A Preliminary Study on the Algal Diversity of Selected Indigenous Ponds in Kannur, Kerala, India

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Abstract: Kannur district in Kerala state of India was famous for large number of traditional ponds associated with temples. This study has been undertaken to investigate the diversity of algae in freshwater pond ecosystems associated with the traditional ponds of two famous temples from Irikku block (Thaliparamba taluk) of Kannur district of Kerala state in India. Sample collection was done in post monsoon and pre monsoon seasons in 2018-2019. Both ponds under investigation showed rich algal diversity and the water parameters showed slight variation. The study revealed 27 algal taxa belonging to groups such as Chlorophyceae, Bacillariophyceae, Dinophyceae and Myxophyceae.

Keywords: pond, algal diversity, physico-chemical parameters

1. Introduction

Ponds are small fresh water ecosystems. Two artificially constructed but having much historical significant temple ponds were selected for the present study. For artificial pond, walls are built above or around the ground level, the retaining wall prevent the flow of surface water into the pond, otherwise surface water from land may flow into the pond after the rains. Anuja and Chandra (2012) suggested that the culture studies of temple ponds are very essential as it may result in the discovery of many new taxa in these water bodies. According to Welch (1952) “ponds are very shallow bodies of quite standing water in which extensive occupancy by higher aquatic plant is a common characteristics”. This study was an attempt to know the algal diversity of such an important aquatic ecosystems namely ponds, associated with the two famous temples from Irikku block (Thaliparamba taluk) of Kannur district. The microalgal population was enormous in ponds. Algae, the principle primary producers, are photosynthetic thallophytes, usually microscopic, unicellular and colonial or multicellular organisms which perform the maximum quantum of photosynthetic activity than any other living organisms in this world. Many forms spread throughout the water body and cause turbidity of water and algal blooms. The appearance of algae is most probably seasonal. Ponds usually associated with the centers of worship, such as temples having much significance in cultural, aesthetic and diversity aspects. The construction of temple and temple ponds is in harmony with available resources and climatic condition. The aquatic life may vary according to water parameters. Those properties can be physical chemical or biological. Occasionally these ponds were polluted by discharge of domestic sewage, industrial effluents, agricultural run-off etc.

2. Research Methodology

The diversity of aquatic algal groups and water parameters vary seasonally. The level of contamination is higher during pre-monsoon than post-monsoon, primarily due to water scarcity (Kannan and Joseph, 2009). For comparing the diversity in two ponds, data about some important physiochemical parameters are essential. Changes in algal flora distribution depended on local environment, size of pond, usage and water quality.

3. Study Area

Two ponds of Irikku block, Velam Sree Maha Ganapathi temple and Mamanikkunnu temple were selected for the present study. Apart from serving as water harvesting device these ponds were found to facilitate the growth of a wide variety of algae. The two ponds selected were from two entirely different in size and architecture. Pond associated with Velam Sree Maha Ganapathi temple was well constructed. The water observed as green by microscopic algae. Renovation process is taking place in the Velam Ganapathi temple, where as in the case of Mamanikkunnu temple had no renovation for the last 5 years, only cleaning process were conducted. Thick films of filamentous algal bloom were observed here.

The Velam Sree Maha Ganapathi temple was one of the famous temples dedicated to lord Ganesha in the Malabar region. It was located in the Kayarakalam Village, Mayyil in the district of Kannur. Velam Maha Ganapathi Temple was just 800 Meters from Mayyil township, located in 11°59'52" N and 75°26'48"E. The temple pond is near to the temple, it was about 240 feet nearly 1335.4626m².

The Mamanikkunnu Mahadevi temple is dedicated to Shakti and is located in Irikku block of Taliparamba. This temple was situated on the eastern bank of Irikku River. Temple pond was situated at East-North region of the Mamanikkunnu Sri Mahadevi temple. It was located in 11.9932 N and 75.54900 E, around 28kms from Taliparamba. Area of the pond is nearly 100m².
4. Collection and Analysis

Sampling was conducted seasonally, post monsoon season as well as pre monsoon season. The sample was collected in the morning hours. The algal samples were collected from all corners and from the centre by using plankton net with 20μm sieve size, and these sub samples were mixed in to polythene bottles of 100 ml. The fixation of sample was done with FAA and Lugol’s solutions. Identification of algae done with the help of reference texts of authors, Fr. Jose John and Francis (2013) and Presscott (1964). Classification system followed was by Fritsch (1961).

