kingdom. The division between the Sinhalese and Tamil kingdoms by geography had significant cultural and psychological consequences. The Tamils living in the northern region were able to develop a distinct and self-assured culture, which was supported by a renewed Hinduism that drew inspiration from the traditions of southern India. Because of the continuous influence of these culture, the Mukuvar community remained a marginalized and disadvantaged group within the caste system in India²⁰.

ILLAM

In all ancient societies there was a division of classes based on occupation and within each "clan" different gotras were formed. One of the basic structures of the community is 'Clan Division'. In folk tradition, gotras are referred to as 'Illams, Kiriyas, and Clans. There was 'Illam' division in all the communities like Malayarayans, Valans, Valluvans, Mukayars, Thiyyars, Karimbalans, Kurichiyars, Kanikkars²¹ etc.

²⁰ Yogasundram Nath, *A comprehensive history of Sri Lanka from prehistory to Tsunami*. Vijitha Yapa Publications, Colombo, 2008, p.138.

²¹ KR Nagendra Singh, (ed.,) *Global Encyclopaedia of the South Indian Dalit's Ethnography*, Global Vision Publishing House, 2006.p.315.

There were such distinctions in the Mukuva community of northern Kerala. The "Illam" among the Mukuvas are clans in the tribal concept. Until recently, there was an Illam tradition among the Mukuvas with the intention of maintaining the purity of the lineage. In North Malabar the Mukuva community is divided into four illam namely Ponillam (Pon, gold), Chempillam (Copper), Karillam and Kachillam,²² hence they are called Nallillakars or people of the four illams. The South Malabar Mukkavas and Arayans have only the latter three Illams and are therefore called Munillakars, the people of the three Illams. The caste also has a section called Kavuthiyas, who act as barbers to others, and are sometimes called Panimagans²³.

The Nalillakar are considered superior to the Munilakar and Kavuthians. The three sections did not intermarry with each other. Kavuthians have special ritual functions related to the removal of pollution; It is noteworthy that sea water is used in ritual sprinkling for this purpose.

Upon examining the history of the islanders, it becomes evident that Hindu family names are widespread across all of the islands. It is worth noting that many houses in the islands have the word "Illam" in their names. According to Jha, Makhan some local historians suggest that the early settlers on the islands may have been Namboothiris based on this naming convention. This observation, however, is not entirely convincing, as the Adivasi houses also use the term "illam". Therefore, it cannot be concluded that only the houses of the Namboothiris were referred to as "Illam. However, Hindus were among the migrants who migrated from the Malabar coast to the islands²⁴.

²² Baidyanath Saraswati, (ed.,) Life-style and Ecology, Indira Gandhi Centre for the Arts, D.K. Printworld, 1998.p.178.

²³ L.A. Krishna Iyer, Social History of Kerala: The Dravidians, Book Centre Publications,1968. p.58

²⁴ Makhan Jha, The Muslim tribes of Lakshadweep Islands: an anthropological appraisal of island ecology and cultural perceptions., M.D. Publications,1997. p.p.29-30

The Lakshadweep islands, excluding Minicoy, are believed to have been initially inhabited by Hindus from the Malabar coast. In contrast, Minicoy's population shares distinct Maldivian ancestry, with some claiming origins in Sri Lanka before adopting

The Mukkuvans residing along the coastal stretch from Kodungallur to Cannanore are affiliated with the same four illams as the Katararayans. On the other hand, the inhabitants of the coast from Chavakkad to Kodungallur belong to three illams, and there is a strict demarcation between the two groups, with no intermarriage or interdining. However, a member from any of the four illams can share meals and enter into a concubine relationship with a person from the three illams. Conversely, a member from the latter group cannot partake in meals at the residence of someone from the former without thoroughly cleansing the utensils used, nor can they marry a woman from the former without her losing her caste status. This disparity suggests that the members of the four illams hold a higher social standing compared to those belonging to the three illams.

In relation to inheritance, the system of succession differs between South Malabar and North Malabar. In South Malabar, succession follows the male line, while in North Malabar, it follows the female line. In the latter case, wives and children do not possess any rights to the father's property unless it has been specifically transferred to them during his lifetime.

The Mukkuvans have their own caste assemblies that convene on significant occasions pertaining to the welfare of the caste. These assemblies are presided over by the caste head-man, known as the Arayan. The Arayan's authority over the caste members is absolute, and the position is passed down through hereditary means. Additionally, there is a subordinate position known as the Ponamban in Cochin and Kadavan²⁵ in Malabar. The duties of the Ponamban/Kadavan²⁶ involve carrying out

Islam. A hierarchical social structure was introduced when upper-caste migrants from Malabar brought lower-caste individuals as laborers. The first settled islands, Amini, Kalpeni, Androth, and Kavarathi, were known as "Tarawad" islands, associated with aristocratic lineage. Subsequently, lower-caste inhabitants from these islands populated the "Melacheris" islands. The upper caste on the islands, known as Koyas, claim descent from Nair or Nampoothiri families, while lower castes are believed to be of Thiyya (Mukkuva/fishermen) origin. Evidence supporting Hindu origins includes traditional Hindu family names and the presence of "illam" houses, typically associated with Nampoothiri families in Kerala.

²⁵ Charles Alexander Innes, *Malabar Gazetteer*, Kerala Council for Historical Research, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997, p.127.

²⁶ *Madras District Gazetteers*. India, Superintendent, Government Press, 1951.p.127.

the tasks assigned by the Arayan, who has various sources of income derived from the caste members' families.

The Arayan receives nine annas for determining an auspicious time for tying the tali (a ceremonial necklace) and conducting marriage rituals. Before being invited to officiate in these ceremonies, the Arayan is paid four annas and six pies. Furthermore, the Arayan receives one rupee and two annas for granting permission to erect a pandal (decorative canopy) during a marriage ceremony. Similarly, the bridegroom presents the same amount to him upon departing with the bride. In the case of divorce, the Arayan receives a significant portion of the deposited sum from the individual seeking separation.

In the past, the Mukuva community experienced discrimination from upper caste individuals who viewed them as inferior and restricted their access to public roads. Due to these social disadvantages and their coastal lifestyle, many members chose to convert to either Christianity or Islam, resulting in improved social status. These converts are commonly referred to as Puisseans²⁷, New Muslims, or New Muslims. The entire Puissean²⁸ community engages in fishing. The Mukuva community insists on maintaining a distance of thirty-two feet from Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and others. They consider themselves equal to Kammals and Izhvans,²⁹ and there is no concept of pollution by touch within these groups. Additionally, they do not consume food prepared by the Panan and Mannan castes, and they have their own barber and washerman.

An illustrative example of the caste-based discrimination experienced by the Mukuva community is the case of a Thiyya woman who reportedly declined to ride in a palanquin, even though she was involved in prostitution. Her refusal stemmed from the fact that the palanquin bearers were from the lower-caste Mukkuvar

²⁷ Salah Punathil, *Interrogating Communalism: Violence, Citizenship and Minorities in South India.*, Taylor & Francis, 2018,p.5.

²⁸ Puisseans: A converted Muslim fishing community of Northern Kerala.

²⁹ F. Fawcett, *Nayars of Malabar.* India, Asian Educational Services, 1985,p253

community. Buchanan's narrative of this incident suggests that they held caste beliefs and were unwilling to compromise, fearing that entering a palanquin carried by mukkuva would make them untouchable.

The Mukuva community has undergone a remarkable transformation in their quest for equality and empowerment. Once subjected to discrimination and social disadvantages, they found solace in converting to Christianity³⁰ or Islam. This religious conversion not only elevated their social status but also provided a path towards breaking free from the oppressive treatment imposed by the upper castes. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the negative factor that prompted their conversion—the history of discrimination they endured, which led them to seek alternative paths for improvement.

One of the notable positive aspects of the Mukuva community is their deep-rooted connection with the Mopla muslim. This bond is exemplified by a unique tradition where Mukuva women stay in Mopla households during their menstrual cycles, showcasing a strong sense of unity and mutual support between the two religion. Additionally, the Mukuva community displays their respect for the deities in Brahmanie temples by standing at a distance from the outer wall. During the cock festival (Meenam barani festival) in the Bhagavathi temple of kodungallore³¹, the Mukuva people are given preference in worshiping the deity over the Izhavans, and the Raja allows vessels to be given to the caste-men who come from distant places.

³⁰ T. Mathew, P., SJ P, *Between the Sea and the Sky: Lived Religion on the Seashore*. United States, Fortress Press, 2020.p.69.

³¹ Stewart Hoover, and Nabil Echchaibi, (ed.) *Media and Religion: The Global View.*, Germany, De Gruyter, 2021.p.210.

The Minam Bharani Festival, celebrated at Sri Kurumba Kavu in central Kerala, is commonly known as the Cock Festival due to its distinctive rituals. This annual event is characterized by fervent and provocative devotional practices, including the singing of explicit sexual songs and ceremonial acts of defilement directed at the goddess Sri Kurumba's shrine. While controversial, the festival continues to attract large crowds and bears striking resemblances to the ecstatic cults that flourished in the ancient Near East and later spread across the Greco-Roman world. During the festival, individuals known as veliccappatus(illuminators) claim to channel the goddess's spirit. In a state of trance, these oracles engage in ritualistic self-harm, such as cutting their foreheads with swords, while performing ecstatic dances.

These privileges are refused to other caste-men, further emphasizing the distinct position and recognition bestowed upon the Mukuva community.

In their pursuit of self-sufficiency and independence, the Mukuva community has established their own sources of sustenance and support. They have their own barber and washerman, fostering a sense of unity and empowerment within the community. However, it is vital to recognize the negative factor of exclusivity as they abstain from consuming food prepared by the Panan and Mannan castes. Such practices perpetuate caste-based discrimination and hinder the potential for holistic unity and inclusivity.

The Mukuva community's journey towards empowerment entails a complex interplay of positive and negative factors. Their conversion to Christianity or Islam has enabled them to overcome discrimination and seek improved social standing. The close relationship with the Mopla caste signifies solidarity and support. While they embrace unity and self-reliance, it is crucial for the community to address exclusionary practices and strive for inclusivity to foster a more equitable society.

Customs and belief

While discussing the special patronage given to Mukkuva in Hindu rituals The Chattambiswamis says that even though the Tatchutakkaimal a Nair of the Koodalmanickam temple, after the avarodham, the Namboothiris should carry him on their pallakk, and in cases of special puja, the Tatchutakkaimal and the deity should be tied with a thread. It is clear that these rights belonged to the Dravidians who included the Nayars in the early days. The presence of a Mukuva at the beginning or end of the Kodungallur Bharani is essential. Only when the king recieved water from Palakal Velan, will the silk umbrella be opened and permission for other rituals will be given. Here the nairs have the right to lead the king. The slaughtering of chickens in Kavuvu should start only after a chicken has been slaughtered as a sign in the Pulayapad to the east part of Kavuvu³².

³² Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala: Written in The Form of Notes on Visscher's Letters from Malabar*, Asian Educational Services, 1986, p.466.

In addition to the primary tier of shrines managed by upper-caste families, a secondary tier of shrines was administered exclusively by Tiyya families, service castes, fisherpeople, and the marginalized untouchable Pulaya castes. While the local Nayar landlords did not engage in direct worship at these secondary shrines, they held a significant role in the annual festivals associated with them. These shrines were distinctive for hosting the Teyyattam, a sacred performance blending storytelling with a recounting of the experiences of individuals, either from the lower or upper castes, who were perceived as victims of injustice and later deified. These deified victims did not receive personal worship but were integrated into local cults, pre existing Bhagavathi shrines, or the ancestral worship practiced within Nayar tharavadus. The performance of Teyyattam remained geographically localized, and in cases where the land on which a Teyyattam was conducted changed hands, the responsibility for perpetuating the ceremony shifted to the new owner. This secondary tier of shrines served dual purposes: they functioned as tangible markers representing a conceived community area and concurrently as reminders of the enduring dynamics of power relations.

This secondary tier of shrines, managed by lower-caste and marginalized communities, underscores the complex interplay between caste-based hierarchies and religious practices in traditional Indian society. The Teyyattam performance, with its focus on narratives of social injustice, can be seen as a form of social commentary within a religious context. It encapsulates the experiences of both lower and upper-caste individuals, highlighting the omnipresent issues of power, hierarchy, and social justice.

These shrines also serve as important markers of localized communal identity. They provide a sense of belonging and community for those who have historically been marginalized and excluded. While the Nayar landlords may not have directly worshipped at these shrines, their participation in the associated festivals suggests a recognition of the significance of these rituals within the broader social fabric.

The existence of these secondary shrines and the practice of Teyyattam highlight the intricate relationship between religion, caste, and social dynamics. It emphasizes how religious practices can both reflect and challenge existing social hierarchies, providing valuable insights for understanding the historical and sociological dimensions of Indian society.

In 'Kochi State Manual' state that many years before the kodungallur temple was allowed to enter, most of the devotees who come here are Hindus. It contains an indication of the social character before the introduction of Brahmin supremacy³³. Therefore, it can be assumed that the temple did not come after the introduction of the caste system and the temple must have existed long before that. When the Brahmins came under the rule, they may have given the right to one day's food as a compromise respecting the old flexibility. The custom of Tindal has gone out of public view in Kerala. However, the gathering of devotees of the goddess, who enter the kavu in Ashwathi thirunal day immediately before the Meenabarani, is still called Kavutheendal³⁴. The Hindu festival of Sivarathri, celebrated in Kumbham during February to March, is observed by the higher castes. Festival connected with specific temples, the most well-known and locally popular one is the Bharani or cock feast, which takes place at the Kali temple in Kodungallur during the month of Meenam (March to April). This festival attracts hundreds of pilgrims from all over Malabar, including Nayars, Tiyyans, and lower castes, who march to the shrine shouting "Nada, Nada" and singing bawdy songs while making insulting remarks to the goddess. Upon arriving, they throw stones and filth at the shrine and continue their insults. The leader of the Mukkuvan caste, known as the Kuzhi Muttattu Arayan, has the honour of starting the pollution of the shrine. Pilgrims make offerings of pepper and receive turmeric powder in return from girls connected to the temple. The highlight of the festival is the sacrifice of cocks by each pilgrim. The day ends with excessive drinking of arrack and toddy. The festival lasts for seven days, after which the temple is cleaned. A pilgrimage to Kodungallore is

³³ C. Achyuta Menon, *Op. cit.*

³⁴ G Krishnan Kutty, *The Political Economy of Underdevelopment in India*, Northern Book Centre, 1999, p.178

believed to protect against cholera and smallpox. The priest belongs to the Adigal caste³⁵. besides, in Karayanthala temple at Venkitang in Thrissur district, Mangalore Emprantiris were the priests and Dravidian communities like Mukuvar, Vetuvar, Pulayar, Parayar and Ezhava were allotted special places near the temple³⁶. What is common in these customs is that the castes, which were currently considered to be lower castes, are given special status in festivals³⁷

The investigation into the shrine festival at Pishari kavu, situated near the port town of Quilandy within Kurumbranad, provides valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of caste identity and communal cohesion within the context of traditional Indian society. This festival, spanning seven days during the month of April, elucidates the allocation of distinct roles to various castes, operating under the overarching leadership of upper castes, notably Nayars and Nambudiris. The multifaceted nature of these roles, directly tied to each caste's traditional occupations, underscores the festival's capacity to underscore the pre-existing social hierarchy and caste-based stratification within the community.

Specifically, the festival engages diverse castes, including washermen, tribals, oracles, and notably, fishermen (referred to as "fisherpeople" or "mukkuvar"). On the fifth day, a significant role is played by the washerman in announcing the procession of the goddess, while the sixth day witnesses the active participation of the headman of the fisherpeople. The latter assumes a pivotal role, overseeing the repair of the shrine's silver umbrella and leading a procession featuring a distinctive display of tender coconuts and the shrine umbrella. The engagement of fishermen underscores their integral presence within the festival's intricate ritual tapestry, marking their active involvement in the ceremonial procedures and their broader role within the communal framework.

³⁵ N.M. Namboothiri, and P.K. Sivadas, *Kerala Charitrathinte Nattuvazhikal*, D.C Books, Kottayam,2009.

³⁶ C.A. Innes and F.B. Evans (Ed.), *Malabar*, Government press, Madrass,1951.

³⁷ Dilip M. Menon, *Caste, nationalism and communism in south India, Malabar, 1900-1948*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p.53

The festival is contextualized as a multifaceted phenomenon, embodying a nuanced interplay of caste identities, religious observance, and communal dynamics. While personal devotion may motivate some participants, the festival's overarching objective appears to revolve around the perpetuation of a communal sense of worship and shared subsistence. Essential to this perspective is the festival's pivotal role in sustaining the communal structure and resource-sharing mechanisms during periods of scarcity. In contrast to a simplistic interpretation that frames these festivals solely as instruments for reinforcing caste hierarchy, this analysis underscores their broader significance, transcending mere caste delineations and encompassing communal and subsistence dimensions. It would be overly reductionist to assert that these festivals merely perpetuated and replicated established caste hierarchies or caste identities³⁸.

KADAL KODATHY (SEA COURT)

The structure and roles of Kadalkodathy's constitution and functions can be understood as a complementary system to the Sri Kurumba temple. This organization comprises two main functional entities: the Sthanikans, who hold hereditary positions, and the democratically elected temple trust.

The Sthanikans, a dominant group within Kadalkodathy, consist of four Karanavanmar, six Achanmar, two anthithiriyans, and one kodakkaran, totaling 13 members. This group wields significant authority over temple matters and holds legal jurisdiction during court sessions. Additionally, there is a supporting group known as "irupathinalukar," which means approximately 24 members, although it usually consists of 12-15 members in reality.

The primary decision-making body among the Sthanikans is the four Karanavanmar, who are the head priests. These leaders, each representing one of the four illams or ancestral clans, possess the ultimate authority in resolving disputes. An illam signifies an ancestral household responsible for upholding clan purity. Notably, each Karanavan holds a distinct honorary title that cannot be exchanged.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.48-49

Once the title is conferred, it exclusively identifies the individual by that designation, rather than their original name. This prestigious position is hereditary and confined to the four illams, which are regarded as the original or fundamental cosmological sources of the clan, from which other families trace their origins.

The democratically elected temple trust is responsible for the day-to-day management of the temple and its assets. The trust consists of 12 members, who are elected by the villagers. The trust is headed by a president, who is elected by the other members.³⁹

The Kadakkodi institution stands out for its inclusion of knowledgeable village elders who contribute their expertise and experience in fishing practices and community affairs to the decision-making process. The institution also fosters collective responsibility and accountability within the fishing community, with the entire community actively participating in monitoring decisions' implementation. This shared responsibility ensures order, fairness, and adherence to established norms and regulations.

An important feature of the Kadakkodi institution is its emphasis on open and inclusive discussions, which facilitate the exchange of ideas and the exploration of innovative solutions. This collaborative approach promotes a sense of ownership and empowerment among the fishermen, reinforcing their unity and resilience in the face of challenges.

The Kadalkodathy organization can be understood within the context of segmentary lineage theory. Segmentary lineage theory is a model of social organization that describes how societies, particularly those with a strong emphasis on kinship and lineage, are organized into a series of segments or branches. Each segment is a distinct unit with its own set of rights, responsibilities, and obligations. The segments are related to each other through a common ancestor. When a threat is

³⁹ Ramachandran, C, and Thamban C. "Biodiversity and Community Based Institutions: A Case Study on Kadalkodathy of Malabar Coast." People for Nature. Accessed on 16.08.2023,<https://www.mappilaheritagelibrary.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Biodiversity-Kadalkodathy-OF-Malabar-Coast.pdf>.

posed to the society, the segments unite to defend it. When the threat is gone, the segments return to their separate identities. The segmentary lineage theory was developed by a number of anthropologists, including E. E. Evans-Pritchard⁴⁰, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown⁴¹, and Max Gluckman⁴².

In the system of Kadal kodathi, the illams, which are ancestral clans, align with the concept of segments. These illams are considered the founding sources from which other families have originated. The four Karanavanmar, as the leaders representing each illam, embody the principle of segmentary leadership. These leaders hold considerable decision-making authority and play a pivotal role in dispute resolution. Their positions are hereditary and tied to the specific illams, reflecting the segmentary lineage's emphasis on maintaining distinct segments while acknowledging a broader interconnectedness.

The concept of "clan purity" within the illams can also be seen as a manifestation of the segmentary lineage theory. The emphasis on maintaining the purity of the clan highlights the importance of boundaries between segments and the preservation of their shared identities.

In essence, the segmentary lineage theory helps us understand how Kadalkodathy's organizational structure and practices are rooted in a broader sociocultural framework that values ancestral lineages, hierarchical arrangement, and the interplay between distinct segments. This theoretical perspective enriches our understanding of the dynamics at play within Kadalkodathy's constitution and functions.

However, these kadakkodi institutions faced limitations in addressing discrimination within the profession. often functioned as problem-solving bodies exclusive to a specific religion or caste, overlooking the broader social challenges

⁴⁰ E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, Oxford University Press, 1940, p.p.102-103.

⁴¹ A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*, Free Press, 1952, pp.152-153.

⁴² Max Gluckman, *The Judicial Process among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia*, Clarendon Press, 1955, pp.13-14.

encountered by individuals engaged in the same occupation. This led to the marginalization of fishermen who had converted to different religions, rendering them socially ostracized. Even after conversion, individuals, including new Muslims (puthu – islam), continued to experience social discrimination.

COMMUNITY

The Mogaya community in Malabar believed itself to be superior to other groups. Food and water from Mukuva are typically not accepted. Valan is ranked first in a comprehensive Kerala classification, which also places Araya, Mukuva, and Mogaya as the next four positions. The superiority of the Valans over the Arayans is due to the distinction given to them by one of the Perumals or early kings of Malabar in selecting their ancestors for his boat service. Valans are generally considered to be of higher status than Arayans and enjoy certain privileges.⁴³ These two groups generally do not conflict or intermarry with each other. Yet it is noteworthy that it is a subcaste of the Arayans who also perform priestly functions for the Valans. Among Valans the division into Illams or families or houses applies. There are four exogamous divisions namely Illam, Alayakad, Evunalu, Vaishyam, Gireyam and Vazhapilli in other parts of Kerala. According to Valan, these divisions originated from various families originally connected with or descended from the four Namboothiri illams. To maintain this tradition, or in memory of it, when family problems occur, they still visit their respective illams with gifts and offerings and seek blessings from the Namboothiris. Although this may add some color to the tradition, it must be observed that the division of a caste or caste into Illams is not exclusive to the Valans. In the lower classes even the Mukkuva and Pulayars are thus divided. Mukkuvar had four illams and Pulayar has ten illam were existed.

The Valan in religion is an inferior form of Brahmanism not far removed from Asura worship. There are a few small temples of Bhagwati worshiped by Valans. The Valans adhere to Hinduism as their religious faith, and their mode of

⁴³ Gotz Hoeppe, *Conversations on the beach: fishermen's knowledge, metaphor and environmental change in South India*, United Kingdom, Berghahn Books, 2007. p.31

worship does not create divisions among them. They hold deep veneration for deities such as Siva, Vishnu, and the legendary figures from Hindu puranas, treating them with equal respect. Similar to their fellow caste members, they hold a particular reverence for Bhagavathi.

This deity is appeased through offerings of rice flour, toddy, fresh coconuts, bananas, and poultry on both Tuesdays and Fridays. They fear demons especially water demons. In Brahmin temples, they can worship only from a distance. They are becoming more and more Brahminized, and they now make it a practice to observe Hindu festivals, feasts and fasts, Additionally, there have been major variations in funeral ceremonies. The funerary rites are now completed in all of the centers in three to five days. In addition, there has been a change in how the community members approach the ritual. The utilisation of social customs like "Kadakodi," which the Mukkuva Chieftain once strictly controlled.

The "Aana ezhunnallat" that is presently used at the Mukuvars' Srikurumba locales was formerly solely utilised in royal temples during the feudal era. Formerly found in temples of a higher Castes, Vechu Nivedya is now found in Mukkuva places. Additionally, the once-forbidden practise of making pilgrimages to higher temples to worship has started.

Many of the magical traditions have vanished, however certain ancient rites are still practised today. However, their unintentional effect continues to permeate society. For this reason, special vows are made for *Chakara*, sacrifices are made on the shore, "Dhanu Nivedya" is presented, besides "Thichamundi" is performed.⁴⁴ Such methods might be viewed as a component of M.N. Sreenivasan's theory of Sanskritization.

In some centers, there are beliefs that Munnillakars are 'Mukkuva' and Nalilillakars are 'Arayar'. If we analyze the community structure of Mukkuvar in North Kerala, it will be clear that this is not true. The Madras Gazetteer's dissection

⁴⁴ S. Jayashanker, *Temples of Kannoor District*. India, Controller of Publications, 2001. p.425

of the Mukuva community as 'Nallillas' in North Malabar and 'moonillas' in South Malabar is also not entirely correct. Lands Among the Mukkuwaras in Uttara Kerala, relationships exist beyond the order of settlement. Those who are in 'Nallilla' keep in touch with each other even if they are far away. Kasargod, Keezhur, Bekalam and Kottikulam are connected areas and are known as "Naludesangal or Nalunadu". Sometimes Kawwai is added and it is called "Anchunadu". On special occasions Kannur and Thalassery are added to the five areas and it is also called "Seven Desams". In addition to 'nadu', the word 'Rajya' can also be found. There is a division of land among the Mukuvas in Koyilandi and Kozhikode as well. It is called 'Nine Rajyaam' by combining the interrelated lands like ezhukutikal, Valiamangad, Cheri Mangad, Koilandi, Puthan Katappuram, Koothampally, Arayan Paramba, Thannirmukham in Koilandi. It is also called 'Seven Rajyaam' by adding the seven interconnected lands of Edakkal, Thodiyil, Kampurum, Kunnummal, Munnalil, Puthyangadi and Puthiyappa at Kozhikode.

Fishermen Across Borders: Perspectives from Foreign Travelers

The writings of foreign travelers who explored Kerala offer diverse perspectives on the coastal communities, particularly the fishermen. In 1293, John of Montecorvino, during his visit to Kerala, provided insights into the coastal inhabitants. He commended their nautical skills and the construction of high-quality vessels. These coastal dwellers displayed a keen understanding of favorable sea-travel seasons, enabling them to embark on annual trade expeditions to foreign lands. Chinese traveler Mahwan, arriving in 1409, categorized the population into five distinct groups: Nayans (Nairs), Muhammadeirs (Muhammadeirs), alla (Chitti), kolingar (Kolings), and Mukkuvars⁴⁵. Among these, the Mukkuvars were often marginalized and impoverished. They were subject to regulations that limited the height of their dwellings to a mere three feet and restricted their attire to short garments. When encountering a Nair or Chetti from a distance, Mukkuvars would prostrate themselves until the higher-caste individuals passed by.

⁴⁵ George Phillips, Mahuan's Account of Cochin, Calicut and Aden. United Kingdom, 1896. p.343

Niccolò Conti, who visited Kochi in the 5th century, documented an astonishing observation. While sailing along a river, he witnessed an unconventional method of fish-catching involving the use of fire on the riverbank. These unique creatures would skillfully encircle the fish drawn to the flames. Remarkably, Conti noted that these beings, both male and female, bore a striking resemblance to humans. Velayudhan Panickassery later corroborated Conti's account, explaining that such nighttime fire-based fishing practices persisted in areas like Vypin, Ponjickara, Raman Thurut, Ernakulam, and Vendu Thurutti. Foreigners may have relied on their shipmates to explain this practice, often using sign language for communication.⁴⁶

Chinese traveler Fei Xin, who explored Kerala in 1436, also provided insights into the Mukkuvars. He described their modest homes along the coastline and their courteous demeanor despite limited wealth. Both men and women wore simple cotton garments around their waists. They inhabited small huts nestled among coconut groves along the shore. Fishing was their primary livelihood, but the fluctuating fish prices and unpredictable weather sometimes pushed them to the brink of starvation. When confronted by strangers, they sought refuge in their shelters.

In 1498, Vasco da Gama encountered and communicated with the Mukkuvars at sea before reaching Calicut. In 1500, Barbosa mentioned the Thiyars, Mukkuvas, and Mogayars during his visit to Kerala. The Mukkuvars primarily engaged in fishing and seafaring and were often considered a marginalized caste. Some members, however, achieved financial success and owned substantial properties.

In the 17th century, French trader Pirard de Laval highlighted the significance of fishing as the primary occupation of Kerala's coastal inhabitants. Every fisherman had the liberty to catch fish as per their needs, and the profession was esteemed.

⁴⁶ Velayudhan Panickassery, *Keralacharithram: Kerala Samsthana Roopeekaranam Vare (Mal.)*, D.C Books, 2023 p.32.

Hamilton, an Englishman who visited Kerala between 1688 and 1723, noted the issue of untouchability in Kerala society. Thiyars, Mukkuvas, and Pulayars were regarded as lower castes. If a Nair crossed paths with them, they were expected to maintain a certain distance, or else they risked harm or death at the hands of the Nairs or even the king himself.⁴⁷

In the early 15th century, the Chinese traveller Ma Huan documented that when Mukkuvas ventured beyond the borders of the way, they would promptly prostrate themselves upon encountering a Brahman, Nayar, or Chetti, refraining from rising until they had passed by. Mentioning the Nayars, Barbosa reports, 'Upon their movement, they vociferate to the peasants, demanding the clearing of their path; and the peasants duly comply. Failure to do so could result in the Nairs resorting to fatal violence without legal consequences. This dynamic is particularly pronounced when dealing with castes of higher status.'

Members of the higher echelons make vocal exclamations, such as 'hoo, hoo,' while traversing roads, signalling to individuals of lower status to maintain their distance. Samuel Purchas noted that 'if an individual from the common populace makes physical contact with a Nayar, the Nayar possesses the right to take their life.' Furthermore, the contact is considered impure, necessitating specific purification rituals. It is in light of this belief that they vocalize their presence in the streets, employing the phrase 'Po, Po.'⁴⁸

Social life of fishermen in British period in Kerala

Colonial modernism in Malabar was crucial in transforming several aspects of society during the 19th and 20th centuries, especially in respect to the caste system and social engineering. Due to the impact of the colonial powers during this time, Kerala's sociocultural environment witnessed a substantial change. One of the most important elements of this shift was the introduction of urban culture to the area, which over time led to the adaptation of native customs to the colonial setting.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ C. Achyuta Menon., *Op.cit.*, p.377.

Reorganising families and inheritance laws was one of colonial modernity's most significant effects. As new ideas and institutions, particularly capitalism, were brought by colonialism, established structures were challenged. The colonial rulers also spread the idea of a civilising mission, purportedly with the intention of releasing the indigenous from what they saw as oppressive circumstances. They unintentionally upset long-standing feudal relationships that were ingrained in Malabar society by doing this.

Under the caste system people were grouped into Jati based on their birth creating an arrangement where certain Jati held higher status than others. This framework had an impact on not only Hindus but also in Muslims and Christians in Kerala albeit in different ways.

Although Muslims and Christians in Kerala did not strictly adhere to the caste system like Hindus did its influence was still noticeable. It shaped their dynamics and perspectives to some extent. However during the era significant changes occurred in the landscape due to shifting economic patterns due to the colonial modernity.

The introduction of a market driven economy during times had effects on the caste system of Kerala. The cultivation of cash crops gave rise to a growing merchant class that challenged the dominance of Brahmins. This economic transition also brought about changes in family structures, inheritance laws and social relationships, across communities.

The outcome of these changes led to a society marked by disparities, among castes and communities. In essence the caste system, in Kerala continued to revolve around Brahmins and those adhering to Hindu traditions. Brahmins held an amount of power and influence with Hindu castes ranking below them followed by Muslims and Christians. At the bottom of this hierarchy were the lower castes like Hindu and Muslim fisherfolk and other Dalit castes who faced discrimination and oppression.

It is important to recognize that the caste system is not fixed. Rather it has changed and adapted over time to reflect the social changes in the region. The

changes observed in the caste system of Kerala during the colonial era highlight how evolving circumstances have deeply influenced standing structures.

The fall of caste barriers in several societal sectors was certainly one of the most notable transformations. An intellectual conflict against the rigidity of the caste system was visible during the 19th century. A modern civil society could not flourish within the boundaries of such a hierarchical and discriminating framework as colonial modernity developed. Caste-based disparities began to gradually fade as a result, at least in some areas of life.

It is impossible to overstate the impact colonial modernity had on Malabar throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. With the introduction of capitalism and the idea of a civilising mission⁴⁹, it significantly altered family patterns, inheritance laws, and societal institutions. A crucial period in the history of the area was marked by these transformations, which were not without their complications and difficulties but also opened the way for a more open and inclusive society.

They did this by enumerating and categorising their populations in place of religious organisations that served as registers of births, marriages, and deaths, defining and classifying space, drawing lines between the public and private spheres, keeping track of business transactions like real estate sales, defining and classifying their populations, and standardised languages and scripts. As soon as the British gained control of Malabar, they intended to simplify the social environment there into controlled "facts.". Colonialism developed its geographies, created manageable categories, established boundaries, and invented histories based on the priorities of empirical positivism, which believed that humans could learn about the inner workings of the world through rational experience.

The spirit of change has permeated portions of the incoming educated classes due to the liberal and logical scientific thought. Generally speaking, the intellectuals of the nineteenth century did anticipate social and economic change inside the

⁴⁹ Kavitha Philip, *Civilizing Natures Race, Resources and Modernity in Colonial South India*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 2004, p.p.149-50.

colonial government system itself. This explains the role they gave themselves of developing the intellectual underpinnings of a bourgeois order, "with polished persons, refined houses, and refined society" within a government that was a colonially subject one. Colonialism, with its justifications for being on a civilising mission, had a significant part to play in this⁵⁰.

During the British period in Kerala, the social life of fishermen was likely characterized by their involvement in the fishing industry and their participation in the local community. Fishermen in Kerala were considered to be lower castes in the traditional Hindu social hierarchy. As a result, they have been facing social discrimination and marginalization, and had limited access to education and other opportunities. It is through tradition that knowledge and messages are passed on to the next generation. Normal relations with other communities only help to strengthen one's own personality⁵¹. But it is not possible to see the cultural change formed as a part of colonization in the coastal society. It is a fact that no colonial culture has been able to penetrate into their habitat

Despite these challenges, fishermen in Kerala were an important part of the local economy, and they played a vital role in the region's fishing industry. Many of them lived in small, close-knit communities along the coast, where they worked together to catch and sell fish. In these communities, they had participated in local festivals and religious rituals, and had close relationships with their neighbours⁵²

Fishermen in Kerala interacted with the British colonial authorities in various ways, such as through the sale of their catch or through interactions with local officials. However, the exact nature of these interactions would depend on the specific historical context and the specific community in which the fishermen lived.

⁵⁰ K.M. Sheeba, 2002, *Modernity In Social Reform Discourse: The Women Question In Colonial Kerala*, Vol. 63,p. 932, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44158163>, Accessed online On 12th January

⁵¹ R. Gopinathan, *Keralathanima* (mal.), State Institute of languages Thiruvananthapuram, 2013, p.262.

⁵² B. A. Prakash, *Kerala's Economic Development: Issues and Problems*.India, Sage Publications, 1999. p.25.

Thurston suggests that the Mukuva caste brought many converts into the ranks of Muhammadanism. Quoting the Madras Census Report of 1891, he says, "Conversion to Islam is common among this caste. Converts are called Puisseam or New Islam (New Islam)" in Malabar. In the realm of historical records, it is documented that approximately 50,000 individuals who adhered to faiths other than Islam underwent a significant transition to embrace Islam during the years spanning from 1871 to 1881. Among these converts, it is noteworthy that the fishing communities played a prominent role. Historical evidence has elucidated that the Zamorin, with the aim of bolstering his naval forces, issued an edict mandating the conversion of at least one or two individuals from each fishing family to the Islamic faith. Interestingly, this conversion initiative primarily targeted male children born on Fridays⁵³. These new descendants became a class of fishermen who later came to be known as Puslans. Most Moplas belonged to the lower caste, which clearly appealed to the lower castes more than the upper castes. They were primarily fishermen along the shore and farmers and laborers in the interior.

In the context of the Malabar coastal regions, the conversion of fishermen from Hinduism to Islam can be attributed significantly to their social status and the prevailing prejudices within Hindu society. Over time, the Muslim fishermen population witnessed a gradual increase in these coastal areas. The remarkable surge in the number of conversions within the Malabar region raised concerns among both Christian missionaries and the colonial authorities. A pivotal moment in this narrative unfolded during a Christian Mission Conference convened in Calcutta in the year 1882. Reports emanating from this assembly underscored the astonishing rate at which the Mappilas, as the converts were known, were multiplying. To the extent that there was a plausible apprehension that, within a short span of time, the entire lower stratum of the west coast's populace might embrace the Islamic faith⁵⁴.

⁵³ C. Gopalan Nair, *Malayalathile Mappilamar* (Mal.), Basel Mission Press, Managlore, 1917, p.99.

⁵⁴ T.W. Arnold, *Preaching of Islam A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith*, Adam Publishers & Distributors, 1961, p. 272.

It is worth noting that the situation elicited various responses and suggestions. For instance, T.H. Baber, a respected judge presiding over the Criminal Court, once put forth the idea of potentially legislating against conversion altogether as a means of addressing the evolving religious dynamics within the region⁵⁵.

The adoption of the Islamic faith has brought about demographic changes and played a central role in geographically consolidating communities. To illustrate this, we can turn our attention to the case of Ponnani in Kerala. Through the context of Hegel's idealism, we can analyze the evolution of the fishing community residing along Tipu Sultan Road, with a particular focus on the Marakadav area, as a tangible expression of his philosophical tenets. Hegel's idealism underscores the pivotal significance of ideals in molding the course of human culture and history.

The road known as Tipu Sultan Road, extending from Chaliyam to Chetuva in Kerala, serves as a geographical backdrop to this transformation. Along this route, members of the fishing community reside. Here, we encounter the influence of Valiya Jarathingkal Syed Abdurrahiman Hydros besides he is the auliya (a divine person for the sunni sects of muslims). a significant figure in the revival of the fishing community. He arrived in Ponnani, Kerala, in 1803, hailing from Hadramauth, Yemen, in the Arabian Peninsula. It's important to note that Kerala is home to two distinct groups of Sayyids, the Bukhara Sayyeds, and the Hadrami Sayyeds, to which Syed Abdurrahiman Hydros belonged.⁵⁶

The Marakadav area in Ponnani provides a compelling case study. Local women actively participated in the Meen Street area, closely associated with the fish industry. Their responsibilities encompassed tasks like fish selling and preservation. Interestingly, the majority of these women adhered to the Muslim faith, aligning with the predominant religious community in the region.

What's particularly intriguing in the context of Hegelian idealism is the historical transition of the Marakadav fishermen. Originally, they were not engaged

⁵⁵ Malabar District Records, Magisterial, 1882, pp. 236-237.

⁵⁶ Interview with Abdurahimankutti, Historian, Ponnani, On 10th September 2023.

in traditional fishing practices but instead worked as laborers in the Pathemari industry. This departure from traditional fishing practices highlights the transformative power of ideals and societal changes. It was only after the decline of the Pathemari occupation that these fishermen transitioned into what can be termed 'modern fishermen.' This transformation underscores Hegel's notion that ideals serve as motivating forces, guiding human actions and ultimately shaping the course of history. The shift from laborers to modern fishermen reflects how changing ideals and circumstances can profoundly influence a community's identity and livelihood, aligning with Hegel's philosophy of history as an objectification of the rational will and spirit that drives human activities.

Notably, two religious conversion centers emerged, namely "Tharbiyathul Islam Sabah" in Kozhikode District and "Mauntathul Islam Sabah" in Ponnani in Malappuram District. The arrival of the newly converted individuals bore both sociological and numerical implications, necessitating the need to establish connections, assimilate, and imbue an Islamic identity within a substantial segment of the population. In response to this pressing issue, a pivotal gathering convened on the 9th of September 1900 in Malappuram, bringing together approximately 800 prominent Mappila leaders. Notably, Puthiya Maliyakkal Pookoya Tangal presided over this significant session.

During this assembly, an organization known as "Ma'unath al Islam Sabha" was formally established⁵⁷. Subsequently, the Ma'unath initiated the establishment of an institution in Ponnani with the primary purpose of providing instruction and guidance to the newly converted individuals in matters related to Islam. This institution offered specialized provisions for the profession of faith, the circumcision of male converts, and comprehensive education in the Islamic faith.

The converts were immersed in religious teachings for a period spanning from a minimum of two months to a maximum of six months. Throughout this duration, they were provided with essential amenities such as free sustenance,

⁵⁷ P.A. Said Muhammad, Kerala Muslim Directory, Kerala Publications, Cochin, 1960, p.305.

accommodations, and clothing. It is noteworthy that similar educational institutions and Madrasas were inaugurated in various regions across Malabar, reflecting the concerted efforts to facilitate the integration and education of the new converts.

Within the religious congregation encompassing both Muslim converts and non-converts, the fishing community was primarily divided into two distinct segments: the "Kadapurattukars" and the "Angadikars.", indicating their dependence on activities unrelated to fishing. In earlier times, within the fishing community, the social environment was notably more challenging, particularly for individuals belonging to lower castes. This was primarily because of the nature of their occupation, which subjected them to discrimination. To navigate this discrimination, they were compelled to maintain a distinct physical and social separation from non-fishing groups, as they had endured significant bias from these communities. As a sign of respect, it was customary for them to remove their turban and tuck it under their arm. Additionally, they were obliged to offer complimentary fish to members of these other communities. It is worth mentioning that in certain localities of Kerala, the Muslim fishing community is colloquially referred to as the "Jonaka community" and the "Kadapurathukar."

The surnames of Hindu Tharavad members who converted to Islam, such as Kongante Purakkal, Karachante Purakkal, Kongante Cheriya Purakkal, Kuttusunte Purakkal, Vikramante Purakkal, and Cheeramunte Purakkal, serve as distinctive identifiers for them. In the villages of Parappanangadi, numerous families have been making efforts to transform their ancestral family names into names with Islamic associations. Additionally, the architectural resemblance between old mosques in the Alungal hamlet and Hindu temples suggests the historical presence of a Hindu community in these villages.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Sayyid abdulla shakir, *understanding socio-cultural (local) history of muslim fishing Community: a study of parappangadi village in malappuram district, kerala*, researchgate, Accessed on 08.09.2023

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331044166>

The Puslans were regarded as untouchables, leading them to maintain a considerable distance from dining alongside the Mappilas. Marriages between Puslans and other Muslims were deemed impossible. Within their community, Puslan women played dual roles as midwives and singers during weddings. Islamic practice dictates that Muslims of a town should assemble in a common mosque for Friday congregations; however, in many coastal cities such as Calicut, Ponnani, and Tellicherry, the Mappilas and Puslans not only frequented separate mosques for daily prayers but also held distinct Jumua Masjids for Friday prayers. Even within the mosques, designated seating arrangements separated members of these families, reflecting the social divide.

