CHAPTER III

FISHERIES IN KERALA

Kerala is one of the leading fish producing states of India. Fisheries form one of the most important sectors for promoting economic development of Kerala. In addition to its contribution to a flourishing export trade the fishing industry is capable of providing cheap protein food to fight malnutrition. It also provides employment. There is a long tradition to the marine fishing industry in Kerala. An ancient Malayalam treatise *Valavisupuranam* contains several references to the prevalent fishing techniques. Sangam Literature divided Tamizhakam into 5 tinais. One of those Neythal is coastal area and inhabitants of these tinais were *Parathavar*, fishing community¹. The sangam classics named fisher folks are Minavar, Parathavar, Valainars, Nulaiyar, Pazhaiyas and Thurairans². The people enjoyed a large measure of social freedom and equality. Dignity of labour was recognized everywhere and no person was looked upon with an inferior social status³. The ninth and tenth centuries of early Kulasekhara rule constitutes the golden

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¹ Rama Chandran Nair, K.K., Kerala State Gazetteer, Vol. I, 1986, P. 139
² Kerala State Gazetteer, 1986, P. 107
³ Ibid.
age of the fishermen communities. The introduction of China odam and China nets are the notable features of the fishing sector during these period. Thirteenth to seventeenth century witnessed feudalism in Kerala. Social inequalities existed during that period. The feudal lords in the fishery sector were the headman of the fishing villages. From the middle of the 19th century the fishing economy began to undergo structural changes. Production became more trade oriented and diversified. With the separations of processing from production, there arose the need for middlemen to procure raw materials for processing and these. There middlemen emerged as merchants. By 1931-32, the lion share of the product of fishermen’s labour went to the middlemen. The advent of colonial powers resulted in the systematic classification of fish wealth. The katamarams of South Travancore coast and the dugout canoes of the Malabar Coast are small, light boats which are operated with oars and sails. According to the State Planning Board, in 1975 Kerala had over one lakh active fishermen. The fishing crafts in operation included 25000 canoes/catamarams and 2000 mechanized boats.

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4 Administrative Report, Agriculture and Fisheries Department, Govt. of India, 1931-32, P. 105
5 Poverty, Rural Indebtedness and Money landing Practices in Kerala, State Planning Board, 1975, P.
The South West region comprising the states of Kerala, Karnataka and Goa with a coast line of 994 km had been the most productive and the largest contributor to the country’s total marine fish landings. Among the different states in the region, the maximum contribution came from Kerala:60%, from Karnataka, it is 30% and the rest 10% from Goa\(^6\). It is clear from the report of Planning Commission of Government of India.\(^7\)

Kerala being a maritime State, enjoys an advantageous position in terms of fisheries. As the fisheries sector provides employment and income to more than one million people, either directly or indirectly, it has gained in importance. It satisfies the protein requirements of a considerable chunk of the underprivileged population and also considerable revenue, especially, in foreign exchange, to the exchequer of the state.

In general, nearly 11 lakh persons were employed in marine and inland fishing activities during 2003-04. Of these, 77% of them were engaged in marine fishing. Of the total production in 2003-04, more than 87 percent accounted for the marine sector. Kerala has an


\(^7\) Kerala Development Report, Planning Commission, New Delhi, 2005, p. 51
inland water spread of around 4 lakh hectares and an Exclusive Economic Zone 36000 square kilometer in the Kerala coast. In 2003-04 there were 2.20 lakh active fishermen, of which 82 percent was in the marine sector\(^8\).

The inland water resource consists of 44 rivers, 30 major reservoirs, fresh water ponds and brackish inland backwaters\(^9\). So Kerala’s fishery sector can be divided into two marine and inland. Inland fish production increased from 26 lakh tones in 1980-81 to 0.36 lakh tones in 1990-91 and to 0.85 lakh tones in 2000-01. The average annual production of inland fishing during 1980’s was 0.28 tonnes and 0.79 lakh tonnes during 2004\(^{10}\). Prawn filtration in the adjoining paddy fields is a unique feature of the inland fisheries of Kerala. Extensive paddy fields known as ‘Pokali fields ‘occur adjacent to the backwaters in Kanayannur, Parur, Mukundapuram, Vaikom and Shertelai taluks which afford good harvest of prawns. Potentially, the vast and varied inland fishery resources of the state are one of the richest in the

