
SOLO WOMAN WALK-BATAPADY BEACH TO KANYAKUMARI-850+ KM-OCTOBER 5TH 2019 TO DECEMBER 6TH 2019-K2K THE COASTAL WALK

Solid Waste Across the Coastline of Kerala

JANET ORLENE | KANNUR



On October 5th, 2019, Janet Orlene set out on a solo coastline walk from Batapady beach near the border of Kerala to Kanyakumari. Backed by a team of 2, Pradeep Rajendran and Meghana Basavaraju, Janet covered the entire strip of coast meeting the unique terrains, people and solid waste patterns of Kerala.

**This report has not been formally edited.* | 4th July 2020 | Authored by Janet Orlene
Report on Solid Waste along the coastline of Kerala - Kannur*

Introduction

What I expected to see was completely different from what I saw. I expected to find a lot more sanitary napkins, thin plastic bags, more obvious chemical pollution and other textbook things that I've learnt all my life. Instead, the largest quantities of solid waste turned out to be in the form of slippers and shoes, plastic water bottles, diapers, medical waste and household waste. The chemicals I saw polluting the ocean were in the form of thin oily surfaces (often near ferries and the shipbreaking yards), mining wastes, sewage, etc.

This journey through all of the most beautiful coastal landscapes Kerala had to offer was an eyeopener in terms of human activity caused destruction. The coastline is one of the most powerful indicators of the human-caused environmental crisis.

What this report aims to show are the observations I made during the walk down the coastline of Kerala.

Note:

**Although not mentioned otherwise, one of the largest polluters across Kerala shore are diapers.*

**Slippers, Shoes, Medical Waste are the other surprising but largely occurring pollutants.*

**Household wastes, Plastic bottles and other forms of plastic pollutants are mainly found in areas with a higher density of population.*

**Several areas showed biosphere damage with symptoms such as washing up of several species, jellyfish bloom, invasive flora and oft-spoken about, unseasonal weather changes and damage to the fish population.*

Intent and purposes

This report intends to look at the visual observation of solid waste made while walking continuously down the coastline of Kerala over 2 months as a district basis as well as one area that stood out in terms of the intensity of solid waste on the coastline or effort to curb the same in each.

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Kannur

As I walk further towards Payyanur and Kannur, the density of the human population steadily changes, and with that, the attitude towards the ocean. Most of the coastline had significantly more plastic bags tied up with household garbage inside it and tossed in the ocean. The few times we tried to record people tossing the garbage into the ocean, we were too far to record their identities. But they quickly became aware of our phones, threw the garbage and moved away.

Payyanur was fairly clean besides the now natural-to-the-environment slipper, water bottle and plastic fiesta that is to be expected along the coastline. Payyambalam beach was beautiful until I crossed St Angelo fort. The stench alone from the rotting garbage and the shores choking with garbage near the harbour and beyond was enough to turn my stomach. From Kizhunna beach and beyond were clean beaches, and unlike pristine, untouched beaches, these were sanitized by the row of resorts throughout until Edakkad which was well maintained. Thalassery's sea walls are lined with garbage and the waves carry the plastic and the rotting meat and vegetable waste thrown into the ocean in its movements back and forth into the sea wall. Children, goats, cats and dogs play in the same. Some pockets of Thalassery city's coastline look like a landfill. There was a sharp increase in disposable food packaging in this district. Notably, large quantities of plastic cups, plastic food parcel covers and so on. Near Chootad beach (Close to Madayi) was an industry pick up point of the sort with many lorries parked. This area was filled with **biological waste** of all kinds (Mostly intestines and other offal, and skulls of bovine and caprine animals) which were thrown into the sea and often brought back by the waves littering the shores as large composting piles.

Dharmadom

Across Azhikkal, a large ship by the name "Ocean Ruler" lay on the beach. A quick search, the next day, reveals that Ocean Ruler (IMO 8408600) and Oivalli (Stranded between Dharmadom and Kannur) have been stuck for a while now. The local tourists told me how Oivalli was a popular wedding photoshoot prop until the ship moved due to the current and now they dread it. I meet a fisherman close to the ship and ask him about the story. He tells me about how the leaking of chemicals has affected the catch of fish. He also talks to me about SILK (Steel Industrials Kerala Ltd), raising concerns about the growing number of cancer patients near its vicinity.

