



Rapid assessment on post-flood scenario at Aranmula Heritage Zone, Kerala, India

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Abstract

Aranmula is acknowledged by the United Nations Development Programme as a Heritage Village due to uthirattathi snake boat race and Aranmula metal mirror which are unique to this Village. The present rapid assessment was to understand impact on flood in Aranmula Heritage Zone and study carried out on the 1st and 2nd week of September 2018 after the flood in Kerala. A cross sectional survey design was carried out through a rapid assessment of Palliyodams (snake boats), traditional artisans, worship places, traditional houses etc. The participants or sites in the study consist of 52 Palliyodakaras (villages), 21 flood-affected Aranmula Mirror Artisans, traditional houses, around 50 worship places in the Aranmula Heritage Zone. Both qualitative and quantitative method was used for data collection and analysis. The study found that the flood creates huge damages to the livelihoods in the heritage sites. It has affected the Palliyodams, Palliyodapura (Boat Sheds), Adayabharanam (boat ornaments), Palliyoda nayambukal (rudder-oar) and Palliyodakkadavu (snake boat landing area). Majority of the Palliyodams need an overall maintenance and a little less than half of the Aranmula Mirror Artisans have lost materials during the flood. There is a need to revive the livelihood and heritage of the Aranmula people as well as promote and prevent the tangible and intangible culture through a comprehensive plan.

Keywords: Rapid assessment, post-flood, cultural heritage, traditional artisans and aranmula heritage zone.

Introduction

Aranmula is the only heritage zone on Pamba river basin at Kerala. The rich cultural background of Aranmula ranging from the Western Ghats to coastal area of Arabian sea and is spread over the district of Pathanamthitta and Alappuzha in Kerala. The heritage village is well known for its Aranmula Parthasarathy Temple and centre of cultural heritage zone. The zone covers the Kuttanadu wetlands, several water bodies including streams, ponds, wetlands and the Pamba. It also has rich biodiversity, ecosystem and species of plants, birds, pancha (paddy fields), flora, fauna, landscapes, traditional houses, worship places¹. Agriculture is the primary occupation in the zone and the zone is famous for its traditional art and culture like Kathakali, Mohiniattam, Bharathanatyam, karalipayttu, Chakkamaholsawam (jack fruit fest), Aranmula Vallamkali (Snake Boat festival), Vallasadhya (feast), Vasthuvudhya, Aranmula Vadakkokottaram (Palace), Aranmula Kannadi (Aranmula Metal Mirror) etc.

On the day of Uthrutadi star in Chingam month (Malayalam New Year), nearly 52 villages come together and participate in the snake boat festival which is one of the major attractions of the village. The "Vallasadhya" stands for 80-day long season of flavors that takes place from 15th July to 2nd October every year ensuring the captivation of taste buds of people all the time and a ritual offering to lord Parthasarathy with oarsmen of the

snake boats are given a lavish feast. With over 70 dishes, it is probably one of the largest feasts in India².

Aranmula Kannadi is an erratic craft that were even during the vedic period. It is a valuable inbred gift and secret of its making is a family gift passed on through genesis and one among the eight propitious objects in renowned astamagalaya³. The agricultural sector is a strong backbone of Aranmula, which include over 500 hectares of rice fields known as the famous "Aranmula Pancha". Aranmula's agricultural sector had a divine connection with the Onam festival. The cultivated crops are an essential commodity for the entire onam celebration, The Onam festival of the village lasts for more than 2 months as it includes the world famous "Aranmula Vallasadya", a traditional food feast and Aranmula Uthrittathy snake boat race.

The snake boat festival and food feast are held during the month of August-September every year. Therefore, the post flood assessment is needed to identify the cultural scenario. Not only in Aranmula there were lot of damages happened across Kerala due to heavy catastrophic event in the month of August, 2018. But now a days, the assessment on heritage after a disaster are very few and are not in a priority for the contemporary world. Therefore, Aranmula Heritage Trust (AHT) took an initiative to do a rapid assessment on the post-flood scenario in Aranmula HeritageZone. This will lead to revive or rebuild the heritage and develop a comprehensive model to protect, promote and prevent the culture.

