

**Life of the Fisher folk: A case study on the fishing village in Kannanthura.**

**The Report**

**Submitted to**  
**The Evaluation Division, Kerala State Planning Board**  
**Thiruvananthapuram, Pattom**  
**April 2016**

## **DECLARATION**

This report, “Life of the Fisher folk: A case study on the fishing village in Kannanthura” is a bonafide work done by me under the supervision of Dr.V.Vijayakumkar, Chief, Evaluation Division Kerala State Planning Board, Thiruvananthapuram, and has not been previously formed the basis for award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other similar title or recognition.

Thiruvananthapuram

April 2016

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## **CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that this report, “Life of the Fisher folk: A case study on the fishing village in Kannanthura” is a record of bonafide work carried out by Nohin Pappy Nelson under my supervision. No part of this report has been submitted for the award any degree or diploma of any university.

Thiruvananthapuram

Dr.V.Vijayakumar

April 2016

## **DISCLAIMER**

This research report is prepared by Mr Nohin Pappy Nelson, Student of Christ University Bengaluru, III rdYear B.A (Economic Honours). The facts and figures in the report are based on quick field survey done by the author and do not reflect the views or policies of the State Planning Board. The purpose of this document is to provide a comprehensive overview on the life of the fisher folk of Kerala by taking the fishing village of Kannanthura in Trivandrum as the subject for sampling.

Dr.V.Vijayakumar  
Chief,  
Evaluation Division  
Kerala State Planning Board

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This study is an attempt to bring into light the life of the fishermen community of Kerala, by taking the Kannanthura fishing village in Trivandrum as the sample area for the study. Through the study the invigilator tried to find out the problems that the community faced, the depth of penetration of the public policies and the interesting features about the traditional fishing village. Questionnaires were used for collecting data from the fishermen population of Kannanthura and the inferences has been reflected in the study with the help of tables and diagrams. The investigator could reach at the conclusion that education blended with efficient implementation of public policies can trigger the spark of development within the community. The hard work and continuous efforts from the government would ensure efficiency in the occupation and income of the target group.*

# CONTENTS

Title	Page No.
<b>1. Chapter I – Design of the study</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction	2
1.2 Literature Review	4
1.3 Statement of the Research Problem	7
1.4 Objectives	8
1.5 Methodology	8
1.6 Area of Study	9
1.7 Limitations of the study	10
<b>2. Chapter II – Background Chapter</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1 Introduction	12
2.2 Technology	12
2.3 Craft- Gear Combination	13
2.4 Trawling	14
<b>3. Chapter III – Case Study</b>	<b>16</b>
3.1 Traditional versus Modern Scenario	17
3.2 The fishing village of Kannanthura	18
3.3 Factors affecting the lives of the fishermen	19
<b>4. Chapter IV – Role of Institutions</b>	<b>27</b>
4.1 Institutions	28
<b>5. Chapter V – Conclusion and suggestions</b>	<b>41</b>
5.1 Conclusion	42
5.2 Findings	42
5.3 Suggestions	43
<b>6. Chapter VI – Appendix (Questionnaire)</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>7. Bibliography</b>	<b>48</b>

### **List of tables**

<b>Table No.</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
3.1	Cost and Profit of an Outboard engine Boat	21
3.2	Educational Status of the Respondents	23
4.1	Rates of Contributions	29
4.2	Membership Details	30
4.3	Insurance Schemes	30
4.4	Working of the Welfare Schemes	35
4.5	Pension Schemes	37
4.6	Distribution of Profit from the MatsyaLelam	31

### **List of figures**

<b>Figure No.</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
1.1	State wise Distribution of Fishing Villages in India	3



# **CHAPTER I**

## **DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

## 1.1 Introduction

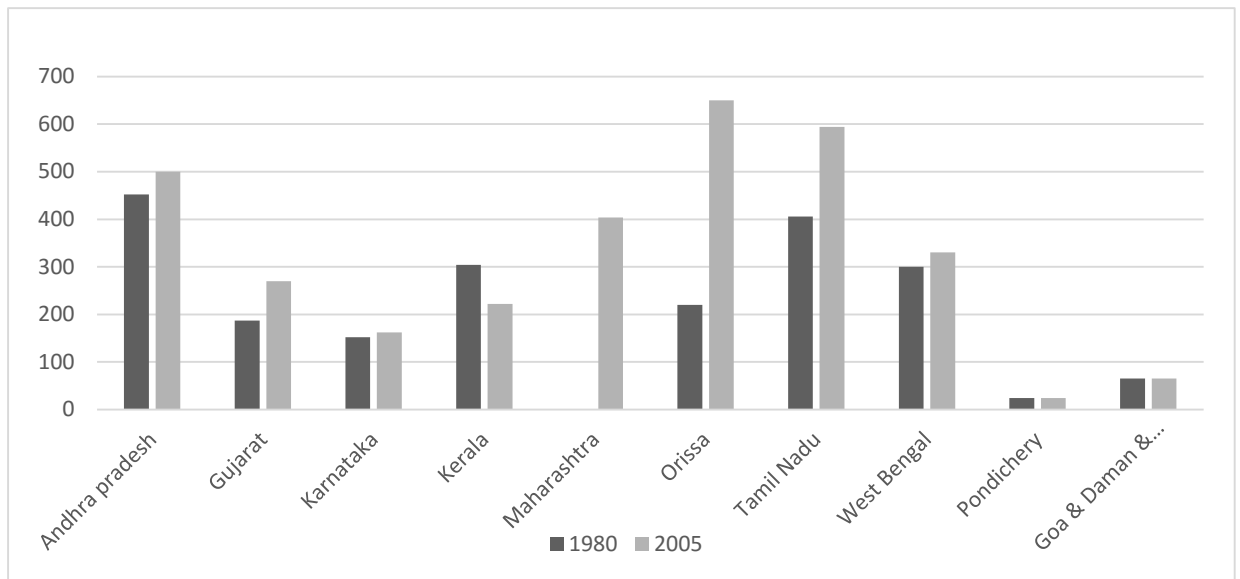
The Land of Kerala is blessed with umpteen numbers of inland water bodies and beaches, spread all along the corners of the Western Ghats. Kerala has a coastline of 589.5 kilometres and an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) which extends up to 200 nautical miles far beyond the continental shelf which covers an area of 218536 sq. km. This forms 10% of India's total coastline which has facilitated trade with other countries since a very long time. The productivity of the aqua products has been on the rise for the past few decades. The net export in this sector shows the development that has happened on these fertile grounds. Kerala stands at the apex in terms of its marine exports. (Fisheries, 2004)

Kerala is being portrayed as a beacon of development in India. The Kerala model of Development has often been praised due to the rapid pace of progress in all the sectors. But this is where the question "What has been done towards the welfare of the minority societies?" arises. The gulf between the rich and the poor is on an ever increasing scale. The grey hands of modernisation have clutched tightly the lives of the common man. Thus attention needs to be diverted towards the quality of production rather than the quantity. It is often said by scholars and sociologists that human beings are both the ends and means of development.

Human development is all about expanding people's real choice and substantive freedoms and capabilities that enable them to lead lives that they value. People whose lives are blighted by poverty, ill health or illiteracy are not in any meaningful sense free to lead lives that they value. Every development process has to be assessed for its effect on the quality of life and human well-being. This study thus aims in bringing forward the livelihood problems and patterns of those people who has voluntarily or involuntarily selected fishing or allied activities as their occupation. (V.R, 1979)

The diagram below shows the number of fishing villages in the different states in India. It is clear and evident from the diagram that the number of fishing villages in Kerala has decreased from 304 in 1980 to 222 in 2005. The reclassification of villages may be a reason for the reduction in the number. But as per the reports and researches done on the same it was clear that the lack of returns from the occupation, the livelihood problems faced by the fisher folk and the social and communal tensions were the reasons for the dissolution of the fishing villages. Kerala is the only state where the number has decreased rapidly over the time. (CMFRI, Marine Fisheries Census, 2005)

**Figure 1.1: State wise distribution of fishing villages, 1980 and 2005**



Source: Marine Fisheries Census, 2005, CMFRI

The marine fisher folk are scattered across 8 states and 2 union territories in India. Marine fisheries census shows that there were 2132 fishing villages and 3.33 lakh fishing households in India in 1980. The numbers were on a rise from 1980 till 2005 when the estimates showed that the figures had risen to more than 50 % of its original state.

But this ratio of increase was not reflected in the case of the fishing villages in Kerala. Due to this reason the God's own country became the specimen for human development experiments. The paradoxes of economic development and high levels of health development were salient features of the Kerala model of development. The United Nations Development Programme was one among the many researchers who looked into the human development indices in Kerala which was initiated during 2006.

