CHAPTER V
FISHERMEN WELFARE SOCIETIES IN
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM DISTRICT

Thiruvananthapuram or Trivandrum, the capital city of Kerala or Trivandrum, as it was conveniently re-christened by the English, is the southern – most district of Kerala. It is the district head quarters as well as the State capital of Kerala. Thiruvananthapuram or the city of Holy Anantha, is named after Ananthan, the Cosmic serpent with a thousand heads, on whose coils Lord Mahavishnu reclines. This iconic representation is the Sri. Padmanabhaswamy, Chief deity in the Sri PadmanabhaSwamy Temple. The old quarter East Fort of the city clusters in and around the East fort, a protected landmark that dates back to the Royal days. Major religions in the district are Christianity, Islam, Muslims, Hinduism, Sikhisms, Jainism and Buddhism. Average literacy of the district is 89.28%\textsuperscript{1}.

Thiruvananthapuram district is situated between north latitudes 8°17' and 8°54' and east longitudes 76°41' and 77°17'. The Southernmost extremity, ‘Parassala’, is 56kms away from Kanyakumari, the ‘lands’ end of India. The district stretches along the

\textsuperscript{1} Kerala, an authentic hand book, Government of Kerala, 2011, p. 358
shores of the Arabian sea for a distance of 78 kms. District boundaries are, East : Tirunelveli District, Tamilnadu South : Kanyakumari District, TamilNadu, West : The Arabian Sea, North : Kollam District. District area is 29192 sq. km. The district came into existence in July 1, 1949.

Thiruvananthapuram is the only State capital, which did not undergo foreign rule. It is the birth place of many social reformers like Narayana Guru and Ayyankali. Southern most taluk of the state Neyyattinkara is in this district. State’s first University, Medical College, Television Centre, Museum, Zoo, Government Hospital, Law College, Engineering College, Five Arts College, Women’s College and Public Library have come to existence in Thiruvananthapuram\(^2\). The district has one Corporation, four municipalities, hundred and sixteen Revenue villages, four taluks, twelve Block Panchayats and seventy eight Grama Panchayats. NH 47 and MC Road are the main roads in the district\(^3\). Among the three rivers in district the Neyyar, the southern most river of the Kerala State has its origin in the Agasthyamala, the second highest peak in

\(^3\) Kerala, an authentic handbook, Government of Kerala, p.358
the Western Ghats is in Thiruvananthapuram. Karamana River and Vamanapuram River are the other two rivers in the district\textsuperscript{4}.

The city has a climate that borders between a tropical savanna climate and a tropical monsoon climate. As a result it does not experience distinct seasons. The mean maximum and minimum temperatures is 34\textdegree C and 21\textdegree C respectively. The humidity is high and rises to about 90\% during the monsoon season. This is the first city along the path of the South - West monsoons and gets its first showers in early June. The city gets heavy rainfall around 1700 mm per year. December, January and February are the coldest months, while March, April and May are the hottest. The lowest temperature recorded during winter was 15\textdegree C and the highest temperature recorded in summer is 39\textdegree C\textsuperscript{5}.

The economy of the district was earlier based on the tertiary sector, with about 60\% of the work force being employed as government servants. Thiruvananthapuram was listed as one of the top 10 cities in India on Vibrancy Index and consumption Index by a study conducted by global financial services firm Morgan Stanley\textsuperscript{6}.

India’s first animation park Kinfra Film and Video Park is situated

\textsuperscript{4} En.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thiruvananthapuram  
\textsuperscript{5} Kerala an authentic handbook, Government of Kerala, 2011, p.358  
\textsuperscript{6} En.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Thiruvananthapuram
here. The city contributes 80% of software exports from the state, and was selected as the fourth hottest IT destination in India\textsuperscript{7}. Tourism has also contributed heavily to the economy of Kerala.

Agriculture has been the primary occupation of the people of the district. More than 42 percent of the total population depends on agriculture. Cultivable land may be classified as wet, dry, garden and plantations. Paddy is the most important crop in wet lands. Tapioca and pulses are the important dry land crops. The district has first place in tapioca production in Kerala. Coconut, one of the most important crops of the district, is cultivated in an area of 84,308 hectares and the annual production is about 516 million nuts\textsuperscript{8}. Major agricultural products are Rice, Pepper, and Pulses including Tur, Green chillies, and coconut\textsuperscript{9}.

