CHAPTER I

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF FISHERMEN

Society, which is an amalgamation of many communities, is a system wherein people live together in organised groups. Each group has its own social, economic, religious, political and cultural values. The *Purusha Sukta* which is found in the tenth mandala of the Rig Veda, refers to the four castes, i.e., Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras. Fishermen

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comes under Sudra caste. In Later Vedic period the caste system was emerged.\textsuperscript{31}

Tamil Nadu with a coastline of 1076 kms. Covers both east and west coast which constitutes about 15 per cent of India’s total coastal length. About 6.8 marine fisher-folk live in 13 coastal districts and they depend on the continental shelf of 41,412 sq.km. for their livelihood.\textsuperscript{32} According to the Fisheries Department Census Report of 2000, it was show that in the Madras State there are 13 fishing districts, there are, Chennai, Thiruvallur, Kancheepuram, Villupuram, Cuddalore, Nagapattinam, Thiruvarur, Thanjavur, Pudukkottai, Ramanathapuram, Thoothukudi, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari.\textsuperscript{33} In Tamil Nadu different fishermen castes are living in different districts. The names of the fishermen community are different various districts. \textit{Mukkuvan} and \textit{Paravan} are the names of the fishermen community in Kanyakumari; \textit{Ganjam} and \textit{Karaiya} in Thanjavur, \textit{Parivaram}, \textit{Paravan} and \textit{Marakayar} in Ramanathapuram and in Tirunelveli, \textit{Sembadavan}, \textit{Pattanavan} and \textit{Parivaram}, in Chennai and Chingleput, \textit{Paravan}, in Thoothukudi, \textit{Rowthar} in Pudukottai and Tirunelveli districts.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{31} According to the \textit{Purusha Sukta}, the primeval giant was sacrificed and the Brahmanas were created from his head, Kshatriyas from his breast or arms, the Vaisyas from his tights and the Sudras from his feet.
The total marine fisher population in Tamil Nadu is 6,79,711 and from 0.96 per cent of the total population of the state as 1999-2000 census report. The marine fishermen are concentrated more in Kanyakumari district i.e., 1,37,940. The fishermen population in Chennai are 71,057 in Tiruvallur and Kancheepuram are 67,612 in Villupuram, 14,923 in Cuddalore, 40,582 in Nagapattinam, 79,768 in Thiruvarur, 10365 in Thanjavur, 25,378 in Pudukkottai, 25,027 in Ramanathapuram, 1,17,291 in Thotthukudi 69,558 and in Tirunelveli, 20,210. Ramanathapuram and Kanyakumari districts show a higher density of marine fishermen population.35

The traditional occupation of the fishermen population in fishing. Most of the fishermen are belonging to Christianity. Some of them Hindus and Muslim. However, the members of Muslim population in fishing is very negligible.36 Fishing communities are generally very poor occupying a low social status with very few representation in the political field. Fisher-folk were relegated to the status of lower castes during the medieval period. However, the community always enjoyed a certain autonomy and dignity. Fisher people, though highly skilled in their profession, had no access to formal education and they hardly entered into other areas of human life.37 The fishing community consists of people of all religions. They are, Hindus, Christians, Muslims, Dalits, Animists, Tribal. Each community generally resides in a compact of geographical areas. Among the fishermen

There are many theories with regard to the original home of fishermen. According to one of the theories, the original home of fishermen in Tamil Nadu was the Ayothya kingdom and it appears that previous to the Mahabharatha war they inhabited the territory bordering on the river Jamuna. At present they are chiefly found in the sea port town of Tinnevelly in South India and also in some of the provinces of the north west coast of Ceylon and Kanyakumari. However the Sangam literature refers to the coastal land in Tamil Nadu as neithal land, and the people of this land had fishing as their main occupation.

According to Periplus the coastal area between South Kanyakumari and Korkai were meant for pearl fishing and fishermen of this area were under the away of the Pandya rulers from about 600 B.C. to 1500 A.D. The fishermen had a local chieftain and their headquarters was at Tuticorin. They held a sub-ordinate position and they paid a regular tribute to Pandian rulers. Their headman was called Thalaivan.

39 Edger Thurston, Caste and Tribes of South India, Vol.VI, Delhi, 1975, p.140.
41 Ibid., p.253.
43 Edgar Thurston, op.cit., p.143.
The Mukkuvas was one of fishing community in Malabar coast. They live near the sea coast. The Mukkuvas otherwise called Arayas who were inhabited in the Arabian sea. They were the descendents of the Cochin kingdom. Their headman was Valia Arayan. In 1493 A.D. there were Christian communities scattered from Cochin to Cape Comorin. The term Mukkuvar implies the following meaning viz., dive into the sea water for pearl. This indicates the fact that they were originally engaged in pearl fishing.

In short the Mukkuvas migrated from South Kerala to Kanyakumari district from 1493 onwards. The Mukkuvas who live in the inland parts, seldom go to venture. Their business is palanquin bearers, because of their low birth. In some places they cultivate the coconut. In the southern parts of the Kerala most of them have became Mussalmans, but continue to follow their usual occupations. The Hindu Mukkuvas worship the goddess Bhadra Kali, which was the caste God. After the completion of the log of wood (boat), they place it before Kali. The Mukkuvas assemble in four times and worship and sacrifice a cock, and make offering of fruit to the log of wood.

In the Gazetteer of Malabar (1905), the following account of the Mukkuvas is given. A caste, which according to a probably erroneous tradition, came originally from Ceylon. Another account is that the Mugayans are probably river fishers, and the Mukkuvans sea fishers.

44 George Koilparampil, Caste in the Catholic Community in Kerala, Cochin, 1982, pp.77-78.
46 P.K.Nambiar, Fishermen of Travancore, Trivandrum, 1960, p.25.
It is recorded, in the Madras Census Report, 1891 that conversion to Islam is common among this caste. The converted people are called Puislam or Putiya Islam (New Islam). All Puislams follow the occupation of fishing. Mukkuvans and Mappillas of Malabar had matrimonial alliances in ancient times.\(^{47}\) A Mukayan is socially superior to a Mukkuvan and their customs was different. According to tradition Mukkuvans and Tiyyans are immigrants from Ceylon, Mukkuvans are divided into Illams or groups, as also are Tiyyans, Illam is the word generally used for Nambudiri house, and it is not clear how the word came to be applied to groups or clans of these inferior castes. Mukkuvans have fourteen sub-divisions, but it is not possible to say many of these are illams.

The Mukkuvan have headmen, who are all powerful and who must be paid fees for anything and everything that happens in a Mukkuva family. These headman, who are also priests in the caste temples, are of two classes two Arayan and Katavan. Mukkuvans dress like Mappilas generally, but females seldom wear jackets. They are very hardly and enterprising body but not particularly prosperous during the pre-independence period.

In north Malabar, the marriage is divided into two parts talikettu and nuptials. The former is also called pandal kalyanam and the later is called vittila (betel leaf) kalyanam. It must be celebrated before the girl attains puberty if not, the girl loses caste. If a husband for the girl has already been decided on, the tali is tied by a woman of that man’s family. In the south this talikettu ceremony does not take place, but when a girl attains puberty, a

woman of the *vannan* caste sings certain songs on the fourth day and bathes her, then the distribution the betel leaf and nut. If the girl has not yet been married, she cannot go out of the house until her wedding. The divorces are settled by a Panchayat. Either party may apply to the headman for a divorce. A Panchayat is then held, and whoever loses the suit is fined. After the divorce, the woman will live with their parents. Some divorced woman dedicate themselves to the temple to meet out their lovelihood. Some other divorced women get remarried. Thus in those days both divorce and remarriages were permitted.

On the death of a *Mukkuvas*, the fellow *Mukkuvas* do not go to work on that day. The body is placed with its head to the south on bier brought by the barber. The body is then dressed in new clothes and ornaments. Four persons carry the bier to the church, the parish priests conducted some prayers and blessing. After the blessings of the priest the dead body will be taken to the grave and buried. A few pieces of the clothes on the dead body are torn out as preserved by the son and successor and those who have to perform the funeral obseque. The bearers and the near relatives of the deceased then bath in the sea and subsequently place the body in the grave. A small piece of gold and a little wax and flowers are placed in the nose, and all present drop water in the mouth of the corpse. The grave is then covered up and use coffins. After the internment all return to the house, all worship a lamp which is a lit by a barber woman. The next of kin is then taken to the sea-shore by the barber, and there oblations of water are given
to the deceased.\textsuperscript{48} The \textit{Mukkuva} community follow certain customs and traditions of the Keralites.\textsuperscript{49}

Every society, community and race has its own traditional customs. These customs differ from caste to caste and religion to religion. These customs reveal the nature and innate conditions of a particular society.\textsuperscript{50} The \textbf{Paravas} and \textbf{Mukkuvas} have similar traditional habits and customs though they live in the same locality, but they do not have any inter-communal relation like marriage and other functions. However most of the social customs of these communities have religious bases, like baptism, first holy communion, marriage, feasts and funeral. They are conducted by the church according to the rules of the Roman Catholic religion. They firmly believe that the religious rites make communion with God.\textsuperscript{51} Apart from these ceremonies within the church, they slightly differ from each other on certain ceremonies.

The \textit{Mukkuvas} have their own communal customs as they hail from the Cochin region, a Malayalam speaking area. Hence they follow the rites adopted in Kerala. Further Kanyakumari was under the Quilon diocese prior to 1930. This yet another reason, why the fishermen community follow certain customs and traditions of the Keralites. The \textbf{Paravas} adopted the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{50} \textit{Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences}, Vol.13, New Delhi, 1964, p.369.
\bibitem{51} \textit{The customs of the Fisherfolk of Kanyakumari Survey}, Kanyakumari, 1986, p.3.
\end{thebibliography}
Tamil customs. In short the socio-religious customs of these fishermen communities can be classified in the following manner viz., pregnancy customs, birth customs, childhood customs, maturity customs, matrimonial customs furnishing customs and the funeral customs. Let us discuss the practice of Mukkuvas and Paravas in conducting these ceremonies.

Pregnancy Customs

The Mukkuvas and Paravas have certain regional and ancestral practices of their own, when a woman of their family is pregnant. A ceremony is performed during the fourth or sixth month of pregnancy which is called Punchavanam. It is more or less a thanks giving function. Since she gives birth to successor. The pregnant woman offer to their deities rice, milk, coconut flower and plantain. The Parava community of Kanyakumari district conduct this ceremony in a grand manner. The pregnant woman on that particular day is dressed up well and taken to the church. The priest reads the mass in the name of the pregnant mother and the baby in her womb. At the end of the prayer the women is blessed by the priest. These are done to the pregnant mother so that she must give birth to a healthy child. This ritual is adopted only during the first pregnancy of a women and they do not practice it during subsequent pregnancies. However majority of the Mukkuvas do not follow this customs. During the ninth month of pregnancy, the parents of the pregnant woman take her to

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52 Mary Philomena, op.cit.,p.9.  
their house for delivery. This custom is called *Sol Azhaithal* 55(oral invitation). This practice of taking the pregnant women by oral invitation during the ninth of pregnancy is prevailing in both communities.