For Physico-chemical parameters, the samples were collected in the morning hours. Few important physicochemical parameters were studied. Two liters of water was collected for further study of physicochemical parameters. Some important parameters such as pH, salinity, temperature, TDS, conductivity, seechi disc transparency were examined on time. pH and temperature calculated by using pH meter. The samples were then brought to the laboratory for analysis of various physico-chemical analysis.

5. Results and Discussion

A thick film of Algal bloom along with hydophytes was observed in Mamanikkunnu Sree Maha devi temple in post monsoon season and that was visible in pre- monsoon season. Water was stagnant and water depth nearly 30cm, and the bottom of pond was clearly visible in pre monsoon. In the case of Velam Sree Maha Ganapathi temple no hydophytes and algal blooms observed.

Algal diversity

The study revealed 27 algal taxa, belongs to Chlorophyceae, Bacillariophyceae, Dinophyceae and Myxophyceae. Mamanikkunnu Mahadevi temple had more algal diversity than Velam Sree Maha Ganapathi temple. Algal diversity also showed seasonal variation, more algal diversity in post monsoon season than pre monsoon season. The algae were easily distinguishable in post monsoon season, but clumps of many algae were observed in pre monsoon season but were not in distinguishable manner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Algal Taxa</th>
<th>Distribution</th>
<th>Pond1: VMG*</th>
<th>Pond2: MSM*</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Post Monsoon</td>
<td>Pre Monsoon</td>
<td>Post Monsoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Gleetrichia</td>
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</table>

Table 1: Seasonal algal diversity of ponds

In Velam Ganapathi temple renovation process was recently taken place, people are continuously visiting there, they use the pond for swimming and various competitions. Where as in the case of Mamanikkunnu temple pond, anthropogenic interfering was very less. In both temple ponds entirely different traditions and conservation practices observed. The
two systems were best example for traditional practices of water conservation

**Morphological Description of Algae**

1) **Selenastrum**
CLASS: CHLOROPHYCEAE, ORDER: CHLOROCOCCALES, FAMILY: SELENASTRACEAE
Cells crescent to sickle-shaped with sharply pointed ends. Normally appear in colonies of 4,8,16 or more cells. Chloroplast is single, parietal and usually with a pyrenoid. Cells 5-8 μm broad, 16-38μm long

2) **Ankistrodesmus**
CLASS: CHLOROPHYCEAE, ORDER: CHLOROCOCCALES, FAMILY: SELENASTRACEAE
Cells curved or sigmoid, twisted around one another. Cells acicular with acute apices normally appear in colonies of usually 4,8,16 rarely two. Cells spiral twisted around one another in the median region, but free at the ends. Chloroplast single and without pyrenoid. Colonies 75-180 μm in size.

3) **Pediasstrum**
CLASS: CHLOROPHYCEAE, ORDER: CHLOROCOCCALES, FAMILY: HYDRODICYTACEAE
Colonies are found to be flat circular plates of 16-32-64 cells. Inner cells four cornered with a small lens-shaped perforation in front and another at the back. Marginal cells usually longer than broad and ending in short spines. Size ranges from 60-80 μm.

4) **Scenedesmus**
CLASS: CHLOROPHYCEAE, ORDER: CHLOROCOCCALES, FAMILY: COELASTRACEAE
Colony a flat plate, cells joined side by side, rarely curved plate of usually 2,4,8 cells which are always in multiplex of two. Individual cells acicular, ellipsoid, ovoid or cylindrical. Cells arranged in one or two rows and in lateral contact. Cell wall was smooth.

5) **Oedogonium**
CLASS: CHLOROPHYCEAE, ORDER: OEDOGONIALES, FAMILY: OEDOGONIACEAE
Thallus filamentous unbranched and attached to substratum with the help of holdfast. Cells cylindrical, longer than broad and enlarged towards the anterior end. Chloroplast with parietal reticulum and numerous pyrenoids. Presence of ring like scars.

