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## Socio Economic Condition of Ezhuthachan Community In Kerala (Survey Research)

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### ABSTRACT

*This Survey focusing to know the existing socio-economic status and major demand of Ezhuthachan the community. The major assumption was History of Ezhuthachan community is related to Jaina or Budha religion and Thunchath Ramanujan Ezhuthachan belongs to Ezhuthachan community. Ezhuthachan community faced a crisis of ethnic identity. The settlement of Ezhuthachan community is patrilineal system. The ethnic identity of Ezhuthachan community is related to the Bhattar community in Andhra Pradesh. The community was in exile during the period of 16<sup>th</sup> century. They kept a typical Brahminical or Bhattar identity. In northern Malabar the teachers of Ezhuthachan community used to stay in the houses and they teach the students, this process was popularly known as "Ezhuthachan Thamasikkuka".*

*The Sanskrit knowledge of Ezhuthachan community is due to the relation of Chola Pallava Dynasty (south Indian inscription by archaeological survey of India, number 351 A.R number 180 of 1931). The inscriptions were found in Thanchavoor Pushpavaneswara temple (south side). These inscriptions tell us about the queen of chola belong Kaduppattar, Thamaramittiyar community. Kaduppattar community is a part of Pallava Dynasty. The relation between Chola Pallava dynasty and Ezhuthachan community was indicated by festival celebrated at 'Chittoormadam' on Tamil month namely 'aady' 18 called 'aadipperukkam' and Tamil Nadu in the banks of kaveri river . At that time itself another festival was celebrated in Karkkidaka month (Malayalam month ) at Chittormadam. This festival is related to the child education .The ethnic identity of Ezhuthachan community and Thunchath Ezhuthachan are inter connected matters. Ezhuthachans and Ganakas (Panikkan) who had Jain culture traditionally had earned acceptance for Vattezhuthu and spread it, which was the earlier form of the Malayalam script. Actually Vattezhuthu spread first in Karnataka, Andhra and Tamil Nadu and after that only came to Malabar and Southern Kerala only after that. Ezhuthachan who belonged to Kaduppottagothra came from Kongudesam via Palakkad and they spread Vattezhuthu in palakkad and then all over Malabar. Ganakas, who came from Madhurai to Southern Kerala through Chengottai and spread Vattezhuthu. In Malabar area Ezhuthachans led the propagation of Vattezhuthu and the same was done by Ganakas in Southern Kerala. It may be because to Vattezhuthu was spread by Ezhuthachans and epics Ramayana and Mahabharata were written by Thunchath Ezhuthachan that he was known as the father of Malayalam. It was not a surprise that Kannassa, who wrote Ramayana under the influence of the Bhakthi movement belonged to Ganaka clan and Thunchath Ezhuthachan, who wrote Adhyathma Ramayana belonged to Ezhuthachan community. Contrary to the traditional nambuthiri line of Manipravala romantic and erotic narration they deviated from it and adopted totally different subject of vedanta and narration, which was proof of their non brahmanic style and route. They have utilized the style of Manipravala which was acquainted with the Jain poets of Karnataka.*

*Kannassa Manipravala was seen with some Tamil words and usages, Ezhuthachan used combination of Sanskrit and Malayalam in his Manipravalam. The community or caste politics is the major factor in Indian politics. We can see the backward caste ruling India up to 20 years of Indian politics. The political relevance of Ezhuthachan community is highly complicated and important in Kerala politics too. But now the community had faced so many exclusions and problems. In the sector of higher education the community representation was very low. Main reasons for this were illitaray and poverty. For the eradication of these particular problems the government must take iniatieves for the community development. Ezhuthachan community posses so many great personalities. But the rulers and the elite class intrest do not consider this section. Sri; Surya Narayana Ezhuthachan and kumaranezhuthachan are example for the exclusion. The socio-economic backwardness is a major problem of the community. In the contemporary era there are so many exclusions faced by Ezhuthachan community and the Governmental authorities must make legislations for the development of Ezhuthachan community*

## INTRODUCTION

To get a clear idea of the socio-economic conditions of the Ezhuthachan's, a primary survey including 270 Ezhuthachans households from Palakkad and Thrissur District was carried out by akhilakerala Ezhuthachansamajam. In order to compare the human development of the Ezhuthachan's with the non- ezhuthans, 100households from the non-Ezhuthachan were also taken. The sample families had 2430members. Among this, 1870 were Ezhuthachan and remaining 560 were non-Ezhuthachan.

