

**Life and Labour of Fish-vending Women in Kerala:
A Case Study of Pulluvila, Thiruvananthapuram District**

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Context

The fish vending women play a significant role in the Small -Scale Fisheries sector of Kerala. In the distribution channel of fish, they connect the fishermen and the ultimate consumer. The people of Kerala are avid fish eaters, to whom the fish vending women supply fish afresh. They supply fishes at doorsteps of houses, local markets, by-lanes, and road side vending places. The fish vending women transform fish catch into cash, through a decentralized supply system and contribute towards economy in terms of decentralized employment generation. Fish vendors engage in their trade in various ways: they procure their fish directly from landing centres, where they participate in daily auctions of the catch; they buy from traders and merchants; or they buy from the wholesale markets for resale at retail/local markets. Vendors also carry out value addition by sorting, grading, cleaning and icing the fish. (Ganesh Kumar et al., 2008). Fish may be sold as either (a) fresh fish that is stored in ice and sold in local or distant markets or door-to-door by vendors, or (b) salted, dried or smoked fish, which is sold in local markets or to merchants who take it to other markets once it is processed; such processing is usually done by women using traditional methods. (ICSF, 2010).

The marketing of fish in the small scale fisheries sector had been primarily a women's domain. The fisher women are thus the primary players in processing, marketing and selling the catch. After the fish has landed, it is the women who take charge of the catch and sell the fish for money and food, contributing to household incomes and food security, and to the local economy. Their labour is, however, often not recognized. Fish vendors operate as an important link between producers and the final consumers, making fish available to consumers in urban and remote rural areas, and enhancing food security in tangible, but unrecognized, ways. (*ibid.*, 2010).

The nature of the product handled by women fish vendors causes a certain stigma that fishermen themselves do not generally face. Unlike men, whose labour is largely confined to the sea, river or lake, fish vendors have to travel with their product to

market places. They have to interact with the public and the law. In the process, they are often forced to deal with inbred prejudices and problems of various kinds. (*ibid.*, 2010).

With the advent of modernization in small scale fisheries, lots of changes have taken place in fishing technology viz. motorization of fishing crafts, modern materials for fishing crafts and gears, new varieties of crafts and gears, new allied fishing equipments like Fish Finders, GPS, etc. (Rajan.J.B, 2002). There was also a radical change in governance from centralisation to decentralisation. Following the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution in 1993 to devolve power to local self-governments (LSGs), the Government of Kerala introduced decentralised planning from the Ninth Five-Year Plan period (1997-2002). The Ninth Plan in Kerala was a progressive and positive departure from the then existing centralised governance system, by transferring the onus of grassroots development to local governance. (Rajan.J.B and Haribabu.T.P, 2005). Decentralisation of power or planning from below would benefit the marginalised/unorganised sections like fishers, whose voice was earlier not heard and were denied opportunities. The vibrant participatory planning and visioning process during the Ninth Five Year Plan was an opportunity for self expression to the marginalised sections in particular. But the studies on decentralised planning with reference to fisheries reveal that the issues of fisher people have not been addressed adequately. (*ibid.* 2005). Neither the technological development in fisheries nor shift in governance from top-down to bottom-up approach has uplifted the livelihood of traditional fisher people. The life and labour of fish-vending women continue to be miserable.

The negative externalities in fisheries have adversely impacted the occupation of fish vending women and their life. Inaccessibility of fish due to centralization of landing centres, unhealthy competition from newly entered fish merchants, new entrance of fish vending males with moped in domestic markets, exploitative practices at various stages of their occupation starting from shore to domestic market, absence of infrastructure and amenities, etc. are some of the problems faced by the fish vending women. (ICSF, 2010). During work, they have been subjected to exploitative practices extending from beach to domestic market. Some of the problems at work are harassment from various parties, deflated fish price, denial of public transportation,

exorbitant rate of interest by money lenders, unhygienic market conditions, lack of amenities for rest and refreshment, etc. Due to the nature of their work, the fish vending women are neither able to care for their children properly nor able to lead a peaceful family life. The low dignity of labour on fish vending is another problem from the societal point of view as it is considered a social stigma by other communities or even within the same community of diversified families. There have been media reports highlighting the issues of fish vending women. Also, a recent news report highlighted that the younger generation from the fishing community are not interested in fish vending and the fish vending by women is on a decline. This, in a way, reflects the miserable life and labour of fish vending women. But the perceptions of women fish vendors on their labour and life have not been studied in depth. Hence the present study.

1.2. Research Problem

The research problem is that the women fish vendors are in a miserable situation at work, family, and society. Despite the labour and social measures that are in place, the issues reported are yet to be addressed. Perhaps, fish vending women are not empowered to assert their rights or historically tuned to subsume their problems. This necessitates an understanding of how the fish vending women perceive their labour situation and life. There are studies on socio-economic aspects and issues of fish vending women in Kerala. (TSSS, 2012; ICSF, 2010; ICSF, 1997; Nayak, 1995; Nayak.N, 1993; Kurien.J, 1985; Gulati.L, 1984). But how the fish vending women perceive their problems is known little. The conventional study covering socio-economic aspects or fish market situations may not be able to capture the perceptions of fish vending women. A study in early eighties attempted to understand the problems of fish vending women in Kerala from an empathic approach, using case study method. (Gulati, 1984). This was just after the changes in small scale fisheries triggered by motorisation of country crafts¹. Drastic changes have taken place since then in the sector, while the problems of fish vending women have become more acute. The miserable situation of women fish vendors is the final product of three inter-disciplinary forces. There are psychological, sociological and management aspects that have contributed to their suffering from time immemorial. But these

¹ The details see chapter 2.

have not been studied from an insider's viewpoint. The present study attempts to understand the problems of fish vending women with an inter-disciplinary and empathic approach.

1.3. Research Questions

Considering the research problem, the present project attempts to make a case study of fish vending women, to address the following questions so as to elicit qualitative information on the dynamics of labour and life of fish vending women.

- i. What are the problems of fish vending women at work, especially at beach, distribution channel, transportation and domestic market?
- ii. How does the fish vending occupation affect their standard of living and life style?
- iii. Do the fish vending women suffer from psychological tension, insecurity and frustration? If so, what are their coping strategies?
- iv. How do the fish vending women perceive their labour and life?
- v. What are the ways of empowering fish vending women to overcome the psychological, sociological, and commercial barriers?

1.4. Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the present project is to make an interdisciplinary and empathic study of labour and life of fish-vending women in Kerala, with special reference to Pulluvila fishing village in Thiruvananthapuram district. In view of this, the objectives are to study:

- i. the problems of fish vending women at work, especially at beach, distribution channel, transportation and domestic market,
- ii. the impacts of fish vending occupation on the standard of living and life style of fish vending women,
- iii. the psychological tension, insecurity and frustration, if any, suffered by fish vending women and coping strategies,
- iv. the perceptions of fish vending women on their labour and life,
- v. the family life dynamics and its impacts on fish vending women,

- vi. the gender discrimination, if any, on the fish vending women and their perceptions,
- vii. the responses of fish vending women on various schemes and support mechanisms, and
- viii. the ways of empowering fish vending women to overcome the psychological, sociological, and commercial barriers.

1.5. Chapter Scheme

This research report is structured into six chapters.

The present chapter provides the rationale of the study viz. research context, research problem, research questions, purpose and objectives.

The literature review, especially changes in Small-Scale Fisheries sector is given in Chapter Two. The modernisation efforts in the Small-Scale Fisheries sector of Kerala since the late forties and its concomitant changes are narrated in Chapter Two based on the review of literature.

The Chapter Three on study design covers the research methodology viz. population, study area, unit of analysis, data type, its source, method of data collection, study duration with time line and also the constraints of the study.

The presentation and analysis of data is spread into two chapters - Chapters Four and Five.

Study of labour and life of fish vending women requires the understanding of conditions in which they work and live. Hence data is collected through RRA and secondary sources regarding the socio-economic background and fishery scenario of Pulluvila; this is presented in Chapter Four as Village Profile. This is followed by collection of qualitative data using case study method from a select number of fish vending women. These cases are presented in Chapter Five.

Chapter Six, the concluding chapter, summarises the observations and evolves suggestions to address the identified problems.

Chapter 2

Small Scale Fisheries Sector

The labour and life of fish vending women all over the world has a long history and is linked to the trends in Small -Scale Fisheries. The State of Kerala is not an exception. The small scale fisheries in Kerala have, from time immemorial, been considered to be a household enterprise where men, women and children play significant role in the fishing and allied activities. There is clear division of labour between men and women, as the former involved in harvest while the latter in pre and post harvest activities. The fishing and allied activities in Kerala has been followed by specific communities as an artisanal occupation. The traditional fishermen have been undertaking fishing primarily for livelihood with a sense of community cohesion and shared feeling and thus as a way of life. (Rajan.J.B, 2001). With the advent of era of development, the traditional fishing techniques began to be replaced by modern capital-intensive methods. (Rajan.J.B, 2002). These have implications on pre and post harvest activities too; thus affecting the labour and life of fish vending women as well. The nut shell of major changes taken place in the Small-Scale Fisheries sector and its implications on post harvest activities, especially fish vending by women, are provided hereunder based on literature review.

2.1. Technological Dualism

After India became independent in 1947, concerted developmental efforts began for the upliftment of the fisheries sector. The major projects introduced in Kerala, aided by foreign agencies, were (i) Technical Co-operation Mission Programme (TCMP), (ii) FAO Technical Assistance Programme (FAO-TAP), and Indo-Norwegian Project (INP). The TCMP was aimed at providing marine diesel engines, a variety of nets and nylon threads, insulated iceboxes and van, etc. The FAO-TAP was initiated to provide training to fishermen on new fishing methods, develop appropriate crafts and gears, construct new fishing harbours, etc. The INP for the development of the fishing community in the erstwhile State of Travancore-Cochin came into existence in January 1953. With the advent of INP, the fisheries sector hitherto traditional became transformed into two distinct entities - mechanised sector and artisanal sector. (Rajan.J.B, 2001). The major changes in fisheries started with the establishment of INP. (Rajan.J.B, 1994).

It was INP, which evolved new kinds of crafts, gears and fishing methods and introduced them in Kerala. Gillnets and trawl nets became popular. Cotton nets and coir nets were replaced by nylon nets. Similarly local varieties of floats and weights were replaced by plastic/rubber floats and zinker weights. (*ibid.*, 2002). The sector, which was primarily seen as a source of employment and food, was quickly transformed into one where the prime motivation was profits by exports. The nature and pace of technological development in the harvesting and processing activities also underwent a radical change during this period primarily due to the above change in motivation. (PCO and SIFFS, 1991). In the post harvesting sphere new avenues opened in respect of processing factories and export markets. The construction of landing centres and harbours has also generally affected women's role in distribution. With large catches that are landed and with larger men merchants in the fray, women have not been able to take advantage of these situations. (Nayak.N, 1995). However the role of women in the Small- Scale Fisheries sector continued.

2.2. Modernisation in Traditional Sector

To protest against the ill effects of mechanisation in fisheries, fishermen movements emerged. The artisanal fishermen countered the technological onslaughts on their traditional fishery by motorisation of their country crafts, but only by eighties. (*ibid.*, 2002). The technological dualism in the harvesting activity until 1981, with two distinct sectors - one with a couple of thousand mechanically propelled craft using trawl nets, and the other with over 20,000 human and wind propelled artisanal craft using diverse gears - almost totally disappeared following the rapid and widespread motorisation of artisanal craft, which began to use more standardised gear types. (*ibid.* 1991). After the advent of motorisation of country crafts, the artisanal sector witnessed a series of further technological changes. They include introduction of plywood boats in 1982, construction of artificial fish habitats (AFHs) in 1983/84; introduction of mono-filament gillnet (*Kangoose vala*), trammel net (*Discovala*), mini trawl net, ring seine (*Thanguvala* and *Ranivala*) in the mid-1980s; and fish-attracting lanterns in 1987. (Rajan.J.B, 1994). It seems that the sector has been moving from a passive-gear¹ to an active-gear technology; from a low-cost to a high-cost technology; and from an eco-friendly to eco-destructive technology. (*ibid.*, 2002).

¹ Fishing gears are broadly classified as passive and active. Passive gears are eco-friendly as they target specific specie, eg. sardine targeting sardines, mackerel net targeting mackerel, etc. Whereas active gears are destructive as they are not

The drastic changes in fishing technologies have resulted in over capitalisation and over capacity in the sector. (Rajan.J.B, 2000a). Considering the potential of marine resources in Kerala, the Kalawar Committee's report in 1984 recommended to limit the number of fishing fleet; as given in Table 2.1. The statistics in 2001-02 show that over capacity in fishing fleet is alarming at 232% for all types fleet taken together. (Table 2.1). While in 2010-11, there is under capacity even if all fleets are taken together at 93%. This is mainly contributed by decline in non-motorised canoe than the allowable limit by 93%. At the same time, there is over capacity with regard to mechanised boats and motorised canoe to the tune of 202% and 629% respectively. These factors had implications on fish vending women as the landings of non-motorised canoe was the main target for them to purchase from shore, for resale at domestic market. With the decline of fishing fleet in the non-motorised sector, there was also substantial decline in the contribution of fish landings by it. The average landings by non-motorised craft-gear combinations drastically declined from 107286 tonnes during 1982-87 to 29856 tonnes during 1988-97 and further declined to 22215 tonnes. (Table 2.2).

Fleet Type	Allowable Limit of Fleet ¹	No. of Fleet		Over/Under Capacity (%) ⁴	
		2001-02 ²	2010-11 ³	2001-02	2010-11
Mechanised Boats	1145	4510	2308	394	202
Motorised Canoe	2960	29395	18628	993	629
Non-motorised Canoe	20000	21956	1444	110	7
Overall	24105	55861	22380	232	93

1. Kalawar, 1984; 2. Govt. of Kerala, 2003; 3. Govt. of Kerala, 2011;

4. Computed by the formula: (actual fleet/allowable fleet) x 100; the figure more than 100 indicates over capacity and the figure less than 100 indicates under capacity.

The landings of motorised canoe on the other hand resulted in centralised landings. In such situations, the fish vending women had to compete with whole merchants. The over or under capacity of fishing fleet has implications on their life too as their men folk suffer economic loss due to over capacity or incur opportunity cost due to under capacity; this adversely affects the household economy too².

specie targeted and catches anything and everything. eg. Trawl net with small mesh size catches everything including juveniles.

² The details of over capacity in fisheries see Rajan.J.B, 2000a.

Table 2.2: Average Landings by Major Fishing Gears (Tonnes) during 1982-87, 1988-1997 and 1998-2005				
#	Craft-gear combination	1982-1987	1988-1997	1998-2005
1	Mechanised Trawler	95949	244458	206981
2	Mechanised Gillnetter	13943	2861	2646
3	Mechanised Purse seiner	8232	5559	3279
4	Mechanised liner	392	1725	3611
5	Mechanised Ring seiner	0	0	46455
Sub-total [1 to 5]		118516	254603	262972
6	OBM-Ring seiner	27194	190763	210841
7	OBM-Gillnetter	22262	41023	55996
8	OBM-Boat seiner	77114	27160	8399
9	Others	16070	27160	33475
Sub-total [6 to 9]		142640	286106	308711
10	Non-motorised craft-gear combinations	107286	29856	22215
[Sub-total 10]		107286	29856	22215
Overall		368442	570565	593898

Source: Adapted from Ravindran.K, 2008.

The changes in fishing technology, socio-political and economic scenario have resulted in phenomenal growth in factors relating to production and output. Fish marketing and financing have expanded in scope and size. The history of technological changes in the Fisheries sector of Kerala reveals that change was not at all an abrupt event but a long drawn process. This process encompassed improvements in communication and transport, opening up of new areas, changes in oceanographic features, growth and diversification of the skills of fishermen. The changes in craft have been very need-based and quite rapid over the last decade. There has been substantial change in both size and design of craft. In the south, new designs made of plywood have come up to cater to the motorised sector. In other areas, the plank canoes have been scaled upwards to meet the requirements of the ring-seine sector. (Nayak.N, 1993). The technological changes resulted in new modes of production and marketing. They created new avenues of diversified employment within the Fisheries sector such as OBM repairing centres, boat yards, spare parts dealers, kerosene suppliers, and dealers of webbing and other materials. (*ibid.*, 2002). But these have not much benefited the fisher people. With the advent of modernisation in fisheries, a portion of total turnover of fishing is shared by other sectors viz. industrial and trading sector. Even though the fish production and total turnover have increased after the introduction of new technologies, a major chunk of the earnings dissipate to various sectors. (Rajan.J.B, 1993).

Motorisation which has led to an overall increase in the size of landings per craft has not led to any noticeable change in the nature of the marketing channels which existed in the different regions. The wholesale merchants are dominant in the north and central regions, while the small distributors predominate in the south. However, in general, the fish from the smaller motorised canoes, irrespective of their location, is handled by small distributors. (PCO and SIFFS, 1991a).

2.3. Change in Post-Harvest

It is argued that "Within the fishing industry, modernisation has often marginalised women and deprived them of their livelihood. Modernisation has also led to the landing of fish catches in distinct ports rather than on beaches where women traditionally participated in post-harvest activities." (Alain Le Sann, 1998). However this observation at the international level had been contended differently in Kerala context that the motorisation and subsequent changes have not affected the buying magnitude of fish vending women. "Looking at sale of the fish, it is generally agreed that the number of buyers has increased and that,, the new buyers are mainly women." (Nayak.N, 1993). The men who have entered the market are large merchants. This is because the traditional fisheries sector also responded technologically to the modernisation like mechanisation³ through motorisation of country crafts; retaining the characterisations of small scale fisheries. Earlier, when most men had catamarans, the landings were small and women could easily buy the fish. With technological changes came large crafts fitted with OBMs and the landings were much more than a single woman could handle. (ICSF, 1997). There are great variations in the manner of first sale, for men and women. The vending pattern also varies. Some women sell in big markets, some in strategic roadside markets which they created for themselves and some engage in house-to-house vending. The markets may be 10 to 20 km away from their own villages. (*ibid.*, 1997).

The increased cash sales however, makes it more difficult for the women to enter the bulk purchases in the auction. Not much importance is given to these aspects even where cooperatives exist, given the prominence of men. In fact, in the urge to get money back to the producer, cash sales are encouraged. (*ibid.* 1993). The issue raised here is the change in

³ The term 'Mechanisation' intends in-board engine fitted boats; generally Trawling Boats. The term motorisation on the other hand denotes

sale deal - cash or credit - and its impact on fish vending women; the issue of access to credit. The credit aspects of fishing units had been studied by Platteau *et. al* (1985) and Rajan.J.B (2000). According to Platteau *et. al*, "In traditional fishing villages, credit, labour and marketing relationships are often interlocked in a way that restricts the economic freedom of the debtors and reinforces the impact of imperfections in each market." (Platteau *et. al*, 1985). This may be true as far as the fish producers (fishermen) are concerned, as the creditor in the informal credit market wants set credit-market bondage. ".....the credit from formal sources is not able to meet the requirements of the small-scale fishing units both in terms of quantity and timeliness. The unorganised credit is predominant in the sector. This is mainly because of the characteristic features of small-scale fisheries and the limitations of the organised sector." (*ibid.*, 2000). But how the credit aspects affects fish vending by women is not studied in detail, except by Nalini (1993) two decades ago. It states that "Experiences in Trivandrum district however show that although the salesmen from the co-operative insist on cash purchases, the credit outstanding with the salesmen is always high and on many an occasion the credit has to be written off." It also states "In some areas, women form a group for purchasing, but a lot of organisation is needed." These are further explored in the case studies made as part of the present study.

There are arguments that modernisation in post harvest has not benefited fish vending women. "The introduction of ice and refrigeration is considered to have radically transformed the distribution of fish and this is true. But it also facilitated the entry of other interests in marketing. People who had larger capital, better transport facilities, and these were mainly men, became participants amidst whom poor women were poor competitors." (*ibid.*, 1995). The complex fish marketing/distribution makes the women vendor's tasks tedious and the changes in harvest and post harvest further increased this complexity. "The unpredictability of the supply; the lack of homogeneity of the product and its perishability makes fish marketing a more difficult proposition than say marketing of milk or beef. The situation of Kerala fisheries with the large number of points of fish landing; the very large number of species with wide seasonalities; the present short fall of supply vis-a-vis demand and the very spatially dispersed nature of the fish-eating population make the task further complex." (Kurien.J, 1985). There are 222 identified fishing villages along the coast. (Govt. of Kerala, 2012). There are also more than 300 species of fish along the coast, of this commercially important specie numbers to about forty. (Govt. of Kerala, 2007). In each of

these villages, the fish landings take place at different locations. The fishing technology and specie variety determines the distribution channel from the primary producer, i.e. fishermen. With the opening up of new market avenues (eg. export market) and bulk landings of exportable varieties (e.g. prawns), larger men merchants entered into the channel. Whether these have implications on the fish vending by women is explored in the case studies.

2.4. Measures and Schemes

As mentioned in paragraph 2.1 of this chapter, concerted developmental efforts in fisheries have taken place after independence of the country but this resulted in creation of distinct entities in fisheries conflicting to each other. This had compelled the State to take various legal, developmental, and welfare measures.