Achievement in demographic transition, the lowest total fertility rate, lower birth rate and death rate, favourable sex ratio and increasing proportion of the aged are some of the demographic attainments of the state. According to the current scenario, these indices are not applicable to all the cases. In the figure shown above, we can see a negative growth in the case of the fishermen population. But if we compare the other Indian states in terms of the percentage share of fishermen to total state population, Kerala still ranks the top. The existing share of the fishermen population to the total population is 1.9 as per the census taken in 2005. (CMFRI, Marine Fisheries Census, 2005)

The Marine fisher folk of Kerala are not uniformly distributed among the districts in Kerala. They are different in religion, community and also the nature of fishing. Inter district variation in demographic feature, educational level, religion and ownership of fishing equipment are some of the factors that differentiate the fishermen in Kerala.

From Kasaragod to Trivandrum, there are 222 active fishing villages which are directly or indirectly engaged in fishing as their prime occupation. The largest number of fishing villages in Kerala is in Trivandrum which is 42 in number. The share of fishermen to the total population is 1.9 % (more than the tribal share) having an average family size of 4.2. The fisher folk of Kerala come mainly under three religions, namely (i) Christianity, (ii) Hinduism and (iii) Islam having a share of 42, 31 and 27 percentages respectively. (UNDP, Quality Analysis of Human Development, 2005)

But no matter where the people reside, the common problems faced by the fishermen community is the same all around Kerala. The rapacious trawling methods of the foreign fishing vessels are one among the many factors that negatively affect the lives of the fishermen. The study aims to bring about the features and problems of the occupation by looking into “The life of the Fisher folk”. The study takes into account the fishing village of Kannanthura in Trivandrum in order to reflect the day to day livelihood problems faced by the community as a whole. The occupational problems and hazards have been drawn out with the help of the respondents from the village. The penetration of the public policies has also been studied through the research.

## **1.2 Literature Review**

The review of the existing literary works on the subject helps the researcher to understand the nature and quantum of research studies undertaken in the particular area. Extensive research reports and articles about the conditions and welfare of the fisher folk in Kerala have been done from the post-independence period. Policy implementers and bureaucrats have studied about this population in order to uplift them from the existing vulnerable conditions. Thus the study is standing on the shoulders of the giant in order to fetch the relevant data to justify and support itself. Some of the works that were reviewed are as follows.

**1.2.1 CMFRI** (1977) points out that the fishermen of our country have a distinct tradition of their own. They belong to all the major religions namely Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and several communities which differ from state to state. In the society, the fishing community

occupies a low status. Majority of the fishermen belong to an economically weaker section and follow traditional methods of fishing employing indigenous crafts and gears. The average size of the fisherman family varies between 4.7 and 8.6 in different states. By and large, they are perennially indebted to the middlemen who advance financial help to them in times of need in return for their entire catch assessed at a low price. Several factors such as a low social status, poor economic conditions, and illiteracy, heavy interference of middlemen, traditional fishing equipment and methods of fishing, low production rate and income influence the socio-economic conditions of fishermen. Right from the beginning of the first Five Year Plan, this sector has been receiving considerable attention from the government. Various schemes for providing housing facilities, dispensaries and community amenities, approach roads etc., are given priority. Organised attempts are made to promote fishery co-operatives in our country.

**1.2.2 Nammalwar and Prakasam** (1979) while studying the status and problem of fishermen in the marine fishing industry point out that over-fishing threatens the fishery resources of our country and therefore regulation of a type, leading to a reduction in the number of units is desirable to conserve valuable resource to forestall economic difficulties and to reduce the clashes among different groups is desirable. Although advances have been made in fishing technology, practically it has not reached the poor fishermen. Several factors such as low social status, poor economic conditions, illiteracy, heavy interference of middlemen, traditional fishing equipment and methods etc. influence the socio-economic conditions of fishermen.

**1.2.3 Babaji** (1984) in a research project had analysed the production, marketing and consumption characteristics of marine fishery sector in Visakhapatnam. He had studied the economy of fisheries sector with reference to the socio-economic profile of traditional fishermen as well as mechanised boat owners. He had also analysed the fish consumption pattern of people in Vishakhapatnam.

**1.2.4 Namasivayam** (2007) in his article entitled “India’s Marine Exports -An over view” observed that the marine food export fetches several crores of foreign exchange to our country and provides employment opportunities for people directly and indirectly. To increase the export of marine food products to various countries, the hurdles such as export import duties, over tax in the exports is to be taken into consideration with immediate effect.

**1.2.5 Ganesh Kumar** (2010), the study has been conducted with the objective of understanding the process of innovative marketing models in the fisheries sector and to draw lessons from the success stories to upscale and replicate in a similar socio-politico-economic scenario in other

parts of the country. It has been conducted to provide a better understanding of fish marketing by self-help groups (SHGs), producer associations, fisheries development corporations, fisherman cooperatives and private institutions in the southern states of India, namely Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh with the hypothesis that the institutional arrangements in the marketing of fish and fishery products reduce the transaction cost and improve the market access and its efficiency. The study has reported the primary activities of those institutions in the efficient fish marketing, such as inbound logistics, operations, outbound logistics, marketing and sales promotion and support activities like infrastructural facilities, technological backstopping, price information and procurement. Through these advantages, the fishermen have been found to achieve economies of scale, technological innovations, capacity development, linkage among activities, degree of vertical integration, timing of market entry, product differentiation, market access, credit access, etc. The study has suggested replication of such successful innovative institutions in marketing the fish and fishery products through appropriate policies and programmes. It has also suggested the promoting institutions like SHGs, producer / fishermen associations, cooperatives, etc. and allowing the entry of private agencies with appropriate regulatory mechanism to improve the efficiency of fish marketing in the country.

**1.2.6 HDR (1990):** Skilled, healthy and well educated people are in a better position than others to take their lives in their own hands.

The empirical data for the study was received from online sources of the fisheries department and the United Nations Development Programme journals. CMFRI journals were also accessed for the collection of secondary data.

**1.2.7 K.V Basavakumar (2011).** He conducted a profilistic study on the socio-economic status of the fisherman community of a village in Dharwad district. A total sample of respondents was 57 families and head of the family was considered as respondent for collection of the data in addition to the head of the fisherman co-operative society. The results of the study revealed that the male population constituted around 52.33 percent indicating the dominance of males in the fisheries sector. Amongst the total fishermen's only 13.84 percent were found to be literate. 45.78 percent of the population fall under the age group of less than 20 years and the total earning population constituted around 56.60 percent. The dominance of male population was evident in all the categories giving an indication that fishing and related activities are the domain of males. On further examination, it was found that smoking, betel nut chewing and

consumption of liquor were the common habits of adult fisherman community. As the major occupation was fishing, majority of the population were engaged in fishing activity and 56.14 percent fall under the low income category. The study indicated that the general socio-economic status of the fisherman community could be improved by the adoption of improved fishing and fish farming methods and by imparting education

### **1.3 Statement of the Research Problem**

As per the statistics given by the Fisheries Department of Kerala, more than 60% of the fishermen population lie below the poverty line. This states that the basic necessities for living are not entitled to these sections of the society. Numerous policies have been implemented and a number of relief programmes has been introduced but still the community lives far away from the shadow of the mainstream.

The main problems faced by the fishermen are: lack of bureaucratic support to compete against the large privatised players in this field, insufficient income due to the low returns from their occupation, absence of a proper organisational structure to guide and support them, the creeping process of westernisation, etc. Thus due to these reasons, we can even see a changing trend in their occupations recently. Thus the main problems of the community can be highlighted as follows:-

- Unpredictable behaviour of the nature which pushes them into deep struggle and agony.
- Lack of returns from the occupation.
- Lack of storage facilities to store the catch.
- Lack of education and awareness among the fishermen
- Presence of a competitive market.
- Improper functioning of the government policies and relief organisations.
- Absence of a rigid organisational structure to hold up their interests.
- Lack of income for the traditional fisher folk due to the pouncing modernisation and trade liberalisation measures.
- Lack of technical and infrastructural advancements to compete with the big players in this arena.
- Absence of a financial organisation to support them in case of emergencies.

These are some of the many problems faced by the fisher folk in Kerala. It is with the encroachment of the trade liberalisation policies that the lives of these people started to change drastically.

Keeping in mind the above problems faced by the fishermen community, the following objectives have been traced out and framed for the study.

### **1.4 Objectives**

- A comparison between the traditional and modern scenario in this field.
- The depth of penetration and the impact of the government policies and schemes in the lives of this section of the society.

The above objectives will be used to bring into light the following aspects as well:-

- A look into how religion and religious groups act as a medium for the government to carry forward its functions at the time of emergencies.
- To put forward innovative and fruitful suggestions that will be able to bring about a change.

### **1.5 Methodology**

As being explorative in nature, the study aims in bringing forward the fact and suggests remedial measures to rectify the shortcomings to an extent. In order to analyse the livelihood problems and government involvement in the lives of the people in Kannanthura, both primary and secondary data were collected. Personal interviews of hundred fishermen of the vicinity were taken in order for the collection of primary data. The respondents were selected on a random sampling basis. Secondary data was collected from the government and its allied organisations that worked for the fishermen population namely:

- The Fisheries Office, Vettukadu
- The Matsyafed Office, Vettukadu
- The MatsyaBhavan, Vettukadu
- The Kannanthura Matsya Thozhilali Vikasana Kshema Sahakarana Sankam, Kannanthura

The Latin Catholic church of Kannanthura was also visited in order to fetch data regarding the involvement of the religious institution in the lives of the fishermen population of Kannanthura.