As we talk to other residents of Dharmadam whom we stayed the night with, they tell us about the worries that SILK has raised throughout. The fears of **chemicals** in both gaseous and fluid form, leaking from Oivalli during its deconstruction for scrap remains with the residents who live around it.

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DATA OF VISUALLY NOTED SOLID WASTE THROUGH THE COASTLINE OF KANNUR



Visual Data based Key:

1 - almost nil/nil

2 - Scattered

3 - Scattered with points of rubbish heaps

4 - Heavily distributed / stepping in it often

5 - unable to avoid waste without stepping on it

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Kannur

Name of Village / City	Chemical Pollutants (Oils/ Industrial pollutants)	Household Waste (Plastic/Paper/ Packaging)	Biological (Flora and Fauna parts or Whole)	Medical Waste (Tablets / Bottles / Syringes)	Tourism industry based (Plastic or Paper based solid waste)	Sewage
Payyanur	1	2	1	2	1	1
Ettikulam	1	1	1	1	1	1
Pazhayangadi	1	2	1	2	2	1
Muttill	1	3	1	2	2	1
Matool	1	2	1	2	2	1
Azhikkal	4	2	1	2	2	2
Azhikode	3	3	1	2	3	1
Kannur	3	4	4	3	4	3
Thottada	1	2	1	2	3	1
Edakkad	1	1	1	2	3	1
Dharmadom	4	5	5	3	2	1
Thalassery	3	5	5	4	5	3
New Mahe`	1	2	1	1	3	1

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SUGGESTIONS FOR KANNUR:

1. Several beaches across Kannur have been developed as commercial beaches such as the drivable beach at Dharmadam. However, currently, they have not been maintained recently. These **beaches can be greatly revived** with an easier source of income for those around the area.
2. Typically the practice of brined vegetables as a snack seems to be popular throughout Kerala starting at Kannur. These, though a healthy alternative, often use disposable plates - recycled and plastic. A **greener alternative amongst stalls** such as these (Banana leaves was one such option in certain stalls) would make a difference. Along these lines, plastic cutlery contributes heavily to the microplastics around these areas, a ban on the same moving to **wooden cutlery or other alternatives** would be advisable.
3. Kannur has many sacred forest and sacred places. These had far more solid waste issues, callousness, industrial damage and so on than the areas with the stories. As Kadalamma holds reverence across religions and the protection of Sacred Groves have been successful across Kerala, **Sacred Coastal Zones** would help set up biodiversity protection programs for the ocean.
4. Often, the coast around beach parks around Kannur gather litter. The **clean up of this by beach parks** can show immediate impact with minimal effort.
5. The fisherfolk of Kannur are open to **training and clean up based programs**. They collect quite a bit of plastic in their nets while fishing every day. This is often dumped on the shore. If it isn't picked up by the sanitation workers, it gets washed back into the ocean.
6. **Diapers need to be incinerated as medical waste**. Often they litter the ocean and spill out non-biodegradable contents as they break down. This also contributes to microplastic waste and general solid waste issues across the coast.

Conclusion

Solid waste is one of the largest factors in the dip in the number of fishes over the years. People are knowledgeable about the impacts of solid waste dumping. The largest issues in coastal waste dumping include:

- Medical waste
- Slippers
- Diapers
- Household Waste
- Bottles (glass and plastic)
- Fishing industry waste - nets, fishing lines, thermocol

There seem to be two major forms of solid waste dumping on the coastline in accordance to the conversations we had:

- 1) Despite solid waste management programs- Where one finds it easier to dump solid waste due to lack of education about the negative impacts of pollution, lack of concern, a belief that plastic “melts” in the ocean and degrades, cheaper (in terms of medical waste dumping or another industrial dumping), or apathy.
- 2) Lack of solid waste management programs - Good examples of these are Anchuthengu and South Thiruvananthapuram (The Valiathope, Vallakadavu, Valiyathura, Beemapally cluster) who have had no choice but to turn their homes into a large dumping ground. It is also much harder for the solid waste programs to be practised as easily as other areas due to the maze-like paths and roads, perhaps, this discourages implementation.

But, there is still hope. The coastal community is impacted deeply by environmental crises regularly whether it comes to their livelihood, their futures or their very existence. They are aware of erosion, overfishing, solid waste issues and how it ties back to the activities of people. They are also aware of how their household wastes, bottles do not allow effective breeding or movement of fish in their areas. There are often local people making an active effort in their villages to make an impact in any way and are welcome to both change and help.