In view of regulation of fishing along the coastline of the Kerala State, Marine Fishing Regulation Act, 1980 was passed. With the intention of overall social empowerment of the fishermen, who are engaged in fishing for their livelihood, State has enacted Kerala Fishermen Welfare Fund Act in September, 1985 and thereby Kerala Fishermen Welfare Fund Board (KFWFB) came into existence in January, 1986. The Kerala Fishermen's Welfare Fund Act was amended in 1999, (Act 17 of 1999) for incorporating the workers engaged in fishery related activities for his livelihood. Several welfare schemes are implemented through this board for those who are registered as active or allied workers. Department of Fisheries implement various schemes directly or through various agencies for the benefit of fisher people. These include Housing, Group Accident Insurance, Accident Insurance for Allied Fish Workers, Saving cum Relief Scheme (SRS), Education Concession, Matsya Samrudhi, Insurance to Fishing Implements, Pension to Fishermen, Group Insurance to Fishermen, Group Insurance to Allied Workers, Modernisation of Country Crafts, Purchasing of Fishing Nets, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), Kuttanad Package, Sea Rescue Operations, Fisheries Roads, Drinking Water Supply, Fish/Shrimp Hatchery, Sea Ranching, Ranching of Open Water bodies, Fisheries Dispensaries, Fisheries Schools, Free Ration, Services by FFDA, Kerosene Permit, Registration of Fishing Vessels & Licensing, etc. (Govt. of Kerala, 2013). Of these, schemes such as SRS, Pension, etc. are provided in the capacity of fish worker and hence benefit to fish vending women too.

The various agencies under the Department of Fisheries include KFWFB, Matsyafed, ADAK, FIRMA, NIFAM, ME, KSCADC, and SAF. Among these agencies, 'SAF' (stands for Society for Assistance to Fisherwomen) has been set up by the Department of Fisheries exclusively targeting fisher women. SAF is an institution registered, under Travancore-Cochin Literary and Charitable Societies Act 1955, in June 1, 2005. SAF conducts myriads of programmes for the upliftment of fisherwomen that includes (i) Economic empowerment of fisher women, (ii) Construction /Modernization of fish market, (iii) Sustainability of micro enterprises, (iv) Value Added fish production unit, (v) Market support to Fisherwomen, (vi) Interest free loan to fisherwomen, (vii) Development of Micro Enterprises, (viii) TEAP dry fish unit, (ix) Tsunami Emergency Assistance Project - Development of Micro Enterprises TEAP Phase II, (x) Tsunami Rehabilitation Programme - Development of Micro Enterprises, (xi) Tsunami Rehabilitation Programme – Hand Made Toiletry, (xii) Tsunami Rehabilitation Programme- Rural Marketing Executives, (xiii) Prime Ministers National Relief Fund, (xiv) Theeramythri Phase I, and (xv) Theeramythri Phase II. (Govt. of Kerala, 2013)

Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) implements various schemes for fisher women. They include technology for preservation of fresh fish, fish vending table, fish drying machinery, fish waste management, fish kiosk, retail market design, modernisation of existing markets, capacity building, etc.

There are also Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) working in the fisheries sector having developmental programmes for the benefit of fisher people in general and fish vending women in particular. SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association), Shree Niketh Vanitha Federation, Cheru Resmi Centre, etc are some of the NGOs that undertakes special programmes for fisher women.

2.5. Ebbing Spaces

Even after implementing many welfare schemes through government and non-government agencies there is no perceptible change, as expected in the living conditions of majority of fisherfolk in Kerala for decades. The traditional fisher people are fast losing their foothold in the fisheries sector. Available statistics prove that their contribution in production has turned out to be marginal. Simultaneously, their earning and per capita income has also been pushed down. Mechanized and motorized segments have trampled upon the traditional. The Kerala

fishery has been warned well in advance about over capacity of fishing crafts and also fishing pressure. (Rajan.J.B and Haribabu.T.P, 2010). It is a fact that the artisanal/traditional fisher people are placed lowest in the socio-economic ladder. Year after year, the per capita income gap of the community to that of the State average is widening to astounding proportions. All social and human development indicators also reveal their plight. On the work front they face unequal competition from large and industrial fishing. Coastal regions, the community living, and work place are under intense development priorities; especially from tourism and housing apartment complexes resulting in mass displacement and employment loss. Unlike other population segments, the work place and living place is one and the same for artisanal fisher people. The fisher people are in proximity of extinction from their living and livelihood space. (*ibid.*, 2010).

The earnings of the fisher people fall far short than their expenditure. Their income is not proportionate to their hard work. In many families, it is the women, and not men who manage and run the houses. They work for more than 12 hours walking through the streets and selling fish, even in the late hours. (Govt. of Kerala, 2005). A glance at the findings of a recent survey underline the facts evidenced at macro level. The survey conducted in 13 coastal wards of Thiruvananthapuram Corporation proves that the status of fisher people is sliding to further depths. (Rajan.J.B, 2010). The household economy in the fishing community is a complex one, given the various transactions within and outside the household, some involving cash and others not. In general, the economy rests on transactions conducted on a daily basis - buying for the day's needs, as the earnings are also dependent on the day's catches. For most part, the fishing community lives from day to day, supported by the philosophy that the *Kadamma* (Mother Ocean) cares for her children or, as the Christians would say, 'God will provide'. (Nayak.N, 1993).

Most of the markets are owned by local bodies, such as Corporations, Municipalities or Panchayats, which auction the right to collect the taxes to individuals. They, in turn, exploit the women fish vendors and force them to pay more than triple the permitted amount, which is published on a Notice Board. This market tax is often a cause for conflicts between women and tax collectors or their thugs. (ICSF, 1997). However the basic amenities are not provided in the markets. A latest on fish vending women reveals that: "Drinking water, shed and toilet are considered to be the basic facilities essential in the market for the vendors. While 66% said there are toilet facilities, 42% said there is shed." (TSSS, 2012). Those who

choose to vend at roadside markets are often harassed by police and civil authorities. The women who sell from house to house cover about 15 to 20 houses a day - their regular customers. (*ibid.*, 1997).

How are these observations valid from the point of view of fish vending women? Would the changes in Small-Scale Fisheries further burden the fish vending women? How does the fish vending women perceive the changes in the Small -Scale Fisheries sector and its impacts, if any? What are the changes over time on the labour and life of fish vending women as perceived by them? The case studies will step into these questions to explore their perceptions through an empathic approach.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1. Scope

The present study targets fish vending women in Kerala; with special reference to Pulluvila fishing village in Thiruvananthapuram district. The study focuses mainly on the dynamics of labour and life of fish vending women in the village through an empathic approach. The nature of study covers inter-disciplinary topics of Psychology, Sociology and Management. The study takes into account the perceptions of fish vending women (Psychology), status of fish vending women in the society (Sociology) and the system of fish vending in the Small -Scale Fisheries (Management).

3.2. Population, study area and unit of analysis

The total fishermen population in the Marine sector of Kerala was estimated to be 11.52 lakhs during 2010-11 ; of this 2.36 were active fishermen comprising of sea-going fishermen and fish vending women. (Govt. of Kerala, 2011a) According to PANFISH Book, the active fishermen in the Marine sector of Thiruvananthapuram district were 48,927; of this 6,998 were fish vendors. (Govt. of Kerala, 2011b) The fish vending women in Thiruvananthapuram district is the universe of the study.

Pulluvila fishing village in Thiruvananthapuram district has been selected purposively, considering the accessibility, previous contacts, and earlier studies by the researcher. All the households in the village belong to one community [Latin Christian] and are segmented by the Parish administrative boundary as Family Units¹ [*Kudumba* Units]. The fish vending women form the unit of analysis.

¹ Every Parish of Latin Diocese is sub-divided into small geographical segments called Family Units (*Kudumba* Units in Vernacular) comprising 20-25 families. Each Family Unit has an elected committee with office bearers; elected from among the heads of households.

3.3. Data type, source, and method

As the scope of the study is in understanding the dynamics of labour and life of fish vending women through empathetic approach, qualitative type of data is required. In view of this, primary data source viz. RRA and Case Study Method have been mainly resorted to by the researcher. RRA² is a better method for gathering qualitative information through informal approach. The profile of the village has been prepared using RRA, which provided backdrop to the case study. The Case Study Method has been applied for assessing the perceptions of fish vending women on the psychological, sociological and management stress with regard to their labour and life.

3.3.1. Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA)

As a prelude to Case Study Method, RRA has been conducted to get a profile of the study area. RRA has also helped to appropriately select the fish vending women for case studies. RRA methods such as Transect Analysis, Observation, Unstructured Interview were applied and information was gathered on the fishing community and fishery scenario in the village. With the participation of fishermen, a seasonal calendar of fishing gears has been prepared. Semi-structured interviews were made with four members from the fishing community, who were identified at random during the course of RRA. The composition of the respondents is given in Table 3.1. The semi-structured interview provided glimpses of labour and livelihood of the community in the village.

Table 3.1: Composition of Respondents

Respondent No.	Occupational Profile
1	Fisherman; husband of fish vendor
2	Electrician; husband of house wife
3	Fisherman, also do masonry work; husband of dried fish vendor at home
4	School Teacher; husband of house wife

² Rapid Rural Appraisal, RRA in common parlance, effective method of gathering information from the people/village through informal approach. It comprised of multiple methods/tools viz. transect analysis, observation, unstructured interview, triangulation, seasonal calendar, time line, etc. (See details Chambers Robert, 1990).

3.3.2. Case Study Method

The fish vending woman has been taken as the unit for the case studies. RRA revealed that different permutations and combinations are possible in terms of life and labour of fish vending. Based on the learnings from RRA, seven major criteria were chosen for the selection of sample cases - three factors on life (age, marital status and house status) and two factors on labour (fish vending experience and market destination). While age, marital status, etc. are visibly known, socio-economic status is influenced by multi-faceted factors. Hence a dummy variable - house status - is chosen for socio-economic aspects; assuming that house status³ reflects the socio-economic condition. Considering these, seven cases were selected at random from different categories. However, these factors are not mutually exclusive. (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Sampling Composition of Case Study

#	Criteria	No. of Cases
1	Too aged, married, <i>kutch</i> a house, long experience, and distant market.	1
2	Aged, married, <i>kutch</i> a house, long experience, and distant market.	1
3	Aged, married, <i>pucc</i> a house, long experience, and distant market.	1
4	Aged, married, <i>semi-pucc</i> a house, long experience, and nearby market.	1
5	Aged, married, <i>pucc</i> a house, long experience but retired, house to house fish vending.	1
6	Aged, widow, <i>pucc</i> a house, long experience, nearby markets.	1
7	Young, married, <i>kutch</i> a house, short experience, and nearby markets.	1
Total		7

The data for case studies were collected using a check list. (Appendix 1). It covers Semi-structured Interview, Life History Analysis, and tips for observation. Life History Analysis considered fish vendors life cycle viz. childhood, adolescent, adult, and ageing. Hence their life and labour over these life cycles have been gathered through informal interaction, but the checklist helped to elicit relevant information from the respondents.

3.4. Reference Period

Reference period of this study is 2003.

³ House status are broadly categorised into *pucc*a [concrete and tereze], *semi-pucc*a [plastered and tiled roof], and *kutch*a [thatched, hut, etc.].

3.5. Project Organisation

Dr.J.B.Rajan, Principal Researcher, has steered the project; he has been supported by Mr.Biju. SK, Co-Researcher. The Principal Researcher has nearly twenty five years of research experience on socio-economic conditions of fisher people. The Principal Researcher shoulders the responsibility of fulfillment of the project by steering the sequence of activities. The Co-Researcher has been closely associated with and had organised the activities of the research.

3.6. Major Activities and Timeline

The study has been completed in four months. The major activities and the timeline are given in Box 3.1.

Box 3.1: Time Line

Major Activities	Months			
	1	2	3	4
RRA - Semi-structured interview, field observation	x			
Literature Review	x			
Developing Checklist for Case Study, selection of cases	x	x		
Case Study - unstructured interview, life history analysis		x	x	
Draft Report, feedback			x	
Final Report				X

The field visit for primary data collection has been broadly classified under three levels. First level was informal using RRA method for an overview of the study area. Second level was collection of data focusing on thematic areas viz. the Psychological, sociological and Management aspects of fish vending women using Case Study Method. Third level was the report drafting stage. The gaps, if any, in the data collected were duly filled at this stage. .

3.7. Output and Outcome

The output of the project is the survey report [both hard copy and softcopy] with strategies of overcoming psychological, sociological and management stress. The outcome will be the necessary policy and developmental interventions from the appropriate authorities; especially Labour Department, Fisheries Department, and PRIs.

3.8. Constraints/Limitations

The present study is not free from constraints/limitations. One of the limitations is the Case Study Method itself as it provides qualitative information. However, the depths of emotions expressed by fish vending women during this study are much beyond what a quantitative assessment can pronounce. The fish vending activities by women vary from village to village depending upon the fishing technologies, specie compositions, market forces and destinations, etc. However, this study assumes that the psychological, sociological, and management stress would be almost the same as far as fish vending women in any villages are concerned. In the present study using RRA and Case Study Method, information has been gathered through empathic approach. Hence, different bits of information are gathered from different cases and made available. As in the case of conventional studies, this information may not necessarily be uniform.. However, such bits of information have been knitted, through life cycle - childhood, adolescent, adult, and aged - to get a holistic picture of study under consideration.

Chapter 4

Profile of Pulluvila Fishing Village

The profile of Pulluvila village is prepared based on the information gathered through RRA. The data from the available literature is also included.

4.1. Geography

Pulluvila fishing village, also Pulluvila Parish, comprises of Wards 1, 15, 16, 17, 18 and a part of Ward 2 of Karumkulam Grama Panchayat in Thiruvananthapuram district. It is bordered by the Arabian Sea on the West, PHC-Kanjiramkulam Road on the East, Karichel Kayal on the North, and the Pallam Church and sea shore on the South. The Vizhinjam-Poovar Road runs across the village along the east side and there is also a Coastal road [*alias Gothambu Road*¹] running parallel to Vizhimjam-Poovar Road along the coast. A majority of the houses are situated mainly in the area between these two roads. But there are also a number of houses towards the west and east sides of the Coastal road. It is seen that most of the households in the west side of the Vizhinjam –Poovar road are involved in fishing and related activities as their livelihood.

The village has a wide stretch of coast with sufficient area for keeping fishing fleet and fishing related activities. The surfing of sea is generally calm; perhaps the inshore water area of the village belongs to the coastal belt bordered by two hillocks in north and south of the coast - hillocks of Adimalathura² and Kodithookkymala³ respectively.

4.2. Households and Population

4.2.1. Households

The total houses in Pulluvila numbered 1962, housing 2533 families; with a population of 9455. The average family size is hardly four; showing a moderate family size. The family-house ratio of 1.29 indicates that more than one family is accommodated in the

¹ *Gothambu*, in Malayalam, means wheat. The name of road attributes its original construction for which labourers were paid wages in terms of wheat. Hence, the road got the name *Gothambu* road. (Oral information from the villagers).

² There few tourist resorts operating in the north side of coast of Adimalathura.

³ *Kodithookkymala* is one of the tourism spot in the district.

house. (Table 4.1) The houses are crowded together with hardly any space between each house. Surprisingly, there are a mixture of different types of houses viz. concrete (single storey and multi-storey), sheet/tiled/thatched roofs huts and sheds. The distribution of houses by its type and availability of basic amenities like electrification and latrines provide sufficient information that point to the socio-economic condition of the households in this village. (Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1:
House by Type of Roof and Basic Amenities (2007)**

House Types	Frequency	
	No	%
By roof type:		
1. Huts/Sheds	86	4.4
2. Thatched	372	18.9
3. Sheet/Tiled	525	26.8
4. Concrete	979	49.9
TOTAL (1 to 4)	1962	100.0
Electrified Houses	1635	83.4
Houses with Latrine	996	50.8
Total Families	2533	
Total Population	9455	
Ave. Family Size	3.73*	
Family-house Ratio	1.29#	

Source: Compiled from the records of Pulluvila Parish.

* Computed by the Researcher using the formula; total population divided by total families.

Computed by the Researcher using the formula; total families divided by total houses

Of the total number of houses at 1962, 50% are with concrete roof; i.e. pucca houses. Over 25% houses are with sheet/tiles; semi-pucca. About 25% houses are kutcha; having thatched roof or huts/sheds. It has been encountered that the families in pucca or semi-pucca houses have members either working in the Gulf or are regular employees in the Government or Private Sector.

In terms of basic amenities, 1635 of the houses (83%) are electrified and 996 (51%) have their own latrine facility. The percentage of un-electrified houses corroborates with the percentage number of huts/thatched houses that are generally unfit for electrification. Despite the housing programmes under various schemes of Government and Non-Government Organisations, why are almost one-fourth of the houses *kutcha*⁴? This aspect is yet to be explored. RRA reveals that it is due to non-

⁴ *Kutcha* houses includes Huts and Thatched houses given in table 4.1. The terms *Kutcha* and *Pucca* are used to denote the condition of house respectively of bad and good.

availability of *Pattayam*⁵, that these families are unable to construct *pucca* (concrete) houses.

It is understood that those households which do not have latrine facilities resort to open defecation - men folk prefer open defecation on the sea shore while women use the shades of small scrubs and/or public toilets. The children generally defecate in open surroundings of their households or on the sea shore; depending on their age. There are few public latrines constructed by the NGOs like TSSS⁶ for the benefits of the villagers and these are mainly used by the women. The availability of a latrine in the house is coupled with the socio-economic, cultural and occupational patterns of households. Those who have a lucrative income with sufficient land holdings and/or diversified occupation from fishing, normally have their own latrines. However, the percentage of un-electrified houses clearly demarcates the household's position in the lowest strata in the society. Reading through the lines, there is a minimum of 17%⁷ households in the village that belong to the lowest ebb of the socio-economic ladder.

Almost all the households in the village belong to Latin Catholic Mukkuva, with a marginal number of Muslims and Hindus. The Pulluvila Parish under St. Jacobs Forenae Church⁸ comprises of 92 BCC [Basic Christian Community] Units [Family Units], that is nested under 12 Wards represented by 12 Parish Councillors. BCC Unit is a decentralised system of administration, where the people under each Parish actively involve themselves in the decision making and other activities related to them.⁹. Every Parish is sub-divided into small geographical segments called Family Units [*alias Kudumba* Units] which comprises of about twenty five families. Each Family Unit has an elected committee with office bearers. The members of each family unit gather once a week in one of the houses on rotation basis, for joint prayers and a Tea meeting, normally sponsored by the host family.

4.2.2. Population

As per the survey of the Pulluvila Parish conducted in the year 2007, there are about 2533 families with a total population of 9455; 4649 males and 4806 females.

⁵ Title deed of the land.

⁶ Trivandrum Social Service Society, an NGO under the auspices of Trivandrum Arch Diocese.

⁷ Those households with un-electrified house.

⁸ This is under Latin Congregation of Thiruvananthapuram Arch Diocese.

⁹ This system is followed in all Parishes under Latin Congregation.

According to the data, the overall sex ratio (1034) and child sex ratio for age group <18 (1347) are favorable to females; but for all the other age groups, it is unfavourable to females. The age-wise distribution of population by sex and Sex Ratio are given in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2:
Population by Age Group (2007)

Age Group	Males	Females	Total	Sex Ratio*
<18	1158	1587	2745	1347
18-40	2173	1934	4107	890
41-70	1182	1155	2337	977
>70	136	130	266	956
TOTAL	4649	4806	9455	1034

Source: Compiled from the records of Pulluvila Parish.

* Computed by the Researcher.

4.2.3. Employment

Of the total population in Pulluvila, 3118 (33%) are employed. The population by employment status is given in Table 4.3. Among the employed population, 65% are in Fisheries Sector – 52% active fishermen and 13% fish vendors. This indicates that the majority of households in the village depend mainly on fisheries for their livelihood. (The fishery scenario is dealt with in Section 4.4 of this Chapter).

Table 4.3:
Distribution of Employed Population (2007)

Employment Status	Employed Population	
	No	%
1. Fishery:		
1.1. Active fishermen	1605	51.5
1.2. Fish vending	407	13.1
Total (1)	2012	64.6
2. Non-fishery:		
2.1. Govt. Servant	116	3.8
2.2. Semi-Govt.	10	0.3
2.3. Non-Govt.	93	2.9
2.4. Self Employed	110	3.5
2.5. Gulf Remittance	667	21.4
2.6. Pensioners	110	3.5
Total (2)	1106	35.4
Total [1&2]	3118	100.0

Source: Compiled from the records of Pulluvila Parish.

There are both men and women in non-fishery activities like salaried employment in Government, Semi-Government or Private institutions. The predominant areas of

employment are Armed forces, Public transport, Communication services, employed or self-employed in trade/business, skilled workers in construction/transport and casual labourers. It is gathered that employment in Gulf with activities related to fishery as well as non-fishery, is a source of income for many households. In recent years, educated persons are getting opportunities in the non-fishery sector in Gulf countries and the not -so -educated but skilled fishermen get opportunities to work in boats or small ships in Gulf. There are some fishermen who circulate¹⁰ to Gulf during the lean fishing season in Pulluvila and return for fishing here during peak fishing season. There are also many persons (both male and female) employed in trading of vegetables/provisions.

4.3. Institutional Scenario

The institutional scenario in Pulluvila gives a rosy picture with numerous formal and informal institutions¹¹ functioning in the village, thereby influencing the livelihood of the people. The village also serves as access to institutions in the nearby places. Education, health, micro credit and social development are the major institutional fields, where the people interact with the organizational structure in pursuit of their livelihood. These include Government institutions and also institutions run or sponsored by NGOs like social and cultural organizations, Co-operative societies, etc. The religious organizations are actively involved in the socio-developmental activities along with the religious activities.