Questionnaires were prepared beforehand after keeping in mind the capacity of the respondents.

The fishing village was piloted before fixing the sampling area in order to find out the capacity of the respondents to give the answers. The village satisfied all the objectives of the study and thus was chosen as the subject.

Statistical tools such as simple, multiple bar diagrams, tables etc. have been used for data analysis.

## **1.6 Area of Study**

The area of study was confined to the fishing village in Kannanthura. The village comes under the jurisdiction of the Trivandrum Corporation. Kannanthura comes under the direct liability of the Shankumukham ward (Ward number 89) which is headed by a counsellor. The area is commonly known as Shankumukham itself as it is not far away from the beach. The sun burnt sand beaches of Kannanthura kisses the tides of the Arabian Sea. It is one among the 222 existing fishing villages in Kerala. It is a coastal fishing village which is mostly inhabited by the Latin Catholic Christians. Majority of the population living in the locality are Christians.

The village was chosen for conducting the study as it was a perfect blend of traditional as well as modern methods of fishing. The people living in the area belong to the Mukkuva community who come under the affiliation of the Catholic Church. The hands of modernisation and trade liberalisation have not yet crept into the society. The indigenous fishermen of the village are not yet adapted with the latest technological advancements that has happened over time in the fishing industry. Thus the sample area of study was apt to trace out the perils to the traditional fishermen due to the tough competition from the trawling vessels which are way ahead with technology. The number of people living in the village is less when compared to the other fishing villages in Trivandrum. The fishermen in the village share a really tight bond with the nature, which acts as the only source of income for them. They have immense knowledge about the elements of nature, that they can even predict the imminent disasters even before they occur. The religious inclination of the people was also taken into account for the study.

The fishermen of the village use traditional crafts for carrying on their occupation. Due to the high illiteracy rate and poverty, the poor folks cannot indulge in modern methods of the occupation. Thus the difference between the traditional and modern scenario was traced through the study.

The total populace of this region are mainly fishermen or folks practicing allied occupations. But recently due to the lack of returns from the occupation, a change in trend can be seen. People are forced to practice other occupations. Some of the other occupations practiced by the folks residing in the village are- constructional work, auto rickshaws, ice cream vehicles etc. The reasons for the change in trend of occupation in the village were also an important objective that was looked through the study. All of the objectives for the study were satisfied by the village and thus was apt to be the subject for the study.

### **1.7 Limitations of the study**

- Due to time and space constraints, only one fishing village could be taken for conducting the study.
- Limited knowledge in the usage of statistical tools.
- Sampling errors that arose in the course of the study.
- Limited access to information.
- Unpredictable behaviour from the respondents.
- The miscommunication that arose between the invigilator and the respondent.
- Absence of a working union of the fishermen for consultation regarding the problems faced by the community as a whole.
- Problems faced when interviewing the fishermen in order for the collection of the data.
- Limited secondary data that was already available with the government offices.
- Inability of the fisher folk to efficiently put forward their problems, due to the lack of education.
- Lack of quantitative data that was fetched through the study.
- The scope of religion in the life of the fishermen was limited to only Christianity.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **BACKGROUND CHAPTER**

## 2.1 Introduction

The Chapter discusses the various statistical data and trends that are seen in the fisheries sector of Kerala. As already discussed in the previous chapter, we can notice how much of a crucial role the fisheries industries play in the overall economic landscape of Kerala. All the statistics noted reaffirm the statement that more efforts should be taken to increase the fisheries industry as a whole. An increase in this sector will lead to the overall and rapid development of the Kerala economy. Just as the dairy industry like MILMA experienced a huge boom, the fisheries industry too requires a boom to set it on the right path. (UNDP, Human Development Report, 2004)

There are currently 222 Marine fisheries villages and 113 inland Fisheries Villages in Kerala. The estimated fishermen population of Kerala state is 11.4 lakhs. The number of fishing harbours in the state is 10. The number of fishing crafts operated in Kerala is 29,177. As per the guidelines marked down by the fisheries department, area coming within the depth range of 50 meters have been demarcated for fishing by the traditional fishermen using country crafts and beyond the limit in the economic zones can be utilized by motorized boats and large vessels.

All of these data and information are collected and maintained by the Department of fisheries which acts as the apex regulatory institution in this sector.

The various arms of this department are given as follows.

1. Kerala State Co-operative Federation for Fisheries Development Ltd (Matsyafed),
2. Agency for the Development of Aquaculture in Kerala (ADAK), Kerala Fishermen Welfare Fund Board (KFWFB),
3. Kerala State Fisheries Resource Management Society (FIRMA),
4. Marine Enforcement & Vigilance and National Institute Fisheries Administration (NIFAM)

## 2.2 Technology

Technology has always played a massive role in the transformation of any sector. A large number of technological changes have taken place in the fisheries sector of Kerala. The major changes are pointed out below

- Introduction and popularization of synthetic fishing gear materials.

- Introduction of trawling in mid 1950s
- Improvement in efficiency and diversification of trawls, purse seines, gillnets and lines, for mechanized sector.
- Continuous improvement in size, endurance, installed engine power, winch capacities, fish-hold, freshwater and fuel capacities of mechanized trawlers to enable multi-day fishing, since mid-1980s.
- Improvement in size, endurance, installed engine power, fish-hold, freshwater and fuel capacities of mechanized gillnetters/liners to enable multi-day, distant water fishing.
- Adoption of modern technologies such as echo sounder and GPS in a wider scale over the last decade.
- Motorization of traditional fishing crafts in 1980s and expansion in fishing grounds
- Improvement of traditional fishing units, in terms of craft modernization, gear materials, gear efficiency and dimensions.
- Introduction of purse seines in commercial fishing in 1986
- Displacement of traditional boat seines by ring seines.
- Rapid expansion of ring seine units in terms of numbers, continuous increase in size of crafts, horsepower of Out Board Motors, changes in craft materials, continuous increase in overall dimensions of the ring seines and introduction of mechanized purse line hauling.
- Introduction of mini-trawling in mid-1987 and its subsequent proliferation, targeting near-shore shrimp and fish resources.
- Introduction of ring seines with inboard engines and purse line haulers in 1999 and continuous increase in numbers.

### **2.3 Craft- Gear Combinations**

There are a variety of craft-gear combinations that are used across the state. About 18 different craft-gear combinations were under operation in the traditional sector, including (i) canoe cotton shore seine; (ii) canoe-encircling gillnet; (iii) dugout canoe boat seine; (iv) dugout canoe-boat seine; (v) dugout canoe-cast net; (vi) dugout canoe-hook and line; (vii) dugout canoe-large mesh drift gillnet; (viii) dugout canoe-lobster gillnet; (ix) dugout canoe-sardine

gillnet; (x) dugout canoe-shrimp gillnet; (xi) kattumaram-hook and line; (xii) kattumaram-large mesh gillnet; (xiii) kattumaram-shrimp gillnet; (xiv) kattumaram-anchovies gill net; (xv) kattumaram-sardine gillnet; (xvi) plank canoe-hook and line; (xvii) plank canoe-nylon shore seine and (xviii) plank canoe-small mesh drift gillnet. (Fisheries, 2004)

Mesh regulation is a common measure for reducing the catch of small fish and small sized non-target species in trawls. Mesh regulation is an important step towards reducing the growth over fishing, rampant in Indian fisheries. A mesh size of 35 mm has been prescribed for trawl codend and incorporated in the Marine Fishing Regulations of Kerala.

The harvestable potential of marine fishery resources in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone has been estimated at about 3.9234 million tonnes (MT). The EEZ extends to 320 km. from the coast which provides vast potential area for optimum exploitation. About 58 per cent of the resources are available at a depth of 0-50 metres, 35 per cent at 50-200 metre depth and 7 per cent in depths beyond 200 metres.

## **2.4 Trawling**

The State of Kerala is very much concerned about the protection of the marine fishery resources and to achieve the said objective, Kerala has introduced trawling ban as early as in 1988. Kerala is the first State in the country to introduce a trawling ban. The trawling ban, thus introduced, was pursuant to various scientific studies conducted by Expert Committees specially appointed by Government of Kerala from time to time. Eleven Expert Study Committees were constituted by the Government of Kerala since 1981.