A south west monsoon unleashed flood and landslide in the state of Kerala. The flood affected 12 districts and central and northern districts were nasty. Mostly, the craggy districts of Idukki and Wayanad have contributed the most victims due to numerous landslides. The major flood affected districts are Idukki, Wayanad, Malappuram, Alappuzha, Pathanamthitta. There was lot of physical damage in different sectors of Kerala. Almost all rivers were overflowed across the state and affected the people residing near banks of river. The sendai frame work for disaster risk reduction always suggest that the culture and its protection help build resilience and enhances the ability of the affected population to contribute in its own recovery. However, we need to protect and prevent our heritage sites and traditional artisans in Aranmula. Therefore, the present study will help to understand post-flood scenario in Aranmula Heritage Zone.

Methodology

A cross sectional survey design was carried out in flood affected area at Aranmula Heritage Zone. The data collection was focused on the damage and livelihoods in the zone like artisans,

worship places, Palliyodams, old houses etc. The major objective of the present study is to understand the post-flood scenario in Zone. The current study was carried out on 1st and 2nd week of September, 2018. There was semi-structured questionnaire for the assessing the damage and livelihood aspects. Descriptive statistical analysis was carried out for the results in the present study.

Results and discussion

Palliyodams (Snake boats): Flood affected 52 Palliyodams and related things. The Figure-1 illustrate that more than one ninth of the snake boats (n=48) had damage cost and more than half (n=37) of the Palliyodapura (Shed) had damage cost in Figure-2.

The Figure-3 majority of the robes (n=37) and cost within Rs.25,000, around 32 rubber-oar had a damage cost between Rs.0 to 50,000 and 33 landing place of snake boat fully covered with mud indicates in Figure-4.

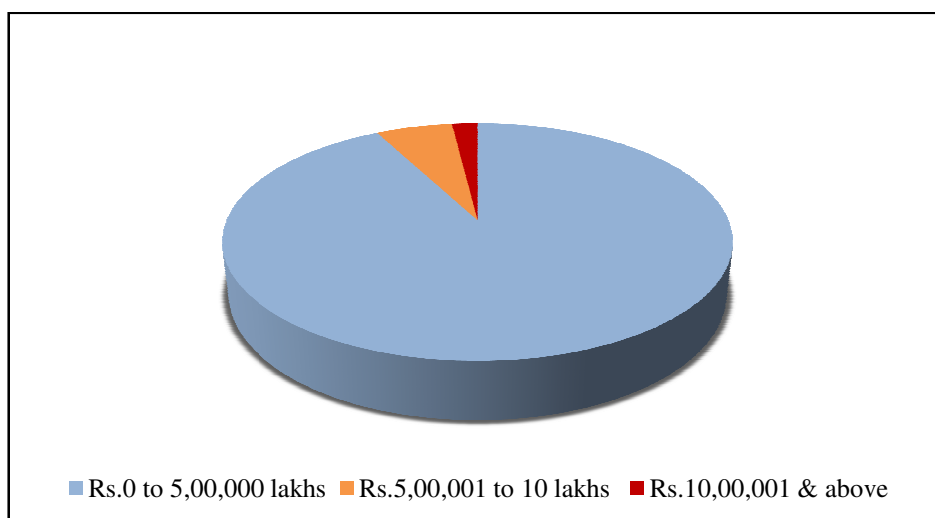


Figure-1: Damage cost of Palliyodams (Snake boats).