In the area of education, there are two Play Schools, three Primary Schools and one Higher Secondary School (HSS) within the village. The HSS - Leo XIIIth HSS - has long years of involvement, before the advent of higher education. It has significant influence on the educational attainment of Pulluvila villagers. In addition to the educational institutions within the village, there are two Higher Secondary Schools, four Primary Schools, and three Colleges functioning in the nearby areas. The students of these institutions are mainly from the Pulluvila households. Some of these schools have English medium classes also and currently a number of children from the village, study in these classes. The KNM Government College in Kanjiramkulam, that runs courses at Degree level, is accessible to the students from Pulluvila too.

¹⁰ Circulation is a term used in literature on labour migration denoting short-term migration. (details see Rajan.J.B, 2002a).

¹¹ The government or registered institutions are termed as formal institutions and the rest as informal institutions.

Libraries, Arts and Sports clubs functioning in the village have a major role in creating general awareness among the villagers and influencing them to participate in social activities. In addition to lending books, these institutions are involved in cultural activities and provide training to youth to participate in competitions. Jaihind Library & Social Cultural Centre in Pulluvila has contributed significantly in the socio-cultural upliftment of the villagers. The centre has helped in grooming the youth through their social and cultural activities. It is learnt that alumnus from these institutions are in the higher cadres of Government Service, including Civil Service; or are holding higher posts in the social or political arena. .

A Government Community Center functions in the village with in-patient and out-patient facilities. Two private hospitals also function in the village. The Nuns from different congregations¹² are active in health related programmes and supportive education. People of the village, sometimes go to the nearby Ayurvedic and Homoeopathic hospitals situated at Kanjiramkulam. Traditional doctors¹³ are also predominant in the nearby areas, especially in Kanjiramkulam.

There are six public distribution depots in the village, which distribute food grains, sugar, kerosene oil etc. at low prices to the households below poverty line and at reduced rates to others thus ensuring food security of the people, especially during the vulnerable period.

Water distribution is another field where government intervention has been remarkable. There are two drinking water supply projects under this scheme. In the context of increasing water scarcity, these schemes are considered blessings by the villagers. The water table of the village is high so there is a high degree of contamination of water. It was told that the fecal content of the water is 2000+¹⁴, showing high degree of contamination and therefore a high risk of contracting water-borne diseases.

¹² Eg. MMS - stands for Medical Mission Sisters.

¹³ Nattu-vaidhyan in common parlance. In Kanjiramkulam, majority of population belongs to Nadar community. There are many traditional doctors from this community.

¹⁴ A former NGO named PCO has set up a Sanitation and Hygiene Project in Pulluvila, supported by ITDG and experimented on compost toilet. PCO had made a lab test of water in the area and found that the fecal content of water is 2000+.

There are two Fisheries Co-operative Societies affiliated to Matsyafed¹⁵ functioning in the village. It provides assistance to activities relating to fishing and allied activities and enhances the livelihood of fisher people. The main activities carried out by the Societies include auctioning of fish catch, sale of fishing equipments (engines, boat, net etc.) at reduced prices, banking activities, financial assistance to self-help groups, creating awareness among workers about the best practices in fish processing and vending, providing loans and other financial assistance to members for enhancing their livelihood. Also, there are Church sponsored organizations in the village providing financial and social services to the people. There are various sources of informal credit facilities available in Pulluvila viz. Blade Companies¹⁶, Gold Loan Financiers, Coconut Leasing¹⁷, Household level credit¹⁸.

The religious institutions are also very strong in Pulluvila with two Latin Churches on the north and south side of the village; termed respectively Kochupally and Valiapally. There are various religious, social and developmental activities carried out by institutions under the aegis of these Churches. For example, Vincent De' Paul Society provides many developmental programmes including thrift and credit. The faith element is very strong as Sunday is considered strictly a 'religious' holiday¹⁹ for the villagers. The families of non-fishery make contributions to Church on a fixed annual basis, while all fishing units have to make a fixed contribution in terms of percentage value of catch²⁰. There are few unorganised illicit liquor traders in and around the village from where the men drink liquor. Surprisingly, the study team found many youngsters below the age of eighteen rushing to such places and consuming liquor.

There are many shops and petty traders in the village. There is also an old Talkies²¹, where mainly Tamil films are screened. Easy access to nearby towns such as Kanjiramkulam, Poovar, Neyyattinkara and Balaramapuram has also benefited the Pulluvila inhabitants.

¹⁵ A Federation, christened as 'Matsyafed', has under its umbrella District Fishermen Development and Co-operative Societies and Fishermen Development and Welfare Co-operative Societies. (see details Rajan.J.B, 2000).

¹⁶ Private money lenders provides credit by charging exorbitant interest, hence the name 'Blade Companies' symbolising the cut-throat interest by the money lenders. (details see Rajan.J.B, 2000).

¹⁷ In local parlance '*Thengotty*', means leasing coconut plant; a predominant system of borrowing money.

¹⁸ Household level credit, named '*Kai-Vaippa*'; informal credit system between households with marginal interest on loan.

¹⁹ They say '*Kadamulla Divasom*', meaning day of debt to God and hence engage in religious activities..

²⁰ This is called '*Kurappu*', means deduction; as the fixed amount is deducted from catch value.

²¹ Name of small scale Theatres in rural areas.

A list of major institutions functioning in the study area and in the nearby places (utilised by the local people) is given in Appendix 2.

4.4. Fisheries Scenario

4.4.1. Fishery Activity

RRA revealed that more than 75% of households are fishery households [this means, at least one member of the household is engaged in fishing or allied activities]. The remaining households are non-fishery. This is also revealed by the data on employment status mentioned in Section 4.2 of this profile. The major fishery activities by gender are given in Box 4.1.

**Box 4.1:
Major Fishery Activity by Gender**

Major Fishery Activity	Male	Female
Fishing	√	
Fish vending		√
Icing	√	√
Salting		√
Drying		√
Head loaders	√	√
Commission agents	√	
Auctioneers	√	
Ice traders		√
Engine oil vending	√	
Gas vending	√	√
Net vending	√	
Net mending	√	√
OBM repairing	√	
Craft making	√	

Source: RRA, 2013.

The division between genders is evident from Box 4.1; men partaking fishing and women fish vending²².

4.4.2. Fishing Fleet

The fishermen ventures on traditional fishing fleet. The traditional fishing crafts in the village are viz. Fibre Boats, Plank Canoe, and Kattamaram. (Descriptions see Appendix 3). The fishing gears in vogue are Roll vala, Echa vala, Kacha vala, Chala vala, Aadu vala, Disco vala, Ozhukku vala, Kamba vala, Thattumadi, Thazhthu vala or Kollu vala, Ponthom, Choonda, etc. (For English names, refer Appendix 4). It is

²² The labourers in these two categories are labelled as 'Active Fishermen' as

notable that the fishermen in Pulluvila are using a variety of fishing nets, many of which are traditional gears. The use of a variety of fishing nets enables the fishermen to engage in fishing almost round the year, as fishing gears are season specific. The Seasonal calendar of fishing in the village is given in Box 4.2.

Box 4.2:
Seasonal Calendar of Fishing in Pulluvila

#	Gears ²³	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Remarks
1	Roll vala	x	x	x	x	x				x	x	x	x	
2	Echa vala	x	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	
3	Kacha vala										x	x	x	
4	Chala vala										x	x	x	
5	Aadu vala										x	x	x	
6	Disco vala													Defunct now*
7	Ozhukku vala					x				x				Out-migration#
8	Kamba vala	x	x	x	x	x	X			x	x	x	x	
9	Thattumadi				x	x	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	
10	Thazhthu vala	x	x	x										
11	Ponthom	x	x	x										
12	Hook & Line	x	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	

Source: RRA, 2013.

* due to decline in prawn; # During October to May.

The State had witnessed the advent of motorization of country fishing crafts by fixing OBM's in the early 80's; resulting in decline of traditional canoes in the central and north Kerala and Kattamarams in the south. However, fishing methods have not changed significantly in Pulluvila, with the change being only in the quantum of gear to suit the higher capacity of plywood boats. The fishermen in Pulluvila are experts in the use of a wide variety of nets. Hence diversified gears, including traditional gears, are still prominent in Pulluvila. The *Kamba vala*²⁴ is nearly on the decline in other parts of the district due to space constraint for operation, but it is still in operation here because of the availability of space in the coast. The reason for existence of *Kattamaram* is that the fishermen are able to catch *Kanava* [Cuttle Fish], which is export variety, with a benefit of low capital investment on the fishing unit.. An important change in this subsector is that the fishing nets made of cotton thread has given way to nets made of nylon.

²³ The names of fishing gears given are in vernacular language; English names of these are given in appendix 4.

²⁴ English name of *Kamba vala* is shore-seine (see appendix 4); 'Kamba' means rope and 'Vala' means fishing gear. The bag shaped net has two wings with long rope that the group of fishermen pull from either side; hence the name. As the fishermen pull the net from the shore (*Kara* in Malayalam), it is also called *Karamadi*; 'Madi' denotes the net.

Kamba vala provide regular employment to a few; part time and seasonal employment to many others. There is considerable migration of fishermen and fishing units within Trivandrum districts as well as to northern districts. The migration within the district is during the monsoon months, when safe anchorage is available only in Vizhinjam. The fishermen can be categorized into owner-workers (fishermen owning and operating fishing crafts), crew members (fishermen working as Coolie in fishing craft, without owning it), and helpers in fishing (helping in loading and unloading, maneuvering fishing craft, etc.). Among households depending mainly on fishing, the main source of income is fishing done by male members and fish processing and vending done by female members. The value of fish catch is shared between the owner worker and other workers according to the local custom. In recent years, auctioning of fish caught by workers is done by Matsyafed Co-operative Society and the benefits are shared by all members.

4.4.3. Allied Fishing Activities

The fishermen in allied fishing activity include persons engaged in fish processing and vending, persons engaged in fishery related activities such as auctioning, vending of ice, oil etc. Men are also engaged in fishery related activities like commission agents, auctioning of fish, transporting and marketing of fish in cycles/auto, repairing of crafts/engines, sale of engine oil etc. The fisher women are mainly engaged in fish processing, fish vending, preparing baits for fishing, etc.

4.4.4. Fish vending Women

They purchase fish landed at shore through auction and take them to rural and urban squatter markets and/or directly to rural/urban households by head load. With changes in fish availability over the years, women have also made changes in their practices. Nowadays, most women do not solely depend on the landings in the village, but tend to go wherever fish is available. By groups, women hire autos/tempos and go to other landing centers and to the city wholesale markets for buying fish. There are women engaged in fish drying at home. Often they take activities outside the fishery, which provides them with a stable income, since the income from fishing is inherently unstable and unpredictable. Some of them run small shops, prepare and sell eateries, either individually or as partners in small groups. In recent years, work provided by

MGNREGS²⁵ is a source of income for many fisher women. It is learnt that younger generation women prefer to work under MGNREGS rather than drying and vending of fish.

4.5. Life and Livelihood: Few Cases

The glimpses of life and livelihood of fisher people in Pulluvila is revealed by few cases, presented hereunder, who were interviewed at random during the course of RRA by the Researchers.

4.5.1 Unstructured interview with Mr.James.P

Mr.James's wife is a fish vendor, covering four domestic markets. Elder son –studied up to HSS - has neither a job nor interested in fishing. He tried for employment in the Gulf but failed the medical test. Second son, studied up to SSLC and is engaged in fishing with father. His daughter is studying.

Mr.James owns a Fibre Boat, Mackerel nets of different varieties, Hooks and Lines. He has been doing fishing for over 35 years. He discontinued his schooling at a very young age and took up fishing as his occupation from then.. This span of experience makes him highly skilled with traditional knowledge for star location²⁶ [identification of Vallies], triangulation [Kanicham Nockal], etc. Mr. James has also worked in Qatar (the Gulf region) doing fishing on Fibre boats for a few years.

Although both James and his wife are hardworking and good earners, the house is not hygienic and the children are also not well educated. This is perhaps due to their absence from home or long working hours which prevent them from giving due care to the children.

James's nets are damaged due to the encroachment of mechanised boats. The repairing of these damaged nets takes a long time period and he has already lost a precious two weeks for the same. The losses are: on net, loss of working days, repairing cost [nets and labour charge]. The working capital is met through household level borrowing at the interest rate of Rs 2 per 100 of borrowing.

²⁵ Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

²⁶ Traditional fishermen have the knowledge and skills of identifying star locations for directions and assessing time when they on board.

According to him, regular set of labourers are available for fishing. If more labourers come forward for fishing, some of them can remain on shore and their share will be given. This indicates the prevalence of “Kara-nila” system, also called “padu vachu” [income spreading], in the village.

4.5.2 Unstructured Interview with Mr. Antony

Mr. Antony: a fisherman, aged 58. His father was a fisherman and mother, a fish vendor. They have two children, the daughter married and her husband is a HSS Teacher [Philosophy], the son, studying for M. Sc [Nursing].

Antony studied up to SSLC at Leo XIII’th HSS. After which, his Uncle [working in the Military Service] brought him to Punjab, on expectation of enrolling him in the Military. That mission failed, but he got employment in a Private Company. However, during his annual vacations, he would come back home and engage in fishing. Later, he went to the Gulf and was employed in fishing on mechanized boats. After returning from Gulf, he has continued this occupation, mainly in Thattumadi [Boat seine].

Son-in-Law of Antony:

His son-in-law: working as a HSST, hailing from the nearby village Adimalathura. His father is a fisherman and mother, a fish vendor. He has one child, who studies in an Unaided School in Mukkola. None of his brothers are engaged in fishing; some hold Government jobs and some are studying for higher degrees. His father, as he said, never desired his children to engage in fishing. The reason being, he believed that fishing is a tiresome and highly risky occupation, with absolutely no dignity of labour.

He was an Altar Boy at Church and the Priest was influential in improving his education. It was this interaction with the Priest that motivated him to join the Seminary. He left the Seminary after a few years, but those years were fruitful as he scaled up the education ladder; He not only acquired his Post Graduate degree in Philosophy but also improved his English speaking skills. This gave him a better career opportunity as a Higher Secondary School Teacher.

The Sisters of Nirmala Convent also were helpful in bettering his education. It is these faith linked interactions with Priests/Sisters that motivate many students to acquire higher education or join the Seminary.

The low dignity of labour, hardships, risk of life, etc. are reasons why fisher people do not encourage their children to consider fishing as an occupation. He opined that these reasons resulted in many people shifting to areas annexed to Pulluvila, whenever they got better career or educational opportunities.

4.5.3 Mr. **Muthappan**

Muthappan: Son of a fisherman and fish vending woman. He is also engaged in fishing and is versatile in multiple fishing gears and often went for masonry work. His father died due to a mishap at sea. This was when he was still a student at school and as a result he and his brothers struggled a great deal. They somehow managed to complete their schooling. One of his brothers completed M. Com and the other one his Ph. D. Muthappan has one son and one daughter studying in Leo XIIIth HSS. His wife is engaged in fish drying and vends dried fish in the home village.

Although Muthappan completed his schooling [Leo XIIIth], he did not continue his education for lack of guidance and support. He felt that the Humanities subject, which he specialized in during Plus Two, had no future prospects and sadly there was no system of career guidance available then. He engaged in fishing, then went to Gulf and worked on assisting electrical works. On his return back home, he continued fishing, venturing in different fishing gears. The acquaintances he made during his stay in the Gulf and the realization of other work opportunities [masonry, etc.] helped him gain employment by assisting masons during off season. When asked, he expressed that he does not like his children to pursue fishing. He also said that no parents from fishing community would like their children to engage in fishing. Fishing is such an adventurous work where life is always at risk. He opined that the fury of the sea, the surf and storm conditions are unpredictable and they cause hardships for safe maneuverability or landing; most often mishaps at sea.

The seasonal effects of fishery are overcome by multiple gear types and also supplementary income from fish vending by women. During off-season, the women vend dried fish or borrow cash from relative / neighbours.

4.5.4 Unstructured interview with Muthayyan Lopez

Mr. Muthayyan Lopez: His father was a fisherman and mother, a house wife. Muthayyan Lopez works as a School Teacher. He has seven brothers and two sisters. All the brothers, except one brother, are employed in non-fishery viz. Two are in the Military Service four in the Gulf, and one is running a Boat Building Yard. His two children are studying in an Unaided school in Mukkola.

Muthayyan's father though engaged in fishing [was **educated**; old Vth standard] desired to send his children for higher studies, as fishing is tedious and insecure. Since he had owned **Kamba** Vala [Shore Seine Unit], he was financially sound to educate his children. Rather, the accessibility of a school [Leo XIIIth UPS at that time and HSS now] nearby was an influencing force for availing education. The Teachers at that time had been from other communities [Nair, Ezhava, Nadar, etc.] diffused in different cultures. The Teachers initiated Arts and Sports programmes [some are residential] and this created better opportunities for mingling with students/teachers/parents from different communities.

After Xth, Muthayyan went to the **Seminary** [Ernakulam]. One of his Uncles was a **Priest** and that influenced him to join the Seminary. He dropped out from the Seminary after five years. The reason was that the news of his maternal grandmother's death was communicated very late to him, by the Seminary and this delay along with the sad news depressed him. However, the life at the Seminary propelled Muthayyan's educational path. He acquired better communication skills in English and further did his B.A from University College, B.Ed from Attoor and got employment in a Government School.

Muthayyan's maternal **Grandfather** was a **traditional** Ayurvedic Doctor [Nattu Vydian]. He was consulted by the patients from other castes [mostly Hindus] and this provided interaction with other communities too.

Also, there were other factors that influenced the educational career and employment diversification. The **Lyola** Poovar [mooted in 1978 by Jesuit Fathers] had intensive involvement in the coastal area from Poovar to Karumkulam [Pulluvila is in Karumkulam GP] focusing on alternate education, employment diversification

programmes, counselling, etc. The first Church in the belt was Karumkulam Church mooted by the **Missionaries**; they initiated programmes to promote education.

One of his Uncles served in KSRTC and another Uncle in the Military. These had its own influence on diversification of employment. Also, there were massive recruitments to Military during that time. One of the Priests who was also HM of the Leo XIIIth HSS, initiated and inspired those who were poor in studying, to join the Military.

Muthayyan cited many cases of people who were highly educated and had reached high cadres in their careers. These people though basically from Pulluvila village, had migrated geographically and occupationally.

4.6. Questions to ponder

The study through RRA and Unstructured interviews throw up light on some questions that are significant for studying the life and labour of fish vending women in Pulluvila. It is a known fact that after the advent of modernization in fisheries and subsequent negative externalities in the Sector, the fish vending by women are generally on the decline. However, it is also noticeable that the proportion of fish vending women is pronounced in the village, which is 13% of the employed population. It is the prevalence of diversified gears and coping with the fishing season that retains the fish vending women in the Sector. Also, the prevalence of Shore-seine is another main reason for the continuance of fish vending women in the Sector. The gear lands a huge quantity of fish, if there is a good catch. But the continued involvement of fisher women in the Sector is not seen in the younger generation. As revealed by the RRA, even with employment diversity among the younger generation fisher men, there is a clear percentage of those who still venture in fishing and related activities. But this trend is not seen among the women of the present/ younger generation. This revelation is stark as fish vending has been a traditional occupation from time immemorial. The parents too, are not interested in sending their daughters for fish vending. There are a few women who find jobs in tailoring, nursing, etc, but a large number of young women are unemployed or searching employment under MGNREGS. A few women engage in fish vending within the village and there are few young women's groups who venture on wholesale fish vending, enabling them to pursue a business while staying in

their own village. Are bitter experiences and low status issues reasons for curtailing the entry of younger generation towards fish vending? If so, what are the specific problems? If not, has their economic status uplifted so much, that they are looking for alternate employment opportunities? The question, in this case, would further be about the older-generation women fish vendors still continuing with their occupation. These are some of the questions thrown up through RRA and Unstructured interviews that are considered in the case studies presented in the forthcoming chapter.

Chapter 5

Chronicles of the Restless

5.1. Case Study: A Brief Profile

The fish vending women is one of the significant fish distribution channels in the small scale fisheries, interlinking the producers (fishermen) and the consumers. The case study of select number of fish vending women in Pulluvila fishing village provides chronicles of their labour and life. As mentioned in Chapter Three on Methodology, the samples of cases have been drawn from different categories of fish vending women considering seven major criteria - three factors on life (age, marital status, and house status) and two factors on labour (fish vending experience and market destination). The cases studied are:

- i. Mrs. Maria Dasi: Very old fish vendor, aged 75, married, staying in kutcha house. She has sixty three years of experience in fish vending and is still engaged in fish vending, covering distant markets.
- ii. Mrs. Celine: Fish vendor, aged 55, married, staying in kutcha house. She has thirty eight years of experience in fish vending. She has been covering distant markets.
- iii. Mrs. Selvanesam: Fish vendor, aged 60, married, and staying in a pucca traditional house.. She has been engaged in fish vending for the last thirty years covering distant markets.
- iv. Mrs. Nirmala Joseph: Fish vendor, aged 50, married, and staying in a pucca rental house. She has been doing fish vending for the last forty one years covering nearby markets.
- v. Mrs. Anthoniyal: Retired fish vendor aged 61, married, and staying in a pucca house. She has forty six years of experience in fish vending covering nearby markets, but now retired due to illness.
- vi. Mrs. Jorisal Mary: Fish vendor, aged 70, married (inter-religion marriage) and staying in a pucca house. She has fifty three years experience in fish vending covering nearby markets.
- vii. Mrs. Dolly: Young fish vendor, aged 42, married, and staying in a shed. She has been engaged in fish vending for the last five covering nearby markets.