\(^8\) Kerala Development Report, Planning Commission, New Delhi, 2005, p.51
\(^9\) Kerala Fisheries Facts and Figures, Department of Fisheries, Kerala, 1990, P. 95 - 97
\(^{10}\) Kerala Development Report, Planning Commission, New Delhi, 2005, P. 55
country. These sustain two types of fisheries namely culture and capture. Culture fisheries or pisciculture is normally practiced in smaller bodies of water that can be manipulated by man. Capture fisheries are carried out in rivers, estuaries, large reservoirs and lakes. The dominant fish fauna are prawns, murrels, pearl spot, tilapia, mullets, cat fishes and jew fishes.\(^\text{11}\)

Fresh water fishery resources are of great importance to Kerala on account of the fact that it is based on resources spread throughout the State and are capable of making substantial contribution to the requirements of the much needed cheap animal proteins for the people Inland fisheries have one great advantage in that the source of production is close to the consuming centres. This reduces the problem of preservation and transportation and consequently the cost of distribution. The entire catch of inland fish is directly utilized as human food.\(^\text{12}\)

On the basis of methods of fishing craft, the sector is of two types. They are Traditional and Mechanized. In traditional fishing, dugout, plank built canoes and Katamarams were the main types of

\(^{11}\) Kerala development Report, Planning Commission, New Delhi, 2005, p. 82

\(^{12}\) Balachandran Thampi, K, (et.al), (art), The Natural Resources of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, p. 84
crafts. Boat seines, gill nets, lines and hooks, coast nets and shore seines were the important gears used in Kerala. In 1974, fishing craft comprised over 200 mechanized boats, and 25000 canoes and katamarams. The mechanized crafts have been carried out in the state with the help of Food and Agricultural Organization or FAO experts and the Indo Norwegian Project or INP. One of the most important change in the Marine Fisheries Sector of Kerala in recent years has been the introduction of ringseine.

In 1977 fishing equipment of Kerala consisted of 2988 mechanized boats and 32377 katamarams, canoes and other country craft. There was enormous increase in the number of fishing crafts operating in Kerala. The number of fishing crafts in the State increased from 1988-89 to 2003-04, from 34007 to 55501, bulk of which form motorized crafts. The motorized fishing craft from 9914, in 1988 increased to 29395 in 2003-04. Its increase resulted in a reduction of the share of traditional crafts in total fish landings.

Kerala Fishing Industry, which comprise fish catching, processing and marketing provides employment to over 3.5 lakh persons, nearly

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14 Rajan, J.B, Techno-Socio-Economic Study of Ringseine Fishing in Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1993, P. 1
5 percent of the work force in the State\textsuperscript{16}. As on 1985, the total fishermen of the state were 836880. Among them, there were 190468 fishermen nearly engaged actively in fishing. The number of active fishermen in the marine sector was 147875 and in the inland sector it was\textsuperscript{17} 42593. There are 222 fishing villages in the Marine and 113 fishing villages in the inland sector, where fishing and related activities provide livelihood to a vast majority of the population.

In Kerala the share of active fishermen is 23 percent. And about 6 percent of the total is observed, as depending on sectors other than fishing for their livelihood\textsuperscript{18}. The fishermen are stagnant by virtue of their predominant participation in fishing and reluctance or incapability to move away. Among the total population the estimated population of fishermen in 2004 is 8.44 lakhs and that of active fishermen is 21.26 percent\textsuperscript{19}. The highest share is in Malappuram, 11.4 percent and Thiruvananthapuram has the second position with 10.2 percent and the lowest is in Kasargod- only 3.8 percent. Sex Ratio of fishermen is 975\textsuperscript{20}.

\textsuperscript{16} Krishna Kumar, S., Fisheries Development and Fishermen’s Welfare in Kerala State, Government of Kerala, 1989, P.2
\textsuperscript{17} Techno Economic survey of fisherfolk of Kerala, Government of Kerala, 1990, P. 26
\textsuperscript{18} Marine Fisheries Census, CMFRI, 2005, P. 32
\textsuperscript{19} Fisheries Statistics of Kerala, Department of Fisheries, 2004, P. 7
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid
Of the total fishermen population in Kerala, 53 percent are occupied, among which 62 percent are active fishermen, 32 percent engaged in allied activities and 6 percent employed in other activities other than fishing. 64.1 percent of the fisherfolk are below poverty line on the basis of Ration card issued by the revenue authorities’.21. Nearly three fourth of the population is concentrated in the districts of Alleppey, Kottayam, Ernakulam and Trichur. Among these, Alappuzha District is the first place in the number of fisher folk with a population of 1.81 lakhs followed by Thiruvananthapuram with 1.76 lakhs22.