**Jatakaranam**

*Jatakaranam* is a ceremony performed on the birth of a child. When the child is born it is wrapped in a white cloth and handed over to the elder member of the house. So that they can bless the child. The child is then fed with a drop of sea water which is called *Senai*. This implies the face that the livelihood of these communities of wholly depending upon the sea. It is an important customs adopted by both the *Mukkuvar* and *Paravar* communities. The child is then given butter and honey.56

**Namakaranam(Baptism)**

The ceremony of naming the new born baby on the 28th day, after its birth is known as *Namakaranam*. The Sanskrit word *Namakaranam* is means naming the child. This ceremony y is the most sacred one and hence celebrated with great fervour.57 The Christian tradition call it baptism, which means immersion and purifying oneself from the genial sins. Both the mother and her child are blessed on this occasion.58 This custom is followed both by the *Mukkuva* and *Parava* communities. Baptism is the first Christian sacrament of the child, it is accented as a status of great importance by the Christians. The Christian religion stipulates that there should be god

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56 Interview with Thiru. A.Francis, Fisherman, Mulloorthurai on 8th October 2004.
parent for the child during the time of baptism. The god parents should take steps to inculcate the child in good Christian behavior and character.\textsuperscript{59}

**Annappiracanam (First rice feeding of and Infant)**

*Annappiracanam*, the first rice feeding of an infant with boiled rice is a ritual usually performed by during the eight month after the birth of the child. The grandmother or mother feeds the first solid food to the child. During this ceremony the members of the family offer prayers to the God to provide a healthy life to the child.\textsuperscript{60}

**Cutakarunam (Tonsure Ceremony)**

Tonsure ceremony of a child is performed during the completion of the first, third or fifth year. This ceremony is otherwise known as *Cutakaranam*. If it is a female child, the parents prick the ears of the child along with tonsure ceremony. They are promoted to do this for they entertain a firm belief that the child is protect from the rage of satan by pricking its ears. This customs is also based on the ancient Tamil tradition.\textsuperscript{61} The fishermen communities performed this ceremony when they go on pilgrimages to religious centres like Vellankanni, Uvai, Kottar Rajavoor, Vettukad etc.\textsuperscript{62}

**Puberty Customs**


\textsuperscript{60} Mary Philomina, *op.cit.*, p.31.

\textsuperscript{61} C.Lakumidaran, Barathi, *op.cit.*, p.37.

\textsuperscript{62} *The Customs of the Fisherfolk of Kanyakumari Survey*, Kanyakumari, 1986, pp.5-6.
The maturity of girl is considered as an important social custom in every human society. When a girl becomes mature, it is celebrated with gaiety. The girl is given bath in medicated water. The paternal aunt of the girl is required to do this. The fishermen communities of Kanyakumari district too practice this custom. On the seventh day after a feast to the dear and near ones.

Matrimonial Customs

Marriage is a sacramental duty of a Christian laity. Hence the matrimonial rituals are the most important in any Christian community. The fisher-folk of Kanyakumari district adopt monogamy as a rule of their life. The Parava community have matrimonial ties within the community. They select the bridegrooms and brides from the maternal land paternal way of relationship. Dowry system is prevalent in these two communities. The dowry is given as cash as well as kind. The members of the fishermen communities used to give fishing boats and fishnets as dowry to the groom. Presenting this kind of dowry cannot be treated as evil as it helps to improve the economy of the family.

Marriage Engagement

In certain families of the fisherman communities of Kanyakumari district the marriage is finalised after comparing the horoscopes of the boy and the girl. They preferred matrimonial alliances within their own communities. In Parava community the marriage engagement is held at the

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64 Mary Philomina, *op.cit.*, p.40.
residence of the girl. On the contrary in the **Mukkuva** families it is conducted in the house of the bridegroom. In both the **Paravas** and **Mukkuva** communities the maternal uncle of the girl and the sister of the boy are given a place of honour and importance in the marriage. The **Parava** community followed the **Urumal** system (*Pattam*) i.e., wearing turban to denote the relationship of maternal uncle to the bridegroom. The maternal uncle will wear the turban upon the head of the bridegroom. The **Urumal** system is popular among the **Parava** community. the **Mukkuva** community does not follow **Urumal (Pattam)** system.

The marriage invitation contains details such as the name of the bridegroom, bride, their parents, their domicile, the parish to which they belong, the time and date of marriage and the church in which the ceremony takes place. In the fisherman communities the marriage invitation is given to the Parish priest. He is invited to bless the mass and the marriage ceremony. Then the bridegroom is required to invite personally the family members of the bride.⁶⁷

**Marriage Function**

The bride and the bridegroom are to sit separately in front of the Dias in the church. So that they could be seen by all the people, who come to attend the matrimonial ceremony. The priest says the mass and prayers connected with marriage. As a Christian custom, the priest asks the groom and the bride to hold their right hands as a symbol of love and unity. Then the priest blessed the wedding chain and the marriage badge (like *tali*) and

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asks the groom to tie it around the neck of the bride.\textsuperscript{68} This ceremony implies the meaning that the God had united the couple through the priest. The groom and the bride also exchange gold rings and garlands during the ceremony.

After the church ceremonies the couple come to the bride’s house where they cut a cake as a sign of happiness. After marriage the bride and the groom stay in the bride’s house for three to five days and then they are taken to the bridegroom’s house.\textsuperscript{69}

**Funeral Customs**

The funeral custom is aimed at the salvation of the soul.\textsuperscript{70} The Mukkuvas and Paravas have certain rituals in this regard such as death day ceremonies, seventh day (after death) sixteenth day, thirtieth day ceremonies and annual ceremony. The old and the sick who are about to die are blessed by the local parish and is given the extreme unction the Christian sacrament. It is aimed at the salvation of a person at his death bed.\textsuperscript{71}

The social life of the Mukkuva and Parava communities of Kanyakumari district are somewhat different in character. However some functions are common to both the groups. Even though these people became converted to Christianity long age, they still practice certain Hindu customs such as giving importance to horoscope, rituals, which are connected with marriage and child birth.

\textsuperscript{68} James Dupuis, *op.cit.*, p.114.
\textsuperscript{69} Mary Philomina, *op.cit.*, p.63.
\textsuperscript{71} W.Mulder, *The Parish and His Clergy*, Nellorenis, 1949, p.74.
With regard to the origin of the Pallava fishing community of the south east, Historia Ecclisiastica (published in Tamil at Tranquebar in 1753) identifies them with the Parvaim of the scriptures, and adds them with them which prevailed in the time of Solomon. They were famous among those who made voyages by sea, but it does not appear that there is any solid foundation for this hypothesis. It is the general belief among the Paravas that their original country was Ayothya or Oudh, and it appears that, previously to that war of Mahabharatha, they inhabited the territory bordering on the river Yamuna and Jamuna. Simon Casie Chetty defined the origin of Paravan in his book Origin and History of the Paravas. At present they are chiefly found in the sea port town of the Tirunelveli district in the South of India, and also in some of the provinces on the north-west coast of Ceylon. With regard to their origin, there is a different of opinion. Some of the Tantras represent them to be descended from Brahman by a Sudra woman, while the Jatibedi Nul (a work of some celebrity among the Tamils) states them to be the offspring of a Kurava or (basket-maker) begotten clandestinely on a female of the Chetty (or merchant) tribe. But the Paravas have among themselves quite a different tradition concerning their origin, which is founded on mythology fable. They related that their progenitors were of the race Varuna (god of the sea) and on the occasion, when Siva had called Kartikeya (god of arms) into existence, for destroying the overwhelming power of the Asuras (evil spirits), they sprang up with him from the sacred lake Saravana, and were like him nursed by the constellation Kartika. At the close of the last Kalpa, when the whole earth was covered with deluge, they constructed a dhoni or boat, and by it escaped.

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the general destruction, and when dry land appeared, they settled on the spot where the *dhoni* rested, hence it is called *Dhonipura*, or the city of the boat.\textsuperscript{73}

The *Paravas* live very close to the sea-shore. The origin of the term *Parava* is traced from the Tamil word *Paravai*, meaning sea sand, since the *Paravas* being a traditional sea-fearing caste, so they have acquired that name.\textsuperscript{74} The young men of the *Parava* caste are known as *Paratavakumarar*.\textsuperscript{75} The *Paravas* adopted the Tamil customs.\textsuperscript{76}

In Tirunelveli district, the *Paravas* found chiefly in Tuticorin and in a number of sea coast villages in the Nanguneri, Tiruchendur, Sripaikundam, and Kovilpatti taluks. They are Roman Catholics and much devoted to their religion.\textsuperscript{77} The *Paravas* were converted from Hinduism to Christianity during the early quarters of the 16\textsuperscript{th} century, i.e. 1532 A.D. When they were abundance and neglected by the high caste Hindus.\textsuperscript{78} St. Francis Xavier was mainly responsible for their conversion.\textsuperscript{79} Before the arrival of the St. Francis Xavier in Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari districts, the *Paravas* suffered at the hands of *Moorement* or *Lubais*. They came from Persian Gulf. Their chief settlement was *Kayal*, a town situated near the mouth of

\textsuperscript{73} *Ibid.*, p.141.  
\textsuperscript{74} V.Nagam Aiya, *op.cit.*, p.415.  
\textsuperscript{76} Mary Philomina, *op.cit.*, p.9.  
\textsuperscript{78} Angelo Vishnuchittan, *op.cit.*, p.14.  
the river Tamirabarani, which is Marco Polo’s time (290-91) was a great and noble city.  

All the Pallavas those who speak Tamil, Malayalam, Canarese are probably descended from the Tamil Paravans or Paratavans. The Tamil Paravans are fishermen on the sea coast. The Paravans caste on the Tirunelveli and Madurai coasts, were found by the Portuguese, on their arrival in India, was groaning under the Mohamadeyan yoke. They were converted into the Roman Catholic. Their headquarters is Tuticorin and the headman is called Talaivan. They are mostly native Christians. They claim to be Kshatriya of the Pandya line of Kings and they ate only in the houses of Brahmins. The Malayalam Paravas are shell collectors, lime burners and gymnasts and their women acted as midwives. Their Canarese Paravans were umbrella makers and devil dancers. Mostly coastal areas are inhabited by fishermen. In course of time the fishermen of these coastal areas came to be known as Pattinavan. Pattinavan literally means a dweller in a town or pāttinam and this word occurs in the names of various towns on the sea coast like Nagapattinam and Cuddalore.

The few Pattinavans have given to high sounding caste their title like Ariyan, Auyayiraththalaiwer (the head of five thousand chiefs Ariyannathachetti), Achchavellala, Karaithurai Vellala and Varunakula Vellala have adopted the title Pillai.

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80 H.R.Pate, *op.cit.*, p.121.
According to a legend it is said that the **Pattinavans** were giving silk thread to Lord Siva and they were called **Pattinavan**, a corruption of **Pattinavar**, meaning the Knitters of silk thread. In the social hierarchy the **Pattinavans** are said to be inferior to **Sembadavans**.

According to one version the leader of a certain **Pattinavan** had two sons, the elder known as **peria pattinavan** and the younger as China pattinavan. It is said that, in course of time the two brothers quarreled and drifted apart. The followers of the elder brother became **Periapattinavans** and those of the younger brothers **Chinna Pattinavans**. Even though both use of same title were followed. The social and other purpose were different, they considered themselves as two distinct communities. There is no inter-marriage between the two communities and even today they remains us to different castes.  