The Regional Poultry Farm and the District Livestock Farm at Kudappanakkunnu, the Dry stock Farm at Palode, the intensive Poultry Block at Pettah, Clinical lab, broiler farm, piggery, Veterinary sub centres, Veterinary Biological Institute, Disease Investigation office, Live – Stock DiseaseControl unit and the Society for

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid  
\textsuperscript{8} tvm.kerala.gov.in  
\textsuperscript{9} Economic Review Kerala, 2002, P. 55
Prevention of Cruelty to Animals or SPCA are the major animal husbandry Institutions in the district\textsuperscript{10}.

In the field of industry, the district has 2 Central sectors, 14 state sectors, 1 Co-operative sector, 4 joint sectors and 60 private sectors including medium and large scale Industries. There is an industrial state at Pappanamcode and an industrial development centre at Kochuveli. Traditional Industries are now faced with several problems\textsuperscript{11}. Keltron has made inroads into electronic markets throughout country. Technopark was established for the Information Technology in the State. The State Legislative assembly and Secretariat are located here. The city is fully electrified by Kerala State Electricity board or KSEB. The sewage system in the city was implemented at the time of the Travancore Kingdom\textsuperscript{12}. The whole system is controlled by Kerala Water Authority now.

Maharaja Marthadavarma, who reigned from 1729 to 1758, and who is regarded as the Father of Modern Travancore, shifted the capital from Padmanabhapuram to Thiruvananthapuram, which he made a great centre of intellectual and artistic activity in those days\textsuperscript{13}.

\textsuperscript{10} tvm.kerala.gov.in.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid
\textsuperscript{12} en.wikipedia.org
\textsuperscript{13} En.wikipedia.org/History of Travancore
The accession of Maharaja Swathi Tirunal who reigned from 1829 to 1847 A.D. ushered in an epoch of cultural progress and economic prosperity. It was during the reign of Sree Moolam Tirunal, in 1888, inauguration of the Legislative assembly took place. Most of the rulers of Travancore gave much importance to education. The promulgation of Temple Entry Proclamation in 1936 was issued by Sri Chithira Thirunal Bala Rama Varma. From his period onwards the modern age of Travancore started.

According to the Department of Fishery, Government of Kerala, Fisheries type of Thiruvananthapuram District is Marine District. The District has 50,950 Marine fisher folk population\textsuperscript{14} including 38,010 male and 12,940 females. The district has 3 rivers, 3 reservoirs and 5 backwaters. It has 1633 Panchayat ponds\textsuperscript{15}. Among these 702 were used for the public, the rest were used for Agriculture and fish culture. Varkala, Anjuthengu, Marianad, Poonthura, Vizhinjam and Poovar are some of the major fishing centres. The district has 34 Irrigation tanks and 69 holy ponds or streams. It have 3 reservoirs namely Neyyar Dam\textsuperscript{16}. The district has a coast line of 78

\textsuperscript{14} Panfishbook District fisheries Databook, Department of fisheries, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{15} Panfishbook, Dept. of Fisheries, 1993, p. 58.
\textsuperscript{16} Panfishbook, district fisheries databook, Thiruvananthapuram, p.76.
km which is 13.22 percentage of Kerala’s coastal area\textsuperscript{17}. It also has 228 canals. The Back waters in the district are Poovar, Akkulam, Kadinamkulam, Edava, Anjuthengu. Vellanayani is the only fresh water lake in the district. It has 5 estuaries, which are Muthalapozhi, Velipozhi, Poonthurapozhi, Karichalpozhi and poovarpozhi\textsuperscript{18}. The main fishing season is January - May. Numbers of fishermen households in the Marine sector are 21140 and in inland sector are 162 out of 750. Number of active fishermen in Marine sector is 50950 and in Inland sector it is 750. Among these the registered fisherfolk are 38,010 male and 12,940 are female\textsuperscript{19}. There are seven coastal wards under Thiruvananthapuram Corporation. They are Chakkai, Veli, Sankumughom, Vettukad, Valiyathurai, Beemapalli and Poonthura.