This separation extended to the mosque's layout, with a clear distinction between the inner portion (Akathay palli), reserved for elites and mosque committee members, and the outer portions (Purathey palli), intended for subalterns such as laborers, Ossans, Puslans, and others. Additionally, separate burial grounds were allocated to these groups, and in these towns, mosques known as "Puslan palli" persisted until the mid-20th century. This underscores the significant social divide that existed between the Mappilas and Puslans.⁵⁹

Lammersiniere also discusses about both groups, Arayar and Mukuvar, in Kerala among the lower castes and outsiders, they say that the "Arayas" were not only exclusively fishermen. Among them were cultivators and others who lived in the hills called the "Mukuvans, Because of their social position outside the caste structure, a large number of them converted to Christianity in the 17th century. — and many were converted to Islam⁶⁰

It is a well established fact that a significant number of Mukkuvans, a fisherfolk community from the Malabar region, embraced the Islamic faith. This can be attributed to the close interactions between the Arab sailors and the fishermen,

⁵⁹ P.P. Abdul Razak, *Colonialism and Community Formation in Malabar: A Study of Muslims of Malabar*, Unpublished Thesis, University of Calicut, 2007, p.11.

⁶⁰ Genevieve Lemercinier, *Religion and Ideology in Kerala*, Louvain: C.R.S.R., 1983, p.262.

who shared a common occupation and lived in close proximity to each other. It is likely that even the children born to Arab men and Mukkuva women would have adopted the surnames of their mother's family, in accordance with the matrilineal customs prevalent in Kerala. Although the conversion to Islam elevated the social status of the Mukkuva converts to that of the Mappillas, they continued to adhere to their traditional customs based on maternal lineage⁶¹.

In an academic context, when examining the fishing communities in the Malabar and Tamilnadu regions, specific historical evidence and elements come to light. By delving into their interactions with Portuguese and subsequent Dutch and British foreign relations, valuable insights can be gained through comparative analysis. A fishing caste living on the coast of Tamil Nadu the Parathavars, were hostile to the Muslims. In 1532, the Portuguese made their first voyage into Tuticorin. Therefore, the Portuguese came along with the Parathavar caste to fight against the Muslims. The paravas successfully damaged the economy and influence of the Muslims with the help of the Portuguese's military strength, mercantile endurance, and maritime competence⁶². In return, the Parathavars accepted Christianity and were later described as Roman Catholics. To avoid social insignificance and discrimination in Indian society, Paravas had to be wary of the widely held belief that low castes were converted to Christianity more frequently than upper castes. Father Michael Vaz and his assistant priests baptised Paravas. and later Large-scale conversion was later strongly consolidated by Father Francis Xavier, who came to the Tuticorin region in C.E 1542⁶³. But from this it can be understood that the Parathavas did not have a communal distinction on the basis of religion, because if that was the case, they would not have been ready to accept Christianity. The Parathavas later became sub-castes such as Paravas, Katiyars,

⁶¹ FR. J Puthenkalam, 1977, p.203, Marriage and the Family in Kerala. Internet Archive, Accessed On 15 Feb. 2023, archive.org/details/marriagefamilyin0000frjp.

⁶² Usha, G, R. Malliga, (ed.), *Role of Portuguese in the Development of Parathavar Community in Thoothukudi District*, Mirror, vol. 8, Scholars Association of Kerala, Kottayam, 2018, pp. 71-72.

⁶³ S. Bakthavalasala Bharathi, *Coromandel Fisherman An Ethnography Of Patanavar Subcaste*, Pondicherry Institute Of Linguistics And Culture, Pondicherry, 1999. P.5

Nullyars, Valayars or Kayalars and the Kayalars converted to Islam to get rid of the caste hatred between them.

In delving into the intricate tapestry of Malabar's historical dynamics, certain vivid episodes stand out, shedding light on its nuanced complexity. Among these, the narrative of an individual from Calicut, transported to Lisbon in 1513 by the Portuguese as a fifteen-year-old, is particularly illuminating. Unfortunately, the historical records remain silent about his original name, but church documents refer to him as a Chetty sent by the Zamorin, although some scholars propose a kinship with the Zamorin, while others categorize him as a 'Young Nayar.'

Upon arriving in Lisbon, he was warmly embraced into the court of King Manuel, where he underwent a transformative process involving learning the Portuguese language, baptism, and marriage. Adopting the Christian name Joao Da Cruz, he attained the status of a fidalgo, receiving knighthood in 1515 along with the insignia and privileges of the Order of Christ. Despite these honors, his return to Calicut in the same year was met with the harsh reality of ostracism as a renegade due to his conversion.

Misfortune continued to shadow Joao Da Cruz in his trading endeavors, necessitating heavy borrowing from the Portuguese Factory after the loss of his ships at sea. During his time in Chaliyam, where the Portuguese had erected a fort, it faced a siege by the Mappilas and Zamorin's forces. Escaping to Kochi, he faced further tragedy when his boat sank, resulting in the loss of his wife and children. Upon reaching Kochi, Portuguese authorities subjected him to ill-treatment and imprisonment for his debts. After his escape, he sought redress from King John III of Portugal, subsequently entering the lucrative horse trade and journeying to Kanyakumari with twelve horses.

In Kanyakumari, Joao Da Cruz played a pivotal role in mediating a conflict between the Parava fishermen and Muslim traders of the Fishery Coast, wherein the

Naik of Madura had aligned with the Muslims⁶⁴. Approximately 20,000 Paravas converted to Christianity, and their fishing rights were reinstated with Portuguese naval support. Joao Da Cruz leveraged tales of Portuguese maritime supremacy to win the Paravas, claiming victories over the Zamorin and his Mappila supporters in Calicut. His correspondences, preserved in the Goan Archives, reveal a vengeful intent against his excommunicating king and community on religious grounds.⁶⁵

Joao Da Cruz further influenced Xavier, a missionary from Goa, to lead conversion efforts among fishermen in Malabar. The Portuguese authorities justified these conversions as a means of saving the 'benighted outcastes,' spiritually through Christianity and physically by shielding them from Mappila attacks and historical neglect by Hindus. Consequently, the Jesuits lauded Joao Da Cruz as 'God's chosen instrument' during a period when other conversion efforts in Kerala had faltered.

In addition to their conversion to Christianity, the Parava community was required to make a financial contribution of 60,000 panams to the Portuguese authorities as a safeguarding measure. This financial obligation served the dual purpose of ensuring the safety of the Paravas and incentivizing further conversions. Subsequently, Miguel Vaz, accompanied by four priests, embarked on a journey to the Parava community, where approximately 20,000 individuals underwent the process of baptism⁶⁶. In a relatively short span of time, the Parava population swelled to encompass a total of 80,000 individuals, including men, women, and children, who settled along the Coromandel coastlines. The Portuguese naval forces assumed the responsibility of providing security for the Parava community, thereby enabling them to engage in their trade activities without fear of disruption.

The arrival of the Portuguese had a significant impact on the Parava community, particularly on the Parava. The Portuguese actions disrupted the power

⁶⁴ Sanjay. Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700: A Political and Economic History*. United Kingdom, Wiley, 2012. p.277.

⁶⁵ M.G.S Narayanan, *Calicut the City of Truth Revisited*, Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhikode, 2006, pp.183-85.

⁶⁶ Selva J. Raj, *Vernacular Catholicism, Vernacular Saints: Selva J. Raj on "Being Catholic the Tamil Way"*. United States, State University of New York Press, 2017, p.p.18-19.

structure within the community and weakened the commercial influence of the local Muslims. This unintentionally strengthened certain factions within the Parava caste, specifically those involved in the Pearl and Chunk fisheries and the mercantile activities of the boat. As a result, a more powerful and hierarchical leadership emerged within the caste, facilitating the consolidation of the community and creating a distinct subgroup. This subgroup had a vested interest in preserving their caste identity and fostering solidarity, as it aligned with their economic and power interests. Exploiting their advantageous position in regional trade, the Paravas distanced themselves from the Hindu Paravas and engaged in fierce competition with the Muslims. This expansion continued throughout the seventeenth century, as they expanded their trade beyond coastal areas and became prominent cloth merchants.

In Kayalpatnam their conversion and incorporation into Islam under the name of Kayalar⁶⁷ Using indigenous fishing skills and superior Arab navigational skills made them gradually emerged as the dominant seafaring people in the region. But the coastal people of Malabar, due to their coexistence with the Arabs, could not adequately bring Arab culture and their maritime skills to them, as well as Muslim religion did not try to give political protection to the converted Puzlan sect or to keep them as a separate sect, therefore today it is difficult to identify this sect separately in the society so the converted Puslan (New Islam) could not become a dominant community within the Islam.

When assessing this type of cultural integration, the Muslim and Hindu life of Lakshadweep coastal people, most of the mosques in the Lakshadweep islands are designed in a style that is characteristic of Hindu architecture. Additionally, the presence of ponds and tanks near these mosques is reminiscent of those found near Hindu temples in Kerala. For instance, there is a pipal tree, which is considered sacred by Hindus, located near the center of Amini Island. There were also traditional folksongs that praised Lord Rama and featured elements of naga (snake)

⁶⁷ Abida Samiuddin, and R. Khanam (ed.,) Global Encyclopaedic Ethnography of Indian Muslim, Volume 2, Global Vision Publishing House, new delhi,2008, pp.389-90.

worship. However, these songs have been supplanted by "Mappila Pattu," which are Muslim folk-songs, particularly following the Islamization of the islands⁶⁸.

When assessing proselytizing conversions. before the arrival of the Portuguese in Kerala, the Syrian Christians, who belonged to a high caste, did not consider the caste system to be problematic. They owned slaves, followed the caste practices and had little interest in converting others. However, the arrival of European missionaries who sought to convert people to Christianity changed the situation significantly. The Syrian Christians refused to admit the new converts from lower castes, such as the Pulayas and Mukkuvas, into their churches and forced them to sit near the entrance. The Portuguese had to build separate churches for the lower castes in Tamil Nadu, as the higher-caste Mukkuvars refused to allow them into their churches. Over time, the Portuguese, who ate beef and drank liquor and associated with the untouchables, were given a caste status called Parangis, and their low-caste converts were referred to as Kulam pukkus, meaning those who had entered a new caste - the caste of the Parangis. The Christian religion was known as Parangi Margam, or the religion of the Parangis. As a new sect and a new (untouchable) caste, the Christians and their converts, particularly in interior Tamil Nadu, were denied many privileges⁶⁹. In Kerala, another manifestation of this phenomenon can be observed among the Latins and Dalit Christians.

In Kerala Hindu solidarity Movement emerged for two primary reasons: the massive increase in non-Hindu population brought on by low caste Hindus converting to Islam and Christianity, and the rising enmity and fear among the *savarnas* over the material wealth of Christians. While the backward populations of Travancore chose Christianity as their religion of conversion, in Malabar they chose Islam. In 1871, there were 5.9% of Muslims in the Madras Presidency, but 25.7% of Muslims lived in the Malabar area. Similarly, in Travancore, Christians rose considerably to 25% of the population in 1875, and 31% of the population in 1931.

⁶⁸ Makhan Jha, *The Muslim tribes of Lakshadweep Islands: an anthropological appraisal of island ecology and cultural perceptions*, M.D. Publications, New Delhi, p.30.

⁶⁹ M.N Sreenivas, *Caste its twentieth century avatar*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1996, p.282.

Corresponding to this, where there were roughly 25% of Christians in 1875, they increased to 31% in 1931. Between 1875 and 1831, the proportion of Pulayas in Travancore decreased from 8.18 to 4.07 percent⁷⁰.

When describing about the history of the Mappila of Kannur coastal area, due to the blow of Chaturvarnyam, the poor people who were reduced to the bottom of the society, especially the Thiyars and Mukkuvas embraced Islam in the hope that they can live as human beings without caste discrimination. In the 12th century, there was a social transformation in the cities of Kolathunadu such as Maadai (Pazhayangadi), Valapatnam and Dharma Pattanam.

Srikanthpuram and Irkur grew as inland trade centers. Arab traders married Malayali women and a new generation of Mappilas grew up who adopted trade as their main means of livelihood. By the twelfth century, the Mappilas of these coastal cities followed a new order called Marumakkathayam adopted by Kolathunad. Ship owners trading with Ormos, Aden, Ceylon and Cambay grew up from the Mappilas of Malabar. Especially in the city of Kannur, when such wealth was acquired, political power was naturally acquired by them, In Pudhupattanam gives status to the Marakkar section by calling it Kunjali in the trade agreement. Calling the name "Manapuram Arayan" and 'Madathu Keerayan' and conferring the rank of Araya Sthana indicates the social status of the Arayans.

The Mappilas, who were the majority in south Malabar, were also antagonistic towards colonisation. The assumption that they isolated themselves from colonial culture is untrue. In the coastal regions, they were able to maintain close ties with the British. In North Malabar, it was very typical. The coastal region of South Malabar provided In the early decades of the 20th century, a Mappila community with a sense of identity emerged in Malabar. This was due to and non-discriminatory practices of the colonial government, improved means of communication such as printing technology, colonial education, the Islamic reform movement, increased tension between Hindus and Muslims in the post-rebellion phase, and the nationalist movement. The collective action required by the changes

⁷⁰ Cherian, *Op. cit.*, p.482.

kept the Mappilas under a single ideology. Therefore, the changing colonial context must serve as the primary context in any study of the discourse of Mappila identity in Malabar and which paved the Great opportunities for the Mappilas to come into contact with modern practises.

But Mappila, who lived in the coastal region, did not regard the English language very well, which practically kept the colonial space out of their lives. It is demonstrated that the Mappilas of South Malabar bore the brunt of colonial interference in land revenue administration.

Poverty and disempowerment are perhaps the root causes of Mapila's rejection of colonial spheres of culture. At the same time, those who had material wealth and were in constant contact with the British had no difficulty getting modern education and British jobs. The Mappila conscience of nineteenth-century South Malabar given little room to the pre-British anti-European struggle. Apart from some battles fought in their own territory, like "Malappurampada,"⁷¹

They also celebrated many battles fought by the Prophet and his followers in Arabia. Anti-colonialism was inculcated in the minds of the Mappilas of the hinterland of South Malabar through recitals such as Badarpat, Uhudpat, and Malappuram Patapat, which depict the cultural background of the anti-colonial struggles of the Mappilas of South Malabar. This does not mean that the South Malabar region was free from colonial influence. Even in South Malabar, we see pockets of colonial influences. However, acceptance of colonial modernity was an unusual trait among the Mappilas in general⁷²

Mythology

Mukkuvar's songs, rituals and arts are also related. Myth refers to supernatural or divine arts. There are myths about the birth of the universe, the birth

⁷¹ Muhammedali T.N, Research Gate, January 2017, Colonial Knowledge and Formations of National Self: Readings from Nineteenth Century Malabar, p.13, Accessed on august 15th 2022 www.researchgate.net/publication/320410625.,

⁷² Muhammedali T, and P.B. Saleem(ed.), "*Arabi Malayala Rachanakal*" in Malabar Paithrikavum Pratapavum(mal), Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhikode, 2011, p, p 473-480

of man, the landscape, nature, and deity. Mythology is also intertwined with social life.

There are many legends in the various centers of Mukuvar. In addition to the songs used in rituals and festivals, myths are also found in the oral traditions of the people of each land. as in most peoples, the songs of the Mukkuvars are full of '*veeropadana* (heroic verses) which are part of the myths. Goddess's triumphal journey in the lake, supernatural and divine relationship, combined with human story and deva story.

Folk Islam in Malabar

The Muslims of Malabar are believed to have originated from two groups: Arab traders who arrived in the region, and Hindus who converted to Islam. Historical sources show that Muslims were present in coastal towns from the 9th to the 16th centuries AD. Islam is thought to have reached Malabar in the 7th century AD.

Over time, the Mappila people, who were originally concentrated in coastal areas, began to move to rural areas. The Mappila people of the hinterland were engaged in tenant farming, small trade, and landless agriculture. In contrast, the coastal Mappila were more involved in trade.

The Mappila population grew significantly from 1.7 million in 1807 to 10 million in 1921. A unique feature of this population is that 60% of them live in the three southern Malabar taluks of Ernad, Valluvanad, and Ponnani.

In the 19th century, Veliyamkodu Umar Kazi, a prominent reformer and traditional intellectual in Malabar, criticized the elitism of elite Mappilas who claimed to be of noble lineage. He questioned their origins, suggesting that many of them were converts from various Hindu castes of Kerala, including Thiyyas, Nairs, Mannans, Panars, Nayadis, Parayars, Asari, Musari, Koyappans, and Chettiars.

In the poem depicted about converts:

*“Aya faqiran Binnasabi
Kaifata faquru
Wa Asluku-min qablu
Thiyyan wa Nayaru
Wa Asari Musari
Wa Mannanu Pananu
Wa Koyappanu Chettiaru
Wa Nayadi Parayaru”*⁷³

This poem sheds light on the fact that a significant portion of Mappilas were indeed converts from different Hindu castes in Kerala. The population size and distribution of Mappilas by the end of the 18th century indicate that the process of conversion to Islam had been ongoing for centuries in Kerala.

Even in the 19th and 20th centuries, conversion to Islam continued, although the exact rate of conversion is uncertain. The annual reports of Mounathul Islam Sangam, Ponnani, confirm that voluntary conversions were still taking place until the mid-20th century

Tomb worship was an important part of the folk Islam practiced by the Mappila Muslims. Although contradictory to Islamic principles, shrines containing the tombs of saints became an integral part of their religious life. The Mappilas sought blessings and intercession from various holy men known as awliya. Although Islam is a monotheistic religion, Mappila religious practices exhibited traces of primitive animism and ancestor worship. Famous thangals in places like Mamburum were so revered that their tombs were transformed into holy shrines and famous places of pilgrimage (ziyarat).

⁷³ P.P. Abdul Razak, *"From Communitas to The Structure of Islam: The Mappilas of Malabar,"* Proceedings of the Indian History Congress 68, 2007, p. 897, accessed on 6 August 2023], URL: [<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44147898>].

It was widely believed that prayers offered through the intercession of a wali (saint) were more acceptable to Allah than direct prayers. Awliyas were gifted with supernatural powers capable of averting dangers, curing diseases, and protecting against epidemics like cholera. Songs composed in their honour were sung during times of crisis. It was customary to look for their names in times of difficulty and take *nercha* to achieve life's goals. Fishermen used to perform grave worship to ensure a good supply of fish from the sea, for which some brought priests from the island themselves. Interestingly, people used mud and stones from the holy tombs of saints for medicinal purposes to treat illnesses like stomach ache and Diarrhea

Martyrs who sacrificed their lives for Islam are also remembered in this way. The graves of many martyrs who lost their lives in the 19th century Mappila riots are respected as places of special significance. Practicing a way of life rooted in religious faith, the coastal people show enthusiasm towards such customs and beliefs.

The tomb of Hydros Kutti muppan, known as Manatala Shahid, who is believed to have been Tipu's lieutenant, is also venerated, and every year Chavkadu celebrates a *nercha* at his tomb. He was the patron saint invoked by fishermen of all communities, Hindus and Muslims." A replica of the jarat (tomb) is carried in procession through the streets during the *nercha*. Similarly, the Badagara fishing community used to seek Cheru Siti Thangal Jaram's blessings for profitable fishing. These individuals include Kasart Aulia (Ponnani), Munambath Bivi (Ponnani), Papamkoya Thangal (Kasarkot), Tanupetumma (Kannur),⁷⁴ etc.

Witchcraft and Evil Eye

The influence of Hinduism is evident in the various superstitions and practices related to witchcraft, exorcism, and dark arts among the Muslims of Malabar, known as Mappilas. Despite the Quran's condemnation of witchcraft, Mappilas held superstitious beliefs, and witchcraft was not unheard of. The Musaliyars, spiritual leaders, selected forty verses from the Quran, transcribing

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

them in ink or ash to cure illnesses. Administering this mixture with water for consumption became a popular method for treating diseases in the Mappila community.

Interestingly, the Mappila Jinn and Shaitan, supernatural beings, assimilated aspects of Hindu demons and gained prominence similarly. During the 1921 riots, a widespread belief in Malabar was that the Ellassu, a protective charm given by religious figures like Konnar Tangal and Chembrassery Tangal, could shield individuals from bullets.

Additional practices involving witchcraft among Mappilas included Homa, an exorcism ritual for the terminally ill, kuppi thookal, the suspension of bottles with Quranic inscriptions from ceilings, and the burial of inscribed copper plates within or outside homes. These practices were indicative of the influence of superstition within the community.

Mappilas in Malabar were associated with various malevolent spirits such as 'Chathan', 'Kutthichatan', and 'Gulikan', which were akin to similar entities in neighboring religious groups. There was also a Muslim variant referred to by various names like Chekuttippappa or Kanjirakkudam. These spirits were believed to inhabit specific rooms in Muslim households, each with separate areas designated for them. Another such spirit, Kunhirayanpapa, had its roots in tribal beliefs and was adapted into the Muslim context when the local population embraced Islam.⁷⁵

The lack of fish in the sea and the resulting starvation are attributed to the malevolent influence of the evil eye. To counter this, the Mukuvar community performs a special Mantra to eliminate its effects. The Malaya community or other knowledgeable magicians, who have an understanding of karma, are called upon to assist in this ritual. Each participating fisherman contributes a coconut to the ceremony. According to the traditional belief, when a fisherman strikes a mantra-infused coconut on the boat and begins their work, they will be protected from

⁷⁵ Interview with Aboobaker, fishermen, Thanur, Kerala On 12th August 2023.

dangers at sea and free from hunger. Some individuals also wear a magic thread around their waist while working.

Rituals Among the Mappiḷā Fisherfolk

The intricate tapestry of rituals practiced by the Mappiḷā fisherfolk can be categorized into eight primary types:

1. **Maulud:** This involves the recitation of the birth, life history, sayings, and achievements of Prophet Muhammed, as well as his predecessors and descendants.
2. **Pattu:** This ritual encompasses the recitation of songs in Arabic-Malayalam that extol the Prophet, his forefathers, and his disciples.
3. **Khattam Otikkal:** Here, the entire Holy Quran is read in praise of the Prophet, his children, grandchildren, predecessors, descendants, or Muslim saints.
4. **Baith:** This ritual involves singing an elegy in Arabic in honor of certain grandsons of the Prophet and his contemporaries.
5. **Rattib:** Special observances dedicated to honouring Shaik Refai and Shaik Mohiuddin, both grandsons of the Prophet⁷⁶.
6. **Muslim Ceremonial Calendar Rituals:** This includes the observance of rituals related to events on the Muslim ceremonial calendar, such as the birth of the Prophet, the conclusion of the Fast, and the day of Sacrifice, among others.
7. **Intermittent Rituals:** These rituals occur at irregular intervals, such as daily, weekly, monthly, or annually, and are influenced by various factors like exceptional catches, illnesses, ownership changes of fishing units, and more.

⁷⁶ Husain Raṅṅattani, Mappila Muslims: A Study on Society and Anti Colonial Struggles. India, Other Books, 2007.p.144

8. **Life Cycle Ceremonies:** Lastly, these rituals are connected with the various stages of life, including birth, circumcision, marriage, and death.

During the month of Muharam, the Mappila fishermen engage in ancestral worship, known as "Andu-kotukkal." They prepare the types of fish that their departed ancestors favoured and offer them as a symbolic gesture of respect. When asked if these offerings are made with the belief that the ancestors consume them, explained, "Since the fish is prepared in their honour, it is believed that they partake in the ceremony." Additionally, during this period, the Sura Yasin is recited as a tribute to the departed ancestors. Invocations, including the dikkar (confession of faith) "La Ilaha Illallah Muhammed - ar Rusulullah" (There is no deity other than God. Muhammed is his messenger), are recited day and night for the first ten days of Muharam to honor Hussain and other departed ancestors.

Moulud Rituals Among the Mappila Fisherfolk

Moulud, a central and widely practiced ritual among the Mappila fisherfolk, originally centered around celebrating the Prophet's birthday⁷⁷. It involved the recitation of his life history, supernatural attributes, and teachings from an Arabic treatise. However, the term Moulud has evolved among the Mappila fisherfolk to encompass not only the Prophet's birthday but also the recitation of the biographies of his predecessors, descendants, and other revered saints⁷⁸. Therefore, Moulud has become a prevalent religious practice among the Mappila fisherfolk, focusing on the births and life histories of the Prophet, his predecessors, descendants, and other venerated figures.

After the ceremony, a feast is hosted, inviting friends, relatives, and other guests. It's worth noting that Maulud can be performed either three or forty days after someone's death

⁷⁷ Sarat Chandra Roy (ed.), *Man in India*, A.K. Bose, 1983, pp.268-71.

⁷⁸ K. Umar Maulavi, *Ormakalude Theerath (Mal.)* Dawa books, Kochi 2014, p.30-33.

These Moulud rituals can be categorized into five main types:

1. **Moulud for prosperity:** Associated with fishing technology, including the creation and launch of new nets and boats.
2. **Religious Moulud:** Connected to significant religious events such as the birth of the Prophet and the end of the Fast.
3. **Social Integration Moulud (Naṭṭu Maulud):** Aimed at fostering social cohesion within the village and propitiating the village spirits.
4. **Descendants Moulud:** Devoted exclusively to the direct descendants of the Prophet.
5. **Predecessors Moulud:** Focused on the ancestors and predecessors of the Prophet.

The Moulud performed solely in honor of the Prophet, except on one occasion, is referred to as "Mongoose Maulud" or the "big Moulud." "Rub-ul-awal Maulud" designates the Moulud exclusively for the Prophet's birthday⁷⁹. Typically, Mappila fishermen celebrate Mongoose Maulud on Thursday or Sunday nights in their homes, particularly when launching a new net or boat. This ritual serves various purposes, including seeking bountiful catches, safeguarding fishing equipment and crew, healing illnesses, warding off malevolent spirits, securing the release of family members from confinement, and ensuring fertility. It also acts as insurance against the unpredictability and hazards of the sea.

The structure of Moulud sessions typically involves gatherings at fishermen's residences on Thursday evenings after sunset and evening prayers. For rituals linked to fishing activities, like launching new boats and nets or life events such as naming ceremonies, haircuts, and circumcisions, specialists are consulted to determine the most auspicious time and day. In these cases, the main living room of the fishermen's homes serves as the venue for the Moulud. Besides close relatives, neighboring Muslims often participate in these rituals.

⁷⁹ N.P. Muhammad, *Ennappadam (Mal.)* novel, Navadhara, 1980, pp.182-83.

The Rituals of Paṭṭu and *Khattam Othikkal* in Reverence to the Prophet

Within the customs of the Mappila fishermen, Paṭṭu and Khattam Ōtikkal hold significant roles. The term "khatam othikkal" refers to reciting the complete Qur'an, being observed on numerous occasions to honor the Prophet. These rituals serve a diverse range of purposes, including seeking abundant catches, addressing illnesses believed to be the result of sorcery or malevolent spirits, and celebrating milestones such as acquiring ownership of fishing units. Additionally, the community conducts Paṭṭu and Khattam Ōtikkal to commemorate the Prophet's ascension, which tradition holds occurred on the 27th day of the lunar month of Radjeeb. It was during this momentous event that the first collection of Quranic verses and commandments pertaining to Salat (prayer) and fasting were bestowed.

Paṭṭu and Khattam Othikkal involve the recitation of the entire Holy Quran by one or more Maulavis (Muslim scholars) in honor of various revered figures, including the Prophet, Mohiuddin Shaik, Rafai Shaik, Sahul Hameed, Khawaja Moinuddin Chist, and Fatima the daughter of prophet muhammed

For the execution of these rituals, two Maulavis, esteemed scholars in the Islamic tradition, are enlisted to recite the Paṭṭu. The recitation of the complete Quran typically takes the Maulavis a span of two to four days. The associated rites linked with Khattam Ōtikkal for other revered figures share a fundamental resemblance in structure and execution.

Paṭṭu ritual is not commonly dedicated to Iyyas Nabi, the guardian of the sea. Nevertheless, the Khattam Ōthikkal ceremony, in his honor, is meticulously observed by every Mappila family during the month of July, a period when fishing activities are temporarily halted. Conducting this ceremony necessitates the participation of a minimum of ten Maulavis. Commencing on the first Thursday night of July and concluding on the last Thursday night of the same month, the ceremony begins with the recitation of Fateha and the Suras of iklas before the Quran is read

Mongoos Maulud

The Mongoos Maulud is performed by Mappila fishermen in honor of the Prophet, signifying the launch of new nets and boats or to invoke a productive fishing season. The launch of a new net (Valananakkal) occurs on either a Friday afternoon or a Sunday evening. The night preceding the launch is dedicated to the Mongoos Maulud⁸⁰. This ritual exclusively propitiates the Prophet and consists of the same recitations as described earlier. The Mappila fishermen firmly believe that failure to perform the Mongoos Maulud, especially before launching new nets and boats, may result in their equipment sinking in the sea, leaving them vulnerable to the sea's turbulence. Performing the Mongoos Maulud is considered insurance against uncertainties and anxieties.

In addition to the Mongoos Maulud before launching new nets and boats, Mappila fisherfolk observe various other ceremonies in connection with boat construction. When a boat's construction is completed, Mappila fishermen conduct a "kuṭṭipuja," a ceremony performed by carpenters to mark the completion of a boat or house.

Numerous Mouluds are practiced by the Mappila fishermen, with a consistent overall pattern but variations tailored to specific circumstances.

BLACK MAGIC

Mappila fishermen hold a belief that neglecting to make votive offerings to the spirits and demons associated with their families may lead to their displeasure, resulting in illnesses among the family members. In times of illness or when influenced by malevolent forces, individuals often seek the guidance of astrologers and the aforementioned practitioners of sorcery for diagnosis and healing. These magicians frequently craft a thin copper plate or a sheet of silver, upon which they inscribe a chakra, a mystical symbol, while reciting mantras or verses from the

⁸⁰ Interview with Beerankoya, Sadr Muallim, Nalikudi Parambu Jumah Masjid On 16th December 2023.

Qur'an⁸¹. This consecrated object is then rolled, sealed, and attached to a string, which is placed around the patient's neck. Mappila fishermen who wear these protective charms do so with the hope of alleviating their ailments and dispelling the malevolent influence of spirits.

There exist two distinct categories of individuals who specialize in curing ailments believed to be caused by spirits: Murtiseva, who are bound by tradition to interact with malevolent spirits, and Jinn Hadarat, individuals with expertise in Islamic spirit-related practices. Murtisevas are often sought not only to heal illnesses but also, regrettably, to inflict harm through malevolent spells and witchcraft. Conversely, Jinn Hadarats are typically invoked to dispel ghosts and malevolent spirits. The power of Murtisevas is deeply rooted in knowledge and heritage, whereas Jinn Hadaraths derive their abilities from their connection with these spirits. Certain families have maintained associations with malevolent spirits, jinn, and asuras for generations. It is the sorcerers from these families who invoke these spirits. For example, Cheruma Shankar is renowned for his command over a kuttichattan, a type of poltergeist. While most seva practitioners are Hindu men, Jinn Hadaraths are almost exclusively Thangals, with very few being Muslim women.

Customs and beliefs among Mapila fishermen are a complex mix of tradition, religion and practicality. While they provide insights into the community's unique way of life, they reveal authenticity, superstition, gender roles, and the need to adapt to changing circumstances. It highlights the importance of balancing tradition with rationality and inclusion within the community's cultural practices. The belief in witchcraft and superstitions is also prevalent among both Muslims and Hindus⁸².

Customs and beliefs among Mapila fishermen are a complex mix of tradition, religion and practicality. While they provide insights into the community's

⁸¹ P. R. G Mathur, *The Mappila Fisherfolk of Kerala: A Study in Inter-relationship Between Habitat, Technology, Economy, Society, and Culture*, Kerala Historical Society, 1977, p.p. 318-19.

⁸² A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala District Gazetteers: Kozhikode*, Kerala Gazetteers, Trivandrum 1967, p.202.

unique way of life, they reveal authenticity, superstition, gender roles, and the need to adapt to changing circumstances. It highlights the importance of balancing tradition with rationality and inclusion within the community's cultural practices. Rich tapestry of rituals and magico-religious practices deeply woven into this community's culture. What's intriguing is that, despite their Islamic faith, the Mappila fishermen have retained many cultural and religious elements from their pre-Islamic past, stemming from the traditions of the converted Hindu Mukkuvar community. Surprisingly, they still carry their ancestral Mukuva clan names even after embracing Islam.

The exploration extends to the intricate magical procedures practiced by Muslims for healing and ensuring abundant catches. It's worth noting that they sometimes invite Hindu magicians to perform these rituals within their community. This highlights their strong belief in non-Qur'anic spirits, which is rooted in the traditions of the local Hindu fishermen.

Moreover, certain traditional beliefs around deities such as Bhagavathy, Ganapati, and Gulika remain significant in their faith. The belief in spirits of the departed also plays a vital role in their spiritual worldview. What's particularly fascinating is the development of elaborate rituals and superstitions aimed at mitigating the inherent uncertainties of their fishing profession.

Islam has merged with this primitive culture rather than replacing it. Mappilas have integrated the beliefs and practices of Hindus with the Islamic tradition, resulting in a syncretic local tradition aligned with the universalism of Islam.

It is important to be aware of the diverse cultural influences on Mappila rituals, and it is not possible to reduce the non-Islamic elements in to purely Hinduism because we have a legacy of Jain -Buddhist culture and pre-Dravidian tribalism which reflecting its diverse historical influences.

In a broader context, Durkheim's perspective on religion as a social fact comes to mind. He introduced the concept of the sacred-profane polarity to explain

religious phenomena. He categorized religious phenomena into beliefs and rites, where beliefs represent sacred things' representations, while rites dictate conduct in the presence of sacred objects. Durkheim defined religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices related to sacred things, creating a moral community called a Church for its adherents.

Later scholars expanded on Durkheim's definition, considering rituals, beliefs, and organization as the three components constituting religion during institutionalization. Rituals encompass patterns of worship and cultic practices, expressing inner feelings and attitudes towards the sacred. Beliefs involve intellectual articulations of faith, leading to creeds and theology. Lastly, organization refers to the forms of association centered around these beliefs, seen in institutions like the Christian Church and Buddhist Sangha⁸³.

Colloquialism and Nomenclature

Language is the main factor that led to the cultural supremacy of man in living societies. Language is the main tool to communicate human ideas, opinions and feelings. It can be said that language is a very important factor in social life.

Different groups of people use different methods of communication. Differences in caste, religion, class, and regional differences of speakers will also cause variation in colloquial language. Dialects are also formed depending on the profession. There will be give and take in language through mutual contacts between communities. Even among different clans belonging to the same community, there are differences in pronunciation. Such differences can also be seen in the spoken language of men and women.

Since ancient times, the majority of communities have held the belief that they are members of a particular tribe. Those beliefs were transmitted orally in the past. Rituals are also involved in the establishment of clan family ties.

⁸³ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, The Free Press, New York, 1965, p.62.

Different groups of people adopted various strategies for acquiring tribal names. There are societies that have made use of plant names, animal organ names, metal names, place names, names of special traits, and names of everyday objects as clan names. The fishing community of Mukaya in North Kerala uses a number of common names that can be considered place names.

The majority of names in the major cities of Mukkuvar, like Dharmatham and Palissery in Kannur District, can be seen to be derived from ancestor names. These house names can also be found in the Talai, Azhikode, Tayyil, and Kottikulam regions.

Name of Houses	Name
Neeli veetil	Neeli
Chiran veetil	Cheeran
Kottupurayil	Kottu
Karimbalantavide	Karimbalan
Shankaran makate veed	Shankaran
Poomi tharavad	Poomi
Chozhi veetil	Chozhi
Chindan veetil	Chindan
Thammakarante avide	Thammakkaran
Vayarante avide	Vayaran

House names that denote direction include "Teke veed," "Vadakke veed," "house," "padinjare veed," "Thazhe veed," "Thazhe purail," "Mele veed," and "Tekothu Taravad."⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Padmanabhan K, *Uttharakeralathile Mukkuvarude Jeevithavum Samskaravum* (Mal), Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Calicut, 2000, p.374

When determining household names, topography can be seen. The presence of nearby trees, ponds, and rivers also has an impact on the names of houses. household names based on topography include vayalil, Purail, Alinkil, Chullil, Chullipuram, Aaviyil, Aavikal, Punchavi, Chirammal, Tottiyil Purayil, etc.

The name comes from Thaikadappuram's extinct "Kattampalli" profession. This is the term used to describe a later-generation individual who is adept at catching fish wherever they may be found in the sea. "Panimakakale tharavad" is the name of the barbers' ancestral home in Kottikulam. Mukkuvars have another tradition whereby those who immigrated from any region were given family names connected to that land.

Name of houses	Place of migration
Ezharakkarantavide	Ezharakkadappuram
Darrrmadakkaran	Darrrmadam
Mayyayikkarantavide	Mayyayi

Different cultures named people using various techniques. The ancient nomenclature was influenced by social conventions, traditional beliefs, and other factors. The majority of the prehistoric societies practiced passing down the names of grandparents and grandfathers to succeeding generations. Traditionally, a girl would be named after her grandmother and a boy after his grandfather. The nomenclature is determined by the names of the deities, their bodily types, and physical traits like colour and look. Changes in lifestyle.

Traditional culture has changed significantly during the past few decades in the majority of civilizations. It is evident in every aspect of life and society. In the beginning, people would locate homes based on the availability of food. Early migrations were constrained by the resources that nature provided. Later, this technique was modified. Along with social and lifestyle changes, folk culture also

evolves. The traditional way of life is being replaced by elements including consumer culture, globalisation, and industrialization. People who are viewed as inferior have a propensity to emulate traditions and ideas and a desire to assimilate.

So the fisherfolk communities in Kerala, exemplify a nuanced interplay between tradition and modernity. Despite the introduction of modern elements, these communities have adeptly preserved their cultural heritage and rituals, demonstrating the coexistence of tradition and modernity. This harmonious integration is not a result of the complete abandonment of traditional practices, but rather a process of adaptation and modification to align with the changing social and economic landscape.

In this context, the preservation of traditional practices within fisherfolk communities underscores the resilience of cultural identity. Even as new technologies have been embraced to enhance fishing activities, the communities have managed to retain their ancestral rituals and beliefs. This preservation serves as a testament to the intricate balance between honouring the past and embracing the future.

The success of this coexistence lies in the mutual respect and understanding between tradition and modernity. By recognizing the inherent value in both sets of beliefs and practices, these communities have found a way to integrate the old and the new. Open dialogue and collaboration have played pivotal roles, allowing for the organic fusion of tradition and modernity without compromising the essence of their cultural heritage.

Fisherfolk communities in Kerala serves as a valuable example of how societies can navigate the complexities of cultural preservation and progress. It emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and appreciating diverse perspectives, ultimately paving the way for a harmonious coexistence between tradition and modernity.

CHAPTER 3

THE STRUGGLES AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE FISHERMEN: NAVIGATING COLONIAL DYNAMICS AND SEEKING EMPOWERMENT

This chapter explores the multifaceted nature of the colonial Indian economy, focusing on the fishing communities. Social structures, economic activities, and cultural norms intertwined within these communities, create a rich tapestry. Caste distinctions, labor relations, and gender roles all played significant roles in shaping the socioeconomic fabric. The enduring influence of caste hierarchies is central to this examination. Caste not only dictated social interactions but also determined economic opportunities within these fishing communities.

Furthermore, a comparative perspective on the fishing industries of colonial India and Great Britain reveals disparities in development and institutional frameworks. Great Britain possessed a well-developed, private enterprise-driven fishing industry, while colonial India relied on rudimentary practices and government initiatives for growth¹.

The economic landscape of colonial India's fishing communities was shaped by a complex interplay of caste, gender, and institutional factors. These factors influenced both the opportunities and challenges faced by this vital sector of the colonial economy.

The persistence of caste differentiations within the Mukuvar community has led to their refraining from employing labour from the Pulaya section, thereby it played a role in exacerbating the economic backwardness experienced by the Mukuva. In stark contrast, Muslim fishermen actively enlisted Pulayas as hired labour, facilitating occupational expansion and economic progress within the

¹ B.R.Tomlinson, *The Economy of Modern India, 1860-1970*, United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p.30

Muslim fishing community. As a consequence, prosperous Muslim fishermen became capable of being providing financial assistance to the Mukuva.

Unlike Hindu fishermen, Muslims did not encounter any caste-related impediments in economic activities, as the economic sphere lacked a caste system. As documented in the Madras Bulletin by B. Govindan, Director of Fisheries, the impoverished living conditions of the Mukuva caste can be attributed to the hindrance imposed by the caste system on the economic sector.²

Upon closer examination, it becomes evident that interest in the fishing industry extended beyond the fishing community. Various castes, including Kongini Brahmins and Chettiars, demonstrated a keen interest in generating income from the fishing industry. Despite not directly engaging in fishing, these castes sought different means to benefit economically. Money was lent to fishermen under the condition of selling the entire fish haul at a rate determined by the lender³. This exploitative practice by moneylenders, capitalizing on the poverty of fishermen, acted as a hindrance to the growth of the fishing sector among the economically disadvantaged.

A noteworthy aspect is the significant involvement of women in the fishing communities. Women played a crucial role by venturing into inland areas to sell fish where demand was high, providing essential financial support to their families. While this self-sufficiency is evident among the Mukua and Mogaya castes, the participation of women in the Muslim fishing community was less pronounced. Nonetheless, this underscores the economic self-sufficiency of women within the broader fishing community.

