INTRODUCTION

The Tamil society from time immemorial was known for its traditions, customs and conversations. Even during the Sangam age itself they had divided the entire landscape according to the physical geographical divisions. Kurinji, Mullai, Marudam, Neidal and Palai were the fivefold divisions.¹ The people of those landed divisions were engaged in specific kind of occupation. The hunters of Kuravars, the Ayar or Idayar or

¹ Tokappiyam, Purul: 5.
Kovalar, the tillers or Vellalas, the Nulayar or Paravar or minavar or Parathavar and Eyinar were the inhabitants of Kurinji, Mullai, Marudam, Neidal and Palai regions respectively. So it becomes a must to have an analysis of the fishermen who were the residents of the Neidal region. It is also obvious that fishing industry was an ancient one. The fishing industry emerged not merely as a means for their food but also it assisted the economic activities of the people of all the areas which have sea shore. In the 20\textsuperscript{th} century fishing industry was a developed one due to the enchanting growth of science and technology.\textsuperscript{2} The art of fishing had attained a phenomenal growth\textsuperscript{3} like the other activities such as agriculture, spinning and weaving. Further the Tamil country is having a coastal line 1076 kms. About 6,79,711 people are living in the 13 coastal districts. So it will be proper and appropriate to have an analysis of the fishermen of Tamil Nadu and their problems and the various relief measured undertaken.\textsuperscript{4}

The fishermen, who belonged to the Shudra community were called as Mukkuvan, Paravan (Kanyakumari) ganjam, Kariyar (Tanjore), Parivaram, Paravan and Parivaram (chennai).\textsuperscript{5} According to the senses report of Fisheries Department 6,79,711 the marine fisher-folk living in coastal villages spread over 13 districts of the Tamil Nadu states. The 13 districts are Thiruvallur, Chennai, Kancheepuram, Villupuram, Cuddalore, Nagapattinam, Thiruvarur, Thanjavur, Pudukottai, Ramanathapauram, Toothukudi, Thirunelveli and Kanyakumari. This study is intended to find out the problems of fishermen in coastal Tamil Nadu particularly marine

\textsuperscript{2} Tamil Nadu State Administrative Report, Tamil Nadu, 1988-89, p.46.
\textsuperscript{4} C.Selvaraj, Small Fisheries in Tamil Nadu, Madras, 1975, p.54.
\textsuperscript{5} Marina Fisherfolk Census, 2000, Fisheries Department, Chennai, 2000, p.1.
fishermen and their impact on the quality of life of fishermen in coastal villages. Their general standard of living is not at all an appreciable one. They hail from various communities such as Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Dalits, animists and tribal. During the 16th century, due to the efforts of Francis Xavier and due to the downtrodden nature caused because of the activities of the high caste Hindus. They face a lot of socio-economic problems throughout the ages. They were generally backward and economically unsound as they are even now. Due to illiteracy and ignorance along with their low economic standard their social status is not at all an appreciable one. Due to poverty they are unable to adhere to modern devices of fishing. So they had to depend on others for their economic uplift. As they follow joint family system they suffer in executing the family celebrations. Further they are all accustomed to drinking. The natural calamities too affect their normal routine. As such it becomes a must to have such as analysis too. These facts will be exposed in a separate entitled The Problems of overseas fishermen.

Disasters are either natural such as floods, droughts, cyclones and earthquakes or human made such as riots, conflicts, refuge situations and others fire, epidemics, industrial accidents and environment fallouts. So the government and the society should come to the rescue and recover of the victims of disasters. The wage based working fishermen also adopts traditional methods and suffer due to indebtedness. So to relieve their