5.2. Case Studies: Presentation

The cases studied are presented and discussed hereunder by describing labour and life situation in the sequence of: (i) Present Profile, (ii) Childhood and Adolescence, (iii) Marriage and Family, (iv) Present Day Routine, and (v) Facts Encountered. The descriptions in the first four sub-titles are the information shared by the respondents that has been collected and presented with an empathic approach. This has been the sequence that is followed in collecting information. Whereas the fifth sub-heading deals with the facts encountered by the Researchers as the sub-title indicates. The sharing of information by the fish vendors have been in their colloquial language that the Researchers noted in Malayalam and transcribed into English. Wherever the colloquial terminologies are important, it has been used as it is and explained in the foot note.

5.2.1.0. Ageing, But Not Tired

Maria Dasi, exudes energy and enthusiasm much beyond her age. At 75 years of age, she is a fish vendor covering distant markets just like she has done for the past sixty three years. Her life and labour related aspects over the life cycle is given below.

5.2.1.1. Present Profile

The present personal particulars of Maria Dasi are given in Box 1.1.

Box 1.1: Personal Profile of Maria Dasi		
#	Components	Particulars
1	Age [Years]	75
2	Education	Studied up to 2nd standard
3	Marital status	Married
3	Experience in fish vending [Years]	63
4	Fish vending destinations	Fresh fish selling, covering distant markets at Aryancode and Neyyattinkara.
5	Occupation of Parents:	
	Father	Fisherman venturing on <i>Kattamaram</i>
	Mother	Fish vendor
6	Occupation of Husband	Fisherman; coolie on <i>Thattumadi</i> (Boatseine), now retired.
7	No. of Children	9

Source: Case Study, 2013.

Born in a fishery family - father was a fisherman and mother, a fish vendor, she has five sisters and one brother; all of them are in the fisheries. She is now staying with her spouse in a *kutcha* house as given in Box 1.2.

Box 1.2: Profile of Maria Dasi's House		
#	Components	Particulars
1	House Type	Thatched
2	Electrification	Electrified
3	Toilet	Yes
4	Other Amenities	TV, Fan, Plastic Chairs, Furniture.
5	Separate rooms for adults	No
6	Family type	Nuclear
7	<i>Pattayam</i> ¹ for land	Yes

Source: Case Study, 2013.

As mentioned before in this study, the profile of house is sufficient to assess the socio-economic condition of the fish vendor and her family. Despite the long years of fish vending, Maria Dasi could not eke out income to construct a *pucca* house and is still continuing to work even at the age of 75. The life and labour portrayed here sheds light on such aspects.

5.2.1.2. Childhood and Adolescence

Maria Dasi studied in Pottayil Pally School up to the second standard. She then dropped out from school as her parents were not serious about educating their children. Usually, among the fishing community, the father engages in fishing and the mother in fish vending. This being the case, the responsibility of taking care of the house and younger siblings usually falls on the elder daughters. While Maria Dasi studied up to second standard, her eldest sister was the one who took care of household. Soon, her elder sister joined their mother for fish vending. Since this, it naturally became Maria Dasi's turn to take care of the house hold. She dropped out from school and started selling peanuts by keeping a basket of peanuts on the *veranda*² of the house. The earnings from selling peanuts were meagre, sufficient only for buying coconut oil, meeting the need of hair oil for bath and such petty expenses.

¹ Deed for land.

² frontage of a house.

Maria's mother died at the age of eleven. The income from peanut sale was meagre and did not meet the daily needs. Hence, her elder sister suggested that she too pursue fish vending. At the age of twelve, Maria commenced fish vending by head load, accompanying her elder sister. Their younger brother did not care much for them. It was the sisters who often paid for their brother's petty expenses. "Even though he never cared for us, we sisters gave him pocket money³, as we had concern for our brother", she told. Fish vending by head load was tedious, due to the heavy load of fish. Maria managed to carry a small quantity of fish or dried fish at the early stages of fish vending and over the years, increased the quantity to a full basket of fish.

5.2.1.3. Marriage and Family

The marriage and procreation being important events in the life of a woman, a brief profile on the same is given in box 1.3.

Box 1.3: Marital Profile of Maria Dasi		
#	Components	Particulars
1	Age at marriage	19
2	Payment of Dowry	Not paid
3	Form of Dowry	Not applicable
4	No. of pregnancies	9
5	No. of births	9
6	No. of children lost under 5 years of age	3 [died at birth]

Source: Case Study, 2013.

When Maria married Jesu Michel at the age of nineteen, she was already established as a hardworking fish vendor. Jesu Micheal was working as a Coolie on Shore-seine fishing unit. Dowry system was prevalent in the community.⁴ However, no dowry was paid, due to the poor financial condition of Maria's family. But the *Tharavad*⁵ house was transferred to Maria Dasi's name. Rather, Maria Dasi was considered by her neighbours as hardworking and disciplined. On knowing this from the neighbours, the groom was ready to marry her even without dowry.

While staying at *Tharavad*, the first three babies died at birth. She believed that this misfortune happened repeatedly due to the inauspicious location of the *Tharavad* house.

³ *Kai-kaashu* in local parlance.

⁴ Agreed cash and gold. Of the total cash paid as dowry, a share of cash is paid to the parents of bridegroom and another share for the couple to live. Then the bride has to wear gold ornaments on an agreed sovereign between the families of bride and bride groom.

⁵ The ancestral land and house property is called *Tharavad* property.

Hence, the couple left the *Tharavad* house and shifted to shore side *Puremboke*⁶ land by erecting a shed. Over time, they erected a house made of mud blocks for side walls, plastered with cement⁷ and a thatched roof. It was from the savings of fish vending that Maria Dasi could construct a house. The subsequent deliveries, after shifting to the new house, were healthy and the babies survived. All the nine deliveries were at home. During the pregnancy period, she went for fish vending till the fifth month.

Later on, a major portion of land in her *Tharavad* had been encroached by the people from nearby areas and her family was not strong enough to protest them.

Among the surviving six children of Maria Dasi, three are males and three females. All of them, except one son were dropouts from school, before the 10th standard. Two sons and two daughters have been involved in fishery, fishing and fish vending respectively. The elder daughter has not gone for fish vending due to health issues and is engaged in tailoring at home. (Box 1.4).

Box 1.4: Background of Maria Dasi's Children			
Sons' Occupation/Education		Daughters' Occupation/Education	
1	Fisherman-studied up to 10 th	1	Tailoring-studied up to 9 th
2	Fisherman-studied up to 8 th	2	House Wife-studied up to 3 rd
3	Gulf returnee-unemployed-studied up to 7th	3	Fish vendor-studied up to 8 th

Source: Case Study, 2013.

Maria's three daughters and two sons got married. A dowry of Rs 8000 and 2.5 sovereign⁸ of gold were paid for the elder daughter; Rs. 1,00,000 and five sovereigns of gold for the second daughter. No dowry was paid for the third daughter, due to financial crunch. Perhaps, because she is engaged in fish vending and is earning a stable income, the groom's parents were ready for this marriage alliance without dowry. The elder two sons are fishermen and got married. A Dowry of Rs 10,000 each was received on their marriage and this was utilised for meeting the dowry requirements of Maria's daughters.

⁶ Public land remains vacant.

⁷ Cost of cement at that time was only Rs 13 per packet.

⁸ One sovereign of gold equals 8 grams.

The son studied only up to seventh and has gone twice to the Gulf in search of employment. But he failed to find a job. He stayed in the Gulf for a short while and returned as he could not find a job. Now he remains unemployed, but often goes for painting. Maria Dasi is very much worried about this son as he neither goes for fishing nor does he have a sustainable job. He is yet to be married too. Maria Dasi feels unfortunate that their younger son has neither formal education nor traditional learning of fishing.

The *Pattayam* of *Tharavad* land was kept at the new house and was lost due to flood, as the new house is near to the shore. As mentioned before, the plot was encroached by people from neighbouring areas over the period of time. Maria was unable to fight this legally. As the sons are married and living with their wives, the old aged couple are not strong enough to fight against this encroachment physically. She curses her fate of helplessness.

5.2.1.4. Present Daily Routine

During the time when Maria commenced fish vending, the target was the evening markets of Perumkadavila, Aryancode, Chembooru, etc. She buys fish for vending by auction from the shore; leave to the markets by head load of fish - carried in '*Vallom*' (bamboo basket) - from home village after 10 am and reaches the markets by evening. No food is taken till evening. It is night by the time fish vending for that day is done, and so she stays at the locals' house [mostly houses of dhobis]. She borrows clothes from dhobis to change her dirty dress, washes and dries them at night itself. By early morning, she walks back and reaches home by Six AM. She has to begin her routine of fish vending again by ten in the morning. This allows her very little time with her family members.

The fish vendors had no wrist watch at that time, but read time by locating sun light or moon light. There were also no bus service and they travelled by bare-foot with a head load of fish on bamboo baskets. Maria Dasi walked non-stop with head load of fish; as halting on the way made them tired. She mentioned that the continuous wetness of head while carrying the head load of fish and walking in the sun causes headaches and eye complaints.. To overcome this, she started carrying the fish basket on her shoulder since the last twenty years. Maria also took very small quantity of fish as she is not healthy enough to carry a heavy load of fish. There were also none to unload the fish during early times. The fish vendors themselves had to unload it. But now, there are allied workers for loading and unloading.

Transportation

There was no public transportation, but only two private vehicles plying at that time - MVMS and AMS. Maria remembers that at around her age of fifty, public transportation⁹ commenced and she availed the facility of transportation. She had the fortune to travel for fish vending by a tempo on a shared basis since the late eighties. Now, it is routine to do so and travel time has substantially reduced availing more time at home. Six or Seven fish vendors hire a vehicle on shared basis. Each person may pay around Rs 150; they charge only 50% of this amount from Maria Dasi as she carries only small quantities of fish. Return travel is by KSRTC to save transportation costs. During early days, drivers would refuse to board her for carrying an Aluminium vessel, but now a days there is no such resistance as even fellow passengers support her. There are also passengers who help her to place the vessel properly within the seat.

With the advent of transportation, a lot of changes have taken place in labour and life. She buys fish from shore, by auction, in the morning. Then travels by tempo at around 9 am, vends fish in the local markets and return home at noon. The markets covered now are Marayamuttom and Perumkadavila. Maria Dasi first goes to Marayamuttom and if there is surplus fish, moves to Perumkadavila market. After that, if she is left with some fish, she sells it to the nearby houses. Years back, fish vending women used to occupy the road side in front of KSRTC Bus stand. But later, they were barred by the authorities. These days, Maria Dasi makes an attempt to sell, if she has balance of dried fish, in front of the KSRTC Bus stand, Neyyattinkara; provided the Police is not watching. It may fetch an amount of Rs 500. Fresh fish cannot be taken in this manner, as it would perish immediately.

According to Maria, there is a difference in labour and life between house to house fish vending and market based fish vending. Those who vend fish at households are back home before 2 pm. While those who vend fish at domestic markets reach home between 3 and 5 pm. However, the latter will fetch better income. The advent of vehicle access has substantially influenced their life as tedious labour with head load of fish could be avoided. They also reach their destinations quickly saving a lot of time and energy.

⁹ Though, Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) commenced its service since 1965 with 661 bus schedules and 36 lorry schedules in the State. At that time, they had 901 buses, 51 lorries, and 29 other vehicles. So the frequency of transportation is even very low in cities and literally absent in rural areas.

Husband Retired

Maria's husband has retired¹⁰ from fishing, since the last 15 years, due to age. She said if the male reaches a certain age, they won't be able to go for fishing. It's she who now takes care of her retired husband and unemployed son.

Challenges

The consumers in the local markets are on decline because the male merchants, using M-80¹¹, are selling fish door to door in the early morning. The house wives also prefer this as those of them employed can cook early in the morning and go to office. Also, with the *Thozhilurappu*¹², house wives are getting work in and around their village location. Hence, they prefer to buy fish from male vendors in the morning so that they can finish cooking and join their *Thozhilurappu group*.

The predominant fishes in olden days have substantially declined these days. The fishes that had been availed plenty were Parava, Neymeen, Vattom Kanny, Neytholi, Vaala, Konchu, etc. The fish landings have also come down drastically. Many of the days, the shore is empty¹³ and the fish vending women do not get any fish. In such situations they buy fish that are transported to Pallom, Kaliakkavila or such other places by lorry. The poor quality fishes ('ice meen'¹⁴) like Choorra, Ayala, Chala are bought from such markets. They are forced to sell such poor quality fishes and this may lead to loss of their reputation and therefore losing their regular customers.

The cost of maintenance of Thatched house is high. Maria Dasi mentioned that thatching the roof using coconut leaves is costly; Rs 7000 was spent in the last year. There is no Govt. scheme to support thatching of roof as they have only housing schemes.

¹⁰ When the husband reaches old age and illhealth, then they do not go for fishing. They call it as retirement.

¹¹ M-80 is one of the brand of moped with a carriage used for transporting goods by small vendors. With the advent of M-80, men folk from outside fishing community entered into fish vending by house to house.

¹² *Thozhilurappu*, in local parlance means employment guarantee. Hundred days employment of rural people are ensured through a Central Government Scheme entitled MGNREGS. It stands for Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. As per this scheme, those who register for employment, have to be offered 100 days manual job; failure of which the applicant is entitled for equivalent wages as compensation.

¹³ *Karayozhinja* dhinam as fish vending women says, means the day with no fish.

¹⁴ The fish preserved in ice is considered by fish vendors as poor quality and they labelled them as "Azhukka Meen" or "Challu Meen" (Bad Fish).

There is an old age pension of Rs 1000/-, but it is not sufficient to meet their expenses. She is not interested to take loan from *Sangom*¹⁵. This is because she is not sure about regular repayment of this loan, due to the lack of a stable income.

5.2.1.5. Facts Encountered

It is evident from the case study of Maria Dasi that women fish vendor's responsibility of household management commences from childhood; that has a negative impact on their education. The child labour is also evident.

There is a learning process of fish vending that is imparted from the mother. Since Maria's mother died during childhood, her elder sister took up that role.

The issues of gender discrimination are very much evident from the glimpses of present case study. Maria had concern and care for her brother, even though there were no support, even during important life events, from her brother.. After her marriage, it was she who constructed the house. Maria is now surviving on the earnings of fish vending. Even at the late age of 75, Maria is vending fish and looking after her ailing husband and unemployed son.

It is during Maria's childhood that she supported her parents through household responsibility, during adolescence stepping into labour for financial support to family, during adulthood substantiating family income for caring for the children, and during old age caring for her retired husband and also giving cash for petty expenses including his liquor consumption; and yet the woman fish vendor's life remains restless and insecure.

It is surprising to note Maria's concern about her husband that he should not go for fishing as he is aged, but she does not feel her own old age and continues to work to eke out an income. She carries similar concerns for her daughters, as they are not financially sound.. It is humbling to note that as in usual cases, where the children support their aged parents, Maria does not expect her children to support her.

¹⁵ Fishermen Cooperative Society they call as *Sangom*; *Sangom* means society.

Maria's daily routine of walking barefoot in the hot sun, on an empty stomach till she reached the market, and staying elsewhere for the night, returning home in the morning, leaving absolutely no time with her family members, reveals the rigorous lifestyle she followed. In a normal society, women staying at a stranger's house at night in the market destinations, were considered unacceptable. However, it is a shocking fact that women fish vendors like Maria were forced to do this, as part of their labour. But things have changed now; bamboo baskets used for keeping fish load is replaced by aluminium vessels, bare foot walk to reach destination is replaced by transportation facility, they read time by watch instead of the sun's position. Also, the women fish vendors return back home by afternoon and this means more time with family.

However, women fish vendors are not free from challenges posed by the modernisation and concomitant changes. For example, their customers are declining due to the advent of men fish vendors with the moped. Also, at the fish landing side, predominant species are on the decline; badly affecting the procurement of fish vendors - in terms of quantity, quality and price. The arrivals of iced fish from other places are a concern for them.

Maria is not happy with the Government schemes. She feels that they do not address their real issues. For example, her need is to renovate or maintain a thatched house, but there are schemes available only for construction of a new house. Another example is insufficiency of pension amount and its irregularity.

Maria's concern about her unemployed son may not be an isolated case. The issue is that the upcoming generation is neither able to step up the education ladder, due to their poor socio-economic background, nor pursue fishing as they could not learn it from childhood.

5.2.2.0. Disgruntled Bread Earner

Celine, aged 55, has long 38 years of fish vending experience, covering distant markets. She is the sole bread winner of family and takes care of her retired¹ husband too. Despite Celine providing for her husband, he seems to be dissatisfied and ever-demanding of her. It is shocking to know that she went for fish vending until the very day of her delivery! Celine has a lucrative fish vending venture, stabilised through hardwork and strategic trading operations. The ups and downs of Celine's life and labour scenario over her life cycle is portrayed here under.

5.2.2.1. Present Profile

The personal particulars of Celine is given in Box 2.1.

Box 2.1: Personal Profile of Celine		
#	Components	Particulars
1	Age [Years]	55
2	Education	5th standard
3	Marital status	Married
3	Experience in fish vending [Years]	38
4	Fish vending category	Fresh fish vending, covering Neyyattinkara-TB Junction
5	Occupation of Parents:	
	Father	Fisherman, owning Shore-seine
	Mother	Fish vending, wholesale basis
6	Occupation of Husband	Fishing, now retired.
7	No. of Children	5

Source: Case Study, 2013.

Despite the long years of strenuous labour, Celine's house is *Kutch*; thatched roof, side walls made of mud-bricks, and congested rooms. (Box 2.2). But this has nothing to do with her wealth status, as she is seen wearing gold ornaments of different designs. (The details see section 5.2.2.3).

¹ retired here means retired from fishing.

Box 2.2: Profile of Celine's House		
#	Components	Particulars
1	House Type	Thatched
2	Electrification	Electrified
3	Toilet	Available
4	Other Amenities	TV, Chairs, Furnitures
5	Separate rooms for adults	One Room
6	Family type	Joint
7	<i>Pattayam</i> for land	Yes

Source: Case Study, 2013.

5.2.2.2. Childhood and Adolescence

Born in a large family of three brothers and five sisters, Celine's childhood was not pleasant. Celine remembers her days of childhood, when there was neither a stable income nor staple food. Since there was never sufficient food at home, she and her siblings would remain starved most of the days. Rarely, would they have a full meal, ideal for a growing child. Celine recalls many days where she has gone to school on an empty stomach, only to fall unconscious due to hunger and fatigue. Education was not a priority for her parents and this coupled with her starvation affected her studies negatively. Celine studied up to Fourth standard using the same slate that was bought for First standard. She had to walk a long distance to reach the school through a narrow path. There was only one set of dress for her, during school days. Hence, she would wash and dry her school dress in the night itself for re-using it the next day. She dropped out from school during the Fifth standard, as she had to help her mother in drying fish. She exclaimed that these a days, this was not the situation and children had better facilities and opportunities!

In the fishing community, with both parents engaged in fishing or fish vending it was common practice to entrust the elder daughters with the charge of taking care of the household and younger siblings. Also, during peak fish landings, Celine's mother would buy fish for drying in sunlight; so that the dried fish could be sold during lean seasons. In such peak seasons, it was the responsibility of the daughters to take care of fish put ashore for drying. Hence the absence from school was a routine in the fishery households. When Celine's elder sister started accompanying their mother for fish vending, Celine took charge of the household activities including fish drying.

In between, Celine's father started showing symptoms of poor mental health. . In order to seek treatment for him, her mother had proceeded to the Medical College with father. They were accompanied by one of Celine’s younger brothers and three younger sisters. . But they didn't return home and there was no clue about their whereabouts for about three months. During those days, it was the elder sister who took care of Celine and her other siblings. Those days were painful as there was no information about their parents, brother and sisters alongwith the struggle for everyday food. After three months they all came back and said that they were in Tamil Nadu in a traditional curing centre. Fortunately, their father was cured and in sound mental health.

After coming back, Celine's mother re-started dry fish vending and father re-ventured into fishing. They then stepped onto a better life. Celine would often go for fish vending with her mother; mostly engaged in fish drying and house hold work.

5.2.2.3. Marriage and Family

A brief marital profile of Celine is given in Box 2.3. Celine married a fisherman at the age of seventeen. As per the custom, dowry was paid - cash and gold ornaments. She remained as house wife engaged in post-harvest activities of fish drying.

Box 2.3: Marital Profile of Celine		
#	Components	Particulars
1	Age at marriage	17
2	Payment of Dowry	Paid
3	Form of Dowry	Cash, Gold Ornaments
4	No. of pregnancies	5
5	No. of births	5
6	No. of children lost under 5 years of age	Nil

Source: Case Study, 2013.

Among the five children, three are in fishery or allied activities; elder son engaged in fishing, second son running auto rickshaw to carry fish, and elder daughter in fish vending as joint venture with Celine. All her children are married. The sons- in- laws are also into fishing. Though two younger daughters have experience in fish vending, their husbands do not permit them to go for fish vending.

Box 2.4: Background of Celin's Children			
Sons' Occupation/Education		Daughters' Occupation/Education	
1	Fisherman-studied up to 7th	1	Fish vendor-studied up to 5th
2	Allied Fish Worker-studied up to 9th	2	House Wife-studied up to 7th
		3	House Wife-studied up to 8th

Source: Case Study, 2013.

As her husband was a fisherman with fishing fleet, the family was generally stable financially. When compared to her difficult childhood, her life after marriage was indeed better and happy. But sadly, this did not last long; by the age of twenty seven, she had to step up to the role as the family bread winner, as her husband started suffering from health problems. He experienced severe chills during fishing on the Kattamaram. This forced Celine to step into fish vending as a means of livelihood. Once her husband fully retired from fishing, he started spending long hours on the sea shore, drinking liquor, for which Celine paid from her daily earnings. This led to a lot of quarrels between them, as the money for his drinking expenses was never enough for him. Her children's education, food, dress and all other expenses had to be met from Celine's earnings.

