

SOCIAL CONDITION OF MARTHANDANURAI FISHERFOLK: A HISTORICAL STUDY

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Abstract: Marthandanthurai is one of the coastal areas of Kanyakumari District, situated at a distance of 1 km from Kollemcode and 6 km from Thuthoor. It is bounded by Arabian Sea on the south, A.V.M canal on the north, Vallavilai on the east, Neerodi on the west. It is not only an important place for fishing but also played an important role for the economic development of the district. Though the main source of income of India is coming is coming from Agriculture, a better portion of the economy is coming from the sea. In India 15% of the total population are involving in fishing and the sea fare activities. In Tamil Nadu Kanyakumari district comes under the first place for fishing and fishmarkets. 68 km of the boarder of Kanyakumari District is a covered by the sea. On eastern side the sea covered from Vattakottai to Kanyakumari, and on Western side the sea covered from Kanyakumari to Neerodi.

Key Words: population, fisher folk, fishing, social problems, Economic conditions, Marthandanthurai

1. INTRODUCTION:

Generally Martandanthuari is considered to be a most populated area. It is coming under the Kollemcode town panchayat. According to 2001 census the total population of the Kollemcode town panchayat was 34,322. Of the Kollemcode town panchayat there are 4 slums namely Manchathopu, Vallavilai, Neerodithurai and Marthandanthurai. Marthandanthurai slum consist of 369 families and 2467 people approximately. Almost all the people of Marthandanthurai are doing fishing. The project group selected the life situation of the fisher folk of Marthandamthurai for their field study.

2. OBJECTIVES:

- To study the social problems of the fisher folk at Marthandanthurai.
- To analyze the educational status of the fisher folk

3. METHODOLOGY:

For writing this article, I have scientifically adopted **descriptive method** and **investigative method**. Through the Descriptive Method we can understand the real situations and the problems of the people. The investigative method helps to see the real life style of the people and their economic, positional, religious, and social improvement

4. MATERIALS:

TOOLS OF THE STUDY:

Primary data:

For collecting the primary data, we have prepared the questionnaire and collected information. For that, our group students prepared plans and visited Marthandanthurai, directly. They collected various information, by asking questions to the people. This is the primary source of the study.

Secondary data:

The secondary sources also played a vital role for this project work. We have got information from books and newspapers. The Tamil newspaper "Thina Thanthi" dated 23-02-2002, the book "Folklore of fishermen in Kanyakumari District – Astuday" by Dr.N. Stephenson, and the article, "The A. V. M. Canal –Present and future" by Dr. Issac Jayadas, published in the Book "Water sources of the South West Coast" are the main secondary sources to study the various problems of fisher folk at Marthandanthurai.

Questionnaire:

The questionnaire is the important aspect of the study with various aspects of the questions. Based on the topic of the study the questions are compiled. The questionnaire contains the name, address, and family background, political, social, economic and religious condition of the people. The answers of the questions bring the required information regarding the theme.

5. DISCUSSION:

CONDITION OF MARTHANDANTHURAI FISHERFOLK

Marthandanthurai Village is a place belongs to Kollemcode panchayat of Vilavancode Taluk. Almost all the people of Marthandanthurai are having a close touch with the sea, because this place is situated near the seashore. Among the people of this are most of them are Christians. In their day to day life they are meeting with various problems and challenges. In this work we have analysed the social problems, Economic conditions, the position of women fisher folk and the condition of the A. V. M. canal at Marthandanthurai.

Social condition:

During the time of fishing the fishermen of this area met with so many problems. The small hurts of fisherfolk were often affected because of the sudden storm prevailing near the seashore. At such times so many people lose their hurts and their goods. The government is not in a position to help this affected people in time. But the people of this are solve this problem by hard work and confidence. In order to protect their houses they construct sea walls with huge stones in front of their houses.

During the time of fishing some miss understanding may arise among the fisherfolk. A group of people used to catch fish at night. Usually, at night they can get a good catch very easily because of the attraction of the gas light used by the fishermen. It will affect the fishermen, who involve fishing in the day time. So a clash started between the two groups. But it was easily stopped by the assurance given by the night fish catchers.

Availability of fishes in the sea depends upon the particular season. For a period of four months (September, October, November, December), the fisherfolk used to get plenty of fishes. After that the people used to go to another area for fishing. In that place they stay the next four months and catch the fishes (January, February, March, April). After that they came back to their native place. Altogether they work for 8 months only. For the rest of the four months, (May, June, July, and August) they are left with no work. But during that time very few people in this area who possess machine boats may go to Cochin, Vizhinjam, Kollam and Neendakarai for fishing. Because of the harbor facilities and the fine geographical position in Cochin, Vizinjam, Kollam and Neendarkarai region there in their places fishing is attractive in all the seasons. The fishing work is going on every day in the above said areas.

