

## SOCIO - ECONOMIC PROFILE OF COIR WORKERS IN KERALA - A CASE STUDY OF CHERTHALA TALUK IN ALAPPUZHA DISTRICT

Article Particulars: Received: 23.03.2018 Accepted: 05.04.2018 Published: 28.04.2018

**J. ASWATHY**

*Independent Scholar*

**SARANYA AJITHKUMAR**

*Independent Scholar*

### Abstract

*Coir is a product of the coconut tree, cocosnucifera, and it is sometimes known as coco fiber. Coir fiber is relatively water-proof and is one of the few natural fibers resistant to damage by salt water. The history of coir industry in the world shows that the origin of modern coir industry was in England. The golden textured Indian coir fiber that Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Goa produce captured the European and world markets from then on, there was the success of Indian coir's reign, and it had no turning back. The big corporate soon established coir factories in Alleppey, Kollam, Kozhikode, Kochi and other parts of Kerala. Coir industry is one of the most important traditional cottage industries in the south western coastal belt of India, with Kerala occupying the major position. The coir industry is agro- based, rural and export oriented. The economic importance of this traditional industry is significant in terms of income, employment and foreign exchange. This traditional cottage craft provides, in Kerala, Employment to 2.13 lakhs families and approximately 4 lakhs people. In Kerala people, the coir industry is the second largest single source of non - agriculture employment for the rural poor. Alleppey is the nerve center of Kerala's famous coir industry. This paper addresses the social and economic profile of coir workers in Kerala based on the survey conducted in Cherthala taluk in Alappuzha district.*

**Keywords:** *Kayar, Husk, Brown coir, Yarn, Tropical palm, cordages, defibering*

### Introduction

Coir is the substance extracted from from the hairy husk of coconuts, and used to create a variety of products such as Mats, Carpets, Upholstery Stuffing, Brushes and Beds. Coir pronounced Koy-er, is a very coarse, stiff fiber and it is also extremely resistant to rot and salt water, making it an ideal material for situation in which other fibers would decay. There are two varieties of coir-brown coir and white coir. Brown coir is harvested from fully ripened coconuts. It is thick, strong and has high abrasion resistance. White coir fibers are harvested from the coconuts before they are ripe. The history of coir industry in the world shows that the origin of modern coir industry was in England. India, Philippines, Ceylon, Dutch East Indies and Malasiya are the most important coconut growing countries of the world. India ranked first among the coconut producing countries in the world. One of the most commonly seen tropical trees in Kerala is the coconut tree. In fact even the name Keralam is derived from this tree ('Kera' in Malayalam language means coconut and 'Alam" means land, thus Keralam = land of coconut). In Kerala, about 6.4 lakhs persons get employment from coir industry out of which 80% are women.

### Results and Discussions

**Table: Socio economic profile of coir workers in Cherthala thaluk, Alappuzha District**

| Sex            | Percentage (%) |
|----------------|----------------|
| Male           | 23%            |
| Female         | 77%            |
| Total          | 100%           |
| Asset Position | Percentage (%) |
| Yes            | 80%            |
| No             | 20%            |
| Total          | 100%           |
| Marital Status | Percentage (%) |
| Married        | 60%            |
| Unmarried      | 2%             |

|                                     |                        |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Windows                             | 33%                    |
| Divorce                             | 5%                     |
| Total                               | 100%                   |
| <b>Employment Status</b>            | <b>Percentage (%)</b>  |
| Permanent                           | 88%                    |
| Temporary                           | 12%                    |
| Total                               | 100%                   |
| <b>Housing Status</b>               | <b>Percentage (%)</b>  |
| Permanent                           | 93%                    |
| Temporary                           | 7%                     |
| Total                               | 100%                   |
| <b>Family Members</b>               | <b>Percentage (%)</b>  |
| 1-3                                 | 25%                    |
| 3-5                                 | 60%                    |
| Above 5                             | 15%                    |
| Total                               | 100%                   |
| <b>Bank deposits</b>                | <b>Percentage (%)</b>  |
| yes                                 | 22%                    |
| No                                  | 78%                    |
| Total                               | 100%                   |
| <b>Debt problem</b>                 | <b>Percentage (%)</b>  |
| Yes                                 | 75%                    |
| No                                  | 25%                    |
| Total                               | 100%                   |
| <b>Bonus</b>                        | <b>Percentage (%)</b>  |
| Yes                                 | 88%                    |
| No                                  | 12%                    |
| Total                               | 100%                   |
| <b>Pension</b>                      | <b>Percentage (%)</b>  |
| Yes                                 | 82%                    |
| No                                  | 12%                    |
| Total                               | 100%                   |
| <b>Insurance</b>                    | <b>Percentage (%)</b>  |
| Yes                                 | 48%                    |
| No                                  | 52%                    |
| Total                               | 100%                   |
| <b>Working condition</b>            | <b>Percentage (%)</b>  |
| Satisfied                           | 90%                    |
| Unsatisfied                         | 10%                    |
| Total                               | 100%                   |
| <b>Income</b>                       | <b>Percentage (%)</b>  |
| Satisfied                           | 82%                    |
| unsatisfied                         | 18%                    |
| Total                               | 100%                   |
| <b>Working hours</b>                | <b>Percentage (%)</b>  |
| Below 8 hour                        | 17%                    |
| 8 hour                              | 88%                    |
| Total                               | 100%                   |
| <b>Member of coir Welfare board</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b>  |
| Yes                                 | 63%                    |
| No                                  | 37%                    |
| Total                               | 100%                   |
| <b>Major income earner</b>          | <b>Percentage (%)</b>  |
| Men                                 | 53%                    |
| Women                               | 22%                    |
| Men & Women                         | 22%                    |
| Total                               | 100%                   |
| <b>Vehicles</b>                     | <b>Percentage (%)</b>  |
| Two wheeler                         | 42%                    |
| Three wheeler                       | 6%                     |
| No vehicle                          | 52%                    |
| Total                               | 100%                   |
| <b>Category</b>                     | <b>Percentages (%)</b> |
| APL                                 | 45 %                   |
| BPL                                 | 55 %                   |
| Total                               | 100%                   |

