

## UNDERSTANDING SOCIO-CULTURAL (LOCAL) HISTORY OF MUSLIM FISHING COMMUNITY: A STUDY OF PARAPPANGADI VILLAGE IN MALAPPURAM DISTRICT, KERALA

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### Abstract

Much has been written about the Local socio-cultural histories of different community. Micro analysis of cultural practices among different communities will open the doors of knowledge to understand what a 'community' is. Especially in globalization era, it helps us to know how a community is surviving with its own cultural heritages. Community welfare policies can be implemented based on their nature. In Indian context, cultural and developmental experiences of tribal communities have been explored by many sociologist and anthropologists. Somehow, studies and research has been excluded other marginal 'communities' like fishing communities especially in case of Muslim fishing communities. So, this article is an attempt to explore and analyze socio- cultural local history of fishing community in different hamlets of Parappanangadi, who are homogeneous community and depends on nature for their everyday livelihood. This paper will discuss Muslim fishing community, history of fishing community social and economic background of fishing communities as well.

**Keyword:** fishing community, Muslim fishing community, local history, cultural heritage of fishing community.

### Introduction

As we know Local history is one of the tools to understand a community at micro level. It is the way to explore many facts that are ignored or rejected by main stream of the social historian. It has been considered as a tool to understand how community works within limitation of working class (Faue, 2000) and it leads us to realize how community maintains social coherence, social order, solidarity among community and sense of belonging (ibid:161). This article is an attempt to explore local history of fishing community from Parappangadi village of Malappuram district Kerala.

Fishing community in Kerala Fishing is one of the traditional occupations of coastal belts from old days and continues as means of livelihood for many people who are living in certain geographical areas. They are considered by authority as an occupational group rather than a caste based community and their culture and living attitudes are different from other groups of communities. As per 12<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission of India, they are among the list of marginalized communities in India. From economic aspects, Kerala is one of the richest Indian states with the variety of fishes and large number of people engaging in fisheries activates. Beside from these, coastal belts of Kerala have a long history of relation with foreigners which began from ancient times; they have relation with ancient china, Greek, Phoenicians and others (Parameswaran, 2000). They were known not only as fishermen/women, but also they were known for their active participation in socio-economic activities with overseas traders in exporting and importing of goods and even they were in nuptial relationships with people of other countries (Ilias, 2007). *Ibnubathuthahas* -who has travelled in different part of the country- have an account on Kerala's coastal people and their relation with outsiders and their trade relations with foreigners in his famous travelogue –*Rihla*-. (Dale, 1990, Pannikasheri, 2014).

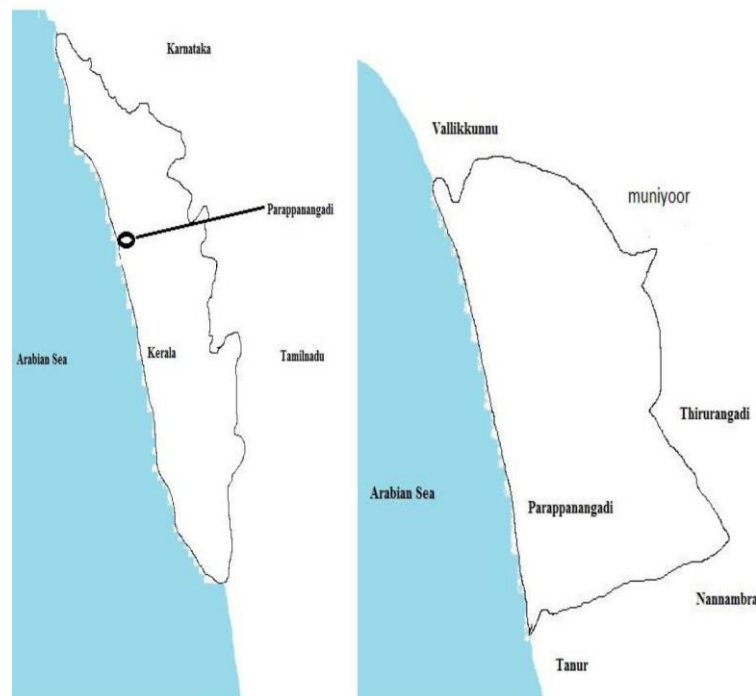
This paper is mainly exploring Local history of Muslim fishing community in various fishing hamlets of Parappanangadi in Malappuram district of Kerala, India. This article focus on social practices among them and how they socially located in community, culturally how they are differing from other community and role of social organization in marinating social and cultural significances in the society.

