

**BETWEEN THE SEA AND TRAJECTORIES OF LIFE: A STUDY
OF THE FISHER FOLK OF CENTRAL KERALA IN THE
TWENTIETH CENTURY**

THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
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By

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JANUARY 2025

DECLARATION

I SWAPNA K P, hereby declare that the work presented in the thesis entitled **Between the Sea and Trajectories of Life: A Study of the Fisher Folk of Central Kerala in the Twentieth Century** is an original work done by me under the guidance of **Dr. K T Thomas**, Associate Professor (Rtd.), Department of History, Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda and has not been included in any other thesis submitted previously for the award of any degree. The contents of the thesis are undergone plagiarism check using iThenticate software at C.H.M.K. Library, University of Calicut, and the similarity index found within the permissible limit. I also declare that the thesis is free from AI generated contents.



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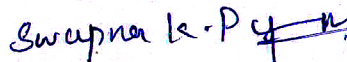
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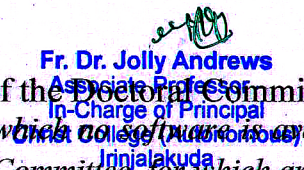

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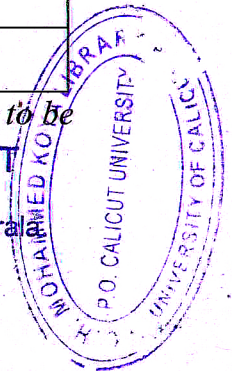

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Place: Irinjalakuda

Swapna K P.

Date:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NPC	:	National Planning Committee.
INP	:	Indo-Norwegian Project.
CITU	:	The Centre of Indian Trade Unions.
AITUC	:	All India Trade Union Congress.
LCFF	:	Latin Catholic Fishermen Federation.
FAO	:	Food and Agricultural Organization.
NCDC	:	National Cooperative Development Programme.
HUDCO	:	Housing and Urban Development Corporation.
FWS	:	Fishermen Welfare Society.
NORAD	:	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation.
UNRISD	:	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.
CRZ	:	Coastal Regulation Zone.
CMFRI	:	Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute.
OBM	:	Out Board Motors.
KSMTF	:	Kerala Swathantra Matsya Thozhilali Federation.
KMFR	:	Kerala Marine Fishing Regulation.
KFWSA	:	Kerala Fishermen Welfare Societies Act.
SAP	:	Structural Adjustment Plan.

Abstract

Fishing community of Kerala has a vital role in moulding the socio-cultural life of the society. The present study is focused on the fishing community of two Coastal Taluks of Central Kerala, i.e., Chavakkad and Kodungallur which in the colonial period spread into two territorial entities of Malabar and Cochin. The present study has academic, socio – economic and environmental relevance. The traditional fishing sector, their problems; its responses to colonial modernity, globalization, intrusion of technology and capital penetration in the proposed region are largely unexplored areas. Technological advancement in the fisheries sector and sustainable extraction of resources have a bearing on the marine eco-system. Above all, the coastal region and traditional fishermen are integral components of Kerala's societal fabric, rendering this issue historically significant and contemporarily relevant.

This study explores how the lives of traditional fishing communities have been shaped by various factors in the twentieth century. It discusses how the social exclusion of the fishermen happened and how they were confined to the fringes of the coastal belt. The study focuses on the socio-economic status of the *Vala*, *Araya* and *Mukkuva* Communities of Central Kerala. The study also analyses the contribution made by women in the fishing community. Despite their active involvement, their role was considered as merely supportive and they were excluded from the mainstream. The role of patriarchy in socially barring women from possessing knowledge about the craft and craft equipment has been analysed.

The *Kalyanadayini Sabha* established by Pandit K P Karuppan at Anapuzha for the *Vala* Community and the Kaipamangalam Fishermen Co-Operative Society established by Rao Bahadur Govindan get special attention in the study. This study examines the factors driving the transformation of the traditional fishing sector from community-owned to capital-intensive operations. The impact of Indo-Norwegian project in the fishery sector has been analyzed. It explores how mechanization posed a threat to the sustainable nature of fishing and other related problems faced by the artisanal fishing community.

Key Words - Traditional Fishermen, Colonial Modernity, Indo-Norwegian Project, Mechanization, Capital Penetration.

സംഗ്രഹം

കേരളത്തിലെ മത്സ്യബന്ധന മേഖല സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ സാമൂഹിക-സാംസ്കാരിക ജീവിതം രൂപപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതിൽ നിർണായക പങ്ക് വഹിക്കുന്നു. കൊളോണിയൽ കാലഘട്ടത്തിൽ മധ്യകേരളം മലബാർ, കൊച്ചി എന്നീ പ്രദേശങ്ങളായാണ് വ്യാപിച്ച് കിടന്നിരുന്നത്. മധ്യകേരളത്തിലെ ചാവക്കാട്, കൊടുങ്ങല്ലൂർ എന്നീ താലൂക്കുകളിലെ മത്സ്യബന്ധന സമൂഹത്തിലാണ് ഈ പഠനം ഊന്നൽ നൽകിയിരിക്കുന്നത്. ഈ പഠനത്തിന് അക്കാദമികവും, സാമൂഹികവും സാമ്പത്തികവും, പാരിസ്ഥിതികവുമായ പ്രസക്തിയുണ്ട്. പരമ്പരാഗത മത്സ്യബന്ധനസമൂഹവും, അവയുടെ പ്രശ്നങ്ങളും-കൊളോണിയൽ ആധുനികതയോടുള്ള അതിന്റെ പ്രതികരണം, ആഗോളവൽക്കരണം, സാങ്കേതിക വിദ്യയുടെ കടന്നുകയറ്റം, നിർദ്ദിഷ്ട മേഖലയിലെ മൂലധന കടന്നുകയറ്റം എന്നിവ പ്രധാനമായും പഠനവിധേയമാകുന്നുണ്ട്. മത്സ്യബന്ധനമേഖലയിലെ സാങ്കേതിക പുരോഗതിയും വിഭവങ്ങളുടെ സുസ്ഥിരമായ ചൂഷണവും സമുദ്ര പരിസ്ഥിതി വ്യവസ്ഥയെ സ്വാധീനിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. എല്ലാറ്റിനുമുപരി, തീരദേശവും പരമ്പരാഗത മത്സ്യത്തൊഴിലാളികളും കേരളത്തിന്റെ സാമൂഹിക ഘടനയുടെ അവിഭാജ്യഘടകങ്ങളാണ്, ഇത് ഈ വിഷയത്തെ ചരിത്രപരമായി പ്രാധാന്യമുള്ളതും സമകാലികമായി പ്രസക്തിയുള്ളതുംമാക്കുന്നു.

ഇരുപതാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടിലെ പരമ്പരാഗത മത്സ്യബന്ധന സമൂഹങ്ങളുടെ ജീവിതം വിവിധ ഘടകങ്ങളാൽ എങ്ങനെ രൂപപ്പെട്ടുവെന്ന് ഈ പഠനം പരിശോധിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. മത്സ്യത്തൊഴിലാളികളുടെ സാമൂഹികമായ അകറ്റി നിർത്തൽ എങ്ങനെ സംഭവിച്ചുവെന്നും അവർ തീരദേശത്തിലേക്ക് എങ്ങനെ അരികുവൽക്കരിക്കപ്പെട്ടു എന്നും ഈ പ്രബന്ധം ചർച്ചചെയ്യുന്നു. മധ്യകേരളത്തിലെ വാല, അരയ, മുക്കുവ എന്നീ സമുദായങ്ങളുടെ സാമൂഹിക-സാമ്പത്തിക സ്ഥിതിയിലാണ് ഈ പഠനം ശ്രദ്ധ കേന്ദ്രീകരിക്കുന്നത്. മത്സ്യബന്ധന സമൂഹത്തിൽ സ്ത്രീകൾ നൽകിയ സംഭാവനകളെക്കുറിച്ചും ഈ പഠനം വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നുണ്ട്. സ്ത്രീകളുടെ സജീവമായ പങ്കാളിത്തം കേവലം പിന്തുണ നൽകുക എന്നതു മാത്രമായി കണക്കാക്കുകയും, മുഖ്യധാരാപ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളിൽ നിന്ന് അവരെ ഒഴിവാക്കുന്നതിൽ പുരുഷാധിപത്യത്തിന്റെ പങ്കിനെക്കുറിച്ചും ഈ പ്രബന്ധം പരിശോധിക്കുന്നു.

റാവു ബഹദൂർ ഗോവിന്ദൻ സ്ഥാപിച്ച കൈപ്പമംഗലം മത്സ്യത്തൊഴിലാളി സഹകരണ സംഘവും, വാല സമൂഹത്തിനായി ആനപ്പുഴയിൽ പണ്ഡിറ്റ് കെ.പി. കറുപ്പൻ സ്ഥാപിച്ച കല്യാണദായിനി സഭയും ഈ പ്രബന്ധത്തിൽ പ്രത്യേകം പഠനവിധേയമാകുന്നുണ്ട്. പരമ്പരാഗത മത്സ്യബന്ധന മേഖലയെ സമൂഹ ഉടമസ്ഥതയിൽ നിന്ന് മൂലധനാധിഷ്ഠിതമായ വ്യവസായമായി പരിവർത്തനം ചെയ്ത ഘടകങ്ങളെ ഈ പഠനം പരിശോധിക്കുന്നു. മത്സ്യബന്ധന മേഖലയിലെ ഇന്തോ-നോർവീജിയൻ പദ്ധതിയുടെ സ്വാധീനം ഈ പ്രബന്ധം വിശകലനം ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ട്. മത്സ്യബന്ധനത്തിന്റെ സുസ്ഥിര സ്വഭാവത്തിനും പരമ്പരാഗത മത്സ്യബന്ധനസമൂഹം നേരിടുന്ന മറ്റ് അനുബന്ധ പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾക്കും യന്ത്രവൽക്കരണം എങ്ങനെ ഭീഷണി ഉയർത്തുമെന്നും ഈ പഠനം പരിശോധിക്കുന്നു.

പ്രധാന പദങ്ങൾ - പരമ്പരാഗത മത്സ്യത്തൊഴിലാളികൾ, കൊളോണിയൽ ആധുനികത, ഇന്തോ-നോർവീജിയൻ പദ്ധതി, യന്ത്രവൽക്കരണം, മൂലധന കടന്നുകയറ്റം.

Introduction

Fishing, as the primary livelihood of a caste-centric community, has an extensive and momentous history in India. Traditional communities have progressed and transformed over centuries through labour, deep knowledge of the marine ecosystem and perfecting relevant harvesting tools and equipment. According to John Buchan "The charm of fishing is that it is the pursuit of what is elusive but attainable, a perpetual series of occasions of hope." Fishing community of Kerala has a vital role in moulding the socio-cultural life of the society. A community refers to a distinct region of social living characterized by some level of social coherence. Locality and community sentiment form the foundational pillars of a community¹. The study of communities has proved them to be structural components of cultural and social organization and transmission. The analysis of their challenges by social scientists has always been against the backdrop of communities. Such studies threw light on the nature, functions and social relations relating to the phenomenon. Community study can be described as an exploration into the nature, behavioral dynamics and inter-relationships that comprise the community². The present study is focussed on the fishing community of central Kerala.

At the elementary level, fisheries is a human phenomenon. According to the economist Lee G Anderson, fishery can be defined as "a stock or stocks of fish and the enterprises that have the potential of exploiting them." Alexander Spoehr advocates that "Fishery is a socio-economic technological system in interaction with a marine ecosystem". An alternative definition by Raul Andersen provides that "Fisheries is a group of activities by means of which people connect with the surrounding aquatic ecosystems and renewable resources"³.

¹ Fumiya Onaka, "Community Transformations in Asian Societies an Introduction", *Historical Social Research*, Vol.42, No.3, 2017, Gesis, 2017, p.161. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44425371>, Accessed on 22/05/2022.

² Conrad M. Arensberg, "The Community-Study Method", *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. LX, The University of Chicago Press, Sept.1954, p.2. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2771896>, Accessed on 12/05/2022.

³ C. Ramachandran, *Teaching Not to F(in)ish ; A Constructivist Perspective on Reinventing A Responsible Marine Fisheries Extension System*, CMFRI, Cochi, 2004, p.20.

The Indian Subcontinent is surrounded by three water bodies - Bay of Bengal to the east, Arabian Sea to the west and the Indian Ocean to the south. The Arabian Sea plays a key role in moulding the ecology and socio-economic life of the people of Kerala. The Western Ghats and Arabian Sea determine the human ecology of Kerala. The continental shelf along the Kerala Coast is the richest fishing ground in the country. The long coastline of Kerala has brought several ethnic groups in direct contact with the fishing communities that include Hindu Fisherfolk, Mappila fishermen and Latin Christian fishermen.

All these communities have vast knowledge about the species of fish and their habitat, the various planktons, and the breeding seasons of the different species. They mainly depend on the Arabian Sea for their livelihood⁴. Their socio-cultural life is fashioned according to the ecological conditions of the region which they inhabit. Their cultural ecology and economic framework are also seen to be the direct result of the marine environment.

Ecologically the state has three belts -the high land, the middle lateritic plain and the coastal plain. The 590-km shoreline of Kerala is marked by a series of *kayals* or backwaters along with estuaries at the mouth of rivers resulting in a perennial water body running nearly parallel to the main shoreline. The narrow sandy ridges between these water bodies and the sea are usually interrupted by massive tidal inflows during monsoon and other tidal peaks⁵. Similarly, these ridges are buried by sediments during the drier periods. As a result, tidal action determines the formation and disintegration of the sand bars which further alters the coastline configuration.

The settlement pattern of Kerala's agrarian villages were predominantly based on the geographical intricacies and nature of ecology. Agricultural laborers,

⁴ P.R.G Mathur, *Ecology, Technology and Economy*, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2008, pp. 1-2.

⁵ Government of Kerala, *Kerala State Gazetteer*(ed.), Thiruvananthapuram, 1986, pp.71-72.

astrologers, washer men, ritual cum medicine men etc. constituted the major occupational classes in these settlements. Ma Huan (1433) included *Mukkuva* fishermen among the five classes of people of the country⁶. There is a Chinese proverb which says “give a man a fish and he will live for a day, teach him how to fish and he will live for ever”⁷. The dynamism between technology, marine species and spatial factor and the troubled social relationship patterns of the fish workers can be attributed to the social ecological changes in the marine fisheries.

This study focusses on the two Coastal Taluks of central Kerala, i.e., Chavakkad and Kodungallur which in the colonial period spread into two territorial entities of Malabar and Cochin. The traditional fishing community of Kerala was divided into ten different categories namely *Valan*, *Mukkuva*, *Araya*, *Bovis-Mogeyar*, *Mogavirar*, *Mokayan*, *Nullayan*, *Arayavathi*, *Panniakkal*, *Valanjiar*. Among this *Vala*, *Mukkuva* and *Araya* communities are found in the focussed area. The *Arayas* were believed to be the descendants of *Meenava* Parathas of *Neithal* Tinai. The people who inhabited the coastal regions and engaged in ocean fishing came to be known as the *Kadalarayans*⁸. Another group of people engaged in backwater fishing in the Thiru-Cochin region came to be known as *Valans*. These two sub castes did not intermingle or intermarry each other. They stood as independent entities for a very long time. The marine fishermen and backwater fishermen competed for superiority over each other.

The fishing community also followed the concept of *illam*. In Kodungallur taluk, the community of *Arayas* belonged to *Nalillakkar* (four illams) - *Ponnillam*, *Chembillam*, *Kachillam*, *Karillam*. Marriage within the same *illam* was prohibited in

⁶ P.J. Cherian, *Perspectives on Kerala History*, Kerala State Gazetteer, Vol.11, Part 11, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, p.82.

⁷ C. Ramachandran, *Op.Cit.*, p.9.

⁸ S.K. Vasanthan, *Kerala Samskara Charithra Nighandu*, (Mal.), Vol.1, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005, pp.68-69.

the past⁹. The headman of the *Arayan* Community was called *Arajan/Aravan*. Similar titles were used by the *Valans* and *Mukkuvas* for denoting their heads.

The next fishing community found in the Kodungallur Taluk was the *Valan*. They were the backwater fishermen and they thickly inhabited the regions of Anapuzha, Poyya, Muthakunnam and sparsely populated the backwater regions of Karupadanna. The *Valans* had four *illams* and their names varied from place to place. The *Valans* claimed a higher status than the *Arayans*. They rendered services to the Cochin royal family as royal ferrymen.

The *Mukkuvas* were found in the Chavakad Taluk. Those who collected pearl from the sea were known as *Mukkuvas*. Along with fishing they were also engaged in limestone making. Some of them served as the carriers of the royal *Pallakku*. The *Mukkuvas* followed the tradition of *Munnillam* and worshiped *Chamandy*, *Dandan*, *Kurumba*, *Mukkan*, etc. The servicing castes were known by different names like *Panimakkal*, *Valanjiyam*, *Kavuthiyan*, *Nayarasserikkaran*, *Arayavathi*, etc. The servicing caste helped them in ritual purification at the time of death, birth, puberty, etc.

Significance of the Study

The present study has academic, socio – economic and environmental relevance. The traditional fishing sector, their problems; its responses to colonial modernity, globalization, intrusion of technology and capital penetration in the proposed region are largely unexplored areas. Technological advancement in the fisheries sector and sustainable extraction of resources have a bearing on the marine eco-system. Above all the coastal region and traditional fishermen are integral components of Kerala's societal fabric, rendering this issue historically significant and contemporarily relevant.

⁹ L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, *The Tribes and Caste of Cochin*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1981, p.261.

Objectives of the Study

- To trace the socio-economic background of fishermen.
- To examine the gender differentiation in the fishing community.
- To understand the functioning of Fisheries Departments of Cochin and Malabar.
- To study the role of fishermen societies in the socio-economic transformation of the fishermen community.
- To explore the contribution of Pandit Karuppan and Rao Bahadur V. V. Govindan in the socio-economic mobilization of the fishing community.
- To analyse the impact of Indo-Norwegian Project on the artisanal fishermen.
- To assess the impact of advancement of technology and capital penetration on the fisheries sector.

Review of Literature

From the Sangam period onwards, we get valuable references about the fishing community. V. R. Parameswaran Pillai's Tamil *Sangakrithiyude Malayala Vivarthanam* mentions about the *Ayin Tinai*, the coastal region of which was called *Neithal*. The main occupation of the people in this area was fishing and salt making¹⁰. *The Akam songs* translated by N.V. Krishna Warriar (Akam song No. 81) refers to the women of *Neithal Tinai* engaged in salting and drying of fish¹¹.

The *Manipravalam* literature also located the fishing communities in the various spheres of the society. The *Manipravalam Charcha* give a vivid account of the various type of fish sold in the market¹². The *Muchanti Angadi Varnana* of

¹⁰ V.R. Parameswaran Pillai, *Purananuru, Tamil Sangakrithiyude Malayala Vivarthanam* (Mal.), Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 1969.

¹¹ N.V. Krishna Warriar, *Akam Songs* (Mal., tran.), Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 1981.

¹² Raghava Warriar, Kesavan Veluthat, *Manipravalam Charcha*(Mal.), Sahitya Pravarthaka Co – operative Society Ltd., Kottayam, 2016.

Unniyachicharitham (song no.13) depicts the language of the fish selling women and varieties of fish that were sold in the market¹³.

“*The Land of Perumals or Cochin, its Past and its Present*” gives a detailed account of the fishing community of Cochin in the colonial period, their crude technology, fishing skills and type of fish they caught¹⁴. Another work of Francis Day, *The Fishes of Malabar*, is a comprehensive study about the fishes of Malabar Coast. Edgar Thurston’s *Encyclopaedia, Castes, and Tribes of Southern India*, explains the social status of the fishing community of Kerala. Francis Buchanan highlights that the *Mukkavas* were not being allowed to cross their caste boundaries and that their traditional occupation was fishing¹⁵. The method of fishing followed by the fishermen of Kerala was reported by the missionary writer Rev. Samuel Mateer in his piece *Njan Kanda Keralam*¹⁶. Samuel Mateer recorded about the raw boats and techniques used by the fishermen for fishing. Their fish sharing pattern and the role of women in the shore are also highlighted in his accounts.

The modern historical works of Kerala like *The Cochin State Manual* of C. Achyuta Menon refers the ritualistic participation of the *Arayas* of Kodungallur in the Bharani festival¹⁷. L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer’s *The Cochin Tribes and Castes* Vol.1 makes a detailed enquiry into the origin and spread of various caste groups among the fishing community and their socio-cultural aspects¹⁸. P. Baskaranunni’s

¹³ Mukhathala Gopalakrishnan Nair, *Unniyachicharitham*(Mal., tran.), The State Institute of Languages, Nalanda, Thiruvananthapuram, 1990.

¹⁴ Francis Day, *The Land of Perumals or Cochin, its Past and its Present*, Asian Educational Service, Madras, 1863.

¹⁵ C.K. Kareem, *Francis Buchanante Keralam* (Mal.), Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 1996.

¹⁶ Samuel Mateer, , *Njan Kanda Keralam*, (Mal.tran.), A.N. Satyadas, The State Institute of Languages Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2010.

¹⁷ C. Achyuta Menon, *The Cochin State Manual*, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Thiruvananthapuram, 1911.

¹⁸ L.K Anantha Krishna Iyyer, *The Tribes and Castes of Cochin*, Cosmo publications, Thrissur, 1981.

*Pathonpatham Nootantile Keralam*¹⁹ and Balakrishnan P.K.'s *Jathivyavasthithiyum Kerala Charithravum*²⁰ give a detailed account of the socio-cultural aspects of the fishing community. The Malayalam works like *Theeram Dheeverude Charitrathiloode* by Madanan²¹, *Dheevera Charithralokanam* of N. R Kesavan²², *Kadalalaraude Jeevanavum Athijeevanavum* of Siddik Rabiyyath²³ reflect the socio-economic life of the traditional fishermen of Kerala.

Rajesh K. Erumeli's *Pandit Karuppan*²⁴, Pooyapilly Thankkappan's *Pandit Karuppan Viplavam Kavithayilum Samoohika Ranghathum*²⁵, and *Pandit Karuppan Smaraka Smaranika*²⁶ focus on the life and contributions of Pandit Karuppan for the upliftment of the *Vala* Community. *Jathikummi* written by Pandit Karuppan²⁷, a satire against the caste system, sheds light into the rigidity of caste system and deplorable living conditions of the fisherfolk of Central Kerala.

Kalpana Ram in her thesis, *Mukkuvar Women, The sexual contradictions of capitalist development in a South-Indian Fishing Community* elucidates how the fishing community was placed both inside and outside of the caste System²⁸. P.R.G.

¹⁹ P. Bhaskaranunni, *Pathonpatham Nootantile Keralam*(Mal.), Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 1988.

²⁰ Balakrishnan, P.K., *Jathivyavasthithiyum Kerala Charithravum*(Mal.), D.C. Books, Kottayam, 2008.

²¹ Madanan, *Theeram Dheeverude Charitrathiloode*(Mal.), Published By Manoj Kumar, Kochi, 2010.

²² N R Kesavan, *Dheevera Charithralokanam*, (Mal.)Srivilas Press, Munambam, 1990.

²³ Siddik Rabiyyath, *Kadalalaraude Jeevanavum Athi Jeevanavum*(Mal.), Kerala Basha Institute, Thriuvanthapuram, 2021.

²⁴ Rajesh K Erumeli, *Pandit Karuppan* (Mal.), Chintha Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram, 2015.

²⁵ Thankkappan, Pooyapilly, *Pandit Karuppan Viplavam Kavithayilum Samoohika Ranghathum* (Mal.), Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-Operative Society Ltd., Kottayam, 2016.

²⁶ *Karuppan Smaraka Souvenir* (Mal.), K M library, Edakochi, 1952.

²⁷ Pandit K P Karuppan, *Jathikummi* (Mal.), *Jenmashathabdhhi Pathippu*, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 2012.

²⁸ Kalpana Ram, *Mukkuvar Women, The Sexual Contradictions of Capitalist Development In A South Indian Fishing Community*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, The Australian National University, 1988.

Mathur's *Ecology, Technology and Economy: Continuity and Change among the Fisherfolk of Kerala*²⁹, has attempted to do a sociological study of the Fishermen community. He brought out the interrelationship between the habitat, technology, economy and society and its impact on the transformation of the socio-economic life of the fishing community. P.R.G. Mathur lays out a comprehensive study of the fishing activity and their deep knowledge of the marine environment and cosmology in *The Mappila fisherfolk of Kerala*.

CDS working papers like *Factoring Social and Cultural Dimensions into Food and Livelihood Security Issues of Marine Fisheries: A Case Study of Kerala* (Working paper No.299) by John Kurien explains the ecological and socio-cultural context of fish and fisheries of Kerala, fish sharing pattern like *Karanila* system, income sharing system, traditional knowledge and technology, the sea court etc³⁰. The paper '*Social Security Nets for Marine Fisheries*' by John Kurien and Antonyto Paul (Working paper No.318) discusses the need of social security in the fishery sector of Kerala³¹. *Small Scale Fisheries in the Context of Globalization* by John Kurien examines the impact of globalization on the small-scale fishery industry³². *Changing Profile of Poverty among Kerala's Marine Fishing communities: Are they still outliers?*³³ penned by John Kurien does a comparative analysis of the income levels of fishing communities and changes in the quality of life, etc.

²⁹ P.R. G Mathur, *Ecology, Technology, Economy; Continuity among the Fisherfolk of Kerala*, Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal, 2008.

³⁰ John Kurien, 'Factoring Social and Cultural Dimensions into Food and Livelihood Security Issues of Marine Fisheries A Case Study of Kerala State, India', Working Paper No. 299, CDS, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000.

³¹ Kurien, John and Paul, Antonyto, 'Social Security Nets for Marine Fisheries', Working Paper No. 318, CDS, Thiruvananthapuram, 2001.

³² John Kurien, 'Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Globalization', Working Paper No. 289, CDS, Thiruvananthapuram, 1998.

³³ John Kurian, "Changing Profile of Poverty among Kerala's Marine Fishing Communities: Are they Still outliers?", DRAFT -- For State Development Report, August 2004.

Technical Assistance Projects and Socio-Economic Change: Norwegian Intervention in Kerala's Fisheries Development by John Kurien³⁴ investigates the impact of a technical assistance project on the socio-economic fabric of Kerala's fish economy. It also observes the impact of Indo-Norwegian Project on the traditional fishermen of Kerala. John Kurien and TRT Aachari in *Overfishing along Kerala Coast: Causes and Consequences* highlights the detrimental consequences of overfishing on the artisanal fishing community³⁵. The *Economics of Artisanal and Mechanized Fisheries in Kerala: A study on Costs and Earnings of Fishing Units* by John Kurien analyses the bases of fishing, different types of rafts and gear in Kerala³⁶. Kurien and Achari (1988) in their study *Fisheries Development and Fisherman's Struggle in Social Action* mentions that fishing being a seasonal job, they are forced to search for subsidiary jobs most of which are not connected to fishing. J.B. Rajan's study *Development or Displacement? Snapshots from Small Scale Fisheries in Kerala*, focuses on various factors which were responsible for their backwardness.

Iyengar in *Fisher People of Kerala: A Plea for Rational Growth* scrutinizes how oblivious the authorities were to the incessant pleas by the traditional fisherfolk to defend their livelihood³⁷. Mathew Philip (1997) examines the impact of co-operatives on the life of traditional fishermen³⁸. The impact of advanced technology in the fishing sector after 1950s has been highlighted by Rajasenan³⁹.

³⁴ John Kurien 'Technical Assistance Projects and Socio-economic Change:Norwegian Intervention in Kerala Fisheries Development', Working Paper No.25, CDS, Thiruvananthapuram, May 1985.

³⁵ John Kurian and Thankappan Achari, "Overfishing along the Kerala Coast: Causes and consequences", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.25, September 1990.

³⁶ John Kurian, 'Economics of Artisanal and Mechanized Fisheries in Kerala: A study on Costs and Earnings of Fishing Units', A Regional FAO/UNDP Project, Working Paper No. 34, Madras, India, July 1982.

³⁷ Vishwapriya L. Iyengar, "Fisher people of Kerala: A Plea for Rational Growth", *EPW*, Vol. 20, No. 49, Dec. 7, 1985.

³⁸ Mathew Philip, *Traditional Fishermen Community in Kerala and Their Development Through Co-operatives*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Mahatma Gandhi University, May 1997.

³⁹ D. Rajasenan, "Technology and Labour Process in Marine Fishery: the Kerala Experience", *Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, Vol. 44, no. 2, New Delhi. 2001.

Mathew Aerthayil in *Fish workers movement in Kerala* pinpoints the various steps undertaken by the government in the last three decades of the 20th century for the socio-economic upliftment of the fisherfolk⁴⁰. The changes in the small-scale fisheries sector are analysed by Thankappan Achari in “*Emerging Trends in Small Scale Fisheries*”⁴¹. Mathew Aerthayil made a detailed examination on the agitations of the organised fishermen community of Kerala. Nalini Nayak and Gabriele Dietrich in their work try to examine the organizational process in the fisheries sector and its impact on class consciousness of the fishing community⁴².

Multidisciplinary approaches are found in focussing on the women in fishing sector. Krishna Srinaths’s *Women in Coastal and Fisheries Resources Management*⁴³ is a systematic analysis about the women’s participation in fisheries like fish processing and their contribution to the sector. She also studies the major issues faced by the women in the coastal areas. *Employment Potential of Fisherwomen in the Collection and Post-Harvest Operations of Seaweeds in India* by Sheela Immanuel and Sathiadhas⁴⁴ explains the problems faced by the women who are engaged in seaweed collection. *Adoption of Fishery Enterprises and Empowerment Options for Fisherwomen Of India* examines the role of women in aquaculture, their contribution to pre- and post-harvest operations and income levels of women involved in different processing activities.

⁴⁰ Mathew Aerthayil, *Fish Workers' Movement in Kerala (1977-1994):- The Role of Non-Party Political Organisations in Social Transformation in India*, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, 2000.

⁴¹ Thankappan Achari, “Emerging Trends in Small Scale Fisheries”, *Fisheries Research Cell*, PCO, Thiruvananthapuram, 1986.

⁴² Gabriele Dietrich and Nalini Nayak, *Transition or Transformation? A Study of the Mobilisation, Organisation, and Emergence Among the Fish Workers of Kerala, India*, Department of Social Analysis, Madurai, March 2002.

⁴³ Krishna Srinath, “Women in Coastal and Fisheries Resources Management”, *Women in Fisheries*, Indian Society of Fisheries Professionals, Mumbai, 2022.

⁴⁴ Sheela Immanuel and Sathiadhas, “Employment Potential of Fisherwomen in the Collection and Post-Harvest Operations Of Seaweeds In India,” CMFRI, Cochin, 2004.

Nikita Gopal and Krishna Srinath in *A study of women in fish marketing in Kerala*⁴⁵ examine the role of Matsyafed in the improvement of the conditions of women fish vendors. *Technological Change and Women's Work Participation and Demographic Behaviour: A Case Study of Three Fishing Villages*” by Leela Gulati elaborates the dynamics between technological advancements and the women in fishing communities. A study conducted by K. Pushpangadan and Murugan, titled '*Gender Bias in a Marginalized Community: A Study of Fisher Folk in Coastal Kerala,*' presents a comparative analysis of the economic disparities and imbalanced sex ratio prevalent in the fishing community.

Generally, the Historical studies are focussed on the middle land and the coastal regions are neglected. Colonial modernity intruded in the coastal commons in the form of capitalism. It altered the basic structure of the fishing pattern. The sustainable nature of fishing was transformed in to capital intensive one. Artisanal fishermen and the marine ecosystem were simultaneously suffered by this change. The role of Fisheries department in the socio-economic transformation of the fishermen of central Kerala has not received due attention. The co-operative society established by the initiative of Rao Bahadur Govindan and the *Kalyanadayini Sabha* of Pandit Karuppan have not been highlighted so far. The role of Indo -Norwegian Project and globalization in the socio-economic transformation of the fishing community in Central Kerala remains to be explored in depth. Most of the historical studies conducted so far have been confined to North Malabar and Travancore areas. This exclusion and the void encouraged to take up the present study.

Research Problem

The present study aims at exploring the history of socio-economic transformation of the fisherfolk of central Kerala in the twentieth century. It examines how the power structure moved ahead in the form of Brahmanical ideology

⁴⁵ Nikita Gopal and Krishna Srinath, “A Study of Women in Fish Marketing in Kerala in Women in Fisheries”, *Indian Society of Fisheries Professionals*, Mumbai, 2022.

in the early phase of colonialism, colonial modernity, and capitalism in the colonial and post-colonial period over the fishing community.

The rituals, traditions, and land records of the period provided valuable information regarding the ritualistic supremacy of the Brahmins. In the peripheral study we cannot identify the presence of ritualistic ideologies among the fishing community but an in-depth analysis of their socio-economic set up indicates the contrary. The study analyses the role of patriarchy in the marginalisation of women and the gender disparity in the fishing community.

It examines the role of colonial modernity in the fisheries sector. The modernization process of the fisheries sector, commenced with the establishment of Fisheries Department of Madras in 1907 and the Cochin Fisheries Department in 1911, has been analysed. It also scrutinized how the introduction of advanced technology became the tools for over exploitation of the marine resources. The role of visionaries like Pandit Karuppan, V V Govindan and Velukutty Arayan for the transformation of the Fishing community has been studied.

The impact of 1953 Indo-Norwegian project on the traditional fisheries sector has been studied. The effects of technological modernization and capital penetration on the fishing community has been focused.

The study would bring to light the impact of globalization in the traditional fishing community. The globalization created a turning point in fishing sector and in the life of the traditional fishermen. It witnessed the development of fisheries without the development of the fishermen.

Period and Area of the Study

The present study focuses on the socio-economic transformation of the fishing community of Central Kerala in the twentieth century. During the colonial period, the coastal region of Central Kerala was spread into two different political entities. The two coastal taluks of central Kerala comprised of Chavakkad and

Kodungallur. The Chavakkad came under the Malabar District of the Madras Presidency and Kodungallur was under the Princely State of Cochin. After the defeat of Tipu Sultan, the region of Malabar came under the control of the British and Cochin was a Princely State. Diwan was the responsible Minister of the Raja and Chief Executive Officer of the Cochin State. Col. Munro became the resident in 1812 and began to take steps to systematize administration, and colonial modernity began to penetrate Cochin state. Ward and Conner stated about the boundary of Malabar: “the most Southern Taluk of the Malabar collectorate occupies a narrow tract of country stretching from Kodungallur on the south to the vicinity of the town of Ponnani on the North a narrow Estuary.” Mathilakam in modern Kodungallur Taluk was the boundary of the Cochin and Malabar. With the formation of Thrissur district on 1st July 1949, both regions became part of the district. The period of the study is limited to the transformation of the fishing communities of central Kerala in the twentieth century. The sub castes of Hindu fishermen community like *Mukkuva*, *Araya* and *Vala* constituted the fisherfolk of Central Kerala besides the Christian and Muslim fishermen.

Sources and Methodology

The method used in this study is an integration of both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include *Administrative Records of Cochin and Malabar*, Legislative proceedings of Cochin State, Settlement Registers of selected villages, *Madras Fisheries Bulletins*, *Kerala State Gazetteers*, Cochin Fisheries Acts, *Bylaws of Kalyanadayini Sabha* and *Kaipamangalam Fisheries Co-operative Society*, *Fishing Stakes of Cochin State*, *Granthavaris*, *Sangam literatures like Akam songs and Puram Songs* (tran.), etc. Archival records from regional archives of Ernakulam, Kozhikode, and Working Papers of Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram and CMFRI archival sources were also made use in this study. Field survey, interviews – both focused and group interviews were also conducted for the completion of the thesis.

Secondary sources like books, journals, periodicals, souvenirs, and unpublished theses were also consulted for the study. The Public Libraries like KILA, CDS – K.N. Raj Library of Thiruvananthapuram, CMFRI Library Ernakulam, Kerala Sahitya Academy Library, Appan Thampuran Library, Thrissur Public Library, Kodungallur Public Library, Pandit Karuppan Library Anapuzha were provided relevant data for the study. The Calicut University Library and Kerala University Library were also found resourceful for the completion of the study. Apart from the public libraries the college libraries of Christ College Irinjalakuda, St. Mary's College Thrissur, KKTm Govt. College Kodungallur, Sri C. Achutha Menon Govt. College Kuttanellur were useful for the study. E-journal facilities of Christ College Irinjalakuda and St. Mary's College Thrissur were also utilized.

Historical methodology is followed in the thesis which is analytical and descriptive. As a multidisciplinary study the community study method of participatory observance was also followed. In-depth and group interviews were conducted to understand the socio-economic transformation of the traditional fishermen. The mapping of spatial collectiveness of the fishermen in backwaters and coastal regions were made possible through a multidisciplinary approach. The scope of the study is limited to the two coastal taluks of Thrissur District, Kodungallur and Chavakkad. A sample survey was conducted in the selected ten coastal villages of these two taluks.

The theoretical frame work of the study is based on the theories of subaltern and Foucault's concept of power. The term subaltern refers to "the section of the population that is considered subservient or marginal in terms of gender, class, caste, office etc". In colonial India, social relations were an amalgam of capitalist and pre-capitalist features. Therefore, the nature of power, exploitation, and resistance in this setting could not be clearly defined and studied in terms of distinct classes. The resistance of the subaltern sections was independent from the social core and fragmented in terms of scale. The findings of Gramsci in this context are relevant as

they are characterized by a clear understanding of the integral contributions of such fringe elements⁴⁶.

Foucault defines “power as the determinant of truth and knowledge”. He explains that “whatever may be the subject the knowledge is the ideological product of the dominant thought, not the individual thought”. He advocates that “history is a fictional narrative order enforced upon the indissoluble chaos of events acting as a means of exercising power”⁴⁷. Further, he throws light on the relationship between scientific knowledge and the exercise of coercive power. Universal truth, designated as the basis of all knowledge, is power. While reason and science are the means to power, the various branches of knowledge are aspects of the extensive power apparatus⁴⁸.

Every rising civilization has been characterised by new development in the control and application of power. One method is the discovery of new techniques for the more effective utilization of available power. It was slowest process in the primitive society, the first advanced stages were the establishment of the super tribal community. The second stage was the rise of the democratic principle. The whole series of changes in the distribution and equalization of power was involved. Then happened the dissolution of colonial empire⁴⁹. The advancement of technology provided the chance to greater exploitation of the resources and there occurred a related and reactive changes in the ideologies of men and groups to bring about the recession of arbitrary power. Social power, the power of man has several meanings and types like the power of sword and power of words, the power of office, power of wealth, the power of knowledge, power of organization etc. In the course of history, the priority moves from one form of power to another⁵⁰. In the modern society there

⁴⁶ Ranajith, Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies V - Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Oxford University Press., New Delhi, 1998, p.203.

⁴⁷ Evans J. Richard, *In Defence of History*, Granta Books, London, 2018, p.176.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.176.

⁴⁹ R.M. MacIver, *Power Transformed*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1964, p.153.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.153.

are various bases of power struggle. The primary change that inaugurated the new sequence was the development of mechanised industry. Great industrialist became more potent in the economy than landed proprietors. In the case of fishermen, they were subjected to the power structure of the Brahmanical ideology in the pre-modern period and then moved to the grip of colonial modernity and finally subjected to the hold of capitalism in the form of mechanization. In the course of time, the traditional fishermen's knowledge about the marine world, their skill in craft and community ownership pattern and sustainable natural exploitation were all subjugated by the invention of the advanced technology and capital penetration. They were facing a process of social exclusion from their own space.

Design of the Thesis

The Thesis has laid out in five chapters excluding introduction and conclusion. This study explores how the lives of traditional fishing communities have been shaped by various factors in the twentieth century.

The first chapter entitled **Unveiling the History of Fishing Community of Kerala** provides a historical framework for the formation of the fishermen community. It traces the evolution of fishermen community from the Sangam age onwards. The role of upper caste in keeping the fishermen in the lower strata of society has been analysed. This chapter also investigates how the fishing community was moulded according to the upper caste ideology and explores the ritualistic practices of the Brahmins in establishing supremacy over the fishermen. It discusses how the social exclusion of the fishermen happened and how they were confine to the fringes of the coastal belt.

The second chapter **Socio-Economic Life of Traditional Fishermen of Central Kerala** focuses on the socio-economic status of the *Vala*, *Araya* and *Mukkuvu* Communities. The artisanal fishing community's customary organizations, community ownership pattern and income sharing pattern have been analysed. This chapter also examines Fishermen's knowledge about the marine ecosystems

consisting of wind, *Nir*, wave, depth of the sea and species of fishes available in each season. They adapted their craft and gear according to the species and season, preparing a wide variety of nets for marine and inland fishing. They revered the sea as *Kadamma*.

It examines the nature of bond existed among the crew members, boat owners and *Tarakans*. Any shift from one boat to another was regulated by customary laws. Their involvement in what was considered an untidy job put them in the lowest strata of the caste hierarchy. Due to the dangerous nature of their job, they were very superstitious which was exploited by the upper-class people.

The third chapter named **Women in the Fishing Community** analyses the contribution made by women in the fishing community. Despite their active involvement, their role was considered as merely supportive and they were excluded from the mainstream activities. They always played a second fiddle to men in fishing, auctioning, and export trade. The chapter examines the role of patriarchy in socially barring women from possessing knowledge about the craft and craft equipment. They were confined to secondary level of job opportunities. The impact of technological changes led to their concentration in domestic market roles and labour-intensive occupations. Their mobility was also restricted. Their burden was increased by drinking water and sanitation problems of the coastal area, along with household responsibilities. The chapter also analyses the low literacy rate and population ratio as signs of gender disparity in the fisheries sector.

The Fourth Chapter entitled **Colonial Modernity and Fishermen of Central Kerala** examines the impact of colonial modernity on the fishing community. The ideology shaped by modernity was reflected in the socio-economic reforms among fishermen. It was brought about by visionaries like Pandit Karuppan and Rao Bahadur V.V. Govindan. The *Kalyanadayini Sabha* established by K.P. Karuppan at Anapuzha region for the *Vala* Community and the Kaipamangalam Fishermen Co-Operative Society established by Rao Bahadur Govindan get special attention in this

study. The chapter also highlights the role of Fisheries Departments in Malabar and Cochin States. The shift in power dynamics from upper caste ideology to colonial ideology is also carefully examined. The establishment of Fisheries Department of Madras spearheaded the transformation of the fisheries sector. The Fisheries Department of the Cochin State also followed the Malabar model. The chapter examines the activities of these two departments which made changes in the professional and social lives of the fisher folk of Central Kerala.

The Fifth Chapter **Technological Transition and Capital Penetration: Impact on the Fisheries and Fisherfolk** analyses the changes that occurred in the fishing sector of Kerala since independence. It investigates the factors that contributed to the shift of the traditional fishing sector from community-based ownership to a capital-intensive industry. The impact of Indo -Norwegian project in the fishery sector has been analyzed. The chapter explores how mechanization posed a threat to the sustainable nature of fishing and other related problems faced by the artisanal fishing community. Furthermore, it examines the fishermen's response to mechanisation. It also analyses the impact of globalization in the marine world as well as the life of traditional fishermen community. The depletion of marine resources, migration of fishermen, CRZ regulations and small-scale fisheries are also focussed. The struggle between manpower and technology in the fishery sector has been analysed.

CHAPTER 1

Unveiling the History of Fishing Community of Kerala

A land of diversity, India, with its culture interlaced with folklore and myth has always given due importance to fish and fishermen. The legendary space given to the fish shows its importance in the socio-economic life of the Indians. The Hindus believed that movement of the sun and its relation to the change of seasons has an important role in agriculture. There is an imaginary band called the zodiac, also called the Circle of Animals, which marks the heavenly pathway on which planets appear to move. It is divided into 12 equal parts; each called a house. The 12th house is called Pisces, which is illustrated by two fishes tied together by their tails. In Hindu Astrology, the Pisces or *Meena Rashi* governs the stars of a certain percentage of people under its influence. It enjoys an elevated position in Hindu mythology and stands as a symbol of good omen or *subh*. From ancient times, fish species was revered in the pools associated with temples and the practice continues even to date. In Hindu mythology the fish occupies an important place¹. The fish avatar of Vishnu, *Matsyavathara*, denotes its importance. It is said that the fish is an incarnation of Vishnu. The incarnation of Vishnu as *Matsya* (Fish) is the first avatar in all Hindu literature².

The earliest evidence of fishing in the Indian sub-continent were found in the Harappan sites. The Excavations from Harappa and Mohan Jadaro indicate that the people indulged in fishing by using the nets and hooks. The hooks made up of animal bones were discovered from many sites of the Harappan Civilization³. The Rig Vedic texts also mentioned about the method of fishing by using nets.

¹ S.C. Agarwal, *History of Indian Fishery*, Daya publishing House, Delhi, 2006, p.2.

² Francis Day, *The Land of Perumals or Cochin its Past and its Present*, Asian Educational Service, Madras, 1863, p.493.