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distresses of marketing their fishes the government has come forward.\textsuperscript{10} The issue of cyclone relief fund ex-officio grants, special loans are few measures employed to get rid of their distresses. The Madras Fishermen Cooperative Federation is yet another measure to deal with the miseries of the fishermen. Subsidies are also arranged for their financial relief. The Fishermen Distress relief Fund is yet another means of relief provided with the fishermen. The fisheries department renders various helps to the fishermen at critical and calamitous situations.\textsuperscript{11} Fishermen colonies are also created with the aid of the government of Tamil Nadu. It offers free supply of catamaran logs and yarn of different courts. Through the Cyclone Relief Fund Fishermen community halls are constructed at different places and they serve as residents of fishermen families at times of natural calamities.\textsuperscript{12} Relief fund are arranged for safeguarding their huts from fire.\textsuperscript{13} Loans and subsidies are also granted to them for construction of houses for having a permanent living.\textsuperscript{14} The cyclone safety centres constructed by the Government of Tamil Nadu in coastal areas\textsuperscript{15} is also a measure of assistance of the affected fishermen at times of calamities like Cyclone. The Government of Tamil Nadu has also made arrangements for the construction of boundary walls to prevent the problems and disasters caused due to sea erosion.\textsuperscript{16} Fishermen Accident Insurance Scheme is also a welfare scheme to relieve the fishermen from their distresses and it is put

\textsuperscript{10} G.O.Ms. No.1430, Food and Agriculture Department, dated 15\textsuperscript{th} April 1958.
\textsuperscript{11} G.O.Ms.No.1857, Food and Agriculture Department, dated 11, June, 1963.
\textsuperscript{12} G.O.Ms.No.743, Agriculture Department, dated 7, March 1966.
\textsuperscript{13} G.O.Ms.No.3035, Agriculture Department, dated 20 September, 1966.
\textsuperscript{14} G.O.Ms.No.2476, Agriculture Department, dated 28 July 1966.
\textsuperscript{15} V.Ramanibai, \textit{Kadal Valumum Kadalazhi Makkalum}, (Tamil), Chennai, 2002, p.147.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, p.149.
into practice with the assistance of the Central Government, Group Insurance Scheme is also instituted for helping the fishermen from calamitous situations.\textsuperscript{17} The Fishermen Extension Service Scheme focused on the welfare of the fishermen is another notable aspect available in Tamil Nadu. The Fishermen Co-operative Societies functioning in Tamil Nadu for the execution of various welfare measures such as the running of balwadies, day care centre and adult education centre.\textsuperscript{18} The Government of Tamilnadu has made arrangements for the quick transport of fish to the markets for avoiding damage to fish.\textsuperscript{19} The Fishermen’s Relief Fund was renamed as The Fund now.\textsuperscript{20}

Since fishing industry is a seasonal one during off seasons and failure of seasons the fishermen suffered a lot. So to safeguard them from starvation and agony the government has introduced various saving-cum-relief measures.\textsuperscript{21} As the life of the fishermen are always risky and miserable it is a must to have an estimate of the various measures undertaken on that line by the government. So a separate chapter called Natural Disasters and problems of fishermen is added.

Fishing is a thriving industry in the coastal areas of peninsular India. The fishermen are the primary producers. Further fishing is a joint endeavour. No single fisherman can achieve anything solid. So they act and serve in groups in gathering their needs fulfilled. They had to dealt with so

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 1989-1990, p.52.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 1999-2000, p.33.
\textsuperscript{20} G.O.Ms.No.2701, Agriculture Department, dated 20\textsuperscript{th} August, 2003.
\textsuperscript{21} G.O.Ms.No.1704, Agriculture Department, dated 10\textsuperscript{th} July 2006.
many activities such as preserving of the materials the fishes etc. In the meanwhile they had to face various distresses and calamities due to nature, merchants, money lenders etc. To get relief from such hardships it becomes a must to have an estimate of the united action undertaken by them.