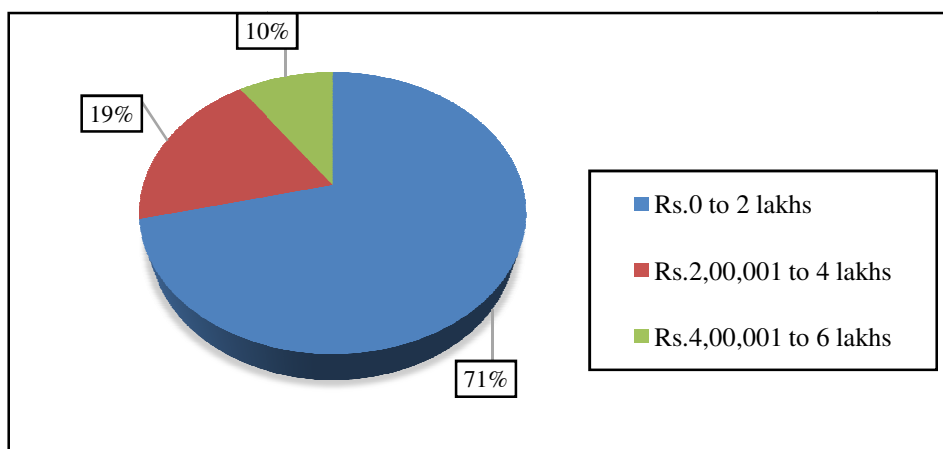


Figure-2: Damage cost of Palliyodapura (Shed).

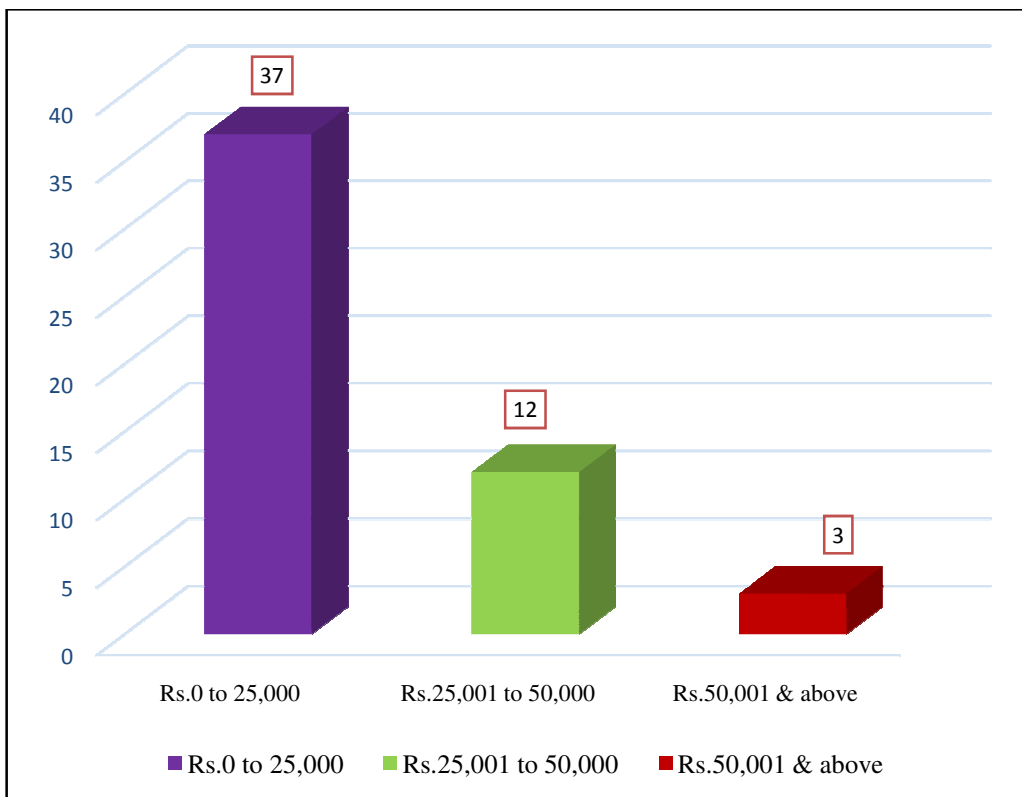


Figure-3: Damage cost of Adayabharanam (robes).