The name of the committees and the year in which it was constituted are as under:

1. Babupaul Committee 1981
2. Kalawar Committee 1985
3. Balakrishnan Nair Committee I 1989
4. Balakrishnan Nair Committee II 1991
5. P.S.B.R. James Committee 1992
6. Sailas Committee 1992
7. Balakrishnan Nair Committee III 2000
8. D.K. Singh Committee 2006

In the year 1980, the Government of Kerala had introduced the “Kerala Marine Fishing Regulation Act, 1980 (KMFR Act)”. Kerala was the first state to adopt such a model statute on

Marine Fishing Regulations in the country. The important provisions of the said Act are as under:

- 1) Regulation of Fishing
- 2) Prohibition of the use of fishing vessel
- 3) Licensing of fishing vessel
- 4) Prohibition of fishing without license
- 5) Cancellation, suspension and amendment of license.
- 6) Registration of vessels etc.

The Fish Farmers Development Agency (FFDA) scheme was initiated as a pilot project by the Department of Agriculture & Corporation, Govt. of India in 1974-75 in some states of the country in order to utilize village tanks and ponds for the purpose of aquaculture by setting up district level agencies. The scheme was introduced to more states and thus the number of agencies also increased. FFDAs are provided with necessary funds, Extension Service Units and required infrastructure so as to develop freshwater fish culture in each district. The FFDAs enjoy reasonable autonomy in their operations. There are 14 FFDAs in the state covering all districts. The first FFDA started functioning in Palakkad district since 1976. Fresh water Fish Farmers Development Agencies are district level organizations registered under the Charitable Societies Act.

### **CHAPTER III**

## **LIFE OF THE FISHER FOLK, A CASE STUDY ON THE FISHING VILLAGE IN KANNANTHURA.**



### **3.1 Traditional Versus Modern Scenario**

There used to be a time when fishermen lived a happy and jovial life with their nets full of fish and their pockets with enough money to support their day to day activities. But now the people are struggling to make both the ends meet in order to survive. The lack of returns from fishing, modernisation and trade liberalisation are some of the reasons for the struggle by the traditional fishermen.

During the post independent period, the fishery sector was at its nascent stage. The sector was never considered to be an area of trade. The catching was mainly meant to meet the daily requirements and the local market demands. It provided a cheap and calorific item in the food menu. Then the government saw that the industry was booming and prospering and thereby introduced foreign trawlers into our seas by the sixties. The huge profit that was looted out from the seas encouraged other private players to enter the arena. This is when the life of the traditional fishermen began to change. A difference in opinion started to develop between the traditional fish workers and the mechanised boat owners who were not from fishing communities. Introduction of bottom trawling was yet another factor that affected the fishermen. Bottom trawling has the capacity to catch anything. It destroys the small fish and kills all the other species. Even the fish eggs will not be spared under this method. Until 1960, fishing in Kerala was entirely dominated by the non-mechanised, traditional country crafts – kattumaram, plank and dugout canoes – using a variety of tackle and gear. During the course of this time, there was a rapid change from cotton to nylon nets.

The introduction of mechanised boats and advanced nets changed the fishery sector altogether. The recent introduction of in board engines in addition to outboard engines changed the situation into a more complex one. If trawling is carried out in the same area as kattumaram fishing there is great risk of damage to the latter fishermen's gear as well as to their lives. The nets of the fishermen in the traditional crafts will get tangled and destroyed due to the heavy machinery that is used for trawling by the other ship. Moreover, since the catching capacity of the trawlers is very high, it affects the catch of traditional fishermen. Even though there is a law stipulating twenty-two kilometres depth of sea only for traditional fishermen, the trawlers never kept the rule. The fish varieties have also decreased because of the rapacious trawling methods that are carried out in the oceans. These factors further pushed the fishermen into darkness.

Nature also plays an important role in the fishing patterns. There has been a substantial decrease in the varieties of fish after the tsunami in 2004. The varieties of fishes and marine resources have decreased due to the impact of the tsunami. Monsoon and unpredictable pattern of the rain are other factors that affect the ratio of catch by the fishermen. The foreign trawlers who line up in the horizon loot everything they can from the water leaving nothing for the poor fishermen community. The fishermen often return empty handed after work most of the days.

The increase in pollution and global warming is yet another reason for the decrease in the varieties and quantity of fishes in the water. Most of the remaining fishing villages in Kerala still use traditional craft and gear for fishing in order to meet both the ends of their family.

Lot has been tried by the government in order to change the existing scenario, but not much fruits have been produced yet. The various researches done by environmentalists and sociologists still lie tangled in the red strings in the government offices, without even seeing the light.

### **3.2 The fishing village of Kannanthura**

The small fishing village of Kannanthura comes under the jurisdiction of the Trivandrum Corporation. The village comes under the responsibility of the Shankumukam ward. The village is a perfect blend of traditional and modern methods of fishing. There are almost 1350 families living in the village which comprises of 1200 active fishermen and 600 folks who practice allied occupation (including the women). This means that at least one person from each household is directly or indirectly engaged in activities connected to fishing. The village has 17 traditional boats which are fitted with outboard engines that are used for fishing. The ownership of these boats is shared between the residents of the village. Majority of the total populace living in the village belong to the Mukkuva community which comes under the affiliation of the Latin Catholic church.

Traditional methods of fishing are still being followed by the fishermen in the village. The only technological advancement is that of the outboard engines that are attached to the boats to aid them in fishing. The fishermen go in a group (which ranges from 20 to 40) to the sea for fishing. They have immense knowledge about the elements of nature which they put to use for the purpose of fishing. Forms of animism can still be seen within the community. The tools and equipment that they use for fishing include indigenous crafts, fishing nets, and compasses. The main catches from this area includes tuna, sardines and anchovy.

### **3.3 Factors Affecting the Lives of the Fishermen**

There are many factors that positively and negatively affect the lives of the fishermen community in Kerala. Shown below are some of the striking factors and features that were observed in the fishing village of Kannanthura. It gives a synopsis of the fishing community as a whole.

- **Occupation**

The fishermen population of Kannanthura includes people who practice fishing as their prime occupation and also the ones who have taken up allied occupations as their source of livelihood. The male population of the village are engaged in fishing whereas the female populace are engaged in allied activities such as drying, curing, peeling and the selling of fish. Majority of the total fishermen population of the village were involuntarily dragged into this occupation due to poverty and lack of education. An extra earning hand would help them to meet their needs every day. Thus the parents would force them to join the crew in order to increase the income of the house hold. They engage in fishing activities for 6 days a week.

The fishermen population living in Kannanthura are traditional fishermen who mostly practice shore fishing and fishing in indigenous crafts (Kattumaram). The fish that they catch are bought by the auctioneers who come from different markets. The absence of a working market system in the locality leads to the involvement of more middlemen which further leads to the exploitation of the poor folks. The women who sells fish in the nearby areas, buy the fish from other markets rather than taking it form the catch of their husbands and dear ones because of the meagre amount of catch in the nets. Allied activities include fish marketing, making and repairing of nets, fish curing and processing, peeling and other connected labour.

The depleting resources in the oceans and the over exploitation of the seas by the foreign trawlers has led to the change in occupations of the fishermen. In order to meet the daily demands of the family, the fishermen are forced to practice other part time jobs. They go for construction works, ice cream selling, and as tourist guides etc. for earning extra income to support the family. This implies that majority of the population still recourse to fishing and allied activities for their daily bread and only a meagre percentage engage in alternative activities. 70% of the population have taken up fishing as their occupation due to the poor living standards in the family. The village mostly comprises of traditional fishermen who have acquired the art of fishing from their parents. Due to financial backwardness, they are unable

to buy advanced machinery for fishing. Depleting resources and rapacious trawling by fishing boats and ships imposes a threat to the traditional fishermen. Banks to some extent has helped the fishermen to buy the boats with the help of loans.

There are many hazards that come along with the occupation. The occupation is really risky and dangerous. Accidents and deaths can happen any time at sea. The unpredictability of nature adds up to the risk of the occupation. A number of deaths and accidents have been recorded in the village, but yet proper measures have not been taken in order to get away with the danger. No emergency assistances are available in the locality for the fishermen who are in danger at sea. They take precautions by their own experience. None of the crafts used in the village are fitted with GPS tracking systems, thus if the men are lost at sea, it is their expertise and knowledge about the elements of nature that would bring them back. The absence of warehouse and storage facilities further adds up to the atrocities faced by the folks. There has been times when they even have had to dispose the catch because of the absence of warehouse facilities.

- **Income and Expenditure**

The lack of returns from the occupation and the uncertainty of the catch lead to the difficulty in the estimation of income. Due to the joint ownership of the fishing boats, the fishermen are bound to go in groups for catching the fish. There are 17 traditional crafts in the village and a crew for each consists of about 30 to 40 fishermen. Thus only a portion of the total catch goes to each individual which most of the times will be frugal. The statistical data collected from the fisheries department says that at least 60% of Kerala's fishermen population lies under the poverty line.

A fishing raft with an outboard engine will need 55 to 60 litres of kerosene daily for fishing. The current rate of kerosene ranges from Rs.60 to Rs.70. The subsidized price of kerosene that the fishermen get from the government is Rs.14 and the quantity that they are allowed is 128 litres for an engine per month. So after proper calculations we can find that the subsidised kerosene that is enlisted to each engine will last only for a maximum of 2 to 3 days. Thus the fishermen have to spend at least Rs.4000 for kerosene for a single catch.

