

From Nets to Hooks: Piravom's Fishing Practices Along the Muvattupuzha River

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Introduction

The Muvattupuzha River, a lifeline for the people of Piravom, flows through the picturesque landscapes of Kochi in Kerala. It's actually the town Muvattupuzha itself being the starting point of this river. It's a very calm river. As the word Muvattupuzha indicates 'Moonu' meaning three, and 'aaru' meaning small river and 'puzha' meaning river itself. As this reveals this river is composed of three other rivers ie, Kothamangalum river, Kaliyar river and Thodupuzha river. The river flows up into Vaikom lake or Vembanad lake and then empty into the Arabian sea. The length of river is around 121 Kms. The first concrete bridge in India is built over this river called Muvattupuzha Bridge. There is a dam across the river called Malankara Dam for the irrigation purposes. we just try to take observe a small stretch of the river which passes through my locality (ie almost 5 kms of the river), Piravom, Ernakulam district, Kerala, 686664, India.



Fig. 1. Muvattupuzha River

Piravom is a municipality in Ernakulam district and a suburb of Kochi in Indian state

Kerala. Piravom is very famous for Hindu temples and Christian churches and so it has several cultural diversity and importance. To its cultural importance the Pazhoor Padipura, an astrology center linked to Pazhoor Perumthrikkovil referred in the 'Adithyamala' (Garland of Legends) by Kottarathil Sankunni, Pazhoor Perumthrikkovil, a temple of Shiva which is believed to be 1,800 years old and Piravom valiya pally (St. Mary's Orthodox Syrian cathedral) one of the oldest church in Kerala is located on the banks of Muvattupuzha river. Several festivals like Pazhoor Shivarathri, Thiruvaathira Aarattu Maholthsavam and Easter in Piravom valiya pally are all have certain connection with the river. The part of Muvattupuzha river which flows through my locality Piravom is came to be known as 'Piravom Puzha'.



Fig. 2. Cultural ethnicity of river, with church and temple on its banks

As one of the significant water bodies of this region, the river has supported various livelihoods for generations. Among the most notable activities are fishing practices that have been passed down through centuries. These fishing methods, including hook and line fishing and casting net techniques, not only serve as an essential source of income but also remain deeply rooted in the leisure activities of the local community living along the river's banks.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A combination of observational research, photography, and direct communication with the local community comprised the research methodology for the study of fishing practices along the Muvattupuzha River in Piravom. Several fishing techniques, including hook and line fishing and casting net methods, were observed and documented by spending time at key fishing locations along the river; photography and video were used to capture the methods, tools, and

the surrounding environment to visually document the activities; research also included an exploration of local knowledge on the ecology of the river, the challenges faced by fishermen, and the sustainable practices being used. These methods contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the fishing practices and their relationship with the river, both as a source of livelihood and a cultural tradition.

Hook and Line Fishing: A Time-Honoured Tradition

In Piravom, fishing with a hook and line is arguably the most individualized and conventional means of catching fish. Simple yet efficient equipment, like a bamboo rod or wooden stick fastened to a line with a baited hook, is frequently used by local fishermen. When the river is quiet and the surroundings are peaceful, this practice can be seen in the early morning or late afternoon. Many people view it as a way of life that ties them to their ancestors rather than just a means of subsistence.



Fig. 3. Hook and Line Fishing

Smaller fish species like tilapia, catfish, and other freshwater species are usually caught with this technique. In search of a tranquil getaway while gathering the river's produce, local anglers frequently fish alone or in small groups. The relationship between the fisherman and the river is close, despite the fact that it may appear to be a solitary activity. The residents of Piravom value the time spent in solitude while waiting for a catch because it allows them to ponder and feel more connected to the natural world.

Casting Nets: A Commercial Fishing Method

However, casting nets, or "kalavara" in the local dialect, are frequently used for commercial fishing along the Muvattupuzha River. Although it requires a lot more work than

hook and line fishing, this technique is quite successful in capturing more fish. Usually cast from a boat or the riverbanks, the nets spread out in a broad circle once they are in the water. The fisherman brings the net back in once it has been submerged, ideally with a plentiful catch of different species.



Fig. 4. Casting Nets

People who rely on the river for their livelihood frequently adopt this method, selling their catch to adjacent towns' vendors or local marketplaces. Larger fish obtained this way are frequently in great demand, particularly by businesses like hotels, restaurants, and fishmongers. To increase their chances of success, anglers must have a thorough understanding of the river's tides and fish behaviour, which makes the work demanding and requiring expertise and experience. Casting nets frequently requires teamwork, in contrast to hook and line fishing, which is typically more solitary. To increase their chances of catching more fish, a group of fishermen may cooperate to cast several nets at once. In addition to helping the local economy, the practice has strengthened the bonds amongst the fisherman in the community.

Leisure and Recreation: Fishing as a Community Activity

For many Piravom inhabitants, fishing along the Muvattupuzha River has evolved into a pleasure hobby in addition to an economic one. It provides those who do not depend on fishing as their main source of income with a fun and peaceful opportunity to spend time by the sea. On weekends or holidays, families frequently go fishing slowly with hooks and lines, turning the pastime into a get-together for neighbours and friends. This custom promotes a sense of

community while enabling the locals to relax and enjoy the beauty of the river.



Fig. 5. Fishing as a recreational activity

Additionally, the tranquillity of riverbank fishing provides a respite from the stress of contemporary life. Fishing is frequently a treasured memory, a link to the past, and a generational bridge for the elderly. The younger generation also takes part in these events, helping to preserve this cultural legacy by learning the craft of fishing from their elders.

The Sustainability of Piravom's Fishing Practices

The delicate balance between tradition and sustainability is also reflected in the fishing methods used along the Muvattupuzha River. Even though many people make their living from commercial fishing, the locals understand how crucial it is to protect the river's ecosystem. In order to prevent fish populations from declining, fishermen frequently employ sustainable methods, and there is a rising movement to control fishing seasons and fish sizes in order to preserve the biodiversity of the river.

Additionally, to lessen the strain on wild fish populations, local officials have been pushing more environmentally friendly practices, such as encouraging fish breeding technologies and lowering the usage of dangerous chemicals in fishing gear. The survival of Piravom's fishing community depends on upholding these customs while protecting the environment as the area expands and encounters the difficulties of contemporary development.

CONCLUSION

The close ties between the local population and the Muvattupuzha River are reflected in the fishing methods used along it in Piravom. These techniques are essential to the area's

cultural fabric, whether it is the peaceful seclusion of hook and line fishing or the active cooperation required to cast nets. In addition to being a business activity, fishing is also a source of leisure and spiritual significance for the residents of Piravom, providing them with a source of income and pleasure. It is impossible to overestimate the significance of sustainable fishing methods because the community still depends on the river for its livelihood. Maintaining this equilibrium will be crucial to the fishing culture of Piravom in the future, allowing the river and its inhabitants to coexist peacefully for many years to come.