Vizhinjam Marine Aquarium, which was established in 1997, showcases some of the world’s rarest and most extinct species of invertebrates and ornamental fish. The coral paradise, cultured by replicating the habitat in its natural form, is a major point of attraction. It is managed by Central Marine Fisheries Research

\textsuperscript{17} Kerala Marine Fisheries statistics, Department of Fisheries, 2000, P. 3
\textsuperscript{18} Kerala marine fisheries statistics, Department of Fisheries, 1997, p.85.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. p.89.
Institute. The new proposed International Transhipment Terminal is also will be in Vizhinjam.\(^{20}\)

The total fishery population in the wards is 49 percent of total population. Fishery population among the surveyed wards is highest in Beemapally and Manikkavilakom, and lowest in Puthanpally followed by Pallithura. Among the religious groups, Christians have the presence in all wards except Vellar\(^{21}\). Poonthura has the distinction of being the ward solely populated by Christian households. Fishery household’s overall distribution is Christian, followed by Muslim and Hindu households. The overall sex ratio of population in the surveyed wards is unfavorable to females at 980. The sex ratio in the non - fishery households is favourable at 1032; while it is unfavourable at 931 in the fishery households\(^{22}\). Among the coastal wards, Vellar and Sangumughom are favourable to females.

Similar to the sex ratio, the household size is also larger among the fisher household\(^{23}\). The average family size among fishery


\(^{21}\) Household survey of Coastal wards, Corporation of Thiruvananthapuram, 2010, p. 3.

\(^{22}\) Ibid, p.4.

\(^{23}\) Personal Survey, Valiyathura, 20/1/13
households is 5.4 members per household as against 4.4 among non-fishery households. The average for all the 12 wards taken together is 4.9 members per household\textsuperscript{24}. Households consider Pattayam or possession certificates for the land as the most valuable document since it can be used as security, while approaching banking or financial institutions for loans for various requirements. Number of households without Pattayam is highest among fishery households – above 7 percent, and among wards number of fishery households without Pattayam ranges from less than 2 percent in Vettucaud to as high as 17 percent in Valiyathura\textsuperscript{25}. Among the households, 27\% of fishery households lives in huts or sheds. 56 percent of them use public tap for requirement of water. 7 percent of fishery household are unelectrified\textsuperscript{26}. Fisher people lag in both general and technical or professional education. Among the fisher people, illiteracy level is quite high when compared to non-fisher people and all ward population. Illiteracy is as high as 20 percent in Manickavilagom and the lowest is 5 percent in Vettucaud. The status of health among households in the surveyed wards is focused on physically and mentally challenged population and also on population with

\textsuperscript{24} Household survey of coastal wards, Corporation of Thiruvananthapuram,2010, p.4.
\textsuperscript{25} Rajan,Dr.J, op.cit, p.6.
\textsuperscript{26} Household survey of Coastal Wards, Op. cit, P.7
prolonged illness. Distribution of active marine fishermen in this district is more than the rest of the district in Kerala. Total active Marine fishermen in the district are 47583. The total fishermen population in the district was 179011. The percentage of active fishermen is 26.58.

On the basis of community, the Christian fishermen are 76 percent, Muslim men occupy 22 percentage and Hindus fisherfolk are only 2 percentage. The District has only one Fishing Harbour at Vizhinjam which is managed by the Department of Fisheries. There are four fish landing centres. They are at Vizhinjam, Marianad, Pulluvila and Poonthura. Thirty four fishing roads and 6 coastal roads are in the district which covers 125.35 km in distance. There are 8179 non – mechanized fishing crafts and 3407 motorised fishing crafts. Neyyar Govt. fish farm is a government fish farm under the Department of Fisheries, Kerala. It is a fresh water fish culture centre that started in the year 1998. Centre for Aquaculture Research or CARE, Kariavattom is also a fresh water fish culture centre.

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28 Ibid, p.90.
29 Balachandran Thampi, The Natural resources of Kerala, WWF, p. 94.
working under the University of Kerala, which was started in 2000. There are fishermen villages which has 1053 fish vendors.

Valiyathura isa coastal area in Thiruvananthapuram Corporation. Even though it is part of the City, the area remains underdeveloped. This village has many fishermen vendors. There are 326 fish markets. Some of them are working in morning and in evening and some of them choose either morning or evening. Among the markets, there are panchayat owned markets, corporation owned and church owned. But many of them are working on the roadside. Most of them are engaged in retail business. There are four fish curing yards in the district. They are at Admimalathura beach, Vizhinjam landing centre Beach, Puthiathura Beach and Valiathura Beach. Salting and sun drying of fishes have been done here. The main types of fishes cured in these places are Anchovies, sardines, Mackeral and Carangids. There are 11 ice plants which make ice in the fishing villages. Two export units are functioning at Vizhinjam and Puthenthope. Two import units are W.P.G. Aqua Park Private Limited and Tzang Yang Aquatech Private

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30 Status study of Women Fish Vendors, TSSS, Thiruvananthapuram, 2012, P. 63
31 Personal Investigation, Valiyathura, 22/1/2013.
33 Personal Survey, Valiyathura, 23/12/2012
34 Marine Fisheries Statistics, 2000, P. 125
Limited. Aquarium accessories and Aqua culture manufactures are imported mainly from Taiwan, China, Singapore, Europe, Japan and Korea\textsuperscript{35}.