**Table 3.1: Table showing the cost and revenue on an outboard engine boat**

Number of boat/s	1
Avg. daily catch (Value in rupees)	5000
No. of workers	30
Kerosene cost (55*70)	3850
Miscellaneous	500
Balance	650

Source: Sample Survey

The above table shows the average cost and revenue for a day at sea.

After toiling for a whole day, the profit that they get as a group is Rs.650 which is to be divided among 30 of them. Thus each will get share of less than Rs.50 after the expenses that are incurred on the boat. This is not the story all the time, fortune does not turn a blind eye to them every day. Sometimes each fisherman will get a share of more than Rs.1000 depending upon the quantity of the catch. But nowadays usually they return empty handed after toiling so hard at the sea because of the depleting resources and the rapacious trawling methods adopted by the competitors.

The change in consumption patterns of the consumers affects the lives of the traditional fishermen drastically. The now existing population of Kerala tries to imitate the western culture and is acquiring a taste towards the western pattern of consumption. They prefer preserved and frozen food to the fresh proteins that are available in the local markets. The people believe that purchasing and spending on a commodity in the local market will cause a blot to their social status. Thus they buy commodities from the supermarkets at exorbitant prices. Thus the working of the Veblen effect is justified here. The poor producers and grass root level workers are the ones who suffer from this imitation game as their produces fail to gain a place against the tough competitors in the market.

The income level of a fisherman ranges from Rs.50 to Rs.300 on an average basis. The fishermen of Kannanthura go for fishing only for 6 months a year because of the low returns and trawling ban. The months of June to August are off season for the fishermen because of the rough seas and monsoon. So they will lie unemployed for this time and will have to spend

on the frugal savings they would have collected at the time of employment. They engage in other part time jobs this half of the year in order to support their family.

The women population of the fishing village in Kannanthura are mostly engaged in allied activities like fish selling, fish drying etc. They travel to distant places to sell fish in order to make a living out of it. It was surprising to find out that after working hard every day, the average amount that they make will only be Rs.150 to Rs.200 per week (sample survey), out of which a share will go to the society. The amount that they make will be used for daily expenses and the educational purposes of their children. Thus with the unavailability of resources, the fishermen and their family are pushed in to indebtedness and low standards of living.

The helping hands of Kudumbashree have started to work wonders with the women of the village. Self-help groups are taking births in the coastal village of Kannanthura. Non-Governmental Organisations also come for the rescue of the people at the time of need. During off season, the fish that was dried and kept will be utilised in order to satisfy their own needs and to earn some extra income. Due to the low returns and unpredictability of income, the youth are turning away from the traditional occupation that their families had carried on for years. They engage in jobs like welding, aluminium fabrication etc .Youth are not interested in the profession that their family has carried on for generations due to lack of returns and the low status of the job. Financial trouble is one of the main factors that lead to the change in occupation.

- **Education**

According to Amartya Sen “If education makes a person more efficient in commodity production then this clearly is an enhancement of human capital. This can add to the value of production in the economy and also to the income of a person who has been educated. But with same levels of income, a person may benefit from education, in reading, communicating, arguing, in being able to choose in a more informed way, in being taken seriously and so on.” (Kurien, 1998)

Education, health and standard of living were three main objectives under the dictum of the Kerala model of development. The government has focussed its working towards uplifting the minority communities with the introduction of compulsory primary education to the people. But the people of Kannanthura were not much inclined towards education. 45% of the population are school dropouts and have not even had basic primary education.

**Table 3.2: Table showing the educational status of the respondents**

No Formal Education	8
Lower primary	57
Upper primary	23
SSLC 10 <sup>th</sup>	8
Degree	4
Total	100

Source: Sample Survey

Hundred respondents were randomly selected in order to find out the livelihood patterns and problems of their community. The table above shows the different level of education that the people have had during their childhood. According to the statistics taken by the Fisheries Department, the average years of schooling of the fishermen in Trivandrum is 5.7 years. It is clear from the table that even after hearing about the success stories about the literacy rates of Kerala, sections of the society are still to be touched with the seducing hands of education. Only 30% of the population in the village have got primary education. It is evident from the table shown above that 3 out of every 10 people drop out from school even before the age of 14. The level of illiteracy in the village is decreasing as the youth has explored the benefits of education and has engaged in, reached out and explored other lands and occupations with the help of education. Due to poverty and low standards of living, a large population of the village were forced to take up fishing as their occupation even at a very young age. They, thus drop out from school in order to help the family to crawl out of poverty and to be an extra earning hand in the family. The female to male ratio is higher in case of enrolment to school. The ratio stands at 100:70. The young female population of the village also go for part time jobs like typing, stitching etc. in order to increase the income level of the household.

Newspapers and other journals are not subscribed by the residents of the village. Lack of schools in the locality is another factor for the high illiteracy rate. The older generation are not aware of the benefits of education as they have not got basic education and thus do not encourage their children to go to school, but will rather ask them to accompany them. Literacy rates of the elderly people in the village are really low. The distance between the educational institutions and the village is another factor responsible for the low enrolment ratio in the schools.

There are two schools that are found in the locality that the fishermen population go to, namely

\* St Joseph's School, Vettukadu, and

\*The Lower Primary School, Kannanthura.

- **Housing**

The village is a mixture of both kaccha and pakka houses. Strong concrete houses were built with the help of the government under its housing scheme. 7 houses have been so far built in the village with the help of the MatsyaBhavan housing scheme. A number of houses were destroyed due to the impact of the tsunami. The houses were rebuilt and repaired under the Tsunami Relief Assistance Scheme of the Fisheries Department. A total of 1909 houses were destroyed by tsunami in Trivandrum. Traditional thatched roof huts can still be spotted amidst the concrete figures in the village.

A striking feature that was seen in the village was that the houses lied too close to the shore. Even after the implementation of the coastal regulation zone activities, the number of houses that lie close to the sea has yet not decreased. Among Indian states, the largest number of coastal fishing villages within 100 metres from the shore is in Kerala. Due to this factor, the damage that is caused to the property due to the high tides is higher. The houses that are seen in the village were built with the help of bank loans and aid from the relatives and near ones. The schemes of MatsyaBhavan have also helped in building houses and toilets in the village.

- **Religion**

95% of the fishermen living in the Kannanthura village are Christians who belong to the Latin Catholic denomination. Christian fishermen are concentrated on the southern part of Trivandrum. 52.4% of the fishermen population of Trivandrum are Christians. The share of fishermen in the village comes under this major percentage. They go to the Latin Catholic churches of Kannanthura and Vettukadu. The fishermen population of the village belong mainly to the Mukkuva community. The fishermen come together as a community in order to solve the problems, with the help of the church. The church acts as a messenger for the government institutions in order to help them with their duties. The priest of the church has control over the lives of the people. He is the one who settles the disputes that may arise between the residents of the village. Years ago, the churches used to be the provider of food supplies and rations at time of famine to the folks of the village. The priest has got the position of a community leader in the vicinity.



- **Debt position**

Due to the low income and returns to scale, the folks are pushed in to poverty. The height of indebtedness increases due to the decreasing rate of returns. The people of the village mainly depend upon each other and their loved ones for credit facilities. Local money lenders, employers, relatives, family and neighbours act as the agents of credit markets in the village. Exorbitant rates of interests are charged by the local money lenders. The helping hands of the relatives who work abroad further acts as source of credit for the poor folks at the time of need. Inability to pay back the borrowed money further causes bonded labour.

Inability to maintain a bank account due to the lack of income and lack of valuable mortgages to keep as a guarantee in the bank further shuts the door of these financial institutions to help the poor folks. But in some cases the commercial banks do come for the help of the fishermen who have the interest of the political leaders of the locale. The acceptance of loans and grants works on a recommendation and political interest basis.

- **Health, sanitation and drinking water**

There are no such health issues that are connected with the occupation other than the allergies and asthma problems that are caused due to the side effects of the colouring agents and chemicals that are used in painting the boats and nets. Due to the increased usage of alcohol and tobacco items by the fishermen, traces of oral cancer and Tuberculosis were diagnosed in the village. The poor folks will deliberately neglect and will not take these health issues seriously after thinking about the pool of expenses that they would have to incur. This often leads to death and paralysis at a very young age. One out of every five residents of the village has been diagnosed with at least one of the above said health problems.

Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) is another important health problem affecting the female population of the village. This is caused due to the inefficient sanitation facilities and hygiene. But they often keep these matters to themselves as they find these health issues embarrassing and as a sign of weakness. The life expectancy of males in the village ranges from 50 – 60 years whereas for females it is 75+. According to the data collected from the UNDP development research, 36.4% of the deaths of the fishermen are caused due to cancer. All the houses do not have toilets attached to them. Lack of hygiene and sanitation are the major causes of diseases in the village. Fevers and endemic diseases are part and parcel to the lives of the people of the village.