In Marthandanthurai the fisherfolk, who are not having work for the particular period of four months suffered a lot. So the Tamilnadu Government came forward to give rupees 1080 per head for their livelihood. For that purpose, they received a passbook. For repaying the money the government collected Rupee 50 by 8 installments. The rest of the amount is considered as subsidy to the fishermen. Anyhow, the people of this area are not satisfying the demands made by the government, and 80% of the people managed the situation by borrowing money from moneylenders at a rate of interest.

There is no problem to go in to the deep sea. But on their way back to the shore from the deep sea the nature may be changed due to the heavy rain or storm. At that time the condition of the people in the machine boat is pathetic. In order to protect their life they move anywhere in the sea. Sometimes they may cross the border of our country and reach the near b-v country. At that time the security (coast guards) of the nearby country catch them and give put them in prison. If the matter is informed to our Indian government they may take steps for the release of the fisherfolk.

Economic condition:

Fishermen of Marthandanthurai often meet with economic distress. At that time, the local parish church of the area comes forward to help the people by giving loans. Another practice in this area is, some of the rich in this place helped the poor fisher folk by giving their machine boats for rent. The fisher folk used those boats for fishing. Generally, they have to pay-half of the income to the boat owners. The rest of the amount may be used for the maintenance of machine boat, fuel and to meet the expense of their families.

Generally, the fisher folk don't have any intension of saving the money. During the period of good catch, they get a considerable amount of money. But they spend the money within a few days. They have no eagerness to store the money for the future generation and so they often have to meet with starvation- Because of the lack of education, their economic condition is declining day by day.

6. ANALYSIS:

Investigator visited Marthandanthurai and the nearby places of changuviragam, Kandaviragam, Medavilagam, Irrayumanthope and interviewed 60 persons. The group asked the above said questions with the people. Through that questions the project group received the answers to form a clear cut picture about the social life of fishing community

TABLE – 1

Status of the people	Number	Percentage
Low class people	32	53.33
Middle Class people	23	38.33
Upper class people	2	3.34

The table 1 contains the data Analysis of social status of the people of Marthandanthurai. Through the questionnaire method the project group found out, out of 60 people 53.33% get the status of low class 38.33% come to the status of middle class and the rest of the 8.34% are hailing to the status of upper class.

7. FINDINGS AND RESULT:

- In total the condition of Marthandanthurai area is insanitary and unhealthy for human habitation. There are no proper toilet facilities and drainage system are available in that area.
- Systematic basic education has not yet reached the fisherfolk. Hence the children of fishersfolk also involve in the fishing work – without attending school.
- The fisherfolk at Marthandanthurai used to throw the rubbish, wastages, and human excreta into the sea and allow the drainages to be mixed with the sea water. By that way the seashore and the nearby areas are polluted.
- Generally, the above said area is under condition. The village has no proper drainage that the place is creating a bad smell.
- The people in that area led an open door life. The fishermen had strong bodies because of their nature of work in the sea. Through fishing they get a very good exercise to their bodies. So in general more than 90% of the people have strong body with strong mind.

8. RECOMMENDATION:

The people of Marthandanthurai face so many problems in their day to day life. If the present government of Tamil Nadu and the voluntary organizations are jointly taking much effort to bring a change in the suffering life of the to the fishing community. Some of their problems are analysed in the fields study of our group. On the basis of our analysis we are submitting the following recommendations:

- Most of the area of Marthandanthurai is not protected from the sea. The Tamil Nadu government is taking some steps for constructing sea walls here and there. If the government comes forward to sanction more amount for the construction of sea walls their it will a ray of hope in the life of the future fishermen.
- Five years back the government of Tamilnadu has given out boat engine to the fisherfolk on the basis of loan. But later on this system was abolished because of the problem of repayment. If the government is ready to receive this plan it will be very much useful to the community.
- Another important recommendation of the project group is to create awareness among the fishing community at Marthandanthurai about sanitation, cleanness of the environment, keeping the rubbish and wastages in the proper place, systematic drainage etc. this may be done with the help of parish church and its organizations, voluntary organizations, non-government organizations etc.
- For the recreation of the fishing community and promote tourism in the coastal line the project group recommend the government to create park facilities, recreation centers, foot ball ground, tourist hurts etc. It may attract so many people especially tourist to visit the place of Marthandanthurai.

The life and the problems of the fishing community in Marthandanthurai is exposed on so many ways with the help of the field group. The project group is giving some findings and recommendation for the improvement of the people. If the government and other voluntary organizations work on the line of the recommendations and finding of the project group, surely the life style of the fisherfolk at Marthandanthurai may change in a systematic way.

9. CONCLUSION:

In general I come to the conclusion that most of the people in that area are hailing from low- class and not able to send their children for higher education. The data analysis also explained some helps from the parish church of that area which was not sufficient for the people. The field study clearly explain the sufferings, poverty and the illiteracy of the fisherfolk of Marthandanthurai.

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