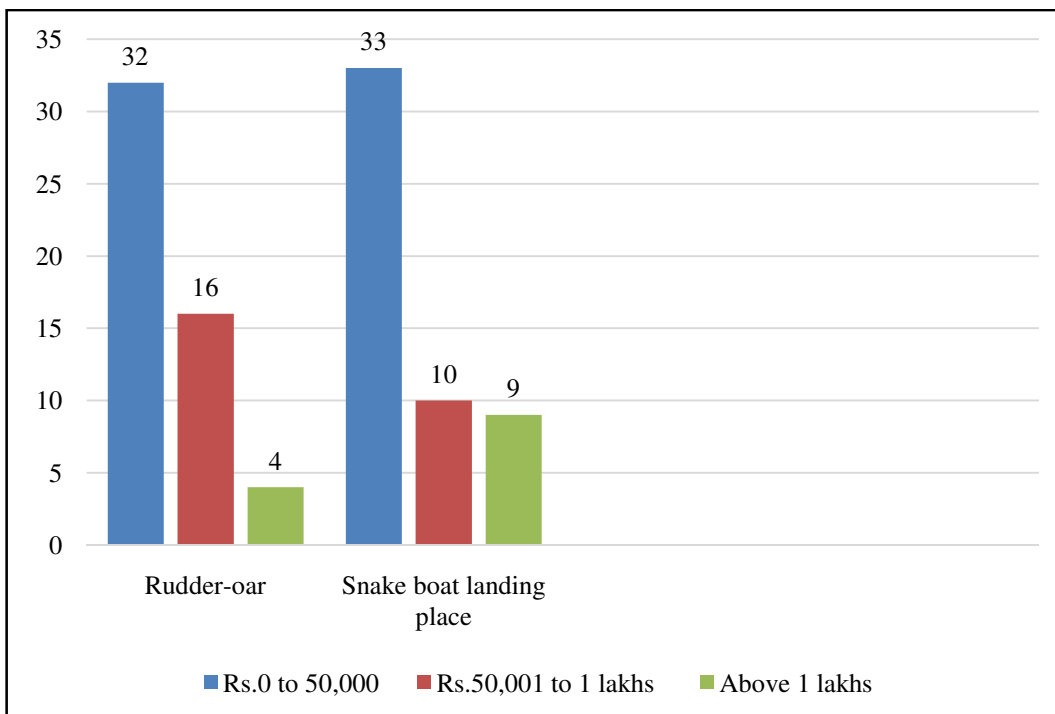


Figure-4: Damage cost of Rubber-oar) and Snake boat landing place.

Majority of the Palliyodams need an overall (n=32) maintenance between the Rs. 0 to 5 lakhs and rest (n=20) of them need reconstruction cost between Rs.5 lakhs to 30 lakhs (Figure-5).

Aranmula Kannadi: There are 21 affected artisans were participated in the present rapid assessment. The socio demographic details and damage assessment are given below.

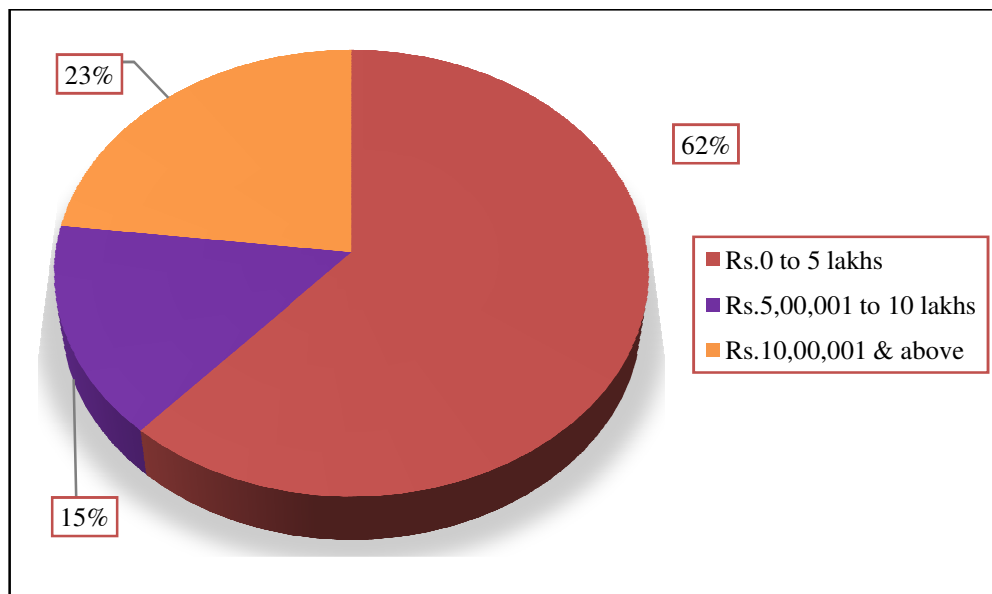


Figure-5: Overall damage cost of Palliyodams (Snake boats).