Source: Field survey

## Objectives

1. To find out the social profile of coir workers
2. To find out the Economic profile of coir workers

## Methodology

The study was based on primary and secondary data. For the purpose of understanding socio- economic profile of workers in coir industry, primary data were collected from Cherthala taluk in Alappuzha district. Alappuzha is the nerve centre of coir industry in Kerala. Researcher collected 50 samples from 5 coir industries, 10 samples from each industry. The selection of respondents was through random sampling method. Primary data have been collected through structured questionnaire and personal interview. Secondary data have been collected from various journals, books and internet.

## Significance of the Study

Coir industry is one of the most important agro-based employment oriented traditional cottage industries in Kerala. Kerala is the largest producer of coir in India. It is concentrated mainly in the rural areas. Coir units are geographically confined to four districts of Kerala are Alappuzha, Kannur, Kollam and Thiruvananthapuram. Cherthala in Alappuzha district has a unique position because of its largest clustering of coir manufacturing units. The concentration of coir manufacturing units of Cherthala in Alappuzha district is the rationale behind selecting this area as the field of investigation under the study. Employment potential of coir industry in Kerala depicts that about 6.57 lakhs of workers are engaged in this industry and out of which 80 percent are being represented by rural women. It is seen from earlier studies that the workers in the coir industry are the socio-economic problems, trade relations of coir products and working and health conditions. This makes the study relevant and significant in the contemporary rural economy of Kerala.

## Major Findings

1. Coir industry is one of the largest traditional industries in Kerala.
2. 82% coir workers are between the age group 30-70 18% belongs to the age Group 70 above.
3. 55% of the members belong to the BPL groups and 45% members belong to the APL groups.
4. 95% of coir workers belong to the Hindu religion and 5% members belongs to the other religions. Among Hindus, 85% are Ezhavas.
5. 60% of coir workers are married and 2% are unmarried and 38% are widows and divorcees.
6. As concerning the educational qualification, 40% of coir workers are below SSLC.
7. 98% of respondents completely depend on coir industry for their livelihood.

8. 37% of respondents are getting monthly income between 5000-7000. 45% are having income below 5000 and 18% are having income above 7000
9. The 75% workers who suffer from the problem of debt. They borrow mainly from bank, money lenders and Kudumbasree.
10. The coir industry creates some health problems to the workers mainly 50% of back pain and 33% have Allergy and Asthma.
11. The coir industry creates no Environmental problems. They have adequate sanitary facilities and they enjoy proper leisure time.
12. In coir industry almost all workers are satisfied with their working conditions.
13. In coir industry workers receive their income on weekly basis and enjoying pension facility, provided by the industry itself.
14. The data reveals that the workers in coir industry enjoying extra bonus for some special festivals or occasions.

### Suggestions

1. Enhance the savings behavior of the workers through initiating small chiti and fund programmes.
2. Provide more health insurance to coir workers.
3. Financial help should be provided by the local self govt. for the improvement of coir industry.
4. Hike in wage
5. Provide basic infrastructure facilities for the development of these industries.
6. Workers should be provided with personal protective yards such a masks, gloves, rain coats and boots.
7. Proper work schedule should be prepared so that they could work comfortably. so that it helps to reduce the health problems faced by them.
8. Proper savings will leads to decrease their debt problems.
9. The government should take necessary steps to protect the workers.

### Conclusion

The study "The Socio- Economic Profile of Coir workers in Kerala: A case study of Cherthala taluk in Alappuzha district" mainly focuses on the socio-economic background of the coir workers in Cherthala taluk. Coir industry is one of the largest traditional industry in India as well as Kerala. In the initial period of 10<sup>th</sup> plan 40% of the total working population are engaged in the coir industry .In the 12<sup>th</sup> plan total population engaged in the coir industry declined to 15%.Today nearly 1-1.5 lakh people completely depends on coir industry for their livelihood. The major part of workers in the industry is women. So women empowerment is closely associated with coir industry.

### References

1. Thomas Issac (2015), Kayarintemaranam, Mathrubhumi Feb 4, P.4
2. Government of Kerala, Economic Review 2014, 2012, 1978. State planning board, Thiruvananthapuram.
3. G. Nagaraya (2011) "prospectus and problems of coir industry in India" EPW. Vol Xii P. 345-356
4. Thampan (1998) "Growth and development of coir industry" coir board. Cochin.
5. Pylees (1975) "coir industry in Kerala" Cochin.
6. [www.coirboard.gov.in](http://www.coirboard.gov.in)
7. [apjor.com/pdf](http://apjor.com/pdf)
8. <https://editorialexpress.com/in>
9. Government of India (1999), coir board Annual Report, Kochi
10. Census Report 2011-Government of India, New Delhi
11. Balakrishnan, P.K, "Evolution and Working of Coir Industry in Kerala, "coir board, cochin