³ S. Ayyappan, et al., "Fisheries Heritage in India", in YL Nene (ed.), *Glimpses of the Agricultural Heritage of India* Asian Agri-History Foundation, Andra Pradesh, 1994, p. 258, <https://archive.org/details/glimpsesoftheagriculturalheritageofindiabyy.l.neneasianagrihistoryfoundationzlib.org/page/n7/mode/2up>, Accessed on 08/09/2022.

In the post Vedic period there originated the Dharma Sastras. The Smritis deals with the same matter in a detailed way⁴. It gives more prominence to social laws so it is known as Dharma Sastras. It also emphasizes fish as an important item of food. There are references about specific types of fish which were cooked at different ritualistic occasions like the *Sraadh*s. At these ceremonies, food is offered to the manes but is consumed by Brahman priests. Fish is often considered as superior in flesh to that of other animals⁵. The Gautama Dharma Sutra also mentions about cooked fish served at *Sraadh* ceremonies⁶. It also mentions that the manes are satisfied for three years by eating fish and the flesh of common deer, spotted deer, hares, turtles, boards, and sheep. Artha Sastra also cited that fish was relished as an article of diet.

The earliest evidences of fish conservation were seen in the Asoka's Pillar Edicts. Asoka made laws to restrict fishing for 12 days in the months on July, August, September, and October. In total 51 days of fishing ban was imposed by Asoka through his Edicts⁷.

The fishermen had special mention in the stories of Ramayana and Mahabharatha. Ramayana tells the story of *Kaivartha*, *Dashan*, *Dheevara*, which are synonyms for fishermen. When Rama went to the forest (*Vanavasa*) Guha, the ruler of Sringerapur helped him to cross the river, Ganga. Even though he belonged to the Fishermen Community Rama accepted his invitation and stayed a night there along with Sita and Lakshmana. After Ravana was killed, Rama was crowned the ruler of Ayodhya. On the auspicious occasion of the coronation ceremony of Rama, he invited Guha as the chief guest.

In Mahabharatha story too, fishermen have played a pivotal role. It tells the story of Satyawati, the daughter of a *Mukkuva*. The *Mukkuva* got her from the river

⁴ S.C. Agarwal, *Op. Cit.*, p .22.

⁵ Romila Thaper, *Asoka and The Decline of the Mauryas*, Oxford University Press, 1961, p.90.

⁶ S.C. Agarwal, *Op.Cit.*, p.23.

⁷ S. Ayyappan, et. al., *Op. Cit.*, p.261.

and it is said that her mother was an *Apsarasu*. The *Apsarasu* gave birth to two children, one boy and a girl but she gave them up and went back to heaven. The boy later came to be known as *Matsyan* and then became the ruler of *Matsya Desam*. The girl was brought up by the *Mukkuva*. She was named Satyavati who grew up to become a beautiful lady. She helped her father in ferrying boats. One day accidentally sage Parasha met Satyavati and fell in love with her. Satyavati was very much afraid of the customs and practices of the society but the sage assured her that she will remain a virgin even after giving birth to a baby. She agreed and secretly gave birth to a child. That child was Veda Vyasa, the famous saint. Later Satyavati become the *Pattamahishi* of Shanthanu, the father of *Devavratha* (Bheeshma). Thus, a *Mukkuva* woman became the ancestor of the legendary Pandava *Vamsa*⁸.

The story of Sakunthalam also refers to a trustworthy *Mukkuva*. In this story when the heroine loses the ring presented by the King, a *Mukkuva* appears as a person of trustworthiness. A fisherman retrieves the lost ring and his honesty was reorganized.

It is said that the fish is an emblem of Vishnu. The first incarnation of Vishnu was *Matsya* (fish)⁹. It is also the symbol of the King of Madura who were formally known as Pandyas. Their standard was called a *Meen Kodah* or fish standard and this indicates they were Vaishnavites. The fish is also found on Buddhist Zeals. The ancient Travancore Rajas struck coins with the emblem of fish and they were found as far north as Cochin, although it would puzzle an ichthyologist to decide to which family they belong to.

There are references to the fishing community in the early Tamil anthologies, popularly known as Sangam literature. An important aspect of the anthologies that has evoked insightful responses in modern researches is the concept of five physiographic divisions, viz. *Kurinji* (hilly backwoods), *Palai* (parched zone), *Mullai*

⁸ Madanan, *Theeram Dheeverude Charitrathiloode (Mal.)*, Published by Manoj Kumar, Cochi, 2010, p.41.

⁹ Francis Day, *Op. Cit.*, p.493.

(pastoral tract), *Marutham* (wet land) and *Neithal* (the littoral). Tinai are the micro eco zones of early Tamilakam. It is found that the human adaptation was taken place through the interaction of micro eco zones.

From the poetic specialization such as hunting and gathering of the Kurinji, plundering and cattle lifting of the *Palai*, animal husbandry and shifting cultivation of the *Mullai*, wet land agriculture of the *Marutham* and fishing cum salt making of the *Neithal*, the forms of subsistence adopted by the people are clear. There are several place names with prefixes of Tinai names, for instance *Marutar* or *Neithalur* are the toponymic survivals of the past in Kerala. Similarly ethnographic survivals of a variety of social groups are *Panar*, *Parayar*, *Paratavar*, *Kollar*, etc¹⁰.

The *Akam* songs and *Puram* songs of the Sangam literature give a vivid account of the socio-economic life of the fishing community. The *Akam* song (written by Ulochanar, song No.81) gives a detailed description about the fisher women who were engaged in salt making and drying of the fish¹¹. It is mentioned that women wore the dress made of *Kaithola*, and the children wore dresses made of *Koombola* and *Panayola*. The song mainly expressed the pain of the bereaved heroine. It portrayed the picture of the social life of the fishing community. The song of Eduvettanars (Song No.86) also mentions about the women of *Neithal* Tinai, who wore the cloth made of *Tazhayola*¹². Another song of Ulochanar, (song No. 95), refer to the *Uppalams* (salt pans) of the *Neithal* Tinai. In the *Uppalams*, the women engaged in salt making processes along with their male counterparts and children. Although the prime focus of the *Akam* songs was on love and war, it also depicted the existing socio-cultural and economic condition.

The *Puram* songs of Sangam literature also contained detailed description on the *Neithal* Tinai and the people who inhabited there. The songs mentioned that the

¹⁰ P J Cheriyan, *Perspectives on Kerala History*, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999, pp.28-29.

¹¹ N V Krishna Varier, *Akam Songs* (Mal.), Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 1981, p.131.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.133.

Neithal was the habitation site of the *Parathavar*, *Arayar*, etc. The main occupations of these people were fishing and salt making. The people from *Neithal* area exchanged salt and fish to the people of *Marutham* for getting other essential commodities of day-to-day life. It is recorded that the fishermen were well versed in sea trade. It is also documented that those who ran the boat through the sea and went to distant regions got the name/title of *Parathavar*¹³. The Pandya rulers were known as *Meenavan* or *Kumari Cherppan*¹⁴.

This expertise of the coastal people and their connections with the distant regions led to the emergence of long-distance trade in Tamilakam. The experts in trade were known as *Parathakumara*. The Pandya rulers of South India also assumed the title “Ten *Parathavars*” as a symbol of their supremacy and dominance on overseas trade. There was a symbol of fish on their flags.

The song of Marokathu Nappachalayar (Song No.126) indicates that the Chera rulers made abundant money through the maritime trade. The skill and expertise of the *Neithal* people in trade and navigation are praised in the lines of Vennikuthiyar and Chozhan Kariakar¹⁵. The *Puram* songs also praised the talents of fishermen in riding bullock carts and inland trade. The main item of the trade was salt. They were also experts in recovering pearls from the depth of the sea.

The *Puram* song No. 386 says that the women standing on the shore counted the number of ships that sailed through the sea. This indicates the existence of a full-fledged maritime trade. It is also evident that the coastal areas were thickly populated with the houses of *Ummanas*. Who were experts in salt trade.

The *Manipravalam* literature of medieval Kerala reflected the socio-economic condition of Kerala, during the composition of the works. The *Manipravalam* work can

¹³ V.R. Parameswaran Pillai, *Purananuru, Tamil Sangakrithiyude Malayala Vivarthanam* (Mal.), Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 1969, pp.496, 497.

¹⁴ R Gopinathan, *Keralathanima* (Mal.), Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 2013, p.302.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.497.

be divided into two branches-*Champus* and *Sandesakavyas*. Among the *Champus* of the thirteenth Century, *Unniyachi Charitham* and *Unniyati Charitham* are the most important works both of which mention about the fishing community of Kerala.

Unniyati Charitham describes the towns like Kozhikode, Mahodayapuram, Kandyuru, Kollam, etc. It gives a vivid account of the existing socio-economic scenario. The beautiful description of *Sreeparvam Angadi* in *Unniyachi Charitham* provides a glimpse into the diverse commodities sold in the market. Fish was also an integral part of the food habit of that society. The fishes sold in the market included *Vala*, *Varalmeen*, *Kond*, *Tiraneli*, *Mangu*, *Kandungal*, *Muthalamulachi*, *Churav*, *Chirachi*, *Karagana*, *Kattlakola*, *Pulavnayala*, *Karumpadetta*, *Tangzhi*, *Vazhtha*, *Chelruthi*, *Kidaram*, *Pumeen*, *Nejrimeen*, *Muyilchel*, *Pulli Tharupural*, *Teemeen*, *Kozhumeen*, *Kandayan*, etc¹⁶. The song no.13 in *Unniyachi Charitham* recounts that the woman from the fishing community indulged in the sale of fish. Their conversations are testimonies of exchange of fish for other essential commodities. There are references to the exchange of prawns for rice and *paralmeen* for paddy etc¹⁷.

In the 14th Century, there appeared the most fascinating *Sandeshakavyas* like *Unnuneeli Sandesham* composed by an unknown author. It gives a detailed picture about the topography of South Kerala from Thiruvananthapuram to Kaduthuruthi. *Unnuneeli Sandesha's Muchanti Angadi* provides a comprehensive sketch of various kinds of fishes sold in the market. Here also women are the fish sellers.

Kokasandesam of 15th Century indicates the presence of Jains in Kodungallur. It describes *Tirukkunavay* as a Siva temple but ironically Brahmins were forbidden to see the lord of the temple¹⁸. This is indeed a strange practice and could be explained by the fact that it was a Jain temple taken over by the Hindus at a later stage. *Unniyadi Charitham* also mentioned that *Kunavai* was adjacent to Kodungallur.

¹⁶ Raghava Varier, Kesavan Veluthat, *Manipravala Charcha* (Mal.), Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative society Ltd., Kottayam, 2016, pp.125-128.

¹⁷ Mukathala Gopalakrishnan Nair, *Unniyachi Charitham* (Mal., Tran.), The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 1990, pp.40-41.

¹⁸ M.G.S Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, Calicut University Press, Calicut, 1996, p. 184.

There is a myth that the Fishermen of Kodungallur helped the Brahmins to oust the Jains from the region. In return they get some privileges in the temple rituals of Kodungallur.

The fishing community of Kerala did not come under the traditional four-fold caste system. The people were generally divided into Brahmins, non-Brahmins, and the untouchables. The Nambudiri's are the Brahmanas, non-Brahmanas included a large number of communities like the Nairs, *Ambalavasis*, *Ezhavas* etc. The untouchables consisted of numerous castes who were all considered as unclean and polluting. The attitude towards the fishing community was the same as that towards the other polluted castes because fishing was considered as an unclean and despicable occupation¹⁹.

Fishing communities are found all along the coast and backwaters that traverse Kerala. The Hindu fishing community in the state was segmented into several sub-castes like *Arayan*, *Arayavathi*, *Bovis-Mogeyar*, *Mogaveerar*, *Mokayan*, *Mukkuva*, *Nullayan*, *Panniakal*, *Valan*, *Valenjeyar*, *Bharathar*, *Kanakkan-Padannan*, and *Paravan*. The traditional Hindu society is a typical example of a closed system of stratification wherein different components such as caste, class and power combined in the same way. They were considered the descendants of Vyasa, the great Hindu sage but despite their claim of superiority caste Hindus considered the fishermen as a polluting caste²⁰. In the traditional caste hierarchy, they ranked below the *Kammala*, *Kaniyan* and *Tandan*.

Caste affects the people by constraining them to accept lower positions and conditions of work embedded with oppression and exploitation. Caste has created conditions of differential access to and control over resources. The role of caste has varied from region to region and from time to time. Castes are discrete, segmentary, and flexible. Caste as a system has transformed itself taking a new face and social

¹⁹ P.R. G Mathur, *Ecology, Technology, Economy; continuity among the Fisherfolk of Kerala*, Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal, 2008, pp.121-122.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.76.

space in Indian Society. Caste structure does not rest upon unequal access to the means of production and the appropriation of surplus alone by a dominant caste²¹.

The social standing of the *Mukkuv*s or the fishing community can be considered both inside and outside of the caste society²². The marine resources were their main source of livelihood and this provided a chance of provisional escape from the low status determined by the caste society. Though they were outside the framework of agricultural production the fishermen were treated as a polluted caste.

In the caste hierarchy based on purity and pollution, the *Mukkuv*s raised a counter ideology of community based on a relationship of difference from and opposition to the model of agrarian society. The men who put out to sea were equipped with a masculine ideology of independence, individualism, bravery, and resourcefulness²³. Their degraded status in caste society was counter opposed to a strong sense of independence. As a group they were ranked by caste society as barbaric and impure in a way like agricultural untouchable castes. Even though the *Mukkuv*s had free access of an entire set of economic and cultural relations, they were not completely autonomous because they depended on land for food, tools, and other accessories of their craft. In this background we must analyze how the power mechanism worked to keep the fishermen both inside and outside the caste system. Power is often conceptualized as the capacity of powerful agents to realize their will over the will of powerless people and the ability to force them to do things which they do not wish to do²⁴.

There is an argument that the traditional fishermen enjoyed relative autonomy within the board framework of the caste structure. But on closer examination we can assume that when they indulged with the middle land for the essential commodities

²¹ K L Sharma, *Caste, and Class in India* (ed.), Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 4-5.

²² Kalpana Ram, *Mukkuvar Women, The Sexual Contradictions of Capitalist Development in a South Indian Fishing Community*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, The Australian National University, 1988, p.83.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.92.

²⁴ Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault*, Routledge, New York, 2003, p.34.

of day-to-day life, the caste hierarchy marked them as untouchables and gave a lower status. At the same time, they were incorporated to the main stream for the vested interests of the high caste people. The survey conducted in the two taluks of Central Kerala gives corroborative evidence to such interpretations.

Kadakkodi: To substantiate this argument, they put forward the existence of the age-old community institution for fisheries management called *Kadakkodi*. The *Kadakkodi* literally meant sea court, i.e., *Kadal* means sea and *Kodathy* means court. This was a unique traditional community institution working mainly as a conflict resolution mechanism in the fishing community and played a key role in the community-based fisheries management institution. This institution can be compared to caste panchayats which were prevalent in rural India²⁵.

The *Kadakkodis* functioned as an adjunct to the temple of the fishermen community. Each *Kadakkodi* consisted of three distinct bodies like *Sthanikans*, *Kadavanmar/Sahayiess* and temple committee. *Kadavanmars* were assistant priests acting mainly as temple messengers and they occasionally performed police functions²⁶. The *Sthanikans* composed of four separate heads namely *Karanavanmar*, *Achanmar*, *Kodakaran* and *Anthithiriyar*. *Karanavanmar* were considered as the high priests and acted as magistrates in the *Kadakkodi*. They were the family heads with high prestige and ceremonial powers and belonged to four *illams*. The main *illams* mentioned were *Chempillam*, *Kachillam*, *Karillam* and *Ponnillam*. *Illam* was believed to represent the root family of the kinship and according to the kinship, they were appointed as the *Karanavars*. The eldest male member of each *Illam* was usually designated as the *Karanavar* in consultation with the astrologer. The community respected the elders like *Achanmar*. The *Achanmar* found solution to the conflicts among the fishermen and sometimes levied fines on them and donated money to the temple festivals. This money was known as *Nadappanam* or

²⁵ C Ramachandran, *Teaching Not to Fish? A constructive Perspective on Reinventing a Responsible Marine Fisheries Extension System*, CMFRI, Kochi, Kerala, 2004, p.84.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

*Vettilpannam*²⁷. In Southern Kerala the local heads were known as *Thurayilarayan*, *Panikkan*, *Aruketti*, etc. The institution *Kadakkodi* functioned only in a few pockets of North Malabar Coast of Kerala. Such a structured form of the institution of *Kadakkodi* was absent in Central Kerala, especially in the Kodungallur and Chavakkad Taluks.

Ideological Domination: The process of integration of the fishermen to the subordinate position of caste hierarchy was made possible through the ritualist ideology. The concept of ideology extended beyond political ideologies to include all cognitive structures, such as beliefs, values, and perceptions of relationships. The Kozhikodan Granthavari reveals the strategic integration of the *Mukuvass* of Malabar. The Zamorin of Calicut, during his *Sthanarohanam*, conferred honorific titles upon *Naduvazhis* and headmen of various caste groups, thereby acknowledging their regional influence. In reciprocation for the honorific titles, the local headmen remitted a specified amount to the treasury of the Zamorin. According to records, the naming ceremony of low-ranking headmen from castes like the *Mukkuvass* and *Thandans* were the simplest ritual in connection with the *Sthanarohanam*. It is recorded that *Mukkuvan* of Manappuram region got the chance to participate in the ritual²⁸.

In the Cochin state the *Valans* got special privileges in some rituals of the royal family as well as in the temples. Each caste had its own headman who was appointed by *Thittoorams* or writ issued by His Highness, the Raja²⁹. He was styled an *Aravan* or honorifically, *Aravar*. Under the headman of each community there were subordinate social heads called *Ponampans* who were however appointed by the head *Aravan* of each community for each *Desam* or *Kadavu*. The *Valan* had the exclusive privilege for fishing in the lagoons and rowing His Highness the Raja's boat on any journey through the backwaters or on occasions of important state

²⁷ S.K Vasanthan, *Kerala Samskara Charithra Nighandu*, Vol.II, Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005. p.400.

²⁸ M R, Raghava Varier, *Sthanarohanam: Chadangukal*, (Mal.), Vallathol Vidya Peedam, Sukapuram, 2004, p.87.

²⁹ Government of Cochin, *Report on the Fishing Stakes of Cochin*, Regional Archives Ernakulam (Here after RAE) 1907, p.4.

functions. Whenever His Highness travelled by boat the headmen of the *Valans* always led the way as an escort in a snake boat.

When the senior male or female member of the ruling family dies, the *Aravan* or headman of the *Katarayans* has the privilege of being the first to visit the successor to the Masnad with his *Thirumulkazha* (Muzzar)³⁰. Which consisted of a small quantity of salt packed up with a rope in a plantain leaf and a venetian ducat or other gold coin³¹. During the time of mourning, Durbar officials and *Sthaines* or noblemen were permitted to express their condolence only after the visit of *Aravans*. The royal orders and letters are proofs to this practice.

- i) Huzur Secretariate letter C 2006-11 dated 2nd March 1936 indicates that Appi Raghavan is the rightful claimant of the deceased Kanakkatsseril Appi of Pallipuram Village for the purpose of presenting *Uppum Kayarum* to His highness at the time of accession³².
- ii) An Order issued by the government stated that Kanakkasseri Aravan should be permitted in to the Krishna Vilas Palace, Ernakulam to present the customary *Thirumulkazhcha* to His Highness Maharaja. It also directed the Tahsildar to send a boat to fetch the Aravan with *Uppum Kayarum*³³.

Other testimonials for the ideological integration of the *Aryas* were; the *Tittorum* issued by the Raja of Cochin by granting the right of horse riding³⁴. But it was not permitted by the Resident by pointing the clause that still then such a right was not enjoyed by the *Aravans* either in Travancore or in Cochin³⁵.

³⁰ *Thirumulkazhcha* Date fixing, Book No.85-625, RAE.

³¹ *Uppum Kayarum* Ceremony, Bundle No.36, Vol.11, 12864/11, RAE.

³² Huzur Secretariat L.Da.12864/11, 24/03/1936, RAE.

³³ Proceedings of the Government of His Highness, Letter C. No. 1934/16, 14/04/1941, RAE; Presentation of Thirumulkazhacha to his Highness-Kanakkattisseri Aravan-Krishna Vilas Palace, Ernakulam, Book No.85-618, RAE.

³⁴ KT Thomas, "The Princily State of Cochin: A Dichotomy of Sovereignty and Control" in A Subramaniam (Ed.) *Quest Historica*, Rajpalayam Rajus College, 2003, p.38., Series File, Series II, No.110, List 1, RAE.

³⁵ Series File, Series II, No.108, List 1, RAE.

The *Aravans* wielded influence and authority in matters of social, civil, and criminal disputes that arose among members of the community. For all social functions including matrimony, funeral, etc. their permission had to be obtained and paid for. The fishermen visited their headman with presents in money, betel leaf and sometimes rice, paddy, etc. The *Ponampans* were likewise entitled to small shares on ceremonial occasions. The Cochin *Valiya Aravan* was the headman of the *Valans* in the state and among the privileges enjoyed by him was an “*annbkavan*” a grant of eight stakes for which he had to pay a *Kazhcha* (present) of 32 *Puthans*. Entitlement through conferment of *stanamanangal* was extended to *Channar*, *Ezhava*, *Mukkuvar* and *Pulayar* community. In the case of Fishermen community, the title conferred was *Aramai* (Lordship). The titles included *Trippappur Arayan* and *Trippappur Mutharayan*. They had customary rights over the fishing communities, particularly over their caste privileges³⁶.

But the final verdict regarding any disputes in the fishing sector was issued by the rulers. For example, in 1041 ME, a petition was presented to the Diwan by Thachapuzha Moopan, Kanki, a dignitary below in rank to the *Valiya Aravan* that, the *Valiya Aravan* under the pretext of having the exclusive right over all the fishing stakes was leasing out on *Kooduthal Pattoms* and mortgaging and selling the fishing stakes planted by the petitioner and others, thus oppressing them. An enquiry was conducted and was ordered on the report that the unjust acts of the *Valiya Aravan* could not and should not be countenanced by the *sirkar* and arrangements were made to restore the original planters’ stakes “*Oonnipads*” and ordered that *Valiya Aravan* should be forbidden from molesting the owners in anyway.

Tax System

Francis Day was the first to mention the history of taxes on fisheries in Cochin. He noted that during the time of Dutch, each fisherman was either obliged to

³⁶ K.N Ganesh, *Reflections on the Pre-Modern Kerala*, Cosmo Books, Thrissur, 2016, p.203.

pay a certain amount or give a proportion of his gain as a sort of royalty to the officials of Cochin. The first authentic record containing the various sources of revenue and expenditure on any organized lines is a '*variola*' or financial statement dated 939ME³⁷. In that there are no distinct references to any rent on fisheries. Earlier times all the expenses of the royal court were met from *Kandu Krishies* and the administration was carried on by means of special taxes of the nature of Sagar and Moturpha and from the surplus of spice trade. The continuous wars with Zamorin, Travancore, Tipu, etc. demanded extra revenue. Given this background, the government levied different kind of taxes on the fishing community like *Valappanam* or the tax on fishing net, *Oonnipadu* or rent on fishing stakes and *Kappukuthaka* or tax on lake fishery farming. All these taxes became a heavy burden to the poor fishermen so later it was abolished by a royal proclamation dated 993ME. There were also taxes like *kottakashu* and *thottupanam*. The former was a small tax amounting to 140 *puthens* collected from 10 persons on each basket of fish carried from the seashore to the Njarakkal Kadavu or landing place and the latter amounting to 32 *puthens*, more of the nature of the toll or export duty on each boat of fish as *Valapattom* or *Pattom* on nets.

They had to pay a tax on small boats (*Vanchis*) to the Cochin Government. The tax was known as *Pathivu*. There was a check post in Anapuzha behind the Thiruvanchikulam temple. The officials stuck a mask on the *Vanchis* (small dugout boats) to identify the tax payers and those who failed to do so were punished. The office was known as canal office. The concerned officials checked the proper remittance of *pathivu* by the *Valans*³⁸. The Cochin Public Canals and Backwaters Navigation Act of 1092ME (January 1917) explicitly specified that taxable vessels encompassed ships, barges, boats, rafts, timber, bamboo, and any other floating materials or objects that were capable of being propelled, regardless of the method

³⁷ *Report on the Fishing Stakes of Cochin*, Ernakulam, 1907. p.9, RAE.

³⁸ *Personal Interview*, Kalesh Babu, former President of Kalyanadayini Sabha, Anapuzha, 20-05-2021

used³⁹. Furthermore, the Act defined a canal as any channel, encompassing both natural and artificial waterways, that facilitated navigation or the flow of water⁴⁰. This act strictly insisted on the registration of the vessels which used the public canal. The authorities maintained a vigilant stance, implementing a strict regime of inspections and evaluations to verify that vessels were properly licensed and adhered to established standards⁴¹. The Government had the right to fix a rate as fees, payable for licensing. One of the key features of the Act was the grant of emergency powers to the Government, enabling it to remove any impediments to the canal's operation, including fishing gear (*unnivalas*) and other accessories, in order to maintain the canal's functionality. Moreover, the seventh clause of the Act stipulates that any canal rents and expenses incurred pursuant to Section 6 shall be recoverable in the same manner as arrears of land revenue, thereby ensuring prompt payment and enforcement. The taxes were also collected for the fishing stakes in different manner.

The taxes calculated were varied in different places. Tax was calculated according to the factors affecting the good catches like salinity of the water of the place, seasons of fishing, the presence of sand banks and their nearness to the stakes, deposits of silt, gravel and dirt found in the locality⁴². The stakes were generally classified in to three classes. The first class of stakes were stood in the main channel, the second category include the stakes found both sides of the channel and those on either ends of the channel were categorized as third class. The government levied taxes on fishing stakes as follows:

- First-class fishing stakes: Rupees 1-4
- Second-class fishing stakes: Rupees 1-3
- Third-class fishing stakes: Rupees 1-2⁴³

³⁹ The Cochin Public Canals Backwaters Navigation Act 1 of 1092, RAE.

⁴⁰ The Cochin Public Canals Backwaters Navigation Act 1 of 1092, RAE.

⁴¹ Canal Navigation-Registration of Vessels, Book No.9 -65, C.2683, RAE.

⁴² Report on Fishing Stakes.....p.16.

⁴³ Report on Fishing Stakes.....p.17.

The *valans* had no objection to the government collecting taxes from the waters belonged to the Cochin rulers. There was no control over the fisheries in the sea while it was exercised over the inland fisheries. So, we can assume that there was no direct exploitation of the marine wealth by the community other than the fishermen.

Temple Rituals and Fishermen:

A survey conducted in the two taluks of Central Kerala reveals the fact that the fishermen communities were incorporated to the annual festivals conducted in the temples of the coastal villages. This was in fact a strategy used by the upper caste people to establish their power over the subaltern groups. There are many examples to indicate this practice. The Kodungallur Temple, Ernakulathappan Temple, Thrikkanamathilakam Temple, Thrippukulam Temple, Kazhuvilangu Temple, Ayroor Temple, Thriprayar Temple, Guruvayur Temple, etc. integrates the fishermen to ritualistic practices. It was the customary right of the fishing people to donate the *Kodikayar* to these temples⁴⁴.

The famous festival of Bharani intertwined with the lives of the fishing community of Central Kerala. Fishermen from all parts of Kerala took part in the festival. At the Bharani festival almost, all untouchable castes got special privileges⁴⁵. The important ritual of the festival was *Kavutheendal*. The *Koolimuttathu Arayan* is the hereditary right holder to inaugurate the ritual of *Aswathy Kavutheendal*. This ritual is continued even today. The fishermen from the Koolimuttam area go to the temple in a huge procession and submit a *Thali* to the *Bhagavathi*. Like the *Arayans*, the *Mukkuva* fishermen, particularly the *Valans* also had special privileges in the temple rites of Kodungallur. At the *Thalappoli* festival of the Kodungallur temple one day ritual is offered by the *Valan* community and it is

⁴⁴ *Personal Interview*, Babu K M, Traditional Fisherman, Azhikodu, 06/01/2021.

⁴⁵ P.R.G. Mathur states that the upper caste people ideologically utilized the help of the fishermen to oust the Buddhist and Jain monks from the Kodungallur region.

known as *Ancham Thalapoli*. On the occasions of the festival, they donated money to the temple.

There is a myth related to Thriprayar temple, that the idol of the temple was brought out from the sea by the fishermen of Koorikuzhi and it was installed at the Thriprayar Temple⁴⁶. Even today the fishermen get an important place in the rituals and administration of the temple and they donated a sum to the temple in every festival season.

The fishermen were also permitted in the festival of Ayirur Temple. The *Arattu* festival of the temple was conducted in the sea and the fishermen got the chance to attend the ritual and donations were made to the temple. The *Perumpadappu Granthawari* mentions about Ayirur as a collated branch of Crangannur family that ruled over the middle portion of the Chetwye Island⁴⁷. The Ayirur Swaroopam stretched between Cranganore and Chetwye⁴⁸. The island was divided into three small regions: Cranganore to the South, Chetwye to the North and Paponetty or Ayroor or Belanga in the Centre⁴⁹. The land under the jurisdiction of Ayroor Swaroopam was known as Manapuram Nadu and it included places like Perinjanam, Koorikuzhi and Koolimuttam⁵⁰. Even today these are typical fishermen colonies. Most of the traditional fishermen even today stick the name of Ayirur on their boats to give due respect to the Swaroopam and the Goddess of the temple, for example, Ayroor Tampuratai, Ayirur Kaithapavalappan etc.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Personal Interview, Janarthanan, Native fishermen of Triprayar, 25/12/2020; S P, "Triprayar Kshetram", (Mal.), *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, Vol.21, 28 April, 1948.

⁴⁷ Raimon S.V., *Perumpadappu Granthavari (Mal.)*, State Archaeological Department, Govt. of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005, pp-7-9.

⁴⁸ C. Achyuta Menon, *Cochin State Manual*, Kerala State Gazetteers Department, Kerala, 1995, pp.89, 128.

⁴⁹ Francis Day, *Op. Cit.*, p.12.

⁵⁰ V.V.K Valath, *Sthalanama Charitangal - Thrissur Jilla (Mal.)*, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 2005, p.125.

⁵¹ *Personal Interview*, Prasad T, Fishermen, Koorikuzhi, 14/01/2021.

The Kazhuvilangu temple is situated near the fishermen village of Koolimuttam. The annual ritual related to the festival of Kazhuvilangu temple, *Aaruttu*, is still conducted in the sea and one day pooja of the temple during the festival season is offered from the side of the fishermen of Koolimuttam area and donated a sum to the temple⁵². In return they get abundant *payasam* as *prasadam* from the temple. This is continued until recently. As the fishermen are very superstitious because of the heavy risk factor in their craft and this fear was exploited by the upper caste by integrating them to the temple rituals.

The power was strategically applied on the fishermen by taking advantage of the fear and risk factor in their occupation. For escaping from the risk of the sea and for getting good catches the fishermen donated a portion of their income to the nearby temples. In the case of fishermen community, the upper castes had no direct access to their resources so they found out a way to subjugate and extract their wealth through temples rituals. The fishermen were given an opportunity to participate in the temple rituals. The fishermen considered it as honor and as community pride⁵³. This custom is continuing by a particular family in the community. That was a strategy of the upper class to extract the wealth of the downtrodden communities, who had no direct entry to the temples. They did not get *Poornavakasasm* and their entry was confined some times to *Chuttampalam* only.

Land Ownership Pattern in the Coastal Areas: The existence of *Brahmaswom*, *Devaswom* lands in the coastal areas of Central Kerala gave impetus to the upper caste exercising of power over them. The survey conducted in the eleven villages and the scrutiny of settlement registers testify that major portion of the lands in the coastal areas were owned by *Janmies* or the upper castes. The Cadastral Survey in this area was started in the beginning of August 1898 (1074 Malayalam Era here after ME) under the supervision of Mr. Thompson, an experienced officer of

⁵² *Personal Interview*, Rajan Pathiseeri, Traditional Fisherman, Bajanamadam Kadappuram, Koolimuttam, Kodungallur, 4/01/2021.

⁵³ *Personal Interview*, V V Haridas, Associate Professor, University of Calicut, 12/01/2021.

the Madras Survey Department. The Diwan, Mr. N. Pattabhirama Raju, a British Settlement officer, drafted a proclamation formulating the principles on which the settlement should be conducted and it was approved by the Madras Government and signed by the Cochin Ruler in 1080 ME (10th March, 1905).

The scrutiny of the settlement registers of the fishing villages specifies the names of *Uralars* and Ruling family. The following table shows the major *jenmis* of the coastal Villages.

Table No. 1.1
Major Land Owners in the
Coastal Villages of Kodungallur and Chavakkad Taluk

Sl. No	Village	Name of the Land Holder
1.	Kadappuram Village: ⁵⁴	Ellankallur Swarupathil Edavalli Vasudevan Subrhamanyan Raja, Punnathur Goda Sankara Valiya Raja.
2.	Edakkazhiyur Village: ⁵⁵	Vadakkum Nathan Devaswam Udama Kochi Maharajavu, Kozhikottu Kizhake Kovilakathu Valiya Tampurati, Punnathur Goda Sankara Elayaraja, Thiruvathra Devaswam Uralan Cherusala Vasudevan Namboodiri.
3.	Chentrappinni Village: ⁵⁶	Kodungallur Putiya Kovilakathu Ramavarma Raja, Ayirur Etamuttathu Kovilakathu Kunjammini Amma Raja, Patipurakkal Puttan Madhathil Nanu Menon, Cheuparambathu Govindan Nair.
4.	Triprayar Village: ⁵⁷	Blahayil Kochunni Nair, Konnattil Kunjuunni Menon and Raman Menon, Patipurakkal Puttaavittil Nanu Menon, Triprayar Devaswam Udama Raja of Cochin.
5.	Kaipamanglam Village: ⁵⁸	Kodungallur Ramavarma Raja, Ayirur Edamuttam Kovilakathu Munnam Thavazhi Kochammaniyamma Raja.

Table contd....

⁵⁴ Settlement Register, Kadappuram Village, Ponnani Taluk, 1905.

⁵⁵ Settlement Register, Edakazhiyur Village, Ponnani Taluk, 1905.

⁵⁶ Settlement Register, Chentrappinni Village, Ponnani Taluk, 1905.

⁵⁷ Settlement Register, Triprayar Village, Ponnani Taluk, 1905.

⁵⁸ Settlement Register, Kaipamangalam Village, Ponnani Taluk, 1905.

Sl. No	Village	Name of the Land Holder
6.	Kulimuttam Village: ⁵⁹	Tripekulam Devaswam, Kodungallur Raja, Kazhuvilangu <i>Devaswam Uralan</i> Achuthapanikkar.
7.	Padinjare Vemballur, Village: ⁶⁰	Kodungallur Swarupathil Muppaya Godavarma. Raja, Kodungallur Swarupathil Muppaya Godavarma Raja Keezhil Kondiyur Kunji Pappu.
8.	Eriyad Village: ⁶¹	Thiruvanchikulam Devaswam, Sreekurumba Bagavathi Devaswam.
9.	Azhikode, Village: ⁶²	Namboothiri Madathil Kochu Kunju.
10.	Methala Village: ⁶³	Paliyathu Kuttikaliyennu Prulla Kochu Kunju Valiyathu.
11.	Poyya Village: ⁶⁴	Paliyathu RamanKomi Enna Sthanaperulla Krishnan Valiyachan.

Source: Village Settlements of Ponnani Taluk of Malabar District and Kodungallur Taluk of Cochin State, 1905.

The presence of the *Devaswam* and *Brahmaswam* lands in the coastal villages testify that the fishermen were not enjoyed full autonomy and excused from the exploitation of the upper caste. When the fishermen interacted with the people of middle land for food and raw materials for the craft, they faced the caste taboos. As the fishermen were outside of the agrarian structure the direct exploitation was not possible. The integration of the fishermen in the subordinate position through titles and some concessions and privileges given in the temple rituals were the strategies applied by the upper caste to extract their wealth. The spiritual domination established by the Brahmins could not be altered easily⁶⁵. The fishermen who are tied

⁵⁹ Settlement Register, Koolimuttam Village, Ponnani Taluk, 1905.

⁶⁰ Settlement Register, Padinjare Vemballur Village, Kodungallur Taluk, 1905.

⁶¹ Settlement Register, Eriyad Village, Kodungallur Taluk, 1905.

⁶² Settlement Register, Azheekodu Village, Kodungallur Taluk, 1905.

⁶³ Settlement Register, Padinjare Vemballur Village, Kodungallur Taluk, 1905.

⁶⁴ Settlement Register, Poyya Village, Mukundapuram Taluk, 1908.

⁶⁵ Kancha Ilaiah, *Buffalo Nationalism A Critique of Spiritual Fascism*, Mandira Sen For Samya, Kolkatta, 2004, p.60.

to their occupation and geography are found in the outer perimeter of the landmass⁶⁶. Foucault rightly stated that the Power is omnipresent and omnipotent. An invisible power controlled the fishermen, designed by the upper caste to regulate the socio-economic life of the fishing community.

⁶⁶ K K Kochu, *Kerala Charitram Samoohika Rupikaranavum* (Mal.), The State Institute of Language, Thiruvananthapuram, 2012, pp.271-279.

CHAPTER 2

Socio-economic Life of Traditional Fishermen of Central Kerala

Mukkuva Community and Subdivisions

The fishing communities are found all along the coast and the backwaters that traverse Kerala. The fishermen occupy the very tip of the land mass and their geographical identity along with the restrictions of caste and pollution, make themselves the prisoners of their own socio-economic structure¹. Fisherman always form a cluster of dwelling patterns because their occupation is based on teamwork.

Mukkuva is a general term used to denote the fishing community. It is an occupational division of those engaged in fishing, the social stratification and religious conversion led to the division among the *Mukkukas*². The fishermen are belonged to Hinduism are divided into ten sub-castes. In central Kerala *Mukkuva* community has sub divisions of *Valans*, *Arayas* and *Mukkukas*. *Mukkukas* and *Arayas* are marine fishermen whereas the *Valans* are backwater fishermen. Among their own community they distinguished themselves by four distinctive appellations. These names were *Sankan*, *Bharathan*, *Ammukkuvan* and *Mukkuvan*. The *Arayans* belonged to the *Sankan* group and the *Valan* are of the *Bharatan* group, *Amukkuvans* are the sub caste of *Katarayans* doing priestly functions to both *Valan* and *Arayan*. *Mukkuvan* were the lowest ranking in this category³.

In the traditional caste hierarchy, fishermen were labeled as untouchables. Among the Hindu fishing communities, they themselves were stratified in to different social levels. For instance, *Mokayans*, *Bovis – Mogeyar* and *Mogaviras* had

¹ Kalpana Ram, *Mukkuvar Women: The sexual contradictions of Capitalist Development in a South Indian Fishing Community*, The Australian National University, 1988.p.14.

² P.R. G Mathur, *Ecology, Technology and Economy, Continuity Among the Fisherfolk of Kerala*, Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal, 2008, p.117.

³ K P Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*, Vol.3, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1993, p.460.

a higher social status than the rest. The *Mukkuvas*, *Arayavathi*, *Aduthavan*, and *Panniakal* were not allowed to walk on public roads or enter temples. The *Arayas* and the *Valans* of the erstwhile Cochin State however, claimed superiority over the *Bovis – Mogyars and Mogavirars* because they were royal ferrymen and had connections with the royal families. The *Valas* never accepted cooked food from *Mukkuvas*. The *Arayas* did not accept food from the *Mukkuvas* and *Valans*.

The *Manipravalam* literature show that they were the polluted castes. The *Mukkuvas* and *Valans* had the status below the Sudras. They were included in the category of *Pathithajathi* along with the *Kaniyan*, *Vil Kuruppu*, *Velan*, *Peruvan*, etc⁴. Malabar Manual elucidates the depth of pollution in the society manifested in the form of keeping the *Mukkuvas* 24 feet away from the upper castes. The gravity of pollution towards women was a little bit more than that towards men⁵. The *Arayas* were considered an inferior race and were precluded from travelling along the public road and consequently were obliged to keep restrained to the sea coast⁶. The Hindu fishing communities had to keep 36 feet from the high caste members⁷.

Mukkuvas: One of the marine fishing communities found in Thrissur were the *Mukkuvas*. They spread from Andathodu in the north to Natika in the south. The word *Mukkuva* is related to the Canarese ‘Moger’ which means to dive. Some others have the opinion that the word came from *Muttu*, *Muthuvan* and later became *Mukkuva*. Another tradition points that the *Mukkuvas* and *Thiyyas* were said to be immigrants from Ceylon. To Buchanan the *Muccua* or *Muccuar* are the tribal people who resided near the coastal areas of Kerala. Ma Huan recorded that the *Mukkuvans* were not allowed to wear long garment’s and to build the houses of more than three feet height. When they met an upper caste people, they should prostrate themselves on the ground and not permitted to rise until the upper-caste people had left the place⁸.

⁴ K.P Padmanabha Menon, *Cochi Rajya Charithram* (Mal.), Mathrubhoomi Books, Calicut, 1989, pp. 84 -85.

⁵ William Logan, *Malabar Manual* (Mal.), Mathrubhumi Books, Calicut, 1985, p.101.

⁶ L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *The Tribes and Caste of Cochin*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1981, p-261.

⁷ P.R. G Mathur, *Op.Cit.*, p.117.

⁸ K Padmanabha Menon, *Op.Cit.*, p.460.

Gazetteers of Malabar (1908) describe the *Mukkuvas* as a caste of fishermen following *Marumakkathaym* in the north and *Makkathayam* in the south. In the southern part of the Malabar district, they are called *Arayan* and elsewhere the term is used as the title of their headmen. In the caste hierarchy they are positioned below the *Tiyas* and the other artisan classes. A large-scale conversion to Islam took place from the community of *Mukkuvas* in the Malabar district. In north Malabar they are divided into four exogamous *illams*, called *Ponillam*, *Chembillam*, *Karillam* and *Kacchillam* and are hence called as *Nalillakar*. In the southern Malabar *Mukkuvas* and *Arayas* were followed the latter three *illams* so they are known as three *illakkar*. *Kavuthiyans* were also belonged to this section and their hereditary job was barber. They were also known as *Pannimakkal* or *Paniyakkal* in different parts of Cochi. *Kavuthiyans* had the right to the ritualistic purification of the *Mukkuvas* from the pollution of birth, death etc⁹. They purified the polluted fishermen by showering the sea water up on them. Because sea is considered as sacred and worshiped as mother goddess.

In the traditional society there was a head man to the *Mukkuva* Community, he is respectfully called as *Arayans* or *kadavans*. Their local judicial system functioned on the leadership of *Kadavans*. The Kadavan enjoyed the privileges to use a painted Cadjan umbrella, a stick, and a red silk shawl etc¹⁰. A committee under the headman made crucial decisions in matters of marriage, divorce, and other socio-economic affairs. After primary consultations, the wedding was fixed with the consent of the *Kadakkodi* or *Kadavans*. These procedures were called *Pozhuthunokal*. The fixed date of the wedding would be written on a pamphlet which was called *Pozhuthukuri* and *Pozhuthola*¹¹. At the time of marriage, the *Kadavans* received betel leaf, tobacco, and coin from the bridegroom.

The community members also presented him tobacco and pan supari on the occupations of the girl's attaining puberty and in the marriage. The *Mukkuvas* had

⁹ *Personal Interview*, Divakaran, Traditional Fisherman, Chandirur, 18/02/2021.

¹⁰ L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *Op.Cit.*, p.264.

¹¹ P Bhaskaranunni, *Keralam Irupatham Noottandinte Aarambhathil* (Mal.), Kerala Sahitya Academi, Thrissur, 2005, pp.38-39.

their own Oracles called *Ayittans or Attans* and priests called *Manakkans or Banakkans* to perform rituals¹². In Thrissur they followed the patrilineal system. Apart from marine fishing, they also engaged in limestone making, loading, and unloading works and in small scale agriculture.

Arayas: Another marine fishing community found in the district is the *Arayas*. It is said that they were the descendants of the Meenava and Paratha communities that lived in the Sangam age¹³. The *Kattalayarans* otherwise called *Katakoties* were a tribe of people lower in status than the *Valas* and lived along the coastal areas of Kodungallur and Cochin and they seldom stayed on middle land. *Araya* headmen enjoyed special privileges in the society. They followed patriarchy and monogamy.

The *Arayas* enjoyed the privilege to keep a *Kuduma* on their heads. Likewise, the female counterpart also enjoyed a privilege to tie their hair in a beautiful manner. Among the *Araya* community the wife called her husband as *Pathiyal* and the husband called the wife as *Tiruval*¹⁴. The widow could remarry any man from her community after one year of the death of her husband. The girls got married either before or after puberty. In most temples of Kerala, the *Arayans* provided the *Kodikkayar*, the rope required for the flag hoisting ceremony of temple festivals. During the colonial period, the *Arayans* served as boatmen for the Portuguese and the Dutch. They also aided in transshipping their commodities. All the members from the families of fishing communities would indulge in the craft and related activities. Men went for fishing whereas women and children were involved in fish processing and marketing.