Celine choose to go nearby markets viz. Chavadi and Kanjiramkulam. The income from fish vending at nearby markets was not sufficient enough for day to day living due to the fetching of low price for fish, as the intensity of fish vendors were more in nearby markets. Hence after a year, she shifted fish vending to a road side of Neyyattinkara Bus Stand. But there were frequent evictions from the road side by the Neyyattinkara Municipality and hence she shifted to Neyyattinkara Market, run by the Municipality.

5.2.2.4. Daily Routine at present

At present, Neyyattinkara fish market is the main outlet for Celine. She buys fish from Pulluvila or Pallom between 6 and 7 am and reaches Neyyattinkara Market at around 9 am. This is by arranging a trucker on shared basis between two to four fish vending women. Neyyattinkara fish market functions between 9 am to 6 pm. She vends fish in the market during that time. After 6 pm, she shifts to the road side in front of the market; targeting the Government employees returning from office. She returns back home between 9 pm and 10 pm.

Seasonal Fluctuations

Celine goes for fish vending every day except on Sundays, festival days [X-mas, Onam, Easter], ceremonies of relatives, and official holidays [on official holidays, the market in Neyyattinkara is usually dull]. She engages in fish vending around the year, but there are seasonal variations. During January-March, fish landings are low along the south coast of Kerala [*Panjamaasom* - months of starvation, according to the fisher people]; when fish arrives from Mangalore, Thuthukudy, and Kasaragod [that they call as "ice-mean"] are bought for sale. For the women fish vendors, these months are lean season and they survive with their savings or borrowed money.

Joint Venture

Celine vends fish jointly with her elder daughter. This helps her buy fish from Vizhinjam or Kaliakkavila [Tamil Nadu], in case fish is not available in Pulluvila/Pallom. Even when fish is available from Pulluvila,, she often purchases additional fish from Vizhinjam or Kaliakkavila depending on the market demand. This is possible only because she does fish vending jointly with her daughter. While her daughter is engaged in fish vending at Neyyattinkara, Celine makes a second trip to Vizhinjam or Kaliakkavila to buy fish; depending on the market demand. The buying of fish from multiple markets and vending at Neyyattinkara Market, assures a better income for Celine and her daughter.

Strategies

It seems that fish vending by Celine is a lucrative business. As mentioned before, her husband is not going for fishing, due to illness. He also drinks liquor regularly from the earnings of his wife. Even then, she is able to run the household and has managed to get all her daughters married, with a sufficient dowry. Celine has successful fish vending strategies of enhancing income from fish vending. Her decision to do a joint venture with her daughter helps her to vend fish for the whole day at Neyyattinkara market. While her daughter looks after the vending of one lot of fish, Celine goes to another place and procures fish for another slot. In the evening, they step onto the road side of Neyyattinkara market to capture the evening customers, employees returning home from offices.

Celine quotes a different price to different customers for the same quantity/ variety of fish; she charges low from ordinary employees and higher from officers. This discretion on the view that the Officers who gets bribe can afford to pay a higher price. Her price discrimination strategy helps her to earn a better income.

After meeting household expenses, the surplus income is saved through *Chitty*² and the *Chitty* amount received will be invested in *Blade*³ at an interest of Rs 2 for Rs 100. The interest from *Blade* alone is a minimum of Rs 2000 per month. The hardworking entrepreneurship between Celine and her daughter and an efficient financial management puts her in a better financial status. Her financial status is evident from the variety of gold ornaments she wears.

During monsoon, from June to August, plenty of fish is available from Vizhinjam Fishing Harbour at low price; as almost all the fishing fleets from the district land at Vizhinjam. At the same time, a higher price for fish is fetched at the domestic markets. This is because during the period of monsoon, fishing with trawl net is banned in the State. This results in a decline of bulk fish in the markets, which further causes a hike in the prices. Hence, the monsoon period is lucrative for fish vending women. While during May, the risk of incurring loss is high as there is a fish glut then, causing prices to go down in the domestic market.

Operational Costs

The operational expenses incurred for fish vending are transportation charges of Rs 150 [Rs 100 per head for truck fare for onward trip and Rs 50 per head for auto fare for return trip], Rs 20 for loading at shore, Rs 20 for unloading at domestic market, Rs 100 per *Charuvam* [Aluminium Vessel] as market toll [*Chantha-pirivu*]. However, if the fish is heaped over proportion of the vessel, exceeding its top limit, Rs 150 per vessel is charged as market toll. The market toll at Kanjiramkulam market is Rs 75 and Kaliakkavila market is Rs 20.

² *Chitty* is one of the thrift and credit programme, especially in rural areas. It is system of depositing a fixed installment [monthly or daily] to the person/institution running the *Chitty* for a specific period for a pre-fixed capital sum as return.

³ *Blade* is a term used for informal credit system in which the money lender charges exorbitant interest. Hence the name "Blade".

Market Amenities

Fish Hall is available in the Neyyattinkara Municipal Market. It has a toilet, urinal and bathroom. Water is also available for cleaning the vessel at a price of Rs 10 per bucket. However, the lack of proper drainage system makes the surroundings unhygienic. The garbage is not disposed off, the waste water drain is logged and no effort is taken to maintain a hygienic surrounding..

Strong Union

Other than the excess toll collection and unclean surroundings, there are not much problems in the market and the Union of fish vendors is strong. The women fish vendors have to compete with male fish vendors from the Muslim community, but no problems have surfaced so far; perhaps the Union has to be appreciated for this.

Miserable, but healthy

Celine's life remains miserable as she hardly gets time to spare at home. Also, she has been skipping breakfast and lunch ever since she commenced the fish vending occupation. Her day commences with a bed tea and then from 6 am onwards, she is busy buying fish from the shore or other places, transportation of fish, vending, and is back home at around 9 pm. In between she normally has tea and snacks in the evening; an expenditure of Rs 10. After reaching home at around 9 pm, she takes a bath and has dinner. Her daughters cook dinner for the household, as Celine is always away at work. But there are numerous occasions where Celine, due to fatigue, has immediately gone to bed, after work, without having dinner. She feels that her occupation, which keeps her busy throughout the day, actually shields her from worry and illness!

It was shocking to hear that the delivery of her fourth and fifth babies took place immediately after she arrived home, after fish vending. On reaching home after fish vending, she felt pain and was rushed to the nearby Government Hospital. However, for the deliveries of her first three children, she had three months of rest at home and the daily expenses are met from savings/borrowings.

5.2.2.5. Facts Encountered

Even though Celine is staying in a *Kutchra* house, her financial position is better. The old house is situated on a narrow stretch, congested between neighbouring houses. The house is retained as *Kutchra* perhaps because, a renovation may create legal/technical issues on spatial planning by the Local Government. This is revelation that the house alone is not an indicator of socio-economic condition.

Celine is able to ensure a lucrative venture due to the multiple strategies that she has applied in fish vending and also alternative income generation activities. She is engaged in dawn to dusk fish sales, through joint venture with her elder daughter. The procurement of fish from multiple sources and price discrimination are the strategies to enhance income. The surplus earnings from fish vending are prudently rotated in alternative income generation activities such as *Chitty* and *Blade*. Celine also makes investment in gold, a stable investment with minimum risk.

Despite Celine's hard work and lucrative venture, her life seems to be miserable. She is the lone bread earner of the family and also provides money for her husband's, liquor needs. She is aggrieved at her husband's behaviour and feels burdened with these thoughts.

5.2.3.0. Dry Fish Vending as a Coping Strategy

Born in a fishery family, Selvanesam too became a fish vendor turning it into a lucrative venture for her. Things changed when she met with a motor accident injuring her shoulder bone forever. Although this prevents her from carrying fish load, she has devised a coping strategy to sustain her occupation. The glimpses of life and labour of Selvanesam narrated hereunder throws light on her survival strategies.

5.2.3.1. Present Profile

The personal particulars of Selvanesam are given in Box 3.

Box 1: Personal Profile of Selvanesam		
#	Components	Particulars
1	Age [Years]	60
2	Education	1st standard
3	Marital status	Married
4	Experience in fish vending [Years]	30
5	Fish vending category	Dry fish vending, covering Chalai market
6	Occupation of Parents:	
	Father	Fisherman
	Mother	Fish vendor
7	Occupation of Husband	Fisherman, formerly <i>Thattumadi</i> Owner
8	No. of Children	7

Source: Case Study, 2013.

Selvanesam has one sister and four brothers; all of them schooled up to the LP level at St. Andrews LPS¹. Selvanesam is now staying in an inherited house; an old traditional house made of hard wood². The house has all amenities and is electrified. (See house profile in Box 3.2).

¹ LPS - stands for Lower Primary School.

² Traditionally called *Nalukettu*, this type of houses are made of hard and thick wooden pieces for side walls and floor; with roofs thatched. Now a days these types of houses are rarely seen.

Box 3.2: Profile of Selvanesam's House		
#	Components	Particulars
1	House Type	Thatched Traditional <i>Nalukettu</i>
2	Electrification	Electrified
3	Toilet	Yes
4	Other Amenities	TV, Fan, Plastic Chairs, Furniture.
5	Separate rooms for adults	No
6	Family type	Nuclear
7	<i>Pattayam</i> for land	Yes

Source: Case Study, 2013.

5.2.3.2. Childhood and Adolescence

Selvanesam dropped out from the First standard at school. . The reason being the Teacher had beaten her. From then she has remained at home supporting her parents in household activities, fish drying, etc. During those days regular schooling was not insisted upon, as both parents were involved in fishing and related activities. Following the usual trend of women fish vendors, with the elder daughter staying at home, to look after the household and younger siblings, Selvanesam too did the same. The reason for discontinuing her school may have been the Teacher at school, but this pattern of low education was not atypical among their clan.

Selvanesam's mother had a lucrative fish vending trade; she is literate too as she has studied up to the Ninth standard. Her mother reads books and news papers. Selvanesam's mother's target markets were Marayamuttom, Avanakuzhy, etc. Selvanesam helps her mother in cooking, loading/unloading, and also salting fish. Tapioca with fish curry³ or wheat soup was their routine diet. The cooked rice was taken very rarely, by the family members, with the exception of her father. Rice was cooked for their father because he had to go for long hours of fishing.

Selvanesam very often accompanied her mother for fish vending. She married at an early age of sixteen; it was a common practice among the fisher community to get their daughters married off, before reaching the legitimate age of 18. Selvanesam ventured into fish vending independently, when she was thirty. Her initial target places for fish vending were the nearby

³ fish cooked with red chilli powder, tamarind juice, and other provisions.

markets like Thirupuram, Arumanoor, etc. The fish was carried on her head in a basket, using three or four areca nut leaves to cushion the basket, to prevent it from leaking. If the basket of fish was heavy, they used *Kondody*⁴ to carry it.

5.2.3.3. Marriage and Family

Selvanesam married a fisherman owning a *Kattamaram* and *Thattumadi*. Four sovereigns of gold and Rs 1500 were paid as dowry. The couple has seven children - six daughters and one son. (Box 3.3).

#	Components	Particulars
1	Age at marriage	16
2	Payment of Dowry	Paid
3	Form of Dowry	Cash, Gold Ornaments
4	No. of pregnancies	7
5	No. of births	7
6	No. of children lost under 5 years of age	Nil

Source: Case Study, 2013.

The first two deliveries were at home and the rest at a Private hospital⁵. Their son and three daughters were schooled up to the LPS level only; the rest of the daughters studied up to UPS⁶. (Box 3.4). Her son dropped out from school as he had an eye disease. Educating children were not a serious concern for parents then. One daughter passed away in a motor accident at the age of thirteen.

Sons' Occupation/Education		Daughters' Occupation/Education	
1	Fisherman-studied up to LPS	1	Fish vendor-studied up to LPS
		2	House Wife-studied up to LPS
		3	House Wife-studied up to LPS
		4	House Wife-studied up to UPS
		5	House Wife-studied up to UPS
		6	House Wife/Tailoring-studied up to UPS

Source: Case Study, 2013.

All of Selvanesam's children are married. The dowry for the first daughter was Rs 20,000/-, second and third daughters were given Rs 40,000/- each and Rs 2,50,000/- for the remaining

⁴ Thick rope for leevay.

⁵ Thankappan Doctor's hospital.

⁶ UPS - Upper Primary School

two daughters. This is in addition to the gold of around two sovereigns given to all of them. Her Sons-in-law are fishermen; although they consume liquor, Selvanesam is happy that they provide for their family. She is also proud of the fact that her grand children go to school and are studious.

Selvanesam commenced fish vending, after fourteen years of her marriage. The family faced acute financial crisis as her husband was alcoholic. . In order get rid of the debt accumulated over time, she was forced to go for fish vending. She bought fish from Karumkulam and would walk a long way, with a head load of fish, to distant markets in Kaliakkavila, Kattakada, Marayamuttom, etc. Selvanesam reaches there by around 2 pm, and back home around 8 pm.

Once Selvanesam engaged in fish vending as an occupation, her daughters took charge of the household activities. The elder daughter would care for the younger ones; she would collect water, cook food and wash clothes. Currently, her daughter or daughter- in-law shares the work at home. At Chalai market, she takes tea twice but has no breakfast. Her only food is the dinner she takes, once she reaches home. As her husband is not well, he is unable to go for fishing. Hence, it becomes her responsibility, to take care of the family and also provide for her husband's alcohol consumption.

5.2.3.4. Daily Routine at present

In her younger days, Selvanesam would always walk to distant markets. This is not possible now, due to her declining age and health. Also, instead of carrying a head load of fresh fish, she feels it easier to carry dry fish. Fresh fish is heavier than dry fish. She mentioned that two baskets of fresh fish equals to one basket of dried fish; while the weight would reduce considerably to one-fourth.. She prefers the Chalai market, which means waking up very early and leaving home without having breakfast.

The Chalai markets starts functioning at around 4.30 am. Selvanesam procures fish from Puthiathura, Karumkulam, Vizhinjam, etc. before 3.30 am. Her elder daughter helps her in drying fish. [Fishing crafts use Driftnets and they land fish early morning]. She purchases fresh fish during peak landings, dries it in sun light, and sells it dry. In case of lean seasons, she procures dry fish from Pallom and manages the seasonal inadequacy.. The transportation she uses is a pick up van or mini van, for which she pays a hire charge of Rs 75 per

Charuvam (Aluminium vessel). The Market schedule continues from 4.30 am to noon and due to hectic vending at Chalai, she does not get time for taking food, other than two cups of Tea till noon. It is the head load workers who help her to unload fish by charging Rs 25 per *Charuvam*.

The two problems raised by Selvanesam are the receding customers and unhygienic market conditions. After the motorisation of fishing crafts, fish landings are centralised. The centralised market locations at the shore, with bulk landings attract wholesalers, which force the fish vendors to purchase at high price. The large scale retailers by the men counter parts attract elite consumers and Government employees. Both these factors negatively impact the fish venture by women. Another problem is the unhygienic market conditions in which the women are forced to sell fish. Chalai market run by the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation, is highly congested and unhygienic. The toilet, though available, are not well maintained. The LSGIs in charge of these market places charge taxes for each vessel. Although they have provided the fisher people with facilities of toilets etc, they do not maintain it in proper standards. Thus, the facility is there, but it serves useless for the women fish vendors. This shows the concern of the Government towards the voiceless.

Shift to Dry Fish Selling

There was a motor accident that happened few years before, leaving Selvanesam's shoulder bone broken, she was hospitalised for one month. After that she was unable to carry heavy weight. Hence, she shifted from selling fresh fish to the selling purely dry fish; as dried fish is light weight comparatively. Although there are head load workers to unload the fish, they do not help her in carrying the fish till the market. Selvanesam returns by a KSRTC Bus and reaches home around by 12 noon. This has been her routine for the last twenty years.

Her husband works on a *Katamaram*. His income is insufficient to meet any major expense of the household. Moreover, he is alcoholic, which means the money he makes is spent for buying liquor. This addiction prevents him from having the sense to save any surplus money they earned. He spends this surplus income to buy better quality alcohol. Thus, the vicious circle of poverty continues. Her daughters' marriages also left her in high debt. Selvanesam's only prayer is to have the health and life to work and repay the debt and protect her daughters from further debt traps. Her daughters are not in a stable financial position. She murmurs that life is restless even in the dusk of her life.

5.2.3.5. Facts Encountered

The motor accident met by Selvanesam- her injured shoulder bone and subsequent inability to carry fish is pointing to the risk element of labour and life as well. It is seen that even with such unfortunate circumstances, Selvanesam has found a coping strategy by shifting to dry fish vending. The support received from her maternal relatives and sisters was helpful, indicating family cohesion.

One striking point noted is that during the early days, only her husband would consume rice in the household. This reflects two issues - one, the poor economic condition and two, gender discrimination that is subsumed by women. It is also recorded from Selvanesam's that in the olden days, shoals of pelagic fishes like Netholi (Anchovy) appeared in abundance along the inshore⁷ waters. But now they have declined. The reason highlighted are OBM fitted canoes and ships. These reflections point to the negative externalities in fisheries as well.

The shift from non-motorised to motorised fishing canoes helped fish vending women as the fishing time was substantially reduced. The Non-Motorised crafts take more time to land fish, while Motorised crafts takes less time. However, the fish has declined very much and the prices at shore shot up. The purchase price of a *Mural* is Rs 3 now days. Also, the arrival of iced fish from wholesale markets affects the fish vending women as the selling price at local markets slide down. These arrivals are also the consequences of mechanisation in fisheries. It is evident that the technological advancement has negative repercussions on the marketing side; ultimately affecting the fish vending women.

Selvanesam's son and son-in law are in the Gulf, but she is still engaged in fish vending. Perhaps, this is due to her determination to be self-reliant. Debts and an alcoholic husband are also reasons for her working even now, without concern about her old age and ill-health.

⁷ Inshore waters - upto 50 m depth of water in the sea.

5.2.4.0. For the Sake of Children's Education

The educational background of fishery households are generally found backward as the children drop out of school at an early age to shoulder the responsibilities of the household, take care of younger siblings or to join their parents in fishery related activities. This vicious circle continues over generations. But Nirmala is an exception. Despite her educational backwardness and strenuous fish vending venture, she has been decisive in providing better education for her children. The life history of Nirmala presented narrates how she succeeded in her mission.

5.2.4.1. Present Profile

Being born in a fishery family - father into fishing and mother into fish vending- Nirmala could study only up to the Fourth standard. The personal particulars of Nirmala Joseph are given in Box 4.1.

Box 4.1: Personal Profile of Nirmala		
#	Components	Particulars
1	Age [Years]	50
2	Education	4th standard
3	Marital status	Married
4	Experience in fish vending [Years]	41
5	Fish vending category	Fresh fish vending at nearby markets.
6	Occupation of Parents:	
	Father	Fisherman
	Mother	Fish vendor
7	Occupation of Husband	Fisherman; now retired.
8	No. of Children	4

Source: Case Study, 2013.

Nirmala's house seems to be well maintained, hygienic, and electrified with TV, Fan, Computer, and other kitchen utensils like Grinder, Gas stove, etc. (Box 4.2). She owns one more house and that is given for rent. Nirmala and her family now reside in a rental house, a *pucca* [terrace] house near Kochupally bus stand. The rent amounts to Rs 2000 and the main reason for staying in this locality is to allow her children easy access to their colleges and also because of the availability of internet facility.

Box 4.2: Profile of Nirmala's House		
#	Components	Particulars
1	House Type	Tiled
2	Electrification	Electrified
3	Toilet	Available
4	Other Amenities	TV, Fan, Grinder, Gas Stove, Computer.
5	Separate rooms for adults	Yes.
6	Family type	Nuclear
7	<i>Pattayam</i> for land	Yes.

Source: Case Study, 2013.

5.2.4.2. Childhood and Adolescence

Nirmala studied in the Leo XIIIth School in Pulluvila and dropped out in the beginning of Fourth standard. The reason for dropping out was that parents did not give her money for purchasing books. At the age of nine, she accompanied her mother for fish vending. During the initial days, she went to Kamukincode; a nearby market. At that time there was no local market at Kodangavila. She exclaimed that now days there are local markets available in every nook and corner.

5.2.4.3. Marriage and Family

Nirmala got married to a fisherman at the age of twenty-five. A Dowry of Rs 12,000 and two sovereigns of gold was paid to the groom's family. He had Kattamaram and small gillnets. These were sold 16 years back, when they were unable to compete with OBM¹ fitted fishing canoes.

Box 4.3: Marital Profile of Nirmala		
#	Components	Particulars
1	Age at marriage	25
2	Payment of Dowry	Paid
3	Form of Dowry	Cash and Gold Ornaments
4	No. of pregnancies	4
5	No. of births	4
6	No. of children lost under 5 years of age	Nil

Source: Case Study, 2013.

¹ OBM-Out Board Motors. With the advent of modernisation in fisheries, sail and oar used by traditional fishing crafts were replaced by OBMs. (See PCO and SIFFS, 1991).

Nirmala gave birth to four children -three sons and one daughter. Two deliveries were at home and two at hospital. Even though Nirmala could not pursue education, she was decisive in educating her children. The profile of her children's education reveals this. (Box 4.4).

Box 4.4: Background of Nirmala's Children			
Sons' Occupation/Education		Daughters' Occupation/Education	
1	MBA Student	1	B. Sc Zoology passed; now studying for Computer Science with International Accounting.
2	B. Sc Computer Student		
3	Plus One Student at Seminary		

Source: Case Study, 2013.