No community or private wells can be seen in the village because of the high percentage of sodium chloride content in the water. The water that they use for drinking comes from the community pipelines that are installed in the village by the Kerala Water Authority. The water that comes from the community pipes is usually not potable, thus they use it for other household activities.

The lack of health and medical facilities that are available in the locale are the reasons for the increase in endemic diseases and other health issues. Proper medical aid given at the right time would help to eradicate the medical anomalies. There are only two small medical clinics that provide aid to the people of Kannanthura, namely (i) The Bernada Nursing home and (ii) a private clinic in Kannanthura.

The vicinity does not have a working government hospital. Most of the health benefits and schemes can be redeemed only from a government hospital. The absence of such a medical institution thus shuts down the scope of free medical aid for the poor community. Due to lack of money, they would leave diseases usually undiagnosed and unattended.

- **Emigration patterns**

Emigration is the act of leaving one's native country with the intent to settle elsewhere. The depleting resources in the oceans and the lack of returns from the occupation are the basic driving patterns that force the folks in migrating to other countries. But it is interesting to note that the people who migrate to different countries usually continue the same occupation. Thus it is clear from this emigration pattern that the people are forced to migrate outside not because of the distaste towards the occupation but because of the lack of returns and income which further pushes them into poverty. Only less than 10 people from the village have yet migrated outwards to foreign countries. The expectations for higher standards of living and income are the factors that drive them to migrate to foreign countries. The occupations that they take up in the foreign countries are: fishermen, drivers, coolie, and other menial jobs.

**CHAPTER IV**

**ROLE OF INSTITUTIONS IN THE COMMUNITY**

## **4.1 Institutions**

Given below are some of the institutions that work actively for the benefit of the fishermen population of Kannanthura. The following chapter shows the depth of penetration of government policies in the lives of the people of Kannanthura

### **4.1.1 The Fisheries Office, Vettukadu**

The Fisheries Department has its head office in Thrissur with its sub offices in the different parts of Kerala which looks after the welfare of the fishermen population. The Vettukadu Fisheries Office is the one which looks into the problems of the fisher folk of Kannanthura.

The fishing area of Kannanthura is known under the code T 22 in the fisheries office for maintaining an easy record in the books. The office disposes its functions to look into the problems of five fishing villages namely:

T 22 – Kannanthura

T 23 – Vettukadu

T 24 – Kochu Veli

T 25 – Valiya Veli

T 26 – Pallithura

These are the fishing villages which come under the area of control of the Vettukadu Fisheries Office. The now incumbent Fisheries Officer is Mrs Helen S Rani Mebel. The Vettukadu Fisheries office comes under the control of the Regional Fisheries Office of Vazhuthakadu.

The benefits and subsidies according to the Kshemanidhi (welfare) Scheme of the Fisheries Department is allotted to the people on an eligibility basis. The disposal of such schemes works on a membership basis. Only the people enlisted as members under the Fisheries Office will be entitled for such benefits. The fishermen or people practicing allied occupations have to maintain a passbook in order to claim their membership in the office. The passbook should be renewed yearly by paying a non-refundable amount under the different rates of contributions as below.

**Table 4.1: The rates of contributions**

I.	Rs.100 per year for people practicing fishing or allied occupations
II.	Boat owners and inboard engines Rs.150 to Rs.1250 P.M.
III	Rs.5 to Rs.35 Per month
IV	Nets Rs.20/- to Rs.25/- P.M. for nine months.
V	Farm (comes under cess act)
VI	Prawn filtration area
VII	Fish market Owners (comes under cess act)
Licensees	
I	Allied activities Rs.20 Per month
II	Owners of ice (comes under cess act)
III	Owners (comes under cess act)

Source: The online portal of the Fisheries Department of Kerala

The table above show the respective amounts that are to be paid by the fishermen and the people following allied activities in order to get the benefits from the government. It is from this amount collected that the various subsidies and benefits are allocated to the respective fishermen who have membership with the Office. The Kannanthura fishing village under the code number T 22 holds the name for the maximum number of active members under the Vettukadu Fisheries office. There are 1052 fishermen from the Kannanthura region who hold a valid pass book under the office. The number of allied workers who hold a passbook with the office is 35 (who are mainly women). The pass book needs to be renewed yearly in order to avail the benefits that are enlisted to the fishermen. The maximum time span for the passbook to remain active without expiration is five years.

**Table 4.2: Table showing the membership details of the fishermen in the fisheries office, Vettukadu**

Membership of the fishermen	1052
Membership of allied workers	35

Source: The Fisheries Office, Vettukadu

The table above shows the number of active members from the Kannanthura fishing village holding a valid passbook under the fisheries office of Vettukadu.

### **Welfare Schemes for Fishermen and Allied Workers Implemented By the Kerala Fishermen Welfare Fund Board**

The various welfare schemes and subsidies from the government and the Fisheries Board reach the fisher folk through this office. These schemes reach the hands of the eligible applicants through the different Fisheries offices that are situated throughout Kerala. The various Welfare schemes under the Fishermen Welfare Board are as follows:

#### **Fishermen's Welfare Scheme**

**1. Group Insurance Scheme:** All registered fishermen of the state between the age group of 18 to 70 years are brought under Group Accident Insurance coverage.

**Table 4.3: Table showing the amount of financial assistance**

I. Accidental claim	Rs.3,00,000
II. Permanent Total	Rs.3,00,000
III. Permanent Partial	Rs.150,000
IV. Hospitalization expenditure after an accident	Rs.20000

Source: Online portal of the Fisheries Department

**2. Death while fishing or immediately thereafter not due to accident:** The dependents of the fishermen who happen to die due to unexpected causes while fishing or immediately thereafter (not due to accident) are eligible for the benefits under the scheme. The rate of financial assistance is Rs.20, 000.

**3. Financial assistance for the marriage of daughters of fishermen:** This is one of the prestigious schemes introduced by the Board to help the poor fishermen who find it very difficult to raise funds for the marriage of their daughters. Financial Assistance of Rs.1500 is paid as ex-gratia as per this scheme for the marriage of all daughters of fishermen.

**4. Financial assistance for the death of dependants:** The aim of the scheme is to render financial assistance to the fishermen to meet expenses in connection with the death of their dependents. Rs.600 is paid towards the funeral expenses of dependents of the fishermen.

**5. Old age Pension Scheme:** Every registered fishermen who attains the age of 60 years and whose annual income is below Rs.5000 is granted a monthly pension of Rs.400.

**6. Financial assistance for temporary disability due to accident:** The scheme aims to extend financial assistance to active fishermen who happen to face with temporary disabilities due to accidents and are unable to go for fishing for not less than 7 days. The maximum amount admissible under this scheme is Rs.500.

**7. Financial assistance to the dependents for the death of fishermen:** On the death of a fisherman by any reason, the dependents will be paid an amount of Rs.5000 for meeting the funeral expenses. If there is no legal dependents the person who meets the funeral expenses will be paid Rs.1000.

**8. S.S.L.C. cash award and scholarships:** In order to promote the educational status of the students of fishermen families, the Board implements this scheme. An amount of Rs.5000 is awarded to the student who secure A+ Grade in the S.S.L.C. Examination and Rs.4000 to 9 A+ winners, Rs.3,000 to 8 A+ winners is awarded to the among the fishermen community in State level. Moreover cash award is Rs.3000 is granted to the students who pass in Fisheries Technical School.

**9. Family Welfare Scheme:** The scheme aims at the propagation of family planning activities among the fishermen. As per the schemes, financial assistance shall be given to the husband or wife of the fishermen family who undergo sterilization operation. The financial assistance granted at present is Rs.500

**10. Financial Assistance for treatment of fatal diseases:** Registered fishermen who are between the age of 23 years and 60 years are eligible for financial assistance for treatment of fatal diseases. The maximum amount payable under this scheme is Rs.50, 000.

**11. Chairman's Relief Fund:** This Scheme aims to providing immediate relief to the fishermen who become victims of unforeseen natural calamities and accidents. Till the formulation of the Scheme there were no means for providing any immediate relief to the helpless fishermen who become prey to accidents and various natural calamities. In order to avoid the usual delay in completing the necessary formalities and for providing immediate assistance to the fishermen, this scheme is formulated. Under this scheme an emergency financial relief up to Rs.5000 is granted.

**12. Special cases sanctioned by the Board:** Financial Assistance is also granted to some special cases which do not come under the purview of the above schemes and which are of humanitarian concern, by the decision of the Board of Directors.

**13. Maternity Benefit Scheme:** Like other schemes which provide financial assistance for the marriage of daughters and for family planning operation, this scheme also aims at giving moral support to the social development among the womenfolk of the fishermen community. The wives of the fishermen and the fisherwomen's who are above 19 years are eligible for financial assistance under the scheme. They are granted Rs.750 for each of the two live births, for the pre post maternity care.

