

# Natural calamity as a reason for socio-structural modification: a study of Cyclone Ockhi

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**ABSTRACT:** *A natural calamity results in a change, change in the basic pattern of the society which is affected by it. Ockhi has become a source of some affirmative changes in the basic structures of Keralites. This study is an attempt to identify socio structural changes that occurred in the coastal regions Kerala, which are affected by Ockhi.*

**Key Words :**

Every contingent situation results in a change, change of social structures. The degree of change depends upon the intensity of contingency. In the case of natural calamities the effect is greater on the nature as well as the socio-cultural mechanisms of a society. Issues related to global warming modified our attitude towards nature, environmental pollution and its effects changed our concern of circumstances, flood happened in Chennai some years ago altered our theories of town planning, earthquake of Gujarat made us aware of the earthquake resisting constructions, smog in New Delhi made whole country aware of the adverse effect of air pollution. Thus each and every natural calamity causes a change in the basic pattern of the social structure which is affected by it.

Here, through this paper researcher tries to analyse how Ockhi, the most ferocious natural calamity witnessed by us in the last decade modified various aspects of the social structure of fishermen community. As they were the one who was affected directly by the cyclone, mechanisms of socio-cultural changes happened in their society and some changes are found in the nearby communities too.

Social-structure may be defined as the patterned social arrangements in society that are both emergent from and determinant of actions of the individual. On a wider range, social structure is a system of socioeconomic stratification, social institutions, or other patterned relations between large social groups. Important elements of social structure are

- **Values**

At top level we consider societal values, they are the most general or abstract normative conceptions of what the ideal society itself would like. At the next level we go for individual values, which enables a person to become a better man.

- **Groups and institutions**

Social structure can be viewed in terms of inter relationships of the component parts. Social structure includes social groups and institutions. These are called the major groups and institutions. Four of these – family, economic institutions, political institutions and religious institutions- centre upon getting food and other items of wealth, procreation, worship and ruling. The community is the total organized life of a locality, is the most spontaneous and effective grouping in a social structure. These are also the enduring phenomena of social classes, the ethnic or racial grouping and temporary grouping of the crowd. These are spontaneous configurations responsive to various interests that develop within the community.

- **Organizations**

In modern societies, we establish certain organizations for the pursuit of our specific purposes. These organizations often called associations. They are group manifestations of life and common interests.

- **Collectivities**

They are specialized collectivities such as families, firms, schools, political parties etc. Differentiated institutional patterns almost directly imply the existence of collective and role units whose activities have different kinds of functional significance.

- **Roles**

Within all collectivities we have certain roles. They change in accordance with the circumstances. Role occupants has to fulfil their obligations to other people. For example, in a family the

father has obligations to his children. Thus we can consider roles as the most important element of social structure.

- **Norms**

Norms can be broadly divide into two, (i) social norms and (ii) individual norms. Social norms may further divided into (a) obligatory or relational and (b) permissive or regulative. Some norms specify positive obligations and sometimes they are not commonly applied to all the roles and sub-groups. For example positive obligations of a firm may not be applicable in a family.

Some other norms specify the limit of permissive action. A role occupant of a sub-group in this case ' must' do or 'must not' do certain things, 'may do' or 'may not' do certain things are called regulative norms. They do not differentiate between roles and sub-groups. For example in our society, regardless of one's role, one must not threat others.

The components of social structure are human beings, the structure being an arrangement of persons in relationship institutionally regulated and defined.

Now let's look into socio-structural changes happened after Ockhi in the fishermen communities.

In value system following changes are noticed

- ✓ Concern of sea and sea related myths have been increased, the holy status of sea is augmented.
- ✓ People of fishermen communities are now aware of the science behind movements of sea and they have increased their faith in technologies.
- ✓ Prayers have been increased especially prayers regarding sea and sea shore.
- ✓ Advises in the form of moral stories have been increased from the part of elder people regarding calamities related to sea.
- ✓ In education system the emergency response system has been introduced in the form of 'coastal pedagogy'.
- ✓ In religious instructions like Sunday schools, stories in relation to sea are increased.

Changes noticed in the institutional level

- The status of religious institutions has been changed to social supporting institutions.
- The activities of kudumbasree and self-supporting groups give more importance to sea related issues.
- Youth clubs were active in the recovery process soon after Ockhi, but now almost all of the youth clubs have lost their interest in sea related issues.
- Schools as a social supporting institutions are more active in the activities related to sea.
- Families as institutions show greater concern in sea related issues and as the result people living on the seashore like to move away from there.

In organizational level we see

- Administrative bodies of government are working with more consciousness and alert in issues related to sea.
- Governmental programmes like MGNREGA are more conscious of the protection of seashore, for that they execute programmes like planting trees on shore, renovation of drainage systems etc.
- Central and state governmental institutions have increased their fund level for monitoring sea related issues.
- Self-supporting groups of fishermen are planning to do other jobs for their living, but lack of skill in doing other jobs create hindrances.

Roles inside a social structure determines the nature of the society. Changes resulted by Ockhi in fishermen community are

- The role of bread earning member of the family is been modified, other members of the family earn through different jobs other than fishing.
- As the role of religious institutions changed, the role of members of religious institution are also changed.

In norms of the society following changes are noticed

- ❖ The construction tend to become sea-friendly and the natural structure of seashore is preserved.
- ❖ Fishermen used to take sand from seashore, but after Ockhi this tendency seems to be decreasing.
- ❖ Natives of seashore have developed a habit of planting trees on the seashore.

So it is clear that Ockhi has modified entire social structure of fishermen community and most of the changes happened are positive and helpful for the society. They may be happened as re result of shock which is produced by the contingent situation resulted by Ockhi, but if they stand, they would help the overall development of the society.

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