### The Context

Parappanangadi is newly constituted municipality in 2015, it is situated in Malappuram district (See graph 1.1), which holds low position in human development index (HDI) of Kerala (Kabir, 2010) . As Per order of 196/1 by state government of Kerala Parappanangadi Grama Panchayat came into existence by amalgamation two Panchayats of Neduva and Parappanangadi. Its socio-cultural history is related with history of Parappanad royal family, which was under Zamurians of Calicut. In 1664 on basis of reconciliation between Zamudiri and Veeravarma Raja from Parappanad Kovilakam on tenure of 10,000 rupees to enthrone the power of Parappanad kingdom to Veeraraja Varma. Later, on basis of inheritance they divided kingdom into three Thravads following matrilineal family system in Parappanangadi, Byepore and Kilimaanoor (Damodaran, 2013). Parappanangadi was known for its people had destroyed railway tracks to block the police and army in 1921 during Malabar riots. The place known as Angadi (bazaar) on sea shore was the first residential areas of Parappanangadi and it has been only one commercial centre in Parappanangadi. Because Angadi was well connected by both sea and land routes, the road from Kadalundi to Tanur passed through this area and it can be seen even today the remains

of these centres scattered. In 1930 it was through the Pandyala store in Palathingal that brought the grocery items from the different parts of Calicut and Kochi. They also engaged with salt marketing in Chapappadi which was brought in countryside ships on sea routes. It was in Tippu Sultan's period, during his invasion into Malabar they enforced a broad chain of roads in the Panchayat for their military purposes.

(Graph1.1, Map of Parappanangadi)



(Source: official website of Kerala tourism and Parappanangadi Municipality)

Parappanangadi has coastal line of 6.8 km of municipality. Out of the 45 division 10 divisions are completely fishing villages and 2 divisions are partly crossing through the coastal village. Alungal Kadappuram, Parappanangadi Kadappuram and Arayan Kadappuram are three important fish landing centres in Parappanangadi. In fishing hamlets, most of the families are depending on the sea for their incomes. Now coastal belts are populated with Muslims, but during 1980's there were few communities belonging to Hindu community but they later shifted to other places and gradually only fishing community of Muslims inhabited the place being the majority (Saidalavi. pp, personal interview, July 2 2015).

From early times, coastal areas especially Alungal Beach and Ottummal Beach were main commercial centres. Parappanangadi was mainly specialized in dried fish exporting business in the field of commerce and they are also engaged in salt marketing at Chapappadi of Parappanangadi which was brought in countryside ships through sea routes (See the

Parappanangadi Grama Panchayat development report. Published in 1992 by the Panchayat governing body, page No: 5).

### **Methodology of The Filed Study**

As indicated earlier, this article mainly looks at the social and cultural practices among Muslim fishing community in the Malabar region of Kerala. Filed work was conducted in short periods between June 2015 to August 2016 in coastal belt of Parappangadi. As part of exploring social history of fishing community in Kerala, I have conducted filed visit some of coastal belts in Thiruvananthapuram district and Kozhikode districts which are populated by Christian and Hindu fishing communities respectively. Punthura and Vizhijam fishing villages were selected from Thiruvananthapuram district and Kappad and Marad villages were selected from Kozhikode districts. I have conducted 89 interviews out of which seven are group interviews among different age groups. Majority of my interviewees were male members. First parts of this article have been organised with the support of the secondary resources like journal and book articles.

### **Fishing Community in Kerala: A Historical Analysis**

Fishing is one of the oldest occupations from the beginning of human existence; hunting and fishing were the means to survive for the people until they developed agriculture (Development of Fisheries in Kerala, 1976). The term '*Neithal*' community in Sangam literature indicates the presence of community who lived in coastal areas and depended on the sea for their livelihood. The literature has mentioned about the availability of fish in shores of Kerala and people commonly used seafood next to other grains. Fish was also exported to near places from fishing villages and salt was produced in the coastal areas and distributed in neighbouring villages. While community settlement changed into village and agricultural based activities, communities who are depending on forest and sea were presented In Kerala (Ganesh, 1997). During Sangam period, fishing was not considered as a low status job. Like hunting in forests kings also participated in fishing. Besides fishing, coastal people also engaged in other manual jobs like agriculture, trading etc. and they were of high status in the society (L.S., 2012). Gradually developments in social structure and traditional occupations like hunting, replaced by animal husbandry and people owned land and started agricultural activities with the supports of the state. But the condition of fishing community remained same without any change in both occupation and living conditions for a long time (Development of Fisheries in Kerala, 1976).