They even require assistance for reforming their age old traditional form of fishing. The materialistic approach also has also become uneconomical and costlier. The welfare of the fishermen are always at stake due to various obvious reasons. The Government of Tamil Nadu has attached significance to the establishment of Fishermen Co-operative Societies for promoting the welfare of fishermen who meet with hardships at frequent intervals due to various calamities.22 The said societies are under the control of the Directorate of Fisheries. The Co-operative Societies for the fishermen in Tamil Nadu had its origin in 1924 under the provisions made by the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919. With the objectives of promoting the fishing industry, to relieve the fishermen from their economic problems and also to save them from the clutches of the money lenders these societies came into being.23 Its primary motive is to raise funds for helping the fishermen by way of providing facilities for purchase or hire of modern crafts and tackles for increasing the catches, for purchasing or hiring vans for providing proper marketing facilities etc.24 As the activities of the co-operative societies were congenial and favourable for the development of the activities of the fishermen it is warranted to give stress to that aspect under the title. Fishermen Co-operative Societies. The

22 G.O.Ms.No.790, Food and Agriculture Department, dated 28th February 1958.
23 G.O.Ms.No.1215, Revenue Department, dated 4th May, 1909.
administrative measures and other activities carried out by them will be analysed. The National Fishermen cum relief scheme, the thrift scheme, the co-operative marketing union and the district co-operative federation are various associate service units. The fisherwomen’s activities, the establishment fish storage godowns are also the outcome of the Co-operative endeavours. Such facts will be dealt with the this chapter.

Amidst all the problems marketing of the fishes caught is yet another, problem which is a crucial one because the economic standard of the fishermen centre around it. Further fisheries is a means for generating employment, raising the nutritional level food, earning foreign exchange are the factors associated with marketing. The need for the fresh fish from the coastal area is a welcome requirement of the fish consumers. During the early periods they were carried as head loads or by cycle to the areas for selling them. They covered 30 to 35 miles in a day. Thus the transport was a problem them. As fish was a perishable commodity the fishermen also had to face difficulties of varied degrees. While preservation and chilling was problem while transporting the fish.\(^{25}\) The road for marketing was also a problem. The fishing villages too are unaccessible by road and the problem of transport is also acute. This is a larger hurdle which arrests the growth and development of the fishing industry. Only the quick transport of the perishable food material fish will yield a good price and that in turn indirectly will assist to maintain a needed standard of living of the fishermen. So as a prime move in elevating the standard of living of the fishermen much stress is assigned by the government in promoting the roads. Since fishing is an income generator, various steps such as

developing processing establishments, gearing up of the manufacture of equipments such as net, and improving the boat yards and refrigeration or ice making plants along with transport as well as road services. The Government of India’s planning commission has also assigned special attention to the fisheries and fishermen who are economically weaker and backward sections of the society.  

With regard to smaller fishermen, the problem of marketing is more serious than those of production. They are unable to complete with the large scale fishermen who employ modern devices in fishing. They are unable to speculate the fish market. Their market is also an unorganised one. They could not even estimate the extent of profit made by the middlemen. Under such circumstances the role of intermediaries such as auctioneer, commission agents, wholesaler, retailer and vendor should also be described with regard to the marketing. The inadequate ice plants and cold storage facilities is yet another problem which has crept into the fish marketing Preservation of fish by salting and drying was a crude old technique. But the modern devices are unaccessible for the small scale fishermen. To have an estimate of all such things the chapter marketing and its problems such a study will assist the analysis of the pros and cons of the fishing market.

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28 Ibid., p.27.
Prior to independence, fisheries sector received little attention due to low social status, poor economic conditions, illiteracy, heavy leaning on middlemen, traditional fishing equipments and methods of fishing, low production rate, low income and influence of socio-economic conditions of fishermen.

Hence the implementation of the Five Year Plans with specific objectives to improve the socio-economic conditions of fishermen. The Central and State Governments allotted money to fisheries sector through five year plans and it introduced many developing schemes for the benefit of the fishermen.

Since 1947 to 2007 the government implemented Ten Five Year Plans.

Fisheries occupy a prominent place in the economy of Tamil Nadu. Fishing statistics which were in an unsatisfactory state at the beginning of the First Five Year Plan had improved to some extent, in the second Five Year Plan. During the second Five Year Plan the marine fisheries were developed in a big way because the introduction of mechanisation of fishing craft and formation of fishing harbours.

