

**LIVELIHOOD DIMENSIONS OF KOLE LANDS: A STUDY OF MADAYIKONAM KOLE  
LAND IN THRISSUR DISTRICT IN KERALA**

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**Abstract**

Kole lands provides livelihood for nearby residents. Aquatic resources occupy a strategic position by providing income and employment to a section of population in Kerala. In rural areas people depend the nearby kolelands for earning their livelihood. This paper is focused on the livelihood of inland fishermen who depend upon the kolelands of Madayikonam.

**Key Words**

1. Kole Land, 2. Livelihood, 3. Sustainability

**Introduction**

Kerala is well known among the Indian states for its natural resource richness, bio-diversity and climatic conditions. Kerala state lies in the 590 km length coastline of Arabian Sea which plays a vital role in shaping its socio-economic fabric. It is a state endowed with 44 rivers and 53 backwaters, long stretch of estuaries, enormous number of ponds and wells interconnected with streams and canals. Among the natural resource base of Kerala the aquatic resources occupy a strategic position that provides income and employment to large section of population. Fishing industry both marine and inland occupies an important place in its economy in molding the socio-economic life of the traditional fisherman folk of the state. Inland fisherman plays an important role in Kerala's economy as it contributes to the state's economy in many ways as a source of food and source of income.

Kole land is an important Ramsar wetland in South of India. It is part of Vembanad-Kole wetland system spread across about 1513 km<sup>2</sup> and is the largest wetland system in India, included as a Ramsar site in 2002. Geologically, Kole is a low lying area with rich alluvium deposits brought along by Kechery and Karuvannur rivers. According to the earlier official estimates, the Kole rice fields are low lying tracts located at 0.5 to 1 metre below mean sea level extending to an area of 136.32 km<sup>2</sup>, spread over Thrissur and Malappuram districts of Kerala. The southern boundary is marked by Chalakudy river while northern boundary by Bharathapuzha river. The Kole land in Thrissur district is located in Mukundapuram, Thrissur and Chavakkadthaluks, where as Ponnani Kole is located in Chavakkad and Thalapillythaluks of Thrissur district and Ponnanihaluk of Malappuram district (Jeena T Sreenivasan, 2010). This wetland ecosystem lies submerged under water for almost six months in a year. It supplements human dietary requirements, cleans polluted areas, prevents floods and protects shorelines and provides unique habitat for a wide variety of flora and fauna (James E. J, 2002). In fact wetlands are called nature's kidneys. Kole land is usually used for rice cultivation and inland fishing interchangeably for the livelihood purposes of the people. Rice is cultivated in this region after dewatering of fields. Dewatering of fields is carried out with the withdrawal of monsoon season and the water is collected in canals for irrigation during summer.

Madayikonam Kole land which belongs to Thrissur kole land provides a variety of aquatic resources and it contributes to the livelihood of many fishermen communities belonging to Kanakka or Padanna among the scheduled caste and other communities of the district. The drastic socio-economic changes that have taken place in Kerala have pulled population from the traditional occupation to other modern avenues of employment but still a large chunk of Kanakka community depends on inland fishing for their livelihood due to many factors.

**Origin of the research problem and significance of the study**

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