The Director, F. A. Nicholson contrasted the situation of Great Britain, where Fishery Departments were chiefly statistical and regulative. In Western countries, the fishing industry was well-developed, and those directly involved had a deep understanding of their business. This led to a more straightforward process of

² V. Govindan, Madras *Fisheries Bureau. Bulletin No. 9*, Government Press. 1916, p.10

³ David West Rudner, *Caste and Capitalism in Colonial India: The Nattukottai Chettiars*, University of California Press, 1995, p.56

gathering statistics, as the industry was organized, boats were large, and the collection was primarily for public purposes rather than fiscal reasons.

In contrast, the fishing industry in British India, particularly in the Madras Presidency, was described as primitive, undeveloped, bound by custom and ignorance, and lacking initiative in modern methods. The government officers, rather than those in the industry, had the knowledge and initiative to lead and develop the fishing sector.

The Precarious Catch: Processing, Markets, and the Enduring Quest for Equity in Malabar Fisheries

Kerala's maritime heritage stretches back millennia, with fishing forming the cornerstone of its coastal communities. From the early past century onwards, a unique tapestry of techniques and traditions blossomed, meticulously adapted to the diverse marine environment. This intricate knowledge, passed down through generations, stands as a testament to the deep-seated connection between these communities and their source of livelihood. However, understanding the enduring legacy of Malabar fishermen necessitates a multifaceted exploration that delves beyond romanticized notions and critically examines the complexities underpinning their social, economic, and ecological realities.

The fishing economy revolves around three distinct stages: harvesting, processing, and marketing. Harvesting, the most labour-intensive stage unfolds within a complex social framework shaped by ownership structures and labour relations⁴. Two primary models dominate traditional fisheries: individual and collective ownership.

Individual ownership primarily involves small, artisanal crafts like canoes and rudimentary tools like the 'kattamaram'. Southern Kerala witnesses diverse bait-and-line and netting methods, while the north sees single-hulled canoes, often

⁴ Venkatesh Salagrama, *Trends in Poverty and Livelihoods in Coastal Fishing Communities of Orissa State*, Italy, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2006, p.25

family-owned. Here, a unique sharing system prevails, distinct from wage-based structures. Each participant, regardless of their number, receives a fair share, with the owner typically receiving an additional portion. Hired labour, if any, shares the remaining catch equally.⁵

Collective ownership, prevalent in central Kerala, involves larger vessels manned by crews. Participation involves varying contributions towards equipment, with shares reflecting individual investments. Interestingly, membership extends beyond immediate family, fostering a collaborative spirit. Laborers are often hired through contractual arrangements, receiving fixed wages and advances during off-seasons. Profits are distributed amongst members after deducting operational costs, food expenses, and contributions to religious and charitable causes.

However, a closer look reveals complexities within this seemingly harmonious system. Firstly, a significant portion of fishing households lack their own equipment, resorting to wage labour. Secondly, unlike land ownership, the sea itself remains unclaimed, raising questions of resource access and management. Finally, the increasing adoption of outboard engines signifies a gradual shift towards mechanisation, its implications demanding careful consideration for sustainability.

Recognizing these nuances was crucial to appreciating the remarkable resilience and resourcefulness of Kerala's Malabar fishermen. Their intimate understanding of the marine environment, coupled with their unique social and economic structures, had ensured the survival of this age-old practice for generations. However, moving forward necessitates acknowledging the challenges they face. Climate change, resource depletion, and competition from commercial fishing all threaten their traditional way of life⁶. Additionally, ensuring equitable distribution of benefits within the fishing communities remains a critical concern.

Therefore, safeguarding this cherished cultural heritage and the vibrant communities it sustains requires a multi-pronged approach. Supporting responsible fishing

⁵ *Ibid*,

⁶ Ramakrishnan Korakandy, *Fisheries Development in India: The Political Economy of Unsustainable development*, Kalpaz Publications, 2008, p.465

practices through regulations and market mechanisms was essential. Fostering collaborative efforts between fishers, scientists, and policymakers leads to sustainable management strategies. Moreover, investing in infrastructure and capacity building can empower these communities to adapt to changing circumstances and navigate the complexities of the modern world.

By critically examining the past, present, and future of Kerala's Malabar fishermen, we can move beyond romanticized narratives and develop a nuanced understanding of their enduring legacy. Only then can we ensure that their unique traditions, knowledge, and resilience continue to thrive for generations to come.

Beyond the initial catch lies a multifaceted reality, where processing, markets, and power dynamics paint a complex picture of their lives. While advancements like modern processing techniques and access to international markets offer glimpses of prosperity, a deeper dive reveals a persistent struggle against exploitation and an ongoing fight for equitable practices.

This analysis excavates the often-invisible labour force behind the final seafood product. Women, the silent heroes of the processing sector, engage in crucial tasks like sorting, curing, and meticulously removing shrimp shells. Yet, their contributions remain undervalued, devoid of proper wages and safe working conditions. This glaring gender disparity exposes a crucial fault line within the fishing community, where critical roles go unrecognised and under-compensated.⁷

The market landscape further complicates the narrative. Initially, non-fishermen traders emerged as intermediaries, seemingly facilitating smoother transactions. However, this facade soon morphed into a system of predatory control. These individuals, evolving into moneylenders known as "Tharakans" and "Kutikars" in different regions, wielded immense power. They dictated fish prices, controlled market access, and trapped fishermen in a web of debt, forcing them to rely on loans for essential equipment. This shift in power dynamics robbed

⁷ Mathew Aertahayil, *Keralathile Malsyathoyilali Prasthanam*, D.C Books, Kottayam, 2002, p.19.

fishermen of the very benefits that advancements like mechanization should have brought increased profits and market reach⁸.

The analysis goes beyond highlighting mere economic exploitation. It delves into the profound social and political ramifications of this system. Indebtedness transcends generations, creating a cycle of servitude that extends beyond financial dependence. It dictates political allegiances and social standing, leaving fishermen with limited agency and diminished bargaining power. The stark reality is that even widespread mechanization has failed to break free from this exploitative system, as indebtedness continues to grip the community.

This analysis serves as a stark reminder that the lives of Malabar fishermen are far more nuanced and precarious than meets the eye. It unveils a complex interplay of gender disparity, predatory market practices, and the enduring struggle for equity. Addressing these challenges necessitates a multi-pronged approach. Empowering women through financial literacy and skills development is crucial to combat gender inequities within the processing sector. Similarly, fostering fair market access through cooperatives and alternative marketing channels can break the stranglehold of exploitative middlemen. Finally, tackling predatory lending practices through financial literacy initiatives and regulations can help liberate fishermen from the shackles of debt and pave the way for a more sustainable and equitable future for this resilient coastal community.

By recognizing the intricate challenges highlighted in this analysis from colonial malabar, able to surpass mere awareness of the Malabar fishermen's hardships and actively pursue solutions that fostered their empowerment in future. These solutions guaranteed they could enjoy the fruits of their labour and navigate the often perilous waters of their lives with increased autonomy and respect. Ultimately, this contributed to the construction of a more just and equitable society for everyone.

⁸ K Ramachandran Nair, *The History of Trade Union Movement in Kerala*. India, Kerala Institute of Labour and Employment, 2006, p.78

Socio-Economic Dynamics of Fisher-Folk and Curers in the South Canara District along the West Coast: An In-depth Analysis of Varied Locations

When exploring the British administration in Madras presidency for compare and contrast the Malabar district In the South Canara District along the West Coast, the economic conditions of fisherfolk and curers vary across different locations, each presenting unique challenges and practices. In Gangoli, Udupi district in Karnataka state, the Marakla fishermen operate with limited capital, often facing financial hardships⁹. They resort to occasional high-interest loans and, at times, accept advances from dry fish merchants. The curing process involves labour, with 1 to 5 permanent servants employed for operations, particularly mackerel gutting and drying, tasks sometimes carried out by females for a specific rate. It also recorded the diversity of castes among curers, including Roman Catholics, Muslims, Billavas, and others.

Moving to Hangarkatta, a port in the Udupi district of Karnataka, both fishermen and curers generally face economic challenges, although some individuals from the Muslim, Billava, and Christian communities provide loans to fishermen, conditioned on selling the catch to them. About 1,000 Goanese Christians are engaged through an advanced system from November to February. Hired labour is utilized for various tasks, paid based on piece rates, and competition is managed through the control of advances.

Tonse near the Udappi district of Karnataka, the economic landscape was characterized by the predominantly poor status of both fishermen and curers. Unlike other areas, they were not financially supported by capitalists, and occasional loans came with high interest rates. Labour wages were contingent on the nature of work, with ordinary wages ranging from 3 to 4 annas per day.

Malpe, a significant center for Mogers, a Hindu caste engaged in fishing, illustrates a complex socio-economic structure. The fisherwomen, despite their role in gutting and cleaning fish, are prohibited from entering fish-curing yards due to

⁹ W. Francis, *Gazetteer of South India*, Mittal Publishers, 1989, p.385

caste objections. The curing industry is primarily controlled by non-fisher castes, such as Brahmins, Muslims, Christians, and others. Well-to-do curers and fish merchants advance money to fishermen, controlling boats and nets, thus limiting the options of local fishermen. The introduction of innovative fishing nets like Rampani and Vaibala has led to significant changes in fishing methods¹⁰. However, despite high fish prices and substantial catches, the general condition of the fisherfolk did not show proportional improvement due to factors like ignorance, illiteracy, intemperate habits, and a lack of thrift.

Migration emerges as a notable trend among Mogayar men from Malpe who sought employment opportunities in Bombay. Those who return exhibit improved financial situations, highlighting the potential benefits of migration. These changes suggest an awakening within the community, with some individuals attempting to introduce habits of temperance and other reforms. This detailed account provides valuable insights into the socio-economic dynamics and challenges faced by fisherfolk and curers along the West Coast, specifically in the South Canara District during the early 20th century.

The South Canara District along the West Coast unfolds a vibrant narrative of human experiences within its fishing communities. In places like Malpe, Udiavar, Mulki, Hosabettu, Bukkapatnam, Mangalore, and Ullal, real stories of people's lives come to the forefront. Malpe emerges as an endeavor, a blend of tradition and modernity, owned by an influential Moger.

Udiavar echoes the fusion of tradition and modernity seen in Malpe. Here, non-fishing caste curers showcase affluence, standing in stark contrast to Moger fishermen grappling with economic challenges. The prevailing loan system, a shared reality with Malpe, highlights the common economic struggles in these localities. Mulki, with its diverse fishing landscape, portrays economic diversity shaped by Mogers engaged in sea and river fisheries. Prosperous curers, often members of

¹⁰ Uma K.Srivastava, *Impact of Mechanization on Small Fishermen: Analysis and Village Studies*, Indian Institute of Management, 1986, p.331

Joint Stock Companies, create a vibrant economic scenario, with hired labor earning competitive wages, underlining a sense of economic prosperity¹¹.

Hosabettu unravels a tale of stark economic disparity between affluent curers and struggling Moger fishermen. The complexities deepen with capitalist support and varying wages for hired labour, adding layers to the economic dynamics. Bukkapatnam unveils financial challenges among most curers, contrasting with the advantageous position of Moger and Mappila curers who secure advances with exclusive fish sales conditions. The nuanced economic interplay within the curing industry takes center stage in this context.

Mangalore emerges as a melting pot of economic diversity, where curers from various castes each contribute to a distinct economic profile. Moger curers, functioning as petty local traders¹², receive financing from Mappila and Billava merchants, setting conditions for exclusive fish sales. The inclusion of women in dealing with fresh fish adds a unique dimension, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of the fishing industry. Varying compensation for hired labour adds another layer to the economic disparities within the community. Despite its port status, the limited engagement of Mogers in landing and shipping businesses unveils intriguing economic dynamics.

Ullal encapsulates the daily struggles and triumphs of both fishermen and curers. Loans discharged through cured fish payments and the intricate labour structures, including Moger women as daily coolies, bring forth the complexities of the socio-economic fabric. Expert Mappilas engaged for gutting large fish showcase specialization within the industry. This comprehensive analysis unfolds the intricate economic dynamics, labour structures, and financial challenges faced by fisherfolk and curers along the West Coast in the South Canara District. It brings to light the human stories, highlighting the interplay of tradition and modern innovation in shaping their livelihoods.

¹¹ Development Department. G.O.1050,1921, RAK.

¹² Amitav Ghosh, *In An Antique Land*, United Kingdom, Granta Publications, 2011, p.p.8-9

An analysis of post-independence data indicates a positive association between market development and educational attainment within fishing communities. This is evidenced by the higher prevalence of graduate households in Udupi and Mangalore taluks. These findings suggest that market growth may have functioned as a catalyst for educational advancement among these populations.¹³

Manjeshwaram, in Kerala adjacent to Kasarkod and the Karnataka state, the fishermen, faced financial hardship and sought advances from prosperous curers with the condition that they sold their catches exclusively to them. The curing operations involve both permanent and temporary coolies, showcasing a mix of monthly and daily wage systems. Despite efforts to establish a Co-operative Society, it hasn't been successful. In Kumbala, Pudu Muslims and Mogers, mostly poor, navigate economic challenges. Mappila curers advance money to some, while Moger fishermen handle their curing. The plight of Pudu Muslims worsens due to gender dynamics, as their women, unlike Moger women, don't sold fish independently.

Kasaragod portrayed the Mukkuva under Mappila control. they made life improvements, as hired labourers. In Baikal, the Mukkuva curers showcased a distinctive level of economic independence within the fishing community. Unlike some other locations where curers may face financial constraints or dependence on external sources, the Mukkuva curers in Baikal demonstrate self-sufficiency. Notably, the curing industry here remained firmly in the hands of the fisherfolk themselves, indicating that the community actively participates in and controls the various aspects of fish curing. Within the Mukkuvan community, gender roles have traditionally been divided, with women primarily assuming domestic responsibilities, fuel and water collection, and participation in social functions. Unlike their Arayan counterparts, Mukkuvan women exhibited a more prominent role in fish salting and its subsequent distribution channels. They actively transported the processed fish inland, engaging in direct sales through door-to-door interactions. Notably, in northern regions like Kasaragod District, collaborative

¹³ Giriappa, S. (ed.), Role of Fisheries in Rural Development. Daya Publishing House, 1994, p. 49.

efforts were observed between Mukkuvan and Bovis Mogeayar fisherwomen. While a limited number of women participated in income-generating activities such as coir twining and net weaving, historical accounts suggest a generally lower social status for Mukkuvan women¹⁴.

This dynamic is demonstrably shifting due to the expanding reach of education and the emergence of professional opportunities. As women increasingly pursue careers, they are actively asserting their agency and achieving a more equitable social standing within the Mukkuvan community.

In the 19th century In 1884, the British government brought about a significant shift in the traditional fish curing process by establishing fish curing yards on the Malabar Coast¹⁵. The new system mandated the use of government-supplied salt, instead of locally manufactured salt. As a result, individuals had to obtain tickets to access government facilities and duty-free salt. The construction of separate curing yards also disrupted the role of Mukkuva fisherwomen in the fish curing process.¹⁶

The introduction of the salt tax and fish curing yards under the government gave rise to a new commercial class, while traditional fishermen became reliant on middlemen and merchants. This led to economic dependency and exploitation by yard owners or fish traders who acted as moneylenders. The decline of traditional salt fields further impacted indigenous salt production, with salt for yards being imported from Thoothukudi.

In some fishing hamlets, monopoly practices emerged, further disadvantaging fishermen. The takeover of curing yards by the Fisheries Department imposed additional financial burdens on ticket holders, exacerbating their grievances. The increase in salt rates by the Madras Government further strained the

¹⁴ Nagendra KR. Singh. Global Encyclopaedia of the South Indian Dalit's Ethnography, New Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House, 2018.p.573.

¹⁵ Edgar Thurston, The Madras Presidency with Mysore, Coorg and the Associated States. United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 2011.p.79.

¹⁶ G.O.1050, *Op. cit.*

fishing community, leading to protests and grievances among fishermen in various regions, such as Kasargode Taluk.

Hosdrug revealed the dependence of Moonnillakkar's fishing community on merchants for loans. Despite owning boats and nets, limited onshore storage for their catch restricted their ability to increase their haul, thereby impacting their profits. Local fish processors were employed as workers, while the fishermen were forced to deal with a middleman who controlled the sale of fish within the village. Although seemingly independent, the fishermen had no choice but to submit to his control. The fish processors were primarily local, with some Moonnillakkars among them, highlighting the existing economic disparities within the community.

Taikadapuram mirrored Hosdrug's situation. Here too, Moonnillakkar fishermen, equipped with their own boats and nets, cured their own fish. However, tensions existed between Mappilla ticket-holders (holders of licenses granting fishing rights) and the wealthier fishermen. There were also signs of progressive ideas driving efforts towards mutual improvement within the community.

In Matul, Mappilla fish curers enjoyed a comparatively better financial standing, often financed by capitalists or middlemen. Hired laborers, primarily Pulayas (a historically disadvantaged caste), were employed for specific tasks. This period also saw an increase in wages due to the emergence of new industries.

Baliapatam depicted Mukkuva curers who had faced financial challenges but had avoided dependence on capitalists. No hired labour was employed, and caste prejudices limited the use of Pulaya coolies¹⁷. Heavy catches were transported to other yards for curing. In Cannore, both fishermen and curers had predominantly faced economic challenges. During periods of abundant catches, curers engaged in the salting of fish on behalf of Mappilla merchants. To fund the purchase of salt, curers often sought advances and received compensation for their labour. The majority of Mukkuvas, who engaged in the curing process, lived in precarious

¹⁷ Arne Martin Klausen, *Kerala Fishermen and the Indo-Norwegian Pilot Project*. Norway, Universitetsforlaget, 1968, p.51.

financial circumstances, with only a few exceptions who were affluent traders. A small number of Mappillas and a larger group of Mukkuva curers owned boats and nets, while the rest depended on financial support from middlemen, conditioned on selling the cured fish to them.

During the era of British administration in Malabar, particularly in Tellicherry, the dynamics of the fishing industry were deeply intertwined with socio-economic structures and power relations. The fishermen, predominantly comprising Hindus, Christians, and Mappillas, were integral to the coastal economy, yet their livelihoods were significantly influenced by external factors, notably the control exerted by Mappilla merchants and other capitalists.

The fishermen, often impoverished, relied heavily on advances provided by boat and net owners, typically ranging from Rs. 50 to Rs. 100. These advances enabled them to work in the boats, with no interest charged but with restrictions on switching employers until the debt was repaid. Such financial arrangements tied the fishermen to specific boats and limited their autonomy in seeking better opportunities. Moreover, the pricing of their catch was affected by indebtedness, with those who borrowed receiving lower prices compared to independent fishermen.

The activities and observations in a fishing village, likely in the vicinity of Tellicherry, depicted the industriousness of the community, where women and children were engaged in spinning cotton thread and repairing nets, essential tasks for the fishing trade. However, the livelihood of the fishermen was often threatened by sharks, which damaged the nets and consumed both fish and parts of the nets themselves. This posed a significant challenge to the fishing community.

The village's fish yard served as a central hub for processing the day's catch. Fish such as seer and catfish were being prepared for curing, with specific attention paid to maintaining cleanliness in the drying area. The community comprised

various groups, including Moplahs and Mukkuvans, who shared responsibilities and worked harmoniously, with disputes reported to be rare.¹⁸

Sanitary regulations prohibited the drying of sardines on the seashore for manure, necessitating either fresh sale or salting of the fish in the yard. Departmental rules mandated that all fish dried in the yard must first be salted, ensuring quality and hygiene standards. Despite challenges such as damage from heavy seas during the monsoon season, the yard remained operational, albeit with adjustments planned to enhance its resilience.

The drying process in the yard involved a variety of fish, including chala mathi (sardine fish) and young sharks, alongside by-products like fins and livers, which were sold for local consumption or export. Fish not sold in the market were brought to the yard for curing, contributing to the village's economic activity. The impact of external factors such as the South African war¹⁹, which disrupted the coastal shipping service, affected the fish trade.

Once prosperous and influential, the Mukkuva fishermen of Tellicherry saw a decline in their fortunes over time. Previously, they enjoyed wealth, literacy, and control over fishing, curing, and trade activities in the region. However, the rise of Mappilla merchants and other factors led to a loss of their economic dominance. Despite their historical prosperity, the Mukkuvans witnessed a decline in their socio-economic status, with only a few individuals retaining involvement in shipping and landing activities, mainly as labourers for Mappilla merchants.

The decline of the Mukkuvans' socio-economic status was accompanied by a weakening of their traditional caste Panchayat, reflecting broader shifts in power dynamics within the community. As prosperity dwindled, the once-strong institution

¹⁸ Edgar Thurston, Madras Bulletin.Vol.III, Superintendent,Government Press, Chennai, 1900, p.p.136-37.

¹⁹ The South African War, also known as the Second Boer War, occurred between 1899 and 1902. It was fought between the British Empire and the independent Boer states of the South African Republic (Transvaal Republic) and the Orange Free State. The war arose from tensions over British imperialism and control of the region's wealth, including its gold mines.

lost influence, symbolizing the erosion of traditional structures in the face of changing economic realities²⁰.

The influence of Mappilla merchants and the challenges faced by various fishing communities across different regions such as Badagara, Quilandy, Elathur, Puthiappa, Calicut (North and South), Beypore (North and South), Parappanangadi, Tanur, Paravanna, and Kuttai.

In Badagara, the economic disparity between fishermen and curers was pronounced, with a few Mappilla curers holding significant wealth while many Mukkuva curers were indebted to them, leading to a hierarchical financial arrangement where lenders held a prior claim over mortgaged boats and catches. The fishing and curing operations, predominantly controlled by Mappilla ticket-holders, led to significant profits due to their advantageous position in accessing fresh fish at lower prices.

Similarly, in Quilandy, Mukkuva fishermen and curers struggled with poverty, relying on advances from Mappilla merchant curers who dictated terms, including lower rates for fish and maintaining a standing loan as leverage. The absence of fish-curing yards exacerbated the dependence on Mappilla curers for processing and selling their catches.

In various other regions like Elathur, Puthiappa, Calicut, Beypore, Parappanangadi, Tanur, Paravanna, and Kuttai, similar patterns emerged where fishermen, predominantly Mukkuvas and Pudu Muslims, faced economic hardships exacerbated by indebtedness to Mappilla merchants. Advances provided by these merchants often came with conditions of selling fish at reduced rates, perpetuating a cycle of debt and diminishing returns for the fishermen²¹.

Furthermore, the role of Mappilla curers as capitalists, employing hired labourers and controlling fishing and curing operations, further marginalized the

²⁰ V. Govindan, *Op. cit.*, p.54

²¹ Nirmal Sengupta (ed.), *Economic Studies of Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge*, Academic Foundation, 2007, p.93.

traditional fishing communities²². The lack of autonomy in setting prices, coupled with the absence of strong community organizations like Panchayats, underscored the vulnerability of fishermen to external economic forces in Ponnani and Edakazhiyur, the socio-economic dynamics of the fishing communities reveal a complex interplay of power, economics, and social structures. the depiction of fishermen, predominantly Pudu Islams, offers insights into their socio-economic conditions and their interactions with Mappilla curers and others in the fishing industry.

In Ponnani, Pudu Islams are characterized by their physical strength and hardworking nature, yet they face economic challenges and societal stigma due to their perceived ignorance, and impoverished living conditions²³. They lack access to capital and often rely on advances from Mappilla curers, which come with the condition of selling fish at prices below the market rate. Despite their expertise in long-line fishing, most fishermen do not own boats and nets, relying instead on hired boats and labour, with compensation often in the form of shares in catches rather than monetary wages.

In Edakazhiyur, the fishing population comprised both Moonnillakkars and Pudu Islams, with both groups facing similar socio-economic challenges. The majority of fishermen were needy and indebted to well-to-do ticket-holders, primarily Pudu Islams, who dominated the curing industry and dictated terms of fish sales. While a minority of fishermen owned property and assets, most lived in rudimentary housing conditions, reflecting broader patterns of economic disparity within the community. The relationship between fishermen and curers was characterized by a lack of external financing from capitalists or middlemen, with advances provided by curers creating a dependency that limits the fishermen's bargaining power and economic autonomy.

Overall, the depiction of fishing communities in Ponnani and Edakazhiyur underscores the intricate web of socio-economic relationships and power dynamics

²² *Ibid.*,

²³ *Ibid.*,

that shaped the livelihoods and experiences of fishermen during this period. The portrayal highlights the challenges faced by fishermen in asserting their economic agency within a system marked by dependency on Mappilla curers and limited access to capital, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the fishing industry in colonial Malabar.

In instances where curer women had encountered financial difficulties, they had resorted to taking loans to cover expenses like salt. These loans, typically repaid after the sale of the cured fish, came with an interest rate of 2 annas per rupee. This interest rate was considered exorbitant, especially given the brief curing period of only 3 or 4 days. Mukkuva curers, primarily women, handled various tasks such as gutting, cleaning, and transporting their fish. In contrast, Mappilla curers enlisted the services of Pulaya coolies, compensating them based on piece rates for their contribution to the curing process. The socio-economic landscape in Cannanore reflected a complex interplay of financial struggles, labour dynamics, and dependency on advances and loans within the local fishing industry.²⁴ The complex dynamics in these locations underscored the intricate interplay between economic struggles, labour practices, and the evolving nature of the fishing industry along the West Coast.

Impact of British Administrative Reforms on Traditional Fishermen: Exploitation, Marginalization, and Economic Struggles

The British administrative reforms had significant adverse effects on traditional fishermen in colonial Malabar. The prohibition of salt collection and the imposition of salt taxes drastically harmed their livelihoods. Traditional fish drying, typically conducted by women, faced stricter regulations, affecting the fishermen's way of life. Additionally, the seashore, vital for fishermen's work, was taken away as part of colonial reforms, leading to their alienation.

²⁴ Mc Goodwin, James R., *Understanding the Cultures of Fishing Communities: A Key to Fisheries Management and Food Security*. Italy, FAO, 2001, p.285.

During an investigation into land distribution in coastal regions, particularly focusing on the Malabar Coast during the British colonial era, a thorough analysis of significant British governmental establishments such as fish curing yards, fish oil processing facilities, and guano factories is essential. This examination encompasses the acquisition of land along the coast, which was allocated by the government for various purposes, including the establishment of fish curing yards and the granting of land to private individuals through deeds or leases for personal use. Additionally, entrepreneurs were granted leases of land to establish fish oil and guano industries. Concurrently, private landowners, known as *genmis*, including notable figures such as the Kozhikode Samoothiri, Chirakkal, and Arakkal Raja, allocated land to tenants based on *Kanam* rights²⁵. In addition to the bestowal of heritable rights (*janmabhogam*) and contractual land access (leasing), a practice existed whereby land parcels were alienated through a public auction system, awarding ownership to the party submitting the highest bid. Some individuals encroached upon land and commenced coconut cultivation before formal land assignment, acquiring occupancy rights by paying fees to the British Revenue Department, thus enabling them to continue farming. Industrial proprietors who suffered financial setbacks in the fish oil industry after the World War and Beypore cannery was closed this circumstance was permitted to cultivate in proposed land to offset economic losses.²⁶ The decline of the salt fields in historical contexts warrants thorough investigation. Evidence of a thriving salt industry and its associated fields is evident in the nomenclature of various locations, such as Kizhakke padanna, padanna valappu Mukkadi paramba, Uppalakkandi paramba, Arayakuzhi padanna, Padannappuram, Padannapram Kuni, Kuzhi Padanna Nilam, PadannaSthalam, Perumbatanna talappangada parambu, among others. The recurrent term "padanna" in these names denotes the presence of salt-related activities. These designations are traceable in the inaugural land registers of coastal *desams*, with the earliest

²⁵ Moore Lewis and Wigram Herbert, *Malabar Law and Custom*, Higginbotham, 1905, p.239.

²⁶ Development Department. G.O. 1807, 1921, RAK.

comprehensive land survey and settlement conducted in 1905 by British authorities marking the transition of salt fields into Parambu territories²⁷.

In the 19th century, Buchanan documented the existence of salt fields in Kurumbranad, noting their proliferation in the region. These fields were predominantly situated in the low-lying plains along rivers proximate to the coastline, where inundation by saline water during high tides was probable. Buchanan observed that the majority of laborers engaged in salt production were vettuvas. His accounts suggest that by the early 20th century, numerous salt fields had vanished, leaving behind only archival references. The conversion of these lands into coconut plantations through colonial encroachment, whether by land grants or leasing, likely contributed to the decline of indigenous salt production. Consequently, salt sourcing for fish curing facilities in the 20th century shifted to Thoothukudi. Additionally, the imposition of salt taxes and the prohibition of local salt collection further impacted regional salt production dynamics.

Before the introduction of the salt tax, local communities enjoyed a degree of autonomy in salt production. The Mukkuva women of Kannur, for instance, utilized "saline earth" collected from coastal lands for fish preservation. This practice not only supported the dried fish trade but also ensured the community's food security.

However, the imposition of the salt tax in 1881 drastically altered this dynamic. The government prohibited the traditional collection of salt earth, effectively disenfranchising indigenous producers. This shift coincided with the establishment of government-controlled fish curing yards, which supplied salt at a subsidized rate²⁸.

The consequences of these policies were far-reaching. The Tellichery fishermen, once considered the "richest and most advanced" on the Malabar coast,

²⁷ Balakrishna Gopinath, *The Malabar Coast And Its People Under British Colonialism (1900-1950)*, anyflip, <https://anyflip.com/ujgvm/gksq/basic/51-59>, Accessed on March, 2024).

²⁸ Development Department Ordinary Series G.O.No.937 dated 14.5.1924, RAK.

reportedly witnessed a decline in their economic standing. The report attributed this decline to the salt tax and the introduction of curing yards.

The ban on traditional salt collection created a situation where those lacking permits were forced to rely on ticketholders for salt. This, coupled with the control exerted by the curing yards, facilitated the rise of a new merchant class and the concentration of capital. In essence, the traditional, self-sufficient fishing practices gave way to a more commercially oriented system.

A significant shift occurred within the Madras fish curing industry in 1920. The oversight of the curing yards transitioned from the Salt Department to the Fisheries Department²⁹. This departmental change ushered in a wave of new regulations for ticket holders utilizing the facilities. These regulations stipulated that any additional land acquired for yard expansion would be borne by the ticket holders themselves. Additionally, the construction of new model sheds within the yards became their financial responsibility. A further regulation mandated the abandonment of the traditional practice of drying fish on coir nettings spread on the ground. Instead, a standardized system of drying fish on specially constructed bamboo racks was implemented. Furthermore, a new regulation required the filtration and reuse of foul water emanating from salted fish for salting purposes. These new regulations proved unpopular with the ticket holders. To compound the issue, the Madras government implemented a substantial price increase for salt, a critical component of the curing process. Effective from April 1, 1924, the price of salt rose from 10 annas to 1 rupee and 4 annas per maund. This price increase was ostensibly implemented to mitigate losses incurred by the fish curing yards, which amounted to a significant sum of Rs. 1.35 lakhs in the financial year 1922-23³⁰. However, the combined effect of new regulations and rising costs significantly impacted the profitability of fish curing operations.

Besides the establishment of Factories and plantations had brought about changes in coastal geography and ecology. This led to salinity depletion. The influx

²⁹ Development Department. G.O.No.1050 dated, 15.6.1921, RAK.

³⁰ Development Department, G.O.No. 792, dated.16.4.1924, RAK.

of non-fishermen into coastal areas had resulted in a diminished workspace for fishermen. To safeguard their interests, fisher reserves were created. These established 'fishermen reserves' were a response to the encroachment on land traditionally used by local fishermen for their livelihood. Initially, a significant area of land in Purathur Desam, Ponnani Taluk, was designated for fishermen's use due to its utility for boat storage and netting activities, as well as the potential need for shelter in case of erosion. However, later revisions had reduced the allotted area to 46.21 acres. Similarly, land in Kootayi desom, Ponnani Taluk, had been set aside, totalling 54.99 acres, due to its congestion and vulnerability to annual erosion by the sea.³¹

This creation of reserves reflected a situation where much of the coastal land had been allocated to non-fishing populations or utilized for cultivation by industrialists and colonial officials, thereby jeopardizing the occupation of fishermen. Additionally, this administrative action limited the operational space available to fishermen, as evidenced by petitions from fishing communities like the Mukkuva fishermen of Kuriyadi Kadappuram, Erupuram Desam of Kurumbranad Taluk, who expressed concern about outsiders leasing foreshore lands critical for their fishing activities. Overall, it highlights the struggles faced by fishermen as their traditional fishing grounds were increasingly encroached upon, leading to the establishment of fishermen's reserves as a means to protect their livelihoods amidst competing land uses.

Fishing communities advocated for access to the seabed through petitions and representation but encountered challenges due to limited land availability, leading to encroachment by non-fishermen into residential areas of fishing communities. While beneficial for the industry, this encroachment adversely impacted the lives and habitats of coastal inhabitants.

³¹ Pranali Tari, "The Malabar Coast and Its People –Some Early Trends of Transformation 1900-1956," Academia.Edu, Accessed on February 28, 2024

https://www.academia.edu/17307500/the_malabar_coast_and_its_people_some_early_trends_of_transformation_1900_1956

A new land distribution system, designed to protect colonial commercial interests, further marginalized fishermen. The government allocated land for fish drying, but permission had to be obtained through the government, leading to the seashores being deserted. Those connected to the government gained permission, displacing traditional fishermen. The fishermen, once independent, became labourers for the new non-fishermen class who purchased land under the administration's influence. Landlords exploited fishermen, seizing fish if lease payments were not met, It created a new indigenous middle class on the Malabar coast.

Government bans and restrictions on salt production and fish drying left fisherwomen and the community unemployed and starving. The salt tax, fish huts, capitalist production, and middlemen exacerbated their misery, reducing them to dependents of ruling-middle-capitalist classes. In the 20th century, the influx of non-fisherman communities to coastal areas worsened fishermen's plight, leading to the loss of employment and storage facilities. This exploitation and marginalization during the colonial era pushed fishermen into severe poverty and dependence.

Pioneers of Social Reform: Pandit Karuppan and Velukutty Arayan in the Fisheries Communities of Malabar

PANDIT KARUPPAN

In the early 20th century, the coastal centres of Malabar were deeply entrenched in age-old customs and rituals, governing the lives of the local fishing communities. The social organization of these communities reflected a fragmented structure, with sub-sections such as Nulayan, Maraikar, Valan, Mukuvan, and Mukayan. Despite their diligence as hard workers, these fishermen faced constant humiliation and exploitation from society.

Fishing communities have long been marginalized and excluded from broader social movements, particularly during the colonial era. This exclusion was compounded by internal struggles and conflicts within these communities, which further emphasized their distinct identity separate from mainstream social

movements. To understand their potential role in social movements, it is crucial to acknowledge this complex historical background.

In colonial Kerala, the social development driven by community mobilization witnessed the transformation of traditional caste and religious groups into 'political communities'³². This process was intertwined with the formation of Kerala as a distinct region, marking a socio-political transformation. The impact of colonial modernity brought about socio-cultural changes, influencing the scattered groups to find new meaning within the emerging political sphere.

The colonial era also witnessed competition for economic and political opportunities, fostering a sense of collective bargaining among subordinated groups such as the Ezhavas, Muslims, and Christians. However, certain groups like the Dalits, Adivasis, fisherfolk, and women were left behind in this development process due to their lack of active participation afterwards. Despite a few leaders and scattered movements representing the most marginalized sections, the Dalits, for instance, never coalesced into a unified political community as the Ezhavas or Muslims did. Similarly, the Adivasis, isolated in hilly regions, were largely excluded from the evolving socio-political processes. Women's agency was also suppressed within community-based assertions.

The fishing communities, specifically the Araya Hindus, Puzhassan Muslims, Marakkayar Muslims, and Mukkuvar Christians, were notably absent from political assertions during colonial times. Consequently, they lack a history of mobilization within their religious folds or independently. When examining the history of conflict and violence within these communities, such as the Mukkuvar and Marakkayar Muslims during the colonial period, this absence of political involvement becomes significant.

The dawn of change in the coastal communities came with the registration and organization of Arayavamsa Pari Palanayoga by the youth, marking the first step

³² Salah Punathil, *Interrogating Communalism: Violence, Citizenship and Minorities in South India*. India, Taylor & Francis, 2018, p.200.

towards a collective identity. However, the divisions among the Araya people persisted, hindering any attempts at unity. The lack of cohesion prevented them from leveraging their ancient knowledge of the sea for their collective benefit.

The reformation movement gained momentum in the early 1900s, primarily driven by the Dhivara community. This period witnessed the emergence of a unified religious identity, catalyzed by the larger Kerala Renaissance that aimed at comprehensive reforms across various societal aspects. The Kerala reform project, spurred by the Kerala Renaissance, addressed issues such as the judiciary, modern education, labor, public debate, women's rights, and caste disparities.

In this transformative era, KP Karuppan, popularly known as Pandit Karuppan, emerged as a significant figure. Karuppan was a Dhevara Sanskrit scholar who took the mantle of initiating the Dhevara reform movement. His endeavors were particularly noteworthy given against the prevailing caste-based discrimination, where lower castes were deemed inferior to animals³³.

Pandit Karuppan stood as a beacon against casteism, dedicating himself to the arduous task of social transformation. The reform movement he spearheaded aimed to bridge the divides within the Dhevara community and address the inequalities that plagued their lives. Through the influence of caste-religious organizations, Christian missionaries, workers, peasants, and national organizations, Pandit Karuppan sought to reform religious beliefs and practices, thus integrating untouchable castes and economically disadvantaged into the broader Kerala reform project³⁴.

One of the significant achievements of this Reformation was the establishment of the Arayavamsodharini Mahasabha,³⁵ which aimed to unite all sects

³³ Velayudhan K.K. *Pandit Karuppan Ormmakaliloode (Mal.)*, N.B.S,Kottayam, 1983.p.9

³⁴ K. M. Udayabhanu, "A Revolution in Making: An Assessment of Pandi K.P. Karuppan's Contributions", *South Indian History Congress8* (1988), http://journal.southindian history congress. org/journals/articles/1988/SIHC_1988_V8_022.pdf, Accessed march28, 2024)

³⁵ Rajesh K Erumeli, *Pandit Karuppan*, Chithra publishers, Thiruvananthapuram,2015,p.25.

within the community under one organization. Karuppan played a pivotal role in this endeavour, advocating for unity and delivering speeches to promote the idea. Other notable figures such as Adv. Jnanasambandha, Valavil Krishna, and Rao Bahadur VV Govindan also contributed to the establishment of Maha Sabha during this period.

The impact of these organizational efforts was profound, leading to the abolition of outdated customs like thaliket kalyanam, which were once prevalent in the Araya community. The strength of activities carried out by organizations like the Valasamudaya Parishkarani Sabha played a crucial role in driving these changes and promoting social progress among the fishermen of during the 20th century.³⁶

Karuppan understood that self-reliance was key to breaking the cycle of exploitation. He championed the formation of cooperative societies, believing that collective action could provide fishermen with greater bargaining power and control over their destinies. This wasn't just an abstract idea; Karuppan, while serving as the director of the Kochi Central Co-operative Bank, established a society specifically for fishermen, laying the groundwork for their economic independence.

His vision extended beyond mere financial empowerment. Karuppan recognized the value of preserving and strengthening traditional occupations. He advocated for the development of communal industries related to fishing, creating opportunities for value addition and diversification within the community. His ideas went beyond local initiatives; he called for the creation of government departments dedicated to supporting these endeavours, ensuring long-term sustainability and wider impact.

Education was another pillar of Karuppan's reform agenda. He recognized the need for traditional vocational training centres, where fishermen could hone their skills and adapt to changing circumstances. His foresight led to the establishment of the Fish Cutting Yard, a unique initiative under the Department of Fisheries and

³⁶ Velayudhan Pannikkassery, *Ayyankali muthal V.T Vare* (Mal.), Current Books, Kottayam, 2003, p.p 20-23

School that not only provided valuable training but also directly improved the livelihoods of fishermen.

The impact of Karuppan's work went beyond immediate benefits. He planted the seeds of a self-reliant future, where fishers were no longer passive participants in their destiny but active shapers of their economic and social reality. His vision resonated deeply, becoming a beacon of hope for a "New Kerala", one founded on principles of empowerment and collective action.

In 1905, Karuppan made his debut into the realm of reformist discourse with the publication of his poetry collection, "Jati Kummi"³⁷. Within this work, Karuppan ventured to challenge the entrenched caste hierarchy by embracing the mythological narrative depicting the birth of Veda Vyasa from the union of a Kshatriya ascetic, Parasara, and a fisherman named Kali. Through this narrative, Karuppan not only questioned the legitimacy of the caste system but also sought to elevate the Dheevara community as the rightful heirs of Hindu heritage, tracing their lineage back to Veda Vyasa himself.

Central to Karuppan's reformist agenda was the assertion of a distinct Hindu identity for the Dhivara community. However, his advocacy extended beyond mere assertion, as he actively confronted the hegemony of Brahminical Hinduism through his impassioned speeches and prolific writings. In his seminal work, "Acharabhushanam," published in 1929, Karuppan launched a scathing critique against the Brahmin priesthood, the institutionalized temple system, and the pervasive dominance of the Sanskrit language in religious rituals and prayers³⁸. He fervently argued for a more egalitarian approach to religious practice, contending that any space utilized by the Dhivaras for communal gatherings could serve as a place of worship and that the role of a priest should be open to individuals possessing comprehensive knowledge of Hindu scriptures and traditions,

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Lalini. M, "Educational and literary contributions of K. P. Karuppan in Kerala society," *Quest Journals*, 31 October 2020, <https://www.questjournals.org/jrhss/papers/vol8-issue10/f08103540.pdf> (accessed March 03, 2023).

irrespective of caste. The community help groups that he established, known as Sabhas, were a direct result of his efforts to combat misogyny and superstition. To unify and integrate the diverse fishing castes of Kerala, a series of organizations were established. The first of these, the Kalyanadayini Sabha (meaning "prosperity society"), was formed in 1919 in Kodungallur. Subsequently, six additional local unions emerged. Through the leadership of individuals such as N. Krishnan, V.V. VelukuttyArayan, and Rao Bahadur V.V. Govindan, these separate entities were consolidated into the ValaSamudaya Parishkarani Sabha (fishermen community reform society). This unified society aimed to abolish outdated and detrimental customs, promote hygiene and social order, advocate for education, and secure freedom of movement for its members.³⁹

Moreover, Karuppan advocated for a simplified mode of worship devoid of elaborate rituals and idol worship, instead advocating for the recitation of straightforward prayers composed in the vernacular Malayalam language. These prayers, crafted by Karuppan himself, were intended for the veneration of Hindu deities, as well as for various rites of passage and life cycle ceremonies within the Dhivara community.