Apart from direct employment in fishing, the number of workers engaged in the allied activities such as middlemen, dallalas, boat pullers and helpers also constitute a significant number. The developments of fish processing industry for the Marine products also provide more chances of employment. For the preservation of fish, ice plants and freezing plants have been built up. These firms provide employment opportunities to a large number of skilled and unskilled labourers.

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21 Economic Review, Kerala, 2005, P.119  
22 Ibid
The state has many ice plants, freezing plants and cold storages working under public and co-operative sector\textsuperscript{23}. They are working at different places. The districts which have ice plants are Kasargode, Kannur, Kozhikode, Malappuram, Thrissur, Kottayam, Alappuzha, Kollam and Thiruvananthapuram. The distribution sector consists of a large number of small vendors especially women vendors. They handle 70 percent of the fish landed in the coast of Kerala at different stages through the fish marketing channels. Among them, there are men carrying fish on bicycles and women as head loads. They take the fish to the sub-urban and rural markets. In addition, the Department of Fisheries and MatsyaFed and the Inland Fisheries programs are also providing employment to unemployed persons. Even though Kerala has a fishable area as large as that of the land surface of the state. The contribution of the fisheries sector to the net domestic product of the state in 1983 formed only about 4 percent of the total. Though the Net State Domestic product of the state has increased, the share of fisheries sector has declined from 1.87 in 1997 to 1.62 in 2003-04\textsuperscript{24}. In Kerala there are 30 reservoirs with water spread of 43000 hectare suitable for fish culture. New fish culture is

\textsuperscript{23} Facts and figures of Kerala Fisheries, Department of Fisheries, Kerala, 2000, P. 177
\textsuperscript{24} Back ground paper on Fisheries, Kerala State Planning Board, 2011, P.1
being carried out only in 10 reservoirs. The total catch reported in 8 reservoirs is 77.24 tonnes and the average productivity is 14.07 kg/ha\textsuperscript{25}.

The per annum target for fish production set for the Ninth Five Year Plan was 7.5 lakh tonnes, consisting of 6.0 lakh tonnes marine and 1.5 lakh tones inland\textsuperscript{26}. The overall performance during the plan period presents more or less a similar trend which had been persisting since the last decade. The marine fish production is stagnant and seems to have achieved a saturation level whereas the inland fish production is showing signs of improvement. The marine fish production increased from 0.58 tonnes in 1997-98 to 78 lakh tonnes in 2001-02. The marine fish production was due to the resource conservation measures namely monsoon trawling introduced by State Government. In 2003-04, India’s total production was 6.40 million metric tonnes, of which 2.94 million metric tonnes was from marine fisheries and 3.46 from inland fisheries.\textsuperscript{27}

The fishing industry is making valuable contribution to our exports and thus playing a vital role in preserving our foreign

\textsuperscript{25} Facts and figures of Kerala Fisheries, Department of Fisheries, 2000, p.177
\textsuperscript{26} Economic Review, Kerala, 1981, P. 83
\textsuperscript{27} Economic Review, Kerala, 2005, P. 118
exchange reserve. The export earnings from sea food products have been growing up steadily till 1973-74, when the value of foreign exports of marine products at the national level reached Rs. 89.51 crores, Kerala’s share being Rs. 57.75 crores which is 65 percent\(^{28}\). In the next year it declined, due to global energy crisis and consumer resistance in the importing countries, even though Kerala’s contribution was 56 percent in quantity and 58 percent in quality\(^{29}\).