Generally, **Sembadavan** are the Tamil fishing caste, who fish in fresh waters, ponds, lakes, rivers and near the sea-shore. The Tamil term **Sembadavan** is said to be derived from **Sivan Padavar** means the boat men employed by Siva. Various legends were told about this community. The following are the most important of them.

1. According to the legend the goddess Ankalamman whom they worship (even now) was a **Sembadavan** girl, Lord Siva become enamoured of her beauty and married her. At the time of the marriage the **Sembadavans**

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acted as Lord Siva’s boatmen and hence they came to be known as “Sivan Padaivar”, the boat men of Lord Siva.

2. According to another legend the founder of the Sembadavan caste, while worshipping God was tested by God himself appearing before him in the form of a big fish. Seeing the fish forgot god and all about his prayers and went after the fish, God cursed him with the occupation of catching fish for ever.

3. It is said that in early days certain fishing communities used boats made by copper. In course of time these owners of copper boats showed their difference from others by styling themselves as Sembadavans, that is those who own and use Sembadans (Chembadavan) Chembu-copper, Padavu-boat.

4. Since fishermen spent a considerable part of their time in water, their black hair became brown and these were subsequently called Chembadavar.86

Even though fishing is regarded as a traditional occupation, in recent decades a few families of their communities have also resorted to fishing for their livelihood. Various factors, like proximity to the sea, love for fishing and lack of alternative employment might have forced these people to become fishermen. Most of the Christian fishing families in Madras city originally are belonged to the Karayar and Parava fishing communities.

They were treated as untouchables by other communities and many of them were converted to Christianity almost all of them Catholics. So they were called New Entrants.  

The majority of the fishermen of coastal Tamil Nadu are engaged in fishing and agriculture. Few are employed in private trusts and government institutions, some are working in alien countries. In Kanyakumari handicraft is another major avocation of the people through which they survive. The fisher-folk in common remain backward and they are financially unsound. Lack of proper planning, alcoholism and illiteracy are the main factors responsible for the backwardness of the fishermen. The problem of backwardness is aggravated by poor living condition. As a result they have a low status in the society. It is a known fact that the housing conditions of the fisher-folk are extremely poor. Most of them live in thatched huts thereby exposed to rain and storm. The government which realised the problem initiated various schemes for providing better housing facilities to the fishermen. Since the magnitude of the problem is large an immediate solution is very difficult. In Kanyakumari district few pucca houses are there and owned by well to do fishermen. Some houses are provided by the government and others by religious and social welfare organisation like the Kottar Social Service Society (KSSS) and the Vincent De Paul Society.

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87 Ibid., p.181.
90 Ibid., pp.18-19.
Among the fishermen families very few have single family and many adhere to joint family setup. Some joint families are big, having as many as twenty or more members, while others are small, the members of the joint family perform their rituals social as well as religious together and the expenses are met out of the common income.\textsuperscript{92}

The middlemen thoroughly exploited to the poor fishermen. So in this reason many fishermen drink daily. Some people drink twice a day, some people are drinking weekly. More money was spent for drinking. Fishermen, especially, marine fishermen do arduous work. Many find comfort in drinking which is the social menace acting cancerous to the economic growth of the community. Hence quarrel break out in the family. The major problems confronted in the villages are water scarcity, lack of adequate bus facilities, lack of transport facilities, lack of adequate school facilities, lack of medical facilities, lack of adequate toilet facilities, dowry problem and superstitious belief.\textsuperscript{93} Another major problems confronted by the boat owners are unstable income, coolie workers are not available nets and other equipments get worn out. Fishing grounds are far off and problems due to personnel or repair boat. Despite the constraints and hurdles, some do not want to change in occupation. The major impact of frequent clashes between fishermen leads to destruction of property and migration of families with bags and baggage’s to other villages. During such predicament families undergo severe trail due to non-employment and financial crunch, resulted in total economic ruin community faction and

\textsuperscript{92} Parish Record, Kanyakumari, 1981, p.4.
\textsuperscript{93} Interview with Tmt. N.Tharsilin, Fisherwoman, Mullorthurai, on 10\textsuperscript{th} April 2008.
strife are almost annual occurrences in these villages. In many cases, the government interference and the village peace committee consisting of community elders from all villages come forward to settle the affair. There are four kinds of settlement in their disputes. They are through court settlement, panchayat settlement, village headmen (representatives from villages) and police. The rift between mechanised boatmen and countrymen is never ending. Even the interference of government to settle these problems have brought only temporary solace. The agreement is often observed by violation by mechanised boatmen. They do fishing in the prohibited areas. Sometimes they damage the nets and fishing vessels or country boat even while negotiating in the sea during their clandestine operation.

Drinking water is the main problem of the fishing community, 65 per cent of the families are not provided with drinking water in which they reside. In the village there are few wells. Even in there the taste is saltiest, hence it can not be used for drinking purpose. During the summer season, the women have to trench a long distance to fetch drinking water.

Regarding the position of women, female children are not given education and they have to shoulder the burden of looking after the households. When they reach marriageable age they are not expected to hover around and socialise themselves as men do. They are married at an early age as soon as they attain puberty. The parents do not have interest

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94 Interview with Thiru. Soosai, Fisherman, Ennayam, on 12\textsuperscript{th} April 2005.
95 Interview with Thiru. Stephen, Fisherman, Poothurai, on 14\textsuperscript{th} May 2005.
96 Interview with Tmt. Christy, Fisherwoman, Colachel, on 17\textsuperscript{th} June 2006.
even in giving them primary education. The poor financial condition of the family and the mass unemployment problem are the main reason which prevent the fishermen from giving education to their female children.98

However, in many of these fishermen families, the housewife is the controller of expenses even though she may not be the main earner. Many of the mothers do fish marketing to earn some extra money.99

Regarding the property right of the women the daughters have equal share with their brothers in the property of the father. However, in practice they do not claim their share. Usually the father writes the will to keep the daughters away from their share in the family property. The women are also convinced about this family custom, eventhough, the legislation had given equal property right to both the sons and daughters of a family.100

The marriage of the fishermen society are settled on the basis of the caste, family background and economic status of the family. The parents of the girls are generally afraid of a match, which fulfills all those requirements. So they are always worried and try to hurry up marriage as early as possible. In the village, marriage of a daughter is still the top priority of the parents. In most of the illiterate fishermen families the men used to consume alcohol daily and the women suffer mainly and are affected by the financial status of the fishermen.101

99 Ibid., pp.8-9.
100 Edgar Thurston, op.cit., p.141.
101 Interview with Thiru. Lucas, Fisherman, Mullorthurai, on 19th June 2006.
Unemployment is another major problem which torments the youth community.\textsuperscript{102} The youth community are developing a kind of indifference towards fishing, their main avocation. It is mainly because of the fact they do not like to go out for fishing in the catamarans. They prefer mechanised boats for fishing, but the poor parents are not in a position to fulfill their desire. As a result, they waste their time and take to bad habits like tobacco and alcohol consumption, beedi and cigarette smoking and chewing churo.\textsuperscript{103}

The socio-economic work should be directed in improving the health, wealth and education of the people. The health of fishing people was rapidly deteriorating. The sanitary condition of villages and evil of drinking prevalent among them are the causes of deterioration of health. The periodical outbreaks of cholera, plague, smallpox also carried away their lives.\textsuperscript{104} Number of weak children are their among the fisher-folk. The existence of toddy shops in almost all the villages, where the Hindus and Christian fishermen live, was also not very satisfactory. The most irregular and an uncertain nature of their income and the want of thrift among them had thrown many of them in deep debt.

The fishermen were a behind their literacy. In order to remove illiteracy from the fishermen community, the fisheries department urged the government to start schools in the coastal areas.\textsuperscript{105}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[102] The Hindu, dated 25\textsuperscript{th} September, 1989, Cochin, p.13.
\item[103] Parish Committee Record, Kanyakumari, 1995, pp.4-7.
\item[104] G.O.No.1636, Revenue Department, dated 12\textsuperscript{th} June, 1908, TNA.
\item[105] G.O.No.2267, Revenue Department, dated 17\textsuperscript{th} August, 1908, TNA.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Indebtedness is the another problem of coolie fishermen and is the most serious handicap of the poor fishermen. The malady is wide-spread and the number of fishermen free from monetary encumbrance is very small. Most of the master fishermen borrow and invest money in fishing crafts and tackles and thus succeed in getting higher income. The main cause of the unproductive debts as revealed by the survey are the following:

(i) It is not only due to the low income but the unsteady and fluctuating nature of the income that is mainly responsible for the debt. Even master fishermen have to borrow on certain days when catches are poor or when they are not going to the sea of fish. Coolies cannot but borrow on certain days when catches are poor or when they are not going to the sea of fish. Coolies cannot but borrow on those days of non-fishing. It is possible to overcome the disadvantages of low and unsteady income by a careful adjustment of the needs of life. But it is too much to expect such adjustments from ignorant and spend thrift to fishermen.

(ii) Even though they know the art of making money by hard work, fishermen are very poor in the art of wise spending. A study of fishermen’s life reveal that there is a day-to-day life. When they get, they spend lavishly on immediate needs and never think of rainy days. In days of plenty their expenses rise and due to their income they spend without hesitation. Naturally on lean days they have to ask somebody even for their bare needs.\footnote{Fisheries Administrative Report, 1994-1995, Department of Fisheries, Tamil Nadu, 1996, p.2.}
(iii) The habit of borrowing is rampant among fishermen. They seldom make a distinction between wants and needs and make little efforts to strive hard against adverse circumstances. Even for avoidable needs they resort to borrowing and the tendency to borrow is almost inborn with them. They pawn ornaments, vessels and even ration cards to get money to satisfy their immediate needs. All this is to a certain extent due to lack of a sense of individual responsibility and foresight.

(iv) Another important cause of indebtedness is the evil efforts of drinks. Almost all the fishermen interviewed have admitted that they drink and consider it as essential for their work. In course of time they develop a mania for alcohol, immediately after their return from the sea, whether they can afford or not. Living in a prohibited area, they have to pay higher prices for spurious stuff. Drink as noted elsewhere roughly consumes 7 per cent to 10 per cent of the fishermen’s monthly earnings.\footnotemark

(v) It is a convention among fishermen to spend money extravagantly whether they can afford or not on all social ceremonies in order to keep a false standard of dignity. Ceremonies like puberty, marriage, burial of the dead, involve heavy expenses. Extravagance naturally leads to indebtedness.

(vi) Owners of catamarans and nets are always prepared to lend money to coolies against “loans on labour”, some such creditors also provide the coolies with huts to live in the undertake to renew the super-structure whenever necessary. The debtor always gets money to tide over his difficulties and had to repay it, at his own convenience and without any

\footnotetext{107} Ibid.
interest. From the point of view of the creditors this “advance on labour” is an industrial necessary. For no owner can be sure of securing the required amount of labour unless the enlists before hand the services of labourers. These advances serve as securities for commanding labour at any time. Moreover, the master fishermen never wants a coolie to clear of all his debts and thus become a freemen. To keep him under control and to secure his labour continuously he goes on giving loans beyond his repaying capacity.\textsuperscript{108}

\textit{Mukkuva} fishermen generally neither grow hemp nor prepare the nets they require for their occupation. They generally borrow money from the fish merchants and purchase the nets enquired. This is one of the main cause of their indebtedness.\textsuperscript{109}

\textbf{Fishing Equipments}

The active fishermen are in the age group of 15 to 65 years, going to the deep sea and do fishing. In addition to this, large number of persons in the fishermen community are engaged in fish marketing.\textsuperscript{110} They carry each day’s catch by head load to the nearby households or markets and sell the same directly to the customers. While the fishermen engaged mainly in fishing, the women look after the rest of the work as fish processing, distribution and marketing. In Tamil Nadu prawn peeling, fish drying, curing and fish marketing are dominated by women in both marine and inland fishing sectors.\textsuperscript{111} Prawn peeling is a seasonal activity coinciding with the prawn-fishing season from August to January, peeled and divined

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Ibid.}, p.3.