After Brahmanical social order came in to practice in Kerala during 11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> centuries and stratified communities into different classes based on the nature of their occupations (Babukuttan, 2013) . Different communities including fishing communities were considered in lower strata of community and they were ordered to keep 24 feet of distance from upper castes communities (Logan, 2008). Fishing communities were asked to live in separate villages, according to their physical appearance and nature of their occupation they were considered as 'thieves' and 'shameless' community by other communities (Barbosa, 2009). During 13<sup>th</sup> century to 17<sup>th</sup> century when Feudalism reached its peak, upper caste communities established their supremacy in coastal areas also (Balakrishnakurup, 2013) . With the supports of the local kings, feudal lords were appointed as the head of fishing village known as '*Valiya Arayas*' who had high status and power in society and they were the 'apex' body of the village communities. All social ceremonies like marriage or entering new boat or other works people had to take

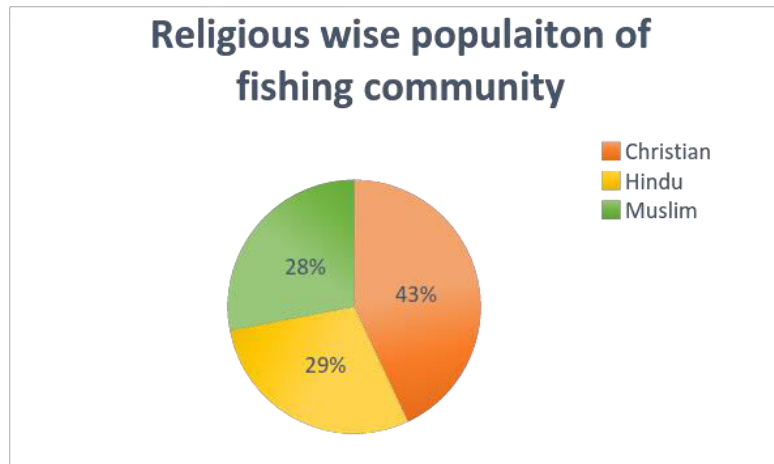
permission from the authority and they collected tax from the fishermen for fishing craft and fishing nets. In addition to this they exploited fishermen by employing them in their agricultural fields (Ibrahim, 1992).

During the Dutch and Portuguese rule in Kerala, socio-economic conditions of fishing communities remained as same before. They imposed more power on fishing communities by exploiting their labour power and they considered fishing communities as slaves. But the productivity in fishing industry increased during Dutch and Portuguese periods in Kerala because they introduced many fishing techniques which people were not familiar during the time (Ibrahim, 1992). Women from fishing communities were worse off than fishermen; women were presented for foreigners with the support of the male members of family including their husbands. They used women as their servants in houses and for sex by giving a small amount of money (Balakrishnan, 2015). It shows that their socio-economic condition was poor so they were ready for any adjustment with the support of the family members for the bread and butter of their families. *Mahuan*, a Chinese traveller who visited fishing hamlets of Cochin areas at the time of Portuguese invasion found fishermen as the impoverished people in these areas, they were living in the houses with the height of three feet and they were not allowed to cover upper part of the body (Phillips, 1896). While they lived in utter poverty local kings imposed tax on the fishing community. The Travancore royal families imposed tax called *kadal karam* (sea tax) once in a month (Micle, personal interview, November, 15,2015) and in Malabar region fishing community had to present some amount of money to king as gift and it was known as '*Mukkor kazhchapanam*' (Haridas, 2015).

The establishment of British power and subsequently the work of missionaries in various sections of the society brought the changes in the life of fishing communities also. In early days, life in the coastal areas were considered as peaceful and calm in comparison with other villages of the state because these areas were populated with same occupational communities. During the invasions of Europeans and Arabs in Kerala, as discussed earlier, people were stratified based on their caste and occupation. Lower caste communities were facing many discriminations from upper caste communities and they were restricted from basic rights like education access to public properties. Many marginalized communities like toddy tapers and agricultural labours including fishing communities were attracted to missionaries and Arab communities and they were converted into Christianity and Islam (Menon, 2014) (Fuller, 1976) (Dhanagare, 1977) and (Kooiman, 1991). In short, both of Arabs and Europeans had a crucial role in socio-economic development of Kerala fishing communities.