Table-1: Socio demographic details of Aranmula Metal Mirror Artisans.

Values		N	%
Gender	Male	19	90.5
	Female	02	9.5
Family members	Nuclear	11	52.4
	Joint family	10	47.6
No employees in the family	One Employee	15	71.4
	Two and more	06	28.6
Year of experience	0-25 years	14	66.7
	26 and above	07	33.3
Water level in workshop (feet)	0-7 feet	02	9.6
	8-14 feet	04	19.1
	15 and above	14	71.3

The mean age of the artisans was 49.05 (SD=10.99) and majority of them are male artisans (90.5%), nuclear family (52.4%), one employee in the family (71.4%), 66.7% had experience between 0-25 years and 71.3% of artisans workshop were covered 15 feet of water in the flood (Table-1).

The Table-2 illustrates that the majority of the artisans was affected the flood. The tools, coal, clay was totally destroyed

and the other materials were affected, minor and major causes. This indicates that the storage system of the artisans was weak. Little less than half of the artisans (48%) of the artisans were lost between 0 to 2 lakhs materials during the flood (Figure-6). This indicates that there is a financial crisis among the artisans in post flood.

Table-2: Damage of Artisans in each material.

Particular	Affected	Minor	Major	Destroyed
Finished mirror	08 (38)	06 (29)	07 (33)	00
Unfinished mirror	05 (24)	07 (33)	09 (43)	00
Mold	06 (28)	05 (24)	10 (48)	00
Box	00	01 (05)	02 (09)	18 (86)
Tools	05 (15)	02 (27)	10 (39)	04 (15)
Coal	00	00	05 (24)	16 (76)
Clay	00	00	00	21 (100)

There are lots of traditional houses in the Aranmula Heritage Zone and 6 feet to 20 feet water level had submerged these houses. The family members are staying in traditional houses and the property was passed on since generations. Most of the houses were built before 200 years and are now in very poor condition. Due to flood the wooden walls, roof top was damaged and maintenance cost of the houses are estimated to be between 50,000 to 1 lakh rupees.