\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Social Welfare}, Vol.XXXVII, p.23.

\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.23-24.
prawn is an important item of marine product for export. 40 per cent of the start working when they attain the age of twenty or even before.  

The reason for the quick acceptance of a job is their need for money for survived. They have to do it due to the economic constrains. The nature of the job brings over a heavy burden on the workers and that is why the capacity of the workers to work is over before fifty years of age. This disability is caused by continuous work done by them and the lack of medical care due to poor financial condition.

The fishing craft another essential may be broadly classified into two categories:

(i) Indigenous or non-mechanised; and
(ii) Mechanised.

The non-mechanised craft may again be divided into three types, namely (1) catamarans, (2) dugut canoes, and (3) plank built canoes. The catamarans is one of the traditional type of fishing crafts used along the east coast from Orissa to Cape Comorin.

The fisher-folk are the principal users of it. This craft is formed by typing together a few longs of light wood. Three to five legs of light wood are tied together with coir ropes to form the catamarans. When the logs are tied together they became curved and shaped like a canoe. A catamaran

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formed by logs has a length varying from feet to eighteen feet. The craft is rowed with the help of a flat wooden pole. When the craft returns after fishing, the logs are separated and dried in the Sun.

The degut canoes are fashioned from large logs of wood and its keel is thicker than the sides. It is used for catching various species of fish near the shore and in deep waters. Its length varies from thirty-two feet to forty-two feet. Very few fishermen were own these canoes. Usually those who use these canoes spend three or four nights in the sea and return to the shore after a long interval. The fishermen use to stay in the sea for just for one or two night. So many of them do not use such deep water crafts.

The boats built of planks can be launched in rough weather. It can be launched into the sea even for six or seven days. Ten to fifteen men can be accommodated in this boat. It is used for deep water fishing. The fishermen of Kanyakumari do not possess such types of boats. Because it is a old type of fishing craft and such non-mechanised boats have lost much of their popularity after the advent of mechanised boats. Hence very few fishermen of Kanyakumari district use these boats for fishing.

In mechanisation of fishing crafts in Tamil Nadu dates back to December 1953, when a tripartite agreement between the United Kingdom, the Government of India and the Government of Norway was signed. The nature of the agreement was that the three governments would build various

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116 Ibid., pp.2-3.
mechanised boats under the British technology to the launched in the deep waters of these countries.\textsuperscript{117}

In modern times mechanised boats are used by the fisher people. In Kanyakumari district, the parish fund, which functions under the Parish priest and the Parish Committee gives loan to the fishermen to buy such mechanised boats.\textsuperscript{118} The Kottar Social Service Society also helps the fishermen of Kanyakumari district to get such mechanised boats by granting loans. The fishermen are required to pay back the debts (loan) in 36 installments to 60 installments. Non-mechanised boats are also given to the fishermen under the loan system.\textsuperscript{119} Even though fishing is the main avocation for the fishing communities, other subsidy activities are followed for supplementing the income such as animal husbandry and agriculture.\textsuperscript{120}

Some of the fishermen are employed by private owners or contractors. These fishermen have to work under the contractors, using the owner’s boats and nets by paying them two thirds of their income.\textsuperscript{121} Few other contractors appoint workers in their boats, paying them a daily wage of Rs.15/- to Rs.40/- according to the skill of the labourer. On the basis of the nature and duration of employment workers, can be classified as temporary or permanent under the contractors.\textsuperscript{122} Majority of the workers are

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{117} \textit{Indian Express}, dated: 28\textsuperscript{th} February, 1982, Cochin, p.12.
\item \textsuperscript{118} \textit{Parish Committee Report, Kanyakumari, 1986}, p.8.
\item \textsuperscript{119} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.8-9.
\item \textsuperscript{120} \textit{Ibid.}, 1987, p.6.
\item \textsuperscript{121} \textit{Ibid.}, 1986, p.8.
\item \textsuperscript{122} \textit{Social Welfare}, Vol.XXXII, December 1988, p.7.
\end{itemize}
temporary due to the nature of the job, its tenure and change in the employer. The average income of these workers per day works out to Rs.25/-.

Economic Life

The sea-going fishermen remain economically poor and backward. Their income is uncertain, irregular and unpredictable. Their income varies from day-to-day. They may get Rs.50/- or Rs.100/- a day or may not get anything for few days at a stretch. As they do not have any concrete plan about their future, they spent all the money, they earn and do not save anything. During the season i.e. from January to June they get a seasonal income around Rs.3,000/-. During off seasons they get a very low income and most of the households have earnings less than Rs.1,000/- per season. It leads to starvation and poverty among the fisher-folk. This is how majority of the fishermen live below the poverty line. Lack of proper education leads to many psychological disturbances such as failure in achieving ambitions and unexpected accidents in the sea. Such pressures make the fishermen a smoker, alcoholic and a man of bad habits, which ultimately make him a pauper.

Thus the income of the fishermen families varies according to their skill, interest in the work and the possession of fishing equipments. Estimation of accurate income is impossible, since most of the fishermen are

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123 Ibid., pp.7-9.  
126 Interview with Thiru. G. John Doss, Clerk, Fisherman Co-operative Society, Mulloorthurai, on 16th August 2006.  
127 Interview with Thiru. Amirthaiya, lecturer, Puthukadai, on 18th August 2006.
illiterates they do not adhere to a system of income and expenditure.\textsuperscript{128} An analysis of the income and expenditure of the fishermen’s families will enable one to assess their standard of living. Both the income and expenditure of the families include transactions in cash and kind. Thus fish is appropriated by the family in the course of the fishing operation is shown as part of the income and if it is consumed by the family as an item of expenditure.\textsuperscript{129} Most of the parents find it very difficult to meet the expenses and perform the marriage of their sons and daughters. Also they find it difficult to buy new fishing equipments, when they became old or lost. An ordinary fishermen find it very difficult even to purchase new nets and other equipments.\textsuperscript{130}

The Problems of Overseas Fishermen

Sea based occupations are the most dreadful and difficult one among the many avocation of human beings. In spite of knowing the dangers of fishing and related jobs in the seas fishermen ventured upon involving in this fatal jobs from time immemorial as they did not find an alternative.

By the domination and monopoly of the vessels operated by foreign countries in the Indian seas and the inappropriate regularities in the fishing industry cause many havocs and there is a whole sale deterioration in the industry. The fishermen, who are engaged in the work in different states

\textsuperscript{128} Edgar Thurston, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.149-151.
\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Fisheries Administrative Report, 1994-95}, Department of Fisheries, Tamil Nadu, p.2.
\textsuperscript{130} Interview with Tmt. Arit Antony, fisherman, Midalam, on 20\textsuperscript{th} August 2006.
and different countries are facing enormous problems in their day-to-day services.131

There are organisation and officials to alleviate the difficulties encountered by Indian fishermen. But there is no proper agencies and establishments to take care of the fishermen working in different parts of the world. The following are some problems faced by the fishermen engaged in fishing in the overseas countries. They are;

(i) Normally it is difficult to register the facts connected with the difficulties of fishermen to the Indian embassy;

(ii) There are poor response from the embassies to the problems of fishermen;

(iii) The fishermen were ill-treated by the wealthy people. Even the common people were reluctant to accept the fishermen and they too consider fishermen as low;

(iv) The retailers, brokers and sellers in this industry never disclose the prevailing rates of the catches to the fishermen;

(v) Proper safety measures and other legal protections are not extended to the fishermen by the owners of the fishing boats;132

(vi) The life insurance facilities are not extended to the fishermen;

(vii) The owners of the boats normally deviate from the contracts and agreements;

132 Ibid., pp.2-3.
(viii) Most of the fishermen are ill-treated and hence they are liable to be cheated;

(ix) The entrepreneurs of the fishing industry took scant interest in the improvement of equipments and hence, there are poor catch. This automatically results in the downfall of their routine income;

(x) Their passport and other documents are normally hold and hence the overseas fishermen could not return to their native country according to their convenience;\textsuperscript{133}

(xi) The overseas fishermen could return to their home country with the mercy and monetary support of the relatives who had already settled elsewhere;

(xii) Those fishermen who do not have adequate income and proper friends and relatives still suffer to seek an alternative i.e. either to return back to their livelihood;

(xiii) Those who safely return to their native are once again suffering from want of suitable alternative jobs;

(xiv) The government schemes available for the welfare of fishermen extended to these fishermen only because they are migrated workers; and

(xv) There are many National and International Forums which are founded to take care of the fishermen. But these forums sometimes ignore the petitions and complaints submitted by fishermen engaged in overseas fishing activities, on the place that their grievances are not within the jurisdiction of the purview of the concerned organisation.\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{133} \textit{Ibid.}, p.3.

\textsuperscript{134} Interview with Thiru. S.Paul Victor, Coordinator of \textit{ADSGAF}, Thoothoor, on 20\textsuperscript{th} August 2004.
Suggestions

(i) International Forum should be established to protect the interest of the fishermen engaged in catching overseas;

(ii) The regional organisations working on the welfare activities of the fishermen should come forward to offer joint support to the cause of bottom level workers in the industry;

(iii) Like the other international association, regulating laws and legislations to safeguard the workers in different function similar units must be started and specific legislations should be passed to protect fishermen; and

(iv) The officials of the embassies should take care of the ill-treated fishermen in perennial problems.