Valas: The *Valas* were the backwater fishing community found in Thrissur. The word *Vala* originated from the act of throwing *vala* or net. The legends say that the *Valas* were brought to Kerala by Parasurama for boat riding. Later they were

¹² *Madras District Gazetteers, Malabar and Anjengo*, Madras, 1908, pp.126-127.

¹³ S.K Vasanthan, *Kerala Samskara Charithra Nighandu* (Mal.), Vol. 1, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005, p.68.

¹⁴ Kattakada Divakaran, *Kerala Sancharam* (Mal.), Side Library, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005, pp.592, 601.

selected for the boat service of the royal family and became a separate caste¹⁵. They were also called as *Arayan* in the colloquial terms. The *Valan* female or *Valathis* were very often referred to as *Arayathees*¹⁶.

The *Valas* were also engaged in the occupation of boat service. The cochin and Malabar areas were intersected with many canals, rivers, creeks, and lagoons, all these were used as channels of transport and communication. Sometimes in many places it was the only means of transportation. There were three types of boats in the backwater region : Cabin boats for high classes, Long narrow canoes for the ordinary passengers and Slow baggage boats for heavy merchandise¹⁷.

The *Vala* community concentrated in the Anapuzha region of the district. The area was rich with backwater resources. Earlier this place was known as *Paliyam Thuruth* because it was under the control of Paliyathachan, the Minister of Cochi¹⁸. The chief occupation of the *Valas* was backwater fishing. The entire family was employed in the fishing sector. Earlier the surplus fish was preserved by salting and drying. The main catch from the backwater was prawn. Abundance of prawn from backwaters made it their staple food. To this date they add small quantities of prawn in every dish. Even though they got good catches they faced poverty because there were no good techniques for fish preservation and marketing.

In the caste hierarchy, most of the fishing communities were having a low status. The *Mukkuvass* were considered as outcastes and stayed far from the upper castes¹⁹. The *Arayan* was considered inferior in race during the past and precluded from travelling along public road and consequently obliged to keep a low key along the sea coast²⁰.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.231.

¹⁶ Achyutha, Menon, C., *Report on the Census of Cochin*, Government of Cochin, Ernakulam, 1876, p.275.

¹⁷ K.P.Padmanabha Menon, *Op.Cit.*, p.469.

¹⁸ *Personal Interview*, Vinayachandran, Native Anapuzha, 01/02/2021.

¹⁹ K P Padmanabha Menon, *Op.Cit.*, pp.84-85.

²⁰ L.K Anantha Krishna Iyer, *Op.Cit.*, p.261.

The Hindu fishing community also had servicing castes. The main servicing castes of the fishermen were the washermen and barbers. The barbers were called *Arayavathi*, *Aduthavan*, *Kouthiyan*, *Kathir*, and *Panniyakkal* whereas the washermen were called *Valinjar*, *Mannan*, *Velan*, *Parayan*, and *Vannan*. *Paniyakkal* was the main servicing caste found in the district. The main duty of the *Paniyakkal* was to render services to the fishing community during the period of death, or help them to overcome their impurity. Some of them worked as barbers and had a low social status than the *Araya*, *Valan* and *Mukkuvas*. Sometimes they went for fishing. They were entitled to get a share of the catch of the fishermen. This was known as *Paniyante Avakasam*²¹.

Knowledge and Techniques of Traditional Fishermen

The fishermen had a bondage towards their fellow boatmen and respected each other by giving special places to their crafts. Generally, the traditional fishermen would go fishing in a small boat (small dugout wooden vessels) which could accommodate five people or in those boats accommodating two persons²². They maneuvered the boat with a bamboo stick which they called *Thanduvali*. If a new *Vanchi* was brought in, they conducted certain ceremonies. The *Vanchi* was built by carpenters who came from different places²³. They used *Punna* and *Karingotta* as timbers in boat making. The *Pankayam*, made of *Pinkoda* and the *ovu* of the net was made of *Karingotta*, *Poyga*. The inaugural ceremony was marked by a ritual performed by the *Karanavar* or *Aravans* and the owner would give a special *Dakshina* to the chief carpenter. Following this, they served delicious food to the carpenters and to the neighbours.

The fishermen were forced to enter their career right from their childhood days. Poverty was the sole reason behind this. Boys from the age of 10 would join the craft of fishing. Initially, they would begin working as an apprentice by cleaning

²¹ *Personal Interview*, Janardhanan P V, President, *Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Union*, Natika, 25/12/2020.

²² *Personal Interview*, Prahaladan, Traditional Fishermen, Kaipamangalam, 14/01/2021.

²³ *Personal Interview*, Amal K S, Traditional Fishermen, Nattika, 03/10/2020.

the boat and net. After this, they were promoted to sit in the third portion of the boat known as *Thottikalli*. Their small dugout wooden vessels were divided into five portions and each person sitting on each part had different responsibilities during the time of fishing.

There were slight variations in the title given to the fishermen who sat on the boat among the *Arayas* and *Mukkuvas*. Among the *Arayas*, divisions in the boat were as follows: *Amarakkaran*, *Mattukallikaran*, *Tottikallikaran*, *Edathanadukaran* and *Talakkekaran*²⁴. However, the *Mukkuvas* were divided as *Pankayakkaran*, *Valakkalikkaran*, *Kadathanadukaran*, *Talakkekaran* and *Aniyakkaran*²⁵. Although the duties entrusted to each person were different, there was a coordination during the time of fishing.

The *Amarakkaran* led the boat and found the right directions according to the *Nir* of the sea. Small dugout boats and *koruvalas* were used by the fishermen. Four members of the crew of five pull the rod and the fifth, called *Amarakkaran*, steers the boat by rowing with the *Pankayam*²⁶. He also pulled the *ovu* of the net into the sea. At that time *Mattukallikaran* should throw the net into the sea, which was a skilful task and was known as *Valapeyyal*. *Tottikallikaran* was the one in charge of the 'fish box.' *Talakkekaran's* duty was to pull the rock into the sea. Sometimes two small boats together would go for fishing and this was called *Ketti peyyal*. The *paituvala* for the joint venture and the whole work was equally distributed among the *Vanchikkar* (fishermen). When the fish got entangled in the net, they slowly raised the net from the sea by making a huge sound calling it as *Valakothakkuka*. The fishermen called the group of fish as *Polapu*. An accomplished fisherman could identify the type of fish by seeing the *Polappu*²⁷. Some species of fish are recognized by *Polapu* and

²⁴ *Personal Interview*, Mani T S, Traditional Fishermen, P. Vemballur, Kodungallur, 18/12/2021.

²⁵ *Personal Interview*, Appunni Aiyappully, Traditional Fishermen, Thiruvathra, Chavakkad, 11/01/2021.,

²⁶ Perinjanam Panchayath, *Vikasana Rekha*, Thrissur, 1997, p.23.

²⁷ *Personal Interview*, Mani T S, Traditional Fisherman, P. Vemballur, Kodungallur, 18/12/2021.

others were identified by bubble, Spitting, circling, and jumping to the surface²⁸. Various kinds of fishes like Mackerel, sardine, Chata, Manthal, Mullan, Thada, Parava, Kora, Veluri, Shark, Etta, Thirandi, Aikura, Avoli, Managu, Kunthal etc. were abundantly available. To the traditional fishermen, the fishing area was around twenty-two “*pagam*,” approximately 12 kilometres away from the shore. Fishing is an act of teamwork involving complete concentration and energy. The fishermen employed their presence of mind as well as physical strength simultaneously at the time of fishing.

The Fishing boats may be classified into three i) the sea fishing and carrier boat, ii) the backwater boat and iii) the small canoes (*chunda manjies*).

- i) The sea fishing and carrier boats were made of *Aini* (wild jack-*Artocarpus hirsutus*), *cheeni* (*Tetrameles nudiflora*), *Elavu* or *Poola* (*Bombax malabaricum*) Paini (*Vateria indica* or Indian copal-*Vatica roxburghiana*) and rarely of mango (*Mangifera indica*)²⁹. A good boat made of Cheeni cost Rs. 200 to Rs. 400 according to its size and generally lasted for about 50 years. The *Cheeni* boats required frequent caulking and smearing with fish oil (sardine and shark liver oil) while the *Aini* boats needed to only be chalked once annually to protect them against the ravages of boring insects like crustaceans and molluscs. The ordinary size of these boats was 30x3x2 (length, breadth, and depth) with ten partitions or *Kallies*. The largest boat measured 40x4x3 meters with a capacity of over 50 maunds. All the boats were undecked, had pointed bows and often a rude mast with a canvas sail, and 4 to 6 oars with a paddle (*pankayam*) for steering purposes in each, though two oars may be put on. The limited carrying capacity of the boats, the impossibility of fitting these with mechanical gear to supplement manual labour, the difficulty to keep the boats in sea for more than 12 hours at the most consecutively owing to the lack of facility to sleep in them, etc.

²⁸ Perinjanam Panchayath, *Vikasana Rekha*, Thrissur, 1997, p.25.

²⁹ Report on the Fishing Stakesp.42.

necessarily restricted the number of nets that may be taken to sea at a time. It also prevented all attempts to deal with the fish immediately as there were no means to preserve them from tainting. It limited the distance and duration of the voyages to 8 to 10 fathoms', rendered the exploitation of the deep sea impossible and permitted only working on the fringes of the sea in a feeble manner³⁰.

- ii) The backwater boats were also like the sea fishing boats, dug boats were much smaller and generally not fitted even with a simple and crude sail. They were also made of similar wood and cost from Rs. 100 to 150 each. They were capable of improvement but were however sufficient for existing fishing purposes in the usually clam backwaters and to carried by the *Valan* with his fishing stakes and net to and from the fishing grounds - the *Onnippad* or stake site.
- iii) The small canoes for single persons in which the line fishermen were seen paddling about with one hand and dexterously holding the rod in the other in his piscatorial occupation were nothing but hollowed trees and cost from Rs. 5 to 15 according to the quality of the wood. Usually, a small quantity of live bait was found in this anone in front of the fishermen under a small piece of olank which covers it and the small fishes he catches. These boats even braved into the sea without any fear of a mishap.

Before the advent of modern Nylon nets, 'net making' was a cottage industry. Earlier, the net was made with cotton. Raw cotton was sunk in the pond for one week and then it would be taken out from the water to let dry; from then commenced the process of net making. Various types of nets are made by both men and women of the community³¹. The wage for making net was four *Anas* for three *Kanni*³². The nets

³⁰ Report on the Fishing Stakes.....p.43.

³¹ *Personal Interview*, Krishnan K, Traditional Fishermen, Chettupadi, Kodungallur, 03/01/2021.

³² The process of Traditional Style of Net making is clearly depicted in the movie Chemmeen. Generally, the women were the ones engaged in this craft by sitting and walking.

were divided into various classes such as those used in shore and deeper waters and at nights and day time, cotton, and hemp etc. The following table indicates the variety of Nets used by both the Marine and Inland Fishermen.

Table No.2.1

Nets Used by the Traditional Fishermen of Marine Sector

1	<i>Koru vala (two types),</i>	11	<i>Odu Vala</i>
2	<i>Paithu Vala, Odam</i>	12	<i>Therandi Vala</i>
3	<i>Vala, Vittu Vala</i>	12	<i>Pachu Vala</i>
4	<i>Muppiri Vala</i>	13	<i>Veechil Vala</i>
5	<i>Nariyan Vala</i>	14	<i>Thattu Vala</i>
6	<i>Chala Vala</i>	15	<i>Vatta Vala</i>
7	<i>Sravu Vala</i>	16	<i>Vadi Vala</i>
8	<i>Illa Vala</i>	17	<i>Cheria Chala Vala</i>
9	<i>Narimccu Vala</i>	18	<i>Cheena Vala</i>
10	<i>Kandadi Vala</i>		

Source: Report on the Fishing Stakes of Cochin, No.468, Regional Archives Ernakulam, and Information gathered from the traditional fishermen.

Table No.2.2

Fishing Nets Used in the Backwaters

1	<i>Kola Vala</i>	9	<i>Konda Kollii Vala</i>
2	<i>Valu Vala (stake net)</i>	10	<i>Thuri Vala</i>
3	<i>Vadi Vala</i>	11	<i>Vatta Vala</i>
4	<i>Thellikanni Vala</i>	12	<i>Veechu Vala</i>
5	<i>Puttukanni Vala</i>	13	<i>Adachil Vala</i>
6	<i>Thirutha vala</i>	14	<i>Kuthu Vala</i>
7	<i>Ola Vala</i>	15	<i>Kumbu Vala</i>
8	<i>Kandadi Vala</i>	16	<i>Kadangani Vala</i>

Source: Report on the Fishing Stakes of Cochin, No.468, Regional Archives Ernakulam and Information gathered from the traditional fishermen.

The boats were launched when the *Nir* was clean and slow. This phenomenon of the sea was called *elappu*. They also had a sound knowledge about which fish must be caught on each season according to the wind and *Nir*, and prepared the net accordingly to carry it for fishing³³. The fishermen would make many varieties of net by using cotton threads like *Choodavala*, *Kollivala*, *Pattumvala*, *Chalavala*, *ozhukuvala* or *Kandadivala*, *Thirandivala* and *Sravuvala*. The backwater fishing community used *Enamvala* and *Unnivala*. The Gill Net is used to catch larger fishes like *Aykkura* (Seer), *Palamin*, *Sravu*, *Eatta* (Cat Fish), *Kunameen* (Tunny), *Nethal* (White Buit), *Mantal* (Sole) etc³⁴. Naturally, small fishes would escape through the big meshes of the traditional Gill Net, when they are chased by predators. Likewise, a wide variety of fishes were in existence though their names had colloquial variations while some had common names. Generally fishing activities in the marine belt extended from six to ten miles³⁵. For the fishermen, continental shelf was the strategic one. Marine biologists divide the marine environment into two important zones. The first being the Benthic which consists of areas on or near the continental shelf. The second zone was the Pelagic which consisted of all-surface water³⁶. These two zones were special habitational sites for the maximum number of species. The fishermen had meticulous knowledge about the depth of the sea. They usually used ropes to measure the depth of the sea by tying a stone at the edge as a sinker.

Nir : The leader should be a person of extensive knowledge about the sea. Colloquially, he was called “*Meenkanda Mukkuvan*.” He must be familiar with the *Nir*, wind, wave, and depth of the sea³⁷. We can call him an oceanographer. They had a fair amount of knowledge about the *Nir* (current), which flowed through their

³³ *Personal Interview*, Krishnan K, Traditional Fisherman, Chettupadi, Kodungallur, 03/01/2021.

³⁴ *Personal Interview*, Appunni Aiynapully, Traditional Fisherman, Thiruvathra, Chavakkad, 11/01/2021.

³⁵ *Personal Interview*, Rajan Pathiseeri, Traditional Fisherman, Bajanamadam Kadappuram, Koolimuttam, Kodungallur, 4/01/2021.

³⁶ PRG Mathur, *Op.Cit.*, p.20.

³⁷ *Personal Interview*, Balan Mepparath, Traditional Fisherman, Edakkazhiyur, Chavakkad, 10/01/2021.

fishing grounds and called it as *Vellamvali*. The occurrence of a particular *Nir* depended upon the blowing winds. The fishermen mentioned about different types of *Nirs* - *Kara Nir*, *Mel Nir* - *Padinjar Nir*, *Vadakku padinjare Nir*, *Vattakkara Nir*, *Tengera Nir*, *Thekkan Nir*, *Puram Nir*, *Vadavathara Nir*, etc³⁸.

The leader of the crew should get through the currents to start their journey, decide which kind of net they must carry with them, the type of fishes they may get³⁹. Depending upon the *Nir*, they set their journey. *Nir* flowed in the fishing grounds. The fishermen defined *Nir* as the forward and backward movement of water masses. Marine biologists hold the view that the current continues the forward movement of water mass. They are caused by a combination of factors such as the prevailing winds supported by the earth's revolution, the difference in the salinity of the sea and oceans as well as their temperature; and consequent variation in density and the occurrence of a particular *Nir* depending upon the blowing of the winds⁴⁰. The fishermen identified eight kinds of *Nir* flowing in different directions like *Vadakkan Nir*, *Vattakara Nir*, *Kara Nir*, *Tengarakara Nir*, *Tekkan Nir*, *Tembrayil Nir*, *Porayi or Puram Nir* and *Vadavathra Nir*⁴¹.

Vadakkan Nir flows from North to South. This is considered as the lucky *Nir* because most of the species of fish particularly the fishermen's favorites like Mackerel, Sardine, Prawn and Mullet are plenty in this *Nir*. Hence expecting a bountiful catch would always come as favorable. Several species of fish appear on the surface water as *Polappu* (shoal)⁴². When the *Vadakkan Nir* and "Vadakkan Kaattu" (wind) happen simultaneously, many Pelagic fishes like Mackerel, Sardine, *Chemban*, Cat Fish, *Mullan* (Silver Belly) Prawns, *Avoli* (Pomfret), *Cuda* (Tunny) etc. appear in the shoal. When the wind flows from East to West, there happens the

³⁸ *Personal Interview*, Ismail, Traditional Fishermen, Kadappuram village, Chavakkad, 10/01/2021; Panchayath *Vikasana Rekha*, Kaipamanglam, Village, Thrissur, 1997, p.25.

³⁹ *Personal Interview*, Ali T S, Traditional Fishermen, Thiruvatra, Chavakkad, 10/01/2021.

⁴⁰ P.R .G Mathur, *Op.Cit.*, p.51.

⁴¹ *Personal Interview*, Mani T S, Traditional Fisherman, P. Vemballur, Kodungallur, 18/12/2021.

⁴² *Personal Interview*, Subhran, Traditional Fisherman, Thiruvathra, Chavakkad, 10/01/2021.

*Kara Nir*⁴³. During this time the fish migrate to distant areas of the sea from eight to twelve miles away from the coastal areas. They hide in the muddy bottom, so it is very difficult to catch the fish.

Thengara Nir or *Tengarakkara Nir* occurs when the wind blows from East to North-West. It is here the sea becomes violent. For this reason, no good catch is expected during this period. The shoal moves to distant areas of the sea in search of a safer place and hide in the muddy bottoms, and it is very difficult to engage in fishing. Another violent *Nir* is *Tekkan Nir*. The fishermen try to avoid fishing during this time. *Puram Nir* or West current is a good omen. When this *Nir* comes, the sea crows appear on the surface water⁴⁴. The sea crows are the omen of good catches, especially the types of fishes like *Camban*, *Podimathi*, and *Netal*. The *Puram Nir* induces the migration of various species of fish like *Avoli*, *Nethal*, *Mullan*, etc. This enables the fishermen to get stellar catches from the coastal waters. Another favourable *Nir* identified by the fishermen is the *Vattakara Nir* or North Easterly current. When this *Nir* flows, the sea becomes calm and the fish migrate from the *Puramkadal* to the *Karakadal*. It is at this point of time that the fish migrates to the coastal water and appears on the surface of the water, enabling the fishermen to catch profoundly. *Vadavathra Nir* or North West current which flows South-East, is yet another violent current. If the wind blows along with this *Nir*, especially in the monsoon season, the sea becomes more violent and reduces the opportunity of fishing⁴⁵. While these current flows, the fish migrates to the depths of the sea and hide in the muddy bottom. In such a scenario, the fishermen will have to heavily exert themselves to catch the fish by extending the length of the float rope and increasing the weight of the sinkers.

Depending upon the *Nir* and season, the fishermen carry nets suitable for catching different kinds of fish. There is a saying that “*neeru marrumbol meen maarum*”, denotes the movement of fish along with the currents⁴⁶. The most important

⁴³ *Personal Interview*, Abdul Khader, Traditional Fisherman, Thiruvathra, Chavakkad, 10/01/2021.

⁴⁴ *Personal Interview*, Babu K M, Traditional Fisherman, Azhikodu, 06/01/2021.

⁴⁵ *Personal Interview*, Krishnan C K, Traditional Fisherman, Chettupadi, Kodungallur, 03/01/2021.

⁴⁶ Nikita Gopal et.al., *Traditional Knowledge in Marine Fisheries of Kerala*, Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Kochi, 2018, p.44.

among them are the Mackerel net and the Sardine net. The Mackerel is caught by using the “*Ayila Chalavala*” by applying the techniques of *Neetivalikkal*⁴⁷. This special technique is adapted as per the direction of the wind and the migration of the fish. When the *Karakattu* blows from East to West and the fish travels from North to South, then the net is launched from South to West, in the same direction. The boat is launched in such a way that its *Aniyam* faces the East against the wind once all the pieces of net are thrown into the sea. The “*Kadessu*” is tied to one end of the *Kamba* (rope) while the other end of the rope is tied to the crossbar closer to the *Aniyam*⁴⁸. The same technique is applied when the *olukkuvala* (gills – net) is used by the fishermen.

The Marine Zones: The fishermen classified the fishing grounds in to five marine zones. The first zone was *Karakkadal*, which extended up to the depth of eight fathoms. They could catch all species of fish from *Karakkadal* by using the traditional net⁴⁹. The second zone was the *Idakkadal* which was positioned between *Karakkadal* and *Padikkadal*. This area had approximately three to eight fathoms depth. According to their cognition, all species of fishes appeared in the *Idakadal* between the months of September and October. Most of the bumper catches were obtained during this period. It was said that the Mackerel and Sardines migrated to the *Idakkadal* during its breeding time. These migrations happened during the month of June and July. The fish stayed put here until their new ones became mature to migrate to other parts of the sea.

The next division of the marine zones was the *Padikkadal*. It was located to the west of *Idakkadal* at a depth of two fathoms. To the fishermen, it was the most dangerous of all the fishing grounds⁵⁰. According to traditional fishermen, it was impossible to rescue boats even from *Padikkadal*, especially in the monsoon season. In the West of the *Padikkadal* lay the *Vayyakadal*, another dangerous fishing ground.

⁴⁷ *Personal Interview*, Balan Mepparath, Traditional Fisherman, Edakkazhiyur, Chavakkad, 10/01/2021

⁴⁸ *Personal Interview*, Ismail, Traditional Fisherman, Kadappuram Village, Chavakkad, 10/01/2021

⁴⁹ *Personal Interview*, Appunni Aiyapully, Traditional Fisherman, Thiruvathra, Chavakkad, 11/01/2021.

⁵⁰ *Personal Interview*, Prahaladan, Traditional Fisherman, Kurikuzhi, 14/01/2021.

The fishermen termed this area as *the Chathiyankadal* or cheater. Unfortunately, most fishes like Sardine and Mackerel were found profusely in this area and the fishermen were forced to take the risk and venture here to get bumper catches. The final division was the *Puramkadal*. It lay beyond 10 fathoms. According to the traditional fishermen, this was the most important economic area of the sea where sizeable fishes were caught.

The ecological awareness of traditional fishermen about marine ecology, irrespective of their caste and religion, is deep and wide. They imbibed this knowledge from childhood days through direct or indirect exposure to the sea. They try to preserve much of the ecological knowledge as well as the value of sustainable development strategy through the eco-friendly fishing techniques, and belief systems.

Socio-cultural Life of the Fishermen

The fishermen lived as a very distinct socio-cultural entity. They had their own customary laws and practices. The fishing community followed a community ownership pattern. If a member of the crew died, it was the duty of the other members to safeguard the family of that person. If he had any loan, it will be remitted by the crew members. The unwritten law in the coastal area was that a person who touched the craft will have the right to get a share of their catch. This special consideration was very helpful to orphans, widows, and elders. There was a deep bondage between the boat owner, the crew and the *Tarakans*. The *Tarakans* or agents auctioned the fish caught by the fishermen. The *Tarakan* would get a share of it. Basically, the income was divided between the boat owner, the crew and the *Tarakans*. Half of the total earning went to the boat owner, one share to *Tarakan* and the rest of share will be equally divided between the crew members⁵¹. If they could not catch any fish, their hard work stood futile. If anyone violated the customary laws he will be excommunicated from the *Tura* .

⁵¹ *Personal Interview*, Rajan Pathiseri, Traditional Fishermen, Bhajanamadam kadappuram, Koolimuttam, Kodungallur, 4/01/2021; Panchayth *Vikasana Rekha*, Kaipamngalam, 1977, p.25.

Mattakettam: There was also a courtesy between the crew and the owner of the boat. If a fisherman wanted to shift to another boat, he was required to take prior consent from former boat owner. According to the customary laws their allotted two dates for *Mattakettam* (changing the boat), either on *Tulam* 30th or *Edavam* 15th.⁵² If a fishermen failed to pay his debt to the boat owner, he should give his son as an employee of the boat. The main work allotted to him was to clean the boat. He should clean each part of the boat (*Kallis*) so he was known as *Kalliyamkutti*⁵³. The *Mukkuvas* of Edakazhiyur had a dress code in the earlier times. They used cotton shirts, hats, and dhotis. Inside the hat of each fisherman, he kept a needle and yarn for the patch work of his cotton net. He could repair the net even when he was in the sea⁵⁴.

There was an extensive interaction between the fishermen and lower castes of inland. The term *Kizhakottupokku* indicates this partnership. The women from the coastal area went to the East with dried and salted fish and in exchange, they got oil, egg, and paddy⁵⁵. There existed a kind of barter system. By the exchange of fish, sometimes they collected certain items required for the craft of fishing. People of low caste provided areca leaf (*koungin pala*) for the fishermen, which was used to remove water from the boats. The coastal folk or fishermen had their own unique food culture. The most important element in their diet was undoubtedly the fish itself. In fact, fish was the substitute for rice at the time of shortage of grains. An outcaste fisherman not only confronted caste taboos but also exploitations from the local land lords. The fishermen of *Tiruvathra* remember such an experience from a Muslim landlord. He fixed the rate of fish caught by the fishermen and forcefully evicted the people from his land if they failed to pay the debt. He even tried to encroach into the personal life of the poor fishermen who lived under his domination⁵⁶.

⁵² *Personal Interview*, Mani T S, Traditional Fisherman, P. Vemballur, Kodungallur, 18/12/2021.

⁵³ *Personal Interview*, Ismail, Traditional Fisherman, Kadappuram village, Chavakkad, 10/01/2021.

⁵⁴ *Personal Interview*, Balan Mepparath, Traditional Fishermen, Edakkazhiyur, Chavakkad, 10/01/2021.

⁵⁵ *Personal Interview*, Subhran, Traditional Fishermen, Thiruvathra, Chavakkad, 10/01/2021.

⁵⁶ *Personal Interview*, Abdul Khader, Traditional Fishermen, Thiruvathra, Chavakkad, 10/01/2021.

Generally, the fishermen had no saving habits. They were presumptuous in the resources of the marine world. They conducted rituals, marriages, and festivals in unnecessary extravagance. This thriftless lifestyle and drinking habits restricted the socio-economic development of this community. In most months of the year, the fishermen were poverty-stricken. At the time of food shortage, they substituted fish for rice. A special dish made with fish, known as *Chelakki* was made by them to substitute rice⁵⁷. Dried tapioca powder, and any available fish were the main ingredients of this special diet. It contained protein, starch, and iron and it was good for health because the traditional fishermen went fishing using manual power.

Kadalvanchi Pattukal: There are several folk songs related to their life, especially *Kadalvanchi Pattukal*. These songs were sung by the fishermen engaged in physical labour, to reduce their hardships and to encourage the team spirit. These songs made them relaxed even in the dangerous waves of the sea. Colloquially, it was believed to give more energy to *Tanduvali*⁵⁸. They thought that it was better to sing a song to reduce the hardship while ferrying the wooden boats. *Kadalvanchi Pattukal* seemed to be a group song and at the end of the song they shouted out with a heavy sound. In the earlier days, the traditional fishermen used wooden boats, which occupied eleven people and usually they pulled the boat into the sea with physical strength. This type of boat was known as *Vallam* and the leader of the *Vallam* was the *Srank* or *Aran*. *Aran* or *Srank* stood in front of the *Vallam* and led the song and others followed his lines. At the end of the song, they shouted the two words *Arappe uroo*. The word *Arappe* means the evil spirits of the Sangam period like *Arathakandan*, *MalamPandaram* and *Uroo* means a command to the evil spirit to go away. *Kadal vanchipattukal* were meant to be sung by the fishermen to be rescued from evil spirits and to get good catches. *Arayan Kavus* are the other noticeable cultural space of the fishing community. *Arayans* had their own *kavus*

⁵⁷ *Personal Interview*, Ismail, Traditional Fisherman, Kadappuram village, Chavakkad, 10/01/2021.

⁵⁸ *Personal Interview*, Amsu M, Retired Teacher, and Traditional Fisherman, Chentrapinni, 06/01/2021.

like that of the other lower castes. *Mukkuva*, *Mugayan* and the *Valans* had *Kavus* in their *Turas*. The main deity of the *Arayan Kavus* was the *Cheerma*. The *Bharani Vela* and *Cheermappattu* were the important festivals of *Arayan Kavus*⁵⁹.

Most of the fishermen were very superstitious and religious. This was because each trip involved risk and uncertainty. So, they saved a sum and donated it to the neighboring temples. The fishermen were great believers of Kodungallur *Bhagavati*. The *Arayas*, *Mukkuvas*, and *Valans* came to the temple during the *Bharani* festival. If they did not get fish, they felt that it was due to evils. To stay away from the evils and for getting good catches they approached the necromancer.

Bharani festival of Kodungallur Temple was of great prominence to the fishing community of Kerala. the festival was conducted in the month of *Meenam* (March – April). This festival attracted thousands of low caste Hindus from all parts of Kerala (i.e., Malabar, Cochin and Travancore areas). During this festival the polluted castes had the right to enter the outer premises of the temple. On the day of *Aswathy Kavutheendal* the low caste people marched towards the temple by crying *Nada Nada* with obscene songs. On their arrival at the shrine, they threw stones at the temple and volleyed abuses at the Goddess. It was the special privilege of the *Koolimuttathu Arayan* to initiate the ritual of polluting the temple⁶⁰.

The main offerings made by the low castes were pepper and sesamum and in return, they got consecrated turmeric powder which they smeared on their head and body. The temple received nearly six to seven thousand rupees during the *Bharani* festival of 1911. This festival lasted for seven days. During the festival days, the devotees indulged freely in drinking toddy and using *arrack*, and when the festival concluded, the temple was cleaned and purified. A pilgrimage to this temple was believed to be a safeguard against cholera and small pox. Every fishing

⁵⁹ V.P.Joseph Valiyaveetil, *Theeradesha Kala Nigandu*, (Mal.), State Institute of languages, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, 2013, p.74.

⁶⁰ C. Achyuta Menon, *Cochin State Manual*, Kerala Gazetteer Department, Thiruvananthapuram, 1911, p.491.

village had its own festivals and donated a sum to the nearby temples. All the seasonal festivals like Karthika, Deepavali, Onam, Vishu, Ramzan, Christmas, etc., were celebrated by the fishing community in an extravagant manner.

When we investigate the socio-religious life of the *Valas*, *Arayas*, and the *Mukkuvvas*, we get a clear picture of the ideological hegemony exercised by the upper class over the fishermen. Their services were utilized by the Cochin Royal family. Even today, the *Valas* of Anapuzha recall that when the King came to visit the Thiruvanchikulam temple or the Kannaki temple of Kodungallur the *Valas* would serve as boatmen. During the Bharani festival, the *Valas* served as the bodyguards of the king. From Anapuzha to Kodungallur they accompanied the ruler and cleared the public to facilitate the King's journey⁶¹. Here we can observe how authorities utilized the muscle power of the *Valas*. They were used as boatmen as they were experts in riding boats through backwaters and the water channels were the most convenient and viable mode of transportation.

According to Antonio Gramsci, hegemony is the spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group. This consent is historically caused by the prestige which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production. The ruling groups impose a direction on social life, subordinates are manipulatively persuaded to board the dominant fundamental express⁶². The obedience to royal family, Brahmins as landlords, their contribution to nearby temples, patriarchy, etc. are the characteristics of the ideological hegemony.

Cultural hegemony was executed by the upper-class people over the community in various forms. The fishing community of the Kerala coast had

⁶¹ Gopinath Panagad, *Jeevithavum Porattavum*(Mal.), Published by the Author, Printed at Pioneer offset Press, Kochi, 2014, pp.19, 20.

⁶² T.J Jackson Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities", *American Historical Review*, Vol.90, No.3, Oxford University Press, June 1985, pp.567-568.

unique socio-cultural and economic institutions. As they followed a community ownership pattern and belief in *Kadamma*, some of the customs and practices of the Brahmanical ideology were incorporated into their lives. The best example is patriarchy. This was evidently practiced in the fishing sector where women were excluded from the actual fishing process and strongly believed in chastity, i.e., the *Pathivratha* concept. This concept was depicted in the work *Chemmeen* authored by Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai.

Education

The socio-economic statistics prepared by V Govindan for the Madras Fisheries department of the Fishing villages reveals that most of the fishermen were illiterate and were exploited by the auction agents and did not get actual price for their efforts. They earned very little and live from hand to mouth situation. He conducted detailed examination of the socio-economic condition of the fisherfolk of Edakazhiyur, Blangad, Chavakkad, Vadanapalli, Kotimbikadappuram, Kurikuzhi, Bimballur and Cochin. The fishing population comprised of *Mukkuvars*, *Pudu Islams* and *Arayars*⁶³. Abraham B. Salem, the officer appointed by the Cochin government conducted a study of the fisheries sector in 1907 and find that fishermen were illiterate and lived in a poor condition. He also put forward the suggestions for the development of fisheries, fish trade, and industries relating to the fish produce⁶⁴. The following table indicates literacy rate of the fishermen of Cochin State in 1911.

⁶³ Government of Madras, *Fishery Statistics and Information, West and East Coasts*, Madras Presidency, Bulletin No.9, Madras, 1916, pp.60-63.

⁶⁴ Government of Cochin, Record of Administration, Cochin State Part IV, 1914, p.75.

Table No. 2.3

Literacy Rate of the Fishermen of Cochin State in 1911

Caste	Total			Literate			Illiterate		
	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female
Arayan	4766	2505	2261	508	473	35	4258	2032	2226
Valan	7827	4046	3781	827	775	52	7000	3271	3729

Source: Census of India, 1911, Cochin, Vol.XVIII.

The above data points to the low literacy rate of the *Arayan* and *Vala* Community of Cochin region. The Valan caste has a higher total population than the *Arayan* caste. The number of illiterate females is significantly higher than illiterate males in both castes. The *Arayan* caste has a higher percentage of literate persons (52.5%) compared to the Valan caste (51.8%). The number of literate women is less when compared to the literacy of men. Most of the women are uneducated and deprived of the socio-economic Space. The socio-economic condition of the fisherfolk was very poor and only few men got primary education.

The fishermen's knowledge of preservation techniques was limited to traditional methods like sun drying and salting, which were primitive and not very effective. In the inland areas, prawns were preserved through a labor-intensive process. First, they were dried in the sun, and then their pulp was extracted through beating. Only the fleshy parts of the prawns were retained and packed in gunny bags or wrapped in Cadjan mats, ready to be sold to middlemen and it was known as *parippu kachavadam*⁶⁵. The shell of the prawn was used as manure.

In general, we can say that in a traditional fishing village, the entire sector was hardworking and struggling for their livelihood. Fishermen did not get commensurate returns for their hard work due to limited access to better transport facilities for fish marketing and advanced fish processing methods. The landlords

⁶⁵ Report on the Fishing Stakesp.17.

who lend the boat and nets to the fishermen get half of the catch which was the major share, and the rest was divided between the crew members equally. Sometimes an extra share was given to the fishermen who identify the shoals and guide the boat. The average workmen earn from as eight *anna* to one Rupees a day during the favorable season⁶⁶. Although traditional society was marked by elements of exploitation, social obligations and cultural norms introduced a degree of flexibility, mitigating the harshness of the situation and allowing for greater adaptability. There was a reciprocal relationship between the boat owners, *Tarakan's* and the fishermen. The traditional system of fish sharing and income sharing ensured a minimum livelihood for the community. Emile Durkheim observed that the primitive societies were clan based and there was a mechanical solidarity among the community which originated from the unique features of the society where the community members shared same functions and perceptions and religion⁶⁷. These characteristics are similarly evident in traditional fishing communities.

The traditional fishing techniques are inherently eco-friendly because they adopted sustainable fishing practices. It minimizes bycatch and waste because the gear and methods were designed to target specific species. The fishing practices often involved catching a variety of species, which helps to maintain the balance of marine ecosystems and it required minimal gear and fuel, reducing carbon emissions and pollution. Above all the traditional fishing practices were habitually closely tied to local communities, promoting community-based management and stewardship of marine resources. The fishing techniques bid a holistic approach and prioritizes sustainability, minimizes environmental impact, and supports the well-being of both the ocean and the communities that depend on it.

The Fishermen have not much time or chance to participate in the changing socio-economic aspects of the mainland. In their day-to-day life, they would set

⁶⁶ Report on the Fishing Stakes..... p.37.

⁶⁷ Ken Thompson, *Emile Durkheim*, Routledge, London & New York, 2002, p.79.

out from their homes in the wee hours of the morning and sometimes come back late at night or after two days. After the hard work in the sea, they had to sell their fish to maintain their net and boat. Earlier cotton net was used by the fishermen which was very difficult to maintain. The cotton nets were to be cleaned and sun dried. They did not have much time to think about what happened to the rest of the world. Illiteracy and drunkenness added to the causes of underdevelopment of the fishing community. Due to the nature of their jobs and poor economic background, most of the fishermen were illiterate. The Christian missionaries and the British took initiative for educating the fishing community but the nature of their job forced them to remain underdogs for several years. The idea of hierarchical exclusion with distance pollution characterized was one of the many ways in which caste system was ideologically sustained as social differentiation was inbuilt into the idea of distance pollution. This practice continued until the middle of the 20th Century. Caste system created an extremely complex social hierarchy and each segment of caste groups tried to maintain overlordship over the lower strata of the people. This system was continued as an overarching umbrella of religion which rationalizes caste structure philosophically and hence ideologically legitimized⁶⁸.

From an analysis of the socio-economic life of the fishing community, it is apparent that they constituted a separate socio-cultural entity. They considered the sea as common property and paid due respect to its resources. The community ownership pattern ensures the food supply of the local community. Though the fishing methods were primitive, it had a sustainable development strategy. Their knowledge about the sea and multiple techniques of fishing indicates the bond between fishermen and the marine eco-system. Their craft and gears were designed according to season and the variety of fish available in different times. Most of the fishing trips were perilous and there were chances of death. They believed that

⁶⁸ K N Panikkar, *Essays on the History and Society of Kerala*, Kerala Council for Historical Research, Thiruvananthapuram, 2021, p.314.

availability of fish and good catches were also dependent on luck. Hence most of the fishermen had blind faith towards local deities. The bondage with the sea and their craft restricted their movement from the coastal belt and excluded from the major socio-economic movements of Kerala. They were forced to remain as the marginalized among the marginalized.

CHAPTER 3

Women in the Fishing Community

Women play a crucial role in the growth and development of the fishing economy. As compared to men, women undertake heavy load of work both in the fishing sector and in the house. While the productive employment of fishermen is essential for the economic sustenance of fisher families, the inherent irregularities in their earning patterns have necessitated the involvement of women from these communities in a range of fishery-related activities, thereby contributing to the overall livelihood resilience of their families¹. About 5 lakh women are involved in the post-harvest sector of marine fisheries in Kerala. Traditionally, women in fishing communities have played a vital shore-based role, focusing on post-harvest activities such as auctioning, marketing, and processing fish products, including pre-processing and value-added processing, which are essential for adding economic value to the catch.

In the fishing households, the male members go to sea and engage in deep sea fishing process braving the adversities. While the men face the uncertainties of the ocean, the women at home shares an equally challenging task of attending all the household chores and contributes to the running of the family through earnings from diverse fishing related activities on the shore, such as processing, marketing, and preservation, mainly confined to salting and drying.

Although fisherwomen constitute about 50 percentage of the population in the fisher community, and contributes considerably to the labour in the fishing households, conventionally the male members alone are permitted to engage in deep sea fishing process². Women are not involved in actual fishing. Women's role is

¹ R. Sathiadhas, et. al., "Adoption of Fishery Enterprises and Empowerment Options for Fisherwomen of India", *Women Empowerment in Fisheries*, Narendra Publishing House, New Delhi, 2005, p.55.

² R. Narayanakumar, Y. Ravichand, "Fisherwomen's Knowledge, Aptitude and Practice (KAP) of Alternate Income Generating Activities: A Case study in AP, " *Fishing Chimes*, Vol.25 No.4, July 2005, p.43.

limited to less demanding jobs such as domestic chores, children's care, and assisting in processing and marketing of fish.

The social and spatial exclusion of women in the fishing sector is visible in the form of denial from the actual fishing. Social exclusion is defined as a multi-dimensional process in which various forms of exclusion are combined: participation in decision making and political processes, access to employment and material resources, and integration into common cultural process³. The two words social and exclusion when put together conjoin society, as opposed to the discrete individual within the society with ongoing process as opposed to timeless state⁴.

Michael Foucault focusses on how power operates through the exclusion of certain groups or individuals from the society. Foucault does not deny the power relations, according to him the knowledge at the base of each of his discourses is also power but it encompasses the whole society. The disseminated power together with less stress on economic relations makes Foucauldian concept of gender analysis exceedingly elusive⁵.

For the fishing community their holy estate is the sea, knowledge about the sea and its treasures are denied to the women. The rights of women to venture into the deep-sea fishing was curtailed by the beliefs and customs. Conventionally women were advised to stay chaste and chant prayers for the safe return of the men who brave the uncertainties of the seas. The genesis of the spatial exclusion of the fisherwomen can be traced down to the concept of patriarchy, prevalent in the traditional society.

According to Sylvia Walby, patriarchy needs to be conceptualized at different levels of abstraction⁶. At a less abstract level patriarchy is composed of six structures, the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal

³ David Byrne, *Social Exclusion*, Rawat Publication, New Delhi, 2005, p.2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.5.

⁵ Sylvia Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, Basil Blackwell Ltd., Oxford, 1990, p.15.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.16.

state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, patriarchal relations in cultural institutions. A more complex form of patriarchal dominance is seen in the waged labour sector. Women are excluded from better life chances, restricted in their freedom and force to do the less skilled works which automatically decrease their earnings and income level. Men continue to dominate women in the most lucrative jobs as well.

The basic unit of patriarchy is the family in which rules and values are continually generated. The roles and behavior of men and women are defined in values, customs, laws, and social roles. The reproductive capacities and services of women were commodified even before the creation of Western civilization. During the Neolithic period with the expansion of agriculture there was the inter-tribal exchange of women for the economic needs of the society. They exchanged women for the increased production of agricultural goods, population growth, for increasing the labor force and to accumulate maximum surplus. Thus, women became a resource acquired by men as the land owned and enjoyed by men. “Men as a group had rights in women which women as a group did not have in men⁷.”

Earlier, tribal wars were characterized by the killing of defeated men. As a result, the prevalent social norms dictated that women be treated as “prize of war”, to be conquered and owned by the victors. This led to the commodification of women wherein they were enslaved and forced into labour leading to physical and sexual exploitation of women. With the advent of settled agriculture, large areas were concurrently brought under cultivation. As a result, all the heavy work were taken up by men which gave rise to institutionalized slavery. This time was also marked by an increased tolerance towards enslavement. Symbols were developed to show the subordination of women. Rise of private property and class society triggered the subordination of women⁸.

⁷ Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, Oxford University Press, New York, p.212.

⁸ Suvira Jaiswal, *The Making of Brahmanical Hegemony, Studies in Caste, Gender and Vaisnava Theology*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2016, p.96.

The first gender defined social role of women were in marriages. In many occasions women were married of with an eye on improving financial status of the families. The next recorded gender role of women was as stand-in wife and this became customary and regularized for women of elite group. In the history of human struggles, we can see that men fought for freedom and women struggled against the oppression and dominance at the hands of their men.

The fishing community lived as a separate class in the outer layer of the society. The *Mukkuv*as had to maintain a spatial distance of 14 feet from the upper caste, and the pollution of women was more than that of men⁹. So, we can see that for women, class is mediated through their sexual ties to a man. A women's access to or denial of the means of production and resources are also determined through men. Definitions of class usually involves a notion of fundamental cleavage based on different economic positions. Educational and other qualifications, common in neo-Weberian analysis, also is considered by some thinkers. Yet others have a rigidly defined notion of economic difference as in ownership or non-ownership of the means of production as in orthodox Marxist analysis.¹⁰ Women get respectable status in the class through their fathers and husbands. If she violates the sexual rules, she will be excommunicated by them. Such instances are very common in the fishing community.

Gerda Lerner in *The Creation of Patriarchy* posits that from the second millennium BC onwards control over the sexual behavior of citizens was a major tool for social control in every society¹¹. Slowly class hierarchy was habitually shaped in the family through sexual dominance. Regardless of the political or economic system, individuals were moulded to function in the hierarchical system created by the patriarchal family. The main pillars of the caste system were the subordination of women and its capacity to reinvent itself in changing social formations in the service

⁹ Willam Logan, *Malabar Manual (Mal.)*, Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhikode, 1985, p.101.