Nirmala's elder son is doing an MBA, another son doing BSc Computer Science, her daughter studying for Computer Science with International Accounting after completing BSc Zoology, and her younger son is studying Plus One at the Seminary. "What I lost during childhood should not happen to my children!" said Nirmala. She worked hard at fish vending and despite the long hours and strenuous work load, she found time to care for her children. Her main focus was that their education should not suffer. She utilised thrift and credit in a way so as to meet the educational expenses of children. Her father, in addition to being engaged in fishing, also had been running a Chitty. Nirmala also became a beneficiary of this Chitty.

In addition to the self generation of income, Nirmala's elder brother [who is working in the Gulf] used to help her whenever there were financial difficulties to meet her children's educational expenses. This led to a difference of opinion with her sister-in-law, so she tries her best now, not to depend on them in any way. One of Nirmala's sisters is unmarried and is into prayers and religious activities. This sister advises Nirmala and her children on issues related to education and career growth. It is because of her advice that Nirmala has now shifted from her own house at the coastal side, which is congested, to the road side rental building; where children are placed comfortably to pursue their education. The rental house is situated in a calm place, which provides a great ambience for the children to focus on their studies. Also internet connectivity is available in this area; which is essential for their education.

5.2.4.5. Present Daily Routine

Nirmala has been vending fish at the nearby markets of Avanakuzhi and Thannimoodu. She multi-tasks cooking and buying fish in the mornings. Once she is back from buying fish, from the sea shore, she continues to cook and packs lunch for her children. For breakfast, the family buys cooked dishes from the household level petty vendors². Nirmala proceeds to domestic fish markets for vending.

Nirmala's husband is not active in fishing now. He does not go for fishing at night as a few years back he had witnessed few mishaps at sea and the death of a peer fisherman.. This event has frightened him from continuing his occupation. Her youngest son, studying for Plus Two, finds time for pulling shore-seines on holidays and brings home fish for consumption.

Multiple Destinations

Nirmala first goes to one market to vend fish and when the sale is over, rushes to next market. Earlier, there were only a few markets, but now the domestic markets have increased. She travels by a mini lorry/carrier auto, shared with peer fish vendors. The fishes are purchased either from the landings of her own village – Pulluvila and also from the nearby village Pallom. If there are bulk landings, the women fish vendors compete and quarrel with large scale fish merchants. Nirmala is the main income earner of the household and the decision maker. She is intelligent enough to insist on educating her children. She is active in thrift and credit, active in SHGs [*Kudumbashree* as well as *Janashree*] and Fishermen Cooperatives. It is her financial management skills that sustain her family and allow for better education of her children. She vends fish throughout the year, except Sundays and religious holidays. It is possible for her to successfully vend fish throughout the year, as she vends dried fish, during the lean season.

Seasonal Inadequacy

One of the problems the fish vending women face is the seasonal unavailability of fish. Nirmala manages this by vending dried or salted fish. Whenever there are bulk fish or

² Household level petty trade of steam cake [*Puttu* in local parlance] and such other dishes are common in the village. It is one of the means of living for some of the women in the village.

surplus fish after vending, the surplus is salted or dried. During off seasons, this salted/dried fish will be sold. Also, as the major target customers in the local markets are Hindus, on certain occasions like temple festivals, the Sabarimala season, marriages, etc the market will be dull. Hence she avoids going for fish vending on such occasions.

Changes

The shift from Bamboo Basket (*Kutta*) to Aluminium Vessel (*Charuvam*) for carrying fish was a relief to the fish vendor as wetting from the fish could be avoided. It was since the last twenty five years that an Aluminium Vessel has been used instead of Bamboo Basket. Before that they had to quarrel with KSRTC Bus Conductor due to the leakage of liquid from fish. Another shift that took place about thirty years back was availing transportation facilities, especially public transportation. If there is a big rush KSRTC Drivers do not stop the bus. There was also no specialised labour available for loading/unloading of fish, hence Nirmala used to do it herself.. But now days with the private service of Truckers/Minivan, etc. such problems are resolved. With the advent of transportation, she is able to reach home by noon. In case of any fish not sold out before she leaves for home, she entrusts her mother with the same for sale. The market toll (*Kadakkai*) earlier was Rs 2, but now increased to Rs 20 per vessel.

Finance

She takes short term loans from SHGs [*Kudumbashree*, *Janashree*, and Cooperative Society of *Matsyafed*] and makes prompt payment. The loans are taken in the name of fish vending, but utilized for asset creation viz. maintenance of house, purchase of TV, purchase of computer for the education needs of her children, etc. Also, borrowed Rs 2 lakhs from *Matsyafed* and Rs 4 lakhs from Indian Bank for meeting the educational expenses of the children. Nirmala never borrows from *Blade*³ as it is not affordable. They lent Rs 900 for 100 days and recoups Rs 1000; charging Rs 100 as interest. But she is being a member of a Self-help group and contributes towards credit and thrift. She also saves money whenever there is surplus income at the household level. Her father had been running *Chitty*⁴ and she also joined this *Chitty* so that further accumulated the savings.

³ Blade in local parlance denotes an informal system of credit, where money lender charges exorbitant interest.

⁴ It's a form of credit and thrift more predominant in rural areas.

5.2.4.5. Facts Encountered

It is encountered that Nirmala is not only struggling to eke out an income to maintain the family but also to meet the expenses for a higher education of her children; despite the fact that her husband is no more an active fisherman. Nirmala also has a good saving mentality [thrift and credit] and asset creation [bought one more house] that is generally rare among fish vending women.

The strategy of reaching multiple market destinations helps Nirmala to maintain breakeven and enhance her income. Also, earnings from fish vending are productively invested, thus the multiplier effect on income. As opined by Nirmala, she is satisfied with her job of vending fish but not interested to send her children for that. This is because the fish vending is tedious, tiresome and restless activity. But somehow she is used to this situation now.. Nirmala does not want her children to suffer like this and this is the reason why she insists on them being educated. The very thought that her occupation and fate should not be passed on to her children and that they should live a better life, motivates her to go on with her mission. She is a proud mother who realizes that her hard work is the reason for her children's well-being and education.

Even though Nirmala is in debt for educating her children, she is proud of the fact that her children are studying well and that they are also disciplined. She aspires that her children would reach better positions in society and take care of her. Nirmala's son is equally aware of his mother's hard work and proudly mentions in his College, that he is the son of a fisherman. Perhaps, diversified employment of her family members influenced Nirmala also to think differently. Her father is engaged in fishing and chitty, brother in auctioning of fish, is also the Secretary of a Charitable Society, and another brother in the Gulf, etc. This must have influenced Nirmala for a planned life. As she spends more time with her family, her children are better cared for and educated. She has realised the value of education and has instilled this in her children. At the same time, through her hard work, Nirmala could develop a positive attitude about fishing and related activities, in her children.

5.2.5.0. Retired on Ill-Health

It was the fate of Anthoniyal that she lost mother at the tender age of three. But her grandmother and maternal Uncles were supportive. She ventured into fish vending by door to door selling, in her childhood itself. She stepped onto a better financial position through concerted effort and prudent family budgeting. This has helped Anthoniyal while she retired from fish vending due to illness. Browsing through her life situation sheds light on these aspects in detail.

5.2.5.1. Present Profile

The personal particulars of Anthoniyal are given in Box 5.1.

Box 5.1: Personal Profile of Anthoniyal		
#	Components	Particulars
1	Age [Years]	61
2	Education	1st standard
3	Marital status	Married
4	Experience in fish vending [Years]	46
5	Fish vending category	Fish vending by Door to Door; now retired
6	Occupation of Parents:	
	Father	Fisherman
	Mother	Died, when Anthoniyal was 3 years old
7	Occupation of Husband	Fisherman
8	No. of Children	3

Source: Case Study, 2013.

Anthoniyal resides in a Pucca house, concrete building with all amenities. (Box 5.2). It is the outcome of Anthoniyal's hard work and family budgeting.

Box 5.2: Profile of Anthoniyal's House		
#	Components	Particulars
1	House Type	Concrete
2	Electrification	Electrified
3	Toilet	Available
4	Other Amenities	TV, Fan, Refrigerator
5	Separate rooms for adults	Yes
6	Family type	Nuclear
7	<i>Pattayam</i> for land	Yes

Source: Case Study, 2013.

5.2.5.2. Childhood and Adolescence

Ever since Anthoniyal lost her mother at the age of three, her maternal relatives came forward to take care of her. Her mother's family was not ready to send her to father's house and hence the second Uncle¹ looked after her. She has three paternal uncles and aunts. Later Anthoniyal's younger maternal aunt married her father. But Anthoniyal continued in her Uncle's house.

While studying in the First standard, Anthoniyal was affected with rheumatic health problems. She was taken for treatment to a traditional doctor². Due to this she could not pursue her education properly and had to drop out from school. She entered into fish vending during childhood, at the age of nine by accompanying her grandmother. Initially, she targeted nearby places only - Thirupuram, Pazhayakada, etc. - as she could not walk long distances with a head load. There were no markets, but small gatherings in front of houses. Grandma would entrust her with the nearby households to care for her and go to distant markets. By the time her Grandma returned back, Anthoniyal would have completed selling fish, door to door, in a small geographic segment. Normally, the households nearby would provide food for her.

She started fish vending independently from the age of fifteen. At that time there was no market toll, as there were no markets set up by the Local Governments. There were only gatherings in public places or in front of houses where space was available. Over the period, markets were set up by the Local Governments. Gradually, market toll of Rs 20 per basket of fish was imposed, and now it is Rs 50 per basket of fish. However amenities in the markets are not satisfactory.

5.2.5.3. Marriage and Family

Anthoniyal married at the age of sixteen. Her parents³ paid a dowry of Rs 1300 (Rs 500 for the couple's expenses and Rs 800 for the in-laws⁴) and gold of 4 sovereigns. Husband ventured fishing on a Kattamaram and small gillnets, owned by him.

¹ As a custom, it shall be the responsibility of maternal family to look after.

² local terminology for traditional doctor is Nattu Vaithyan.

³ Father and second Mother.

Box 5.3: Marital Profile of Anthoniyal		
#	Components	Particulars
1	Age at marriage	16
2	Payment of Dowry	Paid
3	Form of Dowry	Cash; Gold Ornaments
4	No. of pregnancies	3
5	No. of births	3
6	No. of children lost under 5 years of age	Nil

Source: Case Study, 2013.

They have three daughters. Elder daughter studied up to Seventh standard and then dropped out due to illness. Second daughter studied for three years in College. [Anthoniyal doesn't know for which course her daughter studied]. Younger daughter studied Pre-Degree and Nursing. All are got married and is leading a decent life. The elder daughter is a fish vendor. The other two are house wives. Their spouses are working in the Gulf and are wealthy. Hence, they are not willing to send their wives for work.

Box 5.4: Background of Anthoniyal's Children	
Daughters' Occupation/Education	
1	House Wife-studied up to 7 th standard
2	House Wife-studied Degree
3	House Wife-studied up to PDC & Nursing

Source: Case Study, 2013.

Anthoniyal reaches fish landing locations at the shore of Puthiathura, Karumkulam, or Pulluvila at around 6 am. She then buys fish from the landings of traditional fishing fleet. She walks bare foot and a head load of fish to the local markets in Dhanuvachapuram, Udayankulangara, Amaravila, Panachamood, Perumpazhuthur, etc. The long walk by carrying the head load was a tedious task for Anthoniyal. On the way if she found any bullock cart, she would place the fish vessel on it and walk along with it. Anthoniyal would pray to God that she would find a bullock cart on the way to get leeway for carrying heavy load of fish. She would reach the markets by noon; hence the market time was also scheduled like that. There were no sanitation facilities and drinking water in the local markets. Anthoniyal would make use of sanitation facilities in the neighbouring houses and take

⁴ There was a custom in the community to provide a share of dowry received by the Groom to be paid to the parents as a token of upbringing Groom. As the matri-local system prevails, Groom shall go to the brides house after marriage.

drinking water from there. Often they provided food too, due to her cordial relations with them.

Anthonyal would wake up early in the morning to collect drinking water, as it is scarce in the coastal area. Then she proceeds for fish vending routine.. She rarely gets time for household management and caring for her children. It is the Grandmother who took care of the children. She did not go for fish vending on Sundays and festival days. These days she reaches home by around 3 pm after fish vending; she gives credit to better transportation facilities for this. Hence more time is available to spare with family. She wakes up at around 4 am for cooking and other household activities. As they have their own bore well available now, there is no need to go for water collection like before. Most often, she washes clothes in the evening as she reach home in the afternoon.

Her grandmother looked after the daughters at their childhood and after that the elder daughter brought up the younger sibling. This forced the first daughter to drop out from school and she is a fish vending women, leading a restless life with her husband, a fisherman. The other sisters are a nurse and a graduate. Their family is financially sound, so husbands do not allow them to go for work. If she finds her husband playing cards, drinking alcohol and not at home, she searches for him and insist he return home with her. This helped the family because of the availability of both parents at home to look after the daughters. She proudly says about the well upbringing of her daughters, and gives the credit to spending quality time with the family by the father and mother together.

Brought up by uncles, without receiving the love of parents, a life tedious during childhood, Anthonyal had strong determination to defeat the fate of life together with her husband. Anthonyal worked without rest in home and market. She and her husband had given their time and love to their daughters, that she had aspired very much but lost in between her lips and mouth during child hood. She often reaches shores of Puthiathura, Karimkulam, Poovar, or Vizhinjam by 6.30 am, she buys fish landed by Plywood Canoe by auction; either for cash or on credit. If the dealings are on ready cash, a deduction of Rs 50 will be availed from the settled amount. She often competes with large merchants, who arrive when there are bulk landings; and often quarrel with them. A pickup van or minivan is arranged to reach the destinations if a large quantity of fish is bought. If the quantity of fish bought is small, she chooses the service of KSRTC bus.

Catching the KSRTC bus is a tricky affair. The buses, normally, do not stop if they see the fish vendors. Knowing this, the fish vendors hide themselves behind and let the students show hands; signalling for stop. As soon as bus stops, they jump into it. Often they quarrel with bus conductor. She reaches the local markets of Pazhayakada, Vattavila, etc. by 9am. The Market timing is between 10 am to 1 pm. Sanitation facilities are available in the markets. Anthoniyal has food/snacks from the nearby restaurants of the market.

5.2.5.4. Present Day

She is now retired from fish vending due to ailment since the last five years. Five years back, she felt uneasy because of leg pain. Even then she went for fish vending as money due from the customers, need to be collected. Her daughter also accompanied her; as often she took her daughter too to collect amount due from customers. Once on her way to work, accompanied by her daughter, she fell down and could not walk further. Anthoniyal experienced severe pain and was rushed to the hospital. It was shocking for her to hear from the doctor that her bone had decayed and hence broken. The bone was replaced by surgery with a steel rod, inserted for support. Since then she has not gone for fish vending, but is leading a happy life because her children are looking after her very well. Two years back, her husband also fell ill due to blood pressure. Now he is also retired from fishing.

Financial Management

She is happy that due to her hard work, her daughters are in a better position now. One son-in-law in gulf, other employed, the third one a fisherman but owns fishing fleet. It is because of her financial management skills that she could save money. Whatever surplus income was generated from fish vending, it was used for thrift and credit, with money multiplier effect. This helped her build a good financial base and provide better education for her daughters. She could also shift from a hut to a newly constructed terrace house, using her own income. Anthoniyal is so prudent in saving money that she opts to carry fish by auto/lorry only, if there is a huge load of fish. Otherwise she opts to go for fish vending by KSRTC Bus so that the cost of travel can be minimised from around Rs 150 to Rs 15. She says the life is not for enjoyment but to work and lead a low life even though there is high income. Even when the family earned sufficiently, they used rice supplied by the government through the public

distribution system, and no amount is spent for entertainment. Thus the excess income always becomes savings and assets.

Anthonyal said that fish has declined very much due to the operation of Trawling Boats. The predominant varieties like Neymeen, Avoli, Navara, Kattal, Maala, Vaala, Kochu, etc. have declined substantially. She remembered that Konchu once upon time was abundance and to preserve the surplus quantity fisher women used to boil it and preserve.

5.2.5.5. Facts Encountered

Case study of Anthonyal reveals that family cohesion through maternal relation is very strong in the community. Though she missed her parents in the early childhood, her maternal uncle and Grandmother were supportive in her upbringing. matrilocal custom, maternal relatives shoulder the responsibility of caring the maternal hierarchy⁵. Even then Anthonyal's dependency must have influenced her life for a prudent family budget so as to save income and generation of assets. System of dowry is also very strong, but seen as a social security measure to protect the parents of Groom in a matrilocal system. Though both Anthonyal and her husband is retired from fishery, the earnings through prudent financial management and matrilocal bondage sustains them for a happy life; despite the odds suffered during early days.

⁵ The feeling of *Namma Pilla*, a colloquial meaning "Our Child" is very strong in the community.

5.2.6.0. Transition from Forsaken to Self-Reliance

Jorisa Mary was good in studies. But fate did not allow her to continue education as she was forced to drop out from school for non-payment of fee; a meagre amount of Rs 1.25! She then stepped into fish vending. Later, after an inter-religious marriage, she was shunned from her community. A lot of miseries fell upon her, yet Jorisa Mary's journey from a young widow to a self-reliant and confident seventy year old is truly inspiring.

5.2.6.1. Present Profile

The personal particulars of Jorisa Mary are given in Box 6.1.

Box 6.1: Personal Profile of Jorisa Mary		
#	Components	Particulars
1	Age [Years]	70
2	Education	7th standard
3	Marital status	Widow
3	Experience in fish vending [Years]	53
4	Fish vending category	Vending fresh fish in nearby markets.
5	Occupation of Parents:	
	Father	Fisherman; Kattamaram owner
	Mother	Fish vendor
6	Occupation of Husband	Formerly Fruit Vendor; Not alive now.
7	No. of Children	3

Source: Case Study, 2013.

Mrs. Jorisa Mary stays near Kochupally, in a *pucca* house that was inherited by her. The house has all amenities and is maintained well. Now the house has been given to her married daughter and Jorisa is staying with them. (See house profile in Box 6.2).

Box 6.2: Profile of Jorisa Mary's House		
#	Components	Particulars
1	House Type	Tiled
2	Electrification	Electrified
3	Toilet	Yes
4	Other Amenities	TV, Fan, Fridge, Furnitures.
5	Separate rooms for adults	Yes
6	Family type	Joint
7	<i>Pattayam</i> for land	Yes

Source: Case Study, 2013.

5.2.6.2. Childhood and Adolescence

Jorisal studied in Leo XIIIth School in Pulluvila. She was very good in studies. When her teacher punished Jorisal and made her stand outside the class the whole day, for not paying the school fees, an amount of Rs 1.25 in those days, it marked the end of her school education. She was in the seventh standard then.

Jorisal's younger sister passed SSLC¹. She remembers that her younger brother had beaten his Teacher and had to drop out from school, flee to Rajasthan, and find a job there. But somehow he continued his education there and got into a Government job.. Now Jorisal's brother is a retired Income Tax Officer. Jorisal exclaimed that many of her school mates are ex- Government employees now and it is her misfortune that she had to discontinue school. She recalled that those days were lived in utter poverty. Tapioca and Wheat soup were the staple food. Rice was cooked only for her father.

At around the age of fourteen, Jorisal started accompanying her mother to Aralumoodu Market to support her in fish vending. From the age of nineteen, Jorisal ventured into fish vending independently. The target markets were Aralummoodu, Aryancode, Kattakada; the afternoon markets. During that period, she would walk from Pulluvila shore with a head load of fish at around 9 am. Reache Aryancode market by around 3 pm and after the day's business she would start walking home around 6 pm, to reach home by 9 or 10 pm. Her father would often wait for her at the road side.

5.2.6.3. Marriage and family

Jorisal received many proposals for marriage from her relatives. She felt that these proposals came because she was independently pursuing fish vending, and would eventually have to feed their entire family. She did not believe her relatives to be sincere or supportive. At the age of twenty five she met a Muslim merchant from Balaramapuram and married him. Jorisal stayed with her husband's family after their marriage.

Box 6.3: Marital Profile of Jorisal Mary

¹ SSLC - Secondary School Leaving Certificate.

#	Components	Particulars
1	Age at marriage	25
2	Payment of Dowry	No; inter-religious marriage
3	Form of Dowry	Not applicable
4	No. of pregnancies	3
5	No. of births	3
6	No. of children lost under 5 years of age	Nil

Source: Case Study, 2013.

There were resistance from the relatives of both their families. Jorisal detached herself from her family and became part of Muslim community and stayed with her husband, his mother and sisters. Jorisal's husband did not allow her to go for fish vending. She gave birth to three children, all females. Two deliveries were at home and the one at hospital.

Box 6.4: Background of Jorisal's Children	
Daughters' Occupation/Education	
1	House Wife-studied up to 10 th standard
2	House Wife-studied up to 10th standard; Not alive.
3	House Wife-studied up to 10th standard

Source: Case Study, 2013.

Life at Jorisal's husband's home was miserable. Her husband did not have a regular income and with his meagre daily earnings, had to take care of his mother and sisters too. The situation was so pitiful that they went starving for many days. She also had to borrow clothing from their neighbours for her own children. Jorisal's husband died at the age of thirty- four from blood cancer, leaving behind Jorisal and her three daughters. This forced her to seek work as a domestic help in nearby houses. Jorisal also worked as a construction helper carrying head loads of sand, bricks and so on. However, after two years, she returned to her own home. Thankfully, none of her relatives or community opposed this. Her mother transferred the Tharavad to Jorisal's name and the family re-settled there. Soon, she started fish vending. Now all her daughters are married, one to a Hindu Nair.