A fervent critic of the entrenched caste system and its attendant discriminatory practices, Karuppan's mission was not without controversy, as some critics contended that his agenda extended beyond reform to the outright destruction of the caste system, a stance they feared might precipitate social chaos.

Central to Karuppan's reformist vision was his staunch advocacy for education, with a particular emphasis on the use of English as a medium of instruction. While he believed that such an approach could empower marginalized communities, enabling them to break free from the shackles of traditional hierarchies, critics countered that this emphasis on English might result in the marginalization of regional languages and cultures, potentially eroding the rich tapestry of linguistic diversity in the region.

³⁹ S. N. Sadasivan, *A social history of India*, APH Publishing Corporation, 2000.p.577

Karuppan's endeavors to uplift the Dheevera community, a subgroup within the fishermen community, encountered resistance from within. Some members of the Dheevera community voiced contentment with their traditional way of life and vehemently opposed the notion of abandoning it in favor of Karuppan's radical ideas. His attempts at instigating change were met with skepticism, with detractors dismissing him as an agitator who sought to disrupt the established social order.

Karuppan faced a barrage of opposition and criticism from various quarters, with many perceiving him as a troublemaker and a genuine threat to the existing social structure. Accusations of attempting to sow seeds of social unrest followed him, highlighting the extent to which his ideas were considered radical and controversial in the socio-cultural milieu of his time.

In the face of such challenges, Pandit Karuppan's legacy stands as a testament to the complexities and tensions inherent in the pursuit of social reform during the 20th century. His efforts, while contentious, reflect a determined struggle against entrenched social norms, and his vision for a more equitable and inclusive society left an indelible mark on the ongoing discourse surrounding caste, education, and cultural identity within the fishing communities of the region.

In essence, Karuppan emerged as a pioneering force in the socio-religious landscape, spearheading a movement aimed at challenging the entrenched structures of caste hierarchy and Brahminical dominance while advocating for a more inclusive and egalitarian expression of Hinduism among the fishing communities of the region.

VELUKUTTI ARAYAN

Velukutty Arayan, a prominent figure in the historical narratives of the Kerala Renaissance, emerged as a inspiration of social reform among the fishermen communitie. Born on March 11, 1894, in Alappad Panchayat near Karunagappalli, Kollam, Arayan was nurtured amidst the cultural fabric of oppression and prejudice that characterized the era of entrenched casteism.

His early years were marked by a pursuit of education, beginning at the age of five under the tutelage of the Kalarivatukkal Namboothiri family in Ochira Prayar. At twelve, he embarked on the study of Ayurveda under Sankaran Vaidyaan, eventually diversifying his medical expertise into homeopathy and allopathy. Arayan's academic prowess shone as he attained the first rank from the Homeo Medical College in Kolkata.

In the annals of Kerala's social reform, Arayan's legacy shines as a multifaceted crusader against caste-based discrimination and social injustices. His journey from a community reformer to a communist underscore his commitment to uplifting the marginalized and fostering class consciousness among the oppressed.

Arayan's contributions reverberate across various spheres of societal transformation. As an astute labour organizer, he founded Akhila Kerala Navika Thozhilali Sangam, uniting maritime labourers in their struggle for rights and dignity. His foresight and organizational acumen laid the groundwork for future progressive movements, exemplified by his role in igniting revolutionary fervour through the Arayan newspaper. Arayan (1921) tackles the issue of food shortages in the aftermath of World War I, critiquing the extravagance of upper-class customs like Sadhya Oot. This critique may have played a role in drawing Mahatma Gandhi's attention to the social and economic disparities within Kerala's lower classes during his visit. From the Vaikom Satyagraha to student protests against fee hikes, Arayan's voice resonated as a clarion call for justice and equality.

During the Malayalam months of Meenam to Karkidakam (roughly April to July), coastal villages faced starvation. This hardship stemmed from the inability of fishermen to venture out to sea due to rough weather conditions, including strong winds and heavy calls (monsoon rains). The consequence of this restricted activity was a period of famine and disease plaguing the coastal communities.

Arayan, an individual presumably concerned about the plight of the coastal communities, endeavoured to seek urgent intervention from the Fisheries Department and the government. Additionally, an editorial titled "Ocean Starvation

at Sea," published in Fisheries Magazine, sheds light on the problems faced by the coastal population.

This editorial content by Arayan underscores the significance of a centralized organization to unify fishermen across religious affiliations. The underlying argument suggests that such a unified body would empower fishermen to effectively advocate for their rights concerning the central and state governments.⁴⁰

Arayan was also drawn to the labor movement that was emerging in Kerala. He was personally acquainted with several workers, and he became involved in their struggles. He helped to organize the first labour movement in Travancore under his leadership. The events of 1930 were a turning point in Kerala's history. The labour movement that Arayan helped to organize would go on to play a major role in Kerala's history. "Mukuvar" referred broadly to all fishermen, transcending caste boundaries.

In Travancore, the term Mukuvar was not used because it was seen as a caste-specific term. Instead, the term Navika was used to form the Akhila Thiruvithamkur Navika Thozhilali sangam (formed in 1931). The name of the organization was given by Arayan. Velukkutty Arayan and K Raman were elected as the General Secretary and Treasurer, respectively. The meeting was inaugurated by Mannathupadmanabhan, and the organization was renamed as Akhila Travancore navika thozhilali Sangam. The organization's first strike was a protest against the British, who had stopped using boatmen to load and unload goods in favour of starting a barge service.

During Velukkutty Arayan's leadership, information was gathered about boats registered in Travancore and the number of marine workers in the industry. This information was presented to the government in a memorial that outlined the workers' issues. The memorial included a breakdown of the seafarers' population by caste and religion, the number of family members they supported, and various fees

⁴⁰ Rajesh Chirappad and Rajesh Erumeli, *Dr. Velukutti Arayan*, Chintha Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram, p.70

they paid, such as license, boat painting, and municipal charges, as well as expenses on materials like bamboo, rope, and thatch wood. Additionally, it proposed solutions to address the seafarers' challenges.

The Akhila Thiruvithamkur Navika Thozhilali sangham embraced systematic trade union activity. In the context of Kerala's renaissance, the Naval Workers' Memorial holds a similar significance as the Malayali Memorial and the Ezhava Memorial. However, according to Velukkutty Arayan's biography, this workers' memorial did not receive the same level of attention as the other two⁴¹. It was the first memorial specifically focused on the social and economic advancement of the organized working class, and Velukkutty Arayan's contribution to it is particularly noteworthy.

Under the guidance of G. Raman Menon, the union quickly gained momentum, garnering support from 5,000 boatmen. Members of the Congress Socialist Party assumed key roles in guiding the movement. Subsequently, the union evolved into a formidable force, culminating in a significant strike by naval workers in Travancore in 1938. Their primary grievances centred on abolishing government-imposed charges and municipal tolls. The strike achieved resounding success, prompting the authorities to accede to the aforementioned demands and offer additional concessions as part of the settlement. Furthermore, provisions were made for establishing representative offices in key areas, eliminating the influence of middlemen and brokers, and appointing labour representatives in their stead. These achievements not only solidified the union's position but also catalyzed its future endeavours.

A comparative examination of anti-colonial resistance in Kerala demonstrates a geographic disparity in the documented participation of fishing communities of the north and south. This is particularly evident when examining the Mappila Rebellions of 1921 and 1936, which were concentrated in northern Kerala. During these uprisings, a portion of the fishermen's population joined forces with others in protesting against the British administration. One notable instance was

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

their participation in rioting against the British-imposed tax on fishing nets. However, it's important to note that while some fishermen took part, their relatively small numbers meant that their involvement did not significantly impact the outcomes of these events.⁴²

The Dhevara Reform Movement: Maintaining Hindu Identity in Kerala

The arrival of the Portuguese in the 15th century marked the beginning of Christian conversions among fishermen in Kerala, especially in to catholicism⁴³. Estimates that around 6% of Kerala's population, primarily coastal fishermen, converted to Christianity in southern part of Kerala. This trend continued until the mid-20th century, with conversions to both Christianity and to the Islam in Malabar occurring among the Dhivara caste, a group traditionally associated with fishing communities.

Early arguments for liberation among Dalits (oppressed castes) in Kerala often involved conversion to Christianity.⁴⁴ However, social reformers in the early 1900s challenged this approach. They believed that simply changing religion wouldn't solve the core issue of the caste system. Additionally, Dhivara leaders were concerned about the declining population and solidarity within their community due to conversions.

Velukutty Arayan, played a crucial role in strengthening the Hindu identity. During the 1920s and 30s, he actively resisted attempts by a Christian bishop to convert Dhevaras in the Kollam and Alappuzha districts. When his initial efforts to persuade the bishop failed, Arayan employed a different tactic. He spread the message that Christianity forbade polygamy, appealing to the Dhevaras' traditional

⁴² G.D Nair, *Keralathile thozhilali prasthanathinte charithram* (mal.), Thiruvananthapuram, 2014, p.28

⁴³ Fenella Cannell, *The Anthropology of Christianity*, Duke University Press, United Kingdom, 2006. p.79

⁴⁴ Deepika Rose Alex, "Religious Identity at Crossroads Hindu Fisherfolk of Kerala," Research Gate, May 2018, Accessed on February 26, 2023

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324922720_Religious_Identity_at_the_Crossroads_Hindu_Fisherfolk_of_Kerala

practice of having multiple wives. This strategy is believed to have helped curb conversions in the coastal areas to some extent⁴⁵.

The access of Dhivaras to upper-caste temples became a central issue for reformers. The widespread conversion to Christianity and the active participation of Dhivara reformers in the "temple encroachment movement" (seeking entry into temples traditionally restricted to upper castes) in Travancore and Kochi fueled the importance of Hindu identity within the Dhivara community.

Early Dhivara reformers, even those with atheist leanings like Velukkutty Arayan, believed that maintaining a strong Hindu identity was crucial for their caste solidarity. They saw gaining access to upper-caste temples as a way to combat conversions and ultimately end untouchability.

As Arayan worked to strengthen the solidarity of the Dheevaras, the colonial administration simultaneously engaged with the fisheries sector, recognizing its economic significance. The establishment of the Fisheries Department, driven by figures like F.A. Nicholson, marked a pivotal moment in the transition from colonial knowledge to local empowerment, intertwining governance and the survival of traditional coastal communities.

In 1905, F.A. Nicholson, tasked by the colonial administration, conducted extensive research into the fishery industry in the Madras Presidency, examining fishing methods and practices in Europe and Japan. Recognizing the importance of fisheries as an integral part of the food supply, Nicholson submitted proposals in 1907 for the establishment of a Bureau of Fisheries

The colonial government, acknowledging the necessity for such a department in line with international standards, approved the Bureau of Fisheries in 1907 and allocated a designated staff to oversee its operations. The Bureau's primary objectives included conducting experiments at a marine experimental station, establishing an inland hatchery for carp, conducting coastal and inland observation tours, and compiling valuable information about the fisheries sector. Nicholson also

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

proposed creating an experimental sea fisheries station and acquiring ponds for carp culture.

While the government approved the proposals for the marine experimental station and inland carp culture, they rejected Nicholson's suggestion to train students in Japan due to language barriers. As the Bureau evolved, Nicholson advocated for European experts to oversee marine and inland fisheries development. Mr. H.C. Wilson was appointed in 1907 to focus on inland fisheries, and Mr. James Hornell followed in 1908 to oversee marine fisheries⁴⁶.

By 1908, significant progress had been made in fisheries management. Various preservation techniques aimed at maintaining fish quality without refrigeration were introduced. These methods included drying, pickling, and curing, and Nicholson documented these processes to guide future practices. Local fishermen were also trained in gutting fish before salting to prevent spoilage. Previously, ungutted fish often arrived at shore in a soft, pasty, or tainted state. To address this, designated workers were assigned to each boat to gut, wash, and salt the fish, with a small amount of boric preservative added to the salt for enhanced preservation. Consequently, the incidence of pasty fish significantly decreased. Building on these advancements, a proposal to establish fish oil and guano factories followed in 1908, marking further progress in the fishing industry⁴⁷.

The organized efforts towards fisheries management culminated in the First Fisheries Conference in 1949, led by Velukutty Arayan in Pandarathurut, Karunagappally. The conference, grounded in scientific principles, aimed to chart a course for the development of fisheries. Representatives from various coastal areas participated, underscoring the sector's growing importance. Minister B. Wellington's voluntary involvement, along with contributions from figures such as Pattam

⁴⁶ Madras Fisheries Bureau Bulletin 10, Government Press, Madras, 1918.

⁴⁷ F.A. Nicholson, *The Preservation and Curing of Fish*, Madras, 1909. RAK.

Thanupilla, P.S. Natarajapilla, Dr. Henry Austin, and Rafael J. Rodrigues, further highlighted governmental support⁴⁸.

The conference's outcomes were instrumental in garnering support for the establishment of the Department of Fisheries, a key step in addressing the socioeconomic needs of fishermen. While the initiatives of the department aimed to uplift fishermen across different strata, the impact was predominantly felt by the lower classes, reflecting the evolving dynamics of fisheries management during this period—a blend of governmental intervention, scientific inquiry, and grassroots mobilization aimed at sustainable coastal development.

Navigating Challenges and Fostering Resilience Through Cooperative Societies

Mr. Govindan, the Assistant, embarked on an extensive tour marked by meticulous observation and targeted interventions. The central focus of this initiative was the scrutiny of an existing society in Mangalore, instituted in 1907, which functioned on quasi-cooperative principles. Across various localities, a discernible receptiveness to the concept of co-operation emerged, with particular potential identified in Tanur, Kerala. This locale was characterized by independent and isolated fishing units susceptible to exploitative lending practices.

Loans, dispensed by the committee through a non-auction process, underwent scrutiny to ensure their necessity, involving examinations of the conditions of fishing boats. The introduction of an indigenous temperance society among young men aimed to counter the pervasive issue of alcoholism within the fishing community. The notable opposition, especially from parents, underscored the challenges posed by deeply entrenched customs. Here highlighted the role of local community councils in guiding such matters and their persistence in the face of opposition.

The broader imperative for co-operation along the West Coast is eloquently articulated, emphasizing its pivotal role in the comprehensive development of the fishing industry. The synergistic collaboration of both men and capital is deemed

⁴⁸ Madras Fisheries Bureau Bulletin 10, *Op. cit.*, p.40.

indispensable, particularly in emerging sectors such as guano and oil. The report underscores the potential advantages accruing to manufacturers, middlemen, and consumers through concerted cooperative efforts.

Mr. Govindan's initiatives are underscored, providing a detailed account of his successful establishment of a co-operative society among fishermen in Tanur. Operating as a *co-operative Nidhi*⁴⁹, this society involves shareholders contributing to the creation of capital. the positive influence of this success on neighbouring villages and it helped for the formation of a cooperative society tailored for owners of fish oil and guano factories.

It transcends mere economic considerations to address pressing social issues, notably intemperance. endeavours to promote temperance, despite encountering opposition and subversion, reflect a broader socio-economic perspective. it casts light on the influential role played by caste panchayats in steering community decisions.

Here a comprehensive panorama shows about the socio-economic initiatives, accentuating the pivotal themes of co-operation, temperance, and educational efforts within the fishing communities along the West Coast. The nuanced approach evident in the society attests to a keen recognition of the multifaceted challenges confronting these communities, it underscoring the necessity for concerted efforts, both governmental and grassroots, to foster positive and sustainable change.

The detailed process described outlines how Assistant Director Mr. V. Govindan orchestrated the establishment and operation of a cooperative society among the fishermen of Tānur. This complex procedure unfolded in distinct phases, each contributing to the formation and functionality of the cooperative entity.

The cooperative endeavour commenced with the initiation and registration phase, laying the foundation for the cooperative society. Over a four-year period, Mr. Govindan engaged in continuous communication and persuasion with the fishermen of Tanur, resulting in the successful establishment of the cooperative

⁴⁹ Madras Fisheries Bulletin, Superintendent, Government Press, 1918, RAK, p.114.

society. The formal registration underscored the legal recognition and legitimacy conferred upon the cooperative entity.

Following this, the cooperative society took shape with the enlistment of fifty leading fishermen who owned boats and nets as the initial members. Their commitment was evident in the obligation to pay the inaugural installment, known as the "first call," on their shares, demonstrating a tangible financial commitment to the cooperative cause.

The financial structure of the cooperative was defined by the adoption of the cooperative *nidhi* model. This model, characterized by mutual benefit and incentivizing savings among members, mandated each shareholder to contribute Rs. 50 within 25 months, with monthly instalments of Rs. 2. This systematic financial contribution served as a cornerstone for capital creation.

The mechanism relied on the active participation of members in contributing to the cooperative's capital pool. With a maximum limit of 200 shares, the cooperative aimed to accumulate a substantial capital of Rs. 10,000 over two years⁵⁰, contingent on favorable fishing seasons. This capitalisation was strategically envisioned to provide the cooperative with economic autonomy and the means to counteract exploitative practices by money lenders⁵¹.

Another dimension of the cooperative's aspirations involved financial independence and potential support to members. It was suggested that fishermen within the cooperative might require only short-term loans. Furthermore, the accumulated capital held the promise of not only benefiting the members directly but also extending support to other societies or banks, demonstrating a broader socio-economic impact.

The projected timeframe for achieving the targeted capital and the contingency on favorable fishing seasons underscored the practical considerations and dependencies intrinsic to the cooperative's success. The cooperative's financial

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ K.K.Panikkar, *Community Development Administration in Kerala*, S. Chand, 1974, p.116.

goals were intricately tied to the dynamics of the fishing seasons, emphasizing the importance of external factors in determining its economic viability.

The mechanism unfolded as a strategic and well-thought-out process, encompassing phases of initiation, formation, financial structuring, capitalization, and the utilization of funds. The cooperative's overarching objective was to enhance the financial well-being of its members and wield economic influence within the community, presenting a model that intertwined economic empowerment with community development.

Moreover, the government's practice of auctioning the right to fish in a particular area has frequently resulted in exploitation by individuals who are not actively engaged in fishing.⁵² In response to this issue, proposed an alternative strategy: allocating fishing rights directly to the fishermen, contingent upon the establishment of a cooperative society. The underlying objective of this approach was to relieve the financial and legal challenges encountered by the fishing community.

The traditional auction process, which often lead to the fishing rights being acquired by non-fishing individuals, is circumvented. Instead, fishing rights are directly conferred upon the fishermen themselves. This proposed shift not only empowers the fishing community by providing them with direct access to the resource but also places a conditionality on this privilege. The condition stipulates the formation of a cooperative society, thereby promoting a collaborative and community-driven approach to fisheries management.

The rationale behind this proposal is rooted in addressing the longstanding issues faced by fishermen, including financial burdens imposed by external factors and legal entanglements arising from the current system. By entrusting fishing rights to the fishermen through a cooperative framework, envisioned a scenario where the community could collectively manage and govern their fishing activities. This

⁵² Annual Report 1917-18, Madras Fisheries Bulletin No .10, Madras Government Press, RAK.

approach aimed to foster economic autonomy and mitigate the exploitative practices that often accompany the auctioning of fishing rights. This approach represented a strategic effort to promote economic resilience and autonomy within the fishing community.

In the co-operative society at the beginning of the year there were 57 fishermen's co-operative societies on the west coast including three productive societies two in South Canara one in Malabar with the total membership of 3,279 of whom 427 were females. During the year one new society was started at Elathur the existing societies at Tellicherry and Quilandy were bifurcated owing to the feeling among the members at the former place and on account of the wide area over which operations were carried on by the latter hence the number of societies at the end of the year was 60, with a membership of 3,581 and their paid up share capital raised from Rs 66,585 to 81,702 and the amount of loans disbursed from Rs 1,69,103 to Rs 2,53,303⁵³

This outlined mechanism reflected a commendable effort to address socio-economic challenges faced by the fishermen community in the past. Mr. V. Govindan's sustained engagement and strategic approach, coupled with the cooperative Nidhi model, demonstrated a nuanced understanding of cooperative principles and financial inclusion. The emphasis on legal registration added an important layer of legitimacy to the cooperative, fostering trust among its members and potentially paving the way for broader acceptance. The cooperative's potential to not only benefit its members but also contribute to the well-being of other societies or banks reflected a holistic and community-centric approach to economic development. Overall, the mechanism presented a promising framework for fostering financial resilience and autonomy within the fishing community at that time.

The social service and welfare work during that period could be described as unusual dearth of fish after the cyclone was responsible for some distress among the

⁵³ B. Sundara Raj (Ed.), *Madras Fisheries Industrial Reports 1923*, Government Press, Madras, 1924, p.p. 29-30.

labouring classes of the fishermen community, especially those that owned boats and nets. With the outbreak of monsoon the distress in the case of some families became somewhat serious and few a leading man of Calicut led by Rev. A.T Coldman, the chaplain, organised relief measures for affording relief for the needy families and for starting welfare work. The assistance of the yard officer Calicut North was obtained and he made a house to house enquiry. Advantage was taken off the closure of the Vellayil, Calicut Day school for the vacation to locate dispensary temporarily in the school building and Mr. Coldman and other philanthropic gentleman and the members of the Ladies Club visited fisherman quarters persuaded many families to send cases of serious illness such as dysentery typhoid pneumonia etc to the local women and children hospital.⁵⁴ The relief committee through Mr. Kelan, the yard officer, got the huts off 101 poor families re-thatched. Milk, sugar, Barley where distributed at the fish curing yard for sick or ill nourished children and women through the efforts of the yard officer, a rich Mohammedan fisherman was arranging a building at the disposal of the relief committee to enable it to teach subsidiary Industries to fisher women and children so that when the sea failed to yield fish. The officers arranged for improving the sanitary condition on Vellayil. When the vellayil day school was reopened the dispensary was transferred to the fisheries training institute where two rooms on the verandah were being utilised in the evening after school hours. The officer instructed to arrange another building because of inadequate facilities in the fisheries training institute.

This glimpse into past social service work underscores the enduring importance of community, compassion, and resourcefulness in the face of disaster. By studying these historical efforts, we can learn valuable lessons for building more robust and sustainable support systems for vulnerable communities in the future.

From Shores to Subservience: British Hegemony over Fishermen's Livelihoods

In the annals of 19th-century Malabar during the British colonial period, a pivotal episode unfolds as depicted in a complaint submitted to Mr. Brennan, the

⁵⁴ Madras fisheries Bulletin. India, Superintendent, Government Press, 1927, RAK, p.65

Master Attendant of Thalassery, by an Englishman named Fell. This complaint, later presented to the police, centered around the unauthorized mooring of a three-boat by Marakkan Moitheen of Calicut and Ali marakar near the Englishman's residence along the seashore.⁵⁵ The incident, transpiring in 1803, sheds light on the stringent control exercised by the British over the habitat of the Mukuvar fishermen, marking a significant historical moment.

Simultaneously, a petition addressed to the Mahe authority by the Mahe Mukuvar fishermen community in Mayyazhi reveals another facet of the colonial impact. The undersigned tenants, engaged in fish trade, lament the oppressive actions of Chapa Kurup, the Azhiyur native administrator, who forbids Mayyazhi boatmen from selling fish. The violation of a prior grant by Ruler Ishaq underscores the precarious position of the fishermen, with threats of physical harm looming over them should they defy the directive. The petition, submitted by individuals like *Nalakath Kathiri and Kallarakale Kunjiyath, kayyale pakki, kodakkatta kandi bappukutti, Chembangadan bavachi, Pallikandi chekkutti, and Kallarakale adima* is a poignant documentation of their struggle for livelihood and autonomy.⁵⁶

Further delving into the historical records from the Madras File Correspondents in 1803 reveals a letter submitted to the Sub-Collector of the Central Division by a British officer of Thalassery, Malabar. This document, emanating from a British Government authority, enforced a prohibition on mukkuva fishermen utilizing canoes in the harbour⁵⁷. The confluence of these incidents paints a vivid tableau of the British wielding authoritative power to curtail the rights of the Mukkuvar community in their work and movement.

Examining this historical tapestry, it becomes evident that the British imposed a systematic control over the habitat of the fishermen. The narrative encapsulates the evidence of colonial hegemony, portraying the imposition of

⁵⁵ Madras correspondents, vol.4864,21-7-1803, p.13, RAK.

⁵⁶ Kerala District Gazetteers of Kozhikode, G.96, RAK.

⁵⁷ Madras correspondents, vol.2230,1803, RAK.

administrative authority on a socially marginalized and isolated fishing community. Instances even highlight the arbitrary acquisition of their land by the British, wielding unquestionable power. The documentation serves as a stark reminder of a reality endured by the Mukkuvar fishermen, a community struggling against the currents of colonial dominance and striving to reclaim agency in the face of oppressive forces.

Further exemplifying the pervasiveness of British land expropriation during the colonial period, another historical incident saw the state appropriation of land traditionally held as private property by fishermen. This transfer, facilitated by the influence of colonial power, underscores the systematic dispossession faced by indigenous communities under colonial rule.

In the coastal town of Ponnani, Malabar District, Kerala, during the reign of the British Raj in 1915, a land dispute unfolded, highlighting the intricacies of colonial land management and its impact on marginalized communities. Tarakamkoginiyakath Kunhamed Kutty, a fisherman from Ponnani, found himself entangled in a legal battle with the British administration over a small plot of land (S.No. 20/14) designated for the local fishing community's housing⁵⁸.

The conflict arose when Kunhamed Kutty was accused of encroaching upon the designated land and assessed both taran (land revenue) and janmabhogam (land right) along with a fine for encroachment. Kunhamed Kutty vehemently contested the decision, claiming he inherited the land from his mother, Ayissa Ummah.

This claim set the stage for a complex examination of landownership and colonial regulations. The British Raj in Malabar had implemented a land revenue system classifying land as either government-owned (janmam) or privately-owned (kanam). Land records and title deeds were crucial for establishing ownership and usage rights, while the government reserved certain lands for specific purposes, like the designated house sites for marginalized communities.

⁵⁸ Rd's Files, No.93, B.168, Sl.11,1916, RAK.

Kunhamed Kutty presented a certified copy of a title deed (No. 2706) showing his mother's purchase of land called Comamukath kate paramba (66 acres) from the government in 1867. He further claimed possession of S.No. 20/14 based on inheritance from his mother and a lease agreement with his sisters.

However, the Sub Collector, E. Hoqueen, raised various counterpoints. The extent of land registered in Ayissa Ummah's name (70.45 acres) exceeded the purchase mentioned in the title deed, suggesting possible additional land acquisition through unclear means. Moreover, Kunhamed Kutty failed to produce concrete documents proving his mother's ownership of S.No. 20/14 or his own possession through inheritance or lease. The inconsistencies in his claims, coupled with discrepancies in the presented documents, further fueled doubts about their validity.

The Sub Collector argued in favor of upholding the initial decision against Kunhamed Kutty. He emphasized the government's right to reserve land for the welfare of the fishing community and highlighted the potential attempt by Kunhamed Kutty to claim undeserved land.

This case offers a microcosm of the complex landownership issues and power dynamics during the British Raj in Malabar. It sheds light on the challenges faced by marginalized communities like the fishermen in securing access to land and resources, while also showcasing the bureaucratic procedures and arguments employed by the colonial administration in managing land disputes. While the specific outcome of Kunhamed Kutty's case remains unknown, it serves as a valuable historical vignette revealing the intricacies of land rights, inheritance, and colonial power dynamics in 1915 Malabar.

Negotiating Colonial Conservation: A Microcosm of Environmental Politics in Malabar, 1916. In the colonial era of Malabar under British administration, the stakeholders in the fishing industry found themselves entangled in a bureaucratic web, as evidenced by a petition submitted to the Collector of Malabar in Calicut on 28th August 1916. The undersigned Moplahs, residing in Madai and Ezhome

Amshoms of Chirakkal Taluk, approached the colonial authority with a plea that reflected the intricate dynamics of their livelihood tied to the rivers.⁵⁹

The petitioners brought to the Collector's attention a Notification dated 29th June 1916, issued by the Tahsildar of Chirakkal. This notification unequivocally prohibited the use of stake nets or fixed engines for fish-catching operations in the Baliapatam and Taliparamba rivers and their tributaries. The Moplahs, engaged in the age-old practice of netting small shrimps and minnows, expressed their distress at the sudden prohibition, which threatened their primary source of sustenance.

The petitioners carefully outlined their method of fishing, emphasizing the non-destructive nature of their operations. The stake nets, constructed with frail cotton thread, were of modest dimensions and only captured specific species, such as shrimps and the small fish. Importantly, the petitioners asserted that their nets did not pose a threat to the fry or eggs of other fish species, as their catches were limited to the targeted varieties.

The document detailed the seasonal and tidal constraints of their fishing operations, highlighting that the nets could only be deployed for about two weeks each month. Furthermore, the geographical specifics of their netting grounds, a mile away from other operations, ensured that their activities did not hinder river navigation.

Economic considerations featured prominently in the petition, with the Moplahs explaining that the prawns and minnows caught were crucial for their sustenance. Notably, they distributed a portion of their catch to the poorest classes in the locality, fostering a socio-economic interdependence.

In their plea for reconsideration, the petitioners suggested alternatives such as the proclamation and enforcement of a close season instead of an outright prohibition. They appealed to the authorities' sense of justice, expressing confidence that the prohibition, if enforced, would deprive them of their only means of livelihood.

⁵⁹ G.O.2061, B.167, Department of Revenue, 1916, RAK.

This document, a snapshot of a colonial Malabar community's struggle for survival, reflects the complex interplay between livelihoods, conservation concerns, and colonial regulations during that period. Dated 4th September, the communication emanates from the Fishery Bureau in Madras, directed to the Collector of Malabar, Calicut, and addresses the matter of a notification dated 29th June 1916. Their grievances reached at the Honorary Director of Fisheries, prompting the communication from the Fishery Bureau to the Collector of Malabar. The officials sought clarification on the authority underpinning the notification, acknowledging the need for a comprehensive understanding of the situation⁶⁰.

In the subsequent exchange of letters, the Collector of Malabar, represented by C. Wilson, the Piscicultural Expert of the Fisheries Department, engaged in a detailed investigation. The correspondence reveals the nuanced nature of the fishing methods employed by the Moplahs, specifically the use of "*Chemmin vala* (prawn's net)" with a mesh size of about a third of an inch. These nets were fixed to bamboos, were strategically placed in the rivers for a limited duration, aimed to supplement the income of the Madai ferrymen.

The bureaucratic response also demonstrates the Collector's diligence in seeking advice from the Honorary Director of Fisheries. A petition from the Moplah fishermen had reached both offices, and efforts were made to avoid conflicting orders. The Collector, in a letter to the Director of Fisheries, enclosed the results of the local inquiry, seeking guidance on how to proceed.

The correspondence dated 29th September 1916, between H.C. Wilson, a Piscicultural Expert, and the relevant authorities, provides valuable insights into the administration's stance on the use of stake nets and fixed engines by fishermen in the region.

The letter, directed to the Collector of Malabar in Calicut and conveyed through the Honorary Director of the Government Fisheries Department in Madras, indicates the existence of a petition (No. R.O.C. 316/P16) that triggered a personal

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

inspection by H.C. Wilson. The Piscicultural Expert expresses gratitude for the opportunity to provide remarks and emphasizes his opinion on the matter.

Here portrays H.C. Wilson entrusted with evaluating the concerns raised in the petition. Wilson's perspective, as outlined in the letter, argues against permitting stake nets and fixed engines. His primary contention is that allowing these practices might lead to their proliferation, adversely impacting the river. Additionally, he raises the potential difficulty in removing these structures at a later date, citing examples from the east coast where such rights have been established.

The letter underscores the historical context of colonial administration, where decisions were made with a long-term perspective on the region's environmental and economic well-being. The concern for the potential exploitation of the river and the foresight regarding establishing rights align with the intellectual standard of evaluating policies for their broader implications.

The 1916 petition and subsequent bureaucratic interaction in Malabar offer a microcosm of the broader dynamics under British rule. It highlights the challenges faced by indigenous communities in safeguarding their traditional practices in the face of colonial regulations often driven by conservation anxieties and centralized control. The episode also showcases the agency and resourcefulness of the Moplah fishermen, who actively sought dialogue and advocated for their legitimate concerns. Ultimately, this case study underscores the importance of studying the local and specific nuances of colonial environmental policies, moving beyond simplistic narratives of domination and resistance.

The intricate bureaucratic exchanges surrounding the fishing industry in colonial Malabar reflect a microcosm of the broader dynamics under British rule. This episode illuminates the challenges faced by indigenous communities in reconciling their traditional livelihoods with colonial regulations driven by conservation concerns and centralized control⁶¹. Despite these obstacles, the Moplah

⁶¹ Madhav Gadgil, and Ramachandra Guha, *This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India*, University of California Press, 1993, p.173.

fishermen demonstrated agency and resourcefulness, actively advocating for their legitimate concerns and seeking dialogue with colonial authorities. Through a nuanced examination of local nuances and specific policies, this case study underscores the importance of understanding the complexities of colonial environmental governance beyond simplistic narratives of domination and resistance. It serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring significance of studying historical interactions between communities and colonial administrations in shaping contemporary socio-environmental landscapes.

From Claims to Clarity: Colonial Correspondence on Regulating Malabar Fisheries

In a memorandum dated December 18th, 1916, the Revenue Department informed the Government of Madras about claims of "free fishing" within specific port limits in the Malabar district. The government sought clarification on the validity of these claims and the potential for bringing the fisheries under State control. This inquiry highlighted the colonial administration's concern over regulating fishing activities within port limits.

Lieutenant Commander Grosholz RNR, the Port Officer at Calicut, responded on January 8th, 1917, confirming the absence of any licensing or fee collection procedures for fishing boats under his authority. This communication revealed the limited administrative intervention in regulating fishing practices within port areas at that time.

Following up on the government's directive, the Collector of Malabar, F. B. Evans Esq., I.C.S., submitted a detailed report on January 12th, 1917⁶². Evans clarified that there were no known claims to "free fisheries" in the Malabar district's estuaries or backwaters. He further elucidated the legal definition of "free fishing" and the distinction between exclusive and common/public fisheries, arguing against the claims of "free fishery" in the district's estuaries.

⁶² *Ibid.*

Evans also discussed potential measures for regulating fisheries within port limits, referencing existing legal provisions like the Madras Fisheries Act 1897 and the Madras Ports Act 1908 ⁶³. However, he expressed skepticism regarding the need for state intervention, emphasizing the adequacy of existing legal frameworks.

These exchanges between government authorities and administrative officials offer valuable insights into the complexities of colonial governance and maritime resource management, particularly concerning fisheries in Malabar. The correspondence reflects the interplay of legal considerations, administrative practices, and economic interests that shaped the British colonial administration's approach to overseeing fishing activities during the early 20th century.

The exchanges between colonial authorities directly impacted the lives of traditional fishermen in Malabar. The initial memorandum regarding "free fishing" within port limits raised concerns about potential regulations, fees, and restrictions that could affect their livelihoods and traditional practices.

Lieutenant Commander Grosholz's communication, confirming the absence of regulations, provided temporary relief for the fishermen. They could continue their fishing activities without additional bureaucratic hurdles.

Following a government directive, F.B. Evans, the Collector of Malabar, submitted a report on January 12, 1917, regarding fishing rights in the region's estuaries and backwaters. Evans clarified that no official claims to "free fisheries" existed in Malabar. By "free fisheries," he referred to fishing areas where the local population could fish without any legal restrictions or ownership rights.

He further explained the legal concept of "free fishing," distinguishing between exclusive fisheries where specific individuals or groups held private fishing rights and common or public fisheries, where anyone could fish without restrictions. Evans argued that there was no legal basis for recognizing "free fishery" claims in the estuaries of Malabar. His report rejected the idea that local communities had

⁶³ RD'S File, sl.13, B.202,1917, RAK

unrestricted fishing rights in these waters, aligning fisheries regulation with colonial laws rather than local traditions.

This reflects the broader colonial strategy of imposing formal regulations and redefining traditional practices through legal frameworks, often disregarding local customs. Overall, these exchanges during the colonial era reflected the complexities of governance and management of maritime resources. They influenced the regulatory landscape and legal interpretations surrounding traditional fishing activities in the Malabar district.

Petitioning for Parity: A Socioeconomic Analysis of the Mukkuvas' Struggle for Sustainable Livelihoods in British Malabar

1916, Tellicherry, Malabar: Amidst the backdrop of British colonial rule in India, a unique document emerges from the coastal town of Tellicherry. Here describes about a petition, crafted by the Mukkuvas, the hereditary fishing community of the region, addressed to the esteemed Governor of Madras, Lord Pentland⁶⁴. This document, far from being a mere historical artifact, offers a poignant glimpse into the complexities of colonial governance, the struggles of marginalized communities, and the unwavering pursuit of economic and social justice.

Colonial rule holds sway over India, and in the coastal town of Tellicherry, Malabar, a simmering discontent stirs among the Mukkuvas, the hereditary fishing community. Driven by hardship and a yearning for justice, a delegation of ten Head Men pens a desperate plea to the Governor of Madras, Lord Pentland. Their target: a forthcoming visit by the esteemed official to neighboring Tanur, presenting a unique opportunity to air their grievances directly.

The document, meticulously crafted and steeped in respect, lays bare the challenges faced by the Mukkuvas. The British had established fish curing yards on

⁶⁴ G.O 1959, Sl.14, B.16, Department of Revenue,1916, RAK

the Malabar coast, issuing duty-free salt to ease the burden of the 1882⁶⁵ salt earth ban. Yet, these very yards, were meant to empower the Mukkuvas, but they made allegations that had inadvertently become a stronghold for Moplah traders. Mukua women also complain that the presence of mappila fishermen hinders them from trading fish at their place of work.

Beyond Economic Woes Adding to their woes are the "rigid working of the rules" overseen by the Salt Department. Stringent regulations, often implemented by unsympathetic local officials, serve as deterrents rather than facilitators for the already hesitant Mukkuvas. This bureaucratic labyrinth, the petition argues, hinders the very industry it is meant to support.

This appeal was twofold. They yearn for Lord Pentland's direct intervention, seeking relief from the oppressive realities they face. Should a formal audience prove impossible, they humbly request that their petition be treated as a memorial, a lasting record of their struggles and a catalyst for change. It can be referred as a Glimpse into Colonial History, this document offers a rare glimpse into the complexities of British colonial rule and its impact on diverse communities. It sheds light on the unintended consequences of well-meaning policies, the struggles of marginalized groups, and the enduring quest for economic and social justice.

A System Tilted Against Them: The Mukkuvas, despite being the rightful stakeholders in the fishing industry, find themselves trapped in a web of disadvantage. The British, with the intention of aiding them, established fish curing yards and provided duty-free salt. However, mukkuva complained that these initiatives, had been inadvertently, empowered the dominant Moplah middlemen, leaving the Mukkuvas vulnerable to economic exploitation.

From a detached perspective, it becomes evident that the fishermen, particularly the Mukkuvas, grappled with multifaceted challenges, encapsulating economic struggles, bureaucratic entanglements, and a cycle of debt and

⁶⁵ Vijay Prasad and S. Allah Baksh, *Socio-Economic Development Of Fishing Community In Andaman and Nicobar Islands*, Kitab Writing Publication, 2024, p.20.

dependence. At the heart of this historical narrative lies the matter of dominance, a pivotal theme underscoring the socio-economic dynamics of the era. The Mukkuvas found themselves at a distinct disadvantage, lacking the financial and social capital necessary to contend effectively for access to the curing yards. In this competitive landscape, the Moplahs, endowed with greater resources and influence, emerged as dominant players, securing control over the coveted market space. This power asymmetry perpetuated a systemic disadvantage for the Mukkuvas, hindering their ability to carve out a more equitable position within the industry.

Adding complexity to this historical tableau was the bureaucratic labyrinth erected by the Salt Department, imposing rigid rules and regulations that posed a formidable challenge to the Mukkuvas. Navigating this bureaucratic maze proved arduous, compounded by the unsympathetic stance of officials. The intended support for the fishermen community was undermined as these regulations created an additional layer of hardship, limiting the Mukkuvas' capacity to reap the full benefits intended by the British administration.

A further strand of disadvantage wove through the fabric of the Mukkuvas' existence – the cycle of debt and dependence. Driven by economic necessity, especially during off-seasons, the Mukkuvas found themselves compelled to borrow from the Moplah traders. This financial reliance established a precarious cycle, with the Mukkuvas ensnared in debt and perpetually dependent on the economic goodwill of the more affluent Moplahs. This cyclical dynamic entrenched their disadvantaged position, creating a web of economic vulnerability that extended through the entire industry.

A Beacon of Hope: The Petition as a Catalyst for Change:

Despite their struggles, the Mukkuvas did not succumb to despair. Instead, they channelled their collective voice into a petition addressed to Lord Pentland. This document, meticulously crafted and brimming with respect, lays bare their grievances and proposes concrete solutions. Their suggestions encompass:

- **Establishing a Dedicated Curing Yard:** The Mukkuvas propose a separate facility or a dedicated block within the existing yard, exclusively for their community. This would create a level playing field and shield them from Moplah domination.
- **Simplifying Regulatory Frameworks:** They advocate for a less stringent and more empathetic approach to managing the curing yards. They suggest placing the oversight under the purview of individuals like Sir F. A. Nicholson, whose expertise could prove invaluable in streamlining operations.
- **Curbing Coolie Migration:** To counter the influx of Moplah coolies, who posed a threat to their livelihood, the Mukkuvas urge for regulations or other measures to control their migration into the region.
- **Price Equalization:** They request the equalization of salt prices across Malabar and South Canara yards, ensuring fair competition and improved profitability for their community.
- **Investing in Education and Empowerment:** Recognizing the importance of education as a tool for advancement, the Mukkuvas propose free primary and higher education for their community. Additionally, they suggest establishing night schools in Chalil, Thalassery, Kerala modeled after the one in Tanur, offering specialized instruction in fisheries, equipping them with vital skills and knowledge.
- **Community Representation:** To ensure their voices are heard and concerns addressed, the Mukkuvas seek a seat on the Municipal Council for a prominent member of their community. This would grant them direct representation in local governance.
- **Financial Assistance:** To break free from the cycle of debt and invest in improving their boats and equipment, the Mukkuvas request access to loans on favourable terms, similar to those provided to farmers.