The fisheries educational institutions in the district consist of two secondary schools and one Higher Education Centre. Among them Vocational Higher Secondary School, Poovar and Regional Fisheries Technical High School at Valiathura are working under Department of Fisheries and here courses are conducted up to VHSC. Department of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries Karyavattom campus are the higher education centre owned by the University of Kerala. M.Sc, M.Phil, and Ph.D., courses are also conducted here\textsuperscript{36}.

Besides, there are other fisheries institutions and offices. Among them Directorate of Fisheries, Head Office and District office of Matsyafed are working for welfare of fishermen. Regional Office of Kerala Fishermen Welfare Fund Board or KFWFB at Vazhuthacaud is also working for fishermen welfare. Agency for Development of Aquaculture, Kerala or ADAK in Vazhuthacaud is an agency for the development of aquaculture. For training fishermen in sea rescue operations, there is an office of the Assistant Director of Fisheries at

\textsuperscript{35} Kerala Marine fisheries statistics, Dept. of Fisheries, 1997, p.125
\textsuperscript{36} Kerala Marine fisheries statistics, Dept. of Fisheries, 1997, p. 126.
Vizhinjam. There is a fish Hatchery and Aquarium at Neyyar Dam. There are Matsyabhavans at different regions which co-ordinates all the activities in fisheries sector\(^{37}\). There are 11 fishermen colonies or settlement in the region. They are at Poonthura, with 3 colonies, Vizhinjam, Pullorkonam, Thenoorkonam, Vizhinjam Harbour, Pulluvila, Anjuthengu, Marianad, Vettur and Vallakadav\(^ {38} \).

NGO’s and community organizations have played an important role in the development of the fisheries sector in South India. In 1960, the Thiruvananthapuram Social Service Society or TSSS was established by the Trivandrum Catholic Diocese to assist local communities in Trivandrum District. In 1961 the Marianadu Community Development Project was initiated through the TSSS to investigate the community development process in the coastal village. Much of the early co-operative support was carried out by the Programme for Community Organization. The PCO was registered in 1977\(^ {39} \). This is now an autonomous, voluntary organization undertaking socio-economic, educational and cultural activities among the weaker sections of society. In 1985 the co-

\(^{37}\) Kerala Marine fisheries statistics, Department of Fisheries, 2000, p.128

\(^{38}\) Personal Survey, op. cit.

\(^{39}\) Review of IIDG’s work in South India in support of Artisanal Fishing Communities, UK, April, 1993, P. 30
operatives of Thiruvananthapuram, Quilon & Kanyakumari District were brought under SIFFS, which had transferred its former Thiruvananthapuram level apex body functions to a newly formed Trivandrum District Fishermen Federation or TDFF. TDFF took over the role of apex federation for the village level societies in Trivandrum District. Its policy was focused towards field guidance and training as well as an expansion and diversification of activities both within and outside the fishery sector.

The central aim of the fishermen’s welfare society is to enable fisherfolk to realize their dreams as a self reliant, progressive and creative community, free from all exploitation and alienation. The FWS’s activities include fish marketing, boat building and repair, research and development of boat design and propulsion, community welfare and overall administration and management of the markets & boatyards. The main objectives of the PCO were to work for the socio-economic, cultural development of fishermen, to conduct training programme, to initiate employment schemes, to assist in coordinating activities and to organize, promote, advise, administer, initiate or close down various people’s organizations.

40 Ibid. P. 31
The types of traditional fishing or methods used are shore seine or *Kambavala*, Beat seine or *Tattumadi*, gillnet or *Kurukkuvala*, Hook and line or *Choonda, Kattamaram*, Castnet or *Veeshuvala* and Traps or *Ottal*.\(^{41}\)

The first three are used to catch Pellagic fishes. Hook and line and Kattamarams are used to catch both Pelagic fishes and Cephalopods. The last two types are good to catch demersal fishes, prawns, lobsters and Ornamental fishes\(^{42}\). There are two guide lights still working at Vizhinjam and Anjuthengu\(^{43}\). The district has six beaches of tourist importance. They are Somatheeram beach, which is a rocky type at Kottukal, Sandy Kovalam beach, rocky type at Vizhinjam, Sankumughom beach, Veli Beach and Poovar beach. Among these Kovalam Beach and Varkala beach have gained international importance.