Since Jorisal commenced fish vending after a long break of 10 years, she was not able to walk for long distances, like she used to, before marriage. Also, she felt the vendors in the old market like Aralummoodu, were biased to her, due to her inter-religious marriage and her current situation. . Hence, she shifted fish vending to the nearby markets of Kamukincode and Kodangavila. Meantime, transportation facilities were also improved. She opined that the transportation facilities were improved much since the last thirty years. Her parents

would look after the children, while she went for fish vending. When she was ill, the family managed to go on with their savings or borrowed money. Sadly, there were still days of starvation. Pulluvila Health Centre was mainly depended for treating her ailments.

5.2.6.4. Daily Routine

While sharing the present routine Jorisaal recollected the olden days. She would wake up in the early morning at 2 am to collect water from public well. If late, there will be long queue for water collection. Again sleep after water collection and then wake up at 4 am for household activities. Move to Pulluvila sea-shore at around 6 am to buy fish for vending. It is the large fishes like Tuna, Pomfret, Seer Fish, etc. landed in Dugout Canoe or Kattamaram are bought by auction. Around 10 am, she would move to the domestic markets by walk with head load of fish carried on bamboo basket. She walked alone or with a group depending on arrivals of fish and auctioning. There was a private mini bus named 'Amathode' plying in the route, but was not available frequently. Reached markets around 2 pm, market time was 2 to 3 pm. There were neither urinals nor drinking water facilities. After market is over, she would take food from nearby hotels. She would then walk back from markets, with a group and reach home by night.

Routine have changed now a days. After a bed tea and news paper reading, Jorisaal reaches Pulluvila shore to buy fish for vending. In case of lean fish landings, she goes to Pallom². Fish is bought on auction with highest bidding. She would buy fish on credit from the Auctioneer, as he makes payment on auction price to the Fleet Owner/s. The Auctioneer collects the debt amount in the evenings. Normally, a deduction of Rs 30 from the auction price is made, while making repayment. Of the Rs 30, Rs 10 is due to the Auctioneer and Rs 20 to the fish vendors.

After cleaning and icing of fish, Jorisaal moves to the domestic markets at around 9 am by Pickup Auto. The hire charge of Auto is Rs 200 to 250 per trip. It is shared by two fish vendors, hiring the auto together. Reaches Kamukincode Market by around 10 am; vends

² There is recent trend of huge arrivals of fish from outside Districts and even States to Pallom, where the fish vending women procure fish for sale if there is scarcity of fish locally. But fish from Pallom is felt by fish vending women as inferior quality - "Pallom Ice Meen" - they say; meaning the fishes are iced and having low quality. It is said that this phenomenon has increased with the advent of mechanisation and also intensified motorisation in fisheries sector.

fish for one hour as 10-11 am is the normal market time. If there is surplus fish, moves to Kodangavila Market where the market time is 11.30 am-12.30 noon. There is no hall available for fish vendors and they sell fish at an open place. However separate halls are available for vegetable vendors. There are no urinals and drinking water facilities at Kamukincode or at Kodangavila markets. Now a days, Jorisaal returns home by bus and reaches at around 2.30pm. She takes lunch only after reaching home. It is her daughter who cooks food and keeps it ready as Jorisaal returns from the market.

She engages in fish vending year round, except during holidays - Sundays, Onam, X-mas, etc. Also, she would miss her work when she fell ill. The major improvement in fish vending occupation is the access to a motor vehicle, pickup Auto, Tempo, Trucker, etc; which helps fish vendors to take fish immediately to markets. However Jorisaal feels that she was healthy when she walked long distances with head load of fish, while feels ill-health now a days when travelling by motor vehicle. Other changes in the sector are shift of fishing fleet from non-motorised craft to motorised craft and cotton nets to nylon made fishing nets. It is felt that the quality and taste of fish declined with such changes.

Her concern is that now a day's fish price at shore has increased exorbitantly; what she called as 'gold price' for fish. Examples she quoted are: Rs 50 per Kozhiyala, Rs 30 per Ayala that were purchased at very low price earlier. She also expressed concern on the 'ice' fish that arrives in the wholesale market from other districts/States that the fish vending women are forced to sell.

With the liberal credit from the Cooperatives, more youngsters are venturing into fish vending but within the village surroundings. With decline in the number of children in present generation, it is more convenient for them to go for fish vending.

Earlier loading and unloading of fish was done by the fish vendors themselves but now loading and unloading workers³ [Allied Workers] are available. Now days, fish vending women are not able to load/unload fish like she and her peers had done earlier very easily. There are more fish vending women in the markets and thus the low price for the fishes.

³ They belongs to the category of Allied Workers as per the Kerala Fishermen Welfare Fund Act 1985; fish vendors belongs to the category of Active Fishermen as per Kerala Fishermen Welfare Societies Act 1980.

[New generation fish vending women are having more of wholesale dealings, she mentioned].

5.2.6.5. Facts Encountered

It is heartening to know that JorisaI dropped out from school for non-payment of Rs 1.25; perhaps the amount may appear insignificant now but this was a considerable amount levied as fees, in those days. However, it actually points to the fact that education was not considered priority by the parents; despite the fact that their child was a better performing student in the school.

It is also surprising that there was a time when no rice was taken as part of daily menu, with the exception of the father/husband doing fishing. The gender discrimination is very evident as the labour for fish vending is not considered.

Even in her late 70's, JorisaI is going for fish vending, showing her determination to be self-reliant. Also, engaging in fish vending helps her to lead a pleasant life, despite the tedious labour the fish vendors go through.

JorisaI's better performance in school has positive impacts even now, as she regularly reads news papers and books/periodicals, and this fact is a rarity among the fish workers.

Her inter-religious marriage must have influenced the subsequent generation too; one of her daughters has also entered into an inter-religious marriage; marrying a Hindu Nair. The inter-religious marriage and exposure to outside community must have reflected in their life style also; especially in the maintenance of house. Her house is pucca and well-maintained with all amenities.

Even at the age of seventy, JorisaI is determined and confident on fish vending. Transportation facilities have made the labour easy, saving fish vendors from the long walk with heavy load and reducing the travel time. This provides her sufficient time to take rest at home and spend quality time with family.

5.2.7.0. Fish Vending, compelled by Life.

Dolly, aged 42, was born in a rich fisher family. Her father had *Thattumadi* (Boat seine) and mother had lucrative fish vending on wholesale basis. Hence she was did not follow the path of fish vending; as the normal practice in fisher families. But things changed after marriage. The following paragraphs portray the compulsions of life after marriage that made her venture into fish vending.

5.2.7.1. Present Profile

The personal particulars of Dolly is given in Box 7.1.

Box 7.1: Personal Profile of Dolly		
#	Components	Particulars
1	Age [Years]	42
2	Education	5th standard
3	Marital status	Married
4	Experience in fish vending [Years]	5
5	Fish vending category	Vending fresh fish, covering nearby markets of Nellimoodu, Kanjiramkulam, etc.
6	Occupation of Parents:	
	Father	Fisherman; owned a <i>Thattumadi</i>
	Mother	Fish vendor
7	Occupation of Husband	Fisherman; Crew of Fibre Boat
8	No. of Children	3

Source: Case Study, 2013.

Born in a fisher family, Dolly has three brothers and one sister. Brothers are doing fishing and sister studied up to SSLC and now working in a resort. Dolly has stepped into fish vending since the last five years; i.e. at the age of 37. She is staying with her family (husband and children) in a thatched temporary shed close to shore; near Tsunami Market¹. (Box 7.2). The five family members -Dolly, husband, and their three children live in a narrow strip of shed.

¹ After Tsunami, there was no demand for fish in the domestic markets and the fish vending women were forced to vend fish at the vacant plot available near the Anganwadi, where the locals bought fish. After that it became a permanent venue and got the name Tsunami Market.

Box 7.2: Profile of Doll's House		
#	Components	Particulars
1	House Type	Shed
2	Electrification	Not suitable for electrification
3	Toilet	Available
4	Other Amenities	Shed, not suitable for household amenities
5	Separate rooms for adults	Only a four wall erection using coconut leaves
6	Family type	Nuclear
7	<i>Pattayam</i> for land	Yes

Source: Case Study, 2013.

5.2.7.2. Childhood and Adolescence

Dolly studied up to the Fifth th standard. She was not good in studies. She dropped out from school due to ill-health. As her father and mother had lucrative fishing and fish vending venture, she had not been brought to fish vending by mother. But she helped mother at home fish drying. She ventured into the home-based trade of firewoods. She lead a pleasant life during her childhood and adolescence.

5.2.7.3. Marriage and Family

Dolly married Johny at the age of 19. A Dowry² of Rs 5 lakhs was paid. He owned Fibre Boat and Nets. The couple has three children. (Box 7.3).

Box 7.3: Marital Profile of Dolly		
#	Components	Particulars
1	Age at marriage	19
2	Payment of Dowry	Paid
3	Form of Dowry	Cash of Rs 20 lakhs
4	No. of pregnancies	3
5	No. of births	3
6	No. of children lost under 5 years of age	Nil

Source: Case Study, 2013.

The children are better educated; son studying for Hotel Management, elder daughter did a Beautician course and employed as Beautician, and younger daughter passed Plus Two and employed as Sales Girl. (Box 7.4).

² Dowry in coastal area depends on the type of fishing fleet upon which the Groom is working. In other words, Dowry normally correlates with the cost of fishing fleet.

Box 7.4: Background of Dolly's Children			
Sons' Occupation/Education		Daughters' Occupation/Education	
1	Student-Hotel management	1	Beautician; passed SSLC
		2	Sales Girl; passed Plus Two

Source: Case Study, 2013.

Dolly has been doing firewood sales at household level, making marginal source of income; also an engagement. But she was forced into fish vending activity at the age of 37, when her family faced acute financial crunch. Her husband is an alcoholic and their 'Thambu'; fishing fleet was sold. He then worked as a Crew in a Fibre Boat. Her husband's fishing income was not enough to run the family and meeting the educational expenses of children. Domestic violence is a routine in Dolly's life. Her family slipped into acute poverty. She then decided to go for fish vending. She was not familiar with fish vending, since the skills were not passed on to her, from her mother. Initially, she went for fish vending with other fish vending women. Gradually, Dolly became well versed in the fish vending venture. She now practices her trade independently.

5.2.7.4. Present Daily Routine

Fish vending is a routine now for Dolly. She buys fish from Tsunami Market between 6.30 am and 8.30 am. Then proceeds to the domestic markets in the nearby areas. The target markets are Kanjiramkulam, Poovar, Nellimoodu, Ooruttukala, Neyyattinkara, etc. Dolly is back home by noon. If the landings are in the afternoon, then distant markets will be covered, However, Dolly resorts to nearby markets only. Buying fish from Tsunami Market will be the routine, for nine months of the year, extending from September to May. During Monsoon season [i.e. June to August], there are no fish landings in Pulluvila. Hence she has to go to the Vizhinjam fish landing centre where almost all fishing fleets in the District lands fish, because of safe fish landing³ during rough sea. If the landings in Vizhinjam are from early morning 6.30 am to 8.30 am, then morning markets will be covered for fish vending. If the landings in Vizhinjam are from 12 noon to 2 pm, then evening markets in Uchakada are covered. Normally, communication regarding fish arrivals in Vizhinjam will be conveyed over phone very quickly.

³ Vizhinjam has natural fishing harbour, which facilitates safe landing around the year. Hence during monsoon, when the sea is rough, fishing fleets from other villages in the district chose Vizhinjam for safe landing.

In Vizhinjam, there was a ban for sale of fish up to 1 am by outside fishermen. Till that time only the fishermen from Vizhinjam are allowed for fish landings. But that ban is lifted since the last 3 months. However, there was no ban for fish vending women from outside village to buy fish. This created a big rush of fish vending women from many places in Vizhinjam, resulting in an increased price for fish. If there are peak landings in Vizhinjam, fish vending women are communicated through phone and they rush to Vizhinjam.

According to Dolly, aged fish vendors generally go to distant markets and market places in Trivandrum; while youngsters prefers nearby markets. Those who vend fish at distant markets, fetch better income. There are no serious issues at market places reported by her.

Costing

If she buys fish for Rs 3000, an additional Rs 200 would be incurred as operational costs on an average [Rs 60 to Church (*Palli Paisa*), Rs 20 for loading, Rs 50 for ice, Rs 150 for auto fare, and Rs 20 for unloading]. If there are not many arrivals in the market, she may fetch an average profit of Rs 400 a day; while if there are peak arrivals, fish price in the market slides down incurring a loss to the fish vendor.

To meet the running costs of fish vending such as purchase of fish and other operational costs, either money is borrowed from Blade⁴ or from Cooperatives. For loan from Blade, repayment is Rs 110 per day for 90 days for the Principal amount borrowed of Rs 5000. [The loan repayment with interest is calculated as Rs 9900!]. She also resorts to household credit, credit from cooperatives, *Sangom Chitty* [Cooperative Chit], loan from *Matsyafed*, or *Kudumbashree* at nominal interest. Dolly has to borrow money because she is constructing a new house. Her income is sufficient only to run the household, but the construction and other related activities of the new house require more money. The basement work is almost over now.

Institutional Involvement

She is a member of *Kudumbashree* and Fishermen Cooperative Society, but not active in MGNREGS⁵ as the timing [9 am to 5 pm] is difficult. She said there are younger women from the village, finding work under MGNREGS. She has thrift and credit with these

⁴ Private money lenders who charges exorbitant rate of interest, hence the name Blade.

⁵ Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

institutional mechanisms and is constructing a house near the present house [shed]. The basement is over and the construction is in progress.

5.2.7.5. Facts Encountered

Dolly's life story is not necessarily an isolated case. The RRA revealed that the younger generation from the fishing community is engaged in fish vending as that of their predecessors. There is a tendency of ventures like buying and drying of fish for home based dealings, shore based loading and unloading of fish, working in MGNREGS, etc. However, they are forced to fish vending due to family pressure; mostly after marriage. It also points to the fact that whenever a financial crisis hits the family, it is the women who shoulder the responsibility.

Dolly's life story also indicates the changes in education trend among the upcoming generation. Whereas, life histories of fish vendors revealed the school dropout rate due to labour pressures and financial difficulties. This has in turn effected the education of the coming generation too. Dolly was able to provide support for her children's education only by shifting to fish vending.

Dolly regrets the fact that the skills and nuances of the fish vending trade could not be learnt from her mother. She wishes that her mother had included her in the fish vending activities. This shows that most parents do not willingly bring their children to the fishing and related activities. If they had a choice, they would want their children to sustain themselves through other better means. RRA also revealed the tendencies of employment diversification among younger women of fishing community.

Along with shouldering the responsibility for her children's education, Dolly also contributes significantly for the construction of the family's new house. Life has compelled Dolly to step into fish vending as her livelihood, but she is happy with her labour. A main reason for this is that fish vending is not as tedious, as it was years before. Transportation and nearby markets provide women fish vendors with more time and money.

5.3. Case Studies: A Summary of Observations

The case studies of the present research covered fish vending women of diversified nature in terms of life profile and labour. The age of fish vendors studied are in the range of 42 to 75 and the experience in fish vending ranges from five years to sixty three years. It is shocking to note that the women fish vendors work even at the age of 75, although this earns them an experience of sixty three years in the field. Most of them have only received Primary level of school education. The family background of all cases studied belongs to fishery households - father into fishing and mother involved in fish vending. It was common phenomenon among the fishing community that if both parents are involved in fishery, the children are forced to discontinue their school education. The responsibility of the household and younger siblings falls on the tender shoulders of the eldest daughter, not taking into consideration, her own young age. Some of them naturally assume the role of helper and learn skills of fish vending from their mothers. This situation is slightly changing now, as we have seen in this study, some of the women fish vendors insist on providing education for their children. These remarkable women are ready to put in a lot of hard work and sacrifice to meet their children's educational needs.

The status of the houses, except three, are thatched or shed. However, it is seen that most of the houses, except the thatched shed, are electrified and has basic amenities. T But this does not speak of the housing locality and its conditions. The houses are crowded together, as detailed in the Chapter on Village Profile. The so-called *pucca* houses are in reality, a cluster of narrow spaces with absolutely no air circulation and tight compact rooms.

The girl child in the fisher family, learns fish vending skills through an organic process by accompanying the mother and gradually entering into fish vending; a kind of informal education on traditional occupation. None of the women interviewed desires their daughters to enter the fish vending occupation. This indicates the vulnerable labour and life situation of fish vendors. The current situation is such that none of the youngsters (women) engage in fish vending as their choice trade. Their dire financial condition, after marriage, compels them to pursue it as a livelihood.

The gender discrimination is very evident from the case studies. It is the girl child shouldering the household level activities and caring of youngsters, when the mother goes for fish vending. There is clear evidence of child labour too. It is also the wife who takes charge when there is a financial crisis in the family. The husband retires from fishing when he reaches a certain age, while fish vending for women, continue even at the age of 75! This gender discrimination trickled down further to the diet of the fisher people. It was only the father/husband who was given rice during meals.

The matrilocal system is followed in the fishing community; where the husband stays at wife's house after marriage. Perhaps due to matri-local system, support to the family, usually comes from the maternal relatives.

The fish vending labour had once been strenuous, with hardly any time for family life. Transportation facilities have changed this situation. If a simple case of time allocation by fish vending women is taken: generally 4 am to 6 am is spared for household and personal activities; 6 am to 10 pm for procuring fish and allied activities of loading, transportation, unloading, etc.; 10 am to 1 pm for fish vending; after noon they return back home. Depending on the fishing technology and the season, the timing of fishing would also change. The Driftnet (Ozhukkuvala), for example, operates in the night and the fishermen start to venture by evening. They are back only the next day morning, giving very less time for the couple to spend time together.

The modernisation and subsequent changes have both positive and negative impacts on fish vending women and their life. Transportation, for example, has transformed their labour and life by reducing the strenuous efforts of head load, long distant walks, long time of reaching destinations. Whereas, with the advent of mechanisation/motorisation of fishing fleet leading to centralised landings; competition has increased and fish vendors have to compete with male folk too. Also, there are plenty of predominant fishes, landings of that are declined affecting the procurement of fish for sale and increasing procurement price too. Also, the situation of fish glut results in low prices too.

There is generally a decline in the door to door delivery of fish by women. This is influenced by so many factors. One such factor is entry of males with Moped and supply fish early

morning. Also, to reduce uncertainty of sale, fisher women prefer to vend fish at domestic markets.

The number of local markets has increased and is at a reachable distance, but the amenities available are very poor. Neither toilets nor drinking water are sufficiently provided, despite the fact that the Local Governments collect market toll from the fish vending women.

The seven cases studied are different in terms of life and labour; either life issues pushing the women to fish vending labour or labour issues affecting their peaceful life. Each case studied has its specificities viz. very old woman working for daily bread, fish vendor working until the day of her delivery, survival strategies when they are physically ill, marketing strategies to enhance income, etc. Despite the diversities, there is one common aspect that groups these women together, in terms of research analysis, puts them in one common situation- their lives and labour are in a miserable situation.

Chapter 6

Untold Miseries

The fish vending women are one of the significant fish distribution channels in the small scale fisheries, interlinking the producers (fishermen) and the consumers. However, their labour and life is miserable as revealed by this study. Chapter Four provides a Profile of Pulluvila; portraying the overall socio-economic setting of the community. Chapter Five narrates chronicles of labour and life from the case studies of select number of fish vending women through an empathic approach. The present Chapter provides a vivid account of major findings and suggestions by the Researchers. The case studies are substantiated with the information gathered from the RRA. The samples of cases drawn from different categories of fish vending women viz. vendors targeting distant markets, vendors targeting nearby markets, aged vendors and, younger vendors. However, irrespective of the category of fish vending women, the labour and life of fish vending women seems miserable. The major findings and suggestions of the present study are given below.

6.1. Major Findings

6.1.1. Multi-faceted Functions

The fish vending women performs multi-faceted functions of commerce for linking the fish producer (fishermen) and the ultimate consumer. The commerce is the sum total of all process that removes the hindrances in the exchange of goods/services. The fish vending women bring down the hindrance of place and time in fish distribution. As against the normal course of commerce, fish vending women carry out the activities of both trade and aids to trade. While in the commercial sphere, the activities on trade and aids to trade are having specialised ventures viz. exchange of goods (trade - whole sale or retail), removal of hindrance of place (transportation), removal of hindrance of time (warehouse), etc. These are performed by different personnel/entities with specialised spheres. The fish vending women carry out all these spheres of activities by themselves¹. Perhaps this has been due to the household enterprise nature of small scale fishery where men, women and children are

¹ There are fish vending women buy fish from wholesale markets (eg. Pangode Market).

involved in fishing and related activities - with division of labour between men and women on harvest and pre/post activities, respectively.

The fish vending women purchases fish from the shore by auction. They carry fish to the domestic markets/households and then sell it. Their earning is the difference between the sales turnover and cost of procurement and allied expenses. Hence, the earnings from fish vending depends on the uncertainties at two levels - uncertainty of procurement price and uncertainty of selling price. The price at which fish is procured from the shore/wholesale market is influenced by fish landings at shore or arrivals at wholesale market. Similarly, selling price of fish is influenced by domestic market conditions, especially fish arrivals at markets. These uncertainties in the fish marketing channel - at source and destination - increases the risk of earnings.

However, there are strategies to cope up with such uncertainties and risks. One such strategy is to rely on multiple sources of procurement of fish to overcome the fluctuations in arrivals. This is mostly made possible by joint ventures between fish vending women. For example, Celine ventures jointly with her daughter; while daughter concentrates at Neyyattinkara fish market, Celine arranges fish from shore or from Kaliakkavila markets depending on the arrivals. Another strategy is to depend on multiple destinations for fish vending. Eg. Nirmala shifts from one market to another until and unless the entire fish bought by her is sold off, ensuring maximum earnings.