Beyond the Plea: A Window into Colonial Dynamics:

The Tellicherry fishermen's petition transcends its immediate context. It serves as a powerful lens through which we can examine the complexities of British colonial rule in India. It reveals the unintended consequences of well-intentioned policies, the struggle of marginalized communities for a fair share of economic opportunity, and the crucial role of education and empowerment in achieving social justice. This document stands as a testament to the human spirit's unwavering pursuit of equity and progress even in the face of adversity.

Under the British administration, mukkuva faced intricate challenges in its fishing industry, particularly concerning them. The boat owners, responsible for employing able-bodied fishermen, grappled with issues such as labor migration and economic disparities. Boat owners from North and South Canara Districts enticed these fishermen with promises of higher wages, causing irrecoverable advances and a shortage of labor during crucial seasons.

The Mukkuva community highlighted the educational struggles of their children, hindered by poverty and the precarious nature of their fishing profession. Sanitation issues in places like Chalil further underscored their plea for benevolent consideration. Additionally, the fishermen expressed dependence on Moplah middlemen due to financial constraints, resulting in significant losses and a cycle of impoverishment

The appeal concluded with expressions of loyalty to the British Throne and hope for victory in the ongoing global struggle. The fishermen thanked the authorities for their interest in the industry's challenges and looked forward to positive interventions. This historical account sheds light on the intricate socio-economic dynamics and the fishermen's relentless pursuit of justice and improvement during the British administration in Malabar.

CHAPTER 4

NAVIGATING COLONIAL CURRENTS: THE RISE OF FISHERIES EDUCATION IN MALABAR

The educational system in India has long been established within the societal fabric, featuring established structures of schools and higher education that preceded the British colonization in the latter half of the eighteenth century. These educational institutions operated under private management, overseen by diverse communities and religious sects. The state traditionally refrained from direct involvement in educational matters, allowing these institutions to operate independently. Furthermore, there was an absence of a comprehensive organizational network that could interconnect various educational entities. Higher learning centers, rooted in tradition, garnered support primarily from affluent individuals who perceived such patronage as both a religious duty and a social responsibility. It illuminates the decentralized and community-driven nature of education in pre-colonial India, it was setting the stage for the transformative shifts that would accompany the British influence on the educational landscape.

Malabar, as a district within the larger framework of the Madras Presidency during the British colonial era, did not receive the same level of attention and significance in the formulation of British policies. Unlike its counterpart, Travancore, where the propagation of English education flourished, Malabar experienced a more modest dissemination of English education. This discrepancy was mirrored in the unequal distribution of job opportunities associated with English education, with Malabar lagging behind Travancore in this regard.

In the early stages of English education in Malabar, individuals seeking such education were often limited to acquire it from Janmi families. This distinctive aspect underscores the localized and restricted avenues for accessing English education in the region during that period. The prevalence of English education in

Malabar did not match the scale witnessed in Travancore, reflecting the nuanced and region-specific impact of British educational policies.

The dynamics of the Malabar community played a pivotal role in shaping the pursuit of education and employment within the district. The community's engagement with the educational landscape was instrumental in both fostering educational aspirations and preserving traditional occupations. This interplay between education, employment, and the preservation of established livelihoods provides a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted impact of British educational policies on the socio-economic fabric of Malabar.

Malabar's educational trajectory within the British colonial context was characterized by a distinctive set of circumstances, compared to other regions. The differential spread of English education and the associated job opportunities underscore the need for a localized examination of the impact of colonial policies on education and employment dynamics in various districts within the Madras Presidency.¹

The British administrative reforms effectively commercialized the fisheries sector, fostering the emergence of a mild capitalist system along the Malabar coast. To support this, fisheries schools and cooperative societies were established within the fishermen's community. It is crucial to acknowledge, though, that these British interventions led to the disappearance of many local fishing enterprises, underscoring the complex impact of colonial policies on the fishing industry.

People must be free to move about and form associations in any modern civilization for it to survive. Although colonialism was associated with political hegemony, economic exploitation, and cultural oppression, it attempted to alter Kerala society by introducing modern English education, which helped to break down the tight caste barriers and intricate superstitions that plagued the state. In ancient Kerala, the upper castes held a monopoly on all aspects of political and

¹ K.N Ganesh, *Keralathinte Innalekal* (Mal), Kerala State Institute Of Languages, Thiruvanthapuram, 2011,p.p.176-79

social life. However, the social relationships of the people of Kerala underwent major structural alterations as a result of colonial administration. Social institutions, cultural practises, and individual attitudes all changed as a result of English education in society². In order to obtain their rights in society, educated people began working together through various groups.

Western education therefore sparked Kerala's socioeconomic change. The primary contribution of colonial education was the provision of education to all members of society, regardless of caste. Caste used to be a determining factor in someone's education because it was determined by caste. Only those from higher castes were beneficiaries of education.

The expansion of education throughout Kerala demonstrably correlated with a transformation in male attitudes towards women, resulting in their elevated social and economic status. Notably, Christian missionaries played a pivotal role in introducing Western pedagogical methods to the state³.

When the East India Company extended its political control over India One of the responsibilities that came with this agenda was education. With the expansion of the empire there arose the need to create some 'educated insiders' who would help in its administration and maintenance. Modern education was for the revival and improvement of literature and educating the population in western science and English along modern lines. Lately the historians of education have shown great interest in the policies and institutions of education established in the nineteenth century. Imperial interests shaped British educational policy in India. Many policies and initiatives strengthened administrative control and created a class of Indians predisposed to the Raj. These initiatives have been understood from a variety of historiographical frames. According to K.N Panikkar, the Introduction of secular education and relatively greater opportunity for participation in public affairs, the

² Surendra Prasad Sinha, *English in India: A Historical Study with Particular Reference to English Education in India*. India, Janaki Prakashan, 1978, p.93.

³ M. A. Oommen, *Rethinking Development: Kerala's Development Experience*. India, Institute of Social Sciences, Concept Publishing Company, 1999, p.100.

situation was not substantially different during the colonial period. The liberalising influence of English education as a social solvent is often emphasised and this impact however was limited to a small fraction of the population. The overwhelming majority of the people remained enclosed within the traditional cultural milieu even in the emergent culture of the English educated middle class. The forms of residual culture were quite prominently present and the changes in cultural consciousness and identity brought about by the avenues of secondary socialisation⁴ created by the colonial rule were therefore quiet marginal⁵ but Foucault's notion of discourse, and his ideas about social power were highly problematic in this regard. Foucault argued that after the beginning of the nineteenth century (which he characterises as inaugurating the 'modern' epoch), the dominant structures of Western societies reproduce themselves by working insidiously rather than spectacularly upon the human subject and especially the human body. Human beings internalise the systems of repression and reproduce them by conforming to certain ideas of what is normal and what is deviant. Thus, our ideas about madness, criminality or sexuality are regulated through institutions such as the madhouse or the prison, and also by certain ideological 'regimes'. Power does not emanate from some central or hierarchical structure but flows through society in a sort of capillary action: 'Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere'⁶

The Wood's Despatch holds a significant place in the history of Indian education due to its immense historical significance. It discussed the issue of securing qualified teachers for schools, proposing the establishment of training schools in India modelled after those in England. While England also faced a shortage of such institutions, the problem was more pronounced in India due to difficulties in finding properly educated individuals for teaching roles. The Despatch

⁴ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, United Kingdom, Taylor & Francis, 2024, p.150.

⁵ K.N. Panikkar, *Colonialism, Culture and Resistance*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2009, p.46.

⁶ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism-Post Colonialism*, Rout ledge Publishers, London, 1988, p.41

urged the prompt establishment of training schools and classes for teachers in each presidency in India⁷, emphasizing the importance of providing stipends to support teachers during their training.

Additionally, the Despatch highlighted other education-related challenges, including the need for suitable school books in Indian languages, the importance of vocational education, and the establishment of vocational colleges and industrial schools⁸. The practical component of education was aimed at giving students a broad set of skills that could help them enter the manual labor force more easily, rather than training them for a specific job. The idea was to foster vocational readiness, meaning that students would have the basic skills needed to adapt to different types of manual work, but not necessarily the expertise required for any particular trade. It also emphasized the urgency of expanding education among women. The British government had taken the initiatives in promoting fisheries government teacher's training schools under the British government. Elementary Education with Vocational Overtones .As per the Resolution of the Government of India, 1882, the principal object of the enquiry of the Hunter Commission was the development of elementary education which was one of the main objects contemplated by the Despatch of 1854. The Commission therefore boldly admitted that while every branch of education can justly claim the fostering care of the state, it is desirable, in those circumstances of the country, to declare the elementary education of the masses, its provision, extension and improvement to be that part of the educational system to which the strenuous efforts of the state should now be directed in a still larger measure than heretofore. The Commission recommended that primary education should be closely related to the practical aspect of the masses and so while allowing considerable catholicity of views in allowing all the provinces to adopt a Curriculum suited to their needs, they recommended that such curriculum should include certain subjects of practical utility, such as, book-keeping, arithmetic and natural and physical sciences with their application to agriculture, health and

⁷ Suresh Chandra Gosh, *The History of Education in Modern India 1757-2012*, Orient Black Swan, New Delhi, 2015, p.95.

⁸ Tarun Rashtriya, *Vocational Education*, APH Publishing Corporation, 2005, p.p.117-18

industrial arts⁹. The government encouraged primary education by throwing appointments at a lower level to merely literate persons who can read and write-and provided liberal grants-in-aid to primary education in tribal regions and educationally backward. While The Provision for Educationally Backward Classes of Muslim and Women, the Commission was anxious to extend the benefits of primary education to the backward classes including aboriginal tribes and low castes through an exemption of fees, the disparity in the educational progress of the Hindu and Muslim communities as well as of males and females also attracted the attention of its members. The Commission recommended special educational facilities to the Muslims¹⁰ which was also benefited to the coastal students and for encouragement of indigenous Muslim schools like the establishment of Muslim High, Middle and Primary Schools and Normal Schools as well as institution of scholarship and Studentship from primary to college level¹¹

Training Institutions for Teachers and its Resolution accepted the Hunter Commission's recommendation that an examination in the principles and practice of teaching should be made a condition for permanent employment as a teacher in any secondary school, if, in a word, European knowledge is to be diffused by the methods proper to it. There existed, at Madras, Allahabad, Lahore and Jabalpur institutions in which teachers were trained for service. The Resolution spoke in favour of developing training institutions for secondary school teachers which should be as well-equipped as Arts Colleges, with good practising schools attached to each one of them. The period of training for students in a Training College must be at least two years, except in the case of graduates, for whom one year's training might suffice. It should be a university course, culminating in a university degree or diploma.

⁹ R. P. Pathak, *Development and Problems of Indian Education*, Pearson Education India, 2012. p.163-64.

¹⁰ Jose Abraham, *Islamic Reform and Colonial Discourse on Modernity in India: Socio-Political and Religious Thought of Vakkom Moulavi*, United Kingdom, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. p.66.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.96-97.

The scheme of instruction should be determined by the authorities of the Training College and by the Education Department and the examination at the close of it should be controlled by the same authorities, recommended an orientation programme for the trained teachers for to make better impact on secondary school teaching.

The Resolution felt that there should be an increase in the number of Normal Schools for primary teachers particularly in some provinces like Bengal, with an increase in the salaries paid to primary teachers to induce them to undergo a course of training which should in future be of a duration not less than two years. For the rural schools the object of courses should be to serve the more limited and practical purpose of supplying them with teachers whose stock in trade was not mere book learning, and whose interests had been aroused in the study of rural activities, so believed that it able to connect their teaching with the objects which were familiar to the children in the country or village schools¹².

After constant consultations and studies in the coastal malabar The director of public instructions approved by government, attaining institute for special school masters who under the scheme have varied duties to perform had been also sanctioned, a headmaster appointed and work began in a preliminary way on the 14th July 1919. several preliminary schools were started by private agencies in certain villages¹³

Among the important features were the new developments to transfer the department of number of fish curing yards on the west coast from the salt and abkari department to be run on model lines, the reorganisation of aquarium and the control was transferred to the department of fisheries and the institution of a special scheme for the education of the Fisher children and the training of their children¹⁴

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 131.

¹³ James Hornell, F.L.S, Madras *Fishery Investigation 1920 Administration Report– Bulletin no 12, Government Press, Madras, 1927, p.35*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.62

The social activity of the fisheries department aimed at the betterment of the fishing community was under the efficient control of Rao Bahadur v. Govindan, Assistant Director of fisheries. The training institute for pupil teachers opened in July 1919. Thirty four students underwent training and out of six, who completed the three year course of instruction, successfully passed in the Final examination. Besides the usual course of training for teachers in elementary schools, the students were given frequent appointments to learn the rudiments of the fish products industries as carried on at the Cannery and the experimental stations. A fishing canoe with its gear was also at their disposal and they were sent to sea periodically in batches to learn the first-hand rudiments of fishing the sale proceedings of fish caught on these fishing trips amounted to Rs. 296. Trained final year students how to manage a co-operative society one was started among the students themselves; the senior outgoing students became the office bearers. besides the Scout groups was also organised among them. By analysing the annual growth, the fisheries training institute at Vellayil in Calicut continued to increase in usefulness, forty pupils were under training in the year 1922

More practical work in fishing net making, hemp spinning and twine making was done by the pupils. Two canoes were regularly used day and night with various kinds of nets whenever weather permitted the pupils and teachers to go out for fishing. The total quantity of fish caught by them sold for Rs. 140-7-6. The students went on excursion for 20 days to Tanur experimental station, chaliyam cannery and to a number of fishing villages on the coast. The final year students spent ten days with the coastal assistant director in visiting important fishing centres on the south Canara coast as far as the Malpe during this tour they exhibited Magic lantern pictures in out of the fishing hamlet ; this was very much appreciated by the Fisher folk in the addition to other subjects were also tested in their practical knowledge of rowing and handling of boats .The school co-operative society ,which was organised and give practical knowledge in co-operation to the students, has worked actively and proved of much practical use. Another interesting fact is that the school scout troop was inspected by the territorial commissioner and took an active participation in the district scout rally held at Calicut. They underwent training to qualify. Eleven

of them also underwent the second years training course in the territorial force at kannur¹⁵

Recognizing the need for practical carpentry skills in a fishing village, the training institute replaced its carpentry instructor with a carpenter experienced in repairing canoes and crafting fishing implements, despite the lower salary involved. The number of other teachers employed in these schools were 63 (53 in day and 10 in night schools) and 6 of them were fisheries trained men belonging to the first batch of teachers turned out by the fisheries training institute, Calicut, after three years course, three were Canaries men trained with fisheries stipends at Mangalore training institute.

Drawn by the allure of the fishing season, especially lucrative nighttime drift net fishing and bountiful sardine catches, adult students prioritized fishing over evening classes, leading to the closure of four night schools due to low attendance.¹⁶

British government provided industrial education in Kerala soaps industry; the institute owes its origin to the interested labours of Sir Frederic Nicholson who attempted at soap manufacture were at Tanur fisheries experimental stations in 1914-15, where fish oil soap was first made and purifying fish oil at factory. This soap which was in great demand among planters and other officials. Household and toilet soaps were manufactured on a fairly large scale and they were well known throughout India for their pure quality and low price, industries were set up in Vellayil, Kozhikode and Thanur in Malappuram. The institutes trained young men in the art of soap making to enable them to open or manage soap factories on a commercial scale in various parts of India and Burma, and since 1927 several batches of students have been trained and sent out. The factory at Vellayil Sea coast trained pupils where the soaps sent to Bombay presidency for the British high officials.

¹⁵ James Hornell, Madras Fisheries Administration Report 1922-23, Government Press, Madras, 1927, p .38.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.40

An examination of the Fisheries Training Institute in Kozhikode, Malabar, during the academic year 1924-1925 reveals a dynamic tapestry woven from the threads of social, academic, and professional development.¹⁷ This narrative delves into the Institute's inner workings, casting light on its triumphs and challenges through the lens of both social sciences and humanities.

The year witnessed a significant shift in the Institute's pedagogical landscape. Mr. K. Sukumaran, a graduate from the Mukkuva community and the acting First Assistant, returned from his Teacher Training at Saidapet Teachers College in April, marking the first instance of a fully trained staff at the Institute. This development augured well for the quality of instruction and student mentorship.

In Mr. Sukumaran's absence, A.G. Spadikam, the Headmaster of the Kaipamangalam Government Fisheries Higher Elementary School, played a pivotal role in ensuring the continuity of academic pursuits. Recognizing the need for readily available educational resources, Mr. Moses meticulously compiled a Malayalam textbook titled "Janthu Shastra Kurippugal" (Notes on Zoology). The manuscript, meticulously reviewed, held the promise of enriching future learning experiences¹⁸.

The Institute's hostel bustled with the vibrant energy of its residents, a diverse group of 24 students. This microcosm of Kerala's social fabric encompassed young men from various Hindu sub-castes, non-Hindu communities like Muslims and Christians, and fishermen and non-fishermen alike. Sharing meals in the common mess fostered a sense of camaraderie and cultural exchange.

The year 1924-1925 saw a renewed emphasis on practical training. With a fully trained staff, the Institute could effectively guide its pupil teachers in the art of instruction. Beyond the confines of the Institute, valuable hands-on experience was gleaned through observation sessions at the Saint Anthony Higher Elementary School.

¹⁷ Charles Innes, F.B Evans and K.N Krishna Swami Ayer (Eds.), *Madras District Gazetteers 1906*, Government Press, Madras, 1933, p.275

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

The pursuit of academic excellence was complemented by a vibrant extracurricular life. The Pupil Teachers' Literary Society and Games Club provided avenues for intellectual and physical recreation, fostering a well-rounded development among the students. The reading room, stocked with diverse periodicals like *The Malayala Manorama*, *Paraspara Sahaya*, and *The South Indian Boy*, further stimulated their intellectual curiosity.

The Institute's dedication to quality education did not go unnoticed. Inspections by the District Educational Officer and the Inspector of Industrial Schools lauded the Institute's progress, highlighting the effectiveness of its teaching methods and commending the carpentry section's exceptional work despite challenging circumstances.

Despite the prevailing scarcity of fish in Calicut, the students persevered, utilizing three boats provided by the Institute to hone their practical skills at sea. Their efforts bore fruit, culminating in a catch worth Rs. 116, a testament to their resilience and adaptability.¹⁹

Students' cooperative society was started to give practical training to the students in the management of a cooperative society²⁰ carried on its usual work the audit report described that the Assistant Registrar expressed his pleasure at the good work done by the society. In that year the society had a share capital of RS 51812 deposit of Rs 236 reserve fund of Rs 41-13-10 and accumulated common good fund of Rs 12-12-6 and a net profit of Rs 40-8-2. This common good fund was utilised for subscribing for some journals for the students reading room²¹

The institute scout troop was especially active those years due to the new scout master Mr Kunni Kannan. The troop included 22 people teachers and 4

¹⁹ B. Sundara Raj, *Madras Fisheries Administration Report -1924-25*, Government Press, Madras,1926, pp.58-59.

²⁰ S. Vathsala and Uma K. Srivastava (ed.), *Strategy for Development of Inland Fishery Resources in India: Key Issues in Production and Marketing*.India, Concept,1984, p.472.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp.60-61

members of the fisheries Training Institute staff and registered as a Sea Scout troop 24 members of the troop attended the scout Jamboree at Madras in December 1925, one of them won the first prize in hundred yards race for Rovers²². 8 of the Scouts had secured the efficiency batch of swimmers and 5 that of carpenter. An important service rendered by the Scouts was the part played by them in the Health Programme in Vellayil. during the health week the Scouts were very active in cleaning the village, and when the plague broke out, they persuaded the people to get themselves inoculated. The municipal health authorities in their report of the health week have made special mention of the fisheries Training Institute scouts

Since the close of that year the government had appointed a selection committee to regulate the admission of students to the fisheries training institute. The assistant director of fisheries was the president, and the headmaster of the fisheries Training Institute was only other official member on the committee. There were four other members who were all non-official three of them were fishermen and one was a Mohammedan and engaged in fish trade. The three fishermen represented the South Canara District. The two fishermen representing Malabar, one was a moonillakkar fisherman belonging to the Ponnani Taluk and the other was a mukuva belonging to the Calicut but the vellayil night school had been closed because of the poor attendance of the pupils²³

It is evident that throughout the British era, there were wide variations in the modern educational establishments other than fisheries institutions in the Kozhikode region of the Malabar district. Charter act of 1813 and 1833 opened to the missionaries paved the way for spread of education and culture²⁴ among the society especially in lower classes, the Basel evangelical mission opened a primary school at Kallay in 1848, which was transferred ten years later to more spacious building in Calicut and in 1872 raised to a middle and to High School in 1878. The high school developed into a second-grade college Malabar Christian college in 1907 nearby

²² Madras Bulletin, India, Superintendent, Government Press, 1927. p.61

²³ *Ibid.*,

²⁴ Penelope, Carson, *The East India Company and Religion, 1698-1858*, United Kingdom, Boydell Press, 2012. p.198

Vellayil. On the breaking out of the war of 1914 -18, the Britishers had taken the decision that German missionaries had to give up the work and leave the country on those times; and the college was then being managed by the local Christians²⁵.

The Indian officials and business men desired a convent school with English as a medium of instruction, for their children. The Providence, Secondary School for girls was opened in 1928 and was shifted to the present site in 1931. Mother Leonora A.C. with her untiring spirit and dauntless courage and the support of the public put up the school building²⁶. D Souza Doris recorded that the student and staff population of the school in Calicut is purely localite and indianized in culture and outlook. Their entertainment tastes are Indian. This portrays the importance given to preserve traditional culture, develop the local language and art forms in Calicut town. A great sense of social awareness, justice, solidarity and co-operation is seen in the school personnel. This because of the respect for the dignity and right of the individual, particularly the labourer that is fostered in the locality.²⁷

Fisheries institution

Malabar was an important territory of the British as part of the Madras Presidency. During the British rule, several anti-colonial struggles took place in Malabar. Most of the people of Malabar were landlords or cultivators in the plains and highlands, while the rest were fishermen in the coastal areas. The initial sections were farmers and the second were fishermen in coastal villages like Tanur, Parapanangadi and Tirur, the life of fishermen was miserable compared to Muslim farmers in Malabar during the British period. But it is noteworthy that the coastal fishermen were not active participants in the anti-colonial struggle against the British in Malabar. It was only a struggle by the Muslim peasant landlords of Malabar against the British because of the injustice and predatory land revenue policy of the British.

²⁵ Charles Innes, *Op. Cit.*, p.282

²⁶ D Souza Doris, *A study of organizational purpose and distinctive organizational character of apostolic Carmel secondary schools for girls in India*, unpublished thesis, Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda, 1989, pp.12-13

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 443-44

Following the Malabar Rebellion, the British colonial administration in Malabar implemented a socio-economic division, categorizing the populace into two groups: the agrarian community, primarily composed of Muslims, and the coastal fishermen, predominantly Hindus. In dealing with the farmers, the British adhered to their existing policy of landlordism, maintaining the peasants as tenants rather than granting them ownership of the land. However, a distinct approach was adopted to enhance the well-being of coastal fishermen. This strategy encompassed the establishment of fisheries schools, provision of fishing equipment, and the introduction of training programs aimed at cultivating expertise in fisheries.

In 1919, the inception of the Fisheries Training Institute marked a significant milestone within the Fishermen Education Scheme, championed by Sir FA Nicholson in Kerala²⁸. The primary goal of this initiative was to foster the social and educational advancement of fishing communities, thereby contributing to the sustainable growth of the fishing industry.

Sir FA Nicholson had been actively involved in advancing the fishing industry in Kerala since 1907. Recognizing that the social and educational underdevelopment of fishing communities posed a substantial impediment to their industrial and economic progress, he conceived an education program designed to uplift fishermen through educational means. The establishment of the Fisheries Training Institute was a key component of this overarching project. The institute played a crucial role in providing education and training pertaining to the economics of the fisheries industry.

The condition of fisheries schools in British Malabar, as evidenced by the historical communication from James Hornnel, the Director of Fisheries, provides valuable insights into the educational landscape and administrative challenges faced during the early 20th century. The first action the British took to combat unemployment and poverty among the fishing community was to construct fisheries schools throughout Malabar. Offering educational opportunities was one of the

²⁸ Malcolm Tull, and Joseph Christensen, *Historical Perspectives of Fisheries Exploitation in the Indo-Pacific*, Springer Netherlands, 2014.p.57

Fisheries department's one of the major initiatives targeted at the general improvement of the fishing community. With this objective in mind, the department opened large number of primary, day and night schools in primarily fishing community along the west coast. The Madappally School in the Malabar district emerges as a focal point in this communication. The Assistant Director of the coast reports a notable increase in student enrollment, reaching 75, with indications of further growth. This caused the stage for the central issue that the need for additional teaching staff to accommodate the burgeoning student population.

The existing framework, as per the Government order of that period, sanctions the appointment of two teachers. However, adherence to Madras educational rules reveals a misalignment with the actual demand, as admitting more than 60 pupils necessitates the hiring of an additional teacher. Director Hornnel's appeal for the sanctioning of a third teacher on the standard pay scale reflects the pragmatic approach to address this discrepancy. The financial aspect is addressed, with the assurance from Mr. Hornnel that the extra cost associated with the new appointment can be covered from savings under the day and night schools in the particular year's Fishery Bureau budget. This showcases a resourceful strategy to manage budgetary constraints while fulfilling the educational requirements of the fisheries school. The subsequent draft order proposes a flexible solution by allowing the Director of Fisheries to hire an additional teacher when the number of pupils exceeds 80. This anticipatory approach aligns with the Director's foresight regarding the potential growth in school strength.

The Government's response, manifested in G.O. No. 11 dated 27th August 1920, reflects a practical and supportive stance. Sanctioning the employment of an additional teacher, the order outlines the approved salary and provisions for additional remuneration if required.²⁹ Importantly, the appointment is sanctioned until a specified date or until the school's strength reaches a level warranting an extra teacher, these all demonstrating adaptability to the dynamic nature of student enrolment. While discussing balancing of educational needs with budgetary

²⁹ G.O. No. 11,1920, Development departments, RAK

constraints in expanding the fisheries School. on 19th November in 1936 reveals a proposal from the Development Department for additional teacher employment at the South Nattika Fisheries School. This document, addressed to the Finance Committee, discusses about the allocation of funds for the said purpose.

Strength of the South Nattika Fisheries School was 257 students distributed across various classes.³⁰ The staff consisted of seven teachers. The Director of Fisheries recommended the opening of VIII standard in the current year and suggests the need for a Secondary grade teacher for this purpose. Additionally, he proposed splitting the III and IV standards due to an average attendance of over 40 students, requesting two additional teachers of the Higher Elementary Grade.

The Development Department supports the opening of the VIII standard but suggests that a Higher Elementary Grade teacher would suffice. Regarding the request for two additional teachers, the department suggest that the existing teachers can be managed by reshuffling classes, ensuring not more than 40 pupils per teacher. By this procedure the expenditure for the Secondary grade teacher was expected to be covered by the sanctioned allotment to the Fisheries Department.

In response, the Finance Department notes that the proposal should be presented before the Finance Committee. The Assistant Director of Fisheries, Dr. B. Sundara Raj, provides further insights. He pointed out that, as per regulations, teachers for standards above V should ordinarily hold secondary trained teachers' certificates. With standards VI to VIII in the South Nattika school, it suggested that two secondary grade teachers are required instead of a Higher Elementary grade teacher.³¹ It illuminates the challenges faced by fisheries schools in British Malabar, emphasizing the adaptability of administrative processes to address the evolving educational needs. It also underscores the commitment to providing quality

³⁰ G.O. No. 2249,1936, Development departments, RAK

³¹ G. O NO. 2249., 1936, Development Department, RAK

education in the face of changing circumstances, shedding light on the resourceful strategies employed during this period.³²

Government's educational initiatives in remote coastal areas

In a noteworthy initiative to bridge the educational divide in remote coastal villages, the Government of Madras has approved the establishment of six new elementary schools catering specifically to the needs of fisher-children. These schools, strategically located in the villages of Nattika, Mannalakunnu, Parapanangadi, Kasargod, Valiangode, and Chombala, addressed the critical gap in educational access faced by a significant number of fisher-children who lack formal schooling opportunities due to the absence of nearby institutions. The impetus for this initiative stems from a comprehensive assessment conducted by the Director of Fisheries, who identified the educational disparities prevalent among fisher-children residing in remote coastal areas. The Director's proposal poignantly highlighted the lack of access to education for these children, impeding their ability to develop fundamental literacy skills and fully participate in society.

To effectively address this pressing concern, each of the six new schools equipped with one Head Master and one Assistant Teacher. The Head Masters, recognized for their expertise and dedication to the education of fisher-children, received a competitive monthly salary of Rs 25, supplemented by a special pay of Rs 2. Assistant Teachers, equally committed to nurturing the educational growth of their students, it had compensated with a monthly salary of Rs 20.³³ Acknowledging the need for temporary infrastructure, the Government endorsed a two-year timeframe for the operation of these schools. Additionally, the proposal to rent a building for each school at a monthly rental of Rs 3 had been sanctioned, ensuring adequate and accessible learning spaces for the students.

The Director of Fisheries' meticulously crafted estimates for contingent expenditure associated with these schools had been approved, paving the way for the

³² G. O NO.419, 1924, Development Department, RAK

³³ G O NO .761, Dated 12/04/1924, Development Department, RAK

smooth functioning of these educational institutions. The Government's decision to defer the Director's proposal to employ additional teachers in the six existing elementary schools until the necessity arises reflects a prudent approach to resource allocation and ensures that teacher deployment aligns with actual student needs.

The opening of these six new elementary schools were marked a pivotal step towards bridging the educational gap faced by fisher-children in remote coastal areas. By providing access to quality education, these schools empowered fisher-children to learn, grow, and contribute meaningfully to their communities. The Government's commitment to expanding educational opportunities for all, regardless of their background or location, is commendable and sets a positive precedent for future endeavours in the realm of education equity. This initiative serves as a testament to the Government's unwavering dedication to fostering a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape for all its citizens.

Fisheries School in Puduponnani

In the historical records of Puduponnani, the pivotal year of 1933 emerges as a significant chapter, characterized by the earnest appeal of its residents for the establishment of a Fisheries school.³⁴ This coastal community, situated in the Malabar District, voiced dissatisfaction with the prevailing private school, deeming it insufficient in catering to the educational needs of their children. At the heart of their discontent was the school's failure to provide specialized knowledge and skills essential for their maritime-based livelihoods. The endorsement of this proposal found validation in the observations of the Inspector of Fisheries in Chowghat in June 1934, who reported that the private school in the village faced a stark disconnection between a potential enrolment of nearly 400 students (boys and girls) and the harsh reality of only 80 children attending the two available schools. This unfortunate situation stemmed from various factors, primarily rooted in widespread ignorance. The lack of attendance was not solely due to the community's

³⁴ G O NO .78, sl.11, B.24 Dated 28/09/1935, Development Department, RAK

unawareness of the importance of education but was exacerbated by deficiencies in the school's management.

The management of the primary school, in particular, emerged as a significant obstacle to effective education. Officials noted that the manager's shortcomings in both religious and secular instruction constituted a critical flaw. This deficiency not only compromised the quality of education but also perpetuated a cycle of ignorance within the community. Adding to this challenge was the composition of the teaching staff, predominantly comprising young individuals who had only completed up to the 3rd or 4th standard and lacked formal training in pedagogy. The lamentable state of affairs was further accentuated by the absence of proficient educators in the school's history. The institution had never experienced the guidance of a skilled and trained teacher capable of delivering quality education. Even a brief tenure with a trained teacher proved unsustainable, leading to a legal dispute over the non-payment of the teacher's salary, indicating deeper issues within the school's administrative practices.

The educational landscape in the village had grappled with a dual challenge: the pervasive ignorance among the community and inadequacies in the management and staffing of existing schools. The urgency to address these issues becomes apparent when considering the untapped potential represented by the substantial number of school-age children in the village. Effective solutions have extended beyond mere enrollment drives to encompass comprehensive reforms in management, teacher training, and the cultivation of an environment conducive to quality education.

On this alarming state of the local school, underscoring the urgent need for educational reform. The shortcomings identified, such as unqualified teachers, a lack of a structured timetable, and an unfamiliarity with the term 'curriculum,' paint a dismal picture of the educational environment. This situation has tangible consequences, as the attending children are revealed to be receiving minimal benefits from the instruction, impeding their intellectual growth. The perspective on the British Education Administration's approach reveals a distinct emphasis on

religious education. In contrast to the prevalent trend in modern education, which prioritizes secular instruction, the British educational reports from that era underscored the paramount importance of religious education in Mappila schools³⁵. The meticulous scrutiny applied by the British administrators at the time reflected a profound belief in the significance of religious teachings.

In the context of modern educational norms, where secular subjects often take precedence, the British colonial administration's keen attention to religious education stands out. Their reports suggested a willingness to question teachers and administrators if the religious aspect was not adequately addressed in Mappila schools. This scrutiny was not merely a formality; rather, it signified the administration's conviction that religious education was a vital component of a well-rounded educational system. Sundara Raj, the Director of Fisheries during that period, emerged as a prominent advocate for the importance of Muslim religious studies in Mappila schools. His specific mention of the significance of religious education underscores the nuanced understanding of the colonial administrators regarding the cultural and religious context of the educational institutions they oversaw.

The British administrators, by placing a considerable emphasis on religious education, recognized it as a valuable and integral part of the educational experience in Mappila schools. This historical perspective prompts us to reflect on the evolving priorities in education and the nuanced balance between secular and religious instruction. As we navigate the complexities of contemporary educational systems, it becomes crucial to consider the historical roots that have shaped our approach to education, particularly in the realm of religious studies. Sundararaj, the Director of Fisheries, recorded as follows in his report:

“One of the most concerning revelations is the prolonged stagnation of students in the same class for 6 or 7 years without acquiring substantial religious or secular knowledge. The root cause is attributed to the ignorance of both teachers and

³⁵ K. Mohammed Basheer, *Quality Enhancement in Madrasa Education: An Exploratory Study*. United Kingdom, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016. p.47

the Molla associated with the school. Particularly alarming is the absence of meaningful religious instruction, with doubts cast upon the efficacy of the religious education provided. The teacher-manager, who also assumes the role of the Molla, adds another layer of concern by demanding substantial remuneration for religious instruction, resorting to legal measures for fee collection.”³⁶

In a community where education is recognized as a transformative force, it is disheartening to learn that the existing school is doing more harm than good. Attempts to establish a more effective school have been consistently thwarted, as the denial of a proper school persists due to the continued existence of the current nominal institution. The petitioners, in an earnest display of sincerity, extend an invitation for the inspection of the school and its records. They express confidence that an unbiased assessment would validate the accuracy of their depiction of the school's deplorable state. Frustrated by years of unsuccessful attempts to persuade the manager to improve the quality of education, the community took a decisive step by submitting a memorial to the Fisheries Department on June 25, 1933, seeking the establishment of a Fisheries school.³⁷

The District Educational Officer's claim of improvement in the aided school, the petitioners call for a comprehensive inspection by both the District Educational Officer and the Assistant Director (Coast). They advocated for thorough inquiries to verify the accuracy of their claims and emphasize the pressing need for the establishment of a Fisheries school that would genuinely benefit the community. A prior visit by the District Educational Officer and the Deputy Inspector of Schools highlighted the school's deficiency—while a few children were present, the school lacked the necessary teaching staff. These revelations collectively underscore the critical need for immediate intervention and the establishment of an effective educational institution that can truly serve the educational needs of the community. It takes a curious turn with the intervention of the Assistant Director of Fisheries (Coast), who, after a thorough investigation, discerned glaring inadequacies in the

³⁶ *Ibid.*,

³⁷ *Ibid.*,

private school's performance. His recommendation for the removal of the school from the list of recognized institutions, however, met with resistance from the District Educational Officer. This resistance, grounded in assurances of improvement from the school management, temporarily halted the proposal for a Fisheries school. In June 1934, the resilient voice of Puduponnani's fishermen echoed once more, emphasizing the persistent shortcomings of the private school. The ensuing dialogue between the Assistant Director of Fisheries (Coast) and the District Educational Officer revealed a recurring stance: further monitoring of the private school was imperative before contemplating its closure.

Undeterred by these reservations, the Director of Fisheries, attuned to the community's appeals and cognizant of the private school's unsatisfactory condition, sought approval from the Director of Public Instruction. The nod from the Director of Public Instruction acknowledged the community's need for specialized education aligned with their maritime livelihoods, paving the way for a proposal to establish a Fisheries school in the village. This proposal, meticulously crafted by the Director of Fisheries, sought the sanction of the Madras Government to inaugurate a Fisheries school in Puduponnani. The envisioned school, with its inaugural staff of three – a headmaster and two assistants – was categorized as a Part II Scheme for the financial year 1936-1937.

The establishment of a Fisheries school in Puduponnani emerged as an imperative step in addressing the educational lacunae of the local fishing community. Beyond mere academic pursuits, the school's focus on practical fisheries education held the promise of elevating the socio-economic well-being of Puduponnani. The recommendation, therefore, is a resounding call to the Madras Government to endorse this proposal, recognizing the compelling need for specialized education among the fishing community and the profound positive impact it could wield on their socioeconomic fabric. This historical narrative beckons not only for approval but for the continuation of a legacy – a legacy of education tailored to the needs of a community deeply rooted in its maritime traditions.

Charting Educational Initiatives: A Comprehensive Overview of British Government Endeavours in Fisheries

The Assistant Director of Fisheries, acting on behalf of the British Government, furnishes an intricate narrative detailing educational initiatives, specifically improving in on a specialized primary school situated within the government curing yard. This comprehensive account delineates the nuanced approach adopted to shape the educational milieu for young learners. The primary school, hosting a cohort of 23 pupils, transcends conventional elementary education, integrating technical subjects such as carpentry, and the preparation of twine and cotton for net fabrication into its curriculum. It is evident that a specific carpentry teacher was assigned to instruct the students in carpentry.³⁸ The pedagogical framework encompasses practical skills, including net mending. Noteworthy is the submission of an application to the Educational Department for official recognition and support as a grant-in-aid institution, underscoring an earnest pursuit of institutional acknowledgment. It conveys the idea that the primary school established within the government curing yard goes beyond traditional elementary education. It incorporated with the practical and the technical subjects, such as vocational education into its curriculum. Moreover, the school had formally applied to the Educational Department, sought official recognition and support as a grant-in-aid institution. This emphasizes the school's commitment to gaining institutional acknowledgment and support for its specialized educational approach.

The British records accentuates the hands-on involvement of students in the curing shed, actively participating in curing operations. Additionally, select students are dispatched in the canoe carrier to procure fish from the sea for the government yard. Financial education, often emphasized in educational settings, aims to equip students with skills for managing their finances effectively. However, addressing the enduring indebtedness of the fishing community requires a broader understanding of the systemic factors that contribute to it, beyond individual financial habits. Pupils were actively encouraged to initiate savings bank deposits in the local post office,

³⁸ Fort St. George gazette, 1919, http://103.251.43.202/fort_gazette/index.php

with several adolescents above the age of sixteen initiated such financial endeavours. This initiative focused to instil financial responsibility and empower the younger generation to make informed financial decisions, observed that it should had potentially breaking the cycle of perpetual indebtedness that had affected the fishing community.³⁹

The strategic positioning of the school within the government curing yard served a dual purpose. During the periods of heightened demand for processing marine commodities like sardines and prawns, the student body were provided an agile workforce. This symbiotic arrangement was meticulously designed to furnish students with practical insights, augmenting their proficiency and comprehension of the intricacies of the fishing industry. Visual aids, incorporating images depicted fisheries and related subjects, were tactically employed, with forthcoming plans involving the incorporation of an optical lantern—a tool anticipated to elevate visual instruction and entice adult learners.

The report transcends the immediate scope of the primary school, casting light on the Tānur evening school. This educational institution maintained its focus on elementary education and pertinent industrial operations. The Assistant Director underscores the imperative of enhancing the allure of these educational ventures, particularly in areas like the East Coast, where fishing hamlets were characterized by overgrowth of prickly-pear, precipitating unsanitary conditions. In such locales, a preference is discerned for sanitation enhancements over the establishment of educational facilities. The report accentuates the intricate interplay between environmental factors, such as unclean surroundings and contaminated water, and pervasive issues like intemperance and disease. On a broader scale, the report delineates a comprehensive strategy for the betterment of fisherfolk. This holistic blueprint integrates government-backed loans for procuring boats and nets, the establishment of cooperative societies, and educational initiatives. The emphasis

³⁹ Annual Report 1917-18, Madras Fisheries Bulletin No .10, Madras Government Press, RAK

extends beyond mere fisheries development, encompassing the holistic advancement of the fisherfolk community.

The role of education assumes an increasingly pivotal stance, mirroring the growing significance of cooperation within the overarching framework. It acknowledges the Assistant Director's pivotal role in facilitating the establishment of evening schools in Thalayi in Kannur district and Kuriyadi in Calicut. Additionally, a collaborative venture with the Jnanodaya Samaj⁴⁰ at Mangalore⁴¹ underscores a synergistic approach to educational and social reform endeavors. Governmental backing, exemplified by a half-grant for constructing an educational hall, amplifies the scope and impact of these initiatives. The report references governmental communications and directives, specifically citing a Government Order (G.O.) dated January 3, 1917⁴². This official document underscores the government's keen interest in extending elementary education among fisherfolk. The Director of Public Instruction is urged to deliberate on this matter in consultation with the Fisheries Department, paved the way for systematic efforts in this direction. While acknowledging the infeasibility of Fishery Educational Institutes, as understood internationally, the report ardently advocated for the expeditious establishment of fishery schools. These envisioned institutions deployed in distinctive methods and the teaching approaches were tailored to the unique needs of the fishing community. The Assistant Director's engagement with trustees overseeing a substantial endowment for education at an East Coast port introduces a hopeful dimension to the report. This interaction hints at prospective collaborations and specialized initiatives within the educational domain.

⁴⁰ Jnanodaya Samaj Mandir, founded by Mohanappa Thingalaya in 1910 and completed in 1919, were addressed alcohol addiction among fishermen in Mangaluru. It also became a significant site for the Indian independence movement, with Mahatma Gandhi delivered a speech on the dangers of alcohol there in 1934.

For a detailed account, see "Jnanodaya Samaj Mandir: Steeped in History," Deccan Herald, February 24, 2019,

<https://www.deccanherald.com/india/karnataka/jnanodaya-samaj-mandir-720026.html>.