After the independence with the emergence of new government system and political mobilizations in the state of Kerala, as part of community based politics like other community - like Ezhava Community, Muslims and Christians - fishing community were also attacked by mainstream politics (Ibrahim, 1992) and community divided based on religious name like Mukkuva (Christian) Dheevvara (Hindu) and Puslan (Muslim). Now the coastal line of Kerala is composition of Hindu, Christian and Muslim communities and all are known by their religious identities (see graph no. 1.1).

(Graph.1.1, Religious wise population of fishing community)



(Source: Kerala Marine Fisheries Report: 2013)

This figure clearly shows population of fishing community in the state based on religious differences. Fishermen/women from Christian community have highest population in the state. They have 43 percentage of total population of whole fishing community in the state. Next to Christian fishing community Hindu fishing community have 29 percentage and Muslim fishing community holds third in population in the state with the 28 percentage of total population.

It is quite interesting that, Population of fishing communities from different religious groups are more populated in different districts of the state Hindu and Muslim have major population in Malabar and central coastal areas and Christians are more populated in southern districts of Kerala (see table 1.1).

(Table 1.1 district wise population of fishing community in Kerala)

Districts	Religion			
	Christian	Hindu	Muslim	Total
Thiruvananthapuram	27944	608	4788	33340
Kollam	7019	3924	1545	12488
Alappuzha	11076	8187	10115	20278
Eranankulam	4218	4464	636	9318
Trissur	31	3465	1772	5448
Malappuram	3	421	14516	14940
Kozhikode	12	7577	6568	14157
Kannur	3877	2220	1724	4331
Kasaragod	30	3463	1144	4637
<b>Total</b>	<b>50720</b>	<b>34509</b>	<b>33708</b>	<b>118937</b>

(Source: Kerala Marine Fisheries Census Report: 2010)

Above drawn table clearly shows population of fishing community in different districts of the state. We can see that Christian fishing communities are more populated in the districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam and Alappuzha districts. Hindu fishing community have more population in the districts of Eranankulam, Thrissur and Kozhikode. Muslim fishing

communities are more populated in district of Kannur, Kasaragod and Malappuram. The cultural impact of these communities is predominantly influenced by religious values and customs, so life and culture of these communities are different based on their religion.

### **Socio- cultural history of fishing community in Parappangadi**

As discussed earlier, Muslim fishing community in Kerala is more populated in northern part of the state. Lineage of Muslim community of Malabar start with the arrival of Arabs into Malabar coastal areas as traders (Dale, 1990). In the past these areas were populated by Hindu communities, once Arab traders came here they would return to homeland at least after six months according to the nature of the winds (Narayanan, 2015). So, they settled across the coastal areas of Malabar like Byepore, Chaliyam, Kadalundi and Kozhikode and they got married from here; gradually the population of Muslims increased in these coastal areas (Balakrishnakurup, 2013). Along with the traders *Ulamas* (Religious scholars) accompanied them for leading their religious ceremonies. Local Rajas of Kerala and natives welcomed their guests and honoured their culture and provided securities for their commercial activities (Narayanan, 2015). Local kings including Zamorians granted lands and other facilities to build religious institutions like Masjids, *Ottupura* (local religious training and teaching institutions) and appointed labours for the constructions, so many old Masjids especially in coastal areas were constructed in the same architectural forms of Hindu temples. It helped religious scholars to propagate Islamic thoughts in public and many of Hindu people including lower caste communities from Malabar accepted Islam (Balakrishnan, 2015).