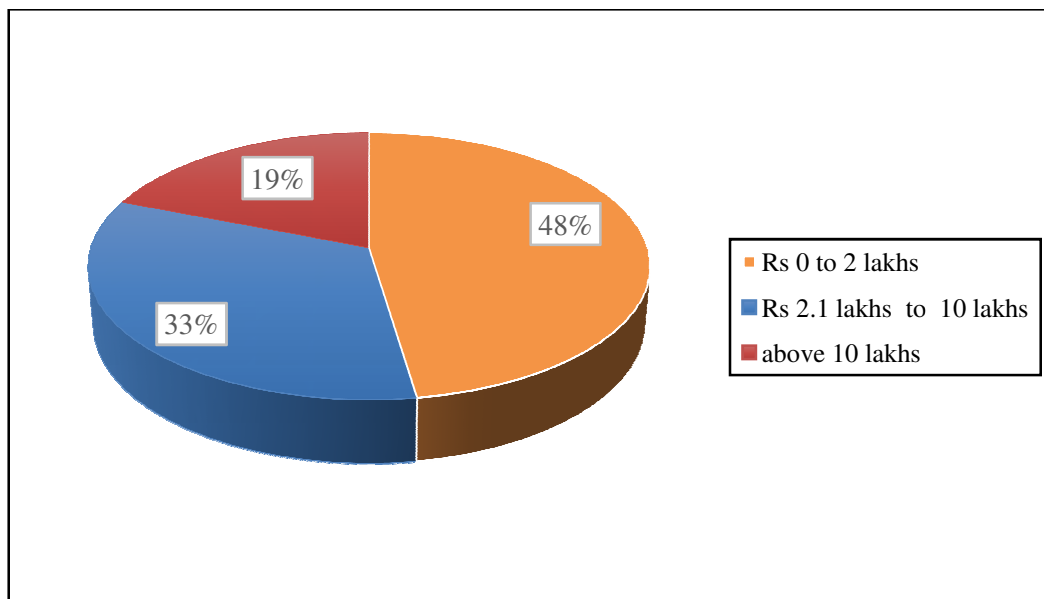


Figure-6: Overall financial and material loss.

Around 50 worship places in Aranmula Heritage Zone were affected during flood and the major traditional documents, walls etc. were destroyed. Apart from the infrastructural damage, the loss of traditional books, materials, paintings manuscripts are more. The water level at famous worship places like Panayangarkavu (mural painting), Sasthamkulangara Narasimha Temple (wood carvings) and Old Syrian Church Chengannur were more than four feet. There are famous vallappattu teachers in Aranmula who reside in palliyodakaras (the villages situated near the banks of Pamba and has a Palliyodam). The disaster has badly affected them. Some of them even lost their lives, their houses were affected and in many cases were destroyed.

Padayani (the traditional artform of Aranmula) artists lost their homes and livelihood. As onam is celebrated in a grand affair in Aranmula there are many artforms related to onam fest and there are other major ancient arts and artists widely practicing these artform in the provisions of Aranmula some of them are kathakali, shilpakala, kolkali, different dance forms like chakyarkoothu, ottanthullal, velakali, paananpaattu, pulikali, velanpaattu, kakkarishinaadakam, naadanpattu, villupaattu, koshavanpaattu, vaadyamelangal, chithrakala, chuvarchithrangal, ayodhanakalal, kalari etc. all of these artists are affected by the flood losing their traditional costumes, ornaments, artforms, houses, teaching centre, art works etc. The ancient martial arts “Kalari” has teaching centers in Aranmula known as “Kalaritharas” These Kalaritharas were destroyed causing discontinuation of training and huge loss to the teachers known as “Ashans” and a has caused a threat to the existence of ancient art.

Discussion: Flood has been measured as the most periodic and common disaster in India and across the world which cause

persistence of life damage and economic loss. The drift of flood in last ten years and huge damaged caused by this catastrophic event⁴ and cultural heritage is also most vulnerable during floods. The Palliyodams (snake boats) and Aranmula metal mirror artisans had a huge loss in the flood. The flood affected during the onam festival season leads to a huge loss for the artisans. The present study has found that there were huge damage and livelihood were affected in the Aranmula Heritage Zone. The Similar studies in abroad revealed that the flood affected the socioeconomic characteristics of artisans⁵⁻⁹. A case study in Gorakhpur found there is a need to implement the flood disaster risk management¹⁰.

The National Disaster Management Authority of India prepared guidelines on heritage spots and confines to develop disaster risk management tactics and approaches through risk assessment, risk reduction, preparedness and emergency response and preparation for post-disaster repossession. There is a need for holistic approach towards disaster risk management that responds to the specific needs of cultural heritage spots and confines. The permit spots executives and location supervise to transmit out basic risk valuation for their spots autonomously and physique arrangement for management, through risk reduction measures, emergency response protocols and recovery processes. There is a need to address the issues that deal with a hazard that emerges due to specific topographical and cultural setting¹¹. The Sendai framework also aims to achieves the sustainable lessening of disaster risk and victims in culture and livelihood over next 15 years¹². However, there is a need to develop a comprehensive model for the protection and prevention of Aranmula Heritage Zone. The Limitations of the current study was due to the short span of time, rapid assessment may not cover all heritage sites or places in Aranmula heritage zone.

Conclusion

There is a need to support the financial crisis, storage system for protecting the cultural assets, need to prepare a Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction (CBDRR), promote heritage institute in Aranmula Heritage Zone.

Acknowledgement

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