In 1991-92 the sharp export of marine products from Kerala was 32.3 percent, amounting to Rs. 444.16 crores\(^{30}\). The export earnings was only Rs. 2.41 crores, which had grown to Rs. 936.22 crores in 1996-97\(^{31}\). The state’s share in all India export is declining in recent years. The share declined in quantity & quality to 16 percent in 2001-02. European Union, Japan and USA are the major market for Kerala’s marine products. Frozen shrimp, frozen legs, frozen lobster tents, cuttlefish, frozen squirrel, canned shrimp and dried shrimp are the marine export items\(^{32}\). Among these, frozen shrimp is the export item which accounts for about our half the export earnings of marine products from the state. Aqua culture of shrimp has gained

\(^{28}\) Economic Review, Kerala, 1975, P. 11

\(^{29}\) Ibid

\(^{30}\) Techno-socio Economic survey of Fisherfolk in Kerala, Govt. of Kerala, 1985, P. 27

\(^{31}\) Economic Review, Kerala, 1997, P. 70

\(^{32}\) Rajan, Dr. J.B., The Fishing Economy of Kerala, Trivandrum, 2000, P. 53.
momentum, as the share of aqua culture shrimp in the total shrimp exports increased from about 33 percent in 1988-89 to 60 percent in 2002-03, in quantity terms. It means an increase in corresponding terms of value 49 percent to 82 percent.

Variability in international prices arising out of different International laws has serious implications for export competitions. After the passing the Sanitary and Phyto Sanitary or SPS agreement\(^{33}\), export of marine products had set an overtime record of 1.48 million US dollar during 2004-05. The total value of marine products export from the country was Rs. 6646.69 crores during 2004-05 and the quantity exported was 4.61 lakh tonnes indicating an increase of 9.11 percent in rupee terms. Major development programs in the fisheries sector in Kerala happened during this period. The pelagic fisheries project at Cochin with an understanding of the United Nations Development Program or UNDP estimated that most of the shrimp resources remain in the offshore and deep sea water of Kerala. With a view to tapping these potential resources, three integrated fisheries development projects for Kerala - covering Vizhinjam, Neendakara

\(^{33}\) Economic Review, Kerala, 2005, p.129
and Beypore\(^{34}\) - were prepared with the consideration of World
Bank for the cost Rs. 36 crores and envisaged construction of fishery
harbours\(^{35}\). The developmental activities in the fishes have been
centrated in the Department of Fisheries. The Department of
Fisheries in Kerala was established in 1952. The structure shown in
Governments fisheries policy in the initial year of planning focused
on increasing fish production or increasing the extractive capacity,
through mechanization of vessels, for which concession and
subsidized credits were provided\(^{36}\).

In the late 1970’s Government implemented assistance
programs to upgrade small scale fisheries. The first initiative to
management issues on Indian Fisheries and to take stock of the
fisheries potentials in India was taken up by the British rulers in the
year 1897 through the enactment of Indian fisheries Act 1897. This
enactment induced three similar enactments in the Kerala region,
namely Travancore Fisheries Act, The Cochin Fisheries Act and
Indian Fisheries Madras Amendment Act 1927\(^{37}\). It was with the
advent of the Indo-Norwegian project in 1953 that mechanized

\(^{34}\) Economic Review, Kerala, 2005, p. 129
\(^{35}\) Economic Review, Kerala, 1975, P. 112
\(^{36}\) Ramachandran Nair, G & Rajan, Dr. J.B., (edit), Kerala Fisheries,
Thiruvananthapuram, 2005, P. 11
\(^{37}\) Ibid., P. 16
fishing was introduced in Kerala. The Kerala Fisheries Corporation was formed in 1966 for fostering commercial activities in fishing\textsuperscript{38}. The Inland Fisheries Development Corporation started Functioning in 1962. Central Institute of Fisheries Technology Cochin or CIFT, was established in 1957. The need-based research in fishing, to investigate various aspects of fishing and to train personnel are the main objectives of this institute. Central Institute of Fisheries National and Engineering Training, Cochin was also established in 1963 as the Central Institute of Fisheries, to train operatives of different skills in fishing.

Pelagic Fisheries Project was started in 1971 with Food and Agricultural Organisation or FAO, United Nations Development Programme or UNDP assistance in Cochin. The objective was to study the pelagic fishery resources of our east and west coast. Among the pelagic resources the dominant ones are oil sardinea or Chala and mackerel or Ayila. Anchoviella or netholi and Tunnies or Chura have also been exploited in good quantities recently. Among the demersal resources, three items alone are considered here, namely prawns, cephalopods and catfishes due to their economic importance and

\textsuperscript{38} Fisheries Crisis and policy Approach in Kerala, seminar proceedings, Trivandrum, 1987, P. 11
otherwise as indicators of the general trend of demersal resources. Relatively the landings of these resources are expected to be less than those of pelagic groups.

