

# Socio-Cultural Construction of Fishing Community Among the Youth: Special Reference to Munambam Harbour in Ernakulam District

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## **Abstract**

In India fisher folk played an important role in the development of fisheries. Kerala is a prominent fish producing state in the country and it is estimated that about 8 lakh people earn their livelihood from capture and allied works in marine fisheries in the 222 fishing villages situated along the coastline of the state. Fisherfolk in Kerala come from three different religious groups-the Hindus, the Muslims, and the Christians. Each of the group has its own socio-cultural characteristics like beliefs, practices, myths, taboos, marriage system, harmony, participation in social organization, mutual-independence, values etc. Therefore, fisherfolk are an important population in Kerala, although they are neglected and disenfranchised despite the state's overall socioeconomic success. This study indented to the socio-economic status of fishermen community and try emphasises the importance of understanding that the fishing community is a distinct group of people geographically located in coastal areas with their own way of life and culture, as well as the special relationship they share with the sea and the environment.

**Keywords:** Socio- economic, culture, Fishermen, Youth

## **Fisheries in India**

India is the world's second-largest aquaculture nation and third-largest fisheries producer after China. The Indian Blue Revolution demonstrated the importance of the fishing and aquaculture industries. The industry is seen as a rising star and is expected to have a significant impact on the Indian economy in the near future. Indian fisheries have lately undergone a paradigm shift from inland to marine-dominated fisheries, with the latter being a major contributor to fish output, increasing from 36% in the mid-1980s to 70% in recent years. Within inland fisheries, shifting from capture to culture-based fishing has laid the groundwork for a long-term blue economy.

## **Current status of fisherman in India**

The global epidemic, which destroyed the lives of millions of people in India's fish industry, left more than 15,000 migratory fish workers stranded. There were broken supply lines when the fisheries activity resumed. Due to reduced consumer demand and the higher risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus. As a result, several mechanized fisheries in India that mainly rely on migrant fishermen were severely harmed. When the yearly mechanized fishing restriction was enacted on the east coast on April 15th, 2020, the

remaining licenced fisheries vied to rebuild themselves. Although some states, like Kerala and Maharashtra, have made considerable advances in bringing seafood back into people's diets, most fishing operations still occur in other states.

### **Fisheries sector in Kerala**

Kerala, which makes up about 1.27% of the Indian subcontinent and is located on the southwest coast, has a total size of around 38,863 square kilometres. The Western Ghats in the east and the Arabian Sea in the west divide the state from the rest of India. The highlands, midlands, and lowlands are the three geographical divisions of Kerala. The lowland is situated near the water. Kerala's coastline, which makes up 10% of all of India's coastline and stretches for 589.5 kilometres, has traditionally facilitated trade with neighbouring nations. Compared to the midlands and the highlands, the population density is relatively high all along the coastline. Kerala is a significant producer and consumer of fish thanks to its extremely rich marine resources, which include a wide variety of fish, and its highly competent population of fisherman. The Kerala coast is particularly fish-friendly due to the heavy rainfall and numerous rivers. The mudbanks, or chakara in Malayalam, are one of the unique features of the Keralan coastline. Following the monsoon, the formation of clay and organic matter on the coast takes place while the sea is still calm, leading to a good fish harvest. Fishermen in Kerala depend on fish as a source of income and a source of high-quality protein, and fishing is crucial to the state's economy. 20% of the nation's total fish landings are represented by the average fish landing in Kerala. The average percentage of Kerala's fish exports was 10.24% in 2000–2001, but it climbed to 15.97% in 2002 and 19% in 2005–2006 of India's total marine exports during that time. In comparison to this output, Kerala has the smallest average fishing area. This demonstrates that Kerala's coastal areas are under a lot of fishing strain. Along with fishing, the fisheries industry also includes related jobs including beach work, small-scale fish distribution, curing, employment in peeling sheds, and plant-based fish processing.

In India fisher folk played an important role in the development of fisheries. Kerala is a prominent fish producing state in the country and it is estimated that about 8 lakh people earn their livelihood from capture and allied works in marine fisheries in the 222 fishing villages situated along the coastline of the state. Fisherfolk in Kerala come from three different religious groups-the Hindus, the Muslims, and the Christians. Each of the group has its own socio-cultural characteristics like beliefs, practices, myths, taboos, marriage system, harmony, participation in social organization, mutual-independence, values etc. All these have great influence on their community.