**14. Cash Award for Higher Education:** According to this scheme cash award of Rs.5000 and merit certificate is given to the student of fishermen families who secure highest marks in each group in Higher Secondary Examinations conducted in Kerala .Cash award of Rs.3000 is also given to the students who secure highest marks in each group in the three regions of the Board. Cash award of Rs.3000 and merit certificate is also given to fishermen students in each region of Board who secure highest marks in Vocational Higher Secondary Education.

**15. Widow Pension:** This scheme envisages giving pension to the widows of fishermen who die before getting old age pension. The rate is Rs400 per month.

**16. Extension Programme:** The scheme envisages having a thorough idea about the schemes implemented by the Board to the fishermen.



## **Allied Workers Welfare Scheme**

**1. Group Accident Insurance Scheme:** The scheme is proposed to be introduced aiming for ameliorating the socio – economic conditions of fishery allied workers who are downtrodden and striving hard to exist. It is therefore found necessary to propose the scheme for providing financial assistance to the bereaved family of these workers on their death or disability due to accidents or unexpected causes. The financial assistance granted under this scheme is Rs.300000 for death and permanent total disability due to accident or unexpected causes and Rs.150000 for partial disability.

**2. Old age pension:** It is proposed to render old age pension to the workers who have completed 60 years of age with Rs.400 per month.

**3. Financial assistance to the dependants for the death of allied worker:** It is proposed to give financial assistance of Rs.5000 to the dependents of allied worker for the death of allied worker by any reason.

**4. Maternity benefit scheme for women allied workers:** It is proposed to give financial assistance to women allied worker an amount of a maximum amount of Rs.750 for the first 2 births.

**5. S.S.L.C. cash award and scholarships:** In order to promote the educational status of the students of fishermen families, the Board implements this scheme. An amount of Rs.5000 is awarded to the student who secure A+ Grade in the S.S.L.C. examination and Rs.4000 to 9 A+ winners, Rs.3,000 to 8 A+ winners is awarded to the among the fishermen community in State level.

**6. Cash award for higher education:** According to this scheme, cash award of Rs.5000 and merit certificate is given to the student of fishermen families who secure highest marks in each group in Higher Secondary examinations conducted in Kerala who secure highest marks in each group in State level. Cash award of Rs.3000 is also given to the students who secure highest marks in each group in the three regions of the Board. Cash award of Rs.3000 and merit certificate is also given to fishermen students in each region of Board who secure highest marks in Vocational Higher Secondary Education.

**7. Financial Assistance for treatment of fatal diseases of allied workers:** A maximum amount of Rs.25000 is given to the allied worker for the treatment of disease of heart, kidney,

cancer and Rs.10000 for paralysis & mentally unsound persons. Rs.5000 is also given for uterus diseases subject to production of bills.

**8. Family welfare scheme:** This scheme aims at the propagation of family planning activities among the allied workers. As per the scheme, the financial assistance granted is Rs.500.

**9. Marriage assistance:** As per the scheme, the financial assistance of Rs.1500 is granted for the marriage of one daughter of allied workers.

All of these schemes work on an application and eligibility basis. The members who hold a valid pass book under the office will be granted the benefits of the different schemes that they are eligible to. The fishermen passbook is the sole identification card that the fishermen have to maintain with the fisheries office.

The amount that is allowed for the fishermen will be credited to the bank accounts of the person if he holds one. The benefits of the scheme are subjected only to the active members.

The table 4.4 shows the application to approval ratios of the various schemes under the Welfare Fund of the Fisheries Sector. The data shown in the table comprises only of the applications that were received from the Kannanthura fishing village. The table exhibits the data for 8 consecutive years in the disposal of the benefits and major schemes. All of the welfare schemes from the fisheries department have not been yet redeemed by the fisher population of Kannanthura.

If we observe the table, we can see that most of the rows and columns are empty. This does not mean that the people did not satisfy the criteria for the schemes, they were simply not aware of the existence of the schemes and welfare policies that were available for them. This happens mainly due to the lack of education and absence of an authorised body to guide them through the same. Thus the introduction of an information agency to teach the fisher folk about their rights and benefits will further help in the methodical penetration of the policies.

**Table 4.4: Table showing the working of the various welfare schemes**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Applications</b>	<b>Approvals</b>
	<b>Group Insurance</b>	
2008	3	3
2009	1	1
2010	2	2
2011	Nil	Nil
2012	Nil	Nil
2013	Nil	Nil
2014	Nil	Nil
2015	Nil	Nil
	<b>Death while fishing</b>	
2012	Nil	Nil
2013	Nil	Nil
2014	Nil	Nil
2015	Nil	Nil
	<b>Marriage Assistance</b>	
2008	2	2
2009	1	1
2010	Nil	Nil
2011	Nil	Nil
2012	Nil	Nil
2013	Nil	Nil
2014	Nil	Nil
2015	4	In process
	<b>Treatment of fatal diseases</b>	
2008	1	1
2009	Nil	Nil
2010	Nil	Nil
2011	Nil	Nil
2012	Nil	Nil
2013	Nil	Nil

Life of the Fisher folk: A case study on the fishing village in Kannanthura

2014	Nil	Nil
2015	Nil	Nil
	<b>Financial assistance for Death</b>	
2008	2	2
2009	2	2
2010	4	4
2011	2	2
2012	Nil	Nil
2013	1	1
2014	1	1
2015	1	1
	<b>Old age pension</b>	
2008	1	1
2009	Nil	Nil
2010	Nil	Nil
2011	Nil	Nil
2012	2	2
2013	Nil	Nil
2014	1	1
2015	Nil	Nil
	<b>Chairman's fund</b>	
2008	Nil	Nil
2009	Nil	Nil
2010	Nil	Nil
2011	Nil	Nil
2012	Nil	Nil
2013	1	1
2014	Nil	Nil
2015	Nil	Nil

Source: The Fisheries Office, Vettukadu

Biometric cards are issued to the fishermen as an identity proof by the fisheries department. Kerala was first among the Indian states to issue biometric identity cards to its fishermen population. The implementation is still at its infant stage but the outcome drawn during the gestation period has been of great success. The card has an identity number, fingerprint, digital signature, and photograph with more personal details, including the address, stored in a chip. Coastal security agencies will be provided with a card reader to access this information. The card will come in handy for fishermen to prove their identity in case the police or the Coast Guard take them into custody while fishing.

The Vettukadu fisheries Office has issued 267 Biometric identity cards to the fishermen of Kannanthura.

The Table 4.5 shows the number of beneficiaries of the various pension schemes from the Fishermen Welfare fund. The following table shows the list beneficiaries from the Kannanthura Fishing Village (Code T 22). There are now 90 people from the village who are receiving pension from the Fisheries Office according to the scheme of the Kerala Fishermen Welfare Fund Board.

**Table 4.5: Table showing various pension schemes**

<b>Pension Scheme</b>	<b>No. of Beneficiaries</b>
Old age Pension	77
Widow Pension	9
Allied Occupations	4

Source: The Fisheries Office, Vettukadu

The Fisheries Office of Vettukadu has worked along with other government institutions in order to efficiently dispose its functions and to aid the community at times of contingency.

#### **4.1.2 The MatsyaBhavan Office, Shankumukham**

The Matsya Bhavan aims in providing housing facilities to the poor fishermen who cannot afford to build one. The schemes of the Matsyabhavan largely encompass the housing and sanitary needs of the fishermen. The Project Monitoring team of the Deputy Director of Fisheries of Trivandrum monitors over the working of the MatsyaBhavan offices in Trivandrum.

The MatsyaBhavan Office of Shankumukham engages itself mainly in the following schemes:

- Providing housing loan of Rupees 2 lakh to the eligible fishermen.
- House repair expenses.
- Building new toilets (sanitation).

The above benefits will be given only to the people after making sure that they are not eligible for any other subsidies by other Government institutions. 7 houses have been so far built in the Kannanthura village with the help of the MatsyaBhavan. A number of toilets were built by the department to promote hygiene and sanitation in the village.

#### **4.1.3 The Matsyafed Office of Vettukadu**

The Matsyafed is the apex federation of 654 primary fisherman Co-operative Societies spread over 10 districts of Kerala. It disposes its functions through the Fishermen Co-operative societies. The Fishermen society of Kannanthura is not yet affiliated by the Matsyafed, Thus the benefit, schemes and subsidies from the Matsyafed are yet to reach the hands of the fisher folk in Kannanthura.

#### **4.1.4 The Fishermen Co-operative Society of Kannanthura**

The proper meaning of a co-operative society is that it is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.

The sole Fishermen Co-operative society in Kannanthura which looks after the economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations of the people is the Kannanthura Matsya Thozhilali Vikasana Kshema Sahakarana Sankam (F (T) 319). It is one among the 654 active co-operative societies in the state. The Fishermen society was made into a reality by Mr Peter Sebastian who now holds a chair in the society. But much cannot be done by the society because it has not been yet affiliated by the Matsyafed. No benefits from the Matsyafed have reached the people through the society yet. But this hasn't stopped the institution in working for the people. The services that they provide are as follows:

- To procure technologically advanced fishing machinery to support the fishermen.
- To connect the fishermen with the outside market.
- To be a helping hand in procuring the benefits for the fishermen from the government.
- To promote co-operation and harmony among the fishermen community.