*Janakeeya Matsya Krishi* was organized with a view to promoting inland fisheries. It was launched in the Ninth plan and implemented through Fish Farmers Development Agency. The program envisaged optimal utilization of the inland water resources with people’s participation in the State. It is an integrated program consisting of fresh water and brackish water farming, seed rearing, setting up of hatcheries for the fisher folk. The technical guidance and supply of fingerlings were provided to fisher folk by Department of Fisheries. Integrated Fisheries Development Project is implemented by Matsya Fed with the assistance of National Cooperative Development Corporation or NCDC.

Integrated development of aquaculture in Kuttanad is a project that envisages arrangement of fish/prawn production by introducing ecofriendly culture and breeding practices. Integrated development of *Pokali* fields is the project for shrimp production & fish culture. Fishing harbours and Landing centres were decided to be built in the

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40 Kerala State Gazetteer, 1986, P. 155
coastal regions. Government can get revenue from these harbours. There are 15 landing centres for traditional fishermen. Major Fishing harbours in Kerala are Neendakara, Cochin, Beypore, Puthiyappa, Kayamkulam, Azheekal, Vizhinjam, Ponnani, Chombal, Muthalappozhi, Thalai and Tottappally\textsuperscript{41}.

Major developmental program implemented during the Xth plan period include inland fisheries development, development of fishing harbours and landing centres and programs ensuring social and livelihood security of fishermen population. The developmental programs in the marine sector include modernization of country crafts, popularization of new generation crafts and distribution of suitable components of fishing gear\textsuperscript{42}. Total expenditure for fisheries sector in Kerala during the year 2004-05 was Rs. 3593.63 lakhs. It included the state plan schemes, centrally sponsored schemes and National Co-operative Development Co-operation or NCDC Assisted Project. The scheme also included NCDC assisted Integrated Fisheries Development Project, Fishing harbour and fish landing centres, Tsunami Emergency assisted projects and programs assuring

\textsuperscript{41} Kerala Marine Fisheries Statistics, Department of Fisheries, Kerala, 2007, P. 3
\textsuperscript{42} Economic Review, Kerala, 2002,p.86.
the social and livelihood security of fishermen population\textsuperscript{43}. The plan to give social security and livelihood support to fishermen community was introduced to promote the fishermen community. The programs include saving cum relief scheme, National Fish Workers Forum or NFWF housing, HUDCO assisted housing, DANIDA model sanitation and group insurance to fishermen. The Kerala Fishermen Welfare Fund Board is the implementing agency for welfare and relief schemes to the fishermen in the State.

Inland fisheries included estuaries, back waters and adjacent low-lying fields, rivers and canals, ponds, tanks and reservoirs. The principal species of inland fish catch comprises prawns, etroplus, murrels, mullets, catfish, jewfish, tilapia and crabs.\textsuperscript{44}

The river fisheries in Kerala are poorly developed. Kerala has 44 rivers including 41 west flowing and 3 east flowing. These rivers flow through 3092 km. in length. The state also has 53 reservoirs covering 44289 sq. Km. area\textsuperscript{45}. Back waters in the state are 52 in number. There are 84 estuaries in Kerala\textsuperscript{46}. Besides too many mangrove areas are also there. The back waters of Kerala, covering

\textsuperscript{43} Background paper on Fisheries, Kerala State Planning Board, 2011, P. 4
\textsuperscript{44} Inland Fisheries at a Glance, Government of Kerala, 1992, P. 9
\textsuperscript{45} Inland Fisheries Statistics of Kerala, Department of Fisheries, 2005, P. 3
nearly an area of 700 sq. km. are the most important source of inland fish production. The main areas are Ashtamudy, Kayamkulam and Vembanad and all situated in the southern part of the state\textsuperscript{47}. Inland fish production increased from 0.26 lakh tonnes in 1980-81 to 0.36 lakh tonnes in 1990-91 and to 0.85 lakh tonnes in 2000-01. There is scope for further utilization of the potential of inland fisheries in the State. The Inland Fisheries Development Corporation was constituted by the Government for the enhancement of inland fish production through the scientific culture of species\textsuperscript{48}. This corporation came into existence in 1981. Estimated Inland fishermen population in 2004 is 25152\textsuperscript{49}. The percentage of active land fishermen to the total inland fishermen during the year 2004 was 15.38. The State possesses 113 inland fishing villages. The Inland fish production shows an increasing trend in all the years. In 2004 it was 76279, but in the previous year it was 750\textsuperscript{50}.