In 2002-03 the number of fishermen beneficiaries who got relief under savings cum relief scheme was 26368. In 2003-04 it was 25032. It is clear from the data that the number of fishermen pensioners decreased from 2002 to 2004 in the district. The number was 5733 in

\(^{41}\) BalachandranThampi, (edit), The Natural Resources of Kerala, WWF, Thiruvananthapuram, P. 90

\(^{42}\) Personal Survey, Valiyathura, 23/12/2012

\(^{43}\) Ibid.
2002 and in 2003-2004 it was 5613 which again decreased to 5009 in the next year.

The District has 42 Marine fishing villages and it has 177239 population. Fish landing in these villages were estimated to be 50368 in 2004\textsuperscript{44}. The Marine fishing villages are South Kollengode, Paruthiyoor, Poovar, Karumkulam, Kochuthura, Puthiyathura, Pallam, Pulluvila, Adimalathura, Chowara, Vizhinjam North, Vizhinjam South, Kovalam, Panathura, Poonthura, Beemapally, Cheriyathura, ValiyathuraKochuthope, Vettukadu, Kochuveli, Pallithura, Valiaveli, Vettuthura, Puthenthope, VettiyathuraMarianad, Puthukurichi, Perumathura, Thazhampally, Poonthura, Anjengo, Mampally Kaikkara, Arivalam, Vettoor Chilakkur, Odayam and Edava. Marine fish production in the district was 44,893, which include about 27 species. At the same time Kerala’s total marine fish production was 558912\textsuperscript{45}. In this district women who distribute fish by head load and men who use cycle load.\textsuperscript{46} Fish vending women, even today are unable to enjoy the satisfaction of their work and happiness of social life.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{44} Kerala Marine fisheries statistics, Department of Fisheries, 2000, p.128.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.p.14
\textsuperscript{46} Vizwanath, Bindhu, A study on the price trend of Marine Fishing Thiruvananthapuram District, University of Kerala, 1999, P. 13
\textsuperscript{47} Status Study of Women Fish Vendors, TSSS, Thiruvananthapuram, 2012, P. 7
A Co-operative society is also a form of organization designed to serve its members. Co-operation is not merely business but a combination of business and a spirit of service which evokes loyalty, fellowship and corporate feeling. The profit that arises should be used for common welfare or it is to be distributed among the members according to the use made for the benefits of the society or according to some other criteria. But in the past most of the societies in the district neither made profit nor did they give any service to fishermen. They are organized for some selfish interest of some people. The principle of democratic control was not applicable to these personal societies.

The performance of these co-operatives was very disappointing. Before the formation of Thiruvananthapuram district the Government of Travancore, through its enquiry committee of 1934 studied the problems of fishermen's co-operatives and suggested various means of encouraging co-operative enterprise among fishermen. The suggestions included the creation of multipurpose co-operatives; the provision of processing facilities

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48 Krishnakumar S., strategy and action program for a massive thrust in fisheries development, Government of Kerala, 1989, p.89.
49 K. Paramupillai, Travancore co-operative Enquiry Committee Report, Trivandrum, 1934 & 1935, P. 52
such as curing yards; involvement of community leaders; and governmental support for co-operatives that oppose the middlemen and undertake marketing themselves\textsuperscript{50}.

Interest in fishermen’s Co-operatives rose again after the reorganization of States in 1950. It is believed that Co-operative enterprise was advocated as the best means by which fishermen would improve their socio-economic standards. Then Department of Fisheries, organizationally envisaged a three-tier structure for co-operatives of fishermen. The Government coupled the organization of primary village co-operatives with other incentives such as the provision of mechanized boats, long-term loans and grants. Government made it clear that high-subsidy mechanized boats would be given only to fishermen’s Co-operatives. It was in this circumstance that, with officials under pressure to achieve targets, any persons who could muster at least 51 names of fishermen, 50 was the statutory minimum, and a share capital of about Rs. 500 was granted a registration. Immediately after registration, the president of the Co-operative and the Co-operative committee resolved at a meeting to apply to the government for a boat, a long-term loan and a

\textsuperscript{50} K. Paramupillai, Travancore Cooperative Enquiry Committee Report, Trivandrum, 1934-35, p.52.
managerial grant\textsuperscript{51}. Some of the members were not real fishermen. The result was a phenomenal increase in the number of co-operative societies in the district as a whole. At that time, they were registered without verification, no pains were taken to ensure that they were genuine people’s organizations and not just names in a registration book\textsuperscript{52}. The Department of Fisheries realised the misdirection of the Co-operative movement among the fishermen and the fact that real fishermen hardly benefited from it, in the late sixties\textsuperscript{53}. Consequently, the registration was almost totally frozen and the reverse process of liquidation was set in motion.