⁴¹ Madras (India: Presidency). Fisheries Department, Bulletin. India, Superintendent, Government Press, 1927.p.67.

⁴² Ibid.,

The report offers a panoramic depiction of the intricate educational undertakings orchestrated by the British Government in the realm of fisheries. The narrative underscores the significance of practical skills, cooperative learning, and the overarching socio-economic development of the fisherfolk community within this multifaceted endeavour.

The Decline of the Fisheries Training Institute and the Plight of E. Raman Menon: A Case Study in Transition and Injustice

In the annals of Malabar's colonial educational landscape, the story of the Fisheries Training Institute and its Head Master, E. Raman Menon, stands as a poignant testament to the human cost of shifting governmental priorities and departmental reorganizations. Founded in 1919 with the noble aim of training teachers for elementary schools under the aegis of the Fisheries Department, the institute fulfilled a crucial role in fostering education specifically tailored to the needs of fishing communities.⁴³ However, the winds of change swept through the bureaucratic corridors in 1937, bringing an abrupt end to the institute's existence due to policy shifts concerning the establishment of new fishery schools. Menon, who had diligently served as the institute's Head Master for 18 years, found himself caught in the vortex of bureaucratic eddies. With the institute's closure, his position became redundant, leaving him facing the prospect of unemployment and a drastic demotion. The offer of a Junior Deputy Inspector of Schools position within the Education Department, while seemingly a lifeline, came with a sting – a significantly lower pay scale compared to his previous earnings. In a poignant appeal dated November 3rd, 1937, Menon's voice cuts through the archival silence. He eloquently articulated his sense of injustice, drawing attention to his qualifications (a B.A. degree with distinctions, an L.T. Degree, and over 25 years of teaching experience) and the commendable track record he established at the Fisheries Training Institute. He implored the authorities to treat his case with fairness and recognize the broader context of his service within the government, not

⁴³ G.O.2995,1937, B.14, Department of education,RAK

just confined to the now-defunct Fisheries Department.⁴⁴ Menon's plea delves into the social and economic implications of such demotions. He argues that accepting the lower-paid position would be akin to economic hardship, a cruel consequence of a policy change beyond his control. His appeal resonates with the anxieties of any individual navigating departmental transitions, highlighting the precariousness of career stability in the face of shifting bureaucratic landscapes.

Furthermore, Menon's case presents a microcosm of the social realities of colonial Malabar. The Fisheries Training Institute catered specifically to the educational needs of marginalized fishing communities. Its closure and the subsequent challenges faced by Menon raise questions about the broader implications of policy changes for vulnerable groups and the potential disenfranchisement of those serving them. The saga of E. Raman Menon and the Fisheries Training Institute transcends the confines of individual hardship. It serves as a cautionary tale, urging us to consider the human cost of bureaucratic transitions and the need for equitable treatment during such critical junctures. Menon's plea for fairness echoes across the corridors of time, reminding us of the social responsibility inherent in shaping and reshaping systems, ensuring that individual lives are not collateral damage in the pursuit of progress.

The Fisheries Training Institute and its Role in Uplifting the Fishing Communities of Madras Presidency: A Historical Analysis

In 1919, Sir F.A. Nicholson, a pioneer in the development of the fishing industry in the Madras Presidency, recognized the crucial role of social and educational advancement in the economic uplift of fishing communities⁴⁵. He lamented that "socio-economic fishery questions," or issues related to the people themselves, had not received due attention in his initial years of work. He saw clearly that the primary duty lay in raising the fisherfolk in the socio-economic scale, encompassing their intelligence, education, self-respect, independence, and

⁴⁴ G O NO .78, Dated 21/12/1937, Development Department, Regional Archives Kozhikode.

⁴⁵ G.O 420, 1932, development department ,RAK

cooperative capacity. He believed that these improvements would naturally lead to advancements in methods, processes, and products within the industry. Nicholson identified co-operation as the key to uplifting the fisherfolk, but recognized the need for sufficient enlightenment for them to understand and participate effectively. In his words, "We are perhaps beginning in the middle when we begin with co-operative societies as the first factor of the uplift of these undoubtedly backward classes... It is clear that what is wanted for fishery development is fisherfolk development and it is in general education that this development lies." He emphasized the need for "general education" in the broadest sense, encompassing the development of intelligence, self-respect, and a sense of community⁴⁶.

The Fisheries Training Institute, established in 1930 as part of Nicholson's broader scheme of fisherman education, embodied this vision. It aimed to equip individuals from fishing communities with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate effectively in the industry and contribute to its progress. However, by 1931, questions arose concerning the Institute's effectiveness and necessity, prompting a review by the Madras government. This review explored the Institute's objectives, its achievements, and its future direction. It addressed concerns about its efficiency and explored alternative options, including reducing the program duration from three years to one. Through this analysis, the review aimed to determine the Institute's optimal role in the broader mission of empowering the fishing communities of the Madras Presidency.

The review represents a significant historical document, shedding light on the early efforts to uplift fishing communities in colonial India. It provides valuable insights into the prevailing social and economic conditions of these communities, the challenges faced, and the strategies employed to address them. By examining the Institute's objectives, achievements, and shortcomings, the review offers a critical perspective on the role of education in driving social and economic change. It also contributes to our understanding of the evolution of government policies and interventions in the fishing sector. It highlights the concerns and considerations

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

guiding policy decisions at that time, and provides a valuable reference point for assessing the effectiveness of subsequent initiatives.

The Need for Special Schools for the Fishing Communities of Madras Presidency: A Social and Educational Perspective

F.A. Nicholson, director of fisheries recognizing the unique circumstances of the fishing communities within the Madras Presidency, argued for the creation of specialized schools specifically tailored to their needs. He identified several key factors that justified this approach⁴⁷:

1. **Isolation and Distinct Occupation:** Unlike other communities, whose lives intertwined with agriculture and other land-based industries, the fishing communities resided in isolated hamlets due to their profession. This isolation cut them off from access to schools and other essential resources that could foster their social and intellectual development.
2. **Unhygienic Surroundings and Limited Exposure:** These isolated hamlets often lacked basic sanitation and lacked the exposure to "civilising influences" that permeated other communities. This deprived the fishing communities of opportunities to learn and grow beyond their traditional ways.
3. **Hereditary Issues and Societal Disrespect:** The fishing communities faced challenges related to hereditary intemperance and unthrifty habits, leading to financial hardships and a cycle of debt. This, in turn, contributed to a lower social standing and limited self-respect and self-reliance.
4. **Unsuitability of Traditional Education System:** Sir Nicholson argued that the general system of elementary education, designed for a predominantly agricultural population, was fundamentally incompatible with the needs of the fishing communities. He pointed to the Royal Commission on

⁴⁷ G.O.No. 2048, 27-5-1918, Department of Revenue, RAK.

Agriculture's observation that education should be "intimately related to the life of the people" to be effective.

5. Rural Reforms and Bias Towards Agriculture: While the Madras Government acknowledged the need for rural education reform, its focus remained heavily skewed towards supporting the agricultural population, which constituted the majority. This left the specific challenges of the fishing communities largely unaddressed.
6. Specialized Profession and Parochial Isolation: The fishing profession, with its unique demands and skills, required specialized knowledge and training that could not be adequately provided by the existing education system. Furthermore, the isolated nature of the fishing hamlets further emphasized the need for dedicated schools catering to their specific needs.

Based on these observations, Nicholson advocated for the creation of specialized schools for the fishing communities. He envisioned these schools as instruments for intellectual awakening, fostering self-respect, and equipping the community with the knowledge and skills necessary for economic advancement and social integration. This proposal, grounded in a keen understanding of the social, cultural, and educational landscape of the fishing communities, paved the way for significant reforms and interventions in their education and overall well-being.

He recognized that traditional schooling, divorced from the realities of the fishermen's lives, would fail to engage them and effectively contribute to their well-being. The proposed schools were not merely institutions for intellectual development, but rather, aimed at fostering holistic community transformation. He emphasized the need for an education that resonated with the fishermen's mentality, touching upon subjects directly relevant to their daily lives and livelihoods.

The curriculum, as envisioned by him, went beyond the standard reading, writing, and arithmetic. It incorporated practical skills such as simple bookkeeping, essential for maintaining accounts and overcoming exploitation by middlemen.

Hygiene education was deemed crucial, considering the fishermen's exposure to putrescible matter and the often-unsanitary conditions of their hamlets.

Furthermore, Nicholson recognized the importance of social development. He championed thrift and temperance, highlighting the detrimental effects of these issues on the community's progress. He believed that fostering these values, alongside co-operation, was vital for empowering the fishermen and advancing their collective well-being.

He emphasized the need for teachers who could connect with their pupils on a deeper level. He envisioned teachers with a practical understanding of nature study and the ability to relate academic concepts to the fishermen's everyday life and environment. These teachers were not to be mere instructors, but rather, guides and mentors who could awaken the minds of their pupils and inspire them to embrace new ideas.

Nicholson's educational philosophy wasn't restricted to children of school-going age. He envisioned the school as a hub for community development, encompassing the entire village. He hoped the school would serve as a platform for social reform, with the teacher playing a central role. Drawing parallels to European villages, portrayed the teacher as a figure of influence, respected not by virtue of his position but by his knowledge and character. He expected him to be a catalyst for change, leading initiatives such as forming cooperative societies, organizing lectures, and promoting better sanitation practices. He envisioned the teacher as a guide and true friend, replacing the negative influences often present in these communities. He anticipated that the teacher would act as a bridge between the village and the government, facilitating communication, and providing guidance on matters such as financial assistance.

His vision transcended academic instruction, encompassing social and economic development, and fostering a sense of community. Through this schools, Nicholson sought to empower the fishermen by equipping them with practical skills, promoting social values, and nurturing a spirit of self-reliance and collective action. His vision remains relevant today, serving as a guide for educational initiatives

aimed at improving the lives of marginalized communities and fostering sustainable development.

A Vision of the "Village Guide": Holistic Approach to Fisher Education

F.A. Nicholson envisioned a transformative role for education within fishing communities, extending far beyond the confines of a classroom. His vision was meticulously articulated in his letter dated 25-3-1918⁴⁸ where he outlined the multifaceted responsibilities of a school master in a fishing village:

1. Champion of Cooperation

He emphasized the need for teachers to be conversant with and eager in cooperation, its methods and its benefits. He envisioned them assuming leadership roles as secretaries and accountants in Raiffeisen societies⁴⁹, empowering communities through collective action.

2. Agent of Change:

As agents of the Fisheries Department, teachers were entrusted with the crucial task of "predisposing the people to try new methods" and "imparting new information". This included informing producers of new markets and conveying community needs and grievances to the department. As the fishing industry evolved with the development of deep-sea fishing methods, the introduction of novel craft and tackle, initiation of refrigeration and other industries, the need for such informed and adaptable educators became even more critical.

3. "Village Guide In essence, F.A. Nicholson envisioned the school master as the village guide, a trusted figure who would not only educate but also lead the

⁴⁸ Madras correspondence File, Regional Archives, Kozhikode

⁴⁹ Raiffeisen, a 19th century pioneer, sparked a global cooperative banking movement. Driven by faith and empathy, he established the first credit union in 1862, empowering communities to escape usury and thrive. Beyond finance, he fostered cooperative ventures in agriculture, leaving a lasting legacy of economic inclusion and social cohesion.

community towards progress and prosperity. This vision was formally adopted by the Government⁵⁰

4. Instruments for Transformation

To actualize his vision, Nicholson recognized the need for specially trained teachers. He argued that teachers trained in ordinary training schools lacked the necessary skills to adapt all subjects of the curriculum to suit the special environment of fisher-children or to carry on social reconstruction in fishing village. He further emphasized the importance of equipping teachers with the knowledge to inculcate the scientific principles involved in fishery methods and practice, thereby preparing future generations for new opportunities within the evolving industry.

5. The Fisheries Training Institute

To address these specific needs, the Fisheries Training Institute was established in 1919. This institution provided teachers with the specialized training necessary to function effectively as instruments for carrying out the experiment.

The scheme of Fisher education transcended the boundaries of conventional schooling. envisioned a holistic approach that would empower individuals, foster cooperation, and drive community development. Through specially trained teachers, he aimed to equip the next generation of fishermen with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to thrive in a rapidly changing industry and contribute to a brighter future for their communities. vision serves as a timeless reminder of the transformative potential of education, particularly when tailored to address the specific needs and aspirations of marginalized communities.

Evaluating the Impact of the Fisheries Training Institute: A Socio-Humanities Perspective (1919)

The Fisheries Training Institute (FTI), established in 1919, aimed to revolutionize education within fishing communities on the West Coast of India⁵¹. Its

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

ambitious vision, spearheaded by Sir F.A. Nicholson, sought to equip fishermen not just with basic literacy but with skills and knowledge tailored to their unique environment and challenges.

Elementary Education:

Undoubtedly, the FTI's efforts in training specialized teachers and spreading elementary education in fishing villages yielded significant results. Successive government reports commended the Institute's work, highlighting the increasing attendance and community interest in education. Reviews noted the "useful work" done by the Institute and the "satisfaction" with the spread of education among fishermen.⁵²

Despite positive reports from the Department itself, the Committee on Fisheries offered a more critical perspective in 1928-29. While recommending transfer of elementary schools to the Labour Department, they acknowledged the Fisheries Department's education efforts had borne admirable fruit. This sentiment was echoed by public opinion, with a remarkable consensus among witnesses praising the schools and advocating for their expansion. The demand for similar schools on the East Coast and interest from neighbouring states such as Travancore and Kochin further underscored the perceived success of this educational model.

Social Reconstruction:

The FTI's impact extended beyond mere literacy. The curriculum's vocational bias, acknowledged by the Committee, aimed to equip students with practical skills relevant to their fishing livelihoods. This included lessons on boat construction, net mending, and resource management, contributing to improved fishing practices and economic well-being. Furthermore, the schools played a crucial role in fostering social development. Teachers, envisioned as "village guides," acted as agents of

⁵¹ From the Archives (June 4, 1919): Madras Fisheries, *The Hindu*, June 4, 2019, Accessed Online on April 23, 2024 12:15 a.m. IST, <https://www.thehindu.com/archives/from-the-archives-june-4-1919-madras-fisheries/article27428307.ece>.

⁵² G.O NO.1895, Department of Development, 1928, RAK.

change, promoting hygiene, thrift, and cooperative principles. This contributed to improved community health and social cohesion.

Imperfections and Future Directions:

Despite the undeniable progress, the FTI's accomplishments were not without limitations. The Committee recognized the need for further development, citing the "imperfect" results and the ideal set by F.A. Nicholson. Addressing issues like teacher shortages and curriculum refinement remained crucial for long-term sustainability. The Committee's recommendation to transfer control of elementary schools was not solely a critique of the FTI's work but also a practical measure to streamline responsibilities within the government. However, their recognition of the benefits of the vocational bias in the curriculum underscores the importance of maintaining a connection between education and the specific needs of the fishing communities.

The Rise of Fisheries Elementary Schools: A Triumph of Vocational Training

The success of fisheries elementary schools in Kerala, India, especially in Malabar in integrating vocational skills into their curriculum, can be largely attributed to the specialized training provided to their teachers at the Fisheries Training Institute (FTI). Unlike their counterparts in traditional training schools, these educators possessed a crucial understanding of the fishing industry, enabling them to seamlessly weave industry-related topics into the core subjects of elementary education. A detailed examination of the FTI's meticulously crafted syllabuses reveals the complexity and depth of knowledge required, making it virtually impossible for an untrained teacher to effectively navigate and implement.

To equip these school teachers for their unique role, the FTI incorporates a comprehensive array of subjects into their training program, exceeding the scope of standard training schools⁵³. This curriculum includes:

⁵³ James hornell, Madras fishery investigation bulletin no.12, RAK

Fisheries Techniques: This encompasses the principles and practices of pisciculture, various fishing methods, fish handling, preservation methods like curing and canning, refrigeration, and the production of fish oil, guano, and fishmeal.

Marine Zoology: Understanding the marine ecosystem and its inhabitants is crucial for contextualizing fisheries practices and fostering environmental awareness.

Elements of Navigation: Basic navigational skills are essential for safe and efficient fishing operations, particularly in coastal regions.

Carpentry with a Focus on Boat Building and Maintenance: This practical skill equips teachers with the knowledge to guide students in constructing and maintaining their own fishing vessels.

Principles of Steam and Internal Combustion Engines and Motor Mechanics: Familiarity with these engines is vital for operating modern fishing equipment and ensuring smooth boat operations.

Socio-economics: This expansive subject area includes elements of economics, banking, commercial accounting, cooperative principles, rural sanitation, first aid, and even temperance education, all of which are crucial for empowering fishing communities and fostering sustainable development.

It is noteworthy that the Educational Department does not directly oversee the teaching of these specialized subjects, as they fall outside their traditional purview. The syllabus for these subjects was meticulously crafted by the FTI, drew upon relevant textbooks and literature. Furthermore, It had prioritized the development of its technical instruction, continually refining its efficiency as the staff gain deeper familiarity with the intricate details of the curriculum. Notably, the Headmaster translated and adapted a navigation textbook specifically for the FTI's syllabus, demonstrating his dedication and commitment to the program's success. Plans are underway to develop additional lesson materials and elementary-level textbooks for both teachers and students, further solidifying the FTI's position as a leading center for fisheries education.

Despite limitations such as limited funding, insufficient staffing, and imperfect facilities, the FTI has demonstrably achieved considerable success in its role as a training institute for fisheries school teachers. This dedication and ongoing guidance had played a critical role in overcoming these challenges. Beyond its primary aim of providing vocational training, the FTI envisions its graduates as agents of social change within their fishing communities. This ambition recognizes the crucial role education can play in fostering progress and uplifting marginalized groups. While measuring success in this domain is inherently more nuanced than tracking academic progress, there is compelling evidence of the FTI's positive impact. Many fisheries school teachers were actively involved in cooperative efforts and other social development initiatives, demonstrating the program's effectiveness in cultivating responsible and engaged citizens. The indirect benefits of education had also been profound, with younger generations of fishermen exhibiting increased levels of thrift, a spirit of cooperation, progressive ideas, and a growing awareness of their rights and aspirations for self-improvement. This transformative shift in attitudes and behaviour offered a promising glimpse into the future of fishing communities along the West Coast. This story offered valuable insights into the transformative power of education, particularly when tailored to the specific needs and aspirations of marginalized communities.

From Rudiments to Reconstruction: Navigating the Role of Fisheries Teachers in West Coast Communities (1923-1930)

The period 1923-1930 witnessed a fascinating confluence of educational initiatives and burgeoning aspirations for social reconstruction within the West Coast fishing community. While other agencies operated 110 schools focusing on basic education, their impact paled in comparison to the Fisheries Training Institute (FTI) and its specialized curriculum. This stark divergence reveals the FTI's pivotal role in catalyzing social transformation within the community. However, a closer examination of the challenges faced by its teachers unveils crucial areas for potential optimization. From its inception, F. Nicholson championed the recruitment of secondary-grade teachers, recognizing their superior knowledge and influence as

vital prerequisites for effective social reconstruction. His letter in G.O. No. 406 (6-3-1919)⁵⁴ advocated for training graduates for both higher elementary and secondary levels. However, initially finding such qualified individuals among fishermen proved challenging. Consequently, the initial batch of teachers lacked the desired influence and educational clout envisaged by Nicholson.

The Servants of India Society's pioneering work further underscored the crucial nature of this specialized training⁵⁵. Their village reconstruction efforts in Malabar starkly revealed the deficiencies of generic teacher preparation in tackling the unique challenges of a fisher hamlet. Unlike the relatively established structures of an agricultural village, these communities had grappled with the absence of fundamental civic institutions like courts, panchayats, and even basic postal infrastructure. Consequently, teachers entrusted with the mantle of social change within these marginalized communities required significantly more than traditional instructional skills. They necessitated the cultural and economic literacy meticulously woven into the FTI's curriculum to effectively guide and transform these often-overlooked communities.⁵⁶

Drawing upon the experiences of organizations like the Servants of India Society, whose rural reconstruction efforts transitioned from elementary-grade to secondary-grade educators, Nicholson underscored the critical role of these teachers in community development. Recognizing this trend, the FTI witnessed a gradual rise in secondary-grade student admissions from 1924 onward, culminating in nearly half the student body belonging to this category by 1929. This natural progression towards a fully secondary-grade teaching staff appeared on track until a critical setback in 1929.

The government's unexpected abolition of secondary classes at the FTI, citing lack of formal approval, threatened the very foundation of the institute's mission. Without secondary-grade teachers, the ambitious social reconstruction goals in fishing

⁵⁴ Madras correspondence files, G.O. No. 406 (6-3-1919), RAK.

⁵⁵ G. R. Madan, *India's Developing Villages*, Allied Publishers, 1990, p.43.

⁵⁶ G.O. 420, 1932, Development department, RAK.

villages seemed unattainable. Thankfully, recognizing the ongoing training for existing S.S.L.C. holders⁵⁷, the government permitted a temporary revival of these classes.

The rationale for employing secondary-grade teachers in fisheries schools is multifaceted:

1. Higher elementary schools, a nascent category within the department's purview, by educational regulations, necessitated secondary-grade teachers.
2. The "fisher education" model envisioned secondary-grade teachers as headmasters of elementary schools, assuming critical roles in community-level social reconstruction. As anticipated, elementary-grade teachers lacked the requisite knowledge and influence to effectively fulfill these demands.
3. The specialized nature of education in fisheries elementary schools further underscored the need for secondary-grade expertise.

Challenges Faced by the Fisheries Training Institute in the 1920s: A Retrospective Analysis

The early years of the Fisheries Training Institute (FTI) in the 1920s were marked by both promising aspirations and unforeseen obstacles. While the institute aimed to empower fishing communities through specialized education and social reconstruction, several internal factors hampered its full potential. This analysis dives into four key challenges that hindered the FTI's progress:

1. Recruiting and Retaining Qualified Teachers:

The curriculum's technical complexities posed a hurdle for students with insufficient educational backgrounds. Recruiting teachers solely from the fishing community meant accepting a lower initial educational baseline. This compromise resulted in younger teachers lacking the experience and influence initially envisioned for community leadership. While acknowledging this temporary

⁵⁷ G.O. No. 2050, Development Department, 1930, RAK.

drawback, the FTI maintained hope that time would bridge the gap. Additionally, the institute advocated for appointing secondary-grade teachers as headmasters to provide stronger academic foundations and leadership within the schools.

2. Balancing Age and Community Integration:

Sir F.A. Nicholson, a pivotal figure in the FTI's establishment, emphasized the importance of teachers who were not only educated but also deeply integrated into the community. He envisioned them as experienced individuals, older and wiser than "mere youths fresh from school," who could command respect and navigate the community's complexities. However, this ideal clashed with the goal of recruiting teachers from within the community itself. The limited educational attainment among older fishermen presented a dilemma: prioritize community knowledge with lower educational qualifications or recruit younger, better-educated individuals from outside. The FTI ultimately opted for the former, acknowledging the temporary limitations of youth but valuing their connection to the community.

3. Lack of Dedicated Pedagogical Supervision:

Nicholson also recognized the crucial role of specialized supervision for FTI graduates. He envisioned dedicated "Pedagogic officers" possessing a deep understanding of the community, local conditions, and best practices in education. This vision, however, remained unfulfilled. In reality, fishery school teachers were primarily overseen by Inspectors of Fisheries whose expertise lay in fish curing yards. These individuals lacked the necessary pedagogical training to effectively guide the institute's educational and social reconstruction efforts in the fishing villages.

4. Limited Resources and Optimization Opportunities:

The FTI's operational efficiency was further constrained by limited staff and equipment. The provided budget revealed inconsistencies and potential areas for improvement, including redundant positions and potential adjustments to salary structures. However, the Development Department prioritized maintaining the existing staff while implementing minor modifications. This cautious approach left

untapped opportunities for optimizing the institute's resources and maximizing its impact.

Analysis of the Fisheries Training Institute: Efficiency, Staffing, and the Pursuit of Quality Education

Challenging Economic Unsoundness Claims:

F.A. Nicholson's original vision has envisioned a rapid expansion with 80 schools, necessitated a large faculty. The 44 schools represented a slower pace, leading to seemingly low student intake. The Committee on Fisheries acknowledged this discrepancy, attributing underutilization to the government's gradual implementation, not inherent inefficiency. Furthermore, the institute proactively proposed cost-saving measures while awaiting expansion, demonstrating its commitment to fiscal responsibility. Additionally, while immediate full-scale operation might seem financially burdensome, the committee and the institute believed future expansion is inevitable, justifying increased capacity and budget allocation.

Debunking Misconceptions about Small Class Sizes:

Critics point to small class sizes as indicative of inefficiency, overlooking the pedagogical benefits. Modern theories emphasize individualized attention and self-directed learning, difficult to achieve in large classrooms. Smaller groups allow for active learning and collaboration, where the "modern teacher" fosters student agency and peer learning. Strength of students and teachers of South Nattika school as follows:⁵⁸

Class	Strength of students	Number of Teachers
I A	36	1
I B	36	1
II A	29	1
II B	17	1

⁵⁸ G.O.2243, Department of Development, 1936, RAK.

Class	Strength of students	Number of Teachers
III A	23	
III B	24	1
IV A	24	1
IV B	21	1
V	19	
IV	16	1
VII	15	
VIII	7	1
TOTAL	260	9

Moreover, a higher staff-to-student ratio translates to personalized support, catering to individual learning styles and needs. This contributes to higher quality education, despite potential cost concerns. The institute acknowledges historical underfunding but highlights ongoing efforts to improve facilities and recruit staff, showcasing its dedication to overcoming resource limitations.

Fluctuating class structures and inadequate staffing plagued the institute

The initial three-class vision was hampered by student availability, necessitating six classes. Additionally, underpaid staff compared to their Education Department counterparts, coupled with limited promotion prospects, led to resignations of key personnel. This hampered efficient training and highlighted the need for competitive salaries and career growth opportunities. To address these issues, a cost-effective proposal recommended retaining the minimum required staff according to regulations while adjusting their salaries. This balanced efficiency with teacher retention without significantly impacting the budget.

Enhancing Equipment and Facilities:

Upgrading the Model School to the Higher Elementary grade, as regulations stipulate, was deemed non-urgent. Similar training schools within the Education Department function with lower elementary Model Schools, allowing for flexibility.

However, overcrowding in the Model School's first standard was addressed by proposing a third section with minimal incremental expenditure, offset by savings from the optimized staffing plan. Essential but costly improvements like a large playground and a hostel were, unfortunately, deferred due to financial constraints. Nevertheless, their importance for future development and holistic education was recognized. Here demonstrates the FTI's dedication to quality education despite challenges. Concerns about economic viability stem from misinterpretations and the gradual pace of expansion. Small class sizes and staffing issues are addressed through proactive solutions that balance efficiency with pedagogical and employee considerations. While resource limitations necessitate prioritization, the institute's commitment to continuous improvement and future development is evident.

Technical Training, Equipment, and Course Duration at the Fisheries Training Institute: A Retrospective Analysis

Technical Training and Staff Optimization:

Recognizing financial constraints, the Fisheries Training Institute (FTI) in its past sought resourceful solutions to maintain quality training while optimizing faculty utilization. Existing departmental personnel with relevant qualifications were identified for specialized instruction. The Research Assistant from West Hill and Tanur handled marine biology and technological courses, while the tindal of the "Lady Nicholson" provided advanced navigation training⁵⁹. This efficient strategy avoided incurring additional staffing costs while ensuring qualified instruction. Furthermore, following the Committee on Fisheries' report, significant improvements were made in equipment resources with minimal additional expense. The "Sutherland" fishing smack became a valuable training vessel, and essential apparatus for fishery industries, including canning and oil/guano production, were acquired. These practical resources significantly enhanced the effectiveness and breadth of the training program.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Madras Fisheries Bulletin.India, Superintendent, Government Press,1933. p.43

Addressing the Debate on Course Duration:

The institute steadfastly defended the continued existence of the three-year program for several compelling reasons. The Committee on Fisheries emphasized the importance of this duration for fostering the "corporate feeling" necessary for effective socio-economic work, a key element of Sir F.A. Nicholson's vision. A limited one-year course was deemed insufficient for both theoretical and practical learning, and unlikely to attract students due to limited employment prospects. Additionally, the disparity in progress between Malabar, with its three-year program, and South Canara, with a one-year program, further corroborated the advantages of the longer duration. Despite potential reductions in the Model School expenses, the savings were deemed insignificant compared to the substantial academic and professional downsides of a shortened program. Maintaining specialized staff for technological courses and essential equipment necessitated keeping a minimum operational budget regardless of program length.

Modified Reorganization Plan: Adapting to Constraints with Strategic Solutions:

Facing financial limitations, the institute proposed adapting to constraints by alternating admissions between secondary and higher elementary students each year. This reduced the required number of classes to three, allowing efficient operation with existing staff, without the need for additional hiring. Recognizing budgetary constraints, the plan outlined retaining only the minimum staff as mandated by educational regulations. However, it emphasized that this minimum should be paid according to the Education Department scales, ensuring competitive salaries and fairer treatment for teachers. This aimed to attract and retain qualified personnel despite the temporary limitations in staffing levels. To further maximize efficiency within the budget, the proposal suggested abolishing redundant positions and reassigning duties strategically. For example, combining the boat and fishery instructor roles and utilizing the drill instructor in the model school were cost-effective measures that optimized staffing without compromising essential instruction.

When concluding this chapter, it is imperative to critically reflect on the historical significance of fisheries schools in British Malabar. While these institutions were framed as efforts to empower fishing communities through targeted education, a closer analysis reveals that they were fundamentally driven by colonial economic motives rather than a genuine commitment to social upliftment. The schools' primary objective was to integrate fisherfolk into the broader capitalist framework by enhancing their productivity and ensuring the efficient exploitation of marine resources. This economic intent often overshadowed the purported goals of social transformation and empowerment.

The Fisheries Training Institute (FTI) in colonial India exemplifies the ambivalence of colonial education initiatives. On the one hand, its curriculum was designed to impart practical skills in navigation, carpentry, and engine mechanics, ostensibly equipping fishermen with tools for economic self-reliance. However, through the theoretical lens of Ranajit Guha's *dominance without hegemony*⁶¹, it becomes clear that these efforts were not aimed at fostering genuine agency within marginalized communities but at securing the economic interests of the colonial state.

Despite its constraints, the FTI did yield certain positive outcomes, such as increased participation in cooperatives and a heightened awareness of socio-economic rights among its graduates. These limited successes, however, should not obscure the underlying economic agenda of the colonial administration, which prioritized resource extraction over sustainable community development. By acknowledging the complexities of such endeavors, we gain valuable insights into the dual nature of colonial education—its potential to empower on one level while perpetuating structural inequalities on another. This nuanced understanding is essential for informing contemporary educational initiatives aimed at achieving genuine social justice and transformative change within marginalized communities.

⁶¹ Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without hegemony: history and power in colonial India*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1997, p.169

CHAPTER 5

RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE: THE STRUGGLE OF TRADITIONAL FISHERMEN AGAINST CAPITALIST INTERESTS IN COLONIAL MALABAR

The fisheries policy during Colonial period leads to the struggle between traditional fishermen and the Capitalist Class. The government's shift from public ownership to private rights in fisheries disrupted the delicate balance between these two groups. This policy change led to a clash of interests, which ultimately shaped the social and economic landscape of the period.

Kerala's system of land ownership throughout the Middle Ages was intricate and dynamic. According to Professor Elarnkulam, land rights were held by indigenous groups and farmers even before the Sangam period, indicating the existence of private ownership. Between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, this arrangement changed as a result of the establishment of the landlord Janmi system in the first century AD¹. This change consolidated land ownership within a select few influential organisations. The control over the production process was influenced by the rights associated with janmam² and kanam³, which dictated ownership and control mechanisms. The economy gained vitality through the introduction of cash

¹ Elamkulam P. N. Kunjan Pillai, *Studies in Kerala History*, National Book Stall Kottayam, 1970, p. 3

² Ashin Dasgupta, *Malabar in Asian Trade: 1740-1800*, Cambridge U.P., 1967, p.22

Janmam: Private land ownership was distributed among three distinct groups: the princes, the Nair chiefs, and the Brahmins. This form of private landholding was termed "janmam," and those who possessed such land were known as "janmkar."

³ Adrain C Mayer, *Land and Society in Malabar*, Oxford University Press, 1952.p.80.

Kanam: The first type of tenure is called kanam and is held by the kanamdar. He pays a certain sum of money, known as the kanam sum, to the janmi. Interest is paid by the janmi on this sum, as if it were a simple loan. The kanamdar then has the right to cultivate or to sub-lease the land.

crops and the expansion of agriculture hence analysing settlement pattern of Kerala based on the occupation.

The traditional fishermen observed that the new policies emphasizing private rights posed a significant threat to their way of life. For generations, these fishermen had relied on the waters they fished for their livelihood. However, this way of life came under threat from capitalist interests, leaving the fishermen increasingly vulnerable. Under the Madras government, the Zemindars⁴, who had previously imposed illegal demands on traditional fishermen, sought to exploit them further by reinstating the Fishery Tax⁵.

The traditional fishermen of Rajahmundry District in the Northern Circars of Andhra Pradesh demonstrated remarkable resilience in their efforts to safeguard their rights and way of life. These fishermen secured court decrees and maintained significant positions within the government, which contributed to their sense of autonomy. Nevertheless, their endeavors were frequently challenged by the formidable influence of capitalist interests, which aimed to displace them from their ancestral fishing grounds. The capitalist class, on the other hand, saw the policy as an opportunity to expand their influence and wealth. They eagerly embraced the concept of private rights in fisheries, recognizing the potential for profit in exploiting the resources of the sea. The Zemindars, who had previously been content with collecting illegal taxes from traditional fishermen, now sought to assert their dominance over the fisheries themselves.

The government, caught between the competing interests of traditional fishermen and capitalist class, struggled to maintain a balance. Sir Thomas Munro's government, for example, passed orders in 1826 to abolish Fishery Rent in Zemindaris, recognizing the need to protect the rights of traditional fishermen⁶.

⁴ Baden-Powell, Baden Henry. *A Manual of the Land Revenue Systems and Land Tenures of British India*, Superintendent of Government Printing, 1882.

⁵ Francis Day, *Indian Fish and Fishing*. United Kingdom, W. Clowes and Sons, 1883. pp.3-4.

⁶ Madras fisheries bill, fisheries department, sl.2042, f/28,1885, RAK.

However, the Zemindars continued to make illegal demands, and the government was forced to intervene repeatedly to stop the exploitation of traditional fishermen.

The clash of fishing practices during the colonial era had a profound impact, disrupting the social, economic, and cultural fabric of traditional fishing communities. As capitalist interests displaced traditional fishermen from their fishing grounds, the loss of cultural identity and community cohesion became increasingly apparent. The erosion of age-old fishing practices threatened to erase the rich cultural heritage of these communities. Historically, the government supported communal access and sustainable management of fisheries, as seen in the 1873 Board of Revenue proceedings. However, the introduction of permit fees and legal exemptions for private owners marked a shift towards a capital-centric approach, undermining traditional rights and promoting the consolidation of natural resources by capitalists⁷. This policy shift created a conflict between traditional fishermen and the capitalist class, with lasting consequences. The struggle to protect the rights of traditional fishermen persisted long after the colonial era, showcasing the enduring strength of community and the resilience of those who rely on the sea.

Burton Stein's analysis of ancient societies reveals that access to resources, such as fisheries, was traditionally governed by kinship ties or community residence. Families or community groups collectively managed these resources, ensuring equitable distribution and communal benefit. However, over time, a shift occurred whereby powerful individuals, often those with political influence, wealth, or social standing, began to assert control over these resources. This shift facilitated the creation of individual claims that could be inherited, gradually supplanting the collective management system. Such a transition from communal to individual ownership persisted into colonial times, leading to a significant decline in communal management practices. As a result, individual and heritable claims on resources became more widespread, centralizing power and wealth among fewer individuals or families, thereby altering the socio-economic landscape significantly⁸.

⁷ G.O.792, Department of revenue, 1875, RAK.

⁸ Burton Stein and David Arnold., *A History of India*, Wiley, 2010, p.15

The introduction of new revenue systems and land policies empowered a new landowning class. This "bourgeoisie-landlord-naduvazhi nexus" facilitated the commodification of land, leading to the dispossession of peasants and artisans, including those involved in crucial support industries for fishing communities. These dispossessed individuals were forced to abandon their traditional occupations like weaving, pottery, and carpentry,⁹ which provided essential supplies for boat building, net repair, and other fishing needs.

Samuel Mateer¹⁰ on colonial affairs during the 19th century observed that colonial administrations favoured the expansion of capitalism. He noted that the government supported capitalists entering the fish curing business by granting them duty-free salt. This policy aimed to encourage commercial activities, marking a departure from traditional subsistence fishing practices¹¹.

As capitalist investments increased, they began to challenge existing feudal relations within society. The infusion of capital into new enterprises disrupted established social and economic structures, leading to significant changes in traditional fishing communities. Mateer metaphorically describes these changes as 'awakening ripples' within feudal society, highlighting how capitalist expansion during colonial times had a transformative impact on social and economic dynamics. This observation underscores the profound shifts brought about by economic modernization and its implications for traditional ways of life.

The industrialization under British governance significantly impacted the traditional occupation of fishermen in Malabar. The expansion of cash crop production brought substantial changes to the region's economy, particularly in the northern and coastal areas where industrialization was more pronounced. This shift

⁹ T.K.Velupillai, Travancore State Manual, Vol.III, Trivandrum, 1944, p.126

¹⁰ Samuel Mateer (1835-1893) was a Scottish missionary and author with the London Missionary Society. He worked in Travancore and Kerala during the 19th century, offering detailed ethnographic observations on the social, economic, and cultural effects of colonial policies. His notable works include "The Land of Charity" and "Native Life in Travancore."

¹¹ George Mathew, Communal Road to a Secular Kerala, Concept Publishing Company, 1989, p.39

led to increased poverty and discontent, forcing many individuals in various occupations to abandon their ancestral roles and seek alternative livelihoods.

In contrast, fishermen largely managed to continue their traditional occupation despite the economic pressures. The southern regions of Malabar, where lower castes were more conservative and less affected by industrialization, also retained their traditional occupations to a greater extent¹². The northern areas, however, saw a diversification of occupations as people responded to economic pressures. For instance, a significant handweaving industry emerged, involving individuals not traditionally associated with the weaver caste. Thus, the use of land for cash crops and industrialization created economic disparities and drove social change, altering living conditions and reshaping the traditional occupational structure of the region. However, the fishermen, unlike many others, managed to survive and persist in their ancestral occupation amidst these challenges.

Colonialism integrated India into the global capitalist economy but did so in a manner that was fundamentally exploitative and repressive. While some sectors saw development, this development was skewed towards the needs of the colonial power rather than fostering broad-based economic progress for India¹³ in the Malabar context, the transformative potential of colonialism remained largely unrealized. While some limited industrial development, like the coir industry, emerged in Travancore and Cochin, the overall effect was detrimental. India became a source of raw materials for British industry, and the influx of British manufactured goods further crippled the traditional industries that were vital to the Malabar fishing communities. The destruction of these local support systems undoubtedly had a negative impact on the livelihoods and well-being of the fishermen in Malabar.

British rule in Malabar had mixed effects on industry. While traditional fishing support industries suffered, the British did set up factories to make oil from

¹² Adrain C Mayer, *Op. cit.*, p.78

¹³ Bipan Chandra., Karl Marx, His Theories of Asian Societies and Colonial Rule.India, Centre for Historical Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1978, p119.

fish¹⁴. However, they only focused on this one product and missed opportunities to develop other areas like cold storage and different seafood products. They also mainly exported raw materials like dried fish, showing more interest in India supplying Britain than developing Malabar industries. During the 1910s, the fishing communities encountered significant difficulties. A major factor was the decline of the fishing industry along the west coast, which sharply reduced their income. To recoup their losses, the British government raised the salt tax in 1924, adding further strain on the fishermen. By 1926, reports suggested that fishing communities in Malabar were experiencing starvation due to poor fish catches¹⁵. However, the Assistant Director of Fisheries in Calicut challenged this, stating that although the fishing season between Mattool and Beypore had been poor, the situation was not as severe as reported.

The establishment of trade monopolies in salt, tobacco, and timber, along with government intervention in the production and sale of liquor, adversely affected the livelihoods of those working in these industries. Salt production, which was widespread along the Malabar coast, experienced a significant decline after the monopoly was introduced in 1806. Although the monopoly pertained only to the sale of salt and not its manufacture, local salt markets dwindled because the government became the sole buyer and seller. The resulting sharp increase in retail prices and the low, arbitrary prices at which the government purchased salt from local producers pushed the local industry towards collapse. The abandonment of salt production for sale along the coast in 1823 is a clear indication of this decline. As a result, local residents were compelled to purchase imported salt at high prices¹⁶.

The salt tax was seen as a key contributor to the fishermen's hardships since it increased the cost of salt, essential for preserving fish. The government did establish duty-free fish curing yards, but the stringent regulations primarily

¹⁴ L Anantha Krishna Iyer, *The Cochin Tribes and Castes vol-I*, government of Cochin, 1909, p.251

¹⁵ Development Department G.O. 1538,,.1926, RAK

¹⁶ Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar*, Vol. II, Madras, 1988, pp.479-82.

benefited middlemen, not the fishermen. Authorities showed little sympathy for the fishermen's struggles. Even though they acknowledged the depressed state of the fishing industry, they attributed it to the fishermen's alleged irresponsibility and chose not to provide any relief¹⁷. Facing these challenges, the fishermen turned to traditional practices. In Tanur, they raised funds to pay a Tangal to perform rituals aimed at attracting fish. In Thalassery, they organized a temple festival with the same objective. In Calicut, a wealthy fisherman-capitalist started relief efforts by advancing grain on credit, trying to maintain the credit system vital to the local fishing industry.¹⁸

The early decades of the 20th century witnessed a significant transformation along India's coasts – the emergence of fishermen's organizations. here explores the struggles and triumphs of these groups under the often-hostile gaze of British colonial rule. In 1920, the Akhila Malabar Mukhaya Sangam, led by Koodakkal Chandran Vaidyan, emerged in Malabar, signifying a growing desire for collective action among fishermen. Local groups like the Araya Jana Seva Samajam and Mukkuva Maha Sabha, founded in Calicut in 1933 by P. Sekharan of Vellayil Kozhikode¹⁹, further solidified this trend. However, these nascent organizations faced a formidable opponent in the British administration.