### **The Munambam harbour**

Munambam fishing harbour is a well-developed harbour with all of the necessary facilities in Ernakulam. For the catch, a public auction method is typically used. Munambam harbour building began in 1992 and was finished in 1998. The harbour's area is around 3 ha, and the development cost is anticipated to be Rs.16 crores. The central government covered 50% of the costs. The harbour is operated by the Kerala government's harbour engineering division. The main crafts at Munambam were trawler, purse seiner, and gill netter. The construction of harbour marked a significant change in the history of munambam locality. Munambam harbour had a direct impact on the social, political, economic and cultural conditions on the fishermen community of this locality and this study intended to analyse it.

**Objectives**

- a) To find out socio-economic status of fisherman community.
- b) To identify the cultural characteristics of fisherman community.

**Research design**

The research design refers to the overall strategy that you choose to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way, thereby, ensuring you will effectively address the research problem; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data. In short, a research design is a framework or blueprint of research. The nature of research design referred to in this study is descriptive. It is a quantitative description technique that seeks to answer questions about real-life situations.

**Identification of variables**

A concept which can take on different quantitative values is called a variable. The most important and useful way to categorize variables is as independent and dependent. Independent variables in the study are age, sex, education, social media, and religion. Dependent variables in this study are income, socio-cultural characteristics.

**Universe and sample**

In research, the population or universe represents the entire group of units which is the focus of the study. So, the universe is the set of all experimental units, from which a sample is to be drawn. A sample is a smaller set of data that a researcher chooses or selects from a larger population using a pre-defined selection method. So, a sample is a representative subset of a population. The fishing sector in Kerala, which was taken as the universe of the study. 50 samples from the fishing community among the youth in Munambam harbour, Ernakulam, were selected. Samples were selected by using cluster sampling method.

**Tools and methods of interpretation**

Several research methods are adopted in order to carry out this study. This study is completely based on primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through a questionnaire, telephonic interview, with keen observation and moreover by direct interview with the fisherman in Munambam harbour, Ernakulam. The secondary data was collected through newspapers, internet, economic reviews, Fisheries department reports, journals, portable document format (pdf) of other researchers.

**Limitation**

- a) Lack of rapport with respondents affects the quality of answer.
- b) Since the sample size is small, the accurate conclusion could not be drawn.
- c) The time period of the study was too short. Today's findings may not hold true for the future.

**Data analysis and interpretation**

Data analysis is the most crucial part of any research. Data analysis summarizes collected data. It involves the interpretation of data gathered through the use of analytical and logical reasoning to determine patterns, relationships, or trends.

**Table.1 Socio-economic status of fishermen community**

Sl. No	Statement	SA		A		N		D		SD		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Economic trouble due to debt	39	78%	5	10%	5	10%	1	2%	0	0%	50	100%
2.	No protection for old age like pension	33	66%	9	18%	2	4%	4	8%	2	4%	50	100%
3.	Fishing is seasonal employment	41	82%	3	6%	4	8%	2	4%	0	0%	50	100%
4.	Fishermen did not get fair price from fishing	26	52%	14	28%	3	6%	4	8%	3	6%	50	100%
5.	Fishing require high physical labour	24	48%	17	34%	6	12%	2	4%	1	2%	50	100%
6.	Unable to pay for healthcare	36	72%	8	16%	2	4%	2	4%	0	0%	50	100%
7.	Health insurance	2	4%	1	2%	0	0%	19	38%	28	58%	50	100%
8.	Membership in welfare organization	29	58%	12	24%	4	8%	3	6%	2	4%	50	100%
9.	Women have equal role in fishing and allied activities	18	36%	16	32%	6	12%	6	12%	4	8%	50	100%
10.	Bond of family relation ship	39	78%	7	14%	3	6%	1	2%	0	0	50	100%
11.	Face to face relationship	21	42%	26	52%	3	6%	0	0 %	0	0%	50	100%
12.	Migration to Gulf countries	1		5		29		6		9		50	100%

\*SA-Strongly agree, A-Agree, N-Neutral, SD-Strongly disagree, F-Frequency, P-Percentage

Table.1 shows economic trouble is an important problem among the fishermen community. Fishing is a seasonal employment because of the climatic changes like heavy rain, flood, heavy wind, trawling ban etc. The fishermen did not get fair price from fishing because of the intervention of the middle men or big merchants. The middlemen are buying the fishes at very low price and selling it in very high rates in the market Fishing is a job that want high physical labour apart from these there is high risk of diseases and injuries.

Health and safety in fisheries is a complex issue with multiple aspects. Fishing is performed under unpredictable and rapidly changing weather and sea conditions, but they are very limited access to social security measures like health insurance and they are not capable of paying for their health issues. The participation of the fishermen in welfare associations are increasing now a days because they ensure that the expenses, responsibilities, and profits of fishing are shared fairly. Fishermen borrowed loans from banks for educational purposes, housing and for business purposes. The participation of the women in fishing and its allied activities are increasing. They have very important role in preparatory works include mending and making nets, baiting hooks, providing services to the fishing boats. Their community feeling is also very high because they are maintaining face to face relationships. Most of them are maintaining a very good bond with family members.