A study for the integrated area development of two administrative divisions or blocks in Thiruvananthapuram district, has documented the growth of fishermen’s co-operatives in coastal panchayats or village level administrative divisions in one of the blocks. The data combined with other information in the study, provides some insights into the state of these co-operatives\textsuperscript{54}. According to the report the Panchayat’s 17 – kilometer coast line is dotted with 10 fishing villages registered primary co-operatives. This

\textsuperscript{51} Interview, Rajan, fisherman, Valiyathura, 23/January/2013
\textsuperscript{52} Travancore Cooperative Enquiry Committee report, 1935, p.52
\textsuperscript{53} Administrative Report, Department of Fisheries, Kerala, 1958 to 1977.
\textsuperscript{54} A plan for integrated Area Development of Athiyannoor and Nemom Blocks in Trivandrum District, Govt. of Kerala, 1975, P. 26
means four co-operatives for every kilometer of coast, or almost seven co-operatives in each village. The average membership was about 80, but it is interesting to note that about half of them had the bare minimum membership of 51 required by the Department of Fisheries. Total membership was 5,265, about 95% of the area’s active fishermen. The average share capital was Rs. 1,691; 61 Co-operatives had secured long term government loans amounting to Rs. 230,619; 36 had managerial grants averaging Rs. 2400 per co-operative; 34 of the 68 societies had received mechanized boats. In 1970s, enquiries reveal that ordinary fishermen deny having any share or membership in the Co-operative societies. The share amount, including membership fee, was probably advanced by some one interested to have the society registered with a view to availing of the assistance offered by the government. Anyhow, the majority of the fishermen including those who have membership in the societies that have received assistance from government, including costly mechanized boats, continue to be as impoverished and exploited by middlemen as they were before. The co-operative movement has not brought about any tangible benefits to the fishermen in the study

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areas either in their exploitation of the fishery wealth or in their redemption of the exploitation of the middlemen.

A Co-operative society theoretically is based on the principle that all are equal and none should be prevented from joining a particular fishermen co-operative society on the score of religion or economic status. Membership should be open to all the fishermen in a locality irrespective of caste, creed or economic status and the share should be kept as low as possible. But so many societies in the district in the past have not been built on such a broad sense. They were in the form of small mushroom societies with an average membership ranging from 25 to 100 members. Most of the members are belong to one family and their relations56.

In 2001, there were hundred fisheries Co-operatives in the District. Out of these 92 were working under Matsyafed and 8 under autonomous fisheries Co-operatives. Of these Beemapalli Matsya Utpadaka Co-operative society or MUCS No. 559 started working in 196957. Most of the societies in the field started functioning in 1980s

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57 Pan Fish Book, Department of Fisheries Thiruvananthapuram,2002, p. 129.
and 1990s. In 1991, the district had 18 societies\textsuperscript{58}. It shows an increase in the number of these societies. The major activities of these societies include auctioning of fish caught by members, issue of loan and collection of repayments. The economic dimension of these co-operative include three main functions. They are providing credit, supplying craft and gear and marketing fish. Although, all the three are equally important, it is tackling of the last function, that is the marketing of fish that will ensure the continued operation of a fisherman’s Co-operative.

Apart from these societies, there are certain voluntary agencies and non-governmental organisations working in the fisheries sector. As on 2001, there were thirteen such organizations. All these come under the category of charitable society. They are Trivandrum Social Services Society or TSS, Program for Community Organization or PCO, Cheruresmicentre of Valiyathurai, Kerala Swathantra Matsya Thozhilali Federation of Valiyaveli, SIFFS of Karamana, FIDES Centre of Kunnukuzhi, Trivandrum District Fishermen Federation or TDFF, Kerala Fisheries Forum, Community Senai, Fisheries Society of Kerala, Samagra, Stree Niketh Vanitha Federation

\textsuperscript{58} Inland Fisheries, Kerala at a Glance, The planning and statistical cell, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, p. 19.
and Teeradesa Mahila Vedi\textsuperscript{59}. These societies have undertaken social and welfare activities in the fisheries sector. It was thus the birth of Marianad Matsya Utpadaka Co-operative Society Limited No. F (T) 287, that a true Co-operative. A true people’s organization began 10 functions. It was a team of community organizers of a voluntary agency, who began to set about the task of organizing the Co-operative\textsuperscript{60}. First, share capital was raised at the rate of Rs. 5 per share. The list of members was thus finalized. Then according to the bye-laws of co-operative, the board of directors constituted. This was the starting of an organized system. No fishermen member had any direct dealings with the small merchants. The Co-operative acted as a social and economic buffer\textsuperscript{61}. One of the community organisers functioning as a part time accountant.