Here we discusses the demographic particulars pertaining to Ezhuthachan familiesespecially their market behaviour, work participation and sociological aspects. Mainly Ezhuthachan communities have their origin in Andhra pradesh. They are mainly settled in Thrissur and Palakkad , Malapuram. A few of them are found in Kozhikode and Ernakulam districts in kerala. Ezhuthachans are the backward in every respect. They are the downtrodden group holding very little land and having little amenities of life. Taking into account the various socio-economic indicators, Ezhuthachan's can be considered to be a better representation of the backward population of Kerala.

## EZHUTHACHAN'S

The etymological meaning of the term 'Ezhuthachan' indicates that The father of letters they earn their livelihood from labour as the term 'teaching' in Malayalam means 'guru'.

### Physical Appearance

The colour of the Ezhuthachans varies from dark to inter linked black and white “edger Thurston” observes that they are 'dark & white skinned peoples , medium in stature, with simple noses and curly or wavy hair'. They speak a debased form of Malayalam mixed with Tamil

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**Sub- divisions**

The Ezhuthachans have two-sub division according to their dwelling pattern- Kadupottans and Vakapottans(karappuathukar) those living Palakkad and Thrissur. The latter group is mainly found in Malappuram district in kerala.

**Food**

Raditionally Ezhuthachans were food-gatherers enjoying the freedom and self sufficiency of agriculture life . They used rice, edible roots, leaves etc. They also used to eat small creatures like crabs by entrapping them. Although rice is their staple food, considerable quantities of wheat or ragi are consumed by the Ezhuthachans. vegetables, animal flesh, fish, crabs and some varieties of roots and tubes are all included in their food items. Besides drinking tea or coffee

**Social customs**

Ear-boring ceremony is usually performed when the child attains the age of three. Both ear-lobes of the child are pierced with sharpened metal needles. A mixture of ginger oil and turmeric paste is used for heeling the wound. 'Ezhuthacan consider the first menstruation of a girl as an indication that she has reached the age of puberty. During this period she is considered ritually impure and is prohibited from doing household duties. On the day of attaining puberty the girl is kept confined in one comer of the room. On the seventh day a purification ceremony is observed

**Marriage customs**

The most common form of marriage among the Ezhuthachan's is marriage by negotiation. Other modes of acquiring mate for a young man include *ringeby* elopement and marriage by service. Marriage by negotiation is always accompanied by the payment of bride price by the bride groom. The initiative for entering into a marital alliance starts from the boy's side. at the time of marriage the "parisha"(samudhayam) members said we gave "1 thulampathram( bronze plates and kitchen usages ) athinothaswarnavum (gold) orupasumkuttieem ( cow and calf) and the lady we will give for you" this system is related to dowery.

**Funeral Rites**

The place of burial of Ezhuthachan is usually near their homes. Mourning is observed by the members of bereaved family for 10 days. The mourner in the house is supposed to perform the rituals on the seventh day. He is not permitted either eat fish or meat, during the customary mourning period. A ritual called 'pula or vaarayka' is performed on the 10 days.

**Religion**

Saraswathi, and ayyappanare the chief god and goddesses of Ezhuthachans. Ezhuthachans give offerings to their gods during rituals and festive occasions. They observe a number of festivals in different seasons. Some of these festivals are exclusively their own whereas some others are those which are regionally spread throughout the State. Vidhyarambha, Onam and Vishu, are also being celebrated by them. The festival of vidyarambha celebrated in honour of 'saraswathi' is conducted during the kanni-thulam month (sep-oct). The annual festival in the locality, thiroor is another important occasion for festivity.