They help the fishermen by connecting them with the outside market in order to sell their catch. The auctioneers get in touch with the fishermen through the society. The auctioneering, also known as Matsya Lelam works on a commission basis. 5% from the value of the catch will be taken by the society and distributed as given in the following table

**Table 4.6: Table showing the distribution of profit from the Matsya Lelam**

2% of the amount collected will be returned back as loans and benefits for the fishermen at the time of emergencies
2% of the amount will be taken by the society as commission for its functioning.
1% will be given to the auctioneers.

Source: The co-operative society of Kannanthura

The society also supports the fishermen by availing credit facility to them. They grant loans at an interest rate of 12% to the fishermen who apply for it in cases of emergencies. The society holds a membership card (member no 1999) under the Jilla Co-operative bank.

260 people out of the total fisher population of Kannanthura have membership in the society. There has not been much of a crowd turnout because of the current position of the cooperative society. For the efficient disposal of functions, it needs to get a place in the records of the Matsyafed.

#### **4.1.5 The Latin Catholic Churches of Kannanthura and Vettukadu**

As Karl Marx rightly said, “Religion is the opium of the masses.” It acts as an elixir to the people who are distressed and who barely cling on to their lives. The churches of Kannanthura and Vettukadu have worked for the benefit of its people since its inception. This was the only platform where the fishermen could address their grievances and problems.

Ample measures were taken by the church in order to hold up the interest of the poor community. The church used to give out rations of food and commodities like milk powder, wheat etc. to the poor fishermen during the shortage of food and supplies. The priest, along with the committee members of the church raise loans in order to help the fishermen at times of trouble. This used to be the story years ago when there were not much of a population other than the fishermen in the locality. But now due to the substantial increase in the population attending to the masses of the church, much cannot be done towards only one section of the

community. The fishermen community come together as a group for any programmes of the church.

But nowadays the church only acts as a messenger to the government offices of the area. The messages and notices of the government offices will be handed over by the respective authority to the priests and other members of the church, who in turn will inform the corresponding recipient. The recipient on receiving the message does as instructed. This shows the amount of respect that the community has towards the priest and the church. For example, in case the fisheries office of Vettukadu has to pass on a message about the renewal of the passbook to one of the fisherman, the message will be delivered to the respective authority of the church who in turn will announce the matter during the services that happen in the church.

These are some among the major institutions that influence the fishermen population of Kannanthura. They have joined hands in order be a helping hand to pull the men out of poverty. Even though there have been some flaws towards the working of the institutions, they are doing an appreciable job to help the fisher folk of Kannanthura.



## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

## **5.1 Conclusion**

The main objective of the study was to bring about and reflect the lives of the fisher folk in Kerala. The same has been done by taking the Kannanthura fishing village as the sample area for the study. An improvement has been made over time when considering the illiteracy rates and primary education in the lives of the fishermen community, but they still lag behind the mainstream society. The health, standard of living, enrolment ratio, and education indices should be taken care of and dealt with more efficiently. The human development indices according to the UNDP show that the community has to go a long way up in the development ladder. The now existing vulnerable conditions of the fishermen should be eradicated with education and awareness. The community has to go a long way to attain human development and be at par with the mainstream society. It needs to pounce over poverty, deprivation in basic amenities, educational backwardness and ill health status which would further help in widening the opportunities, enlarging choices and expansion of capability.

## **5.2 Findings**

The study conducted on the fisher folk of the Kannanthura fishing village of Trivandrum helped to reveal the life of the fishermen community as a whole. The major findings of the study are listed below.

- The Fishermen in the village are blighted by poverty and are living in poor conditions because of the less returns from the occupation and due to the inability to compete with the big players in the arena.
- A change in occupational pattern was observed due to the above said reasons.
- The women populace of the village are mainly engaged in activities like fish selling, fish curing, fish drying etc. to earn extra income to support the family.
- The young female population had more education than any other group in the village.
- The income level of the fishermen community was not enough to support their day to day activities.
- The houses of the fishermen lie close to the shore. Thus the damage caused to the property due to high tides are at its peak.
- Education was lacking among a major share of the population.

- A major share of the elderly population of the village were uneducated, thus not knowing about the benefits of education, they usually did not push the younger population to go to school.
- Inefficient working of the Government offices in the locality were evident from the conditions that the people were living in.
- The health problems and diseases due to the lack of hygiene and sanitation were on the rise.
- The poor population of the village depended upon local money lender, family and relatives for credit facilities.
- Increasing usage and addiction to alcoholic and tobacco products among the fishermen community of the village led to diseases and family problems.
- Lack of educational, financial and health facilities in the locale affected the lives of the folks negatively.
- The increasing trend of emigration were seen in the village due to the lack of returns from the occupation.
- The less number of boats and the inefficient advancements in the methods of fishing has pushed the fishermen in the village to poverty and indebtedness.
- Lack of awareness among the fishermen about the benefit schemes and policies that were available for them reflected the inefficiency of the government offices.
- Absence of a working union to hold up the interest of the fishermen has resulted in the exploitation of the deprived community.
- The less involvement and support from the religious institutions in lives of the people because of the lack of funds.

### **5.3 Suggestions**

Following are the important suggestions of the study that were drawn out after looking into the fishing village of Kannanthura

- The fishermen lag behind in education. Education can diversify the fisher folk to other economic trees, even though they have their own problems. Promotion of education among the fishermen community is a way to attain human development at a rapid pace.
- The establishment of an agency or institution from within the fishermen community itself and giving them proper awareness and knowledge about the working of the public

policies and schemes will obviously help the community to be aware of their own rights and benefits. Thus it will be a helping hand to pull the community out of poverty

- Training the fishermen with bottom trawling methods in order to reduce the over exploitation of the resources in the oceans by the foreign trawlers. This will help the fishermen to further improve their standard of living.
- Extending the market opportunities of the fishermen in order to widen the scope of the selling area.
- Construction of warehouses and providing storage facilities near the fishing villages will aid them in extending the business to the future.
- Training the women of the fisher household with small businesses and occupations will increase the income scale of the family.
- Providing medical aid to all the diseases and health issues of the fishermen will help to increase the life expectancy of the folks.
- Alcohol and tobacco de-addiction programmes should be implemented in order to pull out the population from the addiction to these harmful products.
- The emigration trends of the fishermen population can be reduced by extending the purview of occupation for them. Fish curing and fish processing plants should be constructed in order to eradicate unemployment.
- The fishermen should be aided with some form of employment at the time of off season in order to eradicate poverty during the course of the ill season.
- Easy disposal of schemes by the government will further enhance the standard of living of the community.
- Technologically improving the fishing equipment used by the traditional fishermen will result in increasing the quantity of the catch.
- Implementing stringent methods against rapacious trawling will improve the resources in the oceans and provide employment to the fishermen.
- Increasing the number of schools and hospitals in the vicinity of the village in order to enhance human development.
- Providing means to clean and pure drinking water will to some extent eradicate the occurrences of disease. Promoting rain harvesting measures will act as a remedy to some extent to the problem.
- Efficient injunction of the coastal regulation zone in order to bring down the damages caused to the property by high tides.

- Providing emergency assistances to the fishermen at sea, in case of emergencies.
- Availing easy credit to the fishermen for occupational activities will further increase their production scope.
- Technological gadgets like GPS systems and flash fires should be provide to the fishermen in order to expand the scope of rescue at the time of danger.

## CHAPTER VI

### APPENDIX

#### Questionnaire

##### **An evaluation study on the life of the fisher folk, Kannanthura**

Name

Address

Age

Gender

Religion

Marital status

Family Members

Education

Spouse's Occupation, if any:

- Do you like the occupation that you are practicing? How did you come into this occupation?
- What are the changes that you feel were different from the traditional measures?
- Are you satisfied with your standard of living?
- What are the main problems that you face under this occupation?
- How many days do you work in a month?
- Do you have any other part time jobs? If yes, what are they?
- What is your daily income?
- Is your daily income enough to fulfil your needs?
- What are your daily expenditures?
- What is the main source of your financial support in case of emergencies?
- Where do you sell your catch?
- What are the impacts of the customers change in consumption patterns to your occupation?
- Is there anyone other than you who has a job in your family?
- Is there anyone in your family who is working abroad?

- What are the impacts of modernisation and trade liberalisation that you find in the occupation?
- What are the technological advancements that has happened in the village?
- What are the benefits that you get from the government and co-operative societies?
- Any monitoring from the officials on a regular basis?
- Are you a member of any labour union? If yes, what are the benefits that you get as being a member?
- What are the health problems attached with your occupation?
- Where do you get medical aid from?
- How does your religion support you in case of failure of the distribution of functions from the government?
- Would you like your children to follow your same occupation? State the reason for your answer?
- What are the suggestions that you would like to put forward to improve your existing conditions?

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