It is believed that Mappila fishing community were converted from Hindu religion and they are locally called as '*puslan*' Literary word *Puslan* means Muslim who lives in sandy soils (see, 'Swalahul iqvan' Arabi Malayalam magazine: 1915), but later instead of this meaning this word widely used in the meaning of *pudiya Islam* it means new Islamic believers and it became popular than real meaning. One of the main reasons for the conversion of fishermen was due to their social position and discrimination within the Hindu community (Sebastian, 2013) and local kings provided securities for converted people from the upper caste communities (Dhanagare, 1977). Gradually population strength of Muslim fishermen increased in the coastal areas of Malabar, even they had established two religious conversion centres in coastal areas which were named as '*Tharbiyathul Islam Sabah*' in Kozhikode District and *Mauntathul Islam Sabah* in Ponnani of Malappuram District. In some parts of Kerala locally Muslim fishing community is known by different names like 'Jonaka community' and 'Kadapurathukar' (A.J Vijayan, personal interview, October, 15, 2015).

In the case of Parappangadi, Fishing folks are also converted from Hindu religion to Islam. One of my respondents said that fishermen from these areas belonged to Hindu religion and it could easily trace by their family names, it is very closely related with the names of Hindu Tharavad names like Kongante Purakkal, Karachante Purakkal, Kongante Cheriya Purakkal, Kuttusunte Purakkal, Vikramante Purakkal, Cheeramunte Purakkal. Many families of the hamlets of Parappangadi have been attempting to change their family lineage names into Islamic related names (Kongantepurakkal Moosakoya, personal interview, September, 12, 2015). Construction design of old Masjids in Alungal village are in same patterns of Hindu temple's architectural style which indicates the population of Hindu community in the villages.

### **Fishing Community: 'Where' They Are Socially Located**

As we discussed earlier, fishing and non-fishing communities from Parappanangadi are homogeneous community and living in same geographical areas, in this we are looking how they were considered by 'other' community and where they are socially located in past and now; we will also discuss what kinds of discrimination they had faced from non-fishing communities.

While they are living in same geography they were labelled with different names, Non-fishing community is known as Angadikkar (who depends on non-fishing activities) and fishing community is known as *Kadapurathukar* (who depends on the sea). *Angadikkar* belong to Naha family *Marikkar* family and other middle class families like *Kuttiyadi* families, *Nadammal Puthiyath* families etc. Till 1990's in Parappanangadi there were two categories of fishing community simultaneously, they are known as "*Puslan*" and "*Choondapanikkar*". There were many families in Parappanangadi from Choondapanikkar/ *choodakkar*, *Sakamallukka* Family, *Kuttiyadi* Family; *Thalanjeri* Family and *Kanjiggante Purakkal* are some of them. Their geographical positions are very near to traditional fishing communities; they were residents of eastern part of geography from sea side. Choondapanikkar were not considered as traditional fishing community because, fishing was not considered as their family occupations. Some of family members chose fishing as their occupation and majority of family member engaged in other occupations and they were hold high position in community like other occupational communities. Choondapanikkar gradually gave up fishing and they engaged in other occupations like Business, drivers, electrical works, etc. Now this occupational group completely disappeared from the village (Syed Abdul Ashraf, telephonic interview, March, 30,2016).

In past, social space of fishing community was very worse like lower cast people, they were discriminated by their nature of occupations. They had faced much discrimination from non-fishing communities and they should maintain social and physical distance from non-fishing communities. They had to remove turban from head and hold it in his armpit as the symbol of the respect and to present fish for them at free of cost. The Masjid located in Angadi beach known as 'Parappanangadi *Valiya Jumuath Palli*' (Parappanangadi Great Masjid) is the example for the experiences of discrimination in society against fishing community. The managing trustee of the Masjid was completely dominated by Angadikkar and they had certain positions reserved in the Masjid. For instance, first five rows in Masjid are reserved for elite communities (Angadikkar) and members of fishing community, irrespective of their time of arrival to Masjid they had to occupy seats behind the reserved ones. Due to their experiences of discrimination from elite communities, the fishing community decided to build separate Masjid and madrassa for themselves (Tazhattuveetil Saimadukka, Personal interview, December,16, 2015). Along with these, they were facing many verbal abuses from other communities, the terms *Puslan* itself, using as abuse, so fishermen are not happy to hear this name as their identity they. Many of respondent said they never want to know by this name. To illustrate this bad experience, one of my respondents elaborated about their social contact with other community, he said that they were treating us like strange objects'; and he narrated about his experience in the visit to attend marriage function of their friends in other part of the same district, people including children and old people gathered and starting to look at them; he asked one of them why were you looking to us 'strangely' they replied this is our first time to meet a fisherman (Ashraf, personal interview, January,1, 2016 ).