**Occupation**

Ezhuthachan are primarily teaching labourers but very few families possess land holdings. Traditionally they were engaged in bonded-labour. Now-a-days the economy of Ezhuthachan is well-knit with that of the non-Ezhuthachan settlers who control their occupational pattern and thereby influencing their economic conditions. Since they are employed for agricultural operations like sowing and harvesting only, they have to remain unemployed for a period of 3 to 4 months. Wage in kind, that is in the form of paddy in exchange for labour is also prevalent in some interior parts of Palakkad. Hard physical works are usually done by male members, example, ploughing, ridge making etc. Light works like weeding, harvesting are done by women. Since the wage rate is very low as compared to that of other areas in Kerala, Ezhuthachans continue to be victims of the vicious circle of poverty.

**Indebtness**

Often debts are incurred for meeting the expenses of marriage ceremonies, death rites etc. In other words, money borrowing is the major factor behind land alienation. Ezhuthachan have no other alternative but to borrow money to meet expenses in connections with social obligations. Many Ezhuthachan who were interviewed said that despite higher wages than before in agricultural operations, today they could not repay the debts to their money lenders including their traditional land lords.

**Community Life**

Among the Ezhuthachan there exists the institution of headman known as 'karanavar' who is obeyed and respected by all the members of the community. The office of the headman operates through a hereditary principle. The karanavar presides over the council of elders which takes decisions on important issues. Moreover, he acts as the priest particularly during marriage, funerals etc. He is authorised to settle disputes, cases of theft, quarrels, sexual offences etc. Punishment is generally inflicted upon the offender by imposing fines varying according to the nature of the offence. The traditional role of headman as the supreme authority has weakened over the years and is now reduced to the position of presiding over communal rituals and ceremonies. In spite of a long period of bondage, the Ezhuthachans at present are trying to retain many aspects of their music and recreational activities. It is true that the modern recreational avenues like watching cinema have contributed to changes in the socio-economic behaviour. Changes in the consumption habits have also taken place among them due to changes in economic pursuits. Despite governmental efforts for their economic upliftment, the Ezhuthachan community still continues to 'eke' out a miserable life in the midst of ignorance, indebtedness, ill health and above all unhealthy economic practices.

**Type of the family**

Ezhuthachan families are broadly classified into nuclear, joint and extended. Nuclear family consists of parents with two or three children. Joint family includes parents, grandparents and children. Extended family consists of parents, grandparents, uncle, aunts, sisters, brothers, children etc. Based on the household survey conducted

**Family Size**

The size of the family is a crucial factor in determining the well being of each and every individual. There is a marked difference between the size of the present tribal families and those in older days.

**Distribution of Ezhuthachan Households by the Family Size**

Forty five percentage have family size up to 8 members. Only sixteen percentage of Ezhuthachans have big size families. It is observed that majority of the people surveyed are middle aged couples who do not have any idea of reducing the birth rate. But it was observed that newly wedded couples are aware of the need of reducing birth rate.

**Family size**

*2 to 4 member family*

*4 to 6 member family*

*6 to 8 member family*

*Above 8 member family*

**Head of the Household**

family heads often leave their parent village seasonally and migrate to the place of their work. In their absence, for a major part of the year, male son work as head of the family. There are several such son headed families. Head of the household's age is considered as a determining factor of economic status.

**Socio-Economic Indicators**

Occupational mobility is considered as a major factor which provides tremendous changes in the socio-economic life of the people. Nine type percentage of the Ezhuhachans are casual agricultural labourers who depends on low wages and seasonal work. Majority of Ezhuthachan are landless. No owner cultivator could be identified among the Ezhuthachan community in the survey. Six percentage of Ezhuthachan were employed in private sector jobs. Ezhuthachan participation in government jobs is very meagre(4%). This may be due to their low higher educational standard.