One among the fishery Co-operatives in Thiruvananthapuram which is working in a better condition from 1970 onwards is this Marianadu Society. It was in 1970 that the small scale catamaram fishermen of the little fishing village of Marianad, spearheaded a movement to resist and overcome the hold of the moneylender.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{59} Inland fisheries Kerala at a glance, 2000, P.137.
\textsuperscript{60} Interview, George, Fisherman, Marianadu, 23/1/13
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{62} Interview, - Social workers in Sankumugham, 02.01.2013.
Having collectively decided to act together, they approached the Department of Fisheries for registration as a Co-operative so that they could function within the official co-operative hierarchy. They were informed that registration was not possible as one fishermen’s Co-operative already existed in the same village. Then they bought the old co-operative society. Subsequently the co-operative was able to organize credit facilities, small subsidies, matching loans and members decided to keep 2% of their daily earning in a fixed deposit savings fund. To facilitate quick and easy repayment of loans, members decided to link the repayment of loans to the marketing, that is, 10% of their daily sales earnings from fish catch would be deducted as loan repayment. This system ensured a quicker circulation of credit among members and completed a closed circuit credit – production marketing – savings link. In 1971, the co-operative got permission to stock and sell fishing requisites – mainly nylon twine for making nets. This was a great service to the fishermen since nylon twine was in short supply in the market, and led to a black marketing. The Co-operative was able to solve this problem.

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63 Interview, Ibid.
From 1967 onwards the membership was increased. This accounted for the higher value of fish marketed through the cooperative and the increase in the asset holdings of members. On a per capita basis the gross income of each member had increased. It is to be noted that over the seven years the retains, service charges and profits from sale of requisites minus all administrative expenses and operating expenses have totaled about Rs. 12,800 which have facilitated the issue of dividends and bonuses. The accumulated individual savings also increased. By general agreement a member may withdraw his savings only after it reaches a sum of Rs. 300 and then use it for such purposes as the purchases of more equipment, purchase of land; construction of a house, construction of a toilet and marriage of daughter.

In 1975 – 76 a new marketing experiment was undertaken by the Co-operative. It included the strengthening and expanding the role of the co-operative as a fisherman’s agent. This role was, especially vital since exportable varieties of sea foods which were high priced, subject to artificial fluctuations, contributed the most to the fisherman’s income. The price slump control measures of the co-

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65 Ibid
operative ensure a minimum price whenever there were bumper landings and also the direct marketing of fish from the original producer to the final producer. By any standard the performance of this society is commendable.

The Kerala fishermen welfare societies Act is applicable to all the villages inhabited by fishermen. These villages will form the nodal agencies for all types of development and welfare activities aimed at benefiting the fishermen. Although these village societies were formed in 1980 they had not started in right earnest till 1984. In April 1984, District Societies for coordinating these societies at the district level and the State Co-operative Federation for fisheries Development for coordinating the activities of the District societies at state level were organized. Later all the functions were incorporated in the Matsyafed.

The fishermen in Valiyatura face a lot of challenges. Absence of a harbour is a serious issue in these coastal village. As it is a coastal village, the fishermen used Vizhinjam Port to keep their boats. They require more kerosene than the other fishermen to run boats to sea and return, as they first need to go to Vizhinjam harbour to take their

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66 G.O. M.S. No.7/84/TF & PD, Trivandrum.
67 G.O. M.S.No. 1218, 13/Nov/1958
boats for fishing. They have to pay a daily rent to keep their boats. After completing their fishing they came to Valiyathura to put fishing crafts and fishes. Then again they moved to Vizhinjam to keep their boats. It is necessary to build a harbour in Valiyathurai. General drastic strikes have been conducted by the fishermen in these areas.

According to Melvin Vinod, the fisheries activist of Valyathura, Political influence is the major point for the failure of all co-operatives. He said that only one society in one village would be more effective. The societies need to arrange in Norway style. The Government should collect cess from exports and these amount should be used by Welfare Fund board for various schemes such as Housing, Insurance, equipment, marriage, death and accident. But here collection of such Cess does not takes place. A major fact is that there is no sincere approach from the government officials. Deputation officers have no interest in such issues.