Socio - economic condition of fisher folk are not up to the mark. The Kerala Economy as a whole is being highlighted as an example of new model of development where the paradox of a high

\textsuperscript{47} Sankara Narayanan, K.C., and Karunakaran, V., Economy of Kerala, 1985, P. 44
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{49} Balachandran Thampi, P, (et.al), (edit), Natural Resources of Kerala, P.82
\textsuperscript{50} Sankaranarayanan, K.C., (et.al), op.cit, p.22
quality of life obtains despite the economic backwardness measured by the standard indicator of per capita income. But the marine fisheries sector of Kerala deviates rather adversely from this scenario and presents the communicational relationship of low income coupled with poor quality of life. Fishing and fish trade are universally reserved for the low caste men. So the social status of fishermen on a whole is very low.

Living as on the geographic margins of the land and depending exclusively on the sea for a livelihood, they have been left behind in the economic, and more sharply in the socio-cultural, progress which has been witnessed in the rest of the state. One of the main reasons for the poor quality of life and the substandard conditions of habitat of the marine fishing communities in the State is the crowding of the whole community on a narrow strip of land.

The fishermen are educationally the most backward class and they are deeply connectional. In Northern coastal areas Muslims who are engaged in fishing are treated as lower class. In southern coast line the Latin Catholics dominate. Due to the low social status, the fisher folk are unwilling to mingle with the other world.

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51 Master Pan Fish book, Department of Fisheries, 2002, P. 62
Social reform movements which transformed Kerala Society, failed to take root in coastal villages. Mid eighties of the last century, witnessed the emergence of nonpolitical fishermen’s organization under the leadership of certain Catholic Priests. But the activities of this union are closely associated with the communal and religious interests.

In fishing community there are Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities. All these communities are defined and determined by their religious faiths and have their own self regulatory system. The Hindu communities are most numerous around the North of Kollam, Alappuzha, Thrissur and Kasargod. These communities are of Arayas and Magaviras. They united in the late sixties and came to be known as Dheevaras. As per CMFRI census, of the total fisherfolk majority belong to Christianity-about 42 percent-followed by Hindu, 31 percent and Muslims 27 percent\(^\text{52}\). The fisher folk were left out from the main stream was in terms of income, land holdings, housing, quality, health conditions and literacy levels. They stood far behind the all Kerala average because of the open assessment of resource use and the communities’ lack of awareness of undergoing

\(^{52}\) Human Development Report of the Fisher folk of Kerala, Kerala State Planning Board, 2009, P. 4
exploitation by merchants, the particular pattern of export oriented capital intensive fisheries development fostered by the state resulting in technological dualism, low educational attainments, the role of organized religion in denying the fisher folk a class of identity and the lack of socio-political movements in the communities\textsuperscript{53}. Kerala’s export oriented approach begins in 1960-69 period. The sixties was marked by a gradual process of polarization of the economy. In the period, 1970-1985, Kerala’s fisheries witnessed greatest rise and fall. Marine products exports, on the other hand, increased from 22792 tonnes in 1969 at Rs. 277 million to 31673 tonnes in 1979 valued at Rs. 1096 million\textsuperscript{54}. In the post 1980 phase traditional fishermen began to make investments in the motorization of their traditional crafts. The fishermen economy is now also occupied by a new class of merchant entrepreneurs, Indian big business houses and local units of multinational corporations\textsuperscript{55}. Considerable employment was generated in the processing sector. A survey conducted by the Department of Fisheries in 1979 revealed that only 3 percent of the fishermen households had incomes above Rs. 3000 per annum and

\textsuperscript{53} Kerala’s Development Report, Government of India, 2005, P. 386
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid, P. 24
that 50 percent had income below Rs. 1000 per annum. In 1980’s there arose a movement leading to capability building by the community itself in an effort to enhance its entitlements for a better quality of life. Lack of education among the fishermen is a common feature. The influence of the adult education program launched by the Government in 1990 had some tangible effect in the coastal belt making them to read and write a little. Both the Centre and State Governments provided various incentives in the form of lump sum grants, noon-meal facilities in schools, which promoted education among fishermen.