6) **Spirogyra**
CLASS: CHLOROPHYCEAE, ORDER: CONJUGALES, FAMILY: ZYGEMACEAE

7) **Mougeotia**
CLASS: CHLOROPHYCEAE, ORDER: CONJUGALES, FAMILY: ZYGEMACEAE
Thallus filamentous unbranched. It consists of cylindrical cells. The cells are many times longer than broad with plane and distinct end walls. The chloroplast is a flat axial band like and is capable of shifting and rotating within the cell. Hence chloroplast seen as narrow band in the sides or as twisted plates. The pyrenoids are arranged in one or many rows.

8) **Zygnema**
CLASS: CHLOROPHYCEAE, ORDER: CONJUGALES, FAMILY: ZYGEMACEAE
Filamentous unbranched thallus, cells longer than broad. Chloroplast in pair of two, definitely star shaped (stellate) per each cell. The filaments form a yellow –green to bright green in colour and are free floating.

9) **Cosmarium**
CLASS: CHLOROPHYCEAE, ORDER: CONJUGALES, FAMILY: DESMIDIACEAE
Cells were solitary, tiny to large with shallow to deep median construction called isthmus. Two Semi cells were rounded quadrate with undulate margin. Sub circular to elongate oval in apical view.

10) **Pleurotaenium**
CLASS: CHLOROPHYCEAE, ORDER: CONJUGALES, FAMILY: DESMIDIACEAE
Cells usually solitary, cell contains two elongated semi cells with sub parallel margins. Apex smooth or with ring of round or conical warts, terminal vacuole containing granules around poles. Cell wall with undulate margins. Chloroplast usually narrow, parietal bands, several per semi cells, each with many pyrenoid. Nucleus seen in the isthmus.

11) **Staurastrum**
CLASS: CHLOROPHYCEAE, ORDER: CONJUGALES, FAMILY: DESMIDIACEAE
Cells solitary. Deep median constriction (isthmus) between semi cells. Semi cell walls overlap. The cell wall with decorations. The apex of semi cells extended into radiating arms or lobes which ends in spines. Chloroplast usually one per cell and were stellate in end view with axial pyrenoid.

12) **Microsteria**
CLASS: CHLOROPHYCEAE, ORDER: CONJUGALES, FAMILY: DESMIDIACEAE
Cells flat and nearly circular in proportion star like in view. Containing deep median incision. Semi cells deeply lobed.

13) **Euastrum**
CLASS: CHLOROPHYCEAE,
ORDER: CONJUGALES,
FAMILY: DESMIDIACEAE

14) Desmidium
CLASS: CHLOROPHYCEAE,
ORDER: CONJUGALES,
FAMILY: DESMIDIACEAE
Filamentous desmid. Cells wider than long and are constricted in the middle or with slight median notch. Semi cells transversely sub-rectangular, lateral margins obliquely truncate. Filaments easily broken into individual cells.

15) Bambusina
CLASS: CHLOROPHYCEAE
ORDER: CONJUGALES,
FAMILY: DESMIDIACEAE
Filamentous desmid. Cells in short or long filaments. Individual cells small, elongate, barrel shaped with shallow median constriction (isthmus). Cell in apical view bi radiate or tri radiate. Cell wall with transverse rows of desmid type pores and longitudinally plicate near cell ends. Chloroplast one per semi cells, stellate in end view with central pyrenoid.

16) Fragilaria
CLASS: BACILLARIOPHYCEAE,
ORDER: PENNALES,
FAMILY: FRAGILARIOIDEAE
Thallus filamentous. Cells with numerous intercalary bands and rectangular cells joined by their valve faces to form a ribbon-like chain, Rectangular in girdle view. Elongate with finely punctate striations in the cells.

17) Eunota
CLASS: BACILLARIOPHYCEAE,
ORDER: PENNALES,
FAMILY: EUNOTIOIDEAE
Frustules bend or curved in the apex, wavy or undulate on one margin as seen in valve view, transversely striate, no central nodules

18) Pinnularia
CLASS: BACILLARIOPHYCEAE,
ORDER: PENNALES,
Free floating solitary spindle shaped cells. Shape of Valves elongate elliptical Axial field usually broad, with relatively pronounced "costae" (thickened silica rows)

19) Navicula
CLASS: BACILLARIOPHYCEAE,
ORDER: PENNALES,
FAMILY: NAVICULOIDEAE
Solitary spindle shaped cells. Brown or golden colour. Usually free-floating, rhomboidal lanceolate with gently flatted rostrate ends, raphe thin, straight and median with central nodules. Terminal fissures curved. Axial area narrow, linear central area somewhat rectangular.