**Income**

Traditionally, the Ezhuthachan earns their livelihood through agriculture. A new source of income besides land is employment in government and private sectors. Very few Ezhuthachan are technically educated and only a limited number hold good jobs. . The income groups above the poverty line are government and semi-government servants and private firm employee which consists a very small percentage of Ezhuthachan's.

**Housing**

A glance at the most conspicuous indicator of socio-economic status namely habitation and housing condition would provide a better understanding of the social life of Ezhuthachan's. It is observed that due to the proximity to agriculture of the Ezhuthachan's live in rural areas. In order to get a clear picture of the habitation of the backward society, we have classified the

sample household according to the habitation namely rural, remote and very remote. This classification is based on the mode of transport available to the hamlet (rural by bus, remote by jeep, and very remote by foot alone).

#### Distribution of Households Ezhuthachan's by Habitation

Habitation

Urban -5%

Rural- 10%

Remote- 30%

Very remote -55%

A good portion (fifty five percentage) of the s have Ezhuthachan's have to walk a long distance from their home to town in order to meet their daily requirements. Only ten percentage of the Ezhuthachan's habitation have bus facilities. As far as accommodations are concerned, it is noticed that majority of the have Ezhuthachan's already given up their traditional home an or self-built small houses.

#### Health and Sanitation

Health is an important determinant of a community's living status. Health determines the mortality rate of different groups. Generally, the Ezhuthachan's are not much concerned about their health in the initial stage of the diseases. During the field survey, it was observed that the majority of the Ezhuthachan's houses appeared to be clean. Ezhuthachan's give importance to cleaning and hygiene situation

#### Education

Ezhuthachan's give very little importance to education. Most of them are not yet conscious of the benefits of education and consequent economic gains. There is a feeling among the Ezhuthachan's that, after education their children will become alienated from their family when they migrate to the towns for taking employment. Moreover, they believe that the educated children are reluctant to take up their traditional occupations. It is found that the problem of illiteracy is acute among the Ezhuthachan's community. The literacy rate of Ezhuthachan's was forty five percentage. This low literacy is considered to be the root cause of their socio-economic backwardness. Adult literacy rate vary among the Ezhuthachan's It is observed that there are very few beneficiaries of the literacy mission. Few Ezhuthachan's parents are concerned about the schooling of their children. Now-a-days, the drop-out-rate is also high among them. The enrolment ratio of Ezhuthachan's

#### School Enrolment Ratio of Ezhuthachan's Students

##### Classes

Kindergarten (below age group 3 to 5)

Primary school (5 - 9)

Secondary school (9 - 13)

Higher school (13 - 15)

In primary education is very high in the case of Ezhuthachan's, but the secondary and high school enrolment ratios of students are very low. This is mainly due to the high drop out rate of students.

### **Social Awareness**

The thirty five percentage of the Ezhuthachan's do not possess or use any kind of communication media. It is noticed that a few of them possess radio and mobile phones which is used mainly for hearing songs and entertainment like and not for hearing news. Newspaper is very rare. Major source of social awareness is tea-shops where they spend a lot of time chatting about political and social aspects. For women, chatting centers are neighbouring houses.

### **Decision Taking**

Decision taking on one's own can be considered to be a major indicator of socio-economic advancement of any society. It is observed that eight percent of the sample population take self decision regarding any matter and forty percent of them seek the help of political leaders and relatives and twenty percent of them take decision with the help of 'samudayam' which is constituted by some Ezhuthachan's people. We could also notice that majority of some times Ezhuthachan's youths are not in favour of 'karanavar's rule. They favour political parties, people's organisations etc.

### **Status of Women**

The social structure of the Ezhuthachan's society in Kerala centres around the family. In most of the Ezhuthachan's communities in Thrissur and Palakkad, Ezhuthachan's in particular, the women enjoy equal social status with their men folk. The women are the cornerstone of the social structure of Ezhuthachan's societies of Kerala. The women shoulder heavy responsibilities like feeding, raising the family and maintaining social relations. When cash economy was introduced, women became the custodian of cash and controller of the household in majority of families.