British policies in India were primarily focused on resource extraction and economic gain, with little regard for the welfare of the fishing communities. These communities were systematically marginalized, denied basic rights, and subjected to exploitative capitalist practices. The Samastha Kerala Araya Maha Jana Yogam, initially a source of affiliation for some local groups, eventually ceased to function, highlighting the challenges faced by these organizations in securing a foothold.

In 1927, leaders from both Cochin and Malabar collaborated to form the Araya Vamsodharani Maha Sabha. Additionally, Cranganoor (kodungallore) became

¹⁷ Correspondence file, Development Department, G.O. 1617, 1926, RAK

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Udayabhanu, K. M., *The Dheevera Community and Social Change in Kerala*, Unpublished Ph. D thesis, University of Kerala, 1990, p.96

home to the weekly publication "dharma Kahalam," managed by P.V. Madhava Das and edited by P.K. Dewar. However, both the Araya Vamsodharani Maha Sabha and "Dharma Kahalam" eventually became inactive²⁰, showcasing the difficulties of maintaining such organizations in the face of British indifference.

The Dheevera community also took steps towards self-organization. Following the passing of K.P. Karuppan in 1938, P.K. Dewar established a local Dheevera association, the Pandit K.P. Karuppan Memorial Mahajana Sabha, in 1947. This organization functioned until 1957, but the absence of a more comprehensive Dheevera association necessitated the formation of a new group. Finally, in 1957, the Akhila Kerala Dheevera Sabha was formed, with K.V. Karunakaran as president and P.S. Damodharan as secretary.

The rise of these organizations, despite the numerous obstacles, serves as a testament to the resilience and determination of India's fishing communities. Their fight for recognition and fair treatment under British rule paved the way for a stronger voice for these communities in the years to come.

Memorial of the Mogayer Community to the Governor-in-Council of Madras, 1929

The Mogayer community of Malabar, primarily composed of fishermen residing along sea-boards and riverbanks, submitted a detailed memorial to the Governor-in-Council of Madras on October 15, 1929, memorial, led by above mentioned leader of Akhila Malabar Mukhaya Sangam, Koodakkal Chandran Vaidyar in chombala, Kozhikode, articulates their grievances and appeals for government intervention to upgrade their socio-economic conditions. Here examines the historical context, specific grievances of the community, previous efforts, and the response of British Government to their petitions.²¹ Primarily, the Mogers engaged in sea fishing for their livelihood. Subsequently, many found employment in government-operated fish curing facilities established by the British Raj. Their

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Mokayar memorial, department of development, B.NO. 17, Sl.49,1930

fishing technique involved deploying specialized nets termed "tatthu vala" or "achi vala." These nets were strategically used by coordinated strikes against the sides of their fishing vessels to herd fish towards capture²². The Mogers resided in extended familial units known as tharavad, a matriarchal joint family structure characteristic of Kerala. Colonial fisheries policy in Malabar disrupted traditional fishing practices. Prioritizing private ownership over communal access, it threatened the livelihoods of generations of fishermen. These fishermen relied on customary rights and faced displacement as capitalist entities sought to maximize profits from marine resources. Resistance and legal challenges offered some protection, but often the power of capital prevailed. This shift reshaped the socio-economic landscape and potentially threatened the cultural heritage of coastal communities

The Mogayer community follows social customs that discourage inter-dining and inter-marriages with other fishing communities such as the Arayans and Mukkuvans. Despite being an integral part of the regional fishing industry, the community has historically faced significant socio-economic challenges, which have contributed to their status as one of the most backward groups in Malabar. the Mogayer community in the southern Canara district, comprising Tulu-speaking fisherfolk with a matrilineal inheritance system²³,

A key grievance highlighted in the memorial is the deplorable educational status. Despite the existence of compulsory education systems, approximately 97% of the Mogayer community remains illiterate. This widespread illiteracy has hindered their ability to benefit from various government initiatives aimed at improving the conditions of fisher communities. The lack of adequate educational facilities and targeted efforts to disseminate education among the Mogayers has perpetuated their backwardness and ignorance.

²² Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*. V, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1975, 106

²³ A.M. Sreedharan, *Mukayar Vamshiyatha, Samskaram, Athijivanam (Mal.)*, Unpublished PhD, Thesis, Calicut University, Calicut, 2000, pp. 23-26

The Mogayer (Mukaya) community, in colonial Madras, presented a memorandum to the governor in council in 1920, delineating their socio-economic plight and advocating for increased educational and employment opportunities²⁴. This marked a significant departure from their traditional roles, showcasing a growing inclination towards embracing the avenues afforded by colonial interventions. Subsequent reminders in 1929 reiterated their demands, emphasizing the community's aspirations for political representation and educational benefits. In response, the government stated that "if four fishermen can be nominated to Taluk Boards and District Boards, a Mogayer may be nominated. Preference will have to be in the following order: - Araya Fishermen, Moonillakkar Fishermen, Pudu-Islam Fishermen, Mogayer Fisherman." This reply reinforced the Mogayers' self-identity as a distinct group separate from other coastal communities. Once this classification was established, it became impossible to consider the coastal communities as a single group²⁵. School admissions for fisheries training in the past relied on a religious classification system. Categories like 'Moplah or Muhammadan' and 'Fishermen Hindu' separated students based on faith and ethnicity. While intended for administrative purposes, this system likely reinforced religious divisions in everyday life. By the late 1930s, schools were even segregated into 'Mappila' and 'Hindu' boards, further solidifying these distinctions in the public mind.

However, while acknowledging their grievances, the colonial administration's response perpetuated a hierarchical classification within the fishing communities, thereby solidifying the Mogayers' unique character compared to other coastal settlements. Throughout the early decades of the 20th century, fishermen communities across the Malabar Coast voiced their grievances through collective action. Associations like the Araya Jana Social Service League and Samastha Kerala Araya Mahajana Yogam articulated demands for socioeconomic reforms and governmental intervention, advocating for the inclusion of fishermen in scheduled caste categories and equitable access to resources and education. Their petitions

²⁴ Madras fisheries bulletin, no.19.RAK

²⁵ *Ibid.*

underscored a shared commitment to addressing socio-economic disparities and fostering inclusive growth²⁶.

However, amidst their quest for progress, the Mogayer community faced formidable challenges, particularly during periods of economic hardship. The decline of the fishing industry, coupled with governmental neglect, exacerbated their plight, leading to reliance on traditional practices and religious rituals for sustenance. The famine of 1925-26 exposed the vulnerability of the fisherfolk, highlighting the need for governmental intervention and community resilience in the face of adversity.²⁷

The Mogayers have also faced significant neglect in terms of representation in public services. The memorial notes that only two members of the community served as Sub-Inspectors in the Fisheries Department, highlighting a broader issue of underrepresentation in governmental roles. This lack of representation has further marginalized the community, preventing them from having a voice in decisions that affect their welfare. The memorialists recall a prior appeal submitted to the Governor-in-Council on April 25, 1920, which initially garnered some attention from the Fisheries Department. However, the subsequent efforts were inadequate and localized. Only two schools were established in Korapoya and Madappally, which did not significantly impact the broader educational needs of community.²⁸ Additionally, the failure to promote broader educational initiatives and the persistent neglect of their representation in public services underscored the systemic issues faced by the Mogayers.

The 1929 memorial presents a series of requests aimed at addressing the community's ongoing challenges:

²⁶ Development Department, G.O. No. 2544, 1939, RAK.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Madras fisheries bulletin, *Op. Cit.*

1. Exemption from Examination Rules: The community requested exemptions from rules governing admission to government services, enabling them to secure employment in various government departments.
2. Promotions for Existing Members: They sought promotions for community members already serving in government roles, considering their disadvantaged condition.
3. Representation on Local Boards: The Mogayers requested the nomination of a community member to the Malabar District Board and Circle Boards to ensure representation in future councils.
4. Establishment of a Temperance Hall: The memorialists proposed the establishment of a temperance hall, similar to the one in Mangalore, in a central location predominantly inhabited by Mogayers.
5. Representation in the Government Fisheries Institute: They sought the nomination of a community member to the committee responsible for selecting candidates for training at the Government Fisheries Institute in Calicut.
6. Special Scholarships: The request included five special scholarships for poor students from the community to support their educational pursuits.
7. Opening of Schools: The community urged the opening of schools in all areas lacking educational facilities, exclusively for the benefit of the Mogayers.
8. Conversion of Higher Elementary School: They proposed upgrading the Madapally Fisheries Higher Elementary School to a high school.
9. Honorary Magistrates and Posts: The memorial called for the appointment of community members as Honorary Magistrates and the awarding of honorary posts to facilitate social and moral elevation.

Response of The British Government

In response to the memorial the British Government was largely dismissive, reflecting a broader pattern of neglect towards the communities. The Chief Secretary to the Government, C.W.E. Cotton, conveyed the government's inability to grant the community's requests for exemptions from examination rules, emphasizing merit-based promotion over community affiliation.

While the Fisheries Department endorsed some requests, such as the potential conversion of the Madapally Fisheries Higher Elementary School into a high school, the overall measures proposed were minimal. Where there were suggested to provide limited representation by rotation among various other fishing communities, with the Mogayers considered last, exemplifies the tokenistic approach adopted by the government. Besides The community's smaller size and perceived lesser significance were cited as reasons for deprioritizing their needs.

The Mogayer community's memorial of 1929 vividly captures the persistent challenges faced by this marginalized group in Malabar. Their historical backwardness, compounded by systemic neglect and inadequate government responses, underscores the need for targeted interventions. Despite their efforts to secure educational and social advancements, the British Government's response remained largely indifferent, highlighting the broader issues of representation and equity within colonial administrative frameworks. here illustrates the crucial need for inclusive policies that address the unique circumstances of marginalized communities to foster genuine social and economic progress.

The British approach to education in India, appears to be driven by economic pragmatism rather than social upliftment. While the grant-in-aid system²⁹ increased

²⁹ The grant-in-aid system in British Malabar, established in the mid-19th century, aimed to promote Western education by providing financial assistance to schools that adhered to colonial guidelines. This system facilitated the expansion of formal education, emphasizing English and modern subjects, while often marginalizing traditional knowledge systems. Although it increased literacy and educational access, the benefits were unevenly distributed, favoring elite and upper-caste communities and perpetuating social inequalities.

the number of schools, it likely came at the cost of uneven quality and funding³⁰. This could have worsened the situation for marginalized communities like the Mogayer fishermen whose petition for educational opportunities was dismissed. The British focus on cost-effectiveness and reliance on local elites to manage schools may have created a system that neglected the specific needs of disadvantaged groups. This neglect had a particularly negative impact on communities like the Mogayer fishermen, who already possessed a well-established tradition of indigenous education. Historical records indicate that Malabar had a more widespread network of indigenous schools with a larger number of students than neighbouring regions during the early 19th century. However, by the end of the century, educational development of Malabar stagnated while education in nearby princely states showed significant growth. This disparity suggests that mass education in Malabar was demonstrably neglected throughout the 19th century³¹.

Several factors contributed to how British rule disadvantaged marginalized communities in Malabar in terms of education. First, the British displayed indifference towards the existing educational systems in Malabar, including those serving the fishing communities. The district remained a neglected outpost of Madras on which the British government spent minimally, prioritizing only law and order. As a result, missionaries became the primary providers of English education in Malabar. But their reach was limited, and the growth of western education was slower in Malabar than in other regions.

Furthermore, the limited English education that was implemented adhered to the "infiltration theory," which prioritized higher education over primary education. The establishment of fisheries schools was unsuccessful because students and their families were more concerned with alleviating poverty than acquiring knowledge. To address this issue, colonial administrators should have focused on welfare schemes providing food and shelter. This educational policy catered primarily to the interests of elite and urban populations, further marginalizing the educational needs

³⁰ P.R. Nambiar (ed.), *Keralathile Adhyapaka Prasthanam (Mal.)* Trivandrum, 1982 p.11

³¹ Padmanabhan M N, Political agitations and the teachers movement -The case of Malabar - 1920-1956, unpublished thesis, university of Calicut, Calicut,2009, pp.14-15

of the broader population, including fishing communities. Consequently, the emphasis on English education led to the decline of the indigenous education system in Malabar, and mass education, especially for marginalized communities, was completely neglected

Parallel to their political endeavors, the Mogayer community actively engaged in associational activism, establishing communal organizations aimed at social upliftment and economic empowerment. The formation of the South Canara Mogaveera Mahajana Sabha and similar entities exemplified their quest for self-improvement and community solidarity. These organizations advocated for temperance, hygiene, and educational reform, reflecting the assimilation of colonial modernity into the fabric of coastal life.

In the 1930s, the Mogayer community exhibited a keen interest in establishing their distinct identity and recognizing their minority status. In a memorandum to the Madras government, they stated that although they were fishermen, the Mogayers were a separate group from the Mukkuvas and faced significant disadvantages that hindered their social, educational, and political development³². This reflects the increasing social differentiation within coastal communities during the colonial era. Those who were better positioned sought improved occupations and roles in the public sphere, frequently advocating for these changes collectively.

British policy and Mogaya Community: An analysis

Another document, originating from the Fisheries Department in 1937, provides a detailed account of the economic struggles and governmental interference experienced by the Mugaya community, a group of fishermen in the Malabar region. This community, which has historically relied on river fishing, faced significant challenges due to policy changes and economic conditions influenced by British colonial rule. The Mukaya community, described in the document as "boat-men and river fishermen from time immemorial," was significantly affected by the extension

³² Development department, G.O.No. 989, 1933, RAK.

of the Calicut railway north. This development disrupted traditional boat traffic, forcing the community to depend almost entirely on prawn fishing in the Korapuzha River. The document underscores the depressed educational, social, and economic status of the Mukaya, classifying them as one of the "backward communities" of the Madras Presidency³³.

The petitioners emphasized the precarious nature of prawn fishing, which was not lucrative due to the limited number of productive fishing days each month. This instability was compounded by their lack of English education, which restricted their opportunities for alternative employment. The document reveals that the Revenue Department, without clear justification, ceased the community's traditional fishing rights in 1935, opting instead to auction these rights³⁴. The auction system posed a grave threat to the community's livelihood. Wealthier individuals, often from outside the community, could outbid local fishermen, potentially lead to "permanent enslavement" of the Mukaya community, who would either work under unfavourable conditions for the successful bidders or face starvation. The transition from communal fishing rights to an auction system facilitated by the British colonial administration allowed wealthier individuals, often from outside the community, to outbid the local fishermen for fishing rights in the Korapuzha River. This capitalist intrusion disrupted the Mogaya's long-standing fishing traditions and placed them at a significant economic disadvantage. Unable to compete with affluent bidders, the Mogaya community faced the grim prospects of either working under exploitative conditions for the successful bidders or losing their primary means of livelihood. This shift not only threatened their economic independence but also risked eroding their cultural and social fabric, illustrating the broader adverse effects of capitalist policies imposed during the colonial era.

³³ During the British colonial period, Malabar functioned as a district within the Madras Presidency. This administrative arrangement persisted until 1956. In that year, following the guidance of the States' Reorganization Commission, Malabar was incorporated into the newly formed state of Kerala. Subsequently, the region was subdivided into four distinct districts: Kannur, Kozhikode, Palakkad, and Malappuram.

³⁴ Development department, B.25, Sl.55,1937, RAK.

An Inspector of Fisheries reported that the auction for fishing rights in the Korapuzha River was competitive, with bids from diverse groups, including Moplas and Thiyas. Ultimately, the rights were secured by a member of the Mogayar community, indicating internal efforts to retain control over their fishing activities.

However, the Inspector also noted the unsustainable economic burden placed on the fishermen due to the high auction price. He recommended a shift from auctioning to a licensing system, which would distribute fishing rights more equitably and impose a manageable fee. This proposal was supported by the Assistant Director (Coast), who suggested a fee of Rs 3/- per net, considering the community's economic condition.

The British administration's approach to fisheries in Malabar was largely driven by economic interests and the need for revenue generation. The Indian Fisheries Act of 1897 marked the beginning of formal regulatory frameworks in the fisheries sector. Under this Act, the British introduced licensing systems and regulations that significantly altered traditional fishing practices. The economic conditions of fishermen in the Malabar region during the colonial period were dire. In localities such as Vellayil, Elathur, and Puthiyappa, in calicut fishermen and curators were generally impoverished. During slack seasons, their situation became particularly desperate. To survive, they borrowed money from Mappila fish merchants without interest but were obliged to sell their fish at prices 10 to 20 percent lower than the prevailing market rates. This arrangement perpetuated a cycle of debt, which was only resolved when curators sought other lenders.³⁵

Fishermen were typically employed on a share-catch basis, and coolies involved in fish curing were paid modest wages—3 to 5 anas for men, 2 to 3 anas for women, and 2 anas for boys. In North Calicut, the primary fishermen groups included Mukkuvas, Puthuislams, Many of these fishermen had taken advances ranging from Rs. 200 to Rs. 500 from Mappila curators and merchants under the

³⁵ V.Govindha Rao, *Statistics and Information West and East Coast 1916*, Government Press, Madras, 1916, p.59

condition that all fish caught would be supplied to their creditors at 10 percent below the market rate.

The curators, predominantly Mappila capitalists, conducted their operations with hired labor, although there were a few female curators who worked independently. Calicut, a city with nearly 80,000 inhabitants, had a significant demand for fresh fish. Additionally, fish was packed in ice and transported to the Nilgiris, Bangalore, and other places. Fresh fish was also brought from Tanur, Koyilandy, and other areas to Calicut for local consumption. Being a seaport, a large number of fisherfolk were involved in landing and shipping activities³⁶.

In South Calicut, laborers were not employed on a permanent basis but were hired during peak seasons. In Beypore North, curators and fishermen had limited business acumen and were not supported by capitalists or middlemen. Their operations were on a smaller scale, as the majority of the fresh fish landed was transported inland by small river boats. The fishermen primarily used casting nets and did not employ hired labor, with curators themselves handling the procuring, cleaning, and salting of fish.

The economic conditions in Beypore South mirrored those of Beypore North. However, a notable change occurred in 1924 with the establishment of 57 fishermen's cooperative societies on the west coast, including three productive societies—two in South Canara and one in Malabar—comprising a total membership of 3,279, of whom 427 were females. The British government established a Fishermen Training Centre at Beypore³⁷, offering practical training in trawl netting and drift netting, as well as the operation and maintenance of marine engines. Admission was limited to men aged 18 to 35, who received six months of training in net fabrication and marine diesel engine maintenance³⁸.

³⁶ B. Sundara Raj. Madras Fisheries Industrial Report 1924, Government Press, Madras, 1926, pp.57-60

³⁷ Charles Innes L.C.S, F.B.Evans I.C.S (ed.), Madras District Gazetteer 1933, Government Press, Madras, 1933, p.672

³⁸ B. Sundara Raj, Madras, Fisheries Administration Report 1923-24, Government Press, Madras, 1925, p.42

The British colonial policies, driven by capitalist motives, significantly impacted the lives of fishermen in Malabar. The introduction of cooperative societies and training centers aimed to modernize fishing practices and improve productivity. However, the exploitation by Mappila merchants and curators, coupled with the economic dependency on these intermediaries, entrenched fishermen in cycles of debt and poverty. The capitalist policies favored the interests of merchants and capitalists over the well-being of the fishermen, leading to widespread economic hardship and limited opportunities for economic mobility among the fishing communities. One of the notable implementations was the introduction of stake net fishing licenses in the Korapuzha river. The system, which began in 1941, required fishermen to obtain licenses to legally operate their nets. According to administrative records from 1941-1942, 119 licenses were issued, generating substantial revenue for the colonial government. The documents reveal that the annual revenue from these licenses exceeded the average revenue of the previous four years, indicating a successful economic policy from the colonial perspective³⁹.

While the British policies were economically beneficial to the administration, they imposed significant hardships on the fishermen. The introduction of licenses and fees added a financial burden to an already economically vulnerable community. The requirement to pay for licenses often forced fishermen to borrow money, typically from middlemen who charged exorbitant interest rates, thus perpetuating a cycle of debt and poverty. The policy also disrupted the traditional community structures. Fishing cooperatives, like the Vengalam Mogayar's Cooperative Society, were established to help fishermen escape the exploitative practices of middlemen. However, the rigid enforcement of licensing fees threatened the viability of such cooperatives. In a letter from the Director of Industries and Commerce dated 1942, it was noted that the cooperative struggled to pay the third installment of the license fee due to poor income during

³⁹ G.O.772, Development department, sl.41, B.30,1942, RAK

the rainy season⁴⁰. The enforcement of these fees without consideration for seasonal variations in income exacerbated the financial instability of the fishing communities.

The fishermen of Malabar did not passively accept these colonial impositions. Records indicate instances of resistance and petitions against the policies. For example, the Vengalam⁴¹ Mogayar's Cooperative Society repeatedly requested extensions for fee payments and highlighted the adverse effects of the policy on their livelihoods. These petitions underscore the resilience and agency of the fishing communities in negotiating their survival under colonial rule.

Furthermore, the adaptation strategies of fishermen included diversifying their fishing methods and forming alliances with other communities to better cope with the economic pressures. Despite the oppressive policies, the fishermen's knowledge and skills allowed them to sustain their livelihoods, albeit under more challenging conditions. The historical records from the Fisheries Department in 1937 and subsequent analyses provide a comprehensive account of the adverse impacts of British colonial policies on the Mukaya community and other traditional fishermen in Malabar. The extension of the railway disrupted traditional livelihoods, pushing the Mukaya to rely heavily on prawn fishing in the Korapuzha River. This economic shift was compounded by the introduction of auction systems and licensing fees, which privileged wealthier individuals and external entities, undermining the Mukaya's economic independence and cultural integrity.

The British administration's policies, driven by economic interests, imposed significant hardships on the fishermen. The auctioning of fishing rights and the implementation of licensing systems not only exacerbated the economic vulnerability of these communities but also disrupted traditional social structures. Despite these challenges, the fishermen demonstrated resilience through resistance and adaptation strategies, highlighting their agency in the face of colonial exploitation. The transition from communal fishing rights to a regulated system under British rule reflects broader themes of economic exploitation and social

⁴⁰ G.O. No.M. S 1819, Development department MS series, sl.76, B.30,1942, RAK

⁴¹ Vengalam is a town from Kozhikode.

disruption experienced by indigenous communities during the colonial era. While the proposed licensing system aimed to address some of these issues, it was insufficient to fully mitigate the adverse effects. These historical insights underscore the complexities of colonial governance and its lasting impact on local economies and social structures. The case of the Mukaya community serves as a significant example of the broader struggles faced by marginalized communities under colonial rule and their enduring quest for economic and social justice. The document provides valuable insights into the struggles of the Mukaya community and other similar groups, illustrating the complexities of colonial governance and its direct impact on local economies and social structures. The shift towards a more regulated and equitable system of fishing rights reflects an attempt, albeit limited, to address the injustices faced by marginalized communities under colonial rule. This transition, instigated by the British administration, was part of a broader effort to impose order and control over local economies. The regulated system aimed to create a framework within which fishing activities could be monitored and taxed, thus generated revenue for the colonial government. However, this approach often failed to account for the nuanced socio-economic dynamics of the indigenous fishing communities.

Policy shifts and its impact on Fisherman Community:

The transfer of market control from government bodies to private entities during British colonial rule significantly impacted the lives of fishermen in the North Malabar region, particularly in Beypore. They privatized the residential areas of fisherfolk, monopolized the salt market that had traditionally been managed by local fishermen, and transferred control of port operations to capitalist interests. A case from December 2, 1925, illustrates these challenges vividly. A letter from V. V. Ramaswamy Iyer, President of the Calicut Taluk Board, addressed to the Local Self Government Department, reveals the challenges faced by fishermen due to the new policy adopted in Beypore fish market. The market, though located outside the municipal limits, fell under municipal jurisdiction for levying license fees as per a

government order (G. O. No. 204 November 20, 1926).⁴² This meant that the collection rights for the 1925-26 fiscal year were auctioned for a mere 29 rupees, reflecting the broader trend of market privatization. The private lessee, operating under a lease agreement with the Taluk Board, was then subjected to an additional license fee demand of 20 rupees by the municipality. This situation exemplifies the conflicts arising from colonial policies that often overlooked the economic realities of local communities. The Taluk Board, obligated to comply with municipal regulations, faced the possibility of market closure due to insufficient funds to cover the new fees and operational costs. This further strained the economic situation of local fishermen who depended on these markets for their livelihood.

Privatization essentially shifted control from public entities to private individuals, potentially exacerbating economic vulnerabilities among fishermen. The private lessee's need to comply with municipal demands, despite the historical autonomy of the Taluk Board market, signifies a shift in governance prioritizing revenue generation over the well-being of the community. Such policies, implemented under colonial rule, disrupted traditional economic systems by placing additional financial burdens on fishermen and jeopardizing their already challenging existence. While the Taluk Board initially contested the additional municipal fees, a compromise was eventually reached, allowing for a nominal fee as per Order No. 204 dated January 15, 1926. However, this episode exposes the systemic issues faced by local fishermen due to colonial administrative practices and economic policies.

The British Colonial Policy and Its Impact on Fishermen in Malabar: An Examination of Legal Framework and Administrative Correspondence. The British colonial period in India, particularly in the Malabar region, witnessed significant administrative changes that impacted various facets of local life. One notable example is the privatization of Ponnani Port and its effects on the local fishing community. On 24 February 1890, the presidency officer of Malabar requested the general port officer and Port Conservator to identify areas within their jurisdiction

⁴² Department of local self-government, G.O.NO.204, B.16, Sl.06,1926, RAK

occupied by private persons, including minor ports⁴³. This directive highlights the growing trend of privatization and its potential to restrict access to essential resources for local fishermen.

In a subsequent letter to the collector of Malabar in Calicut, the term "foreshore" was clarified as referring to any portion of the shore within 50 yards of the high watermark. Although this term did not appear in the Indian Ports Act 10 of 1889, it was used in other acts such as the Madras Act II of 1886.⁴⁴ This definition was crucial in determining the legal and illegal occupations of shoreline areas by private entities. Captain Gillian, the port officer in Calicut, reported that most of the foreshore was under private ownership, raising concerns about the legality of these claims. An investigation led by the Deputy Collector and Revenue Inspector aimed to identify the legal boundaries of each private holding between the northern and southern properties, particularly to Beypore.

J.K. Batten, Assistant Collector in collaboration with M. Ramaswami Iyer, Superintendent of Kallai Customs, prepared a comprehensive report outlining the private encroachments on the foreshore. Submitted as per Order No. 245⁴⁵, this report detailed the extent of privatization and its infringement on public spaces historically utilized by fishermen. The privatization of port areas and shorelines significantly impacted the fishing community of Kallai Angadi in Kannur. Iyer's report highlighted the occupied areas extending from Mayyayi to Parakadavu, a crucial site for timber merchants, demonstrating the dominance of private interests over public spaces. Furthermore, he noted the continued tenancy in these areas without proper notification to government authorities. Timber merchants-imposed fees for wood storage, thereby affecting the economic activities of local fishermen who traditionally relied on these areas for landing and processing their catch.

⁴³ Department of Local self-government, B.55, Sl.06,1890,RAK

⁴⁴ Frederic George Wigley, Bengal acts 1862 to 1882,India,Superintendent of Government Printing, 1907.p.49

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Moreover, the authorities' negligence in regulating these private occupations further marginalized the fishermen. As more beach areas were occupied for timber storage, fishermen found themselves with reduced access to vital coastal resources, exacerbating their economic vulnerability. The British policies of privatizing ports and shorelines were primarily driven by economic interests, favoring commercial enterprises over traditional livelihoods. While these policies facilitated trade and revenue generation, they disrupted local socio-economic structures. The fishermen of Malabar, who relied heavily on unrestricted access to coastal areas, faced significant hardships due to these colonial interventions.

The administrative decisions and legal frameworks imposed by the British in Malabar had far-reaching consequences on the local fishing community. The privatization of Ponnani Port and other shoreline areas restricted access to essential resources, undermining the traditional livelihoods of fishermen. This case study underscores the broader impact of colonial policies on indigenous populations and highlights the need for historical accountability and a nuanced understanding of colonial legacies. By examining these historical correspondences and legal frameworks, we gain a clearer understanding of the socio-economic disruptions caused by colonial rule in Malabar, particularly among the fishermen. This analysis serves as a reminder of the complex interplay between colonial policies and local communities, and the enduring effects of these historical processes.

While analysing the Dependency Theory of Andre Gunder Frank offers a critical framework for comprehending the substantial influence of British colonial policies on the fishing communities in Malabar. This theoretical perspective posits that colonial economies were intentionally structured to extract resources from colonies for the benefit of the colonizing powers, perpetuating economic dependency and underdevelopment. In Malabar, the privatization of ports and shorelines under British rule serves as a ideal example of this dynamic. Economic resources and wealth were systematically diverted away from local communities towards colonial centers and local collaborators, exacerbating economic disparities

and marginalizing traditional livelihoods, such as those of the fishermen who relied on unrestricted access to coastal resources⁴⁶.

Further highlighting the struggles faced by fishermen under colonial rule, another incident involved a salt price hike. In the late 19th century, the British government in India implemented stringent regulations on the production and use of salt to secure revenue. One significant piece of legislation was Act I of 1882 (Madras), which restricted the collection and use of "salt-earth," a naturally occurring salt, for fish-curing—a traditional practice among Malabar fishermen. The enforcement of these laws led to significant economic and social repercussions for the local fishing communities.

In July 24, 1884, the fishermen of Malabar presented a memorial to the Revenue Department, expressing their grievances over the hardships imposed by the salt laws. The petition argued that the prohibition on using salt-earth for fish-curing disrupted their traditional livelihoods and sought permission under Section 27(a) of the Act I of 1882 (Madras)⁴⁷ to authorize its use. The response of the government, articulated by H. W. Bliss, the Commissioner of Salt Revenue, emphasised the necessity of the salt laws for safeguarding revenue. Bliss argued that allowing the collection of salt-earth would inevitably lead to revenue losses and necessitate intrusive domiciliary visits to prevent misuse. He dismissed the concerns of fishermen, stating that the quality of salt-cured fish was superior to those cured with salt-earth and that the price increase was justified by the improved quality and safety of the product.

To mitigate the adverse effects on the fishing community, the colonial administration established government fish-curing yards where fishermen could purchase salt at a subsidized rate. By August 1884, there were twenty-one such yards in the Malabar district. Bliss reported that these yards were strategically located to minimize the distance fishermen had to travel and claimed that the system

⁴⁶ Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil* New York, Monthly Review Press, 1967.

⁴⁷ Department of Revenue, folded type, B.26, Sl.11,1884, RAK.

was efficient and well-received by the local population. He noted a significant increase in the use of these facilities and a rise in the quantity of fish being cured.

The British salt policy, while aimed at protecting colonial revenue, had mixed outcomes for the Malabar fishermen. The prohibition on salt-earth disrupted their traditional practices and imposed additional economic burdens. Despite efforts of the government to provide alternatives through government curing yards, the transition was not seamless. The fishermen's petition highlights their resistance to the new regulations and their struggle to adapt to the imposed changes.

Moreover, the policy's justification on grounds of public health and quality control appears to have been more a matter of revenue protection than genuine concern for local welfare. The resistance from the fishermen underscores the socio-economic challenges and disruptions caused by colonial policies that prioritized fiscal interests over indigenous practices. The nationalist movement influenced the lives and economy of fishermen in British Malabar during the early 20th century. On March 9, 1930, the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee met at Badagara in North Malabar and expressed support for the Civil Disobedience Movement. To mobilize backing in Malabar, a Sub-Committee was established to coordinate effective propaganda efforts. The response was enthusiastic, with numerous individuals from Malabar and the Princely States of Cochin and Travancore applying to volunteer at the Provincial Congress Committee's office in Calicut. This surge in participation underscored widespread support for the nationalist cause. The arrests of prominent leaders like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and J. M. Sen Gupta further energised the movement. On March 18, 1930, the Mathrubhumi newspaper of Calicut published an impassioned editorial calling on Kerala residents to prepare for action. In the same edition, Smt. T. C. Kochukutty Amma of the Cochin Educational Service urged women in Kerala to endorse the freedom movement and engage in Gandhiji's constructive programs. P. K. Dewar, Editor of Dharma Kahalom, also highlighted the movement's impact on fishermen in a prominent article, encouraging them to

challenge the Salt Law⁴⁸. This issue was crucial as salt was essential for preserving fish, a vital aspect of their livelihood.

The British colonial salt laws significantly impacted the fishermen of Malabar, forcing them to abandon traditional fish-curing methods and adapt to new regulations that favoured colonial revenue interests. While the establishment of government fish-curing yards provided some relief, it did not fully address the economic and social hardships imposed by the salt laws. This case study illustrates the broader dynamics of colonial policy-making, where economic control often took precedence over the welfare of local communities.

In the 20th century, the British policy of capital accumulation was also evident in Kasaragod. A correspondence from April 1924, submitted by Rama Rao to Devan Bahadur T.N. Sivagnanam Pillai, Minister of Development, reveals several layers of interaction between local fishing communities and the colonial government. This communication likely concerned the supply of salt to fishermen in Kasaragod, South Kanara District⁴⁹.

The primary concern highlighted in the correspondence is the increased rate of salt supplied to fishermen. Historically, salt has been crucial for fish-curing, an essential livelihood for coastal communities. Fishermen had traditionally received salt at nominal prices, fostering the growth of the fishing industry in the region. The increased salt tariff has imposed economic strain on fishermen, leading to the collapse of the fish-curing industry and consequent distress for many poor families.

The impact of British colonial administration on the local economy is clearly evident. The decision to increase salt prices, insensitive to the fishermen's economic realities, reduced their ability to cure fish effectively and led to health consequences for consumers of improperly cured fish. The document from April 1924 captures a moment of economic and social friction between the colonial administration and South Kanara's fishing communities. It highlights the economic pressures due to

⁴⁸ P. K. K. Menon, *The History Of Freedom Movement In Kerala Vol.II (1885 1938)*, The Regional Records Survey Committee Kerala State Trivandrum, 1885, p.196

⁴⁹ Department of Development, G.O. 792, B.4, Sl.6, 1924, RAK

government policies and their broader implications for community welfare⁵⁰. The appeal for reconsideration of the salt price increase underscores the interconnectedness of government policies and local economic health and the importance of culturally sensitive governance in maintaining the stability and prosperity of traditional industries and communities. This case emphasizes the need for culturally sensitive governance. Policies must consider the dynamics of local economies to support the stability and prosperity of traditional communities. Recognizing and addressing the specific needs of local industries is crucial for sustainable growth and community welfare.

The capitalization of fishing rights over traditional fishermen and other shoreline areas, coupled with the rejection of petitions seeking welfare and empowerment in Malabar during the British colonial period, had profound consequences for the local fishing community. This subaltern group faced significant disruptions to their traditional livelihoods due to these policies. Subaltern studies, as developed by scholars such as Ranajit Guha, offer a valuable framework for analyzing the experiences of marginalized groups like fishermen and their resistance to colonial encroachments on their access to essential coastal resources. Guha's critique of elitist historiography, which tends to focus on the actions and ideas of dominant groups while neglecting the politics of the subaltern classes, is particularly relevant here. The British colonial authorities and their native elite collaborators were the primary actors in the privatization of Port, and coastal inhabitants to the capitalist, while the fishermen, as a subaltern group, were largely excluded from this process.

However, their resistance to the loss of access to the foreshore and landing sites, as evidenced by the administrative correspondence, can be seen as a form of "politics from below" that challenged the hegemony of the colonial state and its elite allies. The concept of "dominance without hegemony,"⁵¹ developed by Guha, also

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Ranajit Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*. United Kingdom, Harvard University Press, 1997.

sheds light on the nature of British rule in Malabar⁵². While the colonial state was able to impose its authority through coercive means, it failed to achieve genuine consent from the subaltern classes, whose traditional ways of life were disrupted by colonial policies. The fishermen's reliance on unrestricted access to coastal areas was a key aspect of their subaltern identity, and the privatization of these spaces threatened to undermine their social and economic autonomy.

Colonial policies toward marginalized communities, such as the fishermen of Malabar, reflected a broader governmental strategy aimed at managing populations rather than granting full citizenship rights. In this context, colonial governance classified marginalized groups like fishermen as subjects rather than active citizens, limiting their participation in political decision-making. These groups were often targeted by administrative policies that sought to regulate their livelihoods while offering limited protection or welfare support, but without addressing their deeper socio-economic marginalization.

The colonial government in India used administrative tools such as censuses and surveys to categorize and manage these populations, focusing on control rather than empowerment. This approach was part of what Partha Chatterjee terms the "ethnographic state,"⁵³ which relied on the classification of populations for economic and political control. For fishermen, this meant they were often treated as a distinct population in need of regulation, particularly concerning their traditional fishing methods, which were sometimes restricted under colonial environmental or economic policies. The state's intervention in their practices was frequently framed in terms of developmental or welfare concerns, but these policies often deepened their economic struggles by disrupting traditional livelihoods.

The broader political context reveals that marginalized communities like the fishermen were incorporated into what Chatterjee describes as "political society,"

⁵² Ranajith Guha, (ed.), *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society*. India, Oxford University Press,1982.

⁵³ Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*.United Kingdom, Columbia University Press,2004, p.p.75-76.

where they were subject to governance mechanisms that negotiated their needs on a case-by-case basis. Their claims to resources and rights were often mediated through bureaucratic negotiations rather than through claims of citizenship. Thus, colonial policies towards the fishermen of Malabar exemplify how governance under British rule managed marginal communities through control and regulation, while offering limited avenues for political agency or economic empowerment.

Partha Chatterjee's chapter on the "nationalist resolution of the women question"⁵⁴ provides a valuable theoretical framework for understanding the broader impact of British colonial policies on subaltern groups like the fishermen of Malabar. Chatterjee's analysis sheds light on the limitations of the Indian nationalist movement in effectively representing the interests of marginalised communities. Chatterjee argues that the nationalist discourse, while challenging colonial rule, was ultimately constrained by the need to accommodate the interests of the indigenous bourgeoisie. This resulted in the fragmentation of the nationalist movement, as the concerns of subaltern groups like the fishermen were often sidelined or subsumed within the broader nationalist agenda.

In the case of Malabar, the capitalization of fishing rights and other shoreline areas by the British colonial authorities had a significant impact on the traditional livelihoods of the local fishing community. However, the administrative correspondence and legal frameworks surrounding these policies suggest that the interests of the fishermen were not adequately represented by the Indian nationalist elite. Chatterjee's work highlights how the nationalist resolution of the colonial was shaped by the class dynamics within Indian society, with the bourgeoisie emerging as the dominant force within the nationalist movement. This dynamic marginalized the concerns of subaltern groups, whose struggles and aspirations were often overshadowed by the nationalist policies.

By integrating Chatterjee's insights, the analysis of the British colonial policies in Malabar can be enriched by a deeper understanding of the complex

⁵⁴ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton University Press, 1993, p.120.

interplay between colonial power, nationalist discourse, and the politics of the subaltern classes. This approach underscores the need to critically examine the limitations of the nationalist movement in addressing the concerns of marginalized communities like the fishermen, and the enduring legacies of these historical processes. The shift from communal fishing rights to a system favouring private interests dispossessed fishermen, jeopardized their cultural heritage, and reshaped the social fabric of coastal communities. While these studies provide a valuable perspective, primarily focus on the experiences of men. However, fisherwomen played a critical, yet often overlooked, role in the Malabar fishing industry. Their expertise in fish curing, a labour-intensive and essential process, formed the backbone of the local economy. To gain a more complete understanding of the impact of colonialism on Malabar's fishing industry, we must delve into the lives of these women.

The life of fisherwomen in British Malabar, particularly between 1800 and 1947, reveals a complex interplay of socio-economic factors, colonial policies, and community resilience. A detailed examination of the documents related to the Cannanore Women Curers' Cooperative Society provides invaluable insights into these dynamics. This cooperative society, established to support women engaged in fish curing, faced numerous challenges exacerbated by the socio-economic conditions of the time and the colonial governance structure. Fisherwomen in Malabar were integral to the local economy, particularly through their involvement in fish curing a labor-intensive process requiring significant skill and effort. Despite their critical role, these women often faced severe socio-economic disadvantages, including widespread illiteracy and lack of property ownership. These factors limited their ability to engage fully in economic activities and to manage financial affairs independently. The documents related to the cooperative society highlight these issues and the efforts made to address them.

In a letter dated June 19, 1935, Dr. B. Sunder Raj, the Director of Fisheries, sought permission to appoint the Sub Inspector of Fisheries at the Cannanore fish

curing yard as the ex-officio Manager of the cooperative society for two years⁵⁵. This request underscores the extent to which the fisherwomen relied on external support for the management of their cooperative. The Director's belief that the Sub Inspector's guidance was necessary for the proper functioning of the society reflects the broader colonial attitude towards indigenous populations—an attitude marked by a paternalistic approach that often-undermined local agency. The model bylaw of 1935 further illuminates the governance challenges faced by the cooperative. The bylaw allowed for the appointment of a single manager with extensive powers if the elected Panchayat failed to function. This provision indicates a lack of confidence in the cooperative's ability to self-govern, a situation likely exacerbated by the members' illiteracy and limited administrative experience. Such bylaws, while pragmatic from a governance perspective, also reveal the limitations placed on the fisherwomen's autonomy and capacity-building.

Financial management was another significant challenge for the cooperative. Letters from 1932 and 1933 consistently emphasize the need for the Sub Inspector of Fisheries to handle clerical duties and manage the cash balance of the society⁵⁶. The repeated references to the illiteracy and lack of property among the cooperative's members highlight the precarious economic position of these women. The suggestion to amend the bylaws to make the Sub Inspector the ex-officio Treasurer further illustrates the tension between providing necessary oversight and perpetuating dependency on colonial officials.

The report on the existing practice of retaining the cash balance with the Sub Inspector, despite it being against the bylaws, underscores the practical challenges faced by the cooperative. The recommendation to amend the bylaws to formalize this practice reflects an attempt to institutionalize a protective mechanism against financial mismanagement⁵⁷. However, this solution also reinforces the colonial

⁵⁵ Development department, B.23,Sl.50,1935,RAK

⁵⁶ G.O.205, Development department, B.21,Sl.24,1933,RAK

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

intervention in local economic activities and the limited trust placed in the fisherwomen's abilities.