20) Glenodinium
CLASS : DINIPHYCEAE,
SUB-CLASS DINOKONTAE,
ORDER:DINOFLAGELLATA,
FAMILY: DINOCAPSACEAE
Cells round in shape. Thin evident cell plates, a transverse furrow completely encircling the cell.

21) Chroococcus
CLASS: MYXOPHYCEAE,
ORDER: CHROOCOCCALES,
FAMILY: CHROOCOCACEAE
Cells spherical or sub spherical, hemispherical. Gelatinous mucous matrix is present. Sheath of individual cells distinct firm, generally lamellated, in some homogenous. Cells mostly two, seldom three or four together in group’s bright blue green.

22) Mirocystis
CLASS: MYXOPHYCEAE,
ORDER: CHROOCOCCALES,
FAMILY: MERISMOPEDIACEAE
Colony irregular to circular with numerous cells, mucilage distinct

23) Merismopedia
CLASS: MYXOPHYCEAE
ORDER: CHROOCOCCALES
FAMILY: MERISMOPEDIACEAE
Ovoid or spherical in shape and arranged in flat, forming rectangular colonies held together by mucilaginous matrix

24) Aphanocapsa
CLASS: MYXOPHYCEAE
ORDER: CHROOCOCCALES
FAMILY: MERISMOPEDIACEAE
Thallus colonial, olive green in colour, gelatinous, spherical mostly with a special envelope. Cells loosely arranged in a common mucilaginous envelope. Colony spherical in outline. Mucilage homogenous, colourless, cells often with a thin more or less gelatinized individual sheaths.

25) Spirulina
CLASS: MYXOPHYCEAE,
ORDER: NOSTOCALES,
FAMILY: OSCILLATORIAEAE
Road shaped spiral unicellular algae

26) Oscillatoria
CLASS: MYXOPHYCEAE,
ORDER: NOSTOCALES,
FAMILY: OSCILLATORIAEAE
Filamentous unbranched thallus. Trichome usually naked and have a thin poorly developed mucilaginous sheath. The wall usually smooth. Cells arranged into long flat thread like filaments. Usually found as colonies.

27) Gloeotrichia
CLASS: MYXOPHYCEAE,
ORDER: NOSTOCALES,
FAMILY: RIVULARIAEAE
Thallus spherical colony of many filaments. Filaments tapered towards the distant end. Heterocysts single
spherical. Heterocyst and akinete present at the base. Filaments stratified and with brown sheath around it.

**Results of some important physicochemical parameters**

Table 2: Seasonal variation of some important physico-chemical parameters of ponds

In the case of chemical parameters salinity is increased in pre monsoon season, Alkalinity decreased. Hardness of water is also decreased.

**Figure 1:** Photographs of some algae

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Physico-chemical parameters</th>
<th>POND 1: VMG*</th>
<th>POND 2: MSM*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post monsoon</td>
<td>Pre monsoon</td>
<td>Post monsoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Appearance</td>
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<td>Greenish</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Odour</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Temperature (°C)</td>
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<td>Secchi disc transparency (cm)</td>
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<td>Electrical Conductivity (µS/cm)</td>
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<td>Total Dissolved Solids (ppm)</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Chloride (mg/l)</td>
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</table>

*VMG* - Velam Maha
*Ganapathi Temple ~ MSM* - Mamanikkunnu
*Sree Mahadevi Temple*

occurrence of 27 algal taxa indicates richness of ponds in diversity. This also indicates the productivity of the system. These types of studies were significant in the present scenario of global warming and climate change as these planktons play a wonderful role in carbon capturing.

**7. Future Scope**

The correlation between physico-chemical parameters and occurrence of algae should also be studied. The productivity measurements and pollution status also need to be studied.

**References**


**Author Profile**

Dr. Sreeja J. P working as Assistant Professor of Botany at Sir Syed College Taliparamba, Kannur, also a research guide of Kannur university and were expertise in the field of ecology and diversity studies.

Mrs. Shubha A. CSIR-JRF doing research in the research centre of Sir Syed College Taliparamba.

Ms. Anusree K. P, doing post graduation in Botany at Sir Syed College Taliparamba.

**6. Conclusion**

The present study was a pioneer attempt in finding out algal diversity of traditional ponds of Kannur district. The