The problems of fishermen are varied as in any other occupational communities in India. As the fishermen are living in the coastal areas mostly depending upon sea for their occupation, the problem arises due to various factors like human, natural calamities and inter-governmental relationship. As these problems cannot be solved one individual or by a group of people there arose the necessity to organise an association. With the passage of time, the fishermen got enlightened and few sub-organisation also were established and they solved fishermen problems, particularly in Tamil Nadu and all over India. The Society Registration Act of 1972 too settled some local problems. Some organisations like National Fish Worker’s Forum (NFF), South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies (SIFFS). Association of Deep Sea Going Artisanal Fishermen

\footnote{Interview with Thiru. S.Paul Victor, Co-ordinator, \textit{ADSGAF}, Thoothoor, on 13\textsuperscript{th} November 2004.}
National Fish Worker’s Forum (NFF) is established in 1953. It’s headquarters is at Thiruvananthapuram. The objectives of the Forum are the following:

(i) To work for the social, economic and educational development of fishermen in general;
(ii) To encourage savings and mutual self help among members;
(iii) To work for the welfare of the members;
(iv) To compensate fishermen’s loss of their persons and belongings.
(v) To involve in marketing and make the fishermen to get better prices for their catches.\(^\text{138}\)

Problems of fishermen, and the role of NFF and other organisations:

(i) Adequate supply of kerosene for fishing;
(ii) Inclusion of women and inland fisher people in the saving-cum-relief scheme;

\(^{137}\) Ibid., 2001, Thiruvananthapuram, p.40.
\(^{138}\) National Fish Worker’s Forum, Annual Report, 1960, Thiruvananthapuram, p.3.
(iii) Implementation of Murari Committee recommendations;
(iv) To increase subsidy on diesel proportionate to the price hike;
(v) To stop import of fish;
(vi) To punish the murdered of Co-Pratap save.\(^{139}\)
(vii) To stress that a uniform ban be imposed on fishing in monsoon season;
(viii) It inform the coast guard with regard to any issue pertaining to illegal fishing in Indian waters.
(ix) Total ban on deep sea agreements with foreign companies;
(x) To stop foreign fishing vessels in Indian water;
(xi) To ban mono aquaculture;
(xii) To implement and issue of identity card to all fisher-men/women;
(xiii) Enactment of marine Fishing Regulating Bill.
(xiv) To release innocent fishermen from Maldives, Pakistan, Ceylon and Bangladesh jail, etc.
(xv) Pension should be given to all fish workers who are above 60 years;
(xvi) Implement coastal development bill, favouring the fish workers;
(xvii) Institute in Inland Fisheries Development Authority Bill.\(^{140}\)
(xviii) Withdrawal of the ban imposed on 60 species of fishes including shark;
(xix) Avail immediate relief assistance to fish workers hit by the rough sea and natural calamities;
(xx) Withdraw the tax imposed on fishing boats;

\(^{139}\) Ibid., 2001, Thiruvananthapuram, pp.1-6.
\(^{140}\) Ibid., p.16.
(xxi) Insure the fishing rights in common waters to fish workers only;
(xxii) Ensure security to fish vending women.\textsuperscript{141}

In order to solve these problems and to get demands, the NFF organised a number of strike and other constitutional methods of agitations.

Since 1978 onwards the NFF has always been on the fore-front in organising the fisher people and struggling to protect the resources and the fishing community in India.

The traditional fishing community and the marine resources are not protected. The Murari Committee recommended that the Marine Fishing Regulation in EEZ should be enacted by the parliament. It is yet to be done. In such a context the Ministry of Environment and Forest had declared 60 items of fish 93 endangered species by having resources to Wild-Life Protection Act. On 27\textsuperscript{th} September 1997, the cabinet decided to accept 21 recommendations of the Murari Committee, but the Central Government has not shown any interest in implementing them.\textsuperscript{142} Afterwards many agitations, took place one after the other to obtain diesel and kerosene, in a subsidised rate, for implementing the Supreme Court judgement on aquaculture, for cancellation of all the licenses given to joint venture of fishing vessels.\textsuperscript{143} So many written agreements were signed between the

\textsuperscript{141} Vincent Jain, (ed), \textit{Journal of World Fisheries day, 21\textsuperscript{st} November, 1998}, Nadercoil, p.3.
\textsuperscript{142} \textit{National Fish Workers forum charter of Demands, 2002}, Thiruvananthapuram, pp.3-5. p.5.
\textsuperscript{143} Interview with Dr. Varethaiya, Lecturer, Kalingarajapuram, on 15\textsuperscript{th} November 2004.
ministries concerned and the NFF, the government failed to implement them. All these led to the depletion to fish resources, leading the fishing community to a state of more poverty. The whole fisheries development policy is faulty.\footnote{144}

According to Justice Jeevan Reddy of the supreme court while upholding Monsoon Trawal Ban explained the meaning of development that, “it is perfectly justified in adopting an attitude that the public interest cannot be determined only by looking at the quantum of fish caught in a year. In other words, production alone can be the basis for determining public interest. The government is perfectly justified in saying that it is under obligation to protect the economic interest of the traditional fisher people and to ensure that they are not deprived of their slender means of livelihood. Whether one calls it distributive justice or development with a human face, the ultimate truth is that the object of all development is the human being. There can be no development for the sake of development priorities ought not be interested nor true perspective lost in the quest for more production”.\footnote{145}

In 1989 NFF organised historic long march called Kanyakumari to Mumbai march. The coastal march was led by Fr. Thomas Kocherry, Mantanly Saldanha and A.J.Vijayan. The march began on 2\textsuperscript{nd} April in the west and 3\textsuperscript{rd} April in east coast. The main slogan was to protect waters and protect life. The marchers linked with local issues like, tourism, tourism,

\footnote{144 Interview with Thiru. Paul Victor, Co-ordinator of ADSGAF, Thoothoor on 16\textsuperscript{th} November 2004.}
displacement, Koodankulam nuclear plant, pollution industries in Ennore near Chennai, destruction of mangroves in Sunderban, aquaculture in Chilka and Titanium pollution were brought to the focus.\textsuperscript{146}

About 25,000 people gathered from all over India. It was an interaction of cultures, arts, fishing gears. The police opened fire upon the crowd. 10 people were badly injured.\textsuperscript{147} Justice V.R.Krishna Iyer who came to inaugurate the Public meeting had to return protesting police fire upon the unarmed fisher people. There was a police case pending against the agitated and the police did harassing and giving trouble to the fisher people for the next ten years. As a result the first time fisher people raised environmental issues.

NFF served Indian fishermen to past 50 years. It struggle against the government and private sectors. It got many achievements. Still it is continue there struggle or agitation. Thus NFF is doing a yeoman services to the downtrodden communities like fisher-folk.

India, Pakistan, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives share the water and the resource of the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea. Sri Lanka has its northern coastline along the Palk Strait. The problem of sea boundary between India and Sri Lanka had continued now. Some times Indian fishermen unknowingly enter into the Sri Lankan sea waters, however very often the Sri Lankan Navy enters into the

\textsuperscript{146} Interview with Thiru. Oliver, Retd. Teacher, Thoothoor, on 15\textsuperscript{th} May 2005.
\textsuperscript{147} Interview with Thiru. F.Maria Robinson, Fisherman, Kanyakumari, on 19\textsuperscript{th} April 2005.
Indian territorial waters. So the poor fishermen of Tamil Nadu in the hands of Sri Lankan Navy and the Sri Lankan fishermen for ever a decade are still continuing. The poor and helpless fishermen are rotting in Jails for years, the story of their families back home is one of intense human tragedy and utter distress. They are facing starvation and acute economic problem in the absence of their bread earners. There are untold hardship and misery of these fishermen in Ramanathapuram (mainly Rameswaram), Pudukkottai, Nagapattinam, and now Tuticorin and Kanyakumari coastal districts of Tamil Nadu. Number of incidents continue still, boats are damaged, sunk and fishermen killed or injured. Eventhough the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu in different periods expressed their deep anguish over the number of unprovoked shooting incidents that took away the lives of our poor fishermen, and the Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu in different periods had spoken to Hon’ble Prime Minister of India, personally condemning the killing and urging for early solution.\textsuperscript{148}

The fishermen in the coastal areas are subject to all kinds of diseases, as proper sanitation and medical facilities are not available in these areas. Several schemes for providing dispensaries in coastal fishing villages have helped to solve the problem to some extent. Community amenities such as drinking water, well, latrines, common path-ways and community halls have been provided in some of the colony sites, but majority of the coastal fishing villages are without such amenities.\textsuperscript{149} Hence slum and sanitary improvement programme must be more

\textsuperscript{148} Interview with Thiru. Paul Victor, Co-ordinator of ADSGAF, Thoothoor, on 13\textsuperscript{th} November 2006.

\textsuperscript{149} Interview with Thiru. Lucas, Fisherman, Ramanthurai on 14\textsuperscript{th} October 2004.
effective. To make it more effective, the government may increase the annual allotment to this programme.\textsuperscript{150}

Ramanathapuram district fisher people faced so many problems such as they are, non-implementation of marine fishing regulation act, shore fishing by mechanised bottom trawling, shooting by the Sri Lankan navy, shrimp farming on the coast, industrial and civic bodies pollution of coast and sea, discrimination of fisher women, drinking water crisis and lack of basic amenities, displacement of fishing communities, dynamite fishing in the districts, depletion fish resources by indiscriminate fishing methods, expansion of ship breaking yard at Valinokkam and its effect on the sea and financial problems of the union.\textsuperscript{151}

Fisheries around the world were facing mounting problems including over fishing, unauthorised incursions by foreign fleets, ecosystem degradation, over capitalisation and excessive fleet sizes.\textsuperscript{152}

Fish vending is a difficult occupation. Women fish vendors identify the following their main problems, scarcity of fish, escalating charged by money lenders, entry to big (male) merchants with ready capital and own vehicles, iced fish from other states, and stiff competition.

Since life in the fishing villages is very precarious and basic amenities are few, the time spent at home is not one of relaxation or rest

\textsuperscript{150} \textit{The Hindu}, dated: 4\textsuperscript{th} November, 2000, Chennai.
\textsuperscript{151} \textit{National Fish Workers Forum, Annual Report 2001}, Thiruvananthapuram, p.58.
\textsuperscript{152} \textit{Ibid.}, p.62.
for the women. They have to fetch water, do all the household chores and attended to the needs of their children and husbands. Because of the destructive industries like shrimp and petro-chemical industries along the coast even these resource like water and fuel are becoming scarce as they are either polluted or destroyed.

Tamil Nadu fisheries display an assortment of fishing techniques and women too engage in a variety of fish related tasks. In the districts of Ramanathapuram, Tirunelveli, Kanyakumari and Thanjavur, they are more engaged in drying, curing and vending, whereas the dominant activity in the northern districts of Chennai, Chingelput and South Arcot\textsuperscript{153} the fish marketing is dominant. In the northern districts, the women had earlier auctioned the fish their husbands brought back. Today, they have been completely marginalised in this work because of the centralized landing and bulk purchase for export marketing. Today hundreds of young women and girls from the fishing villages are migrating for work as wage labour in the fish processing plants. Earlier, young women worked in the salt pans. Today, these are being displaced by the shrimp farms.\textsuperscript{154}

Kachcha Thivu an island, half mile in length and half a mile in breadth lies in the Palk Strait, midway between India and Ceylon. This island is located 11 miles off Rameswaram and 18 miles from Pampan

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textsuperscript{154}]\textit{Ibid.}
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
i.e midway of Thalaimannar and its total extent is 285.20 acres. The Kachcha means dirty water.\textsuperscript{155}

Kachcha Thivu is an oval-shaped islet between Pampan in Ramanathapuram district of Tamil Nadu and Delft island north of Sri Lanka. It is one of the ten or more off-shore islands in the Palk Strait. Its shores are rugged with small rocks on the east and sandy on the west and south. One of the off-shore possessions of Ramanathapuram Zamindari viz, the Kachcha Thivu an uninhabited island was the source of international dispute between India and Sri Lanka. The Raja of Ramnad was exercising jurisdiction over the island since 1880 to the date of abolition of Zamindari on 7\textsuperscript{th} September, 1949.\textsuperscript{156}

During the World War II the Kachcha Thivu has been used a naval bombardment practice range in India. In August 1949, India informed the Government of Ceylon of her own intension of carrying out naval exercises in Palk Strait and of using Kachcha Thivu as bombardment target.\textsuperscript{157} The Government of Ceylon states, however that Kachcha Thivu belonged to Ceylon and if India wished to use it, she must have the prior permission of Ceylon. In October 1955, the Government of Ceylon raised the question of using the islands an aerial practice and firing range and sought as the co operation of Indian civil authorities in

\textsuperscript{155}Dhirendra Mohan Prasad, \textit{Ceylon’s Foreign Policy under the Bandara Naikes}, New Delhi, 1973, p.337.


the interest of general safety. India protested, that the island formed part of
the estate of the Raja of Ramnad and therefore it was Indian territory.