¹⁰ Sylvia Walby, *Op. Cit.*, p.11.

¹¹ Suvira Jaiswal, *Op. Cit.*, pp.54-59.

of the powerful and dominant. In which the control over women's sexuality was critical, endogamy as well as hypergamy was used to create distinct caste identity and raise its status.

The system of patriarchy functioned with the tacit cooperation of women and it was reinforced using ideologies like gender indoctrination, educational deprivation, the denial to women of knowledge of their history, the dividing of women one from the other by defining respectability and deviance according to women's sexual activities by restraints and outright, coercion by discrimination in access to economic resources and political power by awarding class privileges to conforming women"¹².

So women shaped their lives and acted under the umbrella of patriarchy in a form of paternalistic dominance. The term paternalistic dominance defines the bond between the dominant group and the subordinate group. The subordinate group is considered as inferior and is maintained through mutual commitments and shared rights. The dominant exchanged submission for protection, unpaid labor for maintenance. In such family's responsibilities and obligations are not equally distributed. The notion of Patriarchy was changed from time to time from biological reason to cultural factors, which is responsible for the subordination of the women universally, and women's role in reproduction process led to the division of labour and men emerged as dominant and possessed power.

The women in the fishing community have always been seen as hardworking in the household sector and the offshore sector of the fishing activity but they do not possess any right over the resources and means of production like net, boat, etc.

In a patriarchal family, male children's subordination to their fathers is temporary and lasts only until they become the heads of household. In a traditional fishing community, the boys up to the age of 12 participated in the fishing activities in the role of *kalliyamkutti* but there was no girl *kalliyamkutties* in the fishing sector.

It is said that women participate in the process of their own subordination because they are psychologically shaped to internalize the idea of their own

¹² Gerda Lerner, *Op. Cit.*, p. 217.

inferiority. The concept of chastity of a wife is very important among the fishermen community. The position of women in the society is merged and portrayed through their sexual relationships. The fishing community believed that if a woman violated the rule of chastity or *Pathivratha* it will harm her husband. The fishermen believed that the chastity of their wives rescued them from the wrath of the natural forces. So in a scenario of a mishap like death or injury of a male member, the community put the onus on his *Mukkuva* wife.

In traditional societies, even females were involved in domestic violence and honour killings perpetrated by men. Women were constantly depowered and subjugated in the patriarchal framework. That they transformed their consciousness by themselves is a myth. In her work *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir, she explains that patriarchy is a derivative of history¹³.

The misconception that women have only a marginalized presence in history has deeply gone into the psychology of women. Only heroines portrayed by the society were in the myths and fables as dragons, slayers, or those with magical powers, etc. In the real life they were meek, had no historical significance and unconditionally believed whatever was recorded in the history. The shift from private to public patriarchy involves changes both in the relationships between structures and within the structures themselves. In private patriarchy, household production is important while in the public patriarchy, status of women is decided by employment and the state. Although platforms change, patriarchy is prevalent in both spaces.

Sandra Freitag argued that “the colonial state was working on the presumption that public and private spaces could be easily made and differentiated and identified itself as accrediting both private and public interests to an increasingly objectified notion of community”¹⁴.

¹³ Sylvia Walby, *Op. Cit.*, p.24.

¹⁴ Quoted in Dilip M. Menon, “Religion and Colonial Modernity: Rethinking Belief and Identity”, *EPW*, April 27, 2002, p.1663.

Sylvia Walby in her paper *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990) discusses the concern of gender disparity in paid employment¹⁵. She tries to answer the question of less earnings of women in comparison with men and gender disparity at the employment level. Various schools have attempted the issue in different perspectives. The Marxist and Marxist feminist addresses the issue in a way that the women's employment is determined by the capitalist relations.

The deteriorated status of women's pay and reduced labour force are censoriously designed by the capital-labour relations. Women are picturized as a subsidiary and borderline group of workers, exploited, and enjoyed by the employers but another section of school perceives that women's position in the household, rather than paid labor, is an achievement. The sexual division of labour is fundamentally different from the idea of division of labour. Even when women are truly de-skilled, they are excluded from many opportunities. As Simone De Beauvoir notes, this exclusion is a double insult to women.

Once the catch touches the shore, the involvement of women in the fishing industry commences. They collected low priced fishes and sold them in nearby areas. They also actively participated in fish curing, preservation and helped with loading and unloading. The main methods of preservation were drying and salting. The women sellers walked long distances for selling their fishes. Low priced fishes earned them lower earnings, much below running market prices. Like in the agricultural sector, the women in the fishing sector also got secondary jobs. Patriarchal society controlled their lives and labour. Most of the women were jobless in the off seasons and some of them took up coir making, *Thadukka* making or net making to earn a living¹⁶.

Hartmans analysis of Job Segregation can be applied in the fishing industry¹⁷. Job segregation by sex was a critical advance in theorizing gender relations in

¹⁵ Nirmala Banerjee, (Ed.), *Sexual Division of Labour in Indian Women: Myth and Reality* Sangam Books, Hyderabad, 1995, p.73.

¹⁶ M K, "Kayarinte Charitram", *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, Vol.27, 8June, 1948.

¹⁷ Sylvia Walby, *Op. Cit.*, p.53.

employment. Segregation and exclusion are two patriarchal strategies in paid work. The exclusion strategy is aimed at totally preventing women's access to an area of employment or indeed to all paid employment, the segregation is a weaker strategy aimed at separating women from men's work and at grading the former beneath the latter for purpose of remuneration and status.

The women actively participated in low-priced fish selling and curing but kept away from actual fishing, auction, or large-scale trades. They were confined to the local marketing sector for procuring food for livelihood. The *Mukkuva* community of Chavakkad area remember the term '*Kizhakottupokku*' (go to the east)¹⁸. The women with fresh or dried fish went to the east to earn a square meal. They sold fish to the people of middle land and bought rice and vegetables.

Gazetteer of Malabar (1908) describes the *Mukkuvas* as a caste of fisherfolk following *Marumakkathayam* in the North and *Makkathayam* in the south. In the Thrissur district they were patrilineal, whereas in Kozhikode and Kannur districts they were matrilineal¹⁹. The converted *Mukkuvas* were known as *Pui Islam* or *Puthu Islam*²⁰. Marriage is vital to the maintenance of one's caste status, defined as one's standing among the smaller segmentary subdivisions within the caste²¹. The principles of marriage practice are therefore inseparable from the principles of hierarchy at the very core of Indian society. Marriage is also linked to process and hierarchy to belief and ritual, it is marriage as the link between the sacred and purity that yields hierarchy.

The *Mukkuvas* had the custom of giving bride's price in which the groom paid the bride's father a fixed amount of 23-34 *panam* (*Kanapanam* or *Kanamkodukkal*).

¹⁸ *Personal Interview*, Ismail, Traditional Fishermen, Chavakkad, 10/01/2021.

¹⁹ PRG Mathur, *Ecology, Technology and Economy: Continuity and Change Among the Fisherfolk of Kerala*, Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal, 2008, p.89.

²⁰ Government of Madras, "Madras Fisheries Statistics and Information West and East Coasts", *Fisheries Bulletin*, No.9, Madras, 1916, p.58.

²¹ Lina M. Fruzzetti, *The Gift of a Virgin: Women, Marriage and Ritual in a Bengali Society*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1990, pp. 8, 9.

Bride price was no longer given under extraneous influences. When a marriage contract was broken a compensation between Rs. 90 and Rs. 100 was given to the aggrieved party and this was called *penninte acharam neekal*. Traditionally the *Mukkuva* women observed seven days of pollution during their monthly periods²². During the first confinement pollution was observed from 41 to 90 days.

The women in the *Mukkuva* community gave priority to their ritualistic purity. After menstruation, birth and death, they received cleaned cloth from the servicing castes. The main servicing castes of the *Mukkuv*as were the *Panimakkal Valanchiyan, Kavathiyan, Naryrasserikaran, Arayavathi, etc.*²³ The *Mukkuv*as remained an outcaste throughout the history of caste system²⁴. The women were the most vulnerable of this repressive system. Mostly they were forced to interact with the caste society. Majority of the fishermen were uneducated and women education was totally uncared for²⁵.

The Mother Goddess is universally a dominant figure manifested in varied forms in most of the chronicles and folklore stories. The fishermen community worships sea as their mother goddess. The cult of the Great Goddess is based on the belief that she is the creator of life. She is admired and renowned for her virginity and maternal instincts. The fisher people believed in the creation stories like the core force in nature is the sea, the water from which create a new life. Goddesses like snake goddess, sea goddess and virgin goddess hold the key to mystery. From this one can assume that only creative act was done by the goddess. In Hindu mythology two types of women are seen, one is the epic heroines and other is mother Goddesses. The epic heroine type describes the sacrificing, chaste, loyal wife set forth as

²² PRG Mathur, *Op.Cit.*, p.89.

²³ S.K. Vasanthan, *Kerala Samsakara Charithra Nigandu* (Mal.), Vol.II, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005, p.400.

²⁴ K.K. Kochu, *Kerala Charithravum Samoohika Rupeekaranavum* (Mal.), The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2012, pp.271, 279.

²⁵ V. Govindan, "Fisheries Statistics and Information, West and East Coasts, Madras Presidency" *Fisheries Bulletin*, No.9, Madras, 1916, p.60.

representing the ideal for female behavior²⁶. These women acquire their power from self-effacement in relationship of subjugation to the male. The mother goddesses are portrayed in the gentle aspect as Lakshmi or Parvathi or more ominous form like Durga and they received power from their motherhood. But in the real sense the status of women is very low.

The rejection of women's role in history has strengthened women's acceptance of the ideology of patriarchy and has undermined the individual women's sense of self-esteem. History legitimized that women are marginalized in civilization and is a victim of historical process. It is also considered as universal truth. The unheard voices of nameless women are seen in the oral traditions, in folksongs and tales of powerful witches and good fairies.

Araya women primarily worked in net making and fish processing units. Cotton net making was a cottage industry²⁷ involving the entire family, including children, in the process. *Tazhapaya* making and *ola medachil* were their other chief occupations. During off seasons, women earned up from 4 to 8 *annas* for their work which was a great relief²⁸. Their involvement was also seen in drying and salting process. The women were also experts in *Tadukka* making (the palm leaf fish containers). As time passed by, they became experts in *beedi* making too. Women of the fishing community were not allowed to clothe the upper parts of the body. Later they wore a single sari to cover their upper parts. The old generation used the single sari system without a blouse²⁹. Pandit Karuppan's tiring efforts to change the dress code bore fruits and the new dress style came to be known as *Karuppan Kacha*³⁰.

²⁶ Leela Gulathi, "In the context of Poor Working Women in Kerala", *Indian Women Myth and Reality*, Sangam Books, Hyderabad, 1995, p.83.

²⁷ In the Malayalam film *Chemeen*, the character Nalla Pennu is picturized as one who is always engaged in the net making process and she regularly carries the cotton thread in her hands.

²⁸ *Personal Interview*, Omana, *Araya* Community Member, Attupuram, S.N. Puram, 3/01/2021.

²⁹ *Personal Interview*, Thanka Ayyappan, Fish Selling Woman, Anapuzha, 08/03 2021.

³⁰ *Personal Intderview*, Chandrika Gopi, Fish Selling Woman, Anapuzha, 08/03/2021

The women of Vala community played a significant role in the socio-economic life of the Anapuzha region. Insights from a survey conducted in the Anapuzha region of Thrissur District highlight the roles they held. Their primary jobs were fish selling, fish curing, fish processing and coir making. The women engaged in fish selling started their business at the crack of the dawn. They arrived at the *kadavu* or the harbour at dawn to purchase fresh fish from the *Tarakans*. Due to financial constraints, most women borrowed money from the *Tarakans* for a day. They repaid the amount after selling the fish³¹. This cycle continued where they hardly made any substantial profits.

The *Vala* women faced many difficulties during their journeys. They sold fish by walking or using public transportation facility³². They identified regular customers at nearby villages. They hardly went to the market because men dominated these areas. Usually, they carried fresh fish in the small baskets made up of coconut palm leaf or bamboos. A special kind of Taduokka was made by the coconut palm leaf's for carrying salt and fish. This type of Taduokka resembles the modern plastic boxes which are used for carrying fish and other items. Later they shifted to aluminum vessels³³. The women usually collected low valued fishes for sale like small prawn, Aranjil, *Mullan*, *Pallathi* etc. and earned an average of 15 to 20 rupees a day in 1980s³⁴. They usually delivered fish directly to customers, walking several kilometers every day.

Due to their demanding work and work schedule, most of these women had health issues. They left their homes early morning without breakfast and returned late after walking several kilometers³⁵. Aluminum vessels of fresh fish weighing 18 to 20 kilograms were carried on their heads up to noon³⁶. After reaching home they had

³¹ *Personal Interview*, Sasikala Kannan, Fish Selling Woman, Anapuzha, 08/03/2021.

³² *Personal Interview*, Ambika Gopi, Fish Selling Woman, Methala, 12/03/2021.

³³ *Personal Interview*, Pankajashi Achuthan, Fish Selling Woman, Poyya, 13/04/2021.

³⁴ *Personal Interview*, Komalu Asokan, Fish Selling Woman, Gothuruth, 14/04/2021.

³⁵ *Personal Interview*, Karthyayani Krishnan, Fish Selling Woman, Poyya, 13/04/2021.

³⁶ *Personal Interview*, Komalu Asokan, Fish Selling Woman, Gothuruth, 14/04/2021.

their household work too. Drinking water problem and lack of sanitation facilities added to their woes. Most of them worked in the unorganized sector and faced numerous challenges. Dried prawn was much sought after in the local markets and households so women with dried prawns or fresh small fish were seen in different areas of Thrissur. From Anapuzha region women travelled to Kodungallur, Mala, Irinjalakuda and Thrissur to sell their products.

The women of the fishing community imbibe the aptitude for trade and other skills from their own family. From childhood onwards they receive informal training from their mother and from other kinswomen. Generally, in the fishing community, men prefer a woman of skill in fish processing and trade. In the fishing villages of Poyya and Anapuzha women were provided with a *Takala* (an aluminum vessel used for fish trade) at the occasion of marriage³⁷. Majority of fishermen had the habit of consuming liquor and the liabilities of their extravagance led to poverty of the family which forced the women folk into trade³⁸.

A fisher woman well versed in her trade can be recognized by her attire and speech. They always talk loudly during the bargaining and sale of fish. Sometimes they use high-frequency derogatory language interlaced with abusive terms in arguments³⁹. The socio-economic mechanisms have a self-understood division of labour and interdependence in the economic roles of the two sexes. Undoubtedly the fisher women have a vital economic role both inside and outside the family. Sometimes their marketing skill and courage in market places, their nature of outspokenness proclaim gender equality but, they are enclosed within the boundaries of the patriarchal form of society.

They followed patriliney and only man had the right in their craft and means of production. Backwater fishing was depended on *unnivalas* and only men possessed the right over them. Only men went for fishing but women appeared in the roles of

³⁷ *Personal Interview*, Karthyayani Krishnan, Fish Selling Woman, Poyya, 13/04/2021.

³⁸ *Personal Interview*, Alli Valsan, Fish Selling Woman, Poyya, 13/04/2021.

³⁹ *Personal Interview*, Komalu Asokan, Fish Selling Woman, Gothuruth, 14/04/2021.

fish seller, curer, and money manager. May be poverty pushed the women to outside the coastal area and interact with the rest of the society.

Colonial modernity brought changes in the life of the women of fishermen community. There was a general illustration in the concept of equality before law but in practice the individual was subordinate to the perspective of the community as a unit of social and political order. Individualism was in a traditional private sphere within which colonialism feared to tread⁴⁰. In this sense colonialism had less influence in the matter of gender disparity on the fishing community.

When Pandit Karuppan started *Kalyanadayini Sabha* in Anapuzha, women gave thrust to the movement by contributing *Pidiyari* (a handful of rice that was collected and donated to the Sabha). They also joined in the *chittis* of the *sabha* and spent the money judiciously in the family. They invested the money from the *chittis* diligently in education, marriage or to satisfy the basic needs of their family⁴¹. Even the newer generation remember and acknowledge the hard work and contributions of women in the Anapuzha region for the development of the community.

Pandit Karuppan Library and the fisheries school had great impact in the Anapuzha region because most of the women in the region had at least primary education⁴². There are so many bold women who are the only breadwinners of their family like widows, spouses of bedridden men, etc. Their lives tell the stories of resilience. There are some exceptional women in the fishing community like Valliyamma *chechi* of Nattika beach. She excelled in auctioneering of fish at Nattika and Blangad beach. She is the only known *Tarakathi* in the district of Thrissur⁴³. The people of Nattika called her as Valliyamma *chettan*.

⁴⁰ K.N. Panikar, *Culture, Ideology, Hegemony, Intellectual and Social Consciousness in Colonial India*, Tulika, New Delhi, 1995, p.33

⁴¹ *Personal Interview*, Binil, Councillor, Kodungallur Municipality, 16/01/2021.

⁴² While conducting interviews and visiting the library, it is noticed that most of the old women are in the habit of reading and possess general knowledge.

⁴³ *Personal Interview*, Janardhanan, President, Traditional Fishermen's Association, Nattika, Kerala, 25/12/2020

While analyzing the socio-economic status of women in the fishing sector, it is found that there is gender disparity in poverty too. Women are poorer than men because they face rigorous and complex cultural, social, traditional, and economic issues even men did not face. While engaging in selling the fish they face the stigma of caste pollution. Fishing keeps men away from their households and thus women are forced to look after their children and find out the resources to fend for themselves. Women get less opportunities in education and little training in skills needed to overcome their poverty. There appear to be a definite feminization of poverty. When a community is poor and downtrodden, the women folk in the community must bear the brunt of it even more⁴⁴.

Fisher women always played a second fiddle in the fishing industry. In the landing centers, women were engaged in the collection of small sized fish for drying. Some of them engaged in loading and unloading works. In the market they sold the low value products. In whole sales and brokering, women were seldom employed. They carried fresh and dried fish either in their baskets or big shoppers to sell in the remote local petty shops and households. Women from Anapuzha region travelled long distances to sell their fish products. In the traditional society women mainly carried fresh fish on their heads. Ice was rare to be procured, so the catch got decayed fast and was never sold off completely.

There are several causes for the gender-blind nature of the fisheries sector. The foremost reason is that women themselves are ignorant in the domain of knowledge about the sea. The techniques of using the gears, nets, lines, and spears are non-accessible to women. Above all women are considered as “fisher wives” and their role is predetermined in private space and the actual fishing took place in the public sphere. The lower ranking jobs performed by women in the private space is called as “gathering” and the men’s task is called fishing⁴⁵. The task of collecting

⁴⁴ R Sathidas et.al., *Op. Cit.*, p.63.

⁴⁵ Pin Pravalpruhskul, “Bernadette Resurreccion, Gender in coastal and marine resource management: A literature review”, *Stockholm Environment Institute*, 26 March 2018, p.7 .

shellfish and other seafood from the shore is referred to as gathering. Right from this less laborious allied activity, the gender disparity widens the economic inequality in a way that fishing is considered a valuable economic supplier and auxiliary activities like gleaning and processing are not so.

In the traditional society, women's participation in employment was decided by their position in the family. The domestic circumstances of a married woman restricted her to enter labour and mostly they were forced to be satisfied in their subordinate role and less skilled labour. In the structure of the labor market, occupational segregation by sex was common. Majority of women was employed in low paid jobs and they frequently earned less pay than men.

Table No. 3.1

Earning Pattern in the Fishing Community of Cochin State in 1931

SI No	Caste	Traditional Occupation	Principal Earners		Working Dependents		Non-working Dependents	Total
			Male	Female	Male	Female	Both sexes	
1	Arayan	Fishing	1952	597	26	768	3231	6574
2	Valan ¹	Fishing	2984	1375	85	1144	696	6284

Source: Census of India, 1931, Cochin, Vol. XXI, P.xliv

Table No.3.2

Earning Pattern in the Fishing Community of Malabar District in 1931

SI No	Caste	Traditional Occupation	Principal Earners		Working Dependents		Non-working Dependents		Total
			Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
1	Mukkuvas	Fishing	19400	200	189	47	814	107	20759

Source: Census of India, 1931, Vol. XIV, Madras Part II, p.135

The table indicates that the male members were the principal earners. They owned the fishing crafts and possessed knowledge about fishing techniques. Women

were often denied the opportunities to engage directly in fishing and earn from it. The discrepancy in the number of male and female earners testifies to the gender disparity in the patriarchal form of society in the fishing sector. In Malabar, only 200 females were principal earners compared to 19400 men. The table also shows the number of working dependents and non-working dependents.

The sectorial policies also increased their vulnerability and marginalized them from the small-scale fishery sector too. Multitasking is a part and parcel of the life of fisher women like the women of other sectors. The unpaid workload of the house is also her responsibility. The fisherwomen engaged in supplementary activities have a very low status in the social hierarchy. They often are denied credit from public sector institutions due to lack of ownership of assets. But in Thrissur District however, both the *Kalyanadayini Sabha* and the Kaipamangalam Cooperative Society gave them small scale credits and helped to overcome the lean days. In Anapuzha region the old women who worked in the marketing section earned money by their hard work and provided primary education and living condition to their children⁴⁶.

There are some common taboos which restrict the entry of women into actual fishing. The traditional fishing community considered women as polluted and denied permission to go to the sea. The women of Muslim Mappila fishing communities very rarely went for fish trade in comparison with the Hindu and Christian communities. Gradually with education and greater socialization, they ventured to a limited extent in some post-harvest fishing activities in the villages. The Hindu Araya fisher folk and the Christian *Mukkuva* fisher folk permitted their women in the economic activities related to fish processing, buying, and selling in markets.

In comparison with the land based occupational groups, the fishermen spend less “quality time” in their home and raising the children. The man whose occupation is at sea takes him away from mainstream society and has limited contacts with the world outside. Women took the responsibility of family and tried to find out money

⁴⁶ *Personal Interviews* with the fish selling women of Anapuzha.

through fish sale. The auction agents supported the fisherwomen in daily purchase of fish. It was an informal arrangement with the loan being repaid the next day after the fish is sold. The women engaged in door-to-door fish marketing spent long hours on foot with head loads and those who engaged in retail markets were forced to remain in a squatting position. It is generally seen that most of the women engaged in this sector have health problems like pain in legs, head, and lower back. In markets too infrastructural facilities are generally poor and this also causes health-related problems.

Among the Hindu and Christian fishing communities, women often engaged in the sale of fish by taking fish to the markets. The women from these communities who interact with the market provide a strong socializing element to the family and have a significantly better understanding of the dynamics of societal forces. In the Muslim community, some of them get involved in the shore-based processing activities but rarely involve in gathering at seashore or going to the markets.

Women in the fishing community are conscious of sanitation and cleanliness and are aware of the importance of personal hygiene and clean surroundings. Scarcity of drinking water makes the efforts of women more complicated⁴⁷. Collection of potable water from water tanks and from far away wells is the greatest drudgery. They spend sleepless nights to fetch drinkable water. It is difficult to get enough clean water even for washing and bathing. Due to the scarcity of clean potable water, epidemics create havoc in the coastal areas. The natural calamities also (sea waves) posed a challenge to women.

Men usually have the habit of using beaches as their toilets while women use secluded places, well before dawn. These lack of facilities to attend nature's call, the use of beaches as public toilets and the excessive crowding created by the cluster settlement pattern give rise to poor health conditions. Contagious diseases in fishing villages spread very rapidly under these physical conditions. These are the root causes of the much-reported ill health conditions in fishing communities. General

⁴⁷ Krishna Srinath, "Women in Coastal and Fisheries Resources Management", *Women in Fisheries*, Indian Society of Fisheries Professionals, Mumbai, 2002, p.16.

health problems found among the fishing community are respiratory and skin infections, diarrheal disorders, and hook worm infestations, etc.

In the coastal regions, people depend on ponds for drinking water. Lack of toilet facilities and the permeable nature of soil make the water in the ponds impure and this is yet another cause for the rapid spread of epidemics in the coastal regions. The sand soil of the coastal areas increases the chance to mix the water from toilet with that of nearby ponds. One of the most important problems in providing toilet facilities in coastal villages is that septic tanks do not function effectively because of the high-water table in the sandy soil. This may increase the risk of seepage of dirty water into wells used for drinking water. The clustering of houses also causes the spread of epidemics faster in the coastal regions. Women suffer much due to scarcity of water in their day-to-day life. Their health and hygiene largely depend on availability of pure water.

The modernization process made far reaching impact on the life of the women in the fishing sector. The fishing sector serves an important source of income and a comparatively cheaper source of protein. As a male dominated sector, the women's role is mainly focused in post-harvest fishery activities. The main obstacles faced by women to emerge as an entrepreneur are illiteracy, lack of suitable venues for earning and gender bias⁴⁸. With the leverage of technology, women's opportunities in the fishing sector dwindled. The post harvesting activities became male dominated as they were mainly done in the harbors. The existing uneven economic power shifted more towards men than women, gradually. Modernization of the fishery industry led to the harbors becoming the hub of activity. The age-old decentralized community-based fishing was declined and gradually the role of women also faded away in the conventional fishing sector. Modernization also shook the foundation of the dynamic and productive assemblage of marketing chains operating in coastal fishing sector which worked in tandem with diverse rural consumer pockets of the immediate hinterlands. This in turn affected the portion of fish consumed by the relatively poorer consumers. Surveys conducted among the

⁴⁸ R. Narayana Kumar, et. al., *Op.Cit.*, pp. 43- 44.

women folk of *Vala*, *Mukkuva* and *Araya* community of central Kerala, indicate that mainly women from the backwater fishing community are still engaged in retail fish sale. Traditional fish landing systems in the backwaters provided opportunities for women to retail fish at low prices. In the other two classes, such employment opportunities diminished due to the outgrowth of modernity.

Women contributed to the economic wellbeing of their households by indulging in small scale fish trade. Poverty was the main driving factor for their economic roles and they received social recognition and support for it. As a rule, their control over wealth is restricted as in most tribal and peasant societies.⁴⁹ In the *Vala* community women have economic flexibility but their role as in public sphere and decision making are minimal.

A strong gender discrimination is seen in the fishing community because the traditional mode of fishing demanded masculine power which was denied to women due to their perceived biological weakness. In the modern mechanized fishing sector, both human effort and energy has been largely taken over by machines so the artisanal fishermen's skills are no longer needed. Their positions also have been usurped by the non-fishermen community so the artisanal fishermen are left marginalized but the worst form of marginalization is still faced by the women. Thus, the traditional fishermen community do not reap the actual benefits of modernization. In the family structure of a fishing community, men controlled the fishing equipment and the craft and women were entrusted with children and household. It was also their duty to feed the family and ensure the economic stability of the family. This compelled them to get into the small-scale fish marketing.

Gender discrimination in the fishing community gained momentum after the modernization process. The gender bias in favor of the boys in the fishing communities and consequent infant mortality rates of girls show the sex differentials⁵⁰.

⁴⁹ C. Sridevi, 'The Fisherwomen Financier: A Study Of Status -Role Nexus In A Peasant Community', *EPW*, Vol.24, April 29, 1989 p.32.

⁵⁰ John Kurien, "Kerala Model, its Central Tendency and the Outlier", *Social Scientist*, Vol.23, No. 1/3 March 1995, p.32, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3517892>, Accessed on 07-07-2016.

The Population Growth rate in 1971-81 was 1.9% in Kerala and 2.3% in Fishing Villages. But the Sex ratio of Kerala was 1032 and 972 in Fishing Villages. The Infant Mortality rate also had a wide gap between the Kerala and the Fishing Villages. In Kerala the female Infant mortality rate was 40% whereas in the Fishing villages it was 85%.

This indicates that the gender discrimination was more severe in the fishing villages compared to the rest of Kerala.

Table No.3.3

Occupational Status of Fishermen of Thrissur District in 2010 and 2016

SI No.	Year	Actual Fishing				Fish seed Collection			
		Full Time		Part time		Full Time		Part time	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	2010	5464	0	234	0	0	1	0	5
2	2016	12706	0	15264	0	549	126	96	507

Source: CMFRI, Marine Fisheries Census, Government of India, Cochi, 2010 and 2016

Table No.3.4 indicates the occupational status of the Fishermen in the District. The surveys of 2010 and 2016 pointed that no women engaged in actual fishing⁵¹. Most of the women were engaged in fish seed collection as a part time job. The productive areas are still dominated by men. Women are mainly confined to allied activities in the fishing sector. When compared to the actual fishing sector a very few male members constitute the allied fish workers.

A survey conducted in the fishing villages of the district exposed the fact that no women participated in the rituals of temples where the community had special privileges even if they belonged to the lower castes. For example, in the ritual of *Kavutheendal* in Bharani festival of the Kodungallur temple, the *Koolimuttathu Arayan* has special privileges. No woman was partaker in the rituals related to boat building or launching ceremony. No titles like *Valiya Arayan* or *Aravan* were accredited to women.

⁵¹ CMFRI, Marine Fisheries Census, Government of India, Cochi, 2010 and 2016.

While female contribution to production is necessary but not a sufficient condition for the development of female status⁵². Fisher women's role reflect an instance of cultural dualism within the ambit of the patriarchal Hindu society. Women's role in economy and their managerial skills increases their individualism and self-reliance but all these happened without the development of female consciousness or emergence of any new stratification system⁵³.

The women sometimes seem to be the propagator of patriarchy. They recognize the biological rationale for the division of labor between sexes. In the cultural sphere also, they accept the norms of patriarchy. They have restrictions to work during the time of menstrual and pre-natal periods. Religious and ritualistic participation of women is rare in the fishing community. Although women earn money from the fish marketing, none of them have made investments in the productive sector. The basic and productive structure of the fishing sector is unapproachable to women. The gender bigotry created by the patriarchal mindset excluded women from the mainstream. The woman's participation in the local judiciaries of the fishermen community is unheard of. They never attended the meetings of *kadakkodies* except in cases of marriage disputes. Though women have economic potential they are kept peripheral to the established structure of the socio-political system.

With the advancement of technology, fishing became more capital intensive and the landing centers got concentrated to main harbours, so the traditional role of women is marginalized⁵⁴. Since capital investment capacity of women is poor, they are naturally turned out from the post-harvest activities but some credit institutions chiefly the co-operative sector have an important role to perform in empowering fisherwomen. Usually, women collected the fish for sale directly from the fishermen. They waited on the shores with their baskets to collect fresh fish as the boats landed. These lively scenes are now obsolete due to the advent of mechanization and

⁵² Peggy Sanday, "Towards a Theory of the Status of Women", *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 75, No. 5, 1973, p.1695.

⁵³ C. Sridevi, *Op.Cit.*, p.9.

⁵⁴ Nikita Gopal and Krishna Srinath, "A study of women in Fish Marketing in Kerala", *Women in Fisheries*, Indian Society of Fisheries Professionals, Mumbai, 2002, p.57.

modernization⁵⁵. Major portion of the catches is exported and only a less quantity is available for local consumption. This change of mode in consumption also led to the decline in the opportunities of women to play an active role in the fishing sector. Nearness to fish landing and processing facilities was one of the determining factors of women participation which declined when landing centers started coming up in the harbours. Only Women from the backwater regions still engaged in fish selling activities. The nearness of harbour and availability of low value of fish in the backwater region encouraged women to continue their business. In the marine sector the low-value fish being primarily purchased by the poor male fishermen, and thereby women got less opportunities to partake in the business . The net making occupation of women also collapsed due to the advent of nylon nets. Nylon nets are produced by machines. The cotton nets produced by them earlier were produced in a manner like cottage industry. Women played an active role in its production.

There is a dynamism between natural resources and the people who are dependent on it. There are also some anomalies in terms of social differences like gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, age, etc. These anomalies translate into unequal access to and control of resources and adversely affect a group of people and the nature. Such interruptions are seen in the resource management in the fishing community. This is because of the gender biased nature of the fishery sector. The fisher women face gender discrimination in most spheres of their social and economic life. The national policies focusing on production targets, overfishing, prioritizing the elementary production of fish, fish exporting, etc. do not offer much to fisher women. Women are confined to less visible roles and not found in activities involving decision making, accessing productive resources like credit, etc. They seem to be in a stagnant position in the economy because their contributions are not considered valuable to the economy or food security. An integrated value chain approach is feasible in managing fisheries and aquaculture but only if these industries recognize women's contribution to the sector.

⁵⁵ In the movie Chemmeen, the Women in the coastal villages are picturized with baskets to collect fish for sale.

CHAPTER 4

Colonial Modernity and Fishermen of Central Kerala

Colonialism as a modern category emphasizing in a holistic manner is a system of political domination. Colonialism means the introduction of capitalist relations of production or capitalist structure in to trade, industry, agriculture, and banking; the introduction of bourgeois state structure, legal and property relations, but not the development of capitalist production or productive powers. Colonialism is a stage of social formation in which several modes of production, relations of production and forms of exploitation coexist, including the capitalist mode of production¹. Colonialism created a chance to interact with the world and introduced modernity in every sphere of life.

The phenomenon of colonial modernity represented a distinctive fusion, blending elements of metropolitan modernity with the cultural heritage of indigenous traditions, thereby creating a unique cultural landscape. The individual was subordinated to a perception of community as the unit of social and political order. Paradoxically, the fundamentally hierarchical and inegalitarian concept of caste emerged as a defining feature of Indian civilization, alongside religion, even as colonial powers professed a commitment to the institution of equality, thereby revealing a profound tension between ideology and reality. Modernity became the rhetoric rather than the project of colonialism². David Washbrook argued that the history of the world was abridged according to modernity.

During the colonial era in India, two simultaneous ideological struggles took place: one aimed at challenging the traditional social order's underlying values and beliefs, while the other sought to counter the oppressive colonial regime's attempts to exert cultural and ideological control. The colonial conquest exposed the inherent weaknesses of the traditional order, highlighting the need for institutional reforms.

¹ Bipan Chandra, *Essays on Colonialism*, Orient Longman Limited, Hyderabad, 1999, pp.4-8.

² Dileep M. Menon, "Caste and Colonial Modernity Reading, Saraswathy Vijayam", *Journal of Studies In History*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, Vol.13, July 1997, p.15.

There were many voluntary associations established by colonial officials, which served as channels of dissemination of colonial culture and ideology in which Indian intellectuals participated. These associations made inter-communal intercourse possible.³ The main aim of the colonial ideology of establishing educational institutions are to meet the administrative need of Government. So, the Indian intellectuals were forced to implement an alternative form of indigenous education system in vernacular languages. The Colonial ideology and the character of the colonial state and state institutions influenced the nature of perception of reality seems too general and perhaps too obvious an operation⁴.

The Europeans in India also took interest in establishing and promoting native libraries with active participation of the Indians. Despite being conducive to the dissemination of colonial ideology, these institutions provided a useful platform for intellectual exchange. In fact, many who became active, either socially or politically, had their baptism in public work in these organizations. Colonialism was viewed as a vehicle for the dissemination of Western liberal ideals, encompassing democratic governance, constitutionalism, and scientific progress, which were presented as universal values essential for the development and progress of colonized nations⁵. Liberalism played a dual role in shaping the response to colonialism: on the one hand, it provided a framework for critiquing the pre-colonial system, while on the other hand, it created a receptive environment for the adoption of colonial ideology, which was perceived as a more enlightened and progressive alternative.

The colonialism and Colonial Modernity had its impact on the fishing community of Kerala. Transforming indigenous culture had been an agenda to the colonial domination. Distinct from physical control exercised by military success and territorial conquest, the colonial state, and its agencies both through direct

³ K.N. Panikar, *Culture, Ideology, Hegemony, Intellectual and Social Consciousness in Colonial India*, Tulika, New Delhi, 1995, p.33.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.71.

⁵ Dilip M. Menon, "Religion and Colonial Modernity, Rethinking Belief and Identity", *EPW*, Vol.37, April 27, 2002, p.1

intervention and indirect influence, communicated and responded a cultural ideal attractive and powerful enough for the colonial intelligentsia to internalize and in turn disseminate in society⁶.

In traditional society, the status was determined by the caste system, purity, and pollution. So, it was very difficult to improve their status in the social hierarchy by means of economic boosting only. The fishing community followed an unclean and despised occupation. In the caste hierarchy, they stood down the social ladder. To remove the stigma and untouchability, they had to discard their unclean profession which was unthinkable to the traditional fishermen⁷. More, they followed age-old techniques and methods of fishing. Their craft was entirely dependent on chance and luck. This led them to seek the help of magicians and most of the fishermen found themselves superstitious. Consequently, most of the fishermen were victims of poverty and had low standards of living. It is pollution that always keeps company with poverty. The geographical limitations, caste system and the nature of the job were the main obstructions to participate in the social changes taking place in the middle land of Kerala. The colonial interventions brought modernity both in their socio-economic life and techniques of production. This chapter tries to explore the changes brought by modernity in the socio-economic life of the fisherfolk.

According to world system theory there will be a panorama of development and change due to the colonial interventions. The incorporation of Kerala region in to British India had been seen in two levels like political and economic. The foremost incident of the political incorporation was realized when Tipu Sultan lost his control over Malabar following the defeat in Third Anglo Mysore War. In the economic level ,since 1792 the colonial polices mainly worked toward transforming Kerala's economy according to colonial interests⁸.

⁶ K N Panikkar, *Op.Cit.*, p.123.

⁷ P.R. G Mathur, *Ecology, Technology, Economy: continuity among the Fisherfolk of Kerala*, Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal, 2008, p.76.

⁸ P J Cheriyan, *Perspectives on Kerala History*, State Editor Kerala Gazetteers Department, Thiruvanthapuram, 1999, pp. 330-331.

The economic and political ideologies of the colonial agencies persuaded the changes in the caste bound nature of society of Kerala from the early 19th century onwards. During Colonial Period several social legislations were passed by the Government. The abolition of slavery getting access to public amenities like schools opened a new path towards modernity. The work of Christian Missionaries and spread of Western Education and liberal ideas were the other factors contributed to the spread of colonial ideology. The opening of modern factories in urban areas and expansion of means of transportation and communication ushered the social mobility and mitigated the evils of traditional caste-based Kerala society.

The colonial intervention and economic changes that have taken place in Kerala facilitated the emergence of a Middle class. The Middle class became the strong supporters of the socio-religious movement in Kerala. The social reform movements enveloped the domestic socio-cultural and religious spaces and released at first the modern educated sections from the traditional ties. It was overtaken by the anti-land lord and anti-colonial agitations, which received precedence over the struggle to transform caste and religious consciousness. This movement brought in to being organizations which had championed internal consolidation of respective caste and religion. Consequently, caste organizations like SNDP, NSS, etc. have emerged as advocates of the interests of caste communities⁹.

Rudolph and Rudolph states that caste associations as agents of modernity, a means by which the social entities of traditional Hindu India were being regarded as democratic pressure groups. Caste provided channels of communication and bases of leadership and organization which enabled those still submerged in the traditional society and culture to transcend the, technical political illiteracy which would otherwise handicap their ability to participate in democratic politics¹⁰.

⁹ K N Panikkar, *Essays on the History and Society of Kerala*, Kerala Council for Historical Research, Thiruvanthapuram, 2021, p.315.

¹⁰ M R, Manmathan, *Recasting Images, Essays on Social Reform in Modern Kerala*, Publication division, Farook College, Calicut, 2017, p.9.

The modernization process of fishing industry and the emancipation movement of fishermen was begun gradually during the first decades of the 20th century. Therefore, fishermen remained tied to their traditional calling and were, by and large, exploited by various intermediary interests in the emerging fishing industry and trade. The lowest castes generally faced badly being tied to the least developed economies of paddy cultivation and fishing¹¹.

The waves of socio-religious reform movement also reflected in the fishing community of Kerala. While reconnoitering the history of the fishing community of Thrissur district, it is very relevant to mention the role played by the socio-religious reformers among them. Reformers like Pandit Karuppan, Rao Bahadur, V. Govindan and Dr. Velukutty Arayan were instrumental for imparting colonial modernity among the fishermen community of Kerala. The history of socio-religious movement of the fishing community is incomplete without mentioning the contributions of V. V. Velukutti Arayan from Thiruvithamkoor, Pandit Karuppan from Cochin and Rao Bahadur Govindan from the Malabar. They realized that religious reform was an instrument through which changes could be introduced in the society. They focused on social prestige and economic welfare of their respective castes. When Sree Narayana Guru incorporated prohibition in his programme of social reform, there was an unprecedented awakening in the entire society.

V. V. Velukutti Arayan

V. V. Velukutti Arayan was born at Cheriyaazhakal of Karunagapilly Taluk of Kollam district in 1894. His parents were Velayuddhan Vaidhyan and Velutha Kunjamma¹². During childhood days itself, he showed interest in literature. He was a zealous student, an avid reader, and an enthusiastic book collector. At the age of

¹¹ P J Cheriyan, *Op.Cit.*, p.445.

¹² T.N Madhanan, *Theeram Deeverude Charitrathiloode (Mal.)*, Published by Manoj Kumar, Cochi, 2010, p.131.

14, the young Velukutti wrote and published an ‘*Ottam thullal*’ named ‘*Kiratharjuneeyam*’. He received the remuneration for this in the form of books. Subsequently, his book collection was turned into a library which was opened for the public. In 1908, he opened his *Vijnana Sandayini* Library as the 6th registered *Granthasala* of Tiruvithamkur.

When he was studying under Paravur Kesavan Asan, he got a chance to meet Sree Narayana Guru. Velukutti Arayan was very much influenced by the teachings of Sree Narayana Guru¹³. He was empathetic to his fellow members. Their socialization process was limited and was denied of their rights to come into the mainstream of the society by the upper castes. They were excluded from acquiring education, wealth and better job opportunities and even lead a free life. To overcome these social barriers, he tried to bring them on a common platform. The result was the formation of the *Araya Vamsapalana Yogam* in 1916. This unity provided a sense of confidence to the grass root level people to overcome the social barricades of untouchability, pollution, and poverty. Velukutti Arayan was very much impressed with the Russian revolution and the socio-religious movement that happened elsewhere in India and Kerala. In the wake of these social changes, in 1917, he started the Newspaper “*Arayan*.” It was a watershed moment in the history of Kerala, a lower caste man’s newspaper becoming the voice of the lower caste people. During that time the Dheevera community was divided into so many sub castes and stood as a separate entity. He walked throughout the Kerala coast to unite the Dheeveras, who were known in different caste names like, *Mukkuva*, *Araya*, *Vala*, *Mughayam*, *Marakkan*, *Nulayan*, etc. He tried to bring them under a single association¹⁴. With an eye toward their unification, he summoned the *Samastha Keraleeya Araya Mahajana Yogam* in 1919. It was a Herculean task to unite the fishing community of Kerala. They were scattered under Thiruvithamkoor, Cochi and Madras province. The Thiruvithamkoor Rashtriya Mahasabha was formed in

¹³ Vallikavu Mohandas, *Arayan:Dr.V.V.Velukutti Arayante Jeevithathe Aspadamakkiyulla Arayapadanam*(Mal.), Kerala Sahitya Academi, Thrissur, 2011, p.48.

¹⁴ *Karuppan Smaraka Souvenir*(Mal.), P K M library, Edakochi, 1952, pp.109-110.

1920 and it demanded for a responsible Government¹⁵. Velukutty Arayan also became the part of this *sabha* and assiduously worked in it.

Velukutty Arayan very enthusiastically got himself involved in the celebrated Vaikom Satyagraha. He worked along with Madhavan, and Periyor EVR. He tried to organize and motivate the Araya community to participate in the satyagraha which fought against pollution and other social injustice. He extended his patronage through his newspaper, *Arayan*. He courageously reported the events of the satyagraha and inspired people to take part in it and give maximum support to this fight against social injustices. For mobilizing the lower caste people, he founded the Thiruvithamkoor *Avarna Hindu Mahasabha* in 1924¹⁶. He also served as the General Secretary of this organization for a long time.

Kerala's first labour union was formed in Thiruvithamkoor because of the efforts taken by Velukutty Arayan. It was named the *Akhila Thiruvithamkoor Navika Thozhilali Sangam*. Through this labour union, he tried to figure out solutions to the problems faced by the boat workers.

At a very young age, he was very much conscious about the need to impart education to his community members. For this purpose, young Arayan conducted night classes for his people. Later he started a middle school in 1936. In 1944 the school was handed over to the government. In the Kollam area, sand mining was rampant. These workers were exploited by the middlemen and they faced a lot of other problems in their jobs. Velukutty Arayan founded the Mineral Workers' union. Another remarkable contribution of Velukutty Arayan was the formation of 'Araya Service Society'¹⁷. It was formed with the intention of providing help to secure better education as well as unfolding employment opportunities to the fishing people. As a

¹⁵ *Rao Bahadur Govindan Souvenir*(Mal.), Rao Bahadur Memorial Committee, Kaipamanglam, 1978, p.212.

¹⁶ T.N Madanan, *Op.Cit.*, p.131.