### **Social Institutions and Cultural Practices among Fishing Community**

Social institutions are one of the important pillars in process of the establishment of social needs and maintaining social coherence. It has major role in the process of socialization of community and maintaining social identities. Human as a social being depends on the different institutions in everyday life, which provides for social services and solutions for them and the functions of institutions will differ from each other according to the nature of the institutions (Blom, 1970). Muslim fishing communities are different from other Muslim communities -even though they co-exist in same geographical location - their social lives, culture, family, marriage, education and occupational activities are very different from rest of community. This paper mainly focus on analysing religious influence, family structure, marriage customs and other institutions among fishing community.

Among fishing communities, they have their own local social institution to maintain social harmony and coherence- *Kadl Kodathi or Kadakkodathi* (sea court). It is a powerful institution among fishing communities which decides sea rules and regulations on the timing of fishing and distribution of fish, even social and economic issues of village community is addressed to via this authority. After long discussion and arguments between two parties the head of this institution will give one judgment which will be final no one could question it. Kadal kodathi has great influence in the community, one of the respondent told that, till the end of 1973 no single petition case was registered in Parappanangadi police station this indicate the influence of Kadal kodathi even after the establishment of federal system in the state (P.P Saidalavi, personal interview, July, 2, 2015). Among the Hindu fishing community also we can see the presence of sea court. In one sense, it has more influence among them than Muslim fishing community but the difference is, function of *Kadal kodathi* of Hindu community will be under the control of religious institutions like temple (AV Vijayan, personal interview, October,10,2015) and among Muslims they will select head man among themselves according to his age and acceptance in society (Kongantepurakkal Moosakoya, personal interview, December, 9, 2015).

### **Religious influences of fishing community**

While fishing community from Parappangadi belong to Islam, they are scattered into various sects of religious groups and each group has different religious institutions like Madrassa and Masjids. Majority of people belong to *Sunni* tradition. The incomes of the religious institutions are contribution from the fishermen. The interesting aspect is whenever they are launching new boat, a fixed amount will be donated to Masjid at the end of every week and Religious leaders will be invited for every social ceremony like marriage, housewarming, etc., and especially during the inauguration of new boats also. The names of boats will be related either to religion or political parties, and they will select the workers among same religious and political sympathizers. *Valiyajarthingal* families -who are descendants of Prophet Muhammad- are the most influential family in Alungal Kadappuram. Many people (including fishing and non-fishing communities) depend on them for their traditional treatments like healing using Qura'nic verses. The most interesting fact is that female members of family are leading these treatments. According to 9<sup>th</sup> month of Islamic calendar on eve of 27<sup>th</sup> day fishing communities organize particular festivals called *VARAVU* Literary it means —arrival. It is quite local festival organized by natives of Alungal beach. From the evening people starts to visit tombs of *Valiyajaratihingal*

family member who are buried there, seeking their blessings. Around 9.30 pm some of natives of Alungal people including youngsters *Valiyajaratihingal* family members will go together to the near Masjid singing Islamic songs and they will come back with the *Naattu Kaaranavar* (community head men) and they will join near to tombs and the elder family member will address them and this event will end with collective prayer from the tombs. Irrespective of all religious and political differences they join this festival. During scarcity of fish, in villages the community will organize public prayer at the sea shore under the *Mahallu* committee (See the Parappanangadi Grama Panchayat development report. Published in 1992 by the Panchayat governing body, page No: 5), the most notable thing is that each religious sect groups will organize different programs by inviting guests from their groups. Fishermen and captains of boats from Alungal beach as representative of others will come to Valiyajaratihingal Thravads during the shortage of fish and present some amount of money as gifts from their side for family members and conduct a special prayer for their prosperity and increase in the availability of fish. This function is known as 'Rajyakkkaru varal'; the householders of Valiyajaratihingal will prepare special dishes for them during this ritual-ceremony.

### Family Structure of The Community

Family is the one of the important social institution. It is one of the units of interacting with others as a growing institution which causes for the changes in patterns according to time like changes from joint family system to nuclear system (Chapin, 1928). Fishing communities across the state were following joint family system, but after 1990's there has a shifting notion to nuclear family system among the members of the community (Av Vijayan, personal interview, October, 15,2015).