It has been argued in the Lok Sabha that Kachcha Thivu island belonged to Ramanathapuram samasthanam which had been taken over the Government of Madras under the Zamindari Abolition Act. The former Prime Minister of India Nehru suggested that “he regarded the legal question of the Indian claim to the Zamindari in Kachcha Thivu was quite separate from the political question of sovereignty over the island. While conceding India’s legal claim to the Zamindari, Nehru regarded the political question of jurisdiction over the island as controversial”.\(^{158}\)

In India no sovereign right over this island, some concession are made to the Tamil fishermen. They dry their nets and take rest. They can’t fish in those water around Kachcha Thivu island, but some facilities, like drying nets and rest to the fishermen things which are under negotiations.\(^{159}\) The island has a small church dedicated to St. Antony. It was built by Seenikaruppan Padayachi, a fishermen from Tondi. Kachcha Thivu is the venue of the annual Catholic festival held for in the month of February. The Sri Lankan Government used to issue permits to its pilgrims visit this church but Indian pilgrims were always allowed to go without restriction. The fishermen in Rameswaram area were unable to participate in the festival in every year. Usually the Tamil Nadu fishermen went to this festival by boat to this church and celebrating the festival of

\(^{158}\) Ibid., p.61.

\(^{159}\) Interview with Thiru. Kumar, Fishermen, Thangachimadam, on 21\(^{st}\) October 2004.
St. Antony with joy. But due to the wrong approach of the Government of Ceylon, the people feared and hesitated to participate in the festival. Hence both Central and State Governments would make an amicable arrangement to these people to attend the festival peacefully.\(^{160}\)

Kachcha Thivu was all along a part and parcel of Indian territory. It was under the jurisdiction of princely state of Ramnad till 1949. Till then there was no claim on the part of Sri Lanka over Kachcha Thivu. Hence there was controversy between Sri Lanka and India for some years which was finally concluded by Mrs. Indira Gandhi in January 1974 at Delhi conference.\(^{161}\)

However the handing over Kachcha Thivu to Sri Lanka by Delhi Congress was not advantageous of Indian fishermen. Still the problem persists as the Kashmir issue in the South India. If we want to find out the solution for the problem of Indian fishermen, we have to get back Kachcha Thivu from Sri Lanka.

The arrest of Indian fishermen on the Sri Lankan side of the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) in the Palk Straits and Gulf of Mannar by Sri Lankan authorities has been a long-standing problem. The Sri Lankan side the fishing ground are mainly because of the high value prawns. The India and Sri Lanka International Maritime Boundary Line

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\(^{160}\) Speech of Thiru. Mookkiah Thevar, M.P, Chairman, All India Forward Bloc, addressed to Smt. Indira Gandhi Prime Minister of India.

and the question of fishing rights in each waters was settled by a series of agreements in 1974 and 1979. The Government of India’s position on these rights is that the boundary is settled and that our fishermen are on the wrong side of the law when they go to fish in Sri Lankan waters. The question of Sri Lankan navy’s harassment of apprehended fishermen has been taken up at all levels with the Sri Lankan Government who have responded by giving a commitment at the highest level that will approach this problem in a humane and considerate manner.

Tamil Nadu Government had taken a number steps to stop incursion of Tamil Nadu fishing boats into Sri Lankan waters such as issuing identity cards to fishermen of coastal districts and making it mandatory for fishermen to carry these cards while fishing, instructing boats owners to paint their boats with fluorescent paint according to the colour code prescribed by the Indian coast guard, with out identity cards and paint while fishing, the imposition of penalties ranging from Rs.1000/- up to cancellation of license/permit. Another measure was deployment of five petrol boats at Chennai, Mallipattinam, Rameswaram, Tuticorin and Kanayakumari under the supervision of coast guard to supervise operations of fishing vessels. These measures however, had a limited impact.\textsuperscript{162}

\textbf{Role of Christian Missionaries for the Upliftment of Fishermen}

Majority of the fisher-folk of Tamil Nadu are Christians belonging to the Roman Catholic rite. Lord Jesus Christ selected his

\textsuperscript{162} Interview with Thiru. Kumar, Fisherman, Thangachimadam, on 21st October 2004.
dispels among the fishermen community. For example, Peter the fishermen from Galilee is revered by Catholics as the rock upon which the Christian church is built. The Pope (father) bishop of Rome now sits in Peter’s chair, speaks with his voice and acts with his authority. So the fishermen community plays a vital role in the field of religion. St. Thomas visited Kanyakumari district in 52 A.D, during his stay, he converted more than two thirds of the population of the costal areas of Kanyakumari, Kovalam, Puthenthurai, Pallam, Midalam, Mannakkudi and Rajakkamankalam. He was one of the apostles of Jesus Christ. In all the places of Kanyakumari district there are about 16,000 persons were converted from Hinduism to Christianity, during his period. These converters who reposed full trust in St. Thomas were popularly called St. Thomas Christians. The advent of the apostle St. Thomas resulted in the establishment of the first Christian Society in South India and it became popular both in the Tamil and Malayalam speaking region.

The next stage in the preaching of Christianity began with the coming of the Portuguese. Vascoda Gama, discovered the sea-route to India in 1498 A.D, and within two years after his arrival Franciscan Missionaries were sent to India. Between 1535 and 1537 a group of paravas a fishing community of the southern coastal area sought protection under the Portuguese. As they were a major fishing community,

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164 Edgar Thurston, op.cit., pp.145-146.
165 George Koilparampil, Caste In the Catholic Community in Kerala, Cochin, 1982, p.79.
who predominately settled on the coast of Bay of Bengal, they were converted to Christianity.\(^{167}\)

The invasion of Malik Kafur, a Muslim commander of the Delhi sultan which lasted from 1537 to 1540 on the southern coastal provinces proved detrimental to the interests of the fishermen.

In this hour of crisis, the Portuguese promised them help on the condition that they should embrace Christianity. Hence between 1537 and 1540, a large number of fishermen became converts to Christianity.\(^{168}\) The arrival of St. Francis Xavier in 1542 A.D marked a turning point in the history of the Church in South India. There was mass conversion of people to the catholic faith.\(^{169}\) In 1542 St. Francis Xavier spent about a year, in the southern coast of India from Kanyakumari to Pallam and preached the truth of the Christian faith and baptised the people.\(^{170}\) That is why the people of Kanyakumari district adore the blessed shrine of St. Francis Xavier in their households.\(^{171}\) The people of the southern areas especially the coastal people welcomed the easy methods of Christian worship and prayers.\(^{172}\) The followers of Fr. Robert De Nobili who evoked appreciable adoration for cross in urban and rural areas of South India converted a large number of Hindus to Christianity. As a result their

\(^{167}\) George Koilparampil, *op.cit.*, p.79.

\(^{168}\) Edgar Thurston, *op.cit.*, p.145.


descendents from a good proportion of the Christians of Tamil Nadu today.\footnote{173}{Gazetteer of India, Country and People, 1943, p.489.}

There are many reason for the conversion of Hindus to Christianity. The primary among them being the domination of the high caste. The low caste were denied even of their legitimate demands. Their attempts to break the caste fetters were resisted by the priestly class.\footnote{174}{George Mark Moraes, A History of Christianity in India, Bombay, 1964, p.13.} As a result the oppressed found a heaven in Christianity. Once converted to Christianity, the converts began to celebrate the religious functions with abiding interest. Hence Catholism is in its privacy in India.

The Paravas embraced Catholicism mainly to escape the oppression from the Mohamadeans. Conversion of Paravas to Christianity in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century was considered as one of the greatest and most successful group conversion movements in India.

According to a tradition the Paravas as having from immemorial conducted the fisheries, and in return for tribute paid from the produce of the fisheries they obtained from successive rulers the protection of their industry and immunity from future taxation. With the weakening of the paramount power of Vijayanagar and the rise to power of Mohamadean immigrants from Arabia, the privileged of the Paravas was seriously threatened.\footnote{175}{H.R. Pate, Tirunelveli District Gazetteer, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, Document action service series-1,(1993),1916, pp..230-231.}
The Moors who had spread themselves over India and principally along the coasts of Madura, were strengthened by the native professing Mahomedanism and by the Arabs, Saracens and the privateers of the Zamorin, the Raja of Calicut and they began also to take to pearl-diving as an occupation, but led away by ill-feeling and hope of gain, they often attempted to kill thousand of Paravas and burn their gears and nets.

Another History reveals that a **Parathi** (Parava Women) girl who was insulted by a Muslim. This act was considered as the greatest insult and the Paravan killed the aggressor on the spot. A conflict ensued in which many Paravas lost their lives. They retaliated by calling aid for men from other villages leading to a massive fight. The Muslims, rich mighty swore to exterminate the Paravas with the support from the Hindu rulers who assured to support the Muslims. It is called massacre. In these circumstances that John De Cruz pointed out to the Paravas that the way out of the difficulty was to convert themselves to Christianity which would ensure them to Portuguese protection.¹⁷⁶

Some records seem to mention even a Christian Diwan of Deva Raya II in Vijayanagar Empire as early as 1445. After the coming of Portuguese, the Jesuits made converts from the people especially from the Paravas of the pearl fishery coast who were eager to escape the oppression of the Muslim monopolists of the Industry by transferring their allegiance to

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Christianity and seeking the protection of Portugal. Venkata II patronised the Jesuits after the manner of Akbar and organised debates between them and Hindu leaders. He allowed them to establish their churches at Chandragiri and Vellore and settled upon them an annual income of one thousand gold pieces which they employed in maintaining the Chandragiri Mission and a college at St. Thomas near Madras.177

The conversion of the fisherfolk in the Pearl Fishery Coast was an exodus event in the words of one of the earliest Catholic missionaries Fr. Henriqus in the Pearl Fishery Coast. In 1542 Martin Alfonso de Sousa, the ‘father’ of the Paravas, arrived in India as Governor (1542-48). Miguel Vas, the Vicar General, approached the new Governor and narrated to him the suffering and the oppressions to which the Paravas had been subjugated by the first captain of the coast, Joao Flores, who was hated for his greed, and Joao Fernandes Correa, had to take charge as captain after the battle of Vedalai, became for his tyranny. He was said to have had some fishermen hanged. Dom Estevao da Gama (Governor 1540-42) had him shifted to Goa. His successor (whose name is not known) was not deterred by this; he continued to perpetrate exploitation and oppression. Miguel Vas requested the Governor to reduce the annual tribute, amounting to Rs.75,000/- fanams, by one-third. The Governor was quite willing to do everything to alleviate the suffering of his beloved Paravas. He lowered the tax to Rs.60,000/- fanams and awaited a decision from Lisbon regarding further reduction.