¹⁷ T.M Ajayakumar, *Charitrathe Aayudhamakkiya Arayan* (Mal.), in Janayugam Daily, March 14, Sunday, 2021.

result of the efforts taken by him a fisheries conference was held at Pandarathuruth Fishing village in 1949. Representatives from almost all fishing villages participated in the conference. Those who attended the meeting included Pattom Tanupillai, P.S. Nataraja Pillai, Hendri Austine Raphel and J. Radrigu. As a preventive measure for sea aggression, he suggested land reclamation scheme. He also proposed to start aquaculture materials, medicinal, and ornamental materials from marine products.

Velulutti Arayan's activities were largely concentrated in the Thiruvithakur region but he consistently inspired and motivated the fishermen community. Crucial decisions regarding the formation of *Araya Vamsodhraini Sabha* were jointly taken by Arayan, Pandit Karuppan and V.Govindan. Velukutty Arayan attended several meetings at Anapuzha alongside Pandit Karuppan. Understanding Arayan's contributions is highly relevant while discussing the socio-religious movements of the region. He was influential for shaping a more just and equitable society.

Pandit Karuppan

Pandit Karuppan was born at Cheranellur on 24th May 1885. His parents were Pappu and Kochuppennu. After his primary education, he came to Kodungallur Kovilakam for higher education at the age of eleven. At that time, he stayed at Anapuzha and conversed with the people of Anapuzha. The Kodungallur Kovilakam followed the *Gurukula* system of education. It imparted education on extensive subjects like Grammar, Debate, Vedantha, Astrology, and poetical ornamentation. The Kovilakam Provided free accommodation and food to the students. The students were given four clothes, one mats and two free meals. Even the lower caste people were admitted in the Kodungallur *Gurukulam* and were allowed to stay at the *Padippura*¹⁸.

K.P. Karuppan learned Sanskrit from Bhattan Tampuran. As a student he impressed Kunjikuttan Tampuran because he was an extraordinary genius and a

¹⁸ Raghava Varier, Rajan Gurukkal, *Kerala Charithram* (Mal.), Vol.II, Vallathol Vidyapedam, Sukapuram, Edappal, 2012, p.205

multitalented student. When he was studying at Kodungallur Kovilakam, he submitted *slokas* in Sanskrit to the Cochin Raja, Rajarshi on his visit to Kodungallur¹⁹. After completing education from Kodungallur *Kovilakm* he went to Ernakulam and learned Sanskrit Grammer from Ramapisharadi and became a Sanskrit Scholar. He also learned English from Melangath Achuytha Menon²⁰. He used to visit Kodungallur *Kovilakm* for further discussions with the Sanskrit scholars of the *Kovilakm*²¹.

His name itself is synonymous with knowledge. The name Karuppan, selected from the Tamil language, means a 'learned man.' This was reflected in his career too. K.P. Karuppan started his profession as a Sanskrit teacher at Ernakulam caste girls' high school. From 1917 to 1922, he worked at Thrissur Victoria Jubilee Memorial Girls' School and in 1932 he joined the services of Collegiate Education at Maharaja's College Ernakulam.

Pandit Karuppan's writings always echoed the voice of social reform. Through literature he criticized the evils of caste system and highlighted the problems of the lower caste people. His pen became his main weapon for social criticism. The revolutionary and finest work of this kind was *Jathikummi*. In this work he openly criticized the crudeness of the caste system and the carnages faced by the lower caste people from the caste Hindus.

Jathikummi is considered as the first poem in the Malayalam literature which criticized and questioned the caste system. It was written in 1905 but published only in 1912. The poem consisted of 144 slokas and in the rhythm of *Ammanakunni*. Pandit Karuppan wrote his poem based on Sankaracharyar's *Maneesha Panchakam*. *Maneesha Panchakam* is a conversation between Sankaracharyar and a Chandalan, a lower cast man. The Chandalan is presented as Lord Siva in disguise. After the

¹⁹ Rajesh K.Erumeli, *Pandit Karuppan* (Mal.), Chinta Publications, Thiruvananthapuram, 2015, p.31.

²⁰ K K Velayudhan, *Pandit Karuppan Ormakaliloode*, Published by the author, 1983, p.46.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.25.

conversation between the lower caste Chandalan, Sankaracharyar got insight and knowledge that all human beings are equal before God and all are His children²². Through his poem Pandit Karuppan also pointed out the evils of the caste system which existed in the Kerala . This helped to make an awareness about the depravity of caste system. The work of Kumaranasan *Dhuravastha* also highlighted the same issues indicated by Pandit Karuppan. Although *Jathikummi* was wrote before *Dhuravastha*, being a marginalized man's work, which questioned the power of the upper caste, it remained unpublished for a long time. So it was published after Kumaranasan published his *Dhuravastha*. His other works like *Lankamardhanam*, *Edward Vijayam*, *Kaliyamardanam* (Ottam Tullal), *Sakunthalam* (*Vanchipattu*), *Balakalesham* (drama) etc., all had radical impact on the society²³. All these works pointed a finger at the existing social evils and in turn boosted the confidence of his community and other downtrodden classes.

At the age of 12 he wrote the drama *Lankamardhanam*. It was highly appreciated by Kodungallur Kunjikuttan Tampuran and Kodungallur Cheriya Kochunni Tampuran. His poems were published in renowned magazines like *Rasika Ranjini* and *Kavana Kaumudi*. The drama '*Edward Vijayam*' narrates discrimination of the lower strata by the dominant caste. He tried to bring changes in the socio-cultural fabric of the society through his works. Pandit Karuppan got a golden chance to participate in the literary competition conducted by *Bharatha Vilasam Sabha* of Thrissur which was an organization of the writers. The competition was conducted under the supervision of Kodungallur Kunjikuttan Tampuran. It was a historic moment in that a man from the bottom rung of the ladder got a chance to compete against the upper caste Sanskrit scholars and won the second prize. Pandit Karuppan wrote the poem *Araya Prasasthi* demonstrating the close relationship between sea and fishermen. He tried to explain how a community is interwoven with the environment and how it struggled to overcome the hurdles of the sea.

²² K.K.S.Das, *Dalit Janathayude Swathandrya Samaram* 1810 to 2010(Mal.), Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society Ltd., Kottayam, 2017, p.52.

²³ Rajesh K.Erumeli, *Op.Cit.*, p.89.

The poems like ‘*Deena Rodhanam*’ and ‘*Pulayar*’ manifested his solidarity towards the *Pulaya* community. Through his poems, dramas, and other literature, Pandit Karuppan gave remarkable contribution to the societal restructuring of *Vala* and *Pulaya* communities. He tried to protest the meaninglessness of the caste system and pollution that prevailed among the Hindus. To bring about social reform, he founded and patronized several organizations for his community and for the *Pulayas*. The *sabhas* established by Karuppan in his relentless crusade against untouchability and other social evils include *Kalyanadayini Sabha* in at Anapuzha and *Pulaya Maha Sabha*. The other important *sabhas* were *Vala Samudaya Parishkarana Sabha* at Thevara, *Eda Kochi Jnanodayam Sabha*, *Sanmargha Pradeepa Sabha* at Kumbalam, *Shanmugha Vilasam Sabha* at Ernakulam, *Sudharmodaya Sabha* at Ayyampilli and *Prabhodha Chandrodaya Sabha* at North Paravur²⁴.

Pandit Karuppan organized these regional level Sabhas as *Karayogams* with the help of local leaders with the clear objective of social development. He drafted the rules and regulations and registered these Sabhas. With the co-operation of the local leaders, he exhorted the lower caste people to oppose the caste taboos and to advance with education. He always stood up for religious harmony. When he formed *Jnanodayam Sabha* at Cochi, its vice president was a Christian named Kalappurakkal Anto²⁵. He communicated with his fellow beings in a simple and heart touching manner to create an awareness about their backwardness and darkness of their life. Inspired by his words, the fishing community slowly gave up their stigmas like *Kettukalyanam*, *Pulikudi*, etc. The *Vala* community started to change themselves, the women started to cover the upper parts of their body. They gave up the extravaganza in ceremonies like marriages and other rituals related to birth and death.

In 1903 Pandit Karuppan and V. V. Velukutti Arayan met at the venue of the Thiruvithamkoor *Araya* community meeting²⁶. Here they laid the groundwork for

²⁴ Pooyapilly, Thankkappan, *Pandit Karuppan: Viplavam Kavithayilum Samoohika Ranghathum* (Mal.), Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society Ltd., Kottayam, 2016, p.14.

²⁵ T.N Madanan, *Op. Cit.*, p.37.

²⁶ Pandit Karuppan Smaraka *Souvenir* (Mal.), P K M library, Edakochi, 1952, .pp.109-110.

establishing *All Kerala Araya Samajam*, encompassing all the sub castes of the Dheevera community. It was decided to summon the first meeting of the *Araya Samajam* at Alapuzha. From the Malabar area V. Govindan provided support to the organization.

In 1925 Pandit Karuppan was selected as the member of the Cochin Legislative Assembly. He made a speech in the Cochin Legislative Assembly on 3rd April, 1925. It was the speech in that a lower caste man spoke for the cause of the low caste people. Pandit Karuppan pointed out that drinking habit of the *Vala* men was the main cause of their backwardness. He demanded the closure of the toddy shops. He raised the issue of large-scale displacement of the fishing family's consequent to the development of Cochin Harbour. Their instrument for livelihood, the stake net - *unnivalas*, were also in tatters. So, he argued, it was of utmost importance that the government rehabilitate the displaced Vala community²⁷. Pandit Karuppan stated that the *Vala* community served the king and the government in many ways like ferrying boats, loading, and unloading and providing fish for food. Now that they were in a famine-stricken condition without having access to even the basic needs like sufficient food, a roof and decent clothing, government should interfere in this matter and should make opportunities for self-employment and give them allowances to maintain their *Unnivalas* at least by the completion of the work of the harbour.

He requested the Cochin government to form a separate department for the uplift of the downtrodden class. *Athakritha Samrakshana* Department was formed in 1927. Rao Sahib C. Mathai, the Director of Education, became the head of the *Athakritha Samrakshana* Department. Pandit Karuppan, as the face of the low caste people, joined the department as the assistant of Rao Sahib C. Mathai. These two dedicated persons worked in tandem for the overall development of the lower caste people.

²⁷ Cochin Legislative Council Proceedings, Vol.I, Eranakulam, 1925, pp .516-17, RAE.

Pandit Karuppan wrote *Achara Bhooshanam* to invoke social consciousness among the people²⁸. Through this work Pandit Karuppan tried to inculcate a sense of self-pride and stirred them to come forward to the main stream of the society. His plans included establishing residential colonies to the landless fishermen, fisheries schools, and a co-operative society for economic stimulation. He also insisted the government to provide educational scholarship to the children of fishermen. He encouraged the fishing community to give up superstitions, blind faith, drinking habits and extravagant rituals and festivals. Later the *Athakritha Samrakshna* Department was carved up to form two departments - the Fisheries Department and the Educational Department. In the formation of the Fisheries Department too Pandit Karuppan made valuable contributions. When the Cochin Fisheries Department was formed in 1911 (1086), he served under A. B. Salem. Later the Fisheries Department was merged with the Revenue Department and came under the jurisdiction of the Taluk Tahasildar. It was a separate department under a separate Farka Inspector. In the initial years, they concentrated on tax collection only.

On 28th July, 1926, Pandit Karuppan presented the problems of the fishing community in the Legislative Assembly. He put forward some other plans for the development of fisheries sector like the establishment of fisheries schools giving importance to the elementary education. Accepting his proposals practical sessions of fishing and related subjects were included in the school syllabus. They were still following the old fish treatment methods like drying and salting. To mitigate this problem fish curing centers (*Chappas*) were set up. Another proposal was to bring the Fisheries Department under the jurisdiction of the collector. Accordingly, during 1929 – 31, four fisheries schools were started at Vallarpadam, Njarakkal, Chennamangalam, Edavilangu. Under the direction of Pandit Karuppan, the administrative charges of the fisheries schools were changed from Education Department to the Fisheries Department.

²⁸ K.K. Velayudhan, *Pandit Karuppan Ormakaliloode* (Mal.) National Bookstall, Kottayam, 1983, p.83.

Pandit Karuppan spearheaded two ground-breaking events that played a crucial role in the social awakening of the marginalized community. First was a reformist organization constituted by him for the lower caste people, the *Pulaya Maha Sabha* and the event that made heads turn was its summit in the backwaters or the *Kayal Sammelanam*²⁹. When the low caste people were denied permission to conduct the meeting on land, they built a makeshift platform on the backwaters by tying together their small dugout vessels. The meeting was held in the *kayal* on 21st April 1913. This was a monumental event in the history of Kerala as the incident showcased their self-worth and pride.

The next incident was related to their entry into an exhibition hall of agricultural products. In 1916 there was an exhibition of agricultural produce at Ernakulam but the actual producers of these exhibited items, the lower caste people, were denied entry into the exhibition hall. Pandit Karuppan approached the Diwan, Sir Joseph Willam Bhor, and got the permission to grant their entry. This was at a time when they did not have even the right to walk along the public roads of the city. These two important incidents challenged the existing caste structure. On these two occasions, Pandit Karuppan stood as an iron man upholding the cause of the lower caste people. As a social reformer and a voice of the lower caste people, Pandit Karuppan suggested two low caste men named Chanchan and Vallon into the Cochin Legislative Assembly.

Pandit Karuppan was very much empathetic to his fellow members of. He met the Sreemulam Tirunal along with P C Sankaran Asan of Anapuzha and informed the grievances faced by the *Araya-Vala* community of Thiruvithamkoor . He requested the Raja to provide fee concessions to the children of fishermen. The demand was granted. It was a strong step towards the advancement of education among the fishing community.

Pandit Karuppan always showed special care and attention to the developmental activities of the *Kalyanadayini Sabha* of Anapuzha. He frequently

²⁹ *Karuppan Smaraka Souvenir*(Mal.), P K M library, Edakochi, 1952, p.54.

visited the *sabha* and communicated with the local people. It was a great encouragement and inspiration to the people of Anapuzha. The *Sabha* always stood for the wellbeing of the *Vala* community. The saving habit among the fishermen was developed through the *Kalyanadayini Sabha*. Women had a great role in the development of the *sabha* as well as the region. They, through their hard work, saved a small amount and spent this sum on education as well as marriage of their children.

As in the agrarian sector the fishing sector was also in need of structural reforms. The farmers who could avail loans and other concessions from the government to improve their technique of production and procuring production materials but the fishermen were generally excluded from such facilities. He demanded government intervention to prohibit the fishing operations by the outsiders and to give prime importance to the traditional fishermen and their fishing-related businesses. Then only the traditional fishermen could enjoy freedom and equality in social life.

Pandit Karuppan had made great contribution to the upliftment of the fishing community as well as the other downtrodden classes of the Cochin area. He realized that without education and social awareness, modernization in the fisheries was not beneficial to the fishermen. The institutions like Elementary schools, Fish curing yards and co-operative societies etc. are the testaments to Pandit Karuppan's contributions.

Rao Bahadur V V Govindan

Rao Bahadur V V Govindan was another important reformer from the fishermen community. *Valiya Veetil* Govindan was born on May 9, 1869, in Kozhikodu, to Pokkan and Kuttathi. As a member of a relatively affluent family, he had access to better educational opportunities. Following the completion of his intermediate studies, he enrolled at Madras Christian College, where he pursued his higher education. He was the first graduate from his community. After completing B.A. Degree, he joined the services of Madras Museum. Later he worked under the

Museum Superintendent, Sir Edger Thurston. When Edger Thurston wrote the book *Castes and Tribes of South India*, he designated V. Govindan as his personal assistant. The result of the survey conducted by Govindan was published separately by Thurston under the title *Ethnographical notes on South India*³⁰.

Govindan was cognizant of the problems faced by the fisherfolk, and as the Director of Madras Fisheries Department, he put forward suggestions to the authorities to improve their situation. The benefits of his hard work were first enjoyed by the fishermen of Malabar area and later his influence panned out to the nearby states of Cochin and Thiruvithamkur. The tireless efforts of V. Govindan were reflected in the form of schools, co-operative societies, temperance societies, fish curing centers, etc.

V. Govindan was very keen on the socio-economic reform of the fishing communities. The civilized world was alien to the fisherfolk. There was ignorance, superstition, poverty, economic thralldom to the money-lenders - be it merchants, curers, or boat owners. Intemperance and spend thriftiness along with the woes of mere inshore fishing, the inability to explore the deep seas, the long and idle waiting period during monsoons, the numerous holidays and off days, and insanitation-related illnesses were the other issues faced by the fisherfolk.

One of the remarkable contributions from the side of V. Govindan was the opening of fish-curing yards in the coastal areas. During the season of bumper catches, there was no way to preserve the excess fish. So, the fishermen lost the chance to take advantage of the bountiful supply. Curing operations were primitive, undiversified, slow, and incomplete. Sun drying, with or without salt, involves a process where the fish was gutted, lightly salted overnight, washed in seawater, and then laid out on the open sand under direct sunlight for two to three days until fully dried.

³⁰ *Rao Bahadur Govindan Souvenir* (Mal.), Rao Bahadur Memorial Committee, Kaipamanglam, 1978, p.214.

Tamarind fish was another method used in Cochin for exporting to Colombo market – this method resembles that of pickling herring wet in barrel. Fish was placed in alternate layers with salt in hogshead of 60 to 65 gallons’ capacity. A small quantity of local variety gusaka (or kudampuli) or Malabar Tamarind, which gives the name to the product, is added into the barrel. After resting for a few days, it is then partially drained through a spigot hole filled to the top up. Additional common methods were smoking, pickling wet in salt, canning with or without subsequent compression³¹.

V. Govindan was aware of the needs of the fisherfolk and took time to mingle and squabble with the various classes, apprehending them of the new approaches in fishing, curing, manufacturing, and co-operating, as well as comprehending and reporting their needs, ideas, objections, and difficulties³². He also carried out demonstrations on fish oil and guano business and much of the success and development of the new industry was due to him³³.

V. Govindan was proactive in setting up schools for fisherfolk in the adjacent of the Tanur curing yard. The pupils, both the young boys and adults, got instructions and suggestions on technical aspects like curing and economic matters of thrift, co-operation, etc. It was found that the villagers were eager to imbibe new techniques and ideas. The government curing yards were situated near the schools so that when there was a sudden need of extra hands to deal with large quantities of sardines, prawns etc., the boys shall work partly in the yard and partly in the school, and thus be doubly trained. Pictures of fishing and fisheries were appended into the curriculum. Visual imageries and cues were about the new strategies and techniques which were to be introduced in the fishing industry so it attracted the adults also.

³¹ Government of Madras, *Madras Fisheries Annual Reports 1908-1917*, Bulletin No.I, Madras, 1918, pp.22-23.

³² Government of Madras, *Madras Fisheries Annual Reports 1908-1917*, Bulletin No.I, Madras, 1918, p. 32.

³³ Ram Das, “Colonial Fishing and the Malabar Coast Some Preliminary Observations”, in MP. Mujeeb Rahman and K S Madhavan(ed.) *Explorations in South Indian History*, Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-Operative Society Ltd., Kottayam, 2014, p.373.

The temperance societies established by V. Govindan in the coastal areas had its impact on the socio-economic life of the fishing community. Drinking habit was the curse of the community. It was partly due to their laborious and exposed occupation and partly because they had no saving mentalities. Surplus money was out of question. The young fishermen took it as a challenge inspired by the Temperance Society, but the bitterest opponents of their resolution were their parents. They believed that the temperance was a departure from hereditary custom and there was no room for maneuvering³⁴. V. Govindan succeeded in injecting prudence among the fishermen. He also took stern steps to make them take a resolution on the prohibition of drinking among the members of the community.

Then the toddy shop owners filed petition to the District Authorities about the fishermen's resolution to abstain from drinking but the authorities could not help them. Drunkenness and abstinence are personal choices and authorities cannot speak for or against it. A temperance society existed in Mangalore and wanted to extend the branches of this society to various parts of Malabar and the membership gradually increased.

V. Govindan provided his services to the East-West people too. The authorities believed that instead of following the practice of giving advances to the fishermen and making them lifetime debtors, it is better to provide more attention to their well-being in the broad spectrum. The government suggested the name of V. Govindan, the Assistant Director of Fisheries, to call the shots in uplifting the fishing community. Taking up the reins, he started day and night schools and temperance societies in the East coast. He met the challenges wholeheartedly and provided his services to the fishermen of the East Coast.

During the period 1908-1909, Govindan worked for six months as Superintendent of Pearl and Chunk Fisheries in the absence of Hornals. He also served under F.A. Nicholson for several months in Cannanore experimental station.

³⁴ Government of Madras, *Madras Fisheries Annual Reports 1908-1917*, Bulletin No.I, Madras, 1918, p. 35.

Nicholson, the Fisheries Director was very much impressed with the dedication and sincerity of V. Govindan and sent him abroad to study about the diversified techniques of fishing adopted by the European countries. He travelled far and wide through various European countries between 1912 and 1913 and learned about their indigenous techniques. After doing a research trip and completing his studies, he got the position of Fellow of Zoological Society (FZS)³⁵. He was also honoured by the Madras University by conferring on him the title Fellow of Madras University (F.M.U). In 1918, the British Government felicitated V. Govindan by bestowing on him the title Rao Bahadur for the meritorious work undertaken by him throughout his career.

After retirement his in 1924 he devoted himself to community development. He planned to start *Araya Vamshodharani Maha Sabha*, for which he got assistance from Pandit K.P Karuppan, Velukutty Arayan and other social workers who strived for the empowerment of the community. During this period the Dheevara community and its subcastes stood as separate entities and V. Govindan was sure that if they did not stand united, they do not have the bargaining power to acquire their rights and come forward. The first meeting of the *Araya Vamshodharani Sabha* was held at Alapuzha in 1928. Pandit K.P. Karuppan and V. Govindan were at the forefront of the *sabha*.

Close to the heels of the socio-religious movement, the fishermen of the Malabar area also witnessed such a campaign in the form of '*Brahma Samaja Sabha*.' The frontrunners of this drive were Ayyathan Gopalan, V. Govindan, B.S.T. Mudaliyar and Kallingal Rarichan Moopan. Under the banner of *Brahma Samaja Sabha*, a conference of *Athakrithodharana Sabha* was held at Varkala in 1921. V. Govindan presided over the conference and wholeheartedly endorsed inter-caste marriage that was in the agenda of the conference. He had always tried to elevate and push the community towards the mainstream of the society. He understood that the fishermen can attain their self-consciousness and self-esteem through these

³⁵ *Rao Bahadur Govindan Souvenir* (Mal.), Rao Bahadur Memorial Committee, Kaipamanglam, 1978, p.14.

organizations. V Govindan breathed his last in 1931. Hearing the news of the death of V Govindan, Pandit K.P. Karuppan wrote a *Charamaganam* (funeral song) in honour of his valuable contributions to the upliftment of the fishing community. He recited the song in the annual session of the *Arayavamshodharani Sabha* in 1931. Later it was published from the *Dharmakahalam* Press at Kodungallur.

The colonialists' ideology was centered on extracting maximum resources, and they achieved this by integrating and exploiting fishermen. This approach was a key strategy of colonialism, designed to tap into the resources and labor of the colonized communities for the colonizers' gain. But as a member from the fishing community of the Malabar Coast, V. Govindan perceived it as a unique window of opportunity to serve his community while working in the Fisheries department. Although he was never recognized as a social reformer in the history of Kerala, he contributed much to the emancipation of the fishing community of Kerala.

Modernization through Governmental Intervention

The colonial modernity was also reflected among the fishing community with the establishment of Fisheries Departments in Madras and Cochin. The fisheries research in India was initiated by the early naturalists, zoologists, and botanists who either worked in the Museum of Natural History in England or in European countries, where dried or preserved material from the East including India was received, identified, catalogued, and reported on³⁶.

The outstanding contribution was that of Francis Day, a Veterinary Surgeon and Naturalist, who travelled extensively through India in the mid-19th Century and wrote several scientific papers and monographs such as *Fishes of Malabar* in 1865³⁷. Later he was appointed as the Inspector General of Fisheries for India and Burma. The works and scattered papers of this officer were conclusive and were accepted as

³⁶ E.G Silas, "History, and development of Fisheries in India", in *Bombay Natural History Society 100(2&3)*, August-December, 2003, p.503.

³⁷ Francis Days other works includes 'The Fishes of India' in two volumes, *The Fishes, and Fauna of British India., The Land of the Perumals or Cochin.*

such by the government of Madras between 1872 and 1888. He drafted two fisheries bills and were accepted and led to the enactment of the Indian fisheries Act in 1897.

This Act was a milestone in the history of Indian fisheries. The Act was envisaged that it was the duty of the states to develop and conserve fisheries in the inland and the territorial waters of their respective provinces. It also authorized the state to formulate their own rules and regulations for the protection and conservation of their fisheries. The Act also contended to adopt measures for the conservation and prevent the destruction of fisheries' resources. As a result, the development, management and conservation of fish and fisheries became a state subject. The sea fisheries were underdeveloped and limited in that there was no deep-sea fishing because the fishermen were dependent on primitive boats like catamaran or canoe class. Generally, the fishermen started in the wee hours of the morning and returned at dusk as it was very difficult to catch the fish at night. It was apparent that the primitive technologies were a barrier to better exploitation of the marine resources.

As the Malabar region was under the Madras Presidency and the direct control of the British, the first efforts to modernize the fishing sector and fishing community started in the Malabar area. The Madras Presidency played a pertinent role in the development of fisheries research and management in the formative years as many of its scientists went on to become heads of State Fisheries Department, National Fisheries Research and Development Institution or hold responsible positions in the department itself. Dr. S. B. Setna, popularly known as the Father of Mechanization of Fishing Boats in Kerala, pioneered research and development programmes in the erstwhile Bombay presidency comprising present day Gujarat³⁸.

The actual inception of the Madras Fisheries Department dates from July 1905, when the Government instituted a Fisheries Bureau based on the proposals of Frederic Nicholson³⁹. Practical work of the department was possible when the staff

³⁸ E.G Silas, *Op.Cit.*, p.504.

³⁹ James Hornell, "The Madras Fisheries Department" in Arnold Wright (ed.) *Southern India its History, People, Commerce and Industrial Resources*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 2004, p.390, <https://archive.org/details/southernindiaits00some/page/38/mode/2up>, Accessed on 18/08/2022.

was enlarged at the end of 1907⁴⁰. The main intention behind the establishment of a separate Department of Fisheries was to ensure uninterrupted food supply to the increasing population⁴¹. Apart from food, this industry was to provide opportunities for non-agriculturalists, manure for soil deterioration, etc. The fish as a food, being highly nitrogenous, was considered extremely valuable. It needed several years of study to form a separate department for pisciculture. This laborious task was conducted by Sir Frederic Nicholson and his personal assistant, Mr. Govindan, and a team.

Frederick Nicholson, was appointed as the Fisheries Officer to investigate the fisheries sector both inland and marine in the Madras presidency on 29th May, 1905. Nicholson demanded the services of a personal assistant with genuine interest and having first-hand knowledge of fisheries work on the industrial side and capable of going abroad for studying about the new technology in fisheries. He also proposed to the government the name of V. Govindan. On his recommendation the Madras Government appointed V. Govindan as his personal assistant who eventually became the Assistant Director of Madras Fisheries Department.

Frederick Nicholson took initiative for establishing a fish preserving unit for improving and sustaining the quality of fish. Further he recommended setting up fisheries research centers. He travelled across the Presidency to study about the fisheries sector and the fishermen community. He visited places like Calicut, Cochi, Tanur, Manjeshwaram, Kasargod, Mangalore, Hosdrug, Cannanore, Badagara, Tellichery, etc. Nicholson collected information regarding fishing, their customary relation between the labor and capital, curers, and trade etc. He also comprehended the nature of the ports and harbours. One of the main problems faced by Sir Nicholson was the native language, it was very difficult to converse with the illiterate fishermen but this problem was solved by V. Govindan. He submitted the report on 31st October 1905.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.391.

⁴¹ Government of Madras, *Madras Fisheries Bureau Papers from 1899*, Vol.1, Madras, 1915, p.1.

The British authorities presumed that a vast majority of the people ate meat but were unable to obtain such diet in sufficient quantity. They thought that adequate fish in diet will ensure a nutritional meal to the increasing population⁴². The Department of Fisheries aimed to provide employment opportunities in fisheries-related activities like boat building, net making, fish curing, manure making, oil extraction, etc. In addition, there was a large demand for salt in these industries. Tax from salt was also a main source of income to government. When the fisheries sector developed and increased the catch, the demand for salt also increased. Given this scenario, the government promoted the Fisheries Department to stimulate and assist the efforts of individual capitalists or the associations abiding by law to ensure quality food supply and steady salt revenue.

The colonialist believed that the disappearance of independent boatmen and the entry of capitalist system into the fisheries sector led to the growth of the industry in the Western style⁴³. They found that big boat and cheap salt are intimately connected and it should be made available to the fishermen. This would help to create across-the-board changes in the lives of traditional fishermen. The fishing sector in this region was very poor because the fishermen depended on the primeval methods of small boats, cotton nets and manual labour. It was envisaged that the modus operandi of modern British steam trawler with its gigantic net sweeping the sea should enhance the catching.

One of the main objectives of the Fisheries Department was the establishment of an experimental station. It stressed the establishment of improved catching method by large boats and more powerful nets, the production of sound and wholesome food, firstly by keeping fish alive up to the shore, properly treating dead fish either in boat or on the way to market, setting up the curing factories with perfect cleanliness, rapidity, thoroughness and by novel method such as smoking, pickling, etc.

⁴² Government of Madras, *Annual Reports of the Madras Fisheries Bureau-1908-1917*, Bulletin No. X., Madras, 1918, p.2.

⁴³ Government of Madras, *Madras Fisheries Bureau Papers From 1899*, Vol.1, Madras, 1915, p.3.

On 17th August, 1908, the government gave approval to open an experimental station in the West Coast. It gave preference to canning and a small oil and fertilizer plant started rolling. This facilitated the petty capitalist or even the fisherfolk to partake in the fisheries industry and reap the benefits from it. The experimental station was a beacon to all coastal villages as it provided good fish oil from fresh or dried sardine⁴⁴. In Mangalore with the assistance and instructions of V Govindan, a plant was designed by Choyi which used a wooden presser. The Fisheries Department took initiative for the designing and getting cheap but effective presses for the purpose so that any small capitalist can take up the business.

Even though the fishermen got plentiful catches during the season, there was not much marketing options and very few preservation centers. There was considerable local trade of fresh fish within a 10- or 12-mile limits from the shore. A share of fish was used as food by the fishing community and the rest was dried on the beach itself. They did not even think about other methods of curing.

The next target was to market the fish products. They acknowledged the fact that the industry and trade were to be seriously developed into a business organization because good products were useless if they were not acceptable or not known to the public. With this intention in mind, V. Govindan made a special enquiry and collected valuable first-hand information and facts. He found that the fish eaters of Madras city seemed to demand moist fish with light salt and consequently a certain amount of taint or high-flavored fish was cured as was done for Colombo.

The Fisheries Department showed a keen interest in the development of Fisheries in Madras Presidency because the whole gamut was wide and beyond prediction. At the same time V. Govindan attempted to revitalize the fisheries sector and improve the lives of those involved in fishing. The fishermen were in the grip of caste system and most of them were illiterate and drunkards. This restrained their

⁴⁴ Government of Madras, *Madras Fisheries Annual Reports 1908-1917*, Bulletin No.X, , Madras, 1918, , pp.7-8.

progress and socio-economic development. Most of the fishermen had a poor socio-economic background and they lived in misery.

The Department extended steadfast support and took the initiative to implement the suggestions set forth by V. Govindan. One of the government reports stated that socio-economic work among the fisherfolk was necessary to enable them to keep out of debt before they could adapt improved methods of catching and dealing with fish. Spread of education and establishment of temperance as well as co-operative societies were favorably considered and made inroads in the West Coast.

Fisheries Elementary Schools in Malabar

The first endeavor was to establish fisheries schools in the coastal regions. The Government planned to start eight schools in the first stage, but Govindan went the extra mile to set up more schools. They were able to kick start 10-day schools and 10-night schools in the coastal villages. While appointing the teachers to these schools, V. Govindan suggested that it would be better to select the teachers from the fishing community itself with special training meted out to them.

V. Govindan designed the curriculum for the fisheries schools in which the teachers should get training in Fisheries Science apart from General Education. The criterion for getting selected as teachers in the fisheries schools included practical knowledge plus hands-on experience in fishing. Keeping this in mind, a special training institute was started in Kozhikode for imparting training to the teachers of the fisheries schools. The training was for a period of three years. It was provided in two sections. Those who qualified the third forum or passed the eighth standard will get training in the higher grade and those who had education below eighth standard will get training in the lower grade. The three years' training included General Education as well as training in Fisheries Science. The Fishery Science training was in the sea so they had to venture out to the sea at least once in a week. Thus, the entry to the fisheries schools was restricted to the educated fishermen only.

The Fisheries Training Institute was started on 14th July 1919 and declared its objective as to train teachers for Elementary Schools for the fisherfolk. In addition to the training in Pedagogy, arrangements were made to familiarize the teachers with technical work carried out in the fisheries station at Tanur and Chaliyam. The trainees got stipend during their training period. They got Rs. 15 per month as stipend.

The admission to the Fisheries Elementary Schools was restricted only to the children of fishermen because of the special syllabus. The fisheries schools brought rapid changes among the fishermen community of Madras Presidency. It also influenced the neighbouring states of Cochin and Tiruvithamkur. They also demanded the establishment of Fisheries Elementary Schools in their regions. In the Cochin State, Pandit Karuppan took initiatives to bring to notice the need of such schools in the state. In Tiruvithamkur, K. Velayudhan *Arayan* took the initiative to start fisheries schools in the state. In 1930s, the teachers from the Cochin State completed their training from Kozhikode Fisheries Training Institute. They got two years' training from there. The trained teachers were appointed in Edakochi, Vallarpadam, Njarakkal, Chendamangalam and Edevilangu Fisheries Elementary Schools.

The Fisheries Department provided special care to the Elementary Schools by providing books, slates, cotton for net making and mid-day meals to the students. The department regularly monitored the working and administration of the schools. In the initial stages, the children from the fishing community were reluctant to come to the school because of their poverty. It was a difficult task to bring the students to schools. As a solution to this problem the fisheries department appointed a special officer, "conductress," for bringing students to the schools and their salary was decided based on the attendance of the students⁴⁵. The Education Department also conducted regular auditing of the fisheries schools because they followed the general

⁴⁵ *Personal Interview*, Amsu, Retired Teacher and Traditional Fisherman, Chentrapinni, 06/01/2021.

syllabus also. When the Government revised the syllabus by giving importance to artistry works, the Fisheries Elementary Schools were exempted from it, because they had already implemented such a system long before the others could even think about that. In addition to elementary education, they were taught technical subjects such as carpentry, preparation of twine and cotton for making nets, net mending, etc.⁴⁶.

V. Govindan requested the Government to recognize schools as grant-in-aid institutions. In the fisheries schools, some of the pupils were employed occasionally in the curing shed to assist the curing operations. Sometimes they also went in the canoe carrier to buy fish in the sea for curing yards. To teach them thrift, the want of which was the cause of the everlasting ineptness of the fishing community all along the coast, pupils of this school were persuaded to make savings bank deposits in the local post office, and several boys above 16 years of age had opened such accounts.

Table No.4.1

Increase in the Number of Students in the Fisheries Schools in Malabar

Year	Strength	Boys	Percentage	Girls	Percentage
1925-26	2294	1681	73	613	27
1926-27	2440	1737	71	703	29
1927-28	3000	2132	71	868	29
1928-29	3443	2368	69	1075	31
1929-30	3637	2573	71	1064	29
1930-31	4136	2794	68	1342	32

Source: Madras Fisheries Department, *Administrative Report 1930-31*, Report No.1 of 1932.

The above table indicates the steady increase in the number of children going to school. From 1925-26 to 1930-31, the total number of school going students increased from 2294 to 4136. The data in the table progressed steadily, with the total

⁴⁶ Government of Madras, *Madras Fisheries Annual Reports 1908-1917*, Bulletin No. X, Madras, 1918, p.116.

number doubling over time. The administrative report of Madras Fisheries Department records shows that during 1930s there was a consistent increase in the number of students attending school. However, a significant gender disparity existed among school-going students, with only 32% of girls attending school. Despite the implementation of compulsory elementary education, additional measures were required to ensure regular attendance. Both the boys and girls were compelled to attend school.

Most of the School buildings lacked the facilities to accommodate the increasing number of students. The schools which needed more facilities were Blangad, Kottakadappuram, Talikulam, Nattika and Kaipamangalam⁴⁷. The school owners of Talikulam, Nattika and Kaipamngalam struggled to secure financial resources for expansion of their facilities and ultimately decided to transfer ownership to the Fisheries department.

Fishermen Co-Operative Societies

During the colonial period, many associations were formed by the influence of colonialist ideologies which served as channels of dissemination of colonial culture and ideology in which Indian intellectuals also get involved⁴⁸. The Europeans in India also took interest in establishing and promoting native libraries with the active participation of Indians. More than the dissemination of colonial ideology, these institutions provided a proactive platform for intellectual exchange. One of the organizations constituted for the betterment of fisherfolk was cooperative Society.

The waves of Cooperative movement came to the Indian Society in the 19th century by the initiatives of the Colonialists. As the first step of Co-operative movement, the Madras Co-operative Societies Act II of 1912 was passed⁴⁹. It was aimed to promote thrift and self-help among the agriculturalist, artisans, and persons

⁴⁷ Madras Fisheries Department, *Administrative Report 1930-31*, Report No.1 of 1932, p.59.

⁴⁸ K N Panikkar, *Culture, Ideology, Hegemony, Intellectuals and social Consciousness in Colonial India*, Tulika, New Delhi, 1995, pp 88-89.

⁴⁹ The Madras Co-operative Societies Act II of 1912, Madras, 1912, Regional Archives Calicut.

of limited access of resources. The Madras Co-operative Societies Act VI of 1932 was passed by the provincial Legislature on the recommendations of the committee set up by the government of Madras in 1927 to examine the progress of the movement⁵⁰. Later the Government exempted Cooperative Societies from payment of income tax on business profits, stamp duties, registration fee etc⁵¹.

In Malabar region V. Govindan paid attention to co-operation among the fishermen and curers. He conducted prolonged journeys through the coastal areas up and down the West Coast. He found the germs of such co-operation in an existing society in Mangalore, which was started in 1907. The societies were setup on Mangalore model. The Mangalore Society worked on the monthly subscriptions of its 51 members. Loans were granted by the committee members if they felt the need was genuine, for eg., a loan was granted if they found it was necessary to buy a fishing boat or net. Around 51 fishermen who owned boats and nets joined the society.

V Govindan set up the first a co-operative society among the fishermen of Tanur after prolonged discussions and persuasion. The society was registered at the end of March 1917⁵². The first co-operative society of fishermen was thus formed in Madras Presidency itself in 1917. In Tanur, the fishermen and curers were subjected to heavy usury on their necessary loans so it appeared to be an excellent field for co-operative work. Fifty leading fishermen who owned boats and nets joined the society and took its first shares. This was a co-operative *nidhi* and each shareholder had to pay a sum of Rs. 50 within 25 months by installments of Rs. 2 per month and thus the members had to credit a capital by their own contributions⁵³. As the maximum numbers of shares was 200, this society would have a capital of Rs.10,000. This put an end to the domination of the greedy middlemen. Most of the fishermen required

⁵⁰ The Madras Co-operative Societies Act VI of 1932, Madras, 1934, Regional Archives Calicut.

⁵¹ Exemption of Co-operative Societies from Stamp Duty, Book no.29 –G.6230/24, RAE.

⁵² C Ramachandran, *Teaching Not to Finish? A constructive Perspective on Reinventing a Responsible Marine Fisheries Extension System*, CMFRI, Cochi, Kerala, 2004, p.105.

⁵³ Government of Madras, *Madras Fisheries Annual Reports 1908-1917*, Bulletin No.X, Madras Fisheries Bureau Madras, 1918, p.116.

only short-term loans. The story of the successful performance of Tanur fishermen co-operative society led to the emergence of similar co-operative societies in Quilandi, Tellicherry and paved way for the formation of societies in several villages of Malabar area. V. Govindan was convinced that the illiterate fishermen cannot run the co-operative societies legitimately and that it will become a financial burden on them. Consequently, he appointed the headmasters of the fisheries Schools or the petty officers of the fish curing centers as the ex-officio secretaries of the fishermen co-operative societies⁵⁴.

Fishermen at Quilandi, Tellichery and some other places were being persuaded to organize similar societies by seeing the successful functioning of the Tanur society. In certain fishing villages which were situated near the mouths of large rivers, there was scope for co-operative fisheries societies. The right of fishing in that locality was auctioned by government and was usually leased by people outside the purview of the fishing community. The setting up of co-operative societies at the local level would be helpful to solve such problems.

Kaipamangalam Araya's Fishermen Co -Operative Credit Society Ltd. No. 2941

As a part of co-operative movement and the socio-economic reforms undertaken by V. Govindan under the Fisheries Department, a co-operative society was established in Kaipamangalam on 31st August 1918. The society was registered in the Ponnani Taluk of Malabar district. Its earlier name was “*Kaipamangalam Fishermen's Aikya Nanaya Sangam Limited.*” The capital investment for the society was made by seventeen members. The Kaipamangalam Fishermen Society had an office and godown of its own, and advanced loans on jewels and conducted chit funds, besides carrying on with other usual activities. The society advanced money on fish besides helping the members to sell the fish jointly and obtain better prices⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ *Rao Bahadur Govindan Souvenir*(Mal.), Rao Bahadur Memorial Committee, Kaipamanglam, 1978, p.20.

⁵⁵ Government of Madras, *Administrative Report of Madras Fisheries Department for the year 1930-31*, Madras, 1932, p.62.

All important decisions regarding the society were taken in the general body. The office bearers consisted of president, secretary, and a committee of at least five members. The members were elected for a period of one year. The committee should meet once in every 15 days. President had overall charge of the society. The secretary was the head of the administration. He should monitor the functions of the society and its associate institutions. He had the right to impose fine and suspend the office staff with the consent of the president. The members may be suspended if they were continuously absent for four meetings. The society should provide bill for all money deeds.

There were three types of deposits in the co-operative society: fixed deposit, recurring deposit, and provident deposit. The tenure of the fixed deposits should be for at least six months. Loans were provided for the following purposes⁵⁶:

- the purchase of seed and manure for growing hemp
- purchase and repair of boats, nets and yarn and other fishing implements.
- constructing the building and purchasing and repairing of fish guano factories and fish -curing sheds.
- Purchasing of fish for curing or beach drying and selling.
- payment of sirkar or zamin kist.
- buying or repairing of dwelling houses or fish storing sheds.
- advances to artisans for the purchase of implements or raw materials required for their industry.
- advances to petty traders.
- payment of prior debts.
- the purchases of food grains and other necessaries of life.
- ceremonial expenses not exceeding Rs.50 and educational expenses.

The society was registered as a co-operative society under the act VI of 1932 Madras. The bylaw of the society clearly stated its objectives⁵⁷:

⁵⁶ By law, Fishermen Co-operative Society, Kaipamangalam, 1918, p.13.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* P.14.

- to borrow funds from members or others to be utilized for loans to members for useful purposes.
- to act as the agent for the joint purchase of the industrial, domestic, and other requirements of its members and for the joint sale of their produce.
- to purchase and own fishing implements such as boats and nets and fish guano factories.
- to disseminate knowledge about the latest developments in fisheries sector and net making and encourage the members to adapt them.
- to spread education among the members and their children and to own school.
- to encourage thrift, self-help, and co-operation among the members.

The criterion for membership was also clearly mentioned in the bylaw. The liability of the members of the society shall be limited to the share capital subscribed by them.

The capital of the society shall be Rs.1500 made up of 100 shares of Rs.15 each. The value of each share shall be paid either in one lump sum on allotment or in installments. If a member had arrear to the extent of the sum, his name may be removed from the list of members. The share capital installments shall not be collected in the month of May, June, July, August, and September of every year. Any person belonging to fishermen community or carrying on fishing occupation or in the fishing industry over 18 years of age can be a member.

For the smooth functioning of the society there is a general body. The ultimate authority in all matters relating to the administration of the society shall be the general body of the members who shall meet from time to time and at least once a year to conduct the work of the society. It shall not interfere with the acts of the Board of directors in respect of matters delegated to it under the by-law⁵⁸.

Every member shall take at least one share but no members shall take more than ten shares. Every member shall pay an entrance fee of four *annas* for each share taken

⁵⁸ Bylaw, Fishermen Co-operative Society, Kaipamangalam, 1918, p.15.

by him at the time of taking the share. No member shall be permitted to withdraw any of the shares held by him in the society within three years after the date when such shares were taken by him. Should a member cease to be eligible for membership either on account of the shifting of his residence from the limits prescribed by the co-operative society, the general body had the right to evict the person who failed to follow the rules and regulations of the society⁵⁹. It is reported that some of the fishermen of Kaipamangalm society could not repay their loans. They voluntarily withdrew from membership after getting their paid-up share capital adjusted towards their long overdue loans. They were not in a condition to repay their loans⁶⁰.