The Third Five Year Plan was very tentative. During this plan period fishery development was not high. In the plans of fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth Plan periods the fisheries developed. In those plans the fisheries sector of Tamil Nadu is not a success. This is due to certain internal weaknesses in the plan as well as external factors. The fisheries sector was given a step-motherly treatment during the plan periods.
To avoid these practices, in the frequent plant, government appointed a committee consisting of experts relating to fisheries science and fisheries economics, policy makers and other officials relating to fishing industry, representatives of fishing entrepreneurs and fishermen to go into the details of various aspects of fisheries development for efficient use of the resource for the benefit of the people of the state.

Disaster is a sudden or great misfortune. Disasters are either natural such as floods, droughts, cyclone and earthquake or human made such as riots, conflicts, refugee situations and others like fire, epidemics, industrial accident and environment fall outs. Often the differences between them are marginal.

In general, the fishing community have to meet on and often the natural calamities. They loose their life, loose their fishing craft and other implements and sometimes they loose their houses also. For this distress the government took many relief measures from time to time. The relief measures undertaken by the government includes free supply of yarn, sail cloth, 50 per cent of repairing charges on fishing boats, sale of catamarans, yarns at subsidised rates, and procuring alternative house sites to fishermen rendered homeless by sea erosion. The government also help the fishermen with suitable and the payment of ex-gratia grants, wherever and whenever necessary.

The impact of natural disasters on the economic life of the coastal people had its own echo. The equipments necessary for the fishing were damaged. Socially, family as an institution had lost its significance. In spite
of all these havocs caused due to the material and social well-being of human life, the people from whole part of the country irrespective of religion caste, colour, language, had extended the whole hearted support to ameliorate the people who had suffered due to the natural calamities.

**Period and Area of Study**

The period of study covers from 1947-2000 A.D. The area located in the eastern coast and part of south western coast of Indian sub-continent.

**Importance of the Study**

This thesis will find out the problems affecting the economic prosperity of various castes in fishing community and their social differences and to find out the solution for solving such problems.

**Objectives**

In the occupation of fishing, many communities like Mukkuvas, Paravas, Sembadavan, Pattinavan, Marakayars, Routhar, Karaiyan and Parivaram are involved and they live on the coastal regions of Tamil Nadu. Hence, the problems of one caste of fishing community will straightly differ from the other caste which has to be brought to light in the thesis.

Besides these the general conditions in the fishing occupation also to be analysed and to find out under what circumstances the problems arises due to this general conditions.

The thesis also will critically analysis how best the polices of the Governments both Central and State had helped the fishing community
Hypothesis

The causes for the problems of the fishermen may be due to society, illiteracy, economic poverty and exploitation of the middlemen and partly due to the government policies, with fishing in sea.

After analysis of these factors the researcher will prove the above lacunae identified with supportive evidences in the form of government reports, co-operative societies, activities, various plans and proposals made by the governments, personal interviews and secondary sources. Finally solution to the major problems have been given as recommendation to government and societies.

Methodology

The focus in this study will be to explain the problems of fishermen in coastal Tamil Nadu through a review and analysis of historical data collected from Tamil Nadu Archives, Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department, various Fishermen Co-operative Societies, various Libraries like C.D.S., M.D.S., Connemara, Madras University Library, various District Collectorates, Dioceses, various Fishermen Association. Journals and through interviews. The primary data will be collected from the fishermen
through personal interviews, Tamil Nadu Archives and analysis the Government Orders.

**Limitations**

“The problems of Fishermen in Coastal Tamil Nadu (Since 1947-2000)” is the subject of study. Since the present study will concentrate on the socio-economic problems of fishermen, Blue Revolution, Role of Fishermen Co-operative Societies, Five Year Plans and Fishing, Marketing and its Problems and Natural Disasters and Problems of Fishermen. The researcher will also find out the solution to solve those problems.

**Chapterisation**

This thesis consisted of six chapters excluding introduction and conclusion. The first chapter dealt with Socio-economic Problems of Fishermen. The second chapter dealt with the Blue Revolution, the third chapter dealt with the Role of Fishermen Co-operative Societies, the fourth chapter dealt with the Five Year Plans and Fishing and fifth chapter dealt with Marketing and Its Problems and sixth chapter dealt with Natural Disasters and Problems of Fishermen.