177 K.A. Neelakanta Sastri, Development of Religion in South India, Orient Longmans, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, New Delhi, p.127.
Further, he decided to send to the fishing coast the licentiate, Antonio Rodrigues de Gamboa, as an enquiry commission. The latter held hearings on complaints against the captain. After investigation the captain was ordered to make amends to the oppressed Paravas. He was arrested and brought to Gao. The new captain Cosme de Paivas was to sail with Francis Xavier to Cape Comorin. All this had a salutary effect and created great confidence among Paravas. Martin Afonso conceived an ingenuous plan to give complete freedom and self-identity to the Paravas. Fr. Miguel Vas and Fr. Antonio do Padrao the two priests baptised large number of paravas at many coastal villages such as Kayal, Ovari, Alanthalai, manapadu, Tuticorin, Periyathalai, Kooduthalai, Kottapanai, Koothenkuzhi, Idintakarai, Perumanal, kootapuli and Kanyakumari. Kayal which came to be called as Palayakayal after the conversion of the paravas had its own pearl market.

The concern of the diocese for the spiritual renewal coincided with an interest in the social uplift of the people. In 1955 to 1962, there was no organised social services in the Kottar diocese, except the distribution of food materials obtained through the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) of the United States of America. The food in the form of bulgar, milk powder and vegetable oil was distributed to orphanages, crèches, homes for the aged, school children and the poor irrespective of caste creed or community.

**Kottar Social Service Society**

Acts of charity, could not match the real needs of the people and answer their deep rooted problems of poverty and destitution. In this situation, organised forms of helps which could contribute to the social and economic development of the people. In this direction the first step was taken by Fr. James Tombeur, a dynamic and hard working missionary from Belgium who came to work in the Kottar diocese in 1950. He was parish priest in a very undeveloped parish Parakunnu.  

At the climax of the social transformation, in 1963 Kottar Social Services Society (KSSS) was established. It was run by a Board of Directors and the Bishops of Kottar as its trustee. Fr. T.R.Agnisamy Bishop of the Kottar Diocese became its co-office trustee. The object of the society was to engage in social service activities aimed improving the living conditions and general welfare of the poor, particular the fishermen, farmers and working men to establish, conduct manage, promote, maintain and administer social welfare centers, social training, technical schools, dispensaries, marketing organisations and food processing for imparting training and to utilise, if any exclusively for charitable purpose.

In order to achieve the goal of the KSSS it started so many branch organizations like the Community Health Development Programmes, Fishermen Sangams and Projects, Rural Motivation Programmes and Schemes for Technological Development. Most of these programmes

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were made possible with the financial and technical assistance received from many voluntary organisations and funding agencies of the world.\footnote{KSSS Annual Report 1988, Nagercoil, 1988, pp.1-3.}

The KSSS has concentrated its attention on the following three areas namely, i) agriculture; ii) fisheries; and iii) health.

To improve agriculture, KSSS launched a programme into action. Many of cultivatable lands were laying barren due to lack of feeder canals which could bring water to the field from the main canals. Further there were many acres of land which could be cultivated if only they were terraced. Seeing how much feeder canals and terracing of lands could profit the marginal farmers. For that KSSS planned to participated the active involvement of the people themselves. Food for work was the mode of action it showed to realise its projects.\footnote{Ibid., 1977, p. 21.}

The KSSS concentrated the fishermen along the coast were condemned to live in misery and poverty. They had been for centuries making use of very rudimentary tools for fishing with little improvement in their profession. But worst of all these fishermen were victims of a system of exploitation in which the middlemen, money lenders and merchants got most of their sweat and toil. Deeply rooted as they were in traditions an praises and break in the system was far from being easy.
Therefore the involvement of KSSS in the coastal villages of the diocese started in 1968.\textsuperscript{185}

The traditional catamarans did not permit the fishermen to go far into the sea and catch large quantities of fish. The KSSS took the initiative of importing outboard motors and thus hundred catamarans in the village of Muttom were mechanised. The fishermen were given, for about three weeks special training to operate them. The mechanisation project eventually proved to be a failure.\textsuperscript{186}

The KSSS learnt from its own failures and launched into other types of programmes in the fisheries sector. Accordingly the KSSS concentrated on the traditional occupation of coastal women to make fishing nets to home. They were paid little for this work. Realising the situation in 1971 KSSS began to organise the traditional practice into a proper cottage industry with various coastal centres where women were assured fair wages for their work. In this scheme concentration is paid to the education for women who learnt to save. In 1974 there were 13 such centres with 12,000 women working and their number was steadily growing.\textsuperscript{187} In 1978 when the government issued license for a mechanised net making firm with which, evidently the cottage industry could not compete. Against this threat the people of the coast and the coastal diocese priests actively

\textsuperscript{185}P. Gillet, \textit{Ten years of involvement with fisheries and fishermen in Kanyakumari District}, Nagercoil, 1979, pp.4-6.


involved, rose in protest to defend the cause of the poor women.\textsuperscript{188} Many of them in fact relied exclusively on not making for their daily sustenance.

The KSSS tried to create an awareness among fishermen. The money lenders were extracting exorbitant interest and merchants and auctioneers exploited the ignorance of the fishermen who did not have any idea of the intricacies involved in the system of marketing. In this situation of bondage and injustice the KSSS established the fishermen sangams or association to liberate them from the clutches of the exploiters.\textsuperscript{189}

KSSS launched a commendable service to Health. In the service of primary and preventive health is concerned in a diocese like Kottar with its rural conditions, huge hospitals are not the solution to the health of the majority of the people. The availability of funds for health purposes could be tempting to build huge hospitals on western models with all amenities and comforts. To reach health services effectively to thousands of poor people in villages something different had to be devised. Accordingly KSSS had initiated a new approach to health for the poor of the district.\textsuperscript{190}

The Christian missionaries not only converted the people and services to the health and hygiene, but also they spread the western education or oriental or regional education. In this purpose they are

\textsuperscript{188} Then Olai, June 1978, pp.1-8.
\textsuperscript{190} Felix Wilfred, \textit{op.cit.}, p.185.
established many schools in the coastal areas. In 1567 a Tamil School was begun at Punnaikayal because the place seemed more appropriate than manner. Fr. Henriques was appointed as Professor with a Brahmin convert called Pero Louis as his assistant. This school, because of many reason, was shifted from Punnaikayal to Manapad and then to Periyathalai. Tamil Nadu is over obliged in gratitude to Fr. Henriques for introducing the printing for the rapid spread of knowledge in the local language the first in India. Fr. Henriques was the first known European to have initiated a scientific study of Tamil language. After learning it, he repeatedly said in his letter that he was compiling for print a grammar of the Tamil language and a vocabulary of Tamil words and terms. After some years, Punnakayal subsequently declined in importance, and its place was taken by Tuticorin.  

The based on the missionaries approach was conversion and also they are teaching the social orders. They are established the many charitable institutions and through them they are contributing generously to various needs in all parts of the world by alleviating the sufferings of people by providing food, cloths, medical aid and enabling them to be trained in gainful occupations.  

Bishop Ambrose took charge of the Tuticorin diocese in 1972, he developed this service centre into Tuticorin Multi Social Service Society (TMSSS) for the purpose of promoting socio-economic development programmes for the upliftment of the poor and the downtrodden. It was

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officially formed and registered in May 1972 under the Societies Registration Act (1860). Fr. Pancras Fernando was the first full time director of TMSSS. The Director with a team was surveying the whole diocese and began to study the problems of the people to make the society a people’s project. The representatives of villages were grouped in different centres. The researcher also was working in one of these groups. The problems of the locality were studied in those meetings and projects suited to the locality were proposed.\footnote{TMSSS Annual Report for 1975, Tuticorin, 1975, p.2.}

TMSSS worked in the four kinds of different projects, they are, relief project, welfare project, economic project and social transformation project. The relief projects are drought relief and flood relief. TMSSS from its beginning up to now is sensitive to the sufferings of the poor especially when a catastrophe occurs to them i.e. fire, droughts and floods. Immediate help is given through relief projects. In addition to immediate help, rehabilitation measures are given by providing houses, boats and nets.

1981 drought relief amount of Rs.1,86,240/- was disbursed in thirty seven villages. Among these villages the following sea coast villages of Ovari, Periyathalai, Ponnaikayal and Vembar got Rs.17,000/-\footnote{TMSSS Annual Report for 1980, Tuticorin, 1980, p.3.}

For tailoring centre at Periyathalai two machines (Rs.1060 x 2) were given. In 1983, drought relief project money Rs.1,26,819.50 was disbursed in nineteen villages. Among these nineteen villages, there are only one
coastal village by name Sippikulam which received Rs.1300/- for new drinking water well.\textsuperscript{195}

A sum of Rs.20,750/- was received from CRS\textsuperscript{*} for renovating a primary school building at Royappapuram, Vembar. A housing scheme by the help of CRS, Caritas India was worked out in Koottapuli for Rs.60,000/- For the construction of drainage scheme in Periyathalai Rs.75,000/- as given.\textsuperscript{196}

TMSSS has advanced to ten fishing canoes costing Rs.75,000/- was loan for improving their boats, tackles and nets in the year 1975. The loan was to be repaid by easy installments. The village committee was put in-charge of the loan collection. But so many occasion the fishermen not paying the loan. Hence the good scheme was shelved.

In the year 1976 a similar project was introduced to improve the lot of the catamaran fishermen who are the vast majority in the coastal villages. Koottappanai a small compact village where the researcher was the parish at that time, was selected and much funds were given to the fishermen to improve their fishing trade. They brought new catamarans, nets, sail and other equipments. Trade was flourished. Prawns were purchased in the fancy rates from the fishermen. Hence the fishermen were happy over the rates than the private sea food companies. It brought admiration from all sides. Loans were paid in the beginning for some

\textsuperscript{*} Catholic Relief Society in the United States of America hereafter called CRS.
time. Then there arose a faction in the village. Hence the fishermen divided into the two opposite camps. Because of this disunity, loans were not collected. This scheme to improve the catamaran fishing trade fell through.¹⁹⁷

For flimsy reasons fishermen divide into family groups and stifle any progressive work. Many fishermen are uneducated. They have no time to go to school because of daily hard work for sea going. The TMSSS brought in a scheme of Adult Education. As an experiment, they introduced it in the big coastal village of Punnaikayal. For some time with enthusiasm the adult fishermen attended the night school. Since the TV and Video pictures entered the fishermen villages, attractions turned towards these pictures and the adult education schemes had a natural death.

The catholic churches also established schools in and around the coastal areas which became important centres of learning. Parish priest in the churches and the nuns in the convents were interested in improving the educational and economic conditions of the fishermen. The welfare projects are for example Mother and Child Health (MCH) programme, village hygiene scheme, housing scheme, drinking water, land reclamation, agriculture and community hall etc… are established in different fishing villages by TMSSS.¹⁹⁸

In the view to improve the economic status of the womenfolk, handicraft was taught by TMSSS established the Mahalir Mantram in

¹⁹⁷ Rubert Arulvalan, *op. cit.*, p.239.
¹⁹⁸ Interview with Thiru. Alphonse, Fisherman, Manapadu, on 30th November 2004.
the year 1990 - 91 in thirteen places. Among them there were seven coastal places namely Pazhayakayal, Koottappanai, Amalinagar, Kottapuli, Sippikulam, Periyathalai and Kuduthalai came under the job oriented programme.  