Basic education has gained added importance among the young generation. Education enabled the fisher folk to get employment outside. There is a growing problem of educated unemployed youth. Religion has an influence on education. Macro evidence shows that certain socio-economic change and poverty alleviation happened in the fishing communities in 1980’s. The poverty level was high in 1970’s. But in early 1980’s the condition improved a lot due to large scale motorization of fishing craft, widespread employment assistance under the National Rural

Thomas Jessy, Soio-Economic factors influencing educational standards in a marginalized community, New Delhi, P. 99- 100
Employment Program and continued migration to the Gulf States\textsuperscript{57}. Due to lack of education, they are ignorant about hygiene. Their huts are congested. The conditions of these houses are very miserable especially during monsoon. These huts are always exposed to monsoon and sea erosion since they are generally located very close to the sea face.

Lack of latrines and bathroom facilities are common. Due to the unhygienic conditions, Cholera, Chickenpox and Amoebic Dysentery are common diseases of the coastal regions. Scarcity of drinking water always has been a problem in the fishing villages. Thus the social conditions are very disappointing among the fishermen folk in Kerala. The causes of economic backwardness of fishermen are the inequality in the assets holding among fishermen, the exploitation of the fishermen by those who are engaged in the process of buying the produce, and the exploitation by those who are engaged in the marketing of fish and the desertion of the middle men on the sea shore to join the merchants with whom they come in contact\textsuperscript{58}. It is proved that for every Rs. 100/- worth of fish bought by a consumer in Kerala, only Rs. 39/- reaches the traditional

\textsuperscript{57} Kerala Development Report, Planning Commission, New Delhi, 2005, P. 368
\textsuperscript{58} Kurien, John, Ripple’s and Repercussions, Trivandrum, 1999, P. 9
fishermen. In case of export of fishery products, the picture is not different.

Department of Fisheries is an important productive sector under the Government of Kerala. The department implements all the development and management programs envisaged by the Government in the fisheries sector. Its vision is to sustainable utilization and development of fisheries sector, both marine and inland aiming at the economic growth, food and nutritional security and for socio economic development of fisher folk. The recent survey conducted by Department of Fisheries reveals that there has been marked improvement in the levels of literacy of fish workers during 1971-1991 from 55 percent to 81 percent. Between 1980 and 1990 the share of households among the fisher folk with no land was more than half that is from 16 to 7 percent. The land holdings are small and primarily cater to the need for housing alone. The district wise variations in land ownership also reveal that between 1980 and 1990, only small changes in land ownership took place. The fisher folk in Kerala constitutes a prominent place at the national level even

\footnotesize{59 \url{http://www.fishnet.kerala.govt.in}.}  
\footnotesize{60 \url{http://www.fisheries.kerala.govt.in}.}  
\footnotesize{61 \url{Ibid}.}  
\footnotesize{62 Kurien John, Op.cit, p.9}
though the growth rate of population and number of villages over the period has declined. In terms of education, the Kerala Fishermen occupy a top position among the Indian States. Within Kerala, there exists, inter-regional variation with respect to demography, religion and ownership of fishing crafts. Majority of the non-motorized owners of fishing crafts are in Thiruvananthapuram. There are more than 60 percent of the technically qualified are possessing fisheries certificate and diploma courses\textsuperscript{63}. Further the Government decided to launch new project for the overall development of fisheries sector.\textsuperscript{64}

There is improvement in basic education of Kerala fisher folk in absolute sense, but wide variation exists across the regions and religions. In terms of many of the variables like, demography, housing condition, drinking condition, sanitation and hygiene, morbidity, maternal and child health and health expenditure, there has been improvement among the fishermen from their respective previous level, but still they stood behind the general population.\textsuperscript{65}

\textsuperscript{63} Human Development Report of Fisher folk of Kerala, Kerala State Planning Board, 2004, P. 22
\textsuperscript{64} Tenth Five Year Plan, Project Planning, Government of Kerala, 2002, P. 3
\textsuperscript{65} Kerala State Gazetteer, 1986, P. 152
The marine fisher folk of Kerala, deprived in material basic amenities and economic facilities together with persisting poverty, limit the capability space of a community. They are also deprived in other basic amenities such as quality of housing and sanitation. There is a long way to human development as the community is not capable of expanding their choices and to lead the life they value.