The colonial government's involvement in the Cannanore Women Curers' Cooperative Society can be viewed through a dual lens. On one hand, the government's actions provided essential support and stability, helping the cooperative to function and protect its members from potential exploitation. On the other hand, these actions exemplify the colonial paternalism that often-limited local agency and reinforced dependency on external authorities. The fisherwomen's lack of formal education and property ownership were used to justify this intervention, perpetuating a cycle of dependency and marginalization.

The life of fisherwomen in British Malabar, as reflected in the documents related to the Cannanore Women Curers' Cooperative Society, was characterized by a blend of resilience and vulnerability. The cooperative society emerged as a crucial support system within a colonial context that both exploited and sought to regulate local labor. These documents provide a window into the socio-economic challenges faced by fisherwomen and the colonial policies that shaped their experiences. While the government's intervention offered necessary support, it also underscored the limitations placed on the fisherwomen's autonomy and capacity for self-governance. This complex interplay of support and control is central to understanding the lived experiences of fisherwomen in Malabar during this period.

The document detailing the Cannanore Women Fish Curers' Co-operative Society, dated July 16, 1940, provides valuable insights into the struggles and achievements of these women during this period. Economic difficulties were a persistent feature in the lives of fisherwomen. The society was initially permitted to hold the office Secretary for a period of two years, as per G.O. No. 2392-13 dated September 26, 1938⁵⁸. The Assistant Director of Fisheries reported that this arrangement has enabled the society to function satisfactorily, despite the fact that there are no members among the women who can manage the society's affairs. This

⁵⁸ G.O.1744, Development department, B.28,S1.58,1940,RAK

underscores the economic vulnerability of the fisherwomen, who were forced to rely on the benevolence of the British administration to manage their affairs.

Social isolation was another significant aspect of the fisherwomen's lives. The society resolved to request the Government to permit the Sub Inspector to continue as the ex-officio Secretary for another two years. This highlights the lack of social and economic mobility among the fisherwomen, who were unable to manage their own affairs and were forced to rely on external authorities.

Despite these challenges, the document also highlights the empowering effects of cooperation among the fisherwomen. The society resolved to request the Government to permit the Sub Inspector to collect dues from the members at the rate of one pie per seer of salt taken from the yard. This demonstrates the ability of the fisherwomen to organize and work together to achieve their goals, despite the significant challenges they faced.

The British administration played a significant role in shaping the lives of the fisherwomen. The system of collecting dues from cooperative societies as cess from the yard was permitted in Government Memorandum No. 2109-I/38-4, dated September 8, 1938, for the Késargod and 'adapalli Co-operative Society. This system was subsequently extended to Quilandy, Meladi, and Thalassery.⁵⁹ The British administration's intervention in the affairs of the fisherwomen highlights the complex power dynamics at play during this period. The lives of fisherwomen in British Malabar during the period of 1800-1947 were marked by significant economic challenges, social isolation, and the need for external support. However, the documents also highlight the empowering effects of cooperation among the fisherwomen and the significant role played by the British administration in shaping their lives. The complex interplay of support and control by the colonial administration, coupled with the resilience and cooperative spirit of the fisherwomen, defines their lived experiences during this period.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Misogynistic Misrepresentations and the Historical Marginalization of the Malabar Fishing Community: A Critical Analysis of Colonial and Foreign Narratives

The fishing community of Malabar has long been subjected to social backwardness and caste neglect; a plight historically documented by various foreign historians. However, many of these accounts are grossly misleading and neglectful, often portraying the community in a negative light. For instance, Barbosa's remark that women in the Mukkuvar and Ezhava communities lived according to the sexual will of others is highly problematic. Similarly, the French navigator Francois Pyrard de Laval, who visited Kerala in 1607 AD, made misogynistic references about the community. He described the "Mukoi" and "Thiyya" as working-class individuals who supposedly had no shame in submitting their bodies to any class or caste in need, with their husbands purportedly accepting this without protest⁶⁰. Such statements erroneously suggest that Mukua women were prostitutes, a gross generalization that is not historically acceptable.

The English Anglican clergyman and foreign traveler Samuel Purchas, in 1626 AD, recorded that the "Muchoa or Mecho" were fishermen, describing the men as thieves and the women as prostitutes⁶¹. Conversely, these contradictory accounts further complicate the historical narrative, suggesting a bias influenced by the social status and the reception of such remarks among the upper classes⁶².

Francis Buchanan's accounts also refer to the "parastri" marriage relationship prevalent in the Mukua community. He describes "parastri" as a type of marriage where a man and woman could separate whenever they pleased, with children

⁶⁰ P. K. Balakrishnan, *Jathi Vyavasthithiyum Kerala Charithravum (Mal.)*, D. C. Books, Kottayam, 2008, p. 314.

⁶¹ K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *A history of Kerala: written in the form of notes on Visscher's Letters from Malabar. Vol. I*, Cochin Government press, Kerala, 1924, p.462.

⁶² Dilsoosa, *Misinterpreting the Identity of Fisherwomen in Foreign Accounts: The Case of Malabar*, Proceedings of the South Indian History Congress, accessed on 10.12.2023, p.p-5-6, http://journal.southindianhistorycongress.org/show_articles.php?atl_id=MzEz

always staying with their mother⁶³. However, this interpretation is misleading, as "Parastri Bandham" in reality denotes an extramarital relationship rather than a marriage practice. Buchanan's misinterpretation of Malayalam terms significantly impacts the understanding of personal and familial relationships within the community. Such careless historical writing destabilizes the sacred institution of marriage by misrepresenting cultural practices.

In Malabar, the "vidaram connection" allowed for the termination of relationships without formalities, contrasting with regular marriages that required formal acknowledgment from the elders to break off⁶⁴. The Mukkuva community's origins can be traced back to the Neythal habitats in the Sangha period, where they did not face such insults. To escape caste discrimination, the Mukkuvars practiced Sanskritization, a process by which they sought to elevate their social status. Their family system was later classified into different parts, divided into three exogamous steps or illams called Ponnillam, Kachillam, and Karillam. This classification was an attempt to substantiate their claim of origin from the upper-caste Namboothiris, as highlighted in M.N. Srinivasan's theory of Sanskritization⁶⁵.

Velukkutty Arayan⁶⁶ interpreted Hinduism in the context of the fishing community, citing Hindu scriptures that depicted Vishnu's incarnation as a fish and

⁶³ Francis Buchanan, Op. Cit.,

⁶⁴ Innes, Charles Alexander. Malabar Gazetteer. India, Kerala Gazetteers, 1997. p.180

⁶⁵ Mysore Narasimhachar Srinivas, Social Change in Modern India. Orient BlackSwan, India, 1995. p.6

Sanskritization: it is in the context of Indian social change refers to the process whereby a lower Hindu caste, tribal, or other social group adopts the customs, rituals, ideology, and way of life of a higher, typically "twice-born" caste. This transformation is often accompanied by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than traditionally acknowledged by the local community. This evolution occurs gradually over generations, with the claiming caste asserting its status despite potential disagreements from neighbouring groups. Such disputes can extend beyond mere opinion to influence institutional practices, illustrating the complex dynamics of caste identity and hierarchy in Indian society.

⁶⁶ Velukkutty Arayan emerged as a prominent leader in Kerala's fishing community. During the mid-20th century, he played a key role in uniting fishermen to fight for improved rights and working conditions. His advocacy brought attention to the socioeconomic issues affecting fishermen, leading to significant advancements in their welfare and living standards.

turtle and the birth of Vyasa from a fisherman⁶⁷. Arayan also referenced the Ramayana to demonstrate that Rama consumed both fish and meat. Furthermore, the Halasya Purana describes Krishna's upbringing by the fishing Yadava dynasty and portrays Shiva as a fisherman. These interpretations aimed to integrate the Dhivaras into the mainstream Hindu community without relinquishing their fishing heritage⁶⁸. Such efforts also served as a counter-narrative to historians who misrepresented Mukkuva women and men.

During this period, the misogyny and sexual violence perpetrated by the upper castes significantly impacted the cultural standards of the lower castes. Foreign writers' references often distorted the history of lower castes like the Mukkuva, exacerbating their plight. John Rex's essay "Theory of Identity"⁶⁹ discusses personal identity by referencing psychologist Reich's study, defining identity as a continuous thread connecting past, present, and future self-perceptions. This concept underscores the importance of accurate historical representation in shaping the identity and dignity of marginalized communities.

Survival Strategies and Social Divisions: Local Fishermen and the Malabar Rebellion

The arrival of European powers in Malabar brought substantial changes to the region's social structure. Prior to European contact, Malabar society was characterized by medieval and traditional systems that began to erode due to European influence. In traditional Malabar society, the Nairs were the dominant military class. They enjoyed special privileges, such as 'livery and maintenance' from their chiefs, and had exclusive rights to engage in warfare. This position

⁶⁷ Deepika Rose Alex. Religious Identity at the Crossroads Hindu Fisherfolk of Kerala, Research Gate, accessed on 18.03.2023, p.p. 45-46, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324922/20>

⁶⁸ Rajesh chirapad and Rajesh k Erumeli, *Dr. Velukutti Arayan (Mal.)*, Chinthapublishers, Thiruvandhapuram, 2017, p. 95.

⁶⁹ David Mason and John Rex, *Theories of RAKE and Ethnic Relations*. United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 1986. p.306

allowed them to maintain significant power and influence within the social hierarchy.

However, the European powers disrupted this established order. They began to recruit individuals from lower castes, such as the Tiyyas, Mukkuvas, and Moplas, into their military garrisons⁷⁰. This inclusion was a strategic move to bolster their defense forces. These groups, previously excluded from military roles, became integral to the European military presence, particularly the East India Company. These lower caste soldiers did not have the same feudal loyalties that the Nairs had towards their chiefs.⁷¹ Instead, their allegiance was to the European powers, specifically the East India Company. Over time, these soldiers from diverse backgrounds became the backbone of the Company's political and military power in Malabar.

The East India Company played a significant role in the social emancipation of these marginalized communities. By including them in their militia, the Company provided these groups with a status equal to that of the Nairs within the military hierarchy. This inclusion marked a significant shift in the social structure, as it broke down traditional barriers and offered new opportunities for these lower caste groups.

During the Malabar Rebellion, the participation of local fishermen in aiding British authorities, despite policies detrimental to their traditional livelihoods, reveals complex dynamics under colonial rule. Their actions can be understood as pragmatic survival strategies amidst the chaos of rebellion, prioritizing immediate safety and stability for their communities. This collaboration also reflects divisions within local societies, where some fishermen chose cooperation to mitigate the rebellion's disruptive impact, while others resisted colonial policies. British authorities likely capitalized on these divisions, employing coercion and incentives to co-opt local support. This historical context illuminates nuanced responses to

⁷⁰ K K N. Kurup, *Modern Kerala: Studies in Social and Agrarian Relations*, Mittal Publications, 1988. p.p.7-9

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

imperial rule, where survival imperatives often conflicted with broader aspirations for autonomy and resistance against colonial exploitation.

The Moplah Rebellion of 1921 stands as a pivotal episode in the history of British India, marked by intense uprisings and socio-political turmoil in the Malabar region. This rebellion posed significant challenges to various governmental departments, necessitating swift and strategic responses to maintain order and continue operations. Among these, the Fisheries Department's actions in Tanur, as documented by James Hornell, the Director of Fisheries in Madras, offer a compelling case study⁷². Here analyzes the department's crisis management strategies, underscoring the importance of local cooperation and administrative resolve. The Moplah Rebellion, also known as the Mappila Rebellion, was an insurrection led by the Mappila Muslim community against British colonial rule and Hindu landlords⁷³. The rebellion was fueled by long-standing socio-economic grievances and religious fervour, leading to widespread violence and disruption. Tanur, a coastal town integral to fisheries operations, became a flashpoint during this rebellion, directly threatening the livelihoods and safety of the fisheries staff and local populace.

In response to the rebellion, James Hornell's correspondence with the Secretary of the Government of Madras outlines a series of urgent measures taken to protect the fisheries staff and operations in Tanur. On November 21, 1921, Hornell requested funds to dispatch a rescue party, emphasizing the necessity of financial support to cover the Assistant Director (Coast)'s expenses in mobilizing the effort. This request highlights the department's proactive stance in crisis management. The chaotic environment in Tanur, exacerbated by severed communication lines and disrupted transportation networks, necessitated a creative and swift response. The Assistant Director of Fisheries in Calicut coordinated with local fishermen to secure fishing canoes, facilitating the evacuation of the fisheries staff. The involvement of loyal local leaders, such as Abdulla Haji and Kuttiamutty Haji, proved crucial in

⁷² Development department, G.O. 604, B.2, Sl.17,1922, RAK

⁷³ Robin Jeffrey, *Politics, Women and Well-Being: How Kerala Became 'a Model'*, United Kingdom, Palgrave Macmillan Limited,1992, p.113

negotiating and ensuring the safety of the staff. Their intervention, particularly during an attempted storming of the fisheries yard on August 23, 1921, was pivotal in averting potential disasters and exemplifies the importance of local alliances in crisis situations.

Hornell's letters underscore the financial strains involved in the rescue operations. The expenditure of Rs. 51/-, a significant amount at the time, reflects the extraordinary measures taken to ensure the safety and continuity of fisheries operations. The breakdown of expenses, including special boat charges and messenger costs, highlights the meticulous planning and resource allocation necessary to navigate the crisis⁷⁴. This detailed financial documentation underscores the transparency and accountability in the department's crisis management efforts.

The situation in Tanur gradually stabilized with the arrival of military forces, leading to the restoration of order and resumption of normal operations at the fisheries yard. The cooperation between the fisheries department and local leaders was instrumental in stabilizing the region and ensuring the continuity of essential services. This collaborative effort not only mitigated the immediate threats but also facilitated a smoother transition back to regular operations.

The Malabar Rebellion exposed the intricate dynamics of colonial rule in India. The response of the Fisheries Department to the Rebellion in Tanur exemplifies effective crisis management through strategic planning, local collaboration, and administrative diligence. James Hornell's detailed documentation provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by colonial authorities during periods of civil unrest. This episode underscores the critical role of community leaders and local networks in navigating crises and safeguarding public services. The resilience and resourcefulness displayed by the fisheries department and its personnel during one of the most turbulent periods in India's colonial history serve as a testament to their commitment and ingenuity.

⁷⁴ Development department, G.O. 607, B.2, Sl.18,1922, RAK

Local fishermen's collaboration with British authorities, despite detrimental colonial policies towards their livelihood, highlights the complexities of survival strategies during a rebellion. Their actions prioritized immediate safety and stability for their communities. This collaboration also reveals internal divisions within local societies.

While some fishermen sought cooperation to minimize the rebellion's disruptive effects, others actively resisted colonial policies. British authorities likely exploited these divisions, using coercion and incentives to secure local support. This historical context sheds light on the multifaceted responses to imperial rule, where the need for survival often clashed with broader aspirations for autonomy and resistance against colonial exploitation.

While the Rebellion of 1921 brought immediate challenges to the fishermen, it was the subsequent implementation of colonial economic policies that fundamentally reshaped their livelihoods. The rebellion's disruption to traditional fishing practices, coupled with the introduction of regulatory measures and privatisation, created a complex interplay of forces that profoundly impacted the fishermen's lives. The resilience and adaptive strategies evident during the rebellion laid some groundwork for confronting the longer-term challenges posed by colonial economic restructuring.

The colonial policies implemented by the British profoundly affected the traditional fishermen of Malabar, fundamentally altering their socio-economic landscape. The shift from communal fishing practices to regulated, privatized systems imposed significant financial burdens on these communities. Licensing requirements and auctioned fishing rights disrupted established economic structures, favouring wealthier individuals and external entities, thereby undermining local fishermen's independence.

The seasonal nature of fishing incomes clashed with colonial economic policies, which were insensitive to the fishermen's cyclical financial stability. Privatization and auctions marginalized local fishermen economically and restricted their access to essential coastal resources. Despite these challenges, the fishermen displayed remarkable resilience and agency, organizing cooperatives to protect

against exploitative middlemen and petitioning against oppressive colonial measures.

The experience of the Mukaya community exemplifies the broader impact of these policies. Infrastructural changes, such as railway extensions, disrupted traditional livelihoods, pushing communities towards unsustainable economic practices. The capitalist frameworks introduced during this period eroded communal and conventional structures, forcing fishermen to diversify their methods and form alliances to cope with economic pressures.

In essence, the colonial policies in Malabar represent a microcosm of the broader themes of economic exploitation and social disruption experienced by indigenous communities during the colonial era. The fishermen's historical narrative highlights the complexities of colonial governance and its profound impact on local economies and social structures. Their resilience and agency in navigating and resisting colonial oppression contribute to our understanding of the enduring legacy of colonialism on traditional livelihoods.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The fishing communities of colonial Malabar experienced a complex interplay of tradition, socio-religious practices, and colonial disruptions that defined their marginalization and resilience. Hindu fishermen were deeply entrenched in caste hierarchies and spiritual traditions, while Islamic and Christian converts faced distinct challenges and opportunities, underscoring the diversity in their cultural experiences. Traditional practices, spiritual reverence for the sea, and unique marriage customs highlighted their rich heritage, which was increasingly eroded by British policies. The colonial administration introduced modern legal systems, exploitative taxation, and economic policies that prioritized capital over community welfare, significantly impacting fisherfolk livelihoods. At the same time, limited initiatives like fisheries education and cooperative societies reflected colonial capitalism's paradoxical role in fostering marginal mobility while exacerbating economic dependence. Despite these challenges, the fisherfolk of Malabar demonstrated remarkable resilience. Community activism emerged as a significant form of agency, with fisherfolk engaging in petitions, protests, and negotiations to demand reforms and protect their livelihoods. Adaptive strategies, including collective bargaining and localized resistance to exploitative practices, showcased their ability to navigate the oppressive colonial framework. This interplay of marginalization and resilience reflects the complex legacy of colonial rule for Malabar's fishing communities, encapsulating their struggles to sustain traditional identities while confronting systemic exploitation.

The Hindu fishermen castes, particularly in the Malabar region, was characterized by intricate social distinctions and segregation. Moreover, those who converted to Islam, referred to as Pudu Islam or Puislan, faced marginalization not only within their original Hindu communities but also within the Muslim

community. This dual segregation highlights the complex interplay of religion, caste, and social exclusion within coastal fishing communities during this period.

The fishermen of Malabar maintained a profound connection to the sea, which they revered as a divine entity known as *Kadamma*. This spiritual bond extended to their worship of Kurumba Bhagavathi; a deity central to matrilineal traditions. Fishing was not merely an occupation but a religiously sanctified practice for these communities, with strong beliefs that abandoning it would amount to sin. The profession was also deeply rooted in inheritance, passed down through generations. Despite this cultural and spiritual connection to their work, fishermen remained relatively isolated from the rapid urbanization and modernity that surrounded the port cities of Malabar. These urban centers, influenced by Arab, Chinese, and other foreign traders, became hubs of cultural and economic exchange, leading to significant advancements. However, such developments scarcely impacted the fishermen, whose lifestyles retained a more traditional, even primitive, character. While colonial modernity introduced changes to the region, the economic policies of the British administration often exacerbated the marginalization of fisherfolk, limiting their socio-economic progress and reinforcing their peripheral status.

In contrast, the Parathavars of Tamil Nadu, a fishing community that converted to Christianity, benefitted from the modern education provided by Jesuit Christian missionaries¹. This exposure facilitated not only cultural transformation but also occupational mobility, with many members transitioning into trade. However, in the Malabar region, Christian missionary efforts were less impactful in converting Hindu and Muslim fisherfolk to Christianity. Consequently, these communities remained largely unaffected by the cultural and social influences introduced by missionary activities. This divergence highlights a marked disparity in the extent and nature of external influences experienced by fisherfolk in different regions.

¹ S. Bakthavalasala Bharathi, *Coromandel Fisherman an Ethnography of Patanavar Subcaste*, Pondicherry Institute of Linguistics and Culture, Pondicherry, 1999. p.5

Traditional dispute-resolution mechanisms, such as the *Kadal Kodathi* (Sea Court), played a significant role in maintaining harmony among Hindu fishing communities. These institutions were temple-oriented and deeply rooted in the socio-religious fabric of the fishing communities. However, with the advent of colonialism and the British emphasis on codified legal systems, these indigenous mechanisms gradually disappeared. The British introduced their modern judicial frameworks, which redefined and centralized dispute resolution processes, aligning them with colonial governance and legal rationality. This shift marked the erosion of traditional institutions and their replacement with structures aligned with colonial modernity.

The socio-cultural dynamics of marriage, mourning, and gender roles within Mukkuva and related communities in colonial Malabar reveal intricate intersections of tradition, caste, and gender, reflecting both the vibrancy and rigidity of historical practices.

The Mukkuva community historically adhered to two stages of marriage: *Kettukalyanam* (pre-puberty symbolic marriage) and *Thalikettukalyanam*, with community forms such as *Pandal Kalyanam* and *Vetila Kalyanam*. These rituals reflected a deep-rooted connection to caste hierarchies and patriarchal norms. The symbolic pre-puberty marriages underscore the community's focus on aligning marriage practices with religious and social prescriptions. Marriage Divorce, mediated by caste-based *Panchayats*, required financial settlements, this typically involved the payment of compensation by one party to the other. These financial obligations reflected the patriarchal and caste-centric values that governed the community. The *Panchayats* thus acted as arbiters, upholding the social structures that prioritized caste authority over individual autonomy in resolving marital disputes. However, reformist interventions, notably by Pandit Karuppan and the *Valasamudaya Parishkarani Sabha*, led to the abolition of outdated customs like *Thalikettukalyanam* among the Araya community, highlighting the shift towards modernization and inclusivity.

Traditional mourning rituals for Mukkuva widows and widowers illuminate gender-based disparities. Widows underwent elaborate rituals such as the breaking of the *tali*, a year-long mourning period, and symbolic acts conducted by the *kavuthiyan* (caste barber). Conversely, widowers observed only a three-day mourning period. These practices reinforce the gendered inequality in mourning obligations, framing a woman's identity primarily through her marital status while marginalizing her autonomy. While these traditions aligned with broader Hindu practices, such as the use of astrologers and approval of elders, their eventual decline underscores changing societal attitudes towards symbolic rituals. Similarly, practices like *Pungan*, which honored pregnant women, and *Pandal Mangalam*, associated with marriage, have largely faded, reflecting evolving community values².

In Hindu Fisheries communities, elder women, known as *karanavathi*, held respected roles, particularly in rituals like *Thirangumangalam* and *Pungan*. In Kasargod's Kottikulam area, these roles extended to ceremonial leadership, albeit with limitations compared to male counterparts. Rituals such as *Pattayadiyanthiram*, honoring deceased female heads, reveal the layered respect accorded to women, juxtaposed against persistent gender inequities.

The persistence and gradual decline of these cultural practices reflect the interplay of tradition, modernity, and reform in colonial Malabar. Customs such as *Thalikettukalyanam*, mourning rituals, and inheritance laws highlight entrenched caste hierarchies and gender imbalances. Yet, reform movements, economic exchanges like *Kurikalyanam*, and changing attitudes toward traditional practices underscore a capacity of community for self-reflection and adaptation. By contextualizing these practices within broader socio-political transformations, this study emphasizes the importance of dismantling oppressive norms while preserving cultural heritage, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

² K.P. Padmanabha Menon (Ed.), *History of Kerala: Written in the Form of Notes on Visscher's Letters from Malabar*, Asian educational services, 1986. p.466

The economic hardships faced by fishermen in colonial Malabar were deeply tied to the involvement of moneylenders, who became integral yet exploitative figures in their lives. Fishermen often took loans from moneylenders, binding themselves to agreements that required them to sell their catch exclusively to these creditors at dictated prices. This dependency created a cycle of economic subjugation. Within this framework, female fish vendors played a crucial role in sustaining the financial stability of their families. These women not only sold fish but also engaged in preserving it, particularly in areas like the Fish Street in the Marakkadav region of Ponnani. Predominantly Muslim women led these efforts and were central to the local fish trade. Additionally, women were at the forefront of resistance, petitioning British officials to challenge the encroachment of private and capitalist interests on coastal lands, demonstrating their active agency in both economic and political spheres.

The British colonial administration introduced significant economic and structural changes that disrupted traditional fishing practices. The establishment of fish oil factories and curing yards under British monopoly displaced the fishermen's traditional curing yards, undermining their livelihoods. Colonial taxation policies, such as the introduction of the salt tax, further strained the fisherfolk's economic stability. Moreover, measures like the privatization of Ponnani port and other fishing markets compounded these challenges, as access to vital resources became increasingly restricted. Additionally, specific instances, the auctioning of fishing rights, as seen in the Korapuzha River case Calicut, prioritized wealthier bidders over local fishermen. This not only displaced them economically but also undermined their social structures and cultural identity.

Amidst these challenges, the colonial administration introduced cooperative societies for fishermen, as noted in administrative reports. Societies like the Vengalam Mogayer's Cooperative worked to alleviate debt cycles by offering alternatives to exploitative middlemen. However, these initiatives were often undermined by colonial policies such as rigid licensing systems, which imposed additional financial burdens on the fisherfolk. These initiatives were ostensibly

aimed at providing support, yet they often served colonial economic interests by streamlining control over fishing communities. Interestingly, colonial modernity also played a paradoxical role in weakening caste divisions among fishermen. The rigid caste hierarchies of pre-colonial times, which had prevented lower-caste groups like the Pulayas from being hired in the fishing industry, began to erode under the pragmatic economic policies of the British. The economic struggles caused by these policies forced fishermen to prioritize survival over caste-based prejudices. For example, fishermen of higher castes increasingly sought financial assistance from Muslim Mappila traders, indicating a shift in social dynamics driven by necessity rather than ideological change.

Lower-caste communities, including the Mukkuvas and Mugayas, experienced a degree of inclusion under British rule that contrasted with the rigid caste hierarchies of pre-colonial society. This relative inclusion was, however, largely a byproduct of the colonial state's administrative and economic goals rather than an intentional push for social equality. Legal reforms and economic initiatives implemented by the British, while fostering some social mobility and tolerance, were limited in scope and often served the pragmatic needs of the colonial government. These measures highlight the complex and often contradictory impact of colonial modernity on the traditional structures of fishing communities in Malabar.

The fisherfolk's response to colonial exploitation demonstrates remarkable resilience and collective agency. In the 1920s and 1930s, organizations like the Akhila Malabar Mukkuva Sangam and the Araya Jana Seva Samajam emerged to advocate for fisherfolk's rights. For example, the Mogayer community submitted detailed memorials to the Governor-in-Council in 1929, demanding educational opportunities, political representation, and employment reforms. Although the British response was largely dismissive, these efforts reflect the community's growing political consciousness.

The introduction of fisheries education in colonial Malabar was shaped by a strong capitalist agenda, as evidenced by the framing of its syllabus by the fisheries

director. The primary focus was on vocational training courses that aligned with economic interests, while subjects like literature and law, which could foster broader social empowerment, were sidelined. The curriculum centered around practical and economically productive topics such as fisheries techniques, which included pisciculture, various fishing methods, fish handling, preservation techniques like curing and canning, refrigeration, and the production of fish oil, guano, and fishmeal. These skills were designed to enhance the economic utility of the fisherfolk but offered little in terms of holistic education.

In addition to fisheries techniques, the curriculum covered marine zoology, equipping students with knowledge about the marine ecosystem and its inhabitants to contextualize their fishing practices and instill environmental awareness. Other practical subjects included elements of navigation to ensure safe and efficient fishing operations, especially in coastal regions, and carpentry with a focus on boat building and maintenance, enabling students to construct and maintain their own fishing vessels. Furthermore, the syllabus addressed principles of steam and internal combustion engines and motor mechanics, preparing students to operate modern fishing equipment and boats effectively.

A broader subject area termed socio-economics was also introduced, encompassing economics, banking, commercial accounting, cooperative principles, rural sanitation, first aid, and temperance education. While these topics were aimed at empowering fishing communities with skills for sustainable development, they were inherently tied to economic productivity rather than addressing the systemic poverty and marginalization of these communities.

Despite the structured curriculum, the success of fisheries education was hindered by the socio-economic realities faced by the fisherfolk. Continuous student dropout was a persistent issue, as many families lived in extreme poverty and relied on fishing for their livelihood. For these families, education was often seen as a luxury that interfered with immediate economic needs. Consequently, students left school to contribute to their families' income through fishing.

The British administration responded to this issue by emphasizing vocational education as a means to address poverty, but their efforts were primarily driven by the goal of capital accumulation rather than genuine poverty eradication or social empowerment. By focusing on vocational training, the colonial government aimed to produce a generation of economically productive individuals who could contribute to the colonial economy. However, this approach neglected the broader social needs of the fishing community, such as access to comprehensive education and opportunities for upward mobility. The emphasis on economic motives over social empowerment highlights the exploitative nature of colonial modernity in shaping the lives of the marginalized fisherfolk.

The establishment of the Fisheries Department by the British in Malabar marked a significant intervention in the fishing sector, driven by the colonial government's focus on exploiting the economic potential of fisheries. The department conducted surveys of marine and inland resources, supported by figures like Frederick Nicholson and Francis Day, who documented the region's ecological diversity and economic opportunities. However, this initiative prioritized taxation and resource control over community development, leaving fishing communities to face systemic neglect and economic challenges.

Revenue-driven measures, such as the licensing systems introduced under the Indian Fisheries Act of 1897³, prioritized capitalist gains over the welfare of fishing communities. These regulations disrupted traditional practices and entrenched socio-economic inequities, leaving fisherfolk vulnerable to economic instability. Efforts like minimal school upgrades failed to address their poverty or provide substantive relief, revealing the superficiality of British reforms.

Amid these challenges, the Mogayer activism of community epitomized by their 1929 memorial to the Governor-in-Council of Madras⁴, underscored the struggles and aspirations of traditional fisherfolk. The Mogayers highlighted the

³ V.Govindha Rao Statistics and Information West and East Coast 1916, Government Press, Madras, 1916, p.59

⁴ Mogayar memorial, department of development, B.NO. 17, Sl.49,1930.

adverse effects of colonial policies, including illiteracy, lack of representation, and the marginalization of their community. Despite presenting pragmatic demands for education, representation, and employment opportunities, the British government's response was largely dismissive, reinforcing systemic neglect and perpetuating socio-economic divisions.

The complex dynamics within the fishing communities during the Malabar Rebellion of 1921 further illustrated the interplay between survival strategies and colonial exploitation⁵. While some fishermen allied with the British to protect their livelihoods, others resisted, reflecting internal divisions that were strategically exploited by colonial authorities. This period underscored the duality of cooperation and resistance among fisherfolk and revealed how British governance deepened social rifts to maintain control.

Ultimately, the colonial approach to fisheries governance exemplified the broader inequities of British rule, where capitalist imperatives undermined traditional livelihoods and self-organization efforts. The persistent marginalization of communities like the Mogayers underscores the enduring impact of colonial policies, shaping the socio-economic struggles and identity formation of fisherfolk in Malabar.

When These Observation applies to Gayatri Spivak's concept of strategic essentialism⁶ can be define that the fisherfolk's resistance to colonial governance was an act of reclaiming agency within the constraints of colonial power. Despite their marginalization, the fisherfolk asserted their collective identity, striving to preserve their traditional practices and socio-cultural bonds. For instance, the Mukkuvas maintained their connection to traditional fishing practices and systems even as these were eroded by colonial interventions. Their strategic assertion of identity was both a survival mechanism and a form of resistance to the erasure of their traditions.

⁵ Development department, G.O. 607,B.2,Sl.18,1922,RAC

⁶ Stephen Morton, *Gayatri Spivak: Ethics, Subalternity and the Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, United Kingdom, Wiley, 2007, p.p. 124-26

Caste divisions and religious exclusions within these communities highlight the intersectionality of colonial oppression, where social hierarchy and economic exploitation compounded their marginalization. Nevertheless, colonial economic shifts occasionally led to limited social mobility, although these were unintended outcomes of policies designed to serve colonial interests.

Aligned with Spivak's theory, the fisherfolk's struggles represent active efforts to navigate and resist colonial domination. Their use of shared cultural practices to assert a collective identity exemplifies strategic essentialism, reflecting both their resilience and agency. While shaped by colonial constraints, these efforts underscore the fisherfolk's determination to resist the dominant order.

This emphasis the need for a nuanced understanding of resistance in colonial contexts, showing how the fisherfolk of Malabar negotiated their identity and survival. By preserving cultural practices and asserting social bonds, they resisted colonial agendas and contributed to shaping their historical narrative.

GLOSSARY

- Chakara*** : Malayalam term for a mudbank, a calm, nutrient-rich area of seawater where many fish and prawns gather during a specific season
- Chala /Mathi*** : Sardine fish
- Chaturvarna*** : The fourfold caste system
- Kadal Kodathy*** : Traditional judicial system for fisherfolk.
- Kadamma*** : considering the sea as a goddess revered by fisherfolk
- Kavu Theendal*** : a channel for the underprivileged to vent their anger, and frustrations in front of Goddess Bhagavati in Kali form
- Kurumba
Bhagavathy*** : Mother goddess in fishermen community
- Panamagans*** : Barbers within the Mukkuva community, performing specific ritual duties
- Parava*** : Tamil Nadu fishing caste, known for pearl fishing.
- Ponamban/Kadavan*** : Subordinate officials assisting the Arayan in caste-related functions
- Puslans*** : Mukkuva converts to Islam
- Sthanikans*** : Hereditary priests or leaders in the Kadalkodathy (sea court)
- Teyyattam*** : Ritual storytelling performance addressing caste dynamics.
- Thachudaya Kaimal*** : Nair official in temple ceremonies
- Tharakans*** : Middlemen in the fishing industry controlling markets and loans for fisherfolk.

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Appendix I



Marriage celebration within the fishing community of Kerala in 19th century

Instructor and Drawing Master.	35-11-50-1-	60	47	8	1	Carpentry Instructor and Drawing Master.	35-11-50-1-	60	47	8	
Drill Master and clerk.	25	1	35	32	3	Fishery Instructor.	25	1	35	32	3
Boat Instructor.	25	1	35	32	3	Operator-Mechanic.	25	1	35	32	3
Fishery Instructor.	25	1	35	32	3	Peon.	12	--	18	15	8
Peon.	12	--	18	15	8						
			458	12	7				446	15	11 13

f.G. Fisheries Schools, Model School, Calicut.

Head Master.	35-11-50-1-	60	47	8	1	Head Master.	35-11-50-1-	60	47	8
Assistants.	25	1	50	150	-	Assistants.	25-	1	50	150
					1	Assistant.			x. 6	6 -
			197	8	6				203	8 6 -

x. Honorarium.

Note.—If the proposal is a reorganization of establishments, the Head of the Department should certify that claims for pension that may arise in consequence have been considered with reference to the provisions of art. 429, C.S.S., and should specify any case in which the maximum pension retentively admissible will be subject to reduction under that article. M. T. R. para. 6

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To The Secretary to Government, Department, thro' the Accountant-General.

Signature: *[Handwritten Signature]*
 Officer's Designation: Director of Fisheries.

Appendix III



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2/2/3

PUBLIC DEPARTMENT.

Memorandum No. 280-1 dated the 10th March 1930.

Public Service Notification - Article I - Exemption - Members of the Fishermen community - Reference their memorial dated the 9th October 1929.

The memorialists are informed that the Government are unable to grant their request that members of their community should be exempted from the rules governing admission to Government service.

C.W.E. COTTON,
Chief Secretary to Govt.

To Koodakkal Chandran Vydier and others, Fishermen, Chombala, Via Mahe, Malabar.
Copy to the Development Department.

Forwarded.
(By order)

Tsr/11-3.

A. Ramani
Superintendent.

m

As

Deo

This may await the return of the main file sent to Public, Dev, and Law. and be stitched with that file after issue of orders.

4/3/30

RR
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Mogayar Memorial-Public Service Notification On 10th March 1930

Appendix IV

6 ചെറുകുടവത്ത് മന്ദിരവെളിപ്പിച്ചു

7 ചെട്ടവാഴപ്പുറത്തിൽ ചന്ദ്രൻ

8 ചിലക്കയലിൽ എ. ജി. ~~...~~

9 നാടുകടലിൽനിന്നുണ്ടായ (9) ~~...~~

10 ചെട്ടിപ്പുറത്തു വലിയകൊച്ചൻ

11 മുത്താച്ചിത്തോടുകൂടി ~~...~~

12 ത്രവണാസ്സൽ ചെട്ടം

13 ചാണ്ടിക്കുശാലത്തുനിന്നു

14 മാട്ടുപുറത്ത് എരവി

15 ചെട്ടിപ്പുറത്ത് ചന്ദ്രൻ

16 ഉപ്പുലത്തു ചന്ദ്രൻ

17 വടക്കെയറ്റത്തു മന്ദിരം

18 കിഴക്കുപുറത്ത് ചെട്ടം ചന്ദ്രൻ

19 കിഴക്കുപുറത്തു ചെട്ടം ചന്ദ്രൻ

20 ഉപ്പുലത്തു മന്ദിരം

21 ഉപ്പുലത്തു മന്ദിരം

12 വിടാക്കുണ്ടു രാമൻ

23 വടക്കു പുറത്തു മന്ദിരം

24 തിരുവല്ലാത്തു മന്ദിരം

24 നടുമുക്ക് ചെട്ടം ചെട്ടം

25 തിരുവല്ലാത്തു മന്ദിരം

26 തിരുവല്ലാത്തു മന്ദിരം

27 തിരുവല്ലാത്തു മന്ദിരം

28 തിരുവല്ലാത്തു മന്ദിരം

29 തിരുവല്ലാത്തു മന്ദിരം

30 വടക്കു മന്ദിരം

31 കല്ലൂർപ്പുറത്തു മന്ദിരം

32 കല്ലൂർപ്പുറത്തു മന്ദിരം

33 വടക്കു മന്ദിരം

34 വടക്കു മന്ദിരം

35 തിരുവല്ലാത്തു മന്ദിരം

36 മുത്താച്ചിത്തോടുകൂടി

37 വടക്കു മന്ദിരം

38 ഉപ്പുലത്തു മന്ദിരം

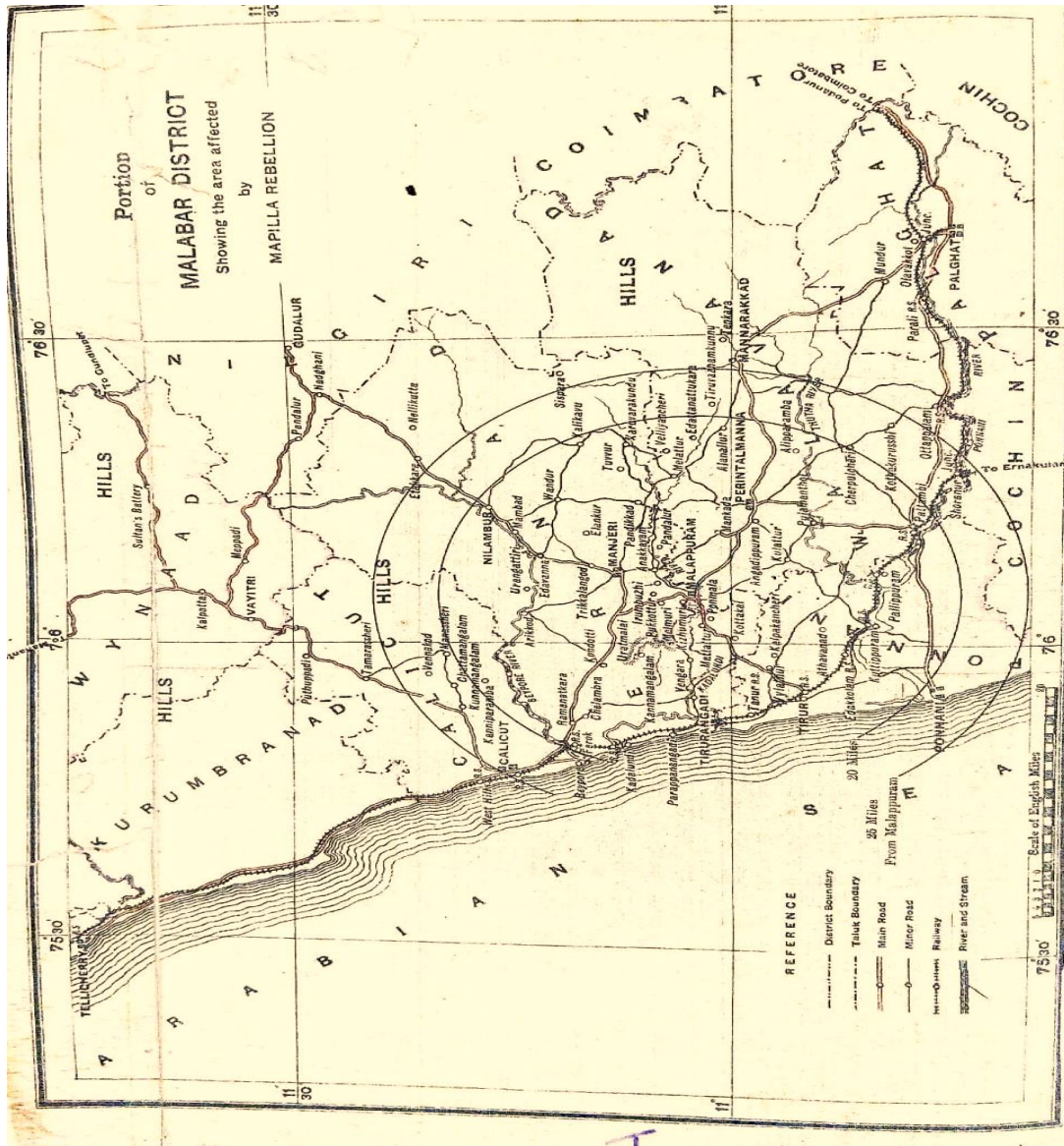
39 നാടുകടലിൽനിന്നുണ്ടായ

40 ചെട്ടിപ്പുറത്തു മന്ദിരം

M. P. ...

Mogayar Memorial -Signed document of Local Fishermen, Chombala, Calicut,1930

Appendix V



Portion of Malabar District, showing the area affected by Mappila Rebellion 1921-22