### **Markets**

The traditional backward society was predominantly a subsistence economy where people depend on the forest for their livelihood and were by and large very self sufficient. Barter economy existed there. Eventually, due to the population pressure in plains, the non-Ezhuthachan's forcefully evicted the Ezhuthachan's from their original habitat. They were subjected to a great deal of exploitation by the non-Ezhuthachans. Thus the they who occupied the position of the landlords in the society were brought down to the level of labourers. Even today, the products supplied by the Ezhuthachan's are sold out at low prices even though different types of co-operatives have been set up in home areas for the procurement of different commodities supplied by the Ezhuthachans. They are exploited considerably in this manner too.

### **Land**

Traditionally 'land' in the wider sense has been considered as the pivotal point of the backward economy of Kerala. However, the question of who owns the land does not arise among the Ezhuthachan's since land is commonly owned. In the slash and burn agriculture, each family with in a group used to be allocated an area by the headman, according to its needs and ability to cultivate. So long as the family remained within the organisation and cultivated the plot, its

occupancy or operational right over that plot remained undisputed. Thus the group as a whole retained the ownership right and the individual Ezhuthachan family enjoyed the operational right. The above mentioned type of an institutional arrangement was possible because land was not at all considered a limiting factor of production in the evolution of the community economy. Later, the caste peasantry came to be divided broadly into two categories, viz, landed and landless. Landlessness - a problem unknown to their traditional society became a grim reality. Obviously the extent of landlessness varies from one place to another.

### **Labour**

Owing to the migration to plains and the partial breaking of isolation, they have taken agriculture as their major source of livelihood. Broadly speaking, the Ezhuthachan's group in Palakkad lacks the motivation for occupational change. It was observed that the society supplies cheap source of labour. Taking into consideration the active participation of group people in plantations, industries, mines etc., the government should come forward to grant them incentives to work together with the other people and provide them reasonable wages. This will help a great deal to improve their lot.

### **Capital**

Capital in its broad sense means, investment in different sectors of the economy. Agriculture being the main occupation of their population, the major part of investment goes to this sector. The major channels of investment are irrigation, tractors and other machines, vehicle for transport and marketing of agricultural goods and provision of modern seeds etc. It was noticed that a small percentage of peoples make investments in these areas. The majority of peoples lack funds for investment. They seldom approach the government agencies for financial assistance in order to purchase these agricultural implements as they are already in debt. It was observed from the field survey that majority of the group, especially the Ezhuthachan's were not aware of the incentives provided by the various agencies like KrishiBhavan, Blocks. Etc...

### **Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship is an occupational enterprise, taken at a personal level. It involves risk, quick decision, innovative adaptation, continuous investment and above all a temperament for profit making and development. Its genesis lies in capitalism but it is also an instrument to provide new avenues to the under developed segments of the society. The government and the voluntary agencies as agents of development, have a crucial role in leading the tribals along the road of entrepreneurship. Though, community development programmes do bring forth agricultural development, only through better entrepreneurship can the techniques of agriculture be changed. Self employment generation programmes like TRYSEM has imparted training to several tribals below 35 years in the field of art, craft, tool and furniture making which provides them with income

### **Product Market**

Product market is another side of market participation where by the extent of purchase and sale of final goods in the market can be determined. Ezhuthachan's in Kerala are basically farmers and daily wage earners. The major items of production and sale are agricultural products



comprising rice, maize, ragi, vegetables, spices, and wood. The transaction of goods within the sector does not occur frequently..

### **Expenditure Pattern**

Expenditure pattern of a society gives a clear picture of their economic status. Expenditure in terms of money determines how much amount of money is spent for various amenities of life. They do not have any account of what they purchase or consume. A few things such as sugar, salt, beedi, tea, liquor, fruits, milk, fish, medicine, etc are purchased from the market whenever required. No record of such expenditure is kept by them. However, a rough estimate of such expenditures was made for Ezhuthachan in this study. It was found that 93 percent of the Ezhuthachan households spend more than 55% of their income on food. Apart from food, major portion of their income is spent on fuel, clothing and medicine. Since tribals spend major portion of their income for day to day necessities, their saving is very low.