**Table.2 Cultural characteristics of fishermen community**

Sl. No	Statement	SA		A		N		D		SD		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Change in food patterns	14	52%	0	0%	5	10%	12	24%	31	62%	50	100%
2.	Obsession with religious ceremonies	29	58%	5	10%	4	8%	10	12%	2	4%	50	100%
3.	Modern dress than traditional dress	32	64%	9	18%	5	10%	4	8%	0	0%	50	100%
4.	Marriage within community	18	36%	7	14%	13	26%	7	14%	5	10%	50	100%
5.	Women's restriction during menstrual days	5	10%	4	8%	1	2%	21	42%	19	38%	50	100%
6.	Traditional values and principles	23	46%	19	38%	3	6%	0	0%	5	10%	50	100%
7.	Preservation of old Fishing equipment	18	36%	16	32%	3	6%	9	18%	4	8%	50	100%
8.	Modern methods of fishing rather than traditional methods of fishing	33	66%	8	16%	0	0%	7	14%	2	4%	50	100%
9.	Modern methods of navigation rather	27	54%	10	20%	1	2%	2	4%	10	20%	50	100%

	than traditional methods of navigation.												
10.	Migration to gulf countries.	17	34%	15	30%	0	0%	11	22%	7	14%	50	100%

\*SA-Strongly agree, A-Agree, N-Neutral, SD-Strongly disagree, F-Frequency, P-Percentage

Table 2 reveals the cultural characteristics of the fishermen community. There is no big change in the pattern of food style among fishermen. The availability of fish in their area is very high so most of the days fish related food items have in their diet. Most of them like to follow the religious ceremonies like ponkala in the honour of the sea, tools used for fishing such as the fishing craft and the gear are blessed by the parish priests for the future luck and for safety. Dressing style of the youth is changing because of the coming of new trends. The concept of marriage within the community is changed and intercaste marriages are also common in their community.

The women have very less restrictions on menstrual days. There is such concepts like women don't have the right to enter into the sea during menstrual days. These restrictions were fully vanished but they have no entry into temples during menstrual days. They have strong belief in traditional values and believes like the role of forces of nature such as wind and fire. Preservation of old fishing equipment is also very common in their community.

Modern methods of fishing like trawler, drift net, long-lining, casting, bait fishing have growing importance rather than traditional methods of fishing. The modern methods of navigation like GPS tracker, sound recorder, compass were commonly using now a days. In the older days direction is detected by looking the sun, wind, cloud etc. The migration to gulf countries is also increased because of better opportunities.

## Findings

Socio-economic status is the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income, occupation etc. In this study most of the respondents were between age twenty six to thirty and doing own businesses. Most of them are married and very much attached to their family. The income level is very low when we compare to other sectors. Majority of the respondents have their own house but their housing conditions are very bad. For educational, housing, business purposes they incurred loan from the banks.

Economic hardship is a significant issue for the fishing community. Because of climate variations such as severe rain, flood, tides, trawling bans, and so on, fishing is a seasonal occupation. Because of the intervention of middlemen or large merchants, fishermen did not receive a fair price for their catch. The middlemen acquire the fish at a low price and sell it at a high one in the market. Fishing is a physically demanding work that also carries a high risk of disease and injury. Fishing health and safety is a multifaceted topic with many facets. Fishing is done in uncertain and frequently changing weather and sea conditions, yet they have little access to social security measures such as proper training, well-being insurance and are unable to pay for their health problems. Fishermen are increasingly joining welfare organisations to ensure that the costs, responsibilities, and profits of fishing are distributed properly.

The participation of the women in fishing and its allied activities are increasing. They have very important role in preparatory works include mending and making nets, baiting hooks, providing services to the fishing boats. Their community feeling is also very high because they are maintaining face to face



relationships. Most of them are maintaining a very good bond with family members. The lack of fishing operations along the shore due to the overexploitation of the fish wealth. This drives the fishermen to pursue deep-sea fishing. In terms of mechanisation, the fisherman are at odds or mismatched. Deep-sea fishing is pursued by trawlers and large fishing vessels, compelling the average fisherman to follow suit. Everywhere there is a fluctuating "price" mechanism. The price of the fish is decided by the middlemen once the fishermen arrive after a long journey at sea. Mismatch in the market price of fish due to an increase in the price of fuel. However, it does not allow traditional fishermen to return to their previous ways of fishing because it may lead to poverty.