Fishing community in Parappanangadi also were following the same, but still now there are many families continue same joint family patterns. Some of the families in Alungal Kadappuram having house documents of three generation without dividing property among family members. During my interview with Kongante Purakkal Koya, while asking about the nature of family system, he replied that they were following joint family system and his family members were more than 25 then he took the legal documents of their house which was handed over to him from his forefathers. Family names or surnames of fishing community in Parappanangadi will be known by the names of Thravad names which are very different from other communities, their names of Thravad is followed by either 'Akath' or 'Purakkal' like Poozhikkuravante Purakkal, Chekkalitnte Purakkal, Cheeramunte Purakkal, Karnamente Purakkal, Korayantepurakkal Pottyakath, Kadalundikaratakath, Alikakath Hajiyyarakath and Hajarakath. These two words 'Akath' and 'Purakkal' indicates their economic and housing conditions also. the names which ends by 'Purakkal' means they had comparatively proper houses and income, and whose house names are ended with the word 'Akath' they are living in huts and they are socially and economically backward than earlier one (Syed Abdul Ashraf, Telephonic interview, March, 30, 2016).

In past, one of the factor which leads fishing community to maintain joint family is their poverty. In a Thravad there are more than five families; total numbers of family member are more than 15-20. Sea as the only source of income, all male members from one family were engaged in fishing under leadership of elder member in same small boats (*Veppu Thoni/ Vallam*) and at the end of the day elder member will distribute some amount of money they called this as

'Chaya paisa' and rest of money will be used for family and it is the responsibility of family headman, the rest of members are free from any extra expenses for the family (Chekkalinte Purakkal Hamsakkoya, personal interview, January, 4, 2016). They go to work early in the morning without having any food, by noon if they get fish and they will cook the food, till that time all family members will wait for it. Only lunch is cooked together for all and served in one vessel. Breakfast and dinner will cook separately using one kitchen, tapioca is one of the main items on the menus for their breakfast and they some cracks on it to identify their share (Imbichumma, personal interview, December,16,2015).

In the past, most of the fishermen had only one or two pair of the dresses. Female members were washing the dresses when they were going out for job and wear same dress when they came returned from the work. In Alungal there was person called *kuppayamidath koya*' (the one who does not wear shirt) lived as a symbol of the poverty in the village he never used to wear shirt because of lack of the finance to purchase the shirt (Aboobaker, personal interview January, 3, 2015). Due to poverty in the village, parents were not ready to give proper education for their children. Often they would come to school to take their children to help their fathers to carry fish and sell it in the market. Teachers were in support of parents because they would they know well about their situations (Imbichumma, personal interview, July, 2, 2015).

### Marriage Customs Among the Community

For a society, Marriage is one of the oldest social institutions and closely related with the family defined by religion, culture, and laws. It is the means to enrich their social relation and maintain social coherence (Bethmann and Kvasnicka, 2011). Mappila Muslims are getting married very early than other communities in Kerala even to other Muslims community in the state from Travancore and Cochin areas. Normally, the age of marriage for Muslim communities are between 25-28 and other communities are between 28-32. In the case of fishing community, they are getting married earlier than other Muslim communities as Rev. Samuel Mateer described about the marriage of Muslim fishing communities during 1880's at Vizhijam fishing villages of Thiruvananthapuram district, while he describing about social conditions of Muslims, he says boys will get married at the age of ten or twelve and girls will be get married at her age of seven (Mateer, 1883). These days also, people are getting married very early in different fishing hamlets of Parappanangadi when comparing to other communities from the same villages.

Even though there is no religious barrier, Muslim fishing community will get married from same occupational groups and it is very hard to marry a girl from fishing communities to non-fishing communities, but occasionally males from fishing communities do get partner from other occupational communities from other villages. Their geographical setting, nature of their occupation and prejudices about them regarding their behaviour like they are quick 'temper person' and they are 'Shameless community', Non-fishing communities are not ready to build-up a family relationship with them. even they have experience of be hindered the marriages from the side of fiancée after the fixing date (Abdurahiman, personal interview, October, 25, 2015). Their geographical positions are great barrier for their wider social relationships than other factors, *Kongantepurakkal Koya* is an example even his family has better economic condition and he being in government service but he had to marry from his own fishing community. During the interview, he said that his parents' preferences was to get marry from out of fishing community, but all proposal was rejected for being he residing in the coastal area.