### **Cropping Pattern**

Ezhuthachan's economy is primarily based on agriculture. This sector provides employment to more than half of the working population. Cropping pattern is the central element of agricultural land use. Expansion of irrigation facilities, introduction of high yielding varieties of crops, agricultural tools and machines, creation of a wide market and development of infrastructural facilities in the form of link roads influence the cropping pattern to a large extent. But it is the others who are more benefited from these kind of development in this area. It was observed in the survey that 90% of Ezhuthachans are not aware of the modern agricultural development and practices. The main cultivation of others is paddy, which is considered as a modern crop by the coolies and now the Ezhuthachans are slowly following the footsteps of the others.

### **Diet Pattern**

Traditionally they were food-gatherers enjoying the freedom of wandering life in the interior forests. They eat rice, edible roots, leaves, wild berries etc.... It is interesting to note that 75% of the people do not depend on home cooked food throughout the year. Instead, they purchase food from nearby hotels or tea stalls. Their reluctance to cook food at home and the preference for wayside eating cannot be attributed to any single reason. It is clear from the study that the consumption pattern of Ezhuthachans is closely tied up with the employment opportunities. Most of them consume food twice a day if work is available, otherwise only once a day. Their staple diet is rice like the others. If rice is cooked twice, the second time they prepare it as kanji. "Three meals a day is something which they enjoy rarely. Usually on working days meals include early morning tea (without milk, most of the time without sugar also) and lunch. Normally they take rice with salt alone or salt and chilli or with 'yellow kari' which is prepared by using potato or papaya. The vegetables they usually purchase are onion, potatoes, beans etc.' ' Diet profile of Ezhuthachans is characterised by lack of milk and milk products. There exists a wide difference between the calorie intakes of sectoral identity.

### **Leadership**

Good leadership is very essential for every society's advancement. Community Development and the Panchayati Raj are the two institutions to promote better living for the whole community which require active and enthusiastic participation of all. In other words, community

development programmes cannot be successful without full participation of the people and proper leadership. Panchayati Raj is considered as an agency which stands for economic, social, political development and the discovery of new leaders. The political socialisation process among the Ezhuthachan before independence have led to the emergence of new leaders. Of late, a limited number of important community leaders like ADV.MA KRISHNANUNNI, SRI A A KUMARAN, SRI PS JAYAGOPAL, etc. have come up in the Thrissur & Palakkad Ezhuthachanbelt. Ezhuthachan in Palakkad & Thrissur belong to different political parties like Indian National Congress and the Communist party of India and Bharatheeyajanatha party(bjp)... Ezhuthachan youths are becoming more interested in party politics and they come forward even to contest elections. a large number of them regularly attend Grama Sabhameetings. Ezhuthachan women are not generally attracted to politics due to their backwardness in all respects. It is observed that even the other women in these areas are reluctant to enter politics or take up leadership owing to their conservative outlook. As a result, Ezhuthachan women participation is very low in local level administrative bodies like panchayath council, village council etc Ezhuthachan have to go a long way mentally for their advancement. The changes that have taken place among these Ezhuthachan's are a matter of pride for our state. Even though, the economic programmes that we introduced so far have failed to bring about major changes in the sectoral scenario, Ezhuthachan's believe that these programmes have contributed to a great extent in achieving their goals

**Role of Akhila Kerala EzhuthachanSamajam to developEzhuthachancommunity**  
**13/69**Akhila Kerala EzhuthachanSamajam 13/69 is a community service organisation representing 25 lakh strong Ezhuthachancommunity in kerala. The organisation was started in the year 1969 It consist nearly 250 sakha (Branch) all over in kerala .It is not only an community an oraganisation it is an cultural & service organisation too. The organisation try to develop an integrity among Ezhuthachan peoples in kerala .Ezhuthachan community students get the OEC scholarship under the hard working of this organisation .Any other organisation were not raise their voice for the development of the community. In the contemporary era the organisation get so many impotence for uplifting the Ezhuthachan community.

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