Development means growth which differs according to the context. When the growth of a person is considered it includes the physical, psychological, emotional and intellectual. When the growth of a particular community is taken into the account, it includes the socio-economic development of a particular rural folk. The economic development projects are for example small scale industry loan, small shops, educational development projects and training programmes such as tailoring and typing.

The MCH programme was systematically brought under TMSSS in the year 1973. The beneficiaries of MCH programme are pregnant lactating mothers, 0-3 years children and 3-5 malnourished children. Under this programme food commodities are distributed to the recipients at the stipulated ration rates and at the suggested intervals. The commodities are donated by the people of USA for the poor and needy irrespective of caste, religion and regional affiliation.

TMSSS also introduced the Balwadies in the children in the age group of 6 to 16 months are eligible. It’s found the school feeding programme is mainly aimed at children of the economically deprived section of the society. The school meal is an incentive of the child to attend

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school. It’s also established the boarding schools and orphanages from the age of 6 to 14 years.

Educational development project are those which improve the self help capability of individuals. Such activities include literacy classes. Vocational training courses, particularly in agriculture and fishing and training of the handicapped, instruction and training in responsible parenthood, nutrition, child care, personal hygiene, home sanitation, family health, food handling, environmental sanitation control of rodents and insects and control of diseases.\(^{201}\)

TMSSS has established three types of organisation. They are *Samugasevai Ani*, (Social Service Association) *Mahalir Mantram*, (Women Association) and *Meenava Sangam* (Fishermen Welfare Association).\(^{202}\)

The Churches must find out the root causes of poverty, misery and injustice and try to alleviate them. The churches follow the western development model which is not liberative but which makes one’s life more comfortable. One can not follow the western development model and suit our country which urgently needs liberative model.

The fishermen have their own association for the improvement of the community. The oldest body *Grama Sabha*, their representative body deals with matters related to local administration and judiciary. It is a

\(^{201}\) Rubert Arulvalan, *op.cit.*, pp.227-228.

traditional council which has full authority over the village people. It has every right to punish the wrong doers. It takes keen interest in the matters pertaining to the individuals, families and their occupations. All the family headmen are its members who selected their representatives of the village committee. This committee system was in vogue prior to the conversion of the people to Christianity. The Grama Sabha of fishermen of Kanyakumari was started in 1900. The village committee became more active in looking after the day to day activities of the church and the people.\textsuperscript{203}

The Paratavar Munnetra Sangam and Mukkuvar Munnetra Sangam are two separate associations exclusively meant for the Paratavar and Mukkuvar Communities. The Paratava Munnetra Sangam is older than the Mukkuvar Munnetra Sangam as the former was established in 1964 and the later in 1966.\textsuperscript{204} Both associations have similar rules and regulations. Membership in both associations is restricted to the men of the communities, who are above 18 years of age. Both associations elect its president, secretary, treasurer and other office bearers, for a team in 3 years. The main activities of the associations are occupational that is fishing. They do represent to the government as well as to the diocese their problems both financial and occupational. Fishermen associations are the redeeming features of their social set up for they strive hard to emancipate them socially and economically.

\textsuperscript{203} Parish Priest Records, Kanyakumari, 1956, p.4.
\textsuperscript{204} Interview with Thiru.Joseph, Fisherman, Kanyakumari on 19\textsuperscript{th} July 2005.
Education to develop human being is absolutely essential to take the nation towards a higher economics statues. The quality of education for the poor has to be developed.

The fishing villages and hamlets are situated in isolated areas, three or four miles distant from the nearest local board schools, and it was too much for the little children of the fisher-folk to walk this distance up and down every day. Hence they grew up without any education or was brought up under any civilising influences. As the fisheries schools were opened in the very heart of their villages, they have been given an opportunity to educate their children, and they were taking full advantage of it.205

Majority of the members of the fishing community are illiterate. The children of this community discontinue their education due to lack of motivation and poor economic condition of their families. Thanks to the Mid-day meal scheme many children join the school. The children who leave the schools engage in the fishing occupation and doing petty jobs. The fishermen parents find it very difficult to provide complete education to their children due to their poor economic conditions. Therefore the parents involve their children in the fishing occupation. As fishing is an independent job the boys also prefer to do it. However as a result of starting of the parish schools and the steps taken by the priest and nuns there is a marked improvement in the literary rates.

205 Madras Fisheries Committee Evidence, 1929, pp.273-274.
The parish schools and convent schools to serve the children in their educational progress. Every school year they encourage the students to take advantage of education in their school. The students are trained the academic and moral lessons with great interest. The students are benefited largely by these schools.²⁰⁶

In 1950’s the government established two Fisheries Elementary Schools functioning, one at Sathankuppam and another at Alambaraikuppam in Chingleput district under the control of Assistant Director of Fisheries, Vellore. Government introduced the full concession were given to all students to promote education among the fishermen communities.²⁰⁷ The Fisheries Department in Madras had been supplying free books to the Pupils in the Fisheries Elementary School.²⁰⁸

Education is urged that government and missionaries should concentrate in the field of education for the cause of fishermen and come forward to relax the rules in the case of education to fishermen children and also award more scholarship and necessary facilities to promote education among the fishermen children.

The fishermen of Tamil Nadu had faced acute housing problem mainly due to poverty and sea-erosion. Fishermen are concentrated in cluster of villages along coastal lines. Most of the fishermen residence in the

²⁰⁶ Interview with Thiru. Rajan, Fisherman, Pudukkadai, on 20th July 2005.
²⁰⁷ G.O.Ms.No.1326, Agriculture Department, dated; 26th May 1956, TNA.
²⁰⁸ G.O.Ms.No.997, Development Department, dated: 4th March 1953, TNA.
Because of seasonal condition, the huts are in dilapidated condition and they have to brave the wind and rains. During the cyclones, their huts are worst affected. With view to develop the standard of living of poor fishermen, the government sanctioned a housing scheme under Village Housing Projects Scheme and Singaravelar Memorial Housing Scheme for fishermen to construction of houses in the various parts of Tamil Nadu, on sites owned or acquired by the fishermen or an *poramboke* lands. The construction of these houses was done through the agency of the Fishermen Co-operative Societies. In the beginning housing colonies were built in coastal areas with government funds and distributed to the needy fishermen free of cost. But the non-contiguous nature of the village where houses were provided and other technical and administrative problems associated with the construction of the buildings in coastal areas coupled with high cost of construction, the programme could not be implemented very successful in most of the States. As an alternative measure, a scheme for issue of grants for construction of houses in plots owned or possessed by fishermen who have irredeemable tenancy rights over the land was started for implementation during the later days. This scheme did not give benefit to most of the fishermen who are either landless or do not have irredeemable tenancy rights over the land occupied by them. Another inherent defect in the scheme is that most of the fishermen find it difficult to complete the houses with the meager stage payments with result that they are forced to borrow money.

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209 V. Ramani Bai, Report submitted at the time of National Seminar on Integrated Development of Fishermen Community conducted by National Association of Fishermen at New Delhi, 13-16 November, 1985, p.2
The housing pattern in fisher-folk villages mainly depends on their economy.  

Under the Fishermen Housing Scheme a loan of Rs.300/- and subsidy of Rs.550/- were sanctioned for each house to the Madras, Chingleput, South Arcot, Thanjavur, Tirunelveli, and Kanyakumari districts. The houses were constructed by the Fishermen Co-operative Societies, under the direct supervision of the Regional Assistant Directors.

In 1956-57, seventy four houses were constructed by the government at Mullikuppam near Santhome. A free grant of Rs.500/- per houses was given through the South Madras Fishermen Co-operative Society for construction of houses at Mullikuppam.

The Kasikolai Kuppam near Tiruvotriyur in Madras, twenty houses were burnt in a fire accident. The proper cause was not known. The fisherman of this village are very poor and they had can not construct the new houses. So the government sanctioned an expenditure not exceeding Rs.51,000/- for payment of the grant towards the construction of twenty eight houses Kasikolai Kuppam in Tiruvotriyur in anticipation of a half grant from the government of India. The free grant for the construction was disbursed in installments. The second and subsequent installments was paid only after the Board of Directors of the Society or the Officials of the Fisheries Department as the case may be satisfy

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210 Interview with Thiru. G.John Doss, Clerk, Fishermen Co-operative Society, Mulloorthurai, on 22nd December 2004.

themselves that the installment or installments already drawn had been properly utilise.  

The formation of Madras-Ennore road, 41 fishermen houses of Ondikuppam, ie acquisition of 5.58 acres of land in Tiruvottiyur village, Saidapet taluk, Madras, were affected during the year 1963-64. Hence the government sanctioned an expenditure of Rs.95,921.50 towards the total cost of acquisition of 5.58 acres of land in Tiruvottiyur village including 15 per cent the cost of the wells and the value of the pumpsheds for the provision of house sites to forty one fishermen families of Indikuppam. The government also directed that 25% of the cost of acquisition viz; Rs.23,981/- should be borne by the Ondikuppam Fishermen Co-operative Society and the balance of Rs.71,941/- met from the funds of highway department.  

In 1960-61, ten houses were sanctioned to the Fishermen Co-operative Society in South Arcot district. A sum of Rs.3000/- as loan and Rs.5,500/- as subsidy was granted to Konimedu Fishermen Co-operative Society in South Arcot District.  

During 1960 - 61, in Thanjavur district, nine houses had been sanctioned to nine members of the Kaveripattinam Sea Fishermen Co-operative Society. And also twelve houses were sanctioned to twelve

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212 G.O.Ms.No.794, Industries, Labour, and Co-operation Department, dated: 26th February 1957, TNA.
213 G.O.Ms.No.3259, Agriculture Department, dated 7th October, 1966, TNA.
214 Proceedings of Director of Fisheries, No.KI.44775/61 dated 14th December, 1961, TNA.
members of the Mallipattinam Sea Fishermen Co-operative Society in Thanjavur district. In addition two hundred houses were constructed for the benefit of the Ammapattinam Sea Fishermen Co-operative Society in Thanjavur district.215

In Tiruvelveli district ten houses were sanctioned at Tharuvaikulam village during the year 1961-62. Under the Government of India Rural Housing Scheme, the Government of India sanctioned 200 houses in Kootapuli fishing village in Tirunelveli district. The government sanctioned a sum of Rs.92,404/- as subsidy of this scheme.216

During 1964-65, the government had sanctioned an amount of Rs.10,125/- for the construction of nine houses at Manapad village in Tuticorin district.217

In 1959-60, nine houses were sanctioned to the fishermen of Marthandamthurai in Kanyakumari district.218 Since there was serious dissensions and differences in the Co-operative Society of Marthandamthurai, according to the Assistant Director of Nagercoil the Government decided to assist Midalam fishermen. Because at Midalam 25 fishermen had been rendered homeless due to sea-erosion. Hence the

215 Proceedings of the Director of Fisheries, No.KI.21429/61 dated 17th March, 1961, TNA.
216 G.O.Ms.No.4301, Food & Agriculture Department, dated 26th December, 1961, TNA.
217 G.O.Ms.No.2561, Food & Agriculture Department, dated 20th July, 1965, TNA.
218 G.O.Ms.No.4133, Food & Agriculture Department, dated 19th December, 1960, TNA.