Primarily, loans were granted to fishermen for improving or purchasing craft equipment. The loan amount was fixed according to the number of shares owned by the members. The maximum amount allotted per share was Rs.100⁶¹. Loans were granted against personal guarantees. The society also focused on importing cotton for net making and other fishing related activities. It communicated the challenges faced by fishermen to the Madras Government. The committee recommended for improvements in basic facilities like upgrading the fishermen school at Kaipamangalam, providing kerosene and cotton nets at subsidized rates. The society positively responded to the war efforts of Madras Government during the Second World War by sending an amount of Rs. 75 from their reserve fund to the Madras government⁶². The society always expressed their solidarity with the fishermen during off seasons by giving relaxation to the loans, providing them with food materials at subsidized rates.

Initially the society's meetings were taking place at the Fisheries Elementary School, Kaipamangalm. Since the fishermen were occupied during the day, the meetings were mostly scheduled at night, often from 9 pm to midnight⁶³.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.18.

⁶⁰ Government of Madras, *Administrative Report of Madras Fisheries Department for the year 1930-31*, Madras, 1932, p.64.

⁶¹ By law, Fishermen Co-operative Society, Kaipamangalam, 1934, p.5.

⁶² Minutes of the Meeting, Kaipamangalam *Araya Nanayasangam*, 27/08/1940.

⁶³ Minutes of the Meeting, Kaipamangalam *Araya Nanayasangam*, 27/07/1919.

Occasionally, the meetings were held in the village coastal areas until a small office building was eventually constructed. The area was referred to as office land (office *valappu*). In 1952, a warehouse was built to store prawn and other dried fish. In 2019 the office moved to a multi-storied building⁶⁴. Today the society is functioning like a co-operative bank. It has its own buildings and a supermarket.

The colonial modernity intervened in the fisheries sector with the establishment of Fisheries Departments. The impact of Modernization process was visible in the fisheries sector through the colonial institutions like Fish curing yards, Co-operative societies, Elementary Schools to providing new techniques to fishermen. The Colonial institutions tried to integrate the fishermen into their systems, and to establish control over the means of production and this integration disrupted traditional fishing practices, cultural norms, and community structures.

Fisheries in Cochin State

The Cochin State had a sea coast of nearly 50 miles beginning from Cranganore in the north extending up to Chellanam in the South⁶⁵. It was divided into two divisions - Northern and Southern and each division was sub-divided into three Taluks, the Cranganore Taluk was attached to the southern division.⁶⁶ The low lands in the Cranganore Taluk was divided into two portions. A long sandy or maritime territory and its eastern part was surrounded by backwaters. The maritime territory was intersected by the openings of the Cranganore river at Ayacotta and Vypeen river at Cochin. One third of this area was filled with water and more than half of the rest flanked by coconut trees⁶⁷. This geographical area was earmarked as residential areas of the fishermen and other low caste people. The first attempt to analyze and

⁶⁴ *Personal Interview*, Athman, Secretary, Fishermen Co-operative Society, Kaipamangalam, 12/02/2020.

⁶⁵ Government of Cochin, *The Record of Administration Cochin State*, Part IV, 15th May 1907-1st March 1914, Ernanakulam, 1914, p.74.

⁶⁶ Government of Cochin, *The Record of Administration Cochin state* Part I-III, Ernakulam, 1914, p.1.

⁶⁷ Francis Day, *The Land of Perumal's or Cochin, its Past and its Present*, Asian Educational Service, Madras 1863, p.33.

study the fishing community of Cochin State was by done by Francis Day who gave a comprehensive view on the Cochin marine life and the fishing community in 1863. Francis Day also pointed out that very few Brahmins resided here.

In the case of Cochin State, the fishing sector was not properly explored by the government. During 1860s the Marine Establishment of the Cochin State was under the master attendant who supervised all duties connected with the shipping except the registration of vessels which was under the Joint Magistrate's office. Every vessel on its arrival or departure from Cochin should report it in the usual form. The first attempt to analyze and study the fishing community of Cochin State was by done by Francis Day who gave a comprehensive view on the Cochin marine life and the fishing community in 1863.

In 1083ME (1908) with the intention of chalking out a future for the fishing sector, a preliminary survey was conducted⁶⁸. The survey gathered information about the fish trade and industries related to the fish products, etc. Mr. Abraham B. Salem who had served under Sir Frederick Nicholson in the Madras Fisheries, was selected for conducting the survey and placed on special duty for a period of one year and three months from 1st *Tulam*, 1083 ME. There was no control exercised by the Government over the fisheries in the sea, while that exercised over the inland fisheries was purely nominal. The result was that extraction of the resources of the sea as well as the inland waters was left to the poor and uneducated fishermen⁶⁹.

A.B Salem's investigation report consisted of three parts –

The first part dealing with the fishing stakes, the second with fisheries and the third with inland fisheries. The report was published by the Government for general information and orders were also passed on the various points raised in the reports after consulting with Frederick Nicholson. His main suggestion included the use of

⁶⁸ Government of Cochin, *The Record of Administration Cochin State*, Part IV, 15th May 1907 to 1st March 1914, Ernanakulam, 1914, p. 75.

⁶⁹ Government of Cochin, *The Record of Administration Cochin State*, Part IV, 15th May 1907 to 1st March 1914, Ernanakulam, 1914, p.75.

power boats. He stressed that when it operated as a fishing boat, it could explore the zones untouched by existing boats, thereby supplementing its efforts. He was in favour of the standard design of a sea-going boat. It required a clear design about the new boat's size, rig, idea about the weather and sea, the classes of operations in catching and curing to be undertaken, the capacity of the crew available⁷⁰.

Nicholson further augmented the decision of the Durbar with his valuable inputs. With the experience in the successful conduct of co-operative credit society in Malabar for at least five years, Nicholson braced himself up to set up one in Cochin State too. Its aim was to help the fishermen gain access to new boats and improve their socio-economic status.

In the meantime, Government of Cochin adopted measures to attract investment in the fishing sector. It started negotiations with the Indian Fisheries Company Private Limited in 1908. The company already possessed a modern type of factory with in the Cochin State⁷¹. The company offered full support and assistance to the government for the new sea fishing venture and related fish products industry. The Government stand was to involve the traditional fishermen while undertaking modernization and mechanization in the sector. The state desired that the fisheries sector should develop and help the fisherfolk as much as possible. The Government believed that it should give encouragement to the indigenous fisheries industries and that new ideas should be adopted to avoid competition from the outsiders. It should prevent outsiders from creating a monopoly that threatens the development and prosperity of the fishermen and residents involved in fishing.

The Cochin Government forced the company to agree to certain terms and conditions like leaving the existing pursuits and practices of fishing class untouched. The company should help the fisherfolk to improve their business, steer clear of

⁷⁰ Government of Cochin, *The Record of Administration Cochin State*, Part IV, 15th May 1907 to 1st March 1914, Ernanakulam, 1914, p.76.

⁷¹ Government of Cochin, *The Record of Administration Cochin State*, Part IV, 15th May 1907 to 1st March 1914, Ernanakulam, 1914, p.78.

outside competition, and restrict their trawling operations in the sea to a five-mile limit from the shore so as not to disturb the existing conditions of the coastal fishermen. The company agreed with the conditions put forward by the state.

The Indian Fisheries Company Ltd. propounded a proposal for nourishing sea fisheries and the line of work related to fish products⁷². The task of finding the initial capital to revamp the fisheries sector and industries related to fish products was left with the company. The Company was ready to forge ahead and that the government was asked to take up the initiative. The caste-based, ignorant, and superstitious fishermen were suspicious of the new venture. Despite the obstruction from the side of the middlemen and wholesale dealers the government moved ahead with the new proposals.

The government put a clause to prevent the company from interfering in the business of the indigenous fisherfolk. The government hoped that the new venture would provide employment to many people in the state. To all intents and purposes, what happened to the native fishermen was that gradually they were excluded from the large-scale fishing operations and slowly they fell a prey to the new technology. Their socio-economic status remained unchanged. The government considered the matter seriously and brought about drastic steps to improve the socio-economic status of the fishermen based on the Malabar model.

The Cochin Fisheries Department was established in 1086 ME (1911). A B Salem oversaw the Department and Pandit K.P. Karuppan assisted him in the survey and other works⁷³. Cochin Government also took steps to constitute an office comprising of a Fisheries Inspector on a monthly remuneration of Rs.75-100, a clerk on Rs. 25 and a patrol party of one petty officer and three peons for controlling the backwater fisheries in the state. The staff was placed under the Diwan Peshkar. A system of licensing for all fishing stakes and Chinese nets were introduced. The

⁷² Government of Cochin, The Record of Administration Cochin State, Part IV, 15th May 1907 to 1st March 1914, Ernanakulam, 1914, p. 78.

⁷³ Rajesh K. Erumeli, *Op.Cit.*, p.26.

classification and registration of fishing stakes and Chinese nets, issue of licenses to hold the stakes, the planting of caution posts at either end of the stake sites as a precaution against accidents of navigating boats, preparation of accurate maps showing the position of stakes and nets, preparation of necessary registration documents and assignment of new areas for fishing were introduced.

There was a gradual progress in the administration of the backwater fisheries. By the end of 1088 ME (1913), there were in all 2,909 fishing stakes and 348 Chinese nets licensed, yielding an annual revenue of Rs. 6,508. Caution posts and lights had also been provided for all important sites⁷⁴. A sum of Rs.11,408 was realized as the value of the occupancy right of new fishing stakes site sold in auction.

The Backwater Fishing community had to pay tax for their small wooden boats, which came under the Public Canals and Backwaters Navigation Act. The Cochin State Canals and Backwaters Regulation was brought into force with the approval of the government of Madras⁷⁵. The main restrictions prescribed by the Cochin Public Canals and Backwaters Navigation Act of 1092 ME (1917) are sometimes harmful to the fishermen of backwater regions.

- (i) in case of emergency state has the right to remove any obstructions from the public canal including fishing equipment (*Unnivalas*).
- (ii) the state has the right to prohibit the construction of any contrivance for fishing or any other purpose in public canal or any erection therein or on a tow-path or other land appurtenant thereto.
- (iii) the Government has the right to suspend or cancel the license or registration of any vessel in case of breach of any condition there of or in lieu of such suspension or cancellation or of prosecution may recover from the person in charge of the vessel a penalty not exceeding five rupees for each such breach.

⁷⁴ Government of Cochin, *The Record of Administration Cochin State*, Part IV, 15th May 1907 - 1st March 1914, Ernanakulam, 1914, p.76.

⁷⁵ Government of Cochin, *The Record of Administration Cochin State*, Part V, 14th April 1925 to 6th December 1930, Ernanakulam, 1938, p.135.

- (iv) Any individual, who violates any rule established under this Act shall, upon conviction by a criminal court, be liable to a fine not exceeding fifty rupees in case of a single offence. Upon continuing offence, the fine may extend to Rs. 10 for each day during which such offence continues. Failure to pay fine will lead to imprisonment⁷⁶.

The Canal and Navigation Rules of 1092 ME (1917) was amended in 1928. The canal rules were revised to make the boat traffic convenient and safe. But the Madras government had certain objection to some of the provisions in the new law. The modification of the Act points to the colonial intervention in the internal affairs of the Cochin State. According to the Act the vessels plying solely in the port should be registered under the Indian Ports Act alone. But the vessels plying both in the port and in the Canals and backwaters of Cochin territory should pay to the Cochin Government. There were differences between the fees chargeable under the Cochin Regulation and the fees paid for licensing or registration of use of the Cochin Canal⁷⁷. The Madras government also defined the line of navigation from Chellanam in the South to Karupadanna in the North. As a result, the main backwater from the southern limit of Cochin to Karupadanna includes a great deal of water in which vessels engaged solely in the trade of port must ply. Consequently, under the newly framed rules, vessels previously regarded as exempt from licensing or Registration under the Cochin Regulation, because they were engaged solely in port trade and not in both port and canal navigation, became liable to pay. All these colonial policies adversely affected the fishermen who depended on the canal and backwaters of the Cochin area. The other restrictions were found in the salt production and sale.

Salt Manufacture and Restrictions

Salt was the crucial ingredient needed to preserve fish and support the fishing industry. Traditional fishermen relied on salting and drying as their sole

⁷⁶ The Cochin Public Canals and Backwaters Navigation Act of 1092, pp.4-9, RAE.

⁷⁷ Jurisdiction-Cochin Backwater Dispute Between The Court of Madras and the Cochin Government, Book No.58-Pw 2, C.273/1106, RAE.

methods to preserve excess fish. Until 1810 there were no restrictions on manufacturing and sale of salt. This changed with the introduction of salt law in 1810⁷⁸. Before this law, a small tax existed on the abundant salt pans along the seaboard tracts in the backwater islands. Once salt became a state monopoly, it was made mandatory to sell it to the government. Until 1840, Bombay supplied only a small quantity of required salt. A major chunk was imported from Goa. Eventually, all supplementary salt had to be imported from Bombay. Despite the significant economic role of the fish curing industry, the government provided neither encouragement nor guidance. A study by a special officer in 1908 revealed that their curing methods were outdated, unscientific and unhygienic. Salting and drying were the main techniques known to the fishermen. So, the government interfered in the matter of salt production and distribution by passing the Salt Act of 1908. The Cochin Salt Act came in to force on 1st day of *Chingam* 1084 ME(1908). The legislation clearly outlined the regulations governing salt production, distribution, and established specific penalties for non-compliance, providing a comprehensive framework for the salt industry.

“Salt factory includes any place used or intended to be used for the manufacture of salt or for the storage or keeping of the same pending sale ,or removal on payment of duty and all embarkments ,cannels ,reservoirs ,lands ,buildings and waste places situated within the limits there of as defined from time to time by the commissioner ; but does not include the cochin sea customs Act”⁷⁹.

It also defines the Salt Revenue:

“Salt revenue means revenue derived from or derivable from any price, duty, fine, confiscation or payment imposed or ordered under the provisions of this Act or of any other law for the time being in force relating to salt”⁸⁰.

⁷⁸ C. Achyutha Menon, *The Cochin State Manual*, S Raimon (ed.), Kerala Gazetteer Department, Thiruvananthapuram, 1911, p.429.

⁷⁹ The Cochin Salt Act (V of 1083), p.7, RAE.

⁸⁰ The Cochin Salt Act (V of 1083), p.6, RAE .

The other provisions of the Act include: Fixing the minimum price of salt sold by or on behalf of the Government, regulation on the manufacture of salt and salt Petre and the import and transport of salt; fixed the fees for licenses and prohibition of salt manufacture without license etc. The law made strict control over the production and distribution of salt in the state. The State became the ultimate authority of the salt manufacture and sale. Non-compliance with the rules would result in a penalty, including a fine and a prison sentence of up to six months⁸¹. The Salt Act has been amended from time to time. The Cochin Salt Act was amended by Act 11 of 1106 ME(1931), Act 1 of 1109 and 1 of 1113(1938) and Proclamation of V of 1112(1937). The Act XXX of 1124ME (1949) empower the government to suspend or cancel licenses of the salt manufacturing units⁸².

The administration record of 1914 pointed that the main reform introduced in the year was the introduction of the Salt Regulation of No. V. of 1083ME⁸³. Under this provision a contractor from Bombay was made the agent for the sale of salt throughout the State. Since then, the Salt was mainly exported from Bombay under the arrangement with a contractor appointed for the purpose. The excess Salt were stored at Malipuram depot⁸⁴. The Government established separate arrangements to examine and pass each consignment of salt delivered at Malipuram and departmental transport of salt to the different bank shells was done away with. The rate of 2,50,408 maunds of salt sold from the Malipuram Depot at Rs.1-13-0 per maund per year⁸⁵.

Initially, salt extraction did not take place in an industrial level in Cochin, but later it was started at Malipuram. Government of Cochin invited tenders from the entrepreneurs from the Cochin states itself for the construction of salt manufacturing

⁸¹ The Cochin Salt Amendment Act 1 of 1113, p.2, RAE.

⁸² The Cochin Salt Amendment Act XXX of 1124, p.3, RAE.

⁸³ Government of Cochin, *The Record of Administration Part IV of 1914*, Ernakulam, 1914, p.25.

⁸⁴ Government of Cochin, *The Report on Administration 1922*, Ernakulam, 1922, p.22.

⁸⁵ Government of Cochin, *Report on the Administration of the Salt*, Abkari and Customs Department in the Cochin State, Ernakulam, 1918, p.2.

unit in Malipuram. Sri Mukkan Thommaakutty from Thrissur got the tender and accordingly the Mookan Salt factory was founded in 1946⁸⁶. It covered an area of 100 acres of land with salt pans and a salt depo. Water was kept in the salt pans for 15 days to evaporate after which it was processed into actual salt. However, the yearly salt production at Malipuram was limited to five months due to the geographical constraints of the place. Approximately 35000 *mannu*⁸⁷ salt was produced from the Malipuram salt factory. The government also sanctioned the sale of salt at ten annas a *maund*⁸⁸ or practically duty free for curing purpose. Nevertheless, the salt produced in the native salt pans were insufficient to meet the needs of the fishermen.

Elementary Schools in Cochin State

The Government of Cochin appointed a fishery investigating officer in 1929 to consider the disabilities and hardships of the fishing industry and the fisherfolk of the State. The whole subject of fisheries was thoroughly gone into by the officer A B Salem and he submitted the report that the fishermen are mostly ignorant and poor. He recommended the Government to take necessary steps to improve the condition of the fisherfolk and appoint of a special inspector for organizing the co-operative societies. He also suggested the methods to improve the industries connected with the Fishery.

In 1104 ME (1929) the Diwan Peshkar submitted certain suggestions which included giving training to the fishermen along the lines of the Malabar model⁸⁹. In Malabar, The Fisheries Department established 28 Elementary Schools known as Fisheries Elementary Schools. In these schools along with the general subjects, they were also taught the subjects pertinent to fisheries. These Elementary Schools imparted practical skills to the children of the fishermen while keeping them

⁸⁶ Thirukochiyile Uppalungal (Mal.), *Malayala Manorama Weekly*, April 21, p.18, 1956.

⁸⁷ One *Mannu* Equal to 37.32 Kg.

⁸⁸ One *Maund* equal to 37.3242 Kilograms.

⁸⁹ Government of Cochin, *Record of Administration Cochin State Part I & II*, 7th October 1930 to 7th April 1935, Ernakulam, 1941, p.26.

connected to traditional fishing methods. He pointed out example of the Elementary Schools which were working in the frontier of the state, such as Kaipamangalam, Nattika and Valappad in the Ponnani Taluk. The main objective of these schools was the improvement of the socio-economic condition of the fisherfolk. The Elementary Schools in the coastal areas operated under the Department of Fisheries and were not connected to the Department of Education except for the regular inspections as the schools came under the rules of the Elementary Education Act⁹⁰. The ordinary Elementary schools at these places could be converted into fisheries schools or new ones could be opened.

During Colonial Period, the lower caste people were denied the right to education and even the use of public spheres. Two schools functioned in the nearby areas of Anapuzha; one was a lower secondary school for the boys of Kodungallur and the second one was a girls' school that functioned in the premises of the Thiruvanchikulam Temple. But being lower caste, the *Valas* were denied admission in both Schools. To address this situation, Pappu a native of Anapuzha drummed up support to the *Kalyanadayini Sabha* for the establishment of a school for the *Vala* community⁹¹. It was located near the Sreekurumba Temple of Anapuzha. The school was thus started for the *Vala* community and later it was handed over to the Government of Kerala.

For improving the educational facilities to the children of fishermen four elementary Schools in the model of the Madras and Travancore region were started in the backwater tracts of Cochi, Njarakkal, Mrinjattukkal, Chennamangalam and Edavilangu. Eight candidates from Cochin were deputed for a period of three years for training in Pisciculture at the Calicut Fishery institute. They got stipend of Rs.20 each per month and travelling allowance under the Cochin service Regulations⁹². Given this background, additional Elementary Schools were set up in the backwater

⁹⁰ Government of Cochin, *Record of administration Cochin state Part I & II*, 7th October 1930 to 7th April 1935, Ernakulam, 1941, p.26.

⁹² Government of Cochin, *The Record of Administration*, Cochin State Parts I and II 1930-1935, Ernakulam, 1941, p.27.

tract of Cochin State, Ernakulam near Toosam, Njarakkal, Cherai, near Pullipuram and Anapuzha near Cranganur⁹³.

Another pertinent question was the appointment of skilled teachers for these elementary schools. A Fisheries Institute in Calicut functioned under the Madras Government Fisheries Department. There the teachers got trained in practical work as well. They were taken on field trips to the fish curing yards and to the experimental station at Tanur. Various methods of curing and preserving fish, ordinary as well as latest, were being followed in the fish-curing yards and in the Tanur Experimental Station. All industries dealing with fish like fish oil, production of fish meal for poultry and cattle, fish manure, etc., were being conducted in Tanur. These provided practical experience to the teachers. So, the Cochin State decided to request the Madras Government Fisheries Department for availing the services of such teachers in the newly founded Elementary Schools. The Cochin Government also decided to send fishermen from the Vala Community to Tanur Experimental Station for training.

Co-operative Societies

Colonial modernity also led to the origin of Co-operative movement in different parts of India. The Cochin State was also impacted by colonial modernity, leading to the formation of co-operative society. The Cochin Government established Fishermen Co-operative societies in the Malabar Model. The Fisheries surveys conducted by Abraham B Salem found that the slack season make the fishermen entirely depended on the money lending class and the only solution to this problem was the formation of Co-operative credit society and to be run strictly on co-operative lines. In 1908, under the presidency of A.R. Banerji, the Diwan of Cochin established the Cochin Fisheries Association, which was initially named *Vala Samudaya Parishkarani Sabha*. The main Objectives of the *Sabha* were⁹⁴;

⁹³ *Rao Bahadur Govindan Souvenir* (Mal.), Rao Bahadur Memorial Committee, Kaipamanglam, 1978, p.14

⁹⁴ Government of Cochin, *The Record of Administration Cochin State, Part V, 14th April 1925 to 6th December 1930*, Ernanakulam, 1938, p.59.

- to develop the Fisheries,
- to safe guard their interests,
- to give their children sufficient elementary education to develop their industry,
- to experiment new methods of capture, preservation, and culture of fish,
- to represent grievances to government for concessions and considerations
- to diffuse a knowledge of co-operation among them and to act in unitdly to obtain maximum benefits

The Fishermen from Chellanam and Cranganore joined in it. But the organization had little impact on the poor and illiterate fishermen. In 1929 the Cochin government appointed a special Inspector to organize co-operative societies among the fishermen⁹⁵. P Keasvan a *Vala* graduate selected as the special officer. Against this backdrop, Fishermen Co-operative Societies were established in various parts of the Cochin State like Njarakkal ,Murinjzhikkal ,Chellanam and Kathiyalam in Edavilangu etc. The Head Masters of the Fisheries Schools were appointed as the officer in charge of the Fishermen co-operative societies as the illiterate fishermen could not manage the society⁹⁶.

As part of the Co-operative movement a fish Marketing Society was also established in Kathiyalam in Edavilangu. The chief occupation of the people of the Kathiyalam was fishing, coir making and coconut cultivation. Although fishing was a lucrative occupation there were no facilities to keep the fish wealth obtained from the sea without spoiling for more than three or four days. The fishermen of the area mainly relied on the curing methods of drying and salting⁹⁷. Prawns were available in abundance, boiled and dried in the local way and marketed. Other fishes like Mackerel, *Mullan* etc., were salted and marketed in the offseason. The rest of the surplus catch were used as manure. The actual benefit of the fishing efforts was

⁹⁵ Government of Cochin, *The Record of Administration Part IV*, Eranakulam 1914, p.28.

⁹⁶ *Personal Interview*, Shaji KT, Native, Kathiyalam, 20/10/2022.

⁹⁷ Edavilangu Panchayath, *Vikasana Rekha*, Thrissur, 1996, p.9.

wasted because of the inadequate methods of curing and lack of marketing facilities. The Kathiyalam Fishermen Cooperative Society was formed with the aim of helping the fishermen for proper marketing of their catch and the improvement of their socio-economic condition. The society provided loan to the fishermen on the security of nets and boats of the members of the Society. It also clearly stated about the purpose of the loans:

- to liquidate the petty debts of the members,
- to purchase new fishing implements,
- to provide improved marketing facilities,
- to provide funds for the promotion of cottage industries among the poor fishermen⁹⁸.

In 1940 the Cochin Government sanctioned an amount of Rs.3000 for the formation of Cooperative Societies among the fishermen. In this context the Government also provided a sum of rupees 700 for the Fish Marketing Co-operative Society of Kathiyalam in Edavilangu. The Superintendent of Fisheries also recommended for the sanctioning of the loan to the society as it was functioned in a proper manner. He was entrusted to provide the monthly reports about the progress of the work and of the recovery of loans. The recommendations were approved and sanctioned a Rs.750 to the Kathiyalam Fishermen Co-operative society with 2 ½ percentage of interest rate⁹⁹

However, the loan facilities and other schemes offered by the Society failed to benefit fishermen who did not own boats and nets, despite providing an opportunity for skill improvement. It was utilized by the auction agents and landlords. The income sharing pattern of the fishermen restricted them to join in the co-operative societies. The fishermen were under the control of a sort of

⁹⁸ Huzur Secretariate files Cochin State, H4.18172/15 dated 11/07/1940, RAE.

⁹⁹ Huzur Secretariate files Cochin State, D5.1840/1116, 425/16 dated 4/10/1940, RAE.

moral obligation to sell their catches to the persons who advances them money¹⁰⁰. The taking of major share of catches by boat owners left to little to be shared among the fishermen in that scenario the co-operatives had less impact on the Fishermen.

The establishment of the Fisheries Department marked the intervention of colonial modernity in the lives of fishermen. The impact of colonial modernity was evident in the introduction of capitalist fishing practices, fish marketing and curing centers, Co-operative societies, and Fisheries elementary schools in the State.

In central Kerala the colonial modernity was instrumental in creating two important organization, which contributed to the overall development of the fishing community. The *Kalyana Dayini Sabha* and Pandit Karuppan Library founded by K P Karuppan in the Anapuzha region for the Vala community are special mention in the transformation of the socio-economic life of the fishermen of central Kerala.

Kalyanadayini Sabha and Pandit Karuppan Library

In Kodungallur Taluk, the Methala village and Anapuzha regions were rich in backwater resources and thickly populated by the *Vala* community. Their main occupations were backwater fishing and coir making. The women from this community were actively engaged in selling fish and fish-curing activities. Even though the whole family was engaged in fish-related occupations and were industrious, their socio-economic status was very low. They were entangled in the exploitation cycle of landlords, middle men, and upper-caste people.

In 1909 Pandit Karuppan founded the *Kalyanadayini Sabha* at Anapuzha with the support of local people¹⁰¹. The women contributed a handful of rice (*Pidiyari*) to

¹⁰⁰ Report on the Fishing Stakes..... p.37.

¹⁰¹ K.K. Velayudhan, *Pandit Karuppan Ormakaliloode* (Mal.), National Bookstall, Kottayam, 1983. p.97.

help the formation of the *sabha*. The main objectives of the *Sabha* were to help the downtrodden classes like fishermen to attain education, employment and to help them transform their standard of living. The capital for the *sabha* was collected from the women selling fish in the form of *Pidiyari* (handful of rice). The rules and regulations of the *Sabha* were formulated by Pandit Karuppan and established a clear set of guidelines for the organization. The *sabha* was formally registered on 29th April, 1917 in the Methala Village of Kodungallur Taluk with the register No.1 /1092ME¹⁰². Its 11 pages of rules put down the basic concepts for the upliftment of the fishermen community and other disadvantaged segments of society. The bylaw of the *Kalyanadayini Sabha* explicitly outlined the eligibility criteria for beneficiaries, identifying those who were most deserving of financial assistance and support from the organization.

The main goals of the *Sabha* were¹⁰³:

- To give educational support to the poor students from the community, especially expenses for schooling.
- To give grants and aids to the schools that belonged to the *Vala* community.
- To start a magazine or a newspaper for the emancipation of the community.
- To establish a library in Anapuzha for the community.
- To train the youth of the community in vocational education and help them pursue a good career.
- To provide fund for the marriage of the poor girls.

The *Sabha* also conducted *chittis* for the benefits of its members. It helped to create the habit of thrift and slowly improved their economic position¹⁰⁴. It collected a sum from the members of the community to generate capital for the smooth functioning of

¹⁰² Registration Order of the *Kalyanadayini Sabha*, Register No.1 /1092ME.

¹⁰³ Bylaw, *Kalyanadayini Sabha*, Anapuzha, 1977.

¹⁰⁴ *Personal Interview*, Kalesh Babu, former President of *Kalyanadayini Sabha*, Anapuzha, 20-05-2021.

the *sabha*. The trustees of the *sabha* were later divided into four categories and had to pay a fixed amount annually. As per the minutes of the *Sabha* in 1977 the members were categorized into A, B, C and D groups and had to pay annual subscriptions of rupees 312, 300, 210 and 290 rupees respectively¹⁰⁵. There was a treasurer to handle all these collections. All the members had equal rights in the wealth of the *sabha*. The rules of the *Sabha* included a provision that specifically prohibited the partitioning of its capital, even in the face of a majority demand, thereby ensuring the long-term stability and integrity of the organization's financial foundation. This key provision laid the foundation for the *Kalyanadayini Sabha's* remarkable journey towards becoming a vibrant and self-sustaining cooperative society, marked by steady growth, stability, and an unwavering commitment to its members' welfare. It functioned like a small-scale banking system by accepting deposits, disbursing loans to improve their craft, providing education and thus usher in a better life.

In its initial stages, the *Sabha* convened under the trees in the Anapuzha temple complex. After registering as a cooperative society in 1917, the *Sabha* began functioning from a modest building in Kavilkadavu. The *Sabha's* infrastructure underwent significant upgrades, first with the construction of a new building within the temple premises in 1983, and later with the addition of a multistoried building featuring an auditorium, which was completed in 2000. In 2012 the office of the *Sabha* moved to Kodungallur town¹⁰⁶. The *Sabha* had expanded its assets, included three multi-storied buildings, which accommodate a range of facilities, including an auditorium, shopping mall, and cooperative society.

Pandit Karuppan also established a Library along with the *Kalyanadayini Sabha* in Anapuzha in 1909. The library was first housed in a single room within the building of the *Kalyanadayini Sabha*. In 2016 the library was relocated to the

¹⁰⁵ Minutes of *Kalyanadayini Sabha*, Anapuzha, 29-03-1977.

¹⁰⁶ *Personal Interview*, Venu Vennara, President, *Kalyanadayini Sabha*, Anapuzha, 22-05-2021.

new building, where it flourished as one of the premier libraries in the Thrissur District¹⁰⁷. This library has played a pivotal role in shaping the socio-cultural sphere of the *Valas* of Anapuzha. It provided educational scholarship to the students and promoted men of literature and art. The drama troupe of the library served as a vital platform for promoting Pandit Karuppan's literary and reformist endeavors, with a special emphasis on his dramatic compositions. The *Sabha* allocated a fixed amount to guarantee the uninterrupted operation and continued success of the library. A radical change that happened in the life of the *Vala* community was through education.

The objectives of *Sabha* were attained through the institutions like Pandit Karuppan Library, The Elementary School of Anapuzha and the Dharmakahalam Press. The important persons who made remarkable contributions to these institutions were K. R. Govindan, V. P. Madhavadas and his father, Mr. Pappu. R Govindan, the founding president of the *Kalyanadayini Sabha* was a driving force for transformation within the *Vala* community, through his inspiring words to bring about meaningful change. The Dharmakahalam press established, V. P. Madhavadas, in Kodungallur also helped to propagate the reformist ideas among the *Valas*.

These institutions had a great impact on the life of the *Vala* community of Anapuzha region. The *sabha* not only made a sense of unity among them but also helped them to create a habit of savings. The old generation even today remember the contribution of the *sabha* to overcome the abject poverty they went through. The *Kalyanadayini Sabha* and the Pandit Karuppan Library worked hand in glove for the uplift of the *Vala community*. It was through these institutions that the social reforms have taken place in the *Vala community*.

In the case of *Vala* community of Anapuzha, it was Pandit Karuppan, who saved them from the age-old backwardness and poverty. It was through education

¹⁰⁷ *Personal Interview*, Prem Nath, Secretary, Pandit Karuppan Library, Anapuzha, 22-05-2021.

that he could impart the revolutionary changes and become the voice of the subaltern class. Pandit Karuppan utilized his knowledge and influence to uplift his own community members as well as others. The *Kalyanadayini Sabha* and Pandit Karuppan Library were instrumental for the socio-economic changes of the *Vala* community of Anapuzha region. The smooth functioning of these institutions till today is the proof of its important role in the socio-economic life of the *Valas* of the region.

The colonial interventions mainly took place through the Madras and Cochin Fisheries Departments and its socio-economic activities among the fishermen. The impact of Modernization process was visible in the fisheries sector through the colonial institutions like Fish curing yards, Co-operative societies, Elementary Schools to providing new techniques to fishermen. The Colonial institutions tried to integrate the fishermen into their systems, and to establish control over the means of production and this integration disrupted traditional fishing practices, cultural norms, and community structures.

Velukutty Arayan, Pandit Karuppan and V. Govindan are three notable names in the history of the fishing community of Kerala. The path-breaking services they rendered to the fishing community of Thrissur District is etched forever. The *Kalyanadayini Sabha*, Kaipamangalam Fisheries Co-Operative society and the fisheries Schools of the district are glowing testimonials of the contributions of these visionaries. The introduction of advanced technology for fishing, fish processing and preservation accelerated the speed of modernization. Still there is a question emerged, who were the actual beneficiaries of modernization. The post-colonial period witnessed the implementation of advanced technology and motorization of fishing craft and a high-speed industrialization in the fishing sector. However, the colonial modernity in the fisheries sector was characterized by the exploitation and appropriation of fishery resources, displacement of traditional fishing practices, and subjugation of

fishermen's livelihoods to serve the interests of colonial powers. This legacy of colonial modernity continues to shape the fisheries sector today, perpetuating inequality, environmental degradation and transformed the community-based industry into a capitalist-driven system that prioritizes profit.

CHAPTER 5

Technological Transition and Capital Penetration: Impact on the Fisheries and Fisherfolk

Fisheries form one of the crucial sectors for promoting economic development of Kerala. The marine resources of the Kerala coasts are exceptionally valuable, especially the shoaling species like sardine, mackerel, and prawns. Fishing is a collective endeavor, important for the livelihoods of fisherfolk and dependent on common property resources. It is also considered as a valuable sector for export trade and a means of inexpensive protein food to the poor. Any change in their collective consciousness should be understood in the greater perspective because that took place in relation to the access and use of common resources. The present chapter focuses on the changes that had taken place in the fishing sector of Kerala with the advent and advancement of technology and consequent increase on market demand, impact on marine ecology and traditional fishermen. The modernization process in the fishery sector has both economic and ecological consequences.

The studies about fisherfolk are mostly based on ecological approach. It is because there is a wet and fish-rich productive regime that defines the socio-cultural and economic life of the fishing communities. Environmental variables and their temporal and spatial differences are set apart from and used to help explain selected features of fishing lifestyle¹. In a typical traditional fishing community, the occupation is caste-bound and the crew acquires knowledge about the craft and sea through hands-on experience. Their technology has also evolved to cater to their livelihoods.

The administrative action for the development of fishing industry in Kerala began with the establishment of curing yards in the west coast of Malabar in 1877. For giving further impetus to the fisheries sector, a Fisheries Bureau was set up in

¹ Bonnie J. McCay, "Systems Ecology, People Ecology and the Anthropology of Fishing Communities", *Human Ecology*, Vol. 6, No.4, Springer, 1978, p. 398, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4602470>. Accessed on 10/02/2018.

Madras in 1898. By 1920s, the states of Travancore and Cochin also had separate departments for fisheries and started to explore the fisheries economy in their respective states. The waters of Travancore alone in the 1940s was calculated to be yielding 254 kg of fish per hectare and this was double the quantity produced by a hectare of water to be considered rich by the fishery experts of the world. The exploited space in the Travancore at that time was only 15% of the actual fishing area². The nature of fishing is a judicious interaction between the marine resources and skilled fishermen. The distinctive feature of the fishing technique is its diversity and solid component of exotic varieties. The diverse techniques are designed according to the nature of the distribution of fish species and topography of the ocean³. The trademarks of this approach are its sociable engagements with the aquatic world and its intrinsic limit on productivity.

The assimilated nuances of their ecosystem gained through continuous series of varied but concrete experiences and the progress of their fishing operation is a simultaneous integration of many discrete thought processes which defy verbalization in the form of any general theory on the practice of fishing⁴. The activities of the department of the Cochin and Travancore States were systematized by the establishment of the Department of Marine Biology and Fisheries in 1946. Several schemes related to extraction of marine wealth, studies on coastal fish, fish culture in fresh and brackish waters and research in the preservation of fish and fisheries products were undertaken with the financial assistance from the Centre under the “grow more” food scheme⁵.

After independence the Planning Commission tried to metamorphize every sector of economy with maximum participation of people. Kerala Fisheries gained more attention in the economic sense and introduced various schemes for effective

² K.N. Ganesh (ed.), *Kerala State Gazetteer*, Government of Kerala, 1989, pp 139-141.

³ Nikita Gopal, et. al., “Traditional Knowledge in Marine Fisheries of Kerala”, *ICAR- Central Institute of Fisheries Technology*, Kochi, 2018, p.9.

⁴ John Kurien, “Technical Assistance Projects, and Socio-Economic Change: Norwegian Intervention in Kerala’s Fisheries Development”, *EPW*, Vol.20, No.25/26, 1985, p.70.

⁵ K.N. Ganesh, *Op.Cit.*, p.140.

management and sustainable exploitation of marine resources. It was found that standard of living of the fisherfolk was very poor and majority of them was in debt and lived in extreme poverty. National Planning Committee (NPC) found that a two-fold approach in the fisheries sector was essential for its overall development. Along with the technological advancement programmes, it also gave priority to community-based development relying on the Gandhian ideal of sustaining organic solidarity. The Government of India decided to transform the fishery sector through a community development approach with the village serving as the basic unit of the development pattern. In the first phase, modernization process was implemented through co-operative societies and in the second phase, advanced fishing techniques were inculcated without making significant change in the basic structure. The NPC also gave priority to education of the community. Education and technology proceeding apace, the former creating the desire for change and the latter the means to fulfil it would help to preserve and enrich further the heritage which a community receives in the form of its natural resources⁶.

Before mechanization, Kerala's Fisheries sector operated with low capital requirements, resulting in low average production, and relying on large scale labour force for harvesting. During this phase, Kerala's fisheries sector was dependent on external assistance programmes such as Technical Cooperation Mission Programme (1947), The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and Technical Assistance Programme (1947). With the support of the INP, Kerala's rich prawn was explored and introduced into the international market. As part of this initiative, small 25-foot mechanized boats with 16-24 HP diesel engines were introduced for demonstration purposes.

In 1952, a separate department for fisheries was established and numerous fisheries development schemes were undertaken during the first five-year plan. In the case of Kerala, the productive continental shelf provided a wide scope to

⁶ Ajantha Subramanian, "Community, Class and Conservation: Development Politics on the Kanyakumari Coast", *Conservation & Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Ashoka Trust, July-December 2003, p.180.

fisheries as a source of development of the rural economy. Under the five-year plan, multipurpose objectives were synthesized like doubling of the harvest, improvement of the socio-economic conditions of fishermen, export-oriented production, creating new employment opportunities, etc. The planning board found that all these objectives could be achieved only through the combined effort of the private and public sectors. For achieving these goals, they introduced a revolutionizing modernization process in the fisheries sector.

1. Introduction of Indo-Norwegian Project, 1953

After the World War second, the UN initiated several technical assistance programmes in the developing and underdeveloped nations for reconstructing the socio-economic realms. Indo-Norwegian Project (INP) was the first in this category for supporting the developing nations. The Norwegian Government launched the technical assistance programme as an extension of the social democratic solidarity model⁷. The Norwegian government established the Norwegian Foundation for assisting the developing and underdeveloped countries in 1952.

Since its formation in 1941, UN was the main economic supporter of the developing and underdeveloped nations. From 1951 onwards the responsibility was entrusted with other developed nations as well. In 1951 Norwegian government assumed responsibility with the establishment of 'Central Committee for National Action for the Underdeveloped Countries' and inaugurated the first bilateral project of the Indo- Norwegian fish and health project, and legally signed as a treaty on 17 February 1952 in between UN, India, and Norway⁸.

After the formation of the Kerala state, the government gave priority to the fishing sector and took initiatives to organize the fishermen, raise their productivity

⁷ *Indyakku Norway yude Sahayam*, Mathrubhumi Daily, Calicut, 23/05/1953.

⁸ Karl Nandrup Dahl, "Norwegian Development Assistance: Technical Guide-lines and Political Leadership, " *Cooperation and Conflict*, Sage Publications, Ltd., Vol. 5, No. 2, 1970, pp. 85-94, <https://Www.Jstor.Org/Stable/45083072>, Accessed on 20/03/2018.

and develop fisheries as a source of their livelihood. However, Kerala's fishery sector was introduced to the international market with the launch of Indo-Norwegian Project in 1953. The initiative was marked by the export of frozen prawns to USA by a private entrepreneur from Cochin and further augmented by the initiatives of INP in the 1950s⁹.

The project commenced in January 1953 for development of the fishing community in the state of Travancore-Cochin and was a tripartite agreement signed in New Delhi between the United Nations, the Government of Norway, and the Government of India¹⁰. The Project started in the Sakthikulangara-Neendakara area and later shifted to Kochi in 1963¹¹. A central institute for training, Marine Fisheries Cooperatives, was set up at Kochi in 1963.

They offered support to India without having a primary understanding of actual problems faced by the Indian Fishermen. Furthermore, the Government of India was following the pattern of mixed economy and the mode of distribution was based on equal allocation of resources. So, the proposals put forward by the Norwegian Government was hardly welcomed by the Board of Directors in India. The Norwegian Government gave priority to food production but Indian Government advocated technical assistance programme rooting on community development. Along with the technical assistance programme some supplementary schemes were also implemented for the wellbeing of the fishermen community. This included establishment of health centres, fresh water supply and programmes for improving health and sanitary conditions of the people. A health survey was conducted to assess the well-being of the people and a clinic was opened at Puthenthura. BCG vaccination and health assessment of school going children were also conducted¹².

⁹ Kurian John, 'Technical Assistance Project and Socio-Economic Change, The Norwegian Intervention In Kerala's Fisheries Development Experience', *Op. Cit.*, p.6.

¹⁰ The Government of Thiru-Cochi, *Administration Report of the fisheries Department for the year 1953-54*, p.6.

¹¹ *Neendakarayile Norwegian Project*, Mathrubhumi Daily, Calicut, 06/07/1953.

¹² The Government of Thiru-Cochi, *Administration Report of the Fisheries Department for the year 1953-54*, p.2.

Technical Assistance Programmes of INP:

1. Two Travancore-Cochin fishing boats were sent to Norway for mechanization.
2. 20 ft. model fishing boat of the Dory-type constructed in Norway was brought to the state.
3. Trials were conducted in towing fishing boats.
4. The construction of a land quay in the beach and storehouse for storing fishing implements were completed.
5. A boat factory and a workshop were constructed.
6. Training in mechanised fishing was given to 12 boys from the fishing community¹³.

INP was implemented in two stages. The first phase was from 1953 to 1963. During this phase the activities were mainly focussed on the Travancore and Cochin regions. The second phase was from 1963 to 1972 and it was a continuation of the first phase and extended to two other maritime states of India, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu. During the initial stages, the traditional canoes were shipped to Norway and fitted with motors and brought back to Travancore. This was found not feasible and unsuitable for the Travancore waters. Later readymade smaller flat-keeled boat designed in Norway was introduced. Experiments were also conducted in shrimp trawling, freezing technology, and export of prawns.

Under this programme, an extensive survey was conducted through the entire coastal areas of the state to identify the availability of fish, their seasons and movements and efficiency of various types of fishing gears. At the same time five-year plans also prioritized the fisheries sector. The investments made by the state of Travancore-Cochin was Rs.0.27 million and the bulk of the investment made

¹³ Government of Kerala, *Administration Report of the Fisheries Department for the year 1954-55*, The SGP at the Government Press Ernakulam, 1957, pp.1-6.

during 1951-55 was from the private sector, the fishermen themselves, aided by the private funds from merchants and money lenders¹⁴. Schemes included in the second five-year plan of the newly constituted state of Kerala for fisheries were the development of fishing harbors, establishment of ice and cold storage plants, assistance to co-operatives, mechanization of small fishing boats, fish culture in inland waters and improvement of fish curing schemes.