Culture can be defined as all the ways of life including beliefs, arts and institutions of a population that are passed down from generation to generation. There has been no significant shift in the eating habits of fisherman. Because fish is readily available in their area, they consume fish-related foods on a daily basis. Most of them prefer to observe religious traditions such as ponkala in celebration of the sea, in which fishing implements such as fishing vessel and gear are blessed by parish priests for future success and safety. The fashion of today's youngsters is changing as new trends emerge. The community's view on marriage has shifted, and intercaste marriages are becoming more popular.

Women face less limitations on menstrual days. There are some who believe that women have no right to swim in the water during their menstrual cycle. These prohibitions have been lifted completely, but they are not permitted to enter temples on menstrual days. They have a strong conviction in traditional values and beliefs such as the role of natural forces such as wind and fire. Old fishing equipment preservation is also quite widespread in their society. Modern fishing methods such as trawler, drift net, long-lining, casting, and bait fishing are gaining popularity over traditional ways. Nowadays, contemporary navigation methods such as GPS tracker, sound recorder, and compass are widely used. Previously, direction was determined by gazing at the sun, wind, stars and cloud. Their migration to gulf countries is also increased because of better opportunities. There were culturally conditioned taboos among fishermen community some of them are Small prawns cause indigestion, stomach problems, and cholera, After eating prawns, avoid drinking milk, black tamarind should be used to cook fish, Fish and lime should not be eaten together, Fish and bitter gourd should not be eaten together, Yoghurt and fish should not be taken at the same time, Mushrooms and fish do not mix, Fish and sprouted grains should not be eaten together, Fish should be avoided if you are using certain ayurvedic (Indian system of medicine) medications, Those suffering from kidney stones should avoid eating fish with scales, Mackerels are known to cause allergies such as tongue and body irritation.

### Suggestions

- The Indian shore is abundant in fish. As a result, an immediate examination of the entire fisheries sector is required. According to the evaluation, a clear ecosystem approach to resource use and fisheries resource management would be implemented. This will be governed under the supervision of each state's government in the region.
- Increase governments assistance for kerosene and diesel that will help the fishermen to meet the fuel price hike.
- The financial assistance for the fishermen community must be increased.
- The state should foster small-scale, selected sustainable harvesting technologies with strong backward and forward linkages that improve and sustain job possibilities in fishing communities.

- The life of fishermen is always a risk factor the state should make proper social security measures like health insurance for their health and protection of family.
- Steps are being done to construct and maintain marketing infrastructure. Currently, the fish is either transported to distant locations or sold at traditional markets. Because there is no alternative arrangement to sell his catching, traditional fisherman are vulnerable to the dictates of the major companies. Condition is identical in processing matters as well. As a result, the government should take steps to establish adequate marketing mechanisms, such as fish markets and processing plants.
- The good working conditions must be made for women's.
- Women's economic participation in coastal fishing communities enriches the region's livelihood. The degradation of coastal eco systems, as well as the relocation of fishing communities from their homes, have had a negative impact on the workload and quality of life of the women in the communities. Involvement of Self-Help Groups and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in this field can lead to greater chances.
- Promote high level of participation among the members of fishing community in training and educational programmes that related to fishing as well as other occupational opportunities.
- Raising the public image and public concern for fishing people should also be promoted by drawing attention to the contributions that they make in the regions and in the nations in which they live.
- The culture of the fishermen and the contributions they made in food supplies and sustainable development, role of them during flood for the state should be incorporated into the curricula of schools, government-supported public information programmes and documentary journalism.
- The creation of welfare organizations and cooperative societies should be created through that the bond of their relationships, face to face interaction, problem solving can be done.

## Conclusion

The goal of the "development decades" in most emerging regions of the world was largely to give priority to attaining economic advancement through major changes in technology and production organisation. The enhancement of capital investment to increase natural resource production was at the heart of this paradigm, while people and their accumulated social and cultural capital were pushed to the periphery. The growth of fisheries in Kerala, India, was no exception. The social and cultural ramifications were regarded as "drags" on the anticipated transformation of a traditional culture into a modern one. The failings of the techno-economic development paradigm quickly demonstrated the futility of this approach. In Kerala, the fisheries is still mostly focused on people. Human weight moves more than fish weight during the harvesting, processing, and marketing processes. Today, this should be considered as a sector strength rather than a weakness. The more participatory a fishery is, the more secure everyone is. This is a fundamental concept for all populous countries with substantial fisheries resources. Committed and systematic efforts must be made to incorporate social and cultural factors into both the discourse and practise of fishery resource management. The preservation of diversity and the promotion of self-reliance are critical components of this endeavour. Both of these are fundamental ideals that run opposite to the current trend of homogenization brought about by globalization.

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