6.1.2. Hardships

The fish vending women face hardships at different stages of fish vending activities, commencing from procurement to vending. These have negative implications on their life too.

6.1.2.1. Competition for Procurement

While the day of every woman, in general, commences at the kitchen with household activities, the fish vending women's day commences at shore waiting for fish landings so as to buy fish for vending. There is normally competition for procurement of fish by the vendors. The fishes are bought by auction and the highest bidder will get the bid. Those who fail the bid will wait for the next landing. Often they wait for a long time to procure fish.

6.1.2.2. Long Walk with Head load

Transportation of fish to local markets was the major hurdle earlier. The vending of fish by women in olden days was tiresome due to physical strain of long walks with head load of fish.

There was neither public transportation nor frequent private transportation facility available. Take the case of Maria Dasi, who went for fish vending in the forenoon, targeting the evening markets of Perumkadavila, Aryanadu, etc. (As told by her, there were only two private buses plying in that route viz. MMS and KRS; that too not frequent). Her routine of long walks, about 20 km with head load of fish weighing about 60 kg in the sun was the typical work load that every fish vending women had suffered. They walked not only with a heavy load, but also suffered from constant wetting from the basket² of fish. They take neither a break nor food during the long walk of about 2-3 hours. Fortunately, this situation has changed now.

6.1.2.3. Unjustifiable Market Toll

The public markets are managed by the Local Self Government Institutions (LSGIs) and are entrusted to collect user fee³. The LSGIs auctions the right of market toll tax collection, as per the rates fixed by the former. The highest bidder avails the right. He then entrusts the Agents to collect the market toll. It is said that the rates are comparatively higher than the rates in neighbouring States. However, necessary amenities have not been provided in many of the markets. Eg. Jorisal informed that there are no urinals and drinking water facilities neither at Kamukincode nor at Kodangavila markets. There is also a complaint that the Agents collect additional taxes, if the fish exceeds the top tip of fish carrying vessel.

6.1.2.4. Hassle Market Conditions

As mentioned, it is a mandatory function of LSGIs to manage the public markets. However the market conditions are a hassle in general, but more particularly the fish market area. The fish vending women are generally provided open space as the outlet. E.g. As informed by

² The use of bamboo baskets.

³ Section 221 Kerala Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 and section 458 of Kerala Municipality Act, 1994.

Jorisaal, there is no hall available for fish vendors and sells fish at open place. There are generally no water facilities either for drinking or for cleaning fish vending vessels. There are no safe sanitation facilities too in the markets. The available sanitation facilities are unhygienic. The use of racial words by men folk is very common in the markets. There had even been cases of *Gundaism* and physical attacks against fish vending women, but such events are on decline now days due to unionisation.

6.1.3. Intergenerational Findings.

The fish vending occupation is intergenerational, i.e. learned and transmitted from one generation to another; generally through maternal hierarchy. During adolescent age, daughters accompany their fish vending mother. Gradually, they learn the occupation and commence the venture independently. There are also cases where the mother and daughter jointly venture the fish vending. E.g. Celine venture fish vending jointly with daughter.

There are fish vending women having lucrative earnings and hence didn't introduce their daughters to the fish vending field. But the daughter at a later stage is often forced to pursue fish vending due to the family compulsions. They regret their mothers not imparting the tricks and skills of the trade to them. This indicates the importance of passing on fish vending knowledge from generation to generation. .

6.1.4. Life for the sake of Labour

Despite the physical strain of long walk, heavy head load, hassle market conditions, timing of labour, etc. the fish vending is compensated neither socially nor economically. The better economic status is not visible from the background of fish vending women's households. None of the fish vending women interviewed has own *pucca* housing.

The life of women fish vendors do not show to be peaceful and fulfilling. They hardly take food during the day and have to compete with other fish vendors during their working hours. They are at home for a very few hours, which means less time for them with their family members. This is the routine, except on Sundays and festivals/ceremonies.

Not only do the fish vending women miss their families, but are also unable to provide proper care to their children. However, things have slightly changed with the advent of

transportation facilities. The fish vending women targeting nearby markets are able to return back home early and are able to spend comparatively more time with family. But this means earning subsistence income only.

6.1.5. Hardships Subdued

Perhaps the fish vending occupation is intergenerational in nature, the hardships of the occupation is subdued by the fish vending women from generation to generation. As mentioned, it is during adolescent age that the daughters accompany their fish vending mother, learn the fish vending, and gradually commences fish vending independently. Generally no mother wants their daughter to pursue fish vending, but their poor economic base compels them to bring their daughters too into this field.

6.1.6. Transformation through Transportation

The advent of transportation facilities (tempo, auto, etc.) have made drastic changes in the labour of fish vending women. There was a time when fish vending women had to walk with head load of fish. After the evening market, they stay at local's residence near the markets and back to home only in the early morning of next day. Now days, fish vending women in small groups hire tempo/pickup auto to carry fish from the shore to the markets. This has not only removed the hardships of long walk with head load of fish, but also helps to carry fish to markets quickly. The replacement of the bamboo basket with an aluminium vessel is also an advantage for carrying fish.

The fish vending women are now able to spare more time with family. Despite the advantages of transportation facilities, its negative implications are also highlighted. When the fish vending women had long walk with head load of fish, they felt very healthy. Whereas, now a days, they are unable to carry and load/unload even a basket of fish.

6.1.7. Setback for Human Development

The attainment on three indicators viz. health, education, and livelihood as represented by income is considered to be the factors of human development. It is found that the education of fish vending women and their successive generations are badly affected due to school dropout. None of the fish vending women have educational status above High School. The fish vending women's children, especially daughters, drops out from school as they have to

take care of younger siblings and also manage the household activities. As Celine told that she was engaged in fish vending during her pregnancy days too. It is shocking to hear that she went for fish vending with head load till the day of the delivery of her fourth and fifth child. What would be the health condition of the baby in womb of fish vending women, if this is not an isolated case? To prove these, health indicators viz. mortality, infant mortality, life expectancy, etc. among fish vending women's households need to be studied further.

6.1.8. Low Dignity

None of the fish vending women interviewed wish their daughter/s to pursue fish vending. The major reason for the same is the low dignity of labour as 'fish vendor' (*Meenkaari* in local parlance). The older generation who are already in the fish vending venture continues in the occupation. This doesn't mean that the youngsters are not entering into field. They are forced to do fish vending due to family pressure. Take the case of Dolly who commenced fish vending to make way for income for the family, as her husband is a drunkard. However fish vending is not as strenuous as earlier. There are allied workers available for loading and unloading of fish and also sufficient transportation facility for carrying fish to the markets. These make the fish vending labour more comfortable. The younger fish vending women cover only nearby markets, thus avail more time to spare at home. Why then the low dignity of labour? Perhaps the shadow of strenuous venture by the old generation that labelled it as low dignity of labour is still continuing. But more importantly the perishable nature of product that produces foul smell and the deplorable market conditions in which the women vendors carry out their trade must be the main cause for low dignity.

6.2. Suggestions

As observed by this study, low dignity of labour and hardships has been two major problems that affected the labour and life of fish vending women. With the advent of transportation facilities, the hardships for long walk with head load and strains have been reduced. However the shadow of low dignity of labour still continues and no mother wishes her daughter to pursue fish vending. The dignity of labour of any occupation depends on conditions in which the worker does it. The hassles in the market and perishable nature of fish that emits foul smell are the major reasons for low dignity. Also the hand-to-mouth earnings from fish vending that causes poor socio-conditions in the life of fish vending

women's households. However those who are having alternative sources of income and fish marketing strategies are better off too. All these point to the need for bettering the labour conditions and supplementary livelihood strategies for the households of fish vending women. In view of these, following suggestions are put forth:

- i. The Local Self Government Institutions have to implement projects and instil mechanisms for ensuring hassle free markets with all modern amenities. The suggestive amenities include:
 - (a) Separate Halls for Fish Vending Women with sufficient seating and storage
 - (b) Sanitary Toilets
 - (c) Drinking Water and water for cleaning vessels
- ii. Matsyafed has to promote and launch projects for:
 - (a) Modern Vessels for preserving and carrying fish, including uniform and other apparels,
 - (b) Special carrier vehicles for fish vending with modern amenities, and
 - (c) Supplementary livelihood to enhance income and socio-economic conditions of fish vending women.
- iii. KILA has to conduct:
 - (a) Training programmes for fish vending women emphasising and addressing the rights of the labourer, class contradictions, unionisation, etc.
 - (b) Study on health aspects of fish vending women's households.
- iv. Department of Fisheries has to introduce a mechanism:
 - (a) For issuing identity cards for fish vending women,
 - (b) For revisiting the schemes for fish vending women, e.g. provision for thatching roof, new house for those having Kutcha house, etc.
 - (c) Redressal mechanism or Vigilance Cell to monitor the issues of fish vending women.

Hope the implementation of these suggestions would resolve the untold miseries that the fish vending women have been suffering and empower them.

Appendix 1:

Labour and Life of Fishvending Women			
[Checklist¹ for Life History Analysis]			
1.0 Household Identification			
1.1.	Grama Panchayat		
1.2.	Ward No. and Name		
1.3.	House No. and Locality		
1.4.	Family Unit		
2.0 Family Details			
2.1.	Name of the Fishvender		
2.2.	Age		
2.3.	Studied upto		
2.4.	Native Place		
2.5.	Experience in fish vending [yrs.]		
2.6.	Marital status	2.7.	Age at marriage:
2.8.1.	Dowry-paid or not	2.8.2.	Form of dowry
2.9.	No. of pregnancies	2.10	No. of births
2.11	No. of children lost under 5 years of age		
2.12	Husband's Occupation		
2.13	Children		
	2.13.1	Sons' Occupation	2.13.2. Daughters' Occupation
	[1]		[1]
	[2]		[2]
	[3]		[3]
	[4]		[4]
	[5]		[5]
2.14	Family Type	2.15	House Type
2.16	Separate rooms for adults		
2.17	Electrification	2.18	<i>Pattayam</i>
2.19	House amenities		
2.20	Parents' Occupation [Fishery Background]		
	2.20.1	Father	2.20.2 Mother
3.0 Fish vending-now			
3.1.	Buy fish from:		
	3.1.1.	Place	
	3.1.2.	Time	
	3.1.3.	Supplier	

¹ This is used only as an indicative for gathering information; the descriptions are jotted down in the note book.

	3.1.4.	Terms	
	3.1.5.	local rules	
	3.1.6.	Problems, if any:	
3.2.	Purchase		
	3.2.1.	Mode	
	3.2.2.	Terms	
3.3.	Transportation Channel		
	3.3.1.	Mode	
	3.3.2.	Charges	
	3.3.3.	Terms	
	3.3.4.	Problems, if any:	
3.4.	Destinations		
	3.4.1.	Place [s]	
	3.4.2.	Reaching Time	
	3.4.3.	Market Time	
	3.4.4.	Food/Water	
	3.4.5.	Sanitation	
	3.4.6.	Rest Place	
	3.4.7.	Terms	
	3.4.8.	Problems, if any	
3.5.	Household Management		
	3.5.1.	Time	
	3.5.2.	Drinking Water collection	
	3.5.3.	Cooking	
	3.5.4.	Washing	
	3.5.5.	Caring Children	
	3.5.6.	Illness	
	3.5.7.	Health incl. mensrial cycle	
	3.5.8.	Festivals	
	3.5.9.	Celebrations	
	3.5.10.	Functions of relatives	
	3.5.11.	Social Network	
	3.5.12.	Problems, if any	
3.6.	Responses/Relations		
	3.6.1.	Suppliers	
	3.6.2.	Transporters	
	3.6.3.	Customers	
	3.6.4.	Local Markets	
	3.6.5.	Villagers	

4.0 Fish vending commenced:			
4.1.	Initial fish vending experience		
	4.1.1.	Age	4.1.2. with whom?:
4.2.	Buy fish from:		

	4.2.1.	Time	
	4.2.2.	Supplier	
	4.2.3.	Major Specie	
	4.2.4.	Terms	
	4.2.5.	Local Rules	
	4.2.6.	Problems, if any.	
4.3.	Purchase		
	4.3.1.	Mode	
	4.3.2.	Terms	
4.4.	Transportation Channel		
	4.4.1.	Mode	
	4.4.2.	Charges	
	4.4.3.	Terms	
	4.4.4.	Problems, if any.	
4.5.	Destinations		
	4.5.1.	Reaching Time	
	4.5.2.	Market Time	
	4.5.3.	Food/Water	
	4.5.4.	Sanitation	
	4.5.5.	Rest Place	
	4.5.6.	Terms	
	4.5.7.	Problems, if any.	
4.6.	Household Management		
	4.6.1.	Time	
	4.6.2.	Drinking Water collection	
	4.6.3.	Cooking	
	4.6.4.	Washing	
	4.6.5.	Caring Children	
	4.6.6.	Illness	
	4.6.7.	Health incl. mensrial cycle	
	4.6.8.	Festivals	
	4.6.9.	Celebrations	
	4.6.10.	Functions of relatives	
	4.6.11.	Social Network	
	4.6.12.	Problmes, if any.	
4.7.	Responses/Relations		
	4.7.1	Suppliers	
	4.7.2	Transporters	
	4.7.3	Customers	
	4.7.4	Local Markets	
	4.7.5	Villagers	
5.0.	Changes in Labour		Year/Age
5.1.	Fish landing		
	5.1.1.	Place	

5.1.2.	Time	
5.1.3.	Supplier	
5.1.4.	Major Specie	
5.1.5.	Terms	
5.1.6.	Local Rules	
5.2.	Purchase	
5.2.1	Mode	
5.2.2	Terms	
5.3.	Transportation Channel	
5.3.1.	Mode	
5.3.2.	Charges	
5.3.3.	Terms	
5.3.4.	Problems	
5.4.	Destinations	
5.4.1.	Place	
5.4.2.	Reaching Time	
5.4.3.	Market Time	
5.4.4.	Food/Water	
5.4.5.	Sanitation	
5.4.6.	Rest Place	
5.4.7.	Terms	
5.4.8.	Problems	
5.5.	Household Management	
5.5.1	Time	
5.5.2.	Drinking Water collection	
5.5.3.	Cooking	
5.5.4.	Washing	
5.5.5.	Caring Children	

6.0.	Changes in Life vis-à-vis Fishvending	
6.1.	Food: own childhood	
	Food: present children	
6.2.	Housing: own childhood	
	Housing: now	
6.3.	Living Conditions: own childhood	
	Living Conditions: now	
6.4.	Health Care: own childhood	
	Health care: now	
6.5.	illness: own childhood	
	illness: now	
6.6.	mensrial cycle: own childhood	
	mensrial cycle: now	
6.7.	wedding-self	
	wedding -children	

6.8.	wedding of relatives/friends	
	Festivals: own childhood	
6.9.	Festivals: now	
	Celebrations: own childhood	
6.11.	Celebrations: now	
	Social Network: own childhood	
6.12.	Social network: now	
	Others	

7.0.	Decisionmaking	
7.1.	No. of children	Self/Husband/Joint
7.2.	Stopage of pregnancy	Self/Husband/Joint
7.3.	House construction	Self/Husband/Joint
7.4.	Savings, investments, etc.	Self/Husband/Joint
7.5.	Children's education	Self/Husband/Joint
7.6.	Children's marriage	Self/Husband/Joint
7.7.	Future ahead	Self/Husband/Joint

8.0.	Major events/occasions in Life	
7.1.	Your first communion	
7.2.	Your marriage	
7.3.	Your first child	
7.4.	Your house construction/warming	
7.5.	school life	
7.6.	school dropout	

9.0.	Memorable Experiences/events in life/labour

10.0	Bitter Experiences/events in life/labour

11	Looking Ahead

Appendix 2:
Pulluvila Fishing Village- Institutions Available and Accessible

#	Institution	Within the village	Activities	Distant places but utilized by the villagers
1	Schools & Colleges	Leo 13 th Higher Secondary School	KG classes LP, UP, HS & HSS – free mid day meals up to 8 th standard -IED (Inclusive Education for differently disabled)scholarships - pre metric scholarships - Matsya Thozhilali scholarships - Egg and milk to students	1. KNM Govt. College. 2. Nellimud new B.Ed College (5 km) 3. MV B.Ed college(2km) 4. Bestheytha (Rosamenthica HSS, Mukkola & Mareon, Pulinkudi) 5. Mother Theresa differently abled’s School, Chavadi.
2	L P Schools	1. St. Mary’s PLGS (Aided) 2. Mohammedan’s LPS (Pallom) – govt. 3. Children’s Palace LP (Unaided), Kochupally	Mid day meals (Govt. & Aided Schools)	1. Jawahar public School (un aided) 2. Mount Carmal –Un aided 3. St. antony’s LPS, Kochuthurai (Aided) 4. SNDP UPS Karumkulam (Aided)
3	Play schools	1. St. Jude’s LKG 2. SDCsadan school	Kindergarten classes and care of children	
4	Anganwadi	10 numbers		
5	Libraries, Arts & Sports Club	1. Jaihind Library & Social Cultural Centre, Pulluvila 2. Jaihind Vanitha Library, Pulluvila Friends club Library & Vanitha Library, Pulluvila 4. Kalasagar Library & Reading Room 5. St. Mary’s Library (book lending only) 6. St. Peter’s Arts & Sports Club 2. Seven Star Arts & Sports Club 3. St. Jacob’s Sports & Arts Club	1. Book lending 2. Cultural activities 3. encouragement for sports and arts. 4. sports teams are formed & provided training to team members to participate in competitions	
6	Health care centres	1. Govt. Community Health Centre 2. St. Joseph Clinic (private) 3. Brothers’ hospital (private)	1. 30 beds (inpatients and out patients)	1. Ayurveda hospital-Kanjiramkulam, 2. Govt. homoeo hospital-Kanjiramkulam

				3. Veterinary hospital – Puthiathura.
7	P D S shops (6)- Public distribution shops	Kochupally -3, Erayimmanthura-1, Pulluvila-2 nos.	Distribution of cereals, kerosene oil, etc. at lower prices, free supply during vulnerable periods.	
8	Govt. drinking water supply project, Karicha & Kumuli		Distribution of drinking water in the village	KANJIRAMKULAM
9	Electricity Office & Telephone Exchange			
10	Panchayat Office		Local governance & development	Puthiyathura (1.5km)
11	Village office		Revenue administration	Puthiyathura (1.5km)
12	Fishery Office		Extension services	Matsya Bhavan at Pallom (500 mtr)
13	Fisheries co- operative societies	1. Pullivila (No FT-28), (Affiliated- Matsyafed) 2. Kochupally, Pallam (affiliated- Matsyafed)	Auctioning of fish caught by members. Issue of loans & collection of repayments. Financial assistance to members.	
14	NSS, SNDP, Churches – related organizations	St. Jacobs Pulluvila, St. Peters Kochupally, Mosch Pulluvila, Keezhethil Devi Temple, Pulluvila	Regular meeting of members, prayers etc.	SNDP Chapat, Karumkulam
15	Church sponsored organisations	1. Trivandrum Social Service Society, 2. St. Vincent de Paul Society, 3. Sisters of the Devine Savior (SDS), 4. Madonna Sisters	Providing houses, providing loans, Assistance for taking loan from banks Financial assistance for fishing and related activities, providing assistance to patients and poor students, educational activity Running nursery school Tailoring (Embroidery) Catering (Central Govt. affiliation) Devine classes Angels – pre-KG - School	

		5. Congregation of Teresan Carmelites (CTC)		
16	Bank – public, private	1. Indian bank, 2. Muthoot enterprises, 3. Muthoot mercantile ltd.	Financial services	
17	Money lenders	7 units – <i>Kai vaippa</i> (Household credit)		
18	NGOs/CBOs	KCYM (Kerala Catholic Youth Movement)	Activities	
19	Markets	1. Kuchupally Market, 2. Tsunami Market, Pulluvila	Fish from other places and Pulluvila are traded	
20	Fish landing centers	Pulluvila - sea shore	fish landings by traditional crafts	
21	Janasree (SHGs)	200 Units of Janasree Mission	Self Help Groups (SHGs)	
22	Kudumbasree (SHGs)	200 Units of Kudumbasree Mission	Self Help Groups (SHG)	
23	Community Hall	1. St. Jacobs (Pulluvila), 2. Masona (Kochupally)	All types of functions on the basis of booking	

**Appendix 3:
Descriptions of Fishing Craft**

1. Plywood Canoe

Fishing craft made of marine plywood. It is relatively new introduction to the artisanal sector, introduced by SIFFS (an NGO) in the early eighties. The modified version of Plywood Canoe is Fibre Boats, made of fibre.

2. Plank Canoe

A plank canoe, as the name indicates, is made of planks. Fishing craft made of wooden pieces with stitch and glue of coir.

3. Kattamaram

Kattamaram or Catamaran is a raft made of joining wooden logs. It is traditional craft used from time immemorial.

**Appendix 4:
English Names of Traditional Fishing Gears**

#	Gears	English Name
1	Roll vala	Mackerel net; made of monofilament
2	Echa vala	Mackerel net; made of nylon
3	Kacha vala	Anchovy net
4	Chala vala	Sardine net; made of nylon
5	Aadu vala	Sardine net; made of monofilament
6	Disco vala	Trammel net; made of three layers
7	Ozhukku vala	Drift net
8	Kamba vala	Shore seine
9	Thattumadi	Boat seine
10	Thazhthu or Kallu vala	Ray net
11	Ponthom	Fish Aggregation Devise (FAD); for catching crab
12	Choonda	Hook & Line

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