In 1954, the Fisheries Department launched a Fisheries Research Programme and the government sanctioned three research stations. Accordingly, a Marine Survey Station at Vizhinjam, an estuarine research station at Ernakulam and a technical station at Kanyakumari were established. The Kanyakumari station consisted of a technology section which handled various aspects of fish curing and preservation and a biological station for collection of statistics of fish landings and study of fish population. The marine survey station was meant to chart out fishing grounds, study the data from offshore fishing grounds and fish population and the estuarine research station in Ernakulam was to carry on work on experimental fish farming, study of compatible species, artificial breeding, etc.¹⁵

During the second five-year plan period, Marine Biological Research Stations were established at Kozhikode, Vizhinjam, Ernakulam and Thiruvalla, conducted researches on marine and fresh water resources and studied their associated problems. The resources of the coastal and inshore regions included fish, crustaceans, shell fish, sea weeds and other plant elements. Indian Mackerel was the most important pelagic fish in India and accounted for about 10% of the total marine fish that landed on the coast. Among the commercial species, oil sardine of the Kerala coast was the most sought after. Sardine was the most popular food fish. It was widely used in the manufacture of oil, guano, and meal. Many sardine oil

¹⁴ Government of Kerala, *Administration Report of the Fisheries Department for the year 1954-55*, The SGP at the Government Press Ernakulam, 1957, p.7.

¹⁵ The Government of Thiru-Cochi, *Administrative Report of the Fisheries Department for the year 1954-55*, Thiru-Cochi Region, 1955, p.14.

industries thrived along the Kerala coast in the first part of the 20th century. The historic levels of catches accounted for about 285000 tons of oil sardine utilized in the seasons of 1922-24 to produce guano alone besides the quantity of fresh fish for consumption and that set aside for manure¹⁶. The years 1957 and 1958 were equally productive for oil sardine.

Prawns constituted the third group of commercially important fish of Kerala. The large chains of backwaters became a significant part of the economic and social setting of the Kerala economy. About 4050 hectares of single crop paddy fields along the edges of backwaters and connected canals were utilized for prawn cultivation¹⁷. A major chunk of the catch was exported to the world market especially USA, Japan, and Europe. The trade of frozen prawns and lobsters was also flourishing with Cochin as the hub of fish processing industry. Messer's, Cochin based private company started the freezing of prawns and exported frozen prawns to US in 1953¹⁸. In the initial stage large size, up to two inch headless alone were frozen but later even small sized prawns were processed and exported to the market, which triggered a 'pink gold' rush along the Kerala Coast.

In 1956 partnership between INP and the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute assessed the marine wealth of Kerala and pegged that Kerala waters were one of the world's richest prawn grounds. It led to the radical shift of INP's goal from motorization of artisanal craft to introduction of bottom trawling for prawns. The value of prawns transformed from being used as manure for coconut palms to becoming 'pink gold' of India's marine exports¹⁹. The significant profits of the prawn business attracted outsiders to the fishing industry, leading to the emergence of a class of non-operating merchant capitalists. These entrepreneurs owned and controlled the means of

¹⁶ K.N. Ganesh (ed.), *Op. Cit.*, p141.

¹⁷ C.K. "Chemmen Labhakaramaya Vyavasayam-Ruchikaramaya Bhakshanam", *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, Vol.18, 20 February, 1955.

¹⁸ Government of Thiru-Cochi, *Administration Report of the Fisheries Department for the year 1955-56*, 1956, p.2.

¹⁹ Ajantha Subramanian, *Op.Cit.*, p.183.

production but lacked fishing expertise, so they hired experienced fishermen as labourers in their new enterprise.

The preservation facilities provided by INP ensured that fishermen received the best prices for their fish. To achieve this, the organization provided access to ice plants, freezing plants, and insulated vans on a large scale²⁰. In Kerala there was a long-standing bond between fishermen and middlemen. The INP disregarded this relationship to benefit the fishermen, introducing co-operative organisations. By the end of the first phase of the INP, the focus shifted from beach landing experiments to using larger, more powerful boats for shrimp trawling and purse seining. To facilitate this, more than 100 fishermen were trained to operate mechanised boats. The INP supplied mechanised boats and modern nets to fishermen at subsidized rates, primarily to distribute increased catches in a manner that offered fishermen a larger share of the profits²¹. Additionally, the project aimed to establish a sales cooperative, fundamentally distinct from the intricate traditional system of agents and middlemen.

This led to the emergence of a new merchant class capable of transforming village products into high-value commodities in the global market. In this context, the INP acted as a supportive agent by providing technology for more efficient harvesting and processing of fish resources²². Additionally, it supported merchant interests by offering loans on a no-risk basis to capitalize on the profits from the “pink gold” phenomenon²³. By leveraging wealth from their initial endeavours, these merchants quickly re-invested in plant and machinery. By the end of the first phase of the INP, while it achieved success in technological advancements, it overlooked the social and economic development of artisanal fishermen. The changes ushered in by the INP spiralled out of control, largely beyond the

²⁰ Meenpiduthakkar, Mathrubhumi Daily, Calicut, 07-06-1953.

²¹ Government of Thiru-Cochi, *Administration Report of the Fisheries Department for the year 1955-56*, 1956, p.4.

²² Pathirasooyante Manorajyam, Mathrubhumi Daily, Calicut, 21/06/1953.

²³ Meenpiduthakkar, Mathrubhumi Daily, Calicut, 07-06-1953.

fishermen's hands. The emergence of a new capital-intensive fisheries industry compelled them to hire labourers from outside their community, signalling the collapse of the fishing industry as a local livelihood source and fish as a staple food for local consumption.

During the second phase, INP shifted towards export-oriented policies, emphasizing the establishment and development of harbours²⁴. Each fishery complex project aimed to introduce power vessels for commercial fishing operations. Shore installations comprised the construction of ice factories, freezing plants, facilities for fish processing and marketing, and boat repair and maintenance services. Supervision of the project was assumed by Government of India under the name Integrated Fisheries Project (IFP). The initiative represented an impressive high-technology fish economy model within Kerala²⁵.

In the second phase of the project, INP utilized its own vessels, marketing channels and other facilities within the fishing sector. However, this period also saw the polarization of the fish economy leading to the marginalization of majority of traditional fishermen who had minimal involvement in the project's new ventures²⁶. Consequently, it had a far-reaching and destructive impact on the socio-economic lives of these traditional fishermen. By 1966, the export trade of fish, particularly prawns, doubled for two major reasons: the devaluation of currency and export-oriented motorization in the fishery sector, which attracted outsiders and further boosted prawn exports from Kerala²⁷. In response to this trend, the fishery policies of the state also underwent changes, with the state prioritizing doubling the harvest by offering subsidies for mechanised boats for trawling and encouraging investments in labour and capital essential for the sector's rapid development. Since 1970s, the

²⁴ M K, "Nammude Thuramugangal", *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, 28 October, 1956.

²⁵ Kurien John, "Technical Assistance Projects, and Socio-Economic Change: Norwegian Intervention in Kerala's Fisheries Development", *Op.Cit.*, p.7.

²⁶ A Manipadam, "Keralathile Matsya Bhandana Vyavasayam", *Navayugam weekly*, Vol.15, 23 May, 1976.

²⁷ John Kurien, TRT Achari, "Overfishing Along Kerala Coast: Causes and Consequences", *EPW*, Vol.25, No.35, 1990, pp. 2011-2018.

fishery sector of Kerala has experienced significant dynamism in the fluctuations of fish harvest.

Table No.5.1
Productivity and Income of Fishermen in Kerala
(Income Per Capita in 1960-61 Prices)

Year	Fishermen on Trawlers		Artisanal Fishermen	
	Productivity (Tonnes/Year)	Income (RS.)	Productivity (Tonnes/Year)	Income (RS.)
1961	NA	NA	3.54	330
1965	NA	NA	3.82	380
1969/70	5.15	790	3.34	630
1974	10.04	2700	3.20	850
1979/80	7.54	2630	1.78	540
1982	7.70	1560	1.62	420

Source: John Kurien , T.R. Thankappan Achari , ‘On Ruining the Commons and the Commoner: The Political Economy of Overfishing’ , CDS Working Paper No.232, 1989, p.26

Between 1956 and 1966, traditional fishermen relied on non-mechanised craft and diverse array of fishing gears to catch fish. However, by the mid-1960s, this scene shifted significantly due to the rising demand for prawns in the international market. Until the 1970s, both fish and prawn harvests experienced a steady increase. However, by 1974, a shift occurred, and the upward trajectory of fish harvest began to decline²⁸. Overfishing resulted in depletion of fishery resources leading to a decline in the income levels of fishermen and a significant increase in the shore price of fish. Since 1974, the productivity and income levels have decreased in the fishery sector. For example, while the trawler crew harvested 10.04

²⁸ John Kurien, T.R. Thankappan Achari, ‘On Ruining the Commons and the Commoner: The Political Economy of Overfishing’, CDS Working Paper No.232, 1989, p.26.

tonnes of fish in 1974, they landed only 7.70 tonnes in 1982²⁹. The productivity of artisanal fishermen also declined significantly, from 3.20 tonnes to 1.62 tonnes in 1982. The polarization in the fish economy posed dual crises for traditional fishermen. Firstly, it threatened their livelihoods, and secondly, it triggered an ecological crisis. The shift of the fish economy towards exports led to widespread purse seine fishing. This phenomenon imposed undue pressure on marine resources and traditional fishermen alike. The initial manifestation of this pressure was seen in the form of overfishing.

The first half of 1970's witnessed the highest ever fish and prawn landings. Fishing industry became highly lucrative and there was great enthusiasm for investments in mechanised boats, small trawlers for prawn harvesting and purse seiners for harvesting oil sardines³⁰. The big trawlers operate with 122 HP Turbo engine. A trawl boat has two separate stores: one for storing fish and the other for storing ice, located in front of the boat. There were also two compartments in a trawler, one for the engine and the other kept 10 to 15 nets and ropes. The nets are dragged through the water with the help of the engines. The bottom fish can be located with the help of GPS³¹. The echo sounder also helps to identify the movement of fish according to the ocean currents and winds.

The traditional fishermen realized that the transformation of their gear and craft was a necessity to earn a livelihood. In the 1980s there was a rapid motorization of traditional craft facilitated by widespread adoption of outboard engines³². The craft and gear used by the fishermen undertook changes following motorization. It shifted to large-sized craft and gears. The motorised boats utilized a sort of mini purse seine known as ring seine. Its encircling, enclosing, and lifting process were easier than that

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Ignatius, "Samurdavum Samudra Vibhavangalum Engine Upayogapeduthanam," *Navayugam Weekly*, Vol.38, 9 October, 1976.

³¹ P.R.G Mathur, *Ecology, Technology and Economy: Continuity Among the Fisherfolk of Kerala*, Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal, 2008, p.173.

³² *Personal Interview*, Janardhanan P V, President, Kerala Traditional Fishermen Association, Nattika, 25/12/2020.

of the traditional nets. However, it still needed human muscle power as it was assisted by a pulley system to lift the bottom of the net. The use of ring seine replaced a diverse range of craft that traditional fishermen used according to the season and species of fish³³. The traditional fishing sector transitioned from using a variety of fishing crafts to relying on a single type of gear. The smaller sized craft below 15 meters needed one motor and above 15 meters required two motors for its propulsion and carrying larger ring-seines³⁴.

The fishing industry can be divided into three main stages: catching, processing, and distribution to market. 66% of the workforce in the fisheries sector involved in the catching process. The productive relation involved owner-worker dynamics in fishing operations. After mechanization the number of crew in a boat varied from five to fifty depending on the size of the vessel³⁵. The share of catch to each was determined according to their skill and nature of their work³⁶. The sharing of fish was done among the members after deducting the capital expenses like cost on the operation of the unit, refreshment charge for the crew, payments to rituals and charity to the poor. In the traditional fishing community, the ratio of income sharing was 30:70 between the owner and the crew³⁷. The total amount was divided into several shares. The number of shares was calculated based on working crew, non-working crew, and extra shares for skilled crew. The crew included both the working fishermen and ownership group. The skilled fishermen got a greater number of shares. At the same time several shares also were set apart to fishermen who had no productive role in the fishing trip. After motorization, the ratio of income sharing pattern changed to 40:60 between the owner and crew. From the

³³ John Kurien, A J Vijayan, "Income Spreading Mechanisms in Common Property Resource *Karanila* System in Kerala's Fishery", *EPW*, Vol. 30, No. 28, Jul. 15, 1995, p.172.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Personal Interview*, Appunni Aiynapully, Traditional Fisherman, Thiruvathra, Chavakkad, 11/01/2021.

³⁶ *Personal Interview*, Subhran, Traditional Fisherman, Thiruvathra, Chavakkad, 10/01/2021.

³⁷ *Personal Interview*, Rajan Pathiseeri, Traditional Fisherman, Bajanamadam Kadappuram, Koolimuttam, Kodungallur, 4/01/2021.

total income, the total operating costs for fuel, sales commission, the crew's food expenses and customary taxes were deducted leaving the divisible income. From this divisible income, 40% was the claim of the owner which was the return on capital and remaining 60% was allocated as labour costs and shared among the crew members³⁸.

Before the introduction of mechanization, fisheries thrived on a variety of productive environments. Through continuous interaction with the ocean and its fish, artisanal fishermen accumulated a wealth of scientific knowledge about diverse marine eco-systems and fish behavior passing this knowledge down through generations³⁹. The technical competence of traditional fishermen dates to this practice. A wide variety of gears, nets and technologies was applied by the fishermen according to the season. Their fishing operations were not investment-based, but focused on a sharing system with every catch organised according to a food sharing pattern from fishermen to middlemen to traders⁴⁰.

Traditional Fishermen's Response to Mechanisation

The widespread use of advanced technology led to the depletion of resources and threatened their livelihoods. Throughout the history of Kerala, the fishermen were not participants in any unified uprisings because of their position as an unorganized sector and they were often excluded from the mainstream socio-political changes occurring in the society. They marked their indirect presence in only two historical movements of Kerala, i.e., Malabar rebellion and Punnapra Vayalar uprisings⁴¹.

³⁸ *Personal Interview*, Ismail, Traditional Fisherman, Kadappuram, Chavakkad, 10/01/2021.

³⁹ John Fernandez, "Artificial Fish Habitats: A Community Programme for Bio-Diversity Conservation", *Artificial Reefs and Seafaring Technologies*, CMFRI Bulletin No. 48, 1996, pp. 42-45.

⁴⁰ *Personal Interview*, Prahaladan, Traditional Fisherman, Kurikuzhi, 14/01/2021.

⁴¹ Mathew Aerthayil, *Fish Workers' Movement in Kerala (1977-1194):- The Role of Non-party Political Organisations in Social Transformation in India*, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, 2000, p.53.

During Punnapra Vayalar Uprising Simon Asan, a prominent communist leader organised the fishermen against the oppression of the land lords. The revolt was suppressed and consequently the union of the fish workers also collapsed. In the Malabar rebellion some fishermen also participated as a protest of the imposition of tax on fishing nets by the British⁴².

The underprivileged fishermen, especially outside the project area, were very aggressive towards the boat owners and the INP project. Additionally, the INP generated discontent among fish merchants. They saw the new project as a threat to their existence. Multiple conflicts occurred between fishermen and fish merchants, fishermen with mechanised boats, fishermen with canoes, fish merchants and INP sale cooperatives and communal tensions between various caste groups⁴³. Violent clashes erupted between traditional fishermen and mechanized boats frequently along the Kerala coast⁴⁴.

The major political parties under the banner of CITU, AITUC tried to organize the fishermen but their activities were limited to only a few pockets in coastal villages⁴⁵. Most of the fishermen were reluctant to join these political party-based trade unions, due to their adherence to ritualistic ideologies and superstitions. As violent struggles escalated, fishermen gradually began to organise at the regional level⁴⁶. They associated, along non-party lines, with the Latin Catholic Church that took the initiative, primarily. There were six district level fishermen's unions from which a state level union evolved in 1977: (i) Ashtamudi Kayal Malsya Thozhilali Union (Inland Fishermen) in Kollam District (ii)

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.54

⁴³ Arne Martin Klausen, "Technical Assistance and Social Conflict: A Case Study from the Indo-Norwegian Fishing Project in Kerala, South India", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.1, No.1, Sage Publications, 1964, pp.5-8, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/422803>, Accessed on 08/03/2018.

⁴⁴ *Personal Interview*, Ismail, Traditional Fisherman, Kadappuram, Chavakkad, 10/01/2021.

⁴⁵ *Personal Interview*, Harish, Retired Head Master, GVHS Kaipamangalam, 05/01/2021.

⁴⁶ *Personal Interview*, Ali, Traditional Fisherman, Thiruvatra, Chavakkad, 10/01/2021.

Alappuzha Fishermen Union, (iii) Vijayapuram Diocesan Fishermen Union (Inland Fishermen) in Kottayam District, (iv) Thiruvananthapuram District Fishermen's Union (v) Alappuzha District Fishermen Union (vi) Kochi Area Malsya Thozhilali Union in Ernakulam District⁴⁷. Recognizing their common grievances, they realized the importance of forming a state-wide organization to increase their bargaining power. Consequently, the union leaders met in Alappuzha and established a state-level organization called the Latin Catholic Fishermen's Federation (LCFF). Through their protest movements, they came to understand the necessity of forming a multi-religious organization to muster maximum strength in addressing the challenges faced by the traditional fishermen. In March 1980 the LCFF changed its name to Kerala Swathantra Malsya Thozhilali Federation (KSMTF)⁴⁸.

Against this backdrop, the traditional fishermen submitted a memorandum outlining their demands including delimiting the fishing operations of mechanised boats to beyond five kilometres from the shore, banning mechanised trawling from June to August, implementing measures to prevent water pollution in inland waters and banning Pelagic nets, providing pension, Provident funds, medical insurance for fishermen etc. Protests were held across Kerala with other working classes also joining in solidarity with the fishermen. In 1984 the KSMTF and *Dheevara Sabha* jointly organised many struggles⁴⁹. It organized huge rallies, demonstrations, picketing, and hunger strikes at all coastal districts of the State. Fishermen of Central Kerala also participated in these major struggles, as it directly impacted their livelihoods⁵⁰.

⁴⁷ Mathew Aerthayil, *Op.Cit.*, p.36.

⁴⁸ *Personal Interview*, Janardhanan P V, President, Kerala Traditional Fishermen Association, Nattika, 25/12/2020.

⁴⁹ John Kurien, and Antonito Paul, 'Social Security Nets for Marine Fisheries', CDS Working paper, No.318, October 2001, , p.33.

⁵⁰ *Personal Interview*, Mani T S, Traditional Fisherman, P. Vemballur, Kodungallur, 18/12/2021

The traditional fishermen believed that the unregulated and indiscriminate bottom trawling for prawns and excessive purse seining for oil sardines and mackerel were the primary causes for ecological crisis. The trawl nets were designed to catch even the most valuable fish species like shrimps and were extensively used in the mechanised boats. It was a mobile and non-selective fishing gear collecting all micro-organisms from seabed and catching even non-targeted species. This type of intensive fishing practice disrupted the complex ecological processes of the oceans⁵¹.

Their main demands were economic zoning for small scale fishermen, a blanket ban on destructive fishing techniques and a systematic regulation and management of the living marine resources of Kerala. Nevertheless, the capitalist class eyed it as a productive field for investment⁵². A combination of economic, technological, and social factors interacting in a specific context resulted in the destruction of Marine resources.

Governmental Response to Fishermen's Struggles

A socio-economic study conducted by UNRISD in collaboration with the Kerala Statistical Institute between 1979 and 1984 found that the poverty of the fishing community could be alleviated through the combined effort of private and public interventions. This multidimensional approach should encompass health, nutrition, education, improvements in working conditions, consumption and saving, housing, clothing, social security, and human freedom⁵³. The socio-ecological and political struggles of the fishing community forced the government to prioritize their plight. Emphasis was placed on social security and livelihood-oriented programmes for the fisherfolk and there was a conscious attempt to

⁵¹ A. Biju Kumar and G.R. Deepthi, "Trawling and Bycatch -Implications on Marine Ecosystem", *Current Science*, Vol.90, No.7, 2006, p. 922, <https://www.Jstor.Org/Stable/24091947>, Accessed on 09/04/2021.

⁵² Ramakrishnan Korakandy, "Purse Seine Fishing in Kerala - Its Economics and Politics", *EPW*, Vol.19, No.13, March 13, 1984, p.14.

⁵³ John Kurien, "Changing profile of Poverty Among Kerala's Marine Fishing Communities: Are they still Outliers", DRAFT -- For State Development Report, August, 2004, p.2.

support technological change with broader benefits. By 1980s, independent socio-ecological movements emerged from the fishing communities, as a protest the denial policies of the government and other institutions and their grievances became the focus of national interest.

The Kerala Marine Fishing Regulation Act- 1980

The Kerala Marine Fishing Regulation Act of 1980 was aimed to conserve marine resources and protect the interests of traditional fishermen. The Act prohibited purse seining within the territorial waters of the state. It earmarked the areas of operation of mechanized and non-mechanized crafts. The Act made compulsory the registration of the mechanized boats and procurement of license for operating in the territorial waters. The main objective of the Act of 1980 was to safeguard the interests of traditional fishermen and the conservation of marine fishery resources by maintaining law and order in the sea. The Act envisaged the registration of all fishing vessels, issue of license, control of total number of fishing vessels, banning of fishing gears in specific areas, impounding fishing vessels that violated various provisions, adjudication, appeal provisions, etc.

By this Act the mechanized boats were permitted to operate only beyond 10 kms. The use of purse seine, ring seine and pelagic trawls were prohibited in the entire 20 km of territorial waters of Kerala. As per the Act the adjudicating officers were empowered to award penalties not less than 25000 but which may be extended to Rs. 50000⁵⁴. The adjudicating officer had the right to confiscate the fishing boat if it violated the various provisions of KMFR Act for the second time⁵⁵.

Artisanal fishermen blamed the mechanized boats' destructive fishing activities for the decline in fish stocks and their subsequent loss of income. From 1980s onwards Fishermen responded with political and technological countermeasures. Occasionally,

⁵⁴ The Kerala Marine Fishing Regulation Act- 1980, Government of Kerala, ACT 10 OF 1981

⁵⁵ K.N. Ganesh (ed.), *Op. Cit.*, p.161.

isolated physical standoffs occurred at sea between the trawlers, purse-seiners, and traditional fishermen. The primary demand of the fishermen was to regulate trawlers and purse seiners and establish zoning of coastal waters to restrict trawler access near coastal shores. They also advocated for a total ban on trawling operations during the monsoon season from June to August, recognized as the breeding season for many fish species. There was also a strong appeal from the environmentalists for monsoon trawling ban. From 1981 onwards there were organized struggles by the fishermen. Until 1983 these agitations were led by independent trade unions, but by 1984 all the major political parties had created trade unions and they joined the stir. The movements were non-violent protests but gained national attention through media coverage. They also received support from environmentalists and ecology groups.

In response to the technological changes the traditional fishermen began to use outboard engines in their traditional crafts by 1981-82. They utilized Yamaha outboard engines ranging from 9.9 HP to 25 HP and 40 HP⁵⁶. Three new boat designs emerged, incorporating advanced technology: Small fiber-covered *Kettuvallam*, big *Kettuvallam*, big fiber-covered *Kettuvallam*. In big *Kettuvallam* 20 fishermen can go fishing with nylon *Tangu Vala* (encircling net)⁵⁷. The *Tanguvallam* applies the technique of *Valnjipidikkal*. In *kettuvallam* the *Aniyakkaran* and *Amarakkaran* got additional shares for bumper catches of 1.50% and 1.35% respectively.

The use of outboard engines led to slight improvement in fish harvests in the traditional sector. This mechanical power enabled the adoption of more active fishing techniques, including smaller versions of trawl nets and purse seine nets. The political strikes of the fishermen were a reaction to the denial of their traditional, historical, and communal rights over the coastal commons.

⁵⁶ *Personal Interview*, Ali, Traditional Fisherman, Thiruvatra, Chavakad, 10/01/2021.

⁵⁷ *Personal Interview*, Ismail, Traditional Fisherman, Kadappuram, Chavakkad, 10/01/2021;

Expert Committees

In 1981 the Government of Kerala appointed an expert committee headed by Dr. Babu Paul to investigate the problems of traditional fisherfolk. Babu Paul committee was appointed in August 1981 under the chairmanship of S. Babu Paul, IAS. The committee, comprising of 13 members, recommended a trawling ban during monsoon, but failed to reach a unanimous decision on this issue. Its recommendations did not address the basic issues satisfactorily. In March 1984, Kalawar committee was appointed chaired by Dr. Kalawar, a fishery consultant for the state of Maharashtra. The committee's report opposed a total ban on trawling during monsoon and suggested permitting night-time trawling beyond 20 m depth range but the suggestion was not acceptable to all. The Kalawar committee also attempted to assess the excess fishing effort in Kerala's fishery. It advocated a total ban on purse seiners stating that the traditional sector could operate at an optimal level of effort especially with the emergence of a more efficient fleet of motorised canoes⁵⁸. The committee argued that there was little need for purse seine fishery for small pelagic species like oil sardine, mackerel, and white bait in Kerala.

In 1988, the Balakrishnan Nair committee was appointed. The 10-member committee chaired by Prof. Balakrishnan Nair recommended a ban on monsoon trawling during the months of June, July, and August. It suggested extending monsoon trawling for a continuous period of three years, with the condition that its impact would be scientifically studied during this time. In 1992, the Kerala government imposed a ban on bottom trawling for all boats in the territorial waters. The Kerala High Court supported the findings of Kalawar commission and another two reports of the special officers appointed by the State Government and observed that "mechanized nets like the purse seine do an irreparable damage to the existing stock of fish by killing the juvenile fish and fish eggs and by preventing fish breeding"⁵⁹.

⁵⁸ TRT Achari, "Mal Development of a Fishery: A case study of Kerala State, India", *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*, 1987, pp.185-186.

⁵⁹ Ambrose Pinto, et.al., "No Fish To Eat, Impact of Liberalization", *EPW*, 28 January, 1995. p.204.

As a remedy to this problem, the State Government proposed zoning methods in coastal waters. The zoning provisions redefined rights pertaining to access and resource exploitation by imposing dual restrictions on mechanized boats in the form of spatial zoning and at a larger stage, temporal zoning or monsoon ban on mechanized fishing⁶⁰. The spatial zoning-imposed restrictions on mechanized boats in inshore fishing areas, while temporal zoning prohibited mechanized fishing during the monsoon season⁶¹. These zoning measures were suggested to minimize the negative impact of advanced technology on both the traditional sector and marine resources.

Even larger fishing units did not enjoy much patronage from the state government. However, technological advancements continued to improve and competition intensified. The phenomenon of over-capitalization also became apparent in this sector. With increased investments in high-powered motors and large fishing nets, fishers were able to make up for seasonal fluctuations and recover their initial investments.

Kerala Fishermen Welfare Societies Act (KFWS Act) 1980

After 1980s, the fisheries sector of Kerala underwent a transformation from open access fishing to increased commercialization. However, despite this, the productivity per worker and per unit of capital invested declined due to the steady increase in the number of workers and the steep increase in the capital investment. For traditional fishermen, this resulted in decreased income levels, deteriorating quality of life, and higher occupational risks forced them to organize struggles. During this period, the government considered social security measures to address their grievances. Social Security involves utilizing social means to prevent deprivation or vulnerability to deprivation⁶². The social measures, also referred to as

⁶⁰ William Joe, "Strategy of Zoning in Marine Fisheries: Evidence from Kerala", *EPW*, Vol.43, No.9, 2008, p.62.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.63.

⁶² John Kurien and Antonito Paul, *Op. Cit.*, pp.5-6.

public action include measures taken at the level of the state, community, or the family.

Although co-operative societies were formed during the second five-year plan period, the fishermen had no control in the management of the societies. It was handled by the rich people in the community. The enactment of Kerala Fishermen Welfare Societies Act (KFWS Act) 1980 provided for a grass root level nodal agency. As a result of this, the coastal areas were delimited into 222 villages and an equal number of Fishermen Welfare Societies were constituted. After the formation of Kerala State Cooperative Federation for Fisheries Development Limited (Matsyafed-1985), the FWS was replaced in 1988 with 81 Fishermen Development Welfare Co-operative Societies covering the entire coast of Kerala⁶³

Matsyafed: Matsyafed was established in 1985 to strengthen developmental assistance to the traditional sector. The main objective of Matsyafed was to enable credit institutions like the World Bank, NCDC, HUDCO and others to finance projects in this previously neglected sector. The initiative also sought to expand the beach-based marketing system, providing traditional fishermen with greater control over their catch and facilitating the sale of fresh, quality fish to consumers at reasonable prices. NCDC aided Integrated Fisheries Development Project funded Rs. 82 crores for the fisheries development, targeting an increase in fish production in the traditional marine sector from 215000 tonnes to 310000 tonnes in 1990⁶⁴. The program aimed to boost per capita production in the traditional marine sector by 25%, increasing it from 1.6 to 2 tonnes per fisherman.

A World Bank-funded project, the Prawn Culture Project, aimed to develop 15, 000 hectares of land for prawn culture, with a total investment of Rs. 134 crores.

⁶³ J.B. Rajan, *Development or Displacement? Snapshots from Small Scale Fisheries in Kerala*, KILA, Thrissur, 2002, p.16.

⁶⁴ K N Ganesh (ed.), *Op.Cit.*, p.158

The project also envisaged to establish three prawn production units with an extension wing, three freezing plants and one marketing house. To enhance the technological capabilities of traditional fishermen, Matsyafed pursued international collaborations. It decided to establish a joint venture company with 26% equity participation in the total cost of the project.

Matsyafed submitted a 50-lakh project for manufacturing value added fishery products in a commercial scale at the Cochin plant. All the equipment and technology received 100% grant from the bilateral assistance agency, Norwegian Agency for Development corporation (NORAD).

The main objectives of the project were:

- To convert the cheap priced fish into value added products.
- To ensure additional employment and income for the fishermen.
- To ensure the quality of fish supplied to the local markets
- To promote export trade in quality processed food products.

The project also envisaged the expansion of deep-sea fishing and designed new strategies for fish marketing. Along with the technical assistance programmes, Matsyafed prioritized the social security of the fishermen. Its main programmes included *Vidyakendrams*, lump-sum grants and other welfare measures. As part of its extension programme, the Matsyafed opened 30 *Vidyakendrams* in selected 15 fishing villages. This scheme aimed to provide non-formal education to the fisherfolk. This programme sought to educate the fishermen about their significant role in co-operative fishing, liberate them from common issues like alcoholism, exploitation by middlemen and increase their awareness on various development schemes designed by the government and non-governmental agencies.

From 1984-85 onwards, children from the fishing community were awarded metric and post-metric scholarships for professional and technical courses. New

schemes were introduced to support the fishermen enabling them to secure loans from commercial banks at subsidised rates. For example, banks provided loans with a 15% subsidy for buying craft and gear and a 25% subsidy for motorization. When a fisherman died or went missing while fishing, the banks offered an insurance amount of Rs.10000. The banks also provided financial assistance to the fishermen who lost their fishing equipment. There were also extended housing schemes, Vyasa stores and kerosene distribution schemes aimed at the development of the fishermen⁶⁵.

Matsya Board: It was established in 1986 under the Fishermen Welfare Fund Act of 1985, for the wellbeing of the fishermen. The main objective of the Matsya board was to co-ordinate and intensify welfare assistance for fishermen. It is known as Kerala Fishermen's welfare fund scheme. The fund for the Matsya Board was created through the contributions from several stakeholders. It includes the Government, fish workers, those who owned fishing implements, fish merchants and the fish exporters. The dealers, the owner of the fishing craft and net shall contribute to the fund every month by the provisions of the Fishermen Welfare Fund Act of 1985⁶⁶. The fishermen can contribute to the fund Rs.30 per year for a period of three years and there after three percent of the value of the fish caught by him during a year.

Acting as a nodal agency for welfare schemes, every fisherman registered under the Welfare Fund Act became a beneficiary of Matsya board. It had both promotional and protective measures for the welfare of the fishermen. Protective measures include death and disability insurance, non-accident death compensation, old age pension and financial aid for temporary disability, funeral expenses of dependents etc. The promotional measures include cash award and scholarship for the best students, family planning and sanitation schemes.

⁶⁵ K.N. Ganesh (ed.), *Op.Cit.*, pp. 159.

⁶⁶ Government of Kerala, *The Kerala Fishermen's Welfare Fund Scheme*, 1986, p.120.

Coastal Regulation Zone Management Notification- 1991

One of the favourable actions taken by the government was the Coastal Regulation Zone Management Notification enforced in 1991 under the aegis of the Ministry of Environment and Forests under the Environment Protection Act, 1986⁶⁷. The CRZ notification was issued to protect the fragile eco-system of coastal areas by classifying it in to four zones. The Four Zones are

- i) Ecologically sensitive areas between low tide and high tide lines
- ii) the areas that have already developed or close to the shoreline
- iii) the areas that are relatively undisturbed and that do not belong to either of the first two zones.
- iv) It covers coastal zones of Andaman, Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands and other small Islands⁶⁸.

The CRZ notification prohibited setting up of or expansion of industries, dumping of waste, construction activities etc. The government also issued guidelines for the beach resort hotels. It was welcomed as a progressive law both by the fishing community and the environmentalists as it gave priority to the protection of marine resources from unregulated exploitation. It also gave importance to the rights of the traditional fishing communities on coastal spaces and ensured livelihood security. Yet, despite its clauses prohibiting and restricting activities along the coast, many remained unimplemented. The main drawback of the notification was the lack of a proper monitoring system to ensure strict implementation of its clauses. In effect, the active collusion between the commercial interests of lobbies and the government resulted in repeated dilutions of the law and total non-implementation of its regulatory procedures, failing to achieve even its primary objectives. The CRZ notification also adversely affected the housing arrangements of the fisherfolk as

⁶⁷ Manju Menon, et. al., "Coastal Zone Management: Better or Bitter Fare?", *EPW*, Vol. 42, No. 38, Sep. 22 - 28, 2007, pp. 3838-3840.

⁶⁸ Ramakrishnan Korkandy, "State of the Environment in Kerala: What Price the Development Model?", *EPW*, Vol. 35, No. 21/22, May 27 - Jun. 2, 2000, p.1083.

58.4% of their households in Kerala was set up within an area of 100 meters from sea coast, where new construction or replacement of existing houses was restricted⁶⁹. 24.7% of total fishermen households were erected in the area between 100M and 200M from shore where only re-construction was permitted⁷⁰. It was estimated that there are 24, 851 fishermen houses situated within 50 M distance from the sea shore. Out of it, 10, 000 fishermen households were highly vulnerable to vagaries of sea including sea erosion⁷¹.

At the international level, there existed a Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) organisation to make decisions regarding the safety of life and implementation of measures for fishermen and coastal populations aimed at fisheries management, resource conservation, sustainable exploitation, and mariculture production⁷². The aim of MSP was to ensure healthy co-existence among multiple users and to protect the marine resources. The aims and objectives of MSP was discussed in the first earth summit in 1992. The member countries agreed to set up MSP based national network of Marine Protected areas by 2012. Being a multi-use planning objective, MSP actively involves and addresses matters of biologically and ecologically sensitive areas. Its focus areas are eco-system-based management catch, by-catch issues, marine resource development, etc. The Marine Fishing Policy of India in 2004 envisaged zoning within territorial waters with demarcation of areas for traditional, motorized, and small mechanised fishing vessels falling under the purview of the coastal state/union territory⁷³. In Kerala CMFRI has taken the

⁶⁹ It was more pronounced in Thiruvananthapuram and Malappuram Districts where it was 84.6% and 79.8% respectively.

⁷⁰ Coastal Regulation Zone Management Notification- 1991, Ministry of Environment & Forests.

⁷¹ State Planning Board, Government of Kerala, Thirteenth Five-Year Plan 2017-2022. Working Group on Fisheries Report Agriculture Division, Thiruvananthapuram, 2017, p.49.

⁷² P. Dinesh Babu, et.al., "Marine Spatial Planning for Resource Conservation, Fisheries Management and for Ensuring Fishermen Security - Global Perspective and Indian Initiatives", *Current Science*, Vol.116, No.4, Current Science Association, Bangalore, 25 February 2019, p .562, <https://Www.Jstor.Org/Stable/10.2307/27137898>, Accessed on 07/04/2022.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.562.

initiative to collect and document activities in the marine zone on a spatial platform by preparing an inventory of fishing activities and fishery information⁷⁴.

Despite promotional and protective measures, most fishermen in Kerala have been left out of the state's development experience. A combination of state and community initiatives were tried to improve the living conditions of the fishermen. The development initiatives included the rules regulating access to sea, organising fisher folks on a cooperative basis for marketing fish, giving loans and credit, imparting knowledge, and equipping them with modern techniques of fishing and fish processing. Since independence, the government has implemented several schemes for the development of fishermen, which had moderate impact, and they are still lived in penury.

Traditional Fishermen in the Era of Globalization

Globalization is the process of integrating various economies of the world while minimizing any impediments to the free flow of goods, services, technology, capital, and human capital⁷⁵. Globalization aims at looking upon the world as global village and labour flows as an essential component of it⁷⁶. The main feature of globalization is capital accumulation and increased output with an eye on market expansion. Globalization brought a renewed focus on integrating rural economies into the global market and financial systems. This trend is visible in the fisheries sector as well.

Globalization opened the doors of the Indian sea to the foreigners, turning Kerala's marine fisheries into a profitable ground for investment. This wave of globalization led to large-scale investment in harvesting and processing, incorporating advanced technology and creating a technological dualism in the fish

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Uma Kapila, *Indian Economy Since Independence*, Academic Foundation, New Delhi, 2016, p.663.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*

economy. The existing artifacts and crafts were labelled as traditional which were incapable of making a successful transition.

During the early phase of globalization, the basic socio-economic dynamism was towards outward manifestations and was more pervading and inclusive. Initially, traditional fishermen were connected to the global market only through their products, but later, global market forces exerted control over economic and technological aspects of production, influencing the harvesting technologies used by small-scale fisheries⁷⁷. The incorporation was deemed complete, characterized by a direct and actual absorption of the sector into the capitalist system. As time advanced, the opportunities became more pronounced but the future became less predictable.

According to Marxist and neo-Marxist thinkers, capital is an important social relation of production that integrates various organizational forms into its exchange process⁷⁸. They advocated that non-capitalist household units of production facilitate mediation of capitalistic penetration by local social structures. Furthermore, such small units enjoy a greater advantage in activities that require intensive and skilled management and labour practices.

The access of global market information via mobile phones intensified the fishing efforts for targeted species. There was no institutional restriction on such expansion. The benefit of market fluctuations was mainly reaped by the mechanised fishing sector through increased capital expansion⁷⁹. Main markets for sea food products of Kerala are Japan, European Union member countries, USA, South East Asia, and the Middle east. The Major share of the export goes to

⁷⁷ John Kurien, 'Small Scale Fisheries in the Context of Globalization', CDS Working Paper, October, 1998, p.10.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.11

⁷⁹ Mark Axelrod, et. al, "Cascading Globalization and Local Response: Indian Fishers' Response to Export Market Liberalization", *The Journal of Environment & Development*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Sage Publications, 2015, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26197952>, Accessed on 07/05/2022.

European Union followed by USA and Japan⁸⁰. The overseas export of fish and fish products led to the scarcity of fish in the local markets and affected the poor fish consumers.

Indiscriminate fishing of the penaeid prawn since 1990, a highly sought after commodity in the international market resulted in irreparable damage to the marine ecosystem by destroying the eggs and larvae of several fish varieties in the inshore sea bottom⁸¹. The most dominant species in the sector was Penaeid prawns followed by stomatopods and cephalopods. There was also demand for low-valued oil sardines and Indian Mackerel. However, between 1994 and 2004 there was a significant change in the demand curve. Penaeid prawns along with oil sardines maintained their prominence along with ribbon fish and Mackerel. While oil sardines dominated the catch in terms of quantity, penaeid prawns yielded the highest value. It is estimated that 17% of the world's marine fishery resources are over exploited, 52% fully exploited and 20% moderately exploited⁸².

Main issue created by the bottom trawling is by-catch and discarding of non-targeted species of the catch. It threatens the existence of marine ecosystem and biodiversity. The shrimp trawling has the highest level of discard/catch ratios in comparison to other fisheries. Trawling leads to the killing of many juveniles and non-targeted species, thereby disturbing the seabed habitats and injuring majority of the benthic organisms⁸³. Benthic habitats serve as shelters and food sources for demersal fish species. The recurrent disturbances in the benthic habitats would damage the marine resources and consequently result in the decline of marine fish landings. As a result of frequent disturbances, marine resources are affected, resulting in the decline of fish landings. Moreover, trawling eliminates several

⁸⁰ Government of Kerala, Economic Review, 2000, p.144.

⁸¹ Preeti Kapuria, "Limits to Sustainable Fish Catch: The Case of Marine Fishery In Kerala", *Environment and Development Economics*, Vol. 16, No. 5, Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 623.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 632.

⁸³ A. Biju Kumar and G.R. Deepthi, *Op.Cit.*, p 923.

biological organisms lowering the seabed productivity. Since many of these occurrences are outside direct human observation, they largely go unrecorded and unnoticed⁸⁴.

Depletion of Marine Resources

Globalization opened the fisheries sector to the outsiders who were equipped with modern technology and were profit oriented. It altered the traditional system of fishing and fishermen which was based on sustainable development. The new gear, trawlers and ring seine were harmful to the sustainable nature of the fishery sector. The coastal waters of Kerala experienced tremendous pressure with the increasing number of fishermen abounding with fishing equipment within a limited area. Thus, a combination of factors such as open access model, indiscriminate technology use, demand driven price increase, investment boosting government subsidies, population growth etc. gave rise to overfishing⁸⁵.

Overfishing can be classified into two types: economic and biological. When marginal cost of an additional unit of fishing effort exceeds marginal revenues, it is called economic overfishing⁸⁶. Inefficient allocation of labour and capital can lead to economic losses despite improvements in total catch.

When the yield of an additional unit of fishing effort becomes negative, preventing the fish production stock from reaching its maximum sustainable yield, it is called biological overfishing. Fish species are generally categorized as pelagic or demersal. Pelagic fish live at the surface level of water while demersal fish dwell at the bottom of the sea. Examples of pelagic fish include oil sardines, mackerel, anchovies, ribbon fish and carangids. The penaeid prawns, soles, sciaenid's, perches, and catfish belong to the category of demersal. Among these oil sardines, mackerel and penaeid prawns are three primary economic species.

⁸⁴ A. Biju Kumar and G.R. Deepthi, *Op.Cit.*, p. 924.

⁸⁵ John Kurien and T R Thankappan Achari, "Overfishing Along Kerala Coast Causes and Consequences", *EPW*, Vol.25, 1990, p.2011.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.2013.

The relationship between prey and predators as well as competition for food play a crucial role in shaping the balance of nature. Purse seine nets and bottom trawling caused over fishing of pelagic and demersal species. There emerged a phenomenon of target fishing operations using the purse seine nets to meet the booming demand for specific species in the international market. Increasing competition and increasing demand for fish has become a driving factor for over exploitation of marine fisheries resources.

The decrease in harvest and rise in shore price affected the food habits of the poor people who are dependent on seafood. Commonly oil sardine and other pelagic fish are considered as a source of affordable protein for the lower income households. While wealthy and middle-income households may have access to alternative protein sources, poor consumers who are less likely to change their dietary habits easily, are adversely affected by changes in the availability of these fish.

Government recognized that addressing malnutrition problems could be achieved by making fish more affordable. This could be accomplished by promoting small scale fisheries, enabling them to maintain low overhead costs and avoiding direct competition with trawlers. “Any good fisheries programmes should be able to pass five major tests as devised by Galtung - contributing more protein to the neediest, leading to better standard of living for fishermen, more egalitarian social structure, strengthening the ecological balance and protecting aquatic life”⁸⁷.

The marine resource management system should prioritize improving the biological productivity of coastal waters while restricting harvesting technology. The biological characteristics of the resources should dictate the type and scale of harvesting technology to be employed. This way, sustainability can be ensured.

⁸⁷ Ambrose Pinto, et. al., *Op.Cit.*, p.206.

Migration of Fish Workers

Another phenomenon observed in the fishery sector with the advent of the advanced technology and globalization was the migration of the fish workers. Migration refers to the act of going away and staying away, and the term remains appropriate when this movement becomes permanent over time and merges into a wandering existence. The scarcity of fish and decreasing income levels impelled the mobility of fish workers.

There are two forms of labour mobility observed on the Kerala coast, i.e., spatial, and occupational. Spatial movement of the fishermen were influenced by commutation, circulation, and migration of fishes⁸⁸. Commutation is the term used to describe the tracking of fish migrations and Commuters are people who make regular trips away from home, typically returning within a 24-hour period. Fishermen used to move to other villages for fishing. The nature of commutation is rapidly changing with the advent of modern technologies⁸⁹.