Now days, while fishing villages are expanding to non-fishing villages by construction of new houses for large increase, the new problems arise in social relations. The male members of non-fishing members are not getting marriages for being residing near to fishing communities. There have been many incidents in these village many families sold out their property including land and shifted to other villages due to these kinds of social barriers.

Commonly, Muslim communities in Kerala arrange marriage functions and other social ceremonies on Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. But fishing communities will hold marriage and other ceremonies only on Friday according to their conveniences. On Friday, they will not go for fishing because of the special prayer in Masjids at noon which is compulsory. In the past marriages, has had been conducted on Thursday nights after they came back from the work and it would go on long till the morning of the Friday (Kuttikattu Veerankutty, personal interview, January, 2, 2016).

Now, dowry has become symbol of prestige among Keralites especially among Mappila community and expenses of marriage are very high in Muslim community due to customs practiced among them like luxury in dresses, modification of homes and opulence in food items etc. (Waheed, 2009). Dowry is a custom practiced by upper caste communities in India like Brahmin as symbol of their social status and dignity, after independence it became common among communities irrespective of caste and religion and regions (Chacko, 2003). During first stage of marriage proposal husband's relatives will negotiate for dowry with the parents of the girls, so fixing groom price became essential part of marriage. Amount will increase according to family status and profession of boys and his value is determined on how much groom price he can demand from his fiancée (Filippo Osella, 2000). Before five-year dowry was demanded either in cash or ornaments now it changed to land properties due to sharp increase in the price of the land and decrease in the price of gold. Now dowry has become burden for girl's parents to find financial sources for marriage and amount of dowry (*sthreedhanam*) and it is also prestige for girl's parents to give demanded groom prices (Billig, 1992).

For fishing communities, Fishing as only means of earning, it is very difficult to meet such a huge amount of money during marriage and other social ceremonies. So, they have developed among them a financial assistance to meet these expenses. They call it *kuri kalyanam*'. They will invite all households from villages for function not only for marriages but also for other social gatherings like house warming and invitee will collectively contribute some amount of money and will give it to the host. One of village man will collect the amounts and record the name of contributor and amount in a book, normally total amount will cross total expenses of function. On occasion of another ceremonies in village, they will do same and in addition to it; the earlier beneficiaries from this person will contribute same or double of previous amount like if 'X' got 500 rupees from 'Y' then 'X' will give back to 'Y' 1000 rupees or more than it. Still now it continues among village people as cyclic process from old days so they can easily conduct marriage function at easiest way which they can cover all expenses of marriage functions, some time they have some amount for saving also (Ibrahim Kutty, personal interview, November, 12, 2015). Otherwise they should depend on other financial institutions like bank with huge amount of interest which they will not able to repayment with the income of fishing.

### Concluding Remarks

Primary concern of this article is to explore social and cultural history of Muslim fishing community in the state of Kerala. Parappanangadi, one of the fishing hamlets from the Malappuram districts has selected as case for the study. Paper has elaborated the history of fishing community in Kerala and their socio- economic conditions during different time periods like under feudalism, different kings, under Dutch and British power. In the case of Muslim fishing community this study has been explored various social and cultural institutions that differ them from others like influence of community with religions like their attachment with the descents of prophet's family during shortage of fish, ceremonies organizing for them in special occasions even community depends on them when they are suffering from diseases. This paper has been looked other social institutions like marriage and family structure of community like how their family terminology itself differing from others name and nature of surname indicating to their social and economic status. it has analysed different characteristics marriage customs in community which are not practiced in other communities even they are coexisted in same geographical positions like, the time and day of marriage, demands in dowry etc.

This paper critically examined the discrimination they faced from other communities. Even they are same religious symporters, they were considered as inferior than others. From my filed experiences, I have observed that, till now they are facing many discriminations which are invisible. In past, they were ordered directly from others some direction to keep in everyday life, like to be away certain distance, reservation of some specific places in public and private and offering fish to them at free of costs etc. But now the nature of discrimination has been changed, while each of them are mingling to each other, the restriction in public placed has been removed but still now non-fishing communities are not willing to build-up any social relations with them, the notion of shifting to near villages to keep distance from this community is results of these kinds of discriminations. Even fishing communities are actively participating with different political alliances, for being fishermen somehow they are excluded from executive positons. In short, this paper exclusively explored history of Muslim Fishing community who are excluded by main stream community.

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