Valiathoppu Vallakadavu, society No. F (T) 145, formed in 1997 has 1210 members. Membership of these societies is of two types Associate membership and full membership. The former has no

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68 Interview, Rajan, Fishermen, Valiyathura, 23/Jan/13.
69 Interview, Melvin Vinod, Fisheries Activist, 23/Jan/2013.
70 Interview, Rajan, fisherman, Valiyathura.
71 Ibid
voting right and latter has only voting right. The members get accident insurance coverage of 3 lakh and for this they have to pay 100/- per month\textsuperscript{72}. Women get loan as interest free or IFL. They have to repay Rs. 100/- in a week. There is a microfinance program for all people in the area who are engaged in other fields also. Women have the insurance coverage of half of the amount of men\textsuperscript{73}.

A number of fishermen Co-operative Societies were organized in the past for the benefit of fishermen, these societies have not been able to bring in any improvement in the socio-economic conditions of the fishermen. The vast majority of the fishermen still continue to be poor, struggling to eke out a bare existence from fishing. They are subjected to heavy exploitation at different levels of production and marketing.

A fisherman said that he first went for fishing at the age of 7. He further added, July-September is the main season for fishing. In other seasons, some days they faced Rs. 4000/- loss in a day. In his boat he had to be accompanied by three persons while going for fishing. He has to pay 100/- as rent for keeping at Vizhinjam boat\textsuperscript{74}.

\textsuperscript{72} Interview, A Lowrence, Secretary, Valiyathoppu Vallakadavu, fishermen society, 23.01.2013
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{74} Interview, Rajan, fishermen, Valiyathura, 22/2/2013
Probably the timing best for fishing from is 4 pm to 6 am. He bought the GPS for Rs. 11,000/-. No subsidy is allotted for this purchase. He also said that in the field of education, progress has been made. Also 20 percent have their own house. There is no drainage along the coastal line. Most of them have only 1.5 cent area. Their houses have an area of 320 sq.m. Recently, he has been inducted as a member of a newly formed society. This society gives 30000/- as loan to men without interest.

It was found that the mechanized vessels have more operating expenses than that of traditional vessels. These boats need 600 litres of kerosene per month. The major problems due to mechanization are entry of capitalists, underemployment, reduction in prices of catch, entry of foreign trawler, lack of preference to aged ones and demand of technical knowhow.

Though traditionally fisher people are always backward in education, there are indicators in this survey that they are closing gaps with the non-fisher people in the area of general education. Measures to attract fisher youths to technical or professional courses especially to fisheries specific courses must be the top priority of all

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75 Interview, S. Jerald, President, Valiyathura society, 22/12/2013
76 Ibid.
those who work for the sector. In the field of education, cooperatives can do a lot. What is required now is a fisheries policy which gives adequate recognition to the traditional fishermen of the state. This policy should lay emphasis on fish production through optimum use of the traditional fishermen. There are several financial institutions which can render assistance provided for viable projects. We should try to tap these resources for the development of the fisheries sector. The study reveals that the fisherfolk are known to be spend thrift not concerned about savings for future. Almost all fisherfolk are poor. Moreover, they find it difficult to meet day to day expenses. The analysis revealed that there is a significant difference between off season income of owners of different sectors. Likewise, there is difference between off season income and seasonal income of fishermen. As one of the decisive segments in the productive sector, marine fishery enjoys its spread throughout the length of the state with closely packed settlements and landing centres. The contribution of the sector to the state’s economy and employment at macro level has been well documented.

77 Balachandran, Thampi, (edit), Natural Resources of Kerala, WWF, p. 98
79 Interview, S. Jerald, op.cit.
80 Kurien, John, Economic and Political Weekly, Bombay, March, 1988, p. 55
But it is also an undisputable fact that the benefits of this contribution have not been percolated to the fishing people; especially to the traditional and marginal sectors. The result is the socio-economic backwardness of the community in many spheres of daily amenities like water, electric power and clean living environment. It needs to be develop social security packages in the coastal villages.\textsuperscript{81}

Decentralised planning from the very initial stage was submitted to provide the fisher people better livelihood opportunities and living conditions, though much has not come about. The low level of sex ratio among the fisher people needs further enquiry. The authorities should create systems for their betterment of educational level of fishermen. An important factor hindering the buildup of membership has been the over polarization of primary co-operatives.

\textsuperscript{81} Thiruvananthapuram Theeradesa Vikasana Rekha, Latin Diocese, Thiruvananthapuram, 2013, p.12.