Circulation is another key feature that contributes to labour mobility in the fishing industry. Circulation involves the cyclical movement of people returning to their origin, which may be temporary or prolonged. In the fishing industry, circulation is exemplified by the seasonal migration of fishermen. Circulation is two types (a) short term and short distance (b) long term and long distance⁹⁰. The short-term circulation extends for a period of three months and is confined to adjoining neighbouring districts. It is based on natural phenomenon. When the sea becomes rough or the village has no fish landing facilities, they seek facilities for fish landing. The long-term circulation is influenced by biological and technological factors. As a result of long-term circulation, the days of employment and income of the fishermen increases.

⁸⁸ J.B. Rajan, *Development or Displacement? Snapshots from Small Scale Fisheries in Kerala*, KILA, Thrissur, 2022, p.88.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.89

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Occupational mobility can take two forms: intergenerational and intragenerational⁹¹.

Intergenerational occupational mobility is determined by the hereditary nature of the job and is found very less in the present generation. Intragenerational occupational mobility can be categorized into two types: inter-sectoral mobility, which involves switching between sectors, and intra-sectoral mobility, which involves movement within a sector. The inter-sectoral occupational mobility is studied based on employment status of the male workforce and is low due to their low educational status.

The number of fishermen declined during the period between 1980 and 2010 due to insufficient opportunities in the traditional sector and this led to occupational mobility. The statistics of the fishermen population in the Thrissur district indicates a downward trend from 1980 to 2010. The occupational mobility caused the decline of traditional fisherfolk, which is clear in the marine fisheries censuses.

Table No. 5.2

District Profile of Marine Fishing Villages and Fishermen Families-Thrissur District -1980-2010

Sl. No.	Year	Landing Centres	Fishing Villages	Fishermen Families	Traditional Fishermen Families
1	1980	19	22	8295	NA
2	2005	19	18	6598	5448
3	2010	21	18	5448	4880

Source: CMFRI, Marine Fisheries Census, Government of India, Kerala, Kochi, 1980, 2005 and 2010.

According to the Marine Fisheries census report of CMFRI, in 1980 Thrissur district has 19 fishing villages and traditional fishermen families numbered 8295. In

⁹¹ J.B. Rajan, 'Labour Mobility in Small Scale Fisheries Sector of Kerala', CDS Working Paper No.44, 2002, pp. 66-67.

1980 there is no classification of fishermen families and traditional fishermen families. But in 2005 and 2010 there is a classification between the two. It also indicates that the number of fishing villages and traditional fishermen families dwindled in 2010. It shows the traditional fishermen's partial exit and intrusion of fish workers from outside.

Small Scale Fisheries

The term small scale fisheries originated in the backdrop of globalization. Its synonyms like subsistence, traditional, inshore etc. were widely used in this phase. The hallmark of the small-scale fisheries sector was its dynamism and self-reliance which was shattered in the storm of globalization. The advocates of globalization believed that small-scale industries would disappear because of the new capitalist economic order. Despite the neglect from the side of liberalization and globalization, the so-called traditional sector survived as small-scale units in this phase⁹². Although exploited by middlemen, artisanal fishermen retained a relative freedom in determining sources of resources, access, and harvesting practices. The traditional fishery sector operated under a framework of common property access. The traditional mechanism had set of fishing practices that limited external interference. Technical barriers required specific skills from fishers and only approved technology was used as determined by the collective community. Social barriers also discouraged private investment in the fishing sector. There was a specified set of rights based on customary agreements that emphasized social concerns and conflicts often arose over the use of common resources. However, all these customary practices were changed with the introduction of globalization. Although the traditional fishermen constituted a considerable segment, their share of fishery output diminished⁹³.

⁹² John Kurien, 'Small Scale Fisheries in the Context of Globalization', *Op.Cit.*, p14.

⁹³ John Kurien and T R Thankappan Achari, "Overfishing Along Kerala Coast Causes and Consequences", *Op.Cit.*, p.3.

In the era of globalization, small-scale fisheries tried to hold their reins in the technological whirlwind by introducing age-appropriate technology. Outboard motors and nylon nets marked the first step in modernizing fishing practices. Between 1991 and 2000 Kerala's fishery sector witnessed wide spread use of OBM and ply wood boats. This resulted in the increase of the coast of fishing and gradual phase out of traditional craft. The introduction of outboard engine and other techniques helped them to get back to the shore early and attain higher price for their harvest but only nominal gains were reaped out of this change. Fishermen were locked in on the OBM and became deskilled in relation to the use of sustainable energy technologies perfected over the centuries. At the same time the government followed the policy of open access of coastal waters to the outsiders and there were no regulations in horse power of OBMs. The outboard engines needed replacement in every two years. The economic burden of engine replacement led to severe indebtedness among the fisher folk. The actual benefit from propulsion revolution was reaped by the moneylenders and fish traders. Other than these, multinational companies who were manufacturing outboard engines made considerable profit from this situation. The mechanization process was slow and the cost was not affordable for the traditional fishermen. The statistics of the Marine fisheries census shows the number of craft used by the fishermen of the Thrissur District.

Table No. 5.3

Fishing Craft Used by the Fishermen of Thrissur District

Sl. No.	Year	Mechanised	Motorized	Non-Motorized	Total
1	1980	61	-	1523	5184
2	1990	152	598	1518	2268
3	2000	131	2502	1351	3984
4	2010	195	670	217	1082

Source: CMFRI, Marine Fisheries Census, Kerala, Government of India, Kochi, 1980, 2010 and Economic Review, State Planning Board, Thiruvananthapuram, 1990, 2000.

The Table No.5.3 indicates that in 1980, the number of mechanised craft used by the fishermen was 61, and 1523 were relied on non-motorised craft. The fishermen of the district did not possess the motorised crafts. In 1990 the motorised craft used by the fishermen was 598 then it increased to 2502 in 2000 but the number declined to 670 due to the decrease in the number of the traditional fishermen. The table shows that the fishermen's movement towards motorisation and mechanisation was very slow. Mechanisation made a significant impact on the fishing industry but had less effect on traditional fishermen. The socio-economic background of the fishermen posed obstacles in their transformation.

Even after ground breaking technological advancements, the fishermen remained poor. Employment opportunities and income of fishermen gradually declined. It is estimated that in 1968-69 a fisherman averaged 184 working days and earned about Rs. 5 per day from fishing. By 1980-81, this plummeted to 157 working days with an average income of Rs. 21.60 per day⁹⁴. The scrutiny of their income, land holding, housing quality, health conditions, literacy level and use of fishing techniques and craft etc. reveals that the fishermen who solely depended on the marine resources were left out of the benefit of the technological advancements.

Education played a key role in the socio-economic transformation of the society. The colonial administration laid the groundwork for educating fisherfolk, and since independence Indian government launched numerous schemes to further this effort. The fishing community's socio-economic backwardness, geographical isolation, and the nature of their occupation limited their access to education. The following table indicated the literacy rate of the fisherfolk of the Thrissur District.

⁹⁴ John Kurien, "Changing profile of Poverty Among Kerala's Marine Fishing Communities: Are they still Outliers", *Op.Cit.*, p.1.

Table No. 5.4**Educational Status of Fisherfolk of Thrissur District 1980-2010**

Educational Status	Years					
	1980		2005		2010	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Uneducated*	24735	61	7513	22	4830	19
Primary	13845	35	9645	28	8761	34
Secondary	1099	3	14032	42	10639	41
Above Secondary	397	1	2888	8	1568	6
Total	40076	100	34078	100	25798	100

Source: CMFRI, Marine Fisheries Census, Government of India, Kochi, 1980, 2005 and 2010. *Excluded children up to the age of 5

Between 1980 and 2010, the number of uneducated fishermen decreased significantly, from 24, 735 to 4, 830. In 1980, the number of fishermen who went for higher studies were only 1% and gradually rose to 6% by the year 2010. But compared to the overall literacy rate of Kerala it is very low. The survey report shows the slow and gradual increase in the literacy rate of fishermen, particularly in higher education. Their socio-economic background restricted their access to higher education.

The ownership of land is a key indicator of development. The examination of the land holding pattern in the 13 fishing villages of Thrissur directs the low economic status of the fishermen. 48 families occupied *Puramboku Bhoomi* 296 of them depended on the operational lands, 35 of them held the *Pattaya Bhoomi*. The data indicates that many of the fishermen still depended on the operational lands and *Puramboku Bhoomi*⁹⁵. This shows the fishermen of the district are still backward.

⁹⁵ Government of Kerala, Report on Fisherfolk Families Living Within 50m from High Tide of Kerala Coast, Department of Fisheries 2018-19 ; See Appendix 1, Table No.1.

The survey report on the housing pattern of the Thrissur district shows that 137 houses are located at 10 meters and 144 situated 10-20 Meters from the sea. In total 408 houses are situated within 50 meters from the sea⁹⁶. Most of the fishermen are still occupied the high tidal area. Their low socio-economic condition forced them to settled in the dangerous areas of the coastal belt. Despite government efforts to promote fisheries development and technological advancement, many fishermen are unable to meet their needs such as good and safe houses and own land.

The colonial intervention initiated the direct control over the fisheries sector and fishing became a capital-intensive industry. The INP was launched to help fishermen through its technological aid and community development schemes. The newspaper reports, journal reports of 1953, reflected the aspirations of public about the INP but their expectations were nullified by the market-oriented production relations of capitalist motives. The traditional fishermen were incapable to find out huge capital for large scale investments and slowly they were marginalized and a new class of investors emerged in the fisheries sector because of commercialization.

The modernization process opened new avenues of employment and income generating fields. Commercial sea fishing and curing had been evolving over the last few centuries. Roughly half of the fish catch was consumed fresh, while the remaining portion was preserved through sun-drying, salting, or freezing, with any surplus being converted into fertilizer⁹⁷. The process involved imposing a capital-intensive method over the existing traditional labor-intensive sector.

During the first decade of planned development from 1956 to 1966, the state's fisheries policy was based on fair exploitation of marine resources. This

⁹⁶ Government of Kerala, Report on Fisherfolk Families Living Within 50m from High Tide of Kerala Coast, Department of Fisheries 2018-19; See Appendix 1, Table No.2.

⁹⁷ K.N. Ganesh (ed.), *Op.Cit.*, pp. 139-141.

policy of the government helped to upgrade the productive capacity and the innate skills of the fishermen. By the mid-1960s, growth-oriented modernization techniques were introduced in the Kerala coast. In the initial stages, the fishermen used their own traditional non-mechanized craft and gears for fishing. As part of modernization process, cotton nets were replaced by nylon nets. Fishing became a capital-intensive industry and the new investors from the non-fishermen community intruded the sector with profit motives. These rapid changes in the fishery sector occurred due to the rising demand of prawns in the international market. Community-based ownership pattern changed to privatization and then to globalization.

Globalization opened the Indian waters to multinational companies. Large scale investments and advanced technology created a technological dualism in the fishing economy. As Emile Durkheim pointed out, with the process of modernization and capitalist development a new solidarity originated in the societies known as organic solidarity. In organic solidarity individuals depended on each other's specialized skills and contributions for smooth functioning of society as whole. It is evident in the fishing sector with the introduction of advanced technology. Technological advancements have proliferated rapidly in a highly competitive environment. It intensified the overcapitalization of the fishery sector. For mitigating the seasonal variability and to maximizing returns the fishing operations were upgraded to high -powered motors and larger fishing gears.

The strategy of the Government was export oriented thereby extracting maximum profit. The big boat owners availed the services of a fewer number of workers than in the traditional fishing sector and led to the decline of working days to the artisanal fishermen. During this period, the small-scale fishermen were unacknowledged and left apprehensive. Above all the profit motive of the capitalist class led to the decline in fishery resources, which ultimately affecting the availability of fish for local communities. Government measures focused on the development of the fisheries sector but neglected the welfare and development of the fishing communities. All these factors have adversely affected the traditional

fishermen and reflected in their standard of living. The recent record of land holdings, literacy rate and the age-old techniques used by the fishermen are the testimonials of their low socio-economic status. As a result of the technological advancement and capital penetration the traditional fishermen were denied their livelihood and their own territory was alienated.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Modern India embraced a multi-ethnic society, characterized by socio-economic inequalities among its constituent groups. The escalating tensions among different social groups, especially in villages, manifested in the form of protests, movements, conflicts, and violence¹.

The recognition and valorization of community roles are essential in contemporary participatory development and conservation initiatives, as they acknowledge the critical contributions of local stakeholders in achieving sustainable outcomes. While community involvement is essential, relying exclusively on community-led initiatives may not be sufficient to address the shortcomings of traditional top-down development and conservation approaches. Instead, the researchers emphasize the need to consider the complex internal power dynamics and socio-economic heterogeneity within communities, which can significantly impact the effectiveness and equity of conservation and development outcomes². Furthermore, they have drawn attention to the ways in which new forms of neoliberal governance can be insidiously introduced and embedded through community development initiatives, potentially perpetuating existing power dynamics and social inequalities³.

Fishing as an occupation was mainly confined to fishing communities living in rural villages scattered along the Indian coastal rivers, estuaries, creeks, tanks, ponds, and backwaters. It is one of the oldest and traditional means of livelihood for about nine million people in India. Productive employment of fishermen is paramount for the sustainability of the fishing community⁴.

¹ K P Kumaran, "Growing Rural Unrest", *EPW*, Vol.28, No.1, January, 1993, p.2.

² Ajantha Subramanian, "Community, Class, and Conservation: Development Politics on the Kanyakumari Coast", *Conservation & Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2, July-December 2003, pp. 177-178.

³ *Ibid.*, p.178.

⁴ C. Sridevi, "The Fisherwoman Financier, A study of Status - Role Nexus in a Peasant Community", *EPW*, Vol.24, April 29, 1989, p.14.

The present study “Between the Sea and Trajectories of Life: A Study on the Fisherfolk of Central Kerala in the Twentieth Century” has scrutinized the changes that have taken place among the traditional fishing community in the modern period. Throughout their life they were subjected to the exploitation of the power elite. At a peripheral glance, the fishing communities seemed to enjoy autonomy but the caste system marginalized them within the social hierarchy.

In Central Kerala, the fishing community falls under three broad subcastes: *Mukkuva*, *Araya* and *Vala*. The first two categories were marine fishermen and the latter backwater fishing community. As they were solely dependent on the marine as well as riverine resources, they were forced to live on the fringes of the coastal belt or the river basins. Peripherally, there was no evidence of direct exercise of power by the elite class, but ideologically they overruled and exploited the fishermen. Ideology was not limited to political ideas, it included all mental frameworks, beliefs, concepts, and ways of expressing relationship. To this end, the upper caste made a ritualistic connection with the fishermen, which was apparently evident in various temple rituals of Central Kerala. The participation of the fishermen was of subordinate nature. The titles and honors conferred upon the fishermen were indirect approaches to seek their support and extract their wealth. Their participation in various rituals in the temples of Kodungallur, Thriprayar, Guruvayur and Eranakulathappan evidently support this concept.

During colonial period the coastal areas of Central Kerala belonged to two political entities, i.e., Malabar and Cochin. The approach of authorities towards the fishermen in each area was slightly different. In Malabar, during the time of *Sthanarohanam* of the Zamorin of Calicut, local leaders were recognized and honored with titles, acknowledging their authority within their respective caste groups. In return for this recognition, the local leaders made a financial contribution to the Zamorin's treasury. It is documented that *Mukkavas* of Manappuram region had the opportunity to take part in the ritual.

In Cochin, the rulers tried to make use of the masculine power of the fishermen by honoring the fishers with titles and respects. That is explicitly manifested in the “*Uppum Kayarum*” ceremony. The *Aravans* also enjoyed some *Sihanamanangal*. In some instances, they even enjoyed customary rights over their community and rights over share of profits.

An examination of village settlement records discloses the fact that most of the coastal lands belonged to *Brahmaswam*, *Devaswam* or the *Cherikkal*. The fishermen hardly possessed any land. In contrast to the agrarian sector, the upper caste's control over the coastal people's economic assets was limited, prompting them to exercise power through more indirect and tactical methods. Strategically fishermen were permitted to take part in the temple rituals. But their entry was restricted to the temple premises only and were not given the *Poornavakasam*. The *Ancham Thalapoli* conducted by the fishermen of Anapuzha, inauguration of *Kavutheendal* by Koolimuttathu *Arayan* in Kodungallur, conduct of *Aarattu* ritual at Ayirur temple in the Koorikuzhi Kadavu, submission of *Kodikkayar* by the native fishermen to famous temples like Guruvayur, Thriprayar, Eranakulathappan, Kodungallur, Kazhuvilangu, and so on are some of ritualistic ideologies formulated and utilized by the upper caste to dominate the fishing community. Due to the risky and unpredictable nature of their craft, they were very superstitious. This weakness of the fishermen was exploited by the upper castes in many ways.

The traditional fishermen followed a community ownership pattern and sustainable mode of marine resource management system. Durkheim observed that in primitive societies, clan-based organization fostered mechanical solidarity, rooted in the shared experiences, values, and religious practices of the community. The society was egalitarian in nature. Many of these features can be observed in the traditional fishing community which followed community ownership pattern and any violation of its customary laws of collective consciousness led to their excommunication.

The socio-economic life of traditional fishermen was interwoven with the marine ecology and resources. They used a wide variety of cotton nets according to

the type of fish they caught. Net making was a cottage industry and women were actively involved in it. Traditional fishing demanded masculine power, limiting fishermen to work no more than twelve hour stretches at sea. Size of the boats also restricted their catch. A typical boat could accommodate only up to five people and carry only a few nets at a time with limited storage capacity. All these factors made their jobs very dangerous and restricted the extraction of resources. Their lives moved in tune with the rhythm of ocean currents, winds, etc. Fishermen tried to overcome the drudgery of their work by singing *Kadalvanchi Pattukal* thereby mitigating their hardships and increasing their team spirit.

Meenkanda Mukkuvan was considered an expert marine scientist. The fishermen designed their craft and planned fishing according to *Nir*. The identification of *Nir* was a very crucial factor during fishing. They had idea about what type of fishes were available during each season and even in a *Nir*. Based on this familiarity, they carried different varieties of nets and organized their fishing trips.

The classification of fishing grounds such as *Karakkadal*, *Idakkadal*, *Padikkadal*, *Chathiyar Kadal* and *Puram kadal* was based on the knowledge about the depth of the sea. Their awareness and calculation of the depth of the sea was remarkable and helped to overcome all the obstacles posed by the rough waters. The fishermen were united by strong cooperative ties and a sense of community ownership. Such behavioral patterns gave them the unique identity of *Kadalitne Makkal*. They considered sea as Mother Goddess and believed that any misconduct from their part incurred the wrath of *Kadamma* leading to miseries and misfortunes to them.

Fishing was a team work where the leader was known as *Amarakkaran* or *Aniyakkaran*. The apprentices were called *Kalliyamkutti*. There was a concrete bondage between the crew members and the boat owners. Any crew member could shift his services to another boat only after obtaining permission from fellow members. It is known as *Mattakettam*. As per the community ownership pattern, any person who touched the craft was eligible for a share of fish for consumption. This

system was beneficial for widows, individuals with disabilities and those with financial burdens. The same pattern of co-operation and co-existence was also seen in the backwater fishing villages. They usually lived in a cluster along the banks of rivers or backwaters. The stake nets or *Unnivalas* were the main asset of the inland fishermen.

Fishermen found their livelihood from sea, but engaged with the mainland for food and raw materials for craft. This interaction connected them to caste hierarchy, vulnerable to being ranked as lower or polluted caste. This categorization placed them at the bottom of the social strata compelling them to live in the fringes of the coastal belt. Caste categorization played a decisive role in their life. Outcaste marriages led to eviction from the community. Most fishermen seemed to be very superstitious and had their own worshipping centres like *Kavus*. The fishermen community had their own servicing castes who helped to purify them from pollution at the time of birth, death, puberty and so on. Their servicing castes like barbers - *Arayavathi*, the washermen - *Paniyakkal*, could claim a share of the fish catch by the fishermen.

A strong patriarchal ideology prevailed in the fishing community. Women faced spatial exclusion both in the workspace and rituals. Only men went for fishing and possessed the knowledge about the marine world. The women were denied the opportunities of resource control and excluded from rituals. The *Pathivratha* concept was adhered to. There was a belief that when a man went to fish, his life was symbolically entrusted with his wife. If her chastity was compromised, the life of man was in danger. Despite all these, active participation of women was seen in the offshore businesses. Poverty and the need for additional source of income in the family pushed women to engage in post-harvest activities like fish curing, processing, and selling. They faced caste pollutions while entering the inland areas. Their slang and attire distinguished them from others as bold. These themes were reflected in many songs of Sangam and *Manipravalam* literature depicting women

selling fish in the market place. Since their husbands were away at sea, they became more responsible but often their husbands' drinking habits escalated their challenges.

Sylvia Walby opines that waged labour sector exhibits a more complex and entrenched form of patriarchal dominance. A woman's access to means of production and resources was controlled by her man who also controlled her mobility. She was confined to secondary job opportunities and excluded from actual fishing, auctioning, or large-scale fish trade. Her role was limited to fish curing, processing, pickling or small-scale fish sale. She performed socio-economic activities without ownership in the resources, craft or means of production. Modernisation in the fisheries sector further widened the gender disparity in the fishing community. Even when the village fish landing centres were relocated to main harbours with the introduction of advanced technology, women remained tied to their localities due to the prevailing ideology of patriarchy. Till date only one woman, Smt. Rekha, a native of Thrissur, is in possession of a licence for marine fishing. Her's is an exceptional case, otherwise the whole industry is male dominated. Other common challenges in coastal areas like access to drinking water, health, and sanitation cause burden to women. Exclusion and exploitation are the primary causes of the poverty of fisherwomen. The gender bias and other delusions among them continued to be a hurdle for their socio-economic advancement.

The advent of colonialism and colonial modernity transformed the traditional fishermen community. Colonial modernity was not a natural process but rather a complex interplay of power dynamics, resistance, and adaption, shaping both the colonizers and the colonized societies. Foucault observed that "in modern societies power is exercised by regulating individuals through the institutions like prison, schools, and hospitals. It manages and influences people through practices like surveillance, medicalization, and governmental intervention in public health and welfare". In the fisheries sector, such power was introduced through the establishment of Fisheries Department in Malabar and Cochin areas.

Malabar and Cochin experienced Socio-economic changes in a different manner. Social reformers like Velukutty Aaryan of Thiruvithamkur region, Pandit Karuppan of Cochin and V. Govindan of Malabar played vital roles in leading the fishing society to the modern phase. The establishment of Fisheries Departments in both Cochin and Malabar brought about changes in the fishing sector. The fishermen of Central Kerala got a chance to participate in the innovative activities of both departments through their prominent leaders like Pandit Karuppan and Rao Bahadur V Govindan. Only the name of Pandit Karuppan seems to have been prominently recognized among social reformers in Kerala, while the contributions of other two reformers seem to have been neglected. Even members from the present generation of the fishing community are unaware of the contributions made by V. Govindan and Velukutti Arayan.

The interventions of Pandit Karuppan in various realms of Central Kerala brought in changes in the community. Karuppan spent his childhood days in Kodungallur receiving education from the Kodungallur Kovilakam. The *Kalyanadayini Sabha*, Pandit Karuppan Library of Anapuzha and the Fishermen Schools are the best surviving institutions to celebrate his efforts. He used his pen as a tool for social reformation of his community. His famous work *Jathikummi* is the first satire in Malayalam literature which criticised the caste system. His poem *Araya Prashathi* shows the interconnection between fishermen and sea.

In 1925, he became the Member of Cochin Legislative Assembly and voiced the concerns of his fellow members. He endorsed the establishment of *Adhakritha Samrakshana Department* for the upliftment of the downtrodden community. His revolutionary activities like conducting *Kayal Sammelanam* were instrumental in inspiring the people of Central Kerala. His contributions had helped to boost the confidence of the fishing community.

V. Govindan from the Malabar region made remarkable contribution to the betterment of the Fishermen. As the Assistant Director for the Fisheries Department of Malabar, he tried to integrate them into socio-economic initiatives to improve the

fisheries sector as well as their lives. Educational initiatives like establishing Fisheries Schools at various coastal villages, conducting night schools, and training them in advanced fishing techniques were helpful in improving their condition.

The economic position of the traditional fishermen was low because of several factors. V Govindan found that the main reasons for the backwardness of the fisherman were their subjugation to the boat owner and the merchant curer, intemperance, extravagance, the uncertainty of mere inshore fishing, lack of advanced technology for deep sea fishing, idle monsoon season, and diseases brought by insanitation, etc. Co-operative societies initiated by V Govindan provided them financial assistance.

Govindan got the chance to implement welfare programmes under the aegis of the Fisheries Department of Malabar. The establishment of fishery schools in the coastal villages of Malabar was the result of tireless efforts taken by V. Govindan. Araya Fishermen Co-operative Society of Kaipamangalam , one of these societies established during his time exists even today. The three visionaries from Thriruvithamkur, Cochin and Malabar laid the foundation for future advancements and improvements within the fishing community.

In 1946, the Department of Marine Biology and Fisheries was established, marking a significant step towards organizing and implementing fisheries development programs in Cochin and Travancore. Their primary concern was food stability. After independence the fisheries sector of Kerala witnessed significant changes. The Planning Commission of India also carried out plans to improve the fisheries sector of Kerala. In 1952, a separate Department for Fisheries was established that aimed at doubling the harvest, export-oriented production and improving the socio-economic status of the fishermen.

The introduction of Indo-Norwegian Project in 1953 marked a milestone in the history of fishing sector of Kerala. Fishing and curing were industrialized and its first experiments were conducted in the Travancore and Cochin states. The INP was

implemented in two stages. In its first stage, the activities were concentrated in Travancore- Cochin region and in the second stage it was extended to the States of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. In the initial stages, the traditional boats were sent to Norway for vessel motorization. Later readymade, small flat -kneeled boats were offered by Norway. The introduction of Indo-Norwegian Project improved the technical competency of the fishermen and traditional cotton nets were replaced with nylon nets.

Marine Biological Research stations were established at Kozhikode, Vizhinjam, Ernakulam and Thiruvalla where studies were conducted for further enhancing overall progress in the region's marine life. Mackerel, sardine, and prawns were becoming commercially valuable fishes of Kerala. Large scale prawn export led to the enhancement of market value of prawns and changed its status to 'pink gold.' In the second phase of INP, concentration was on the establishment and development of harbours. This phase also focussed on improving marketing channels and facilities to boost the fishing sector.

By 1966, fish exports doubled, notably that of prawns. But after 1969-1980, the output in the traditional sector diminished. The fishing economy became polarized significantly affecting the traditional fishermen. In response, the traditional sector adopted motorized craft with outboard engines to overcome their hurdles. However, export-oriented fishing led to the widespread use of purse seine fishing and overfishing which led to ecological crisis. Bottom trawling wiping out the demersal species, badly affected the availability of prime economic species of fish like oil sardine, mackerel and penaeid prawns. The new fishing practices adversely affected the sustainable nature of fishing resources and harmonious co-existence of artisanal fishing community. The lack of inclusive development and disproportionate benefit to the artisanal fishermen led to their economic deprivation. The decrease in the marine resources and job opportunities led to the migration of fishermen. Taking all this into consideration, the government of Kerala was forced to enact the Kerala

Marine Fishing Regulation Act 1980. The Act prohibited purse seining and demarcated the areas for mechanised and non-mechanised crafts.

Simultaneously, the traditional fishermen faced challenges from mechanised boats, big canoes, pelagic nets, etc. As a result of modernization, conflicts emerged between traditional fishermen and trawlers. In the post-colonial period, capitalists consolidated power by creating secular hierarchies that clashed with the traditional order. Durkheim identified 'organic solidarity' as a new form of social cohesion emerging from modernization and capitalist development. It emerged because of division of labour and interdependence of individuals in diverse roles and functions within a society. In organic solidarity individuals depended on each other's specialized skills and contributions for smooth functioning of society as a whole. The income sharing pattern among the fisherfolk also changed along with technological advancements. The ratio of income sharing pattern between workers and boat owners changed from 70:30 to 60:40. The demand of the owner group increased with the modern advancements. The social practices like *Karanila* system, i.e., appropriation of share by the persons who were passive participants in the craft vanished from the fishing sector. As in agricultural sector, fishermen worked as waged labourers in big boats.

The customary principles that controlled the traditional fishing community was replaced by a market oriented system and capital penetration. Dominant class utilized its power to impose its will on the powerless, forcing them to do things against their wishes. In the case of fishermen, the power structure moved from colonial modernity to capital intensive mechanization and then to globalization. Throughout these changes, the modernization process was not controlled by the traditional fishermen and who were not the real beneficiaries of mechanization. Instead, they were sidelined from the mainstream because it was capital intensive and was not affordable to them.

The open access nature of fishing caused the disappearance of local customary laws like *kadalkodis* and decline of judicious exploitation of marine resources. This resulted in an ecological crisis in the marine world, which could be witnessed in the form of depletion of fish stock in the Kerala coast.

Governmental interventions were only partially successful in addressing the heterogeneous nature of problems faced by the artisanal fishing communities. The fishing communities struggled with a wide range of issues, encompassing poverty, environmental deprivation, resource scarcity, and internal divisions. The destructive fishing operations of mechanised boats was responsible for the decline in fish harvests. As a result, there were strong appeals for ban on monsoon trawling, and strikes occurred at many levels. There were conflicts in many sectors due to new capital investments and technology transfers along the Kerala Coast. As violent conflicts intensified, fishermen started to mobilize and organize on a regional level. In 1977 a state-level union emerged from the consolidation of six district-level fishermen's unions named Latin Catholic Fishermen's Federation (LCFF). Later the traditional fishermen found that it was necessary to form a multi-religious organization to confront common challenges with greater efficacy. Then the LCFF changed its name to Kerala *Swathantra Malsya Thozhilali Federation* (KSMTF). In 1980, *Swathantra Malsya Thozhilali Union* heralded a state-wide protest which strengthened their bargaining power. Their main demands were zoning of fishing grounds, ban on monsoon trawling, steps to control water pollution, etc. Until 1983, the agitations were led by the independent trade unions but from 1984 onwards, strikes were taken up by major political parties.

To address the concerns of traditional fishing communities, the Government appointed the Babu Paul Commission. The recommendations made by the Commission were not satisfactory to the traditional fishermen. The government then appointed the Kalawar Commission to investigate the issues. The Commission also suggested zoning methods in the coastal waters to the mechanised and non-mechanised boats. Based on recommendations the government banned bottom trawling in the territorial waters in 1992. It is found that the Government announced only moderate measures to reduce the grievances of the traditional fishing community. The tensions among the fishermen continued to be a lively issue.

With modernisation, there originated a constant struggle between men and machine and a conflict between greed and sustainability. A widening gap has emerged between the rapid development of technology and the slower pace of social

progress, leading to change without corresponding social improvement. Historically, technologies have often served to entrench the power of privileged minorities, while simultaneously displacing, dispossessing, and marginalizing others. The integration of synthetic fishing gear, improved vessel design, and engine power, as well as the introduction of mechanized trawlers, has revolutionized fishing operations, allowing for longer, more extensive trips to remote fishing grounds. Commercialization led to the mismanagement, over exploitation and depletion of marine resources, which in turn threatens the nutritional security of vulnerable populations, particularly the poor.

The instability of fish prices and the market power wielded by merchants and middlemen have created a major obstacle to the economic empowerment of fishermen, restricting their ability to improve their livelihoods and achieve financial stability. Rising expenditures on mechanized propulsion and fishing gear, compounded by the growing demand for costly fuels like kerosene and petrol, have contributed to a surge in fishing costs. These factors collectively slowed down the socio-economic advancements of traditional fishermen.

The Traditional Fishermen's landholding pattern, housing near the coastline, low educational status and dependence on country boats and age-old techniques point to their continued status as subaltern. The policies in this sector only facilitated "fisheries development without fisher folk development." The traditional fishermen remained in the periphery of development.

The protest of traditional fishermen against the acute exhaustion of marine fish resources was not given due consideration. The resultant issues brought irreparable damage to the marine ecology and threw lakhs of fisher people into hardships and increased poverty. The traditional fishermen persisted as marginalized among the marginalized. Any efforts to sustain the sector must be grounded in a holistic approach that integrates sustainable resource management, equitable access to fishing opportunities, and protection of the biodiversity of the marine ecosystem, thereby ensuring the long-term health and resilience of the sector.

Glossary

<i>Achanmar</i>	- elder who controlled the fishing unit, the family, and the social life.
<i>Ain Tinai</i>	- five eco-zones of Tamilakam.
<i>Aini</i>	- wild jack-Artocarpus hirsutum.
<i>Amarakkaran Mattukallikaran, Tottikallikaran, Edathanadukaran and Talakkekararan</i>	- occupational positions given to the traditional fishermen according to their position and duties in the country boats of Cochin area.
<i>Amsam</i>	- a revenue Village.
<i>Ancham Thalapoli</i>	- the fifth day of the festival of Kodungallur Temple.
<i>Aniyam</i>	- top of the Boat.
<i>Apsarasu</i>	- Goddess.
<i>Aramai</i>	- lordship.
<i>Arappe</i>	- the evil spirits of the Sangam period.
<i>Arattu</i>	- ritual of the temple festival, which is conducted in the waterbodies.
<i>Arayan Kavus</i>	- small family shrines or sacred groves of the <i>Arayas</i> in the coastal villages.
<i>Aswathy Kavutheendal</i>	- a ritual in the Kodungallur Temple.
<i>Ayila Chalavala</i>	- net used to catch both sardine and mackerel.
<i>Ayittans or Attans</i>	- oracles among the fishermen.
<i>Bharani Vela</i>	- ritual in the temples of the coastal villages.
<i>Brahmaswom land</i>	- land owned by the Brahmins.
<i>Chappas</i>	- fish curing yards.
<i>Charamaganam</i>	- funeral song.
<i>Cheeni</i>	- wood used for boat making.

<i>Cheermappattu</i>	- a type of folk song sang in the <i>Kavus</i> of the coastal villages.
<i>Chelakki</i>	- a special dish made with fish and dried tapioca powder as substitute of rice in the offseason by the traditional fishermen.
<i>Chuttampalam</i>	- the surroundings of the Temple.
<i>Desam</i>	- basic unit of revenue administration
<i>Devaswom land</i>	- land owned by the Temples.
<i>Dheevera</i>	- fishermen.
<i>Elavu or Poola</i>	- bombax malabaricum (a type of softwood)
<i>Granthasala</i>	- library
<i>Gurukula</i>	- a traditional system of education.
<i>Janmi</i>	- land owners.
<i>Kadakkodi</i>	- dispute setting forum of traditional fishermen.
<i>Kadal Vanchipattukal</i>	- songs sung by the fishermen.
<i>Kadamma</i>	- sea Goddess.
<i>Kadavu</i>	- fish landing centre.
<i>Kaithola</i>	- screw pin Leaf
<i>Kalliyamkutti</i>	- apprentices in the traditional boats.
<i>Kamba</i>	- rope
<i>Kanapanam or Kanamkodukkal</i>	- the custom of giving bride's price in which the groom paid the bride's father a fixed amount
<i>Kanni</i>	- measurement of net.
<i>Kappukuthaka</i>	- tax on fishery farming in lake.
<i>Karanavanmar, Achanmar, Kodakaran and Anthithiriyar</i>	- members of the customary judicial body of the traditional Fishermen.
<i>Karanavar/Mooppan</i>	- elder who controlled the fishing unit, the family and the social
<i>Karingotta</i>	- wood used at the edges of the nets.

<i>Karuppan Kacha</i>	- dress code introduced by Pandit Karuppan.
<i>Katalayarans</i>	- fishermen.
<i>Kayal Sammelanam</i>	- the summit in the backwaters organised by Pandit Karuppan.
<i>Kettipeyyal</i>	- joint effort of two small boats in fishing.
<i>Kizhakottupokku</i>	- going to east.
<i>Kodikkayar</i>	- rope used for flag hoisting in the temples.
<i>Kollivala</i>	- nets used for catching small fish.
<i>Kooduthal Pattoms</i>	- more rent.
<i>Koombola</i>	- areca leaf.
<i>Koruvalas</i>	- small nets used by the traditional fishermen.
<i>Kottakashu</i>	- price for one box of fish.
<i>Kudampuli</i>	- malabar tamarind.
<i>Kuduma</i>	- a hair style.
<i>Makkathayam</i>	- patriliney.
<i>Manakkans or Banakkans</i>	- priests among the fishermen.
<i>Manipravalam</i>	- malayalam literature prevalent in medieval period.
<i>Mannu</i>	- measurements-one <i>Mannu</i> Equal to 37.32 Kg.
<i>Marumakkathaym</i>	- matriliney.
<i>Matsya</i>	- fish.
<i>Matsyavathara</i>	- the fish avatar of Vishnu.
<i>Mattakayattam</i>	- the practice prevalent among the fishers ,shifting their job under one owner to another.
<i>Maund-Measurements</i>	- one <i>Maund</i> equal to 37.3242 kilograms.
<i>Meen Kodah</i>	- fish standard.
<i>Meena Rashi</i>	- pisces.
<i>Meenkanda Mukkuvan</i>	- a person of extensive knowledge about the sea.
<i>Muchanti Angadi</i>	- evening market.

<i>Mukkuva</i>	- fishermen.
<i>Nadappanam or Vettilpannam</i>	- cash given to the <i>Karanavar/Mooppan</i> during the time of Marriage or any festive occasions.
<i>Neeru marrumbol meen maarum</i>	- denotes the movement of fish along with the currents.
<i>Neetivalikkal</i>	- traditional method of Fishing.
<i>Neithal</i>	- coastal area in the Sangam age.
<i>Nir</i>	- current
<i>Ola Medachil</i>	- weaving Coconut leaf for covering the roof of small huts.
<i>Olukkuvala</i>	- gill net.
<i>Oonnipadu</i>	- rent on fishing stakes.
<i>Ovu</i>	- wood tied at the edges of the nets.
<i>Padippura</i>	- out house.
<i>Pagam</i>	- distance.
<i>Paini</i>	- <i>vateria indica</i> or Indian copal- <i>Vatica roxburghiana</i> .
<i>Panayola</i>	- palm leaf.
<i>Paniyante Avakasam</i>	- right of the servicing castes of the Fishermen.
<i>Pankayakkaran, Valakkalikkaran, Kadathanadukaran, Talakkekaran and Aniyakkaran</i>	- occupational position given to the traditional fishermen according to their position and duties in the country boats in Chavakkad area.
<i>Pankayam</i>	- oar.
<i>Parathakumara</i>	- the experts in trade.
<i>Parippu Kachavadam</i>	- business of Prawn pulp.
<i>Pathithajathi</i>	- low caste.
<i>Pathivratha</i>	- chastity.
<i>Pathivu.</i>	- tax on small boats in the backwater.
<i>Pattamahishi</i>	- queen.

<i>Penninte acharam neekal</i>	- when a marriage contract was broken a compensation between Rs. 90 and Rs. 100 was given to the aggrieved party.
<i>Pidiyari</i>	- a handful of rice.
<i>Pinkoda</i>	- wood used for making oar.
<i>Polappu</i>	- fish shoal.
<i>Polappu Kanuka</i>	- shoal identification.
<i>Poornavakasasm</i>	- full rights.
<i>Pozhuthunokkal</i>	- fixing the date of marriage.
<i>Puislam</i>	- people who were newly converted to Islam.
<i>Punna and Karingotta</i>	- timbers used for boat making.
<i>Sraadhas</i>	- ritual related to death anniversary.
<i>Stanamanangal</i>	- positions and recognition.
<i>Sthanikans, Kadavanmar/Sahayiess</i>	- temple committee Members of the Fishermen.
<i>Tadukka</i>	- fish containers made of palm leaves.
<i>Tazhapaya</i>	- a mat made up of screw pin leaf .
<i>Thalappoli</i>	- festival of the Kodungallur temple.
<i>Thanduvali</i>	- manoeuvring of boats.
<i>Tharakans</i>	- the middlemen in the fishing field .
<i>Thirumulkazha</i>	- muzzar.
<i>Thittoram</i>	- royal orders.
<i>Thottupanam</i>	- tax on small water channels.
<i>Ummanas</i>	- experts in salt trade.
<i>Uppalams</i>	- salt pans.
<i>Uppum kayarum</i>	- salt and rope.
<i>Uroo</i>	- command to keep away the evil spirit.
<i>Uzhuvela</i>	- forced labour.


<i>Valakothakkuka</i>	- raising the net from the sea.
<i>Valanjupidikkal</i>	- catching the fish by encircling nets.
<i>Valapeyyal</i>	- throwing the net into the sea.
<i>Valappanam</i>	- the tax on fishing net.
<i>Valiya Arayan</i>	- headman.
<i>Vanavasa</i>	- forest dwelling.
<i>Vanchi</i>	- small dugout canoe.
<i>Variola</i>	- financial statement.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Uppum Kayarum Ceremony

No.....L.Da.12864/11.



RECEIVED
MAR 24 1936
THE HUZUR SECRETARIAT,
ERNAKULAM,
Dated...24th March, 1936.


From
M. R. Ry. T. S. NARAYANA AYYAR Avergall, M. A. & B. L.,
Secretary to Government.

To
The Sarvadhikariakar to His Highness
the Maharaja of Cochin.

Sir,
"ഉപ്പം കായറം" ceremony - claim - Appi Raghavan -
Recognition of.

Reference:-Your letter C.2006/11 dated 2nd March 1936.

I have the honour, by direction, to inform you that it is reported on enquiry by the Diwan Peishkar that Appi Raghavan is the rightful claimant of the deceased Kanakkattasseril Appi of Pallippuram Village for the purpose of presenting "ഉപ്പം കായറം" to His Highness at the time of accession.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient servant,

Secretary to Government.

MSE/24.
AK

please refer #4
R. S.
18871

Source: Huzur Secretariat L.Da.12864/11,24/03/1936,RAE.

Appendix 2

Table No. 1
Land Ownership of Fishermen - Thrissur District (2018-19)

Sl. No	Fisheries Village	Ownership of Land				
		<i>Pattaya Bhoomi</i>	Operational Holdings	<i>Puramboke Bhoomi</i>	Others Land	Total
1.	Azheekode	2	97	15	9	123
2.	Edavilangu	0	70	1	6	77
3.	West Vemballoor	1	23	0	3	27
4.	Kulimuttam	0	12	0	1	13
5.	Perinjanam	1	14	3	0	18
6.	Kaipamangalan	3	51	10	10	74
7.	Chentrapinni	0	3	0	0	3
8.	Cheppallipuram	0	1	0	0	1
9.	Nattika	9	6	0	0	15
10.	Blangad	0	0	3	0	3
11.	Manathala	0	3	3	0	6
12.	Kadappuram	19	16	12	0	47
13.	Manthalamkunnu	0	0	1	0	1
Total		35	296	48	29	408

Source: Report on Fisherfolk Families Living Within 50m from high tide of Kerala Coast, Government of Kerala, Department of Fisheries 2018-19.

Table No. 2
Housing Pattern of Fishermen -Thrissur District

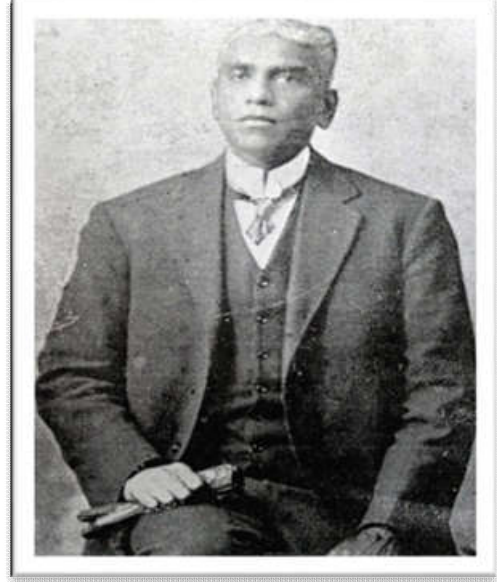
Sl. No.	Fisheries Village	Distance From Sea (in Meters)				
		<10 M	10-20 M	20-30 M	30-50 M	All
1.	Azheekode	54	47	21	1	123
2.	Edavilangu	36	28	13	0	77
3.	West Vemballoor	17	10	0	0	27
4.	Kulimuttam	3	4	6	0	13
5.	Perinjanam	6	11	0	1	18
6.	Kaipamangalan	13	32	17	12	74
7.	Chentrapinni	0	3	0	0	3
8.	Cheppallipuram	1	0	0	0	1
9.	Nattika	3	1	8	3	15
10.	Blangad	0	0	0	3	3
11.	Manathala	0	0	1	5	6
12.	Kadappuram	4	8	11	24	47
13.	Manthalamkunnu	0	0	0	1	1
Total		137	144	77	50	408

Source: Report on Fisherfolk Families Living Within 50m from high tide of Kerala Coast, Government of Kerala, Department of Fisheries 2018-19.

Appendix 3



Pandit K P Karuppan



Rao Bahadur V V Govindan



Velukutty Arayan



Unni Vala / Stake Nets Used for Fishing in the Backwaters



Canal Office - Canal Navigation Tax Collection Centre at Anapuzha



New Boat making workshop at Edakkazhiyur, Chavakkad



Traditional Fishermen manually carrying their boat after fishing at Koolimuttam, Kodungallur.

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