
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

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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 - Kasargod*

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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Kasargod

There were signs of **medical waste** throughout the coastline from Batapady, and although the District of Kasargod has the most pristine beaches that we had ever crossed, it was also the most disturbed with medical waste. A few examples that stood out include, diabetes injections with needles still in them, intact and expired medicines in all forms, blood vials full of blood, broken glass etc. Kasargod city's shores were so littered with the same that in some areas, I could not see the sand at all. A fisherman at Kanhangad Beach met me. I asked him about the medical waste. He said that trucks arrived early morning on the bridge near the mouth of the river and dumped the waste. This is carried into the ocean by the river. Perhaps this is why most of the waste we saw had visible labels and writing.

Like almost every district, Kasargod also had the problem of thousands of slippers being washed up as well as plastic covers being plentiful especially in Kasargod City and Manjeshwar Beach.

One of the most memorable of the stretches was the beach stretching on from Bekal Beach - Pallikere beach. Littered with thousands and thousands of starfish bleached, washed up and a few still alive, this was also one of the cleanest beaches in terms of human litter. Kasargod does not face the burden of tourism in terms of the environmental depletion and tourist-centric resource utilization as much as the rest of Kerala. But the sheer volume of medical waste on its beaches is a distressful one.

SharadaNagar, Manjeshwar

Sharada Nagar continues to stand out in memory long after the walk. We stayed overnight on their temple grounds and spent long hours talking about the problems that the fisherfolk were facing due to the solid waste present. What we found was a unique, deep reverence reminiscent of the stories we hear of the old days. They are deeply connected to the village and the ancestral land. Their efforts to clean up has been regular as they would like to be the "model village" for those around them. The practices to clean and prevent waste from entering the ocean also seems to be tied to the temple Shri Sharada Bhajana Mandira that strives to be a model to the villagers who pay a visit to the same.

DATA OF VISUALLY NOTED SOLID WASTE AT KASARGOD



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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Kasargod

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
Kunjathur	1	2	1	3	1	1
Manjeshwar	1	4	1	4	4	2
Uppala Gate	1	3	1	4	4	1
Mangalpady	1	2	1	3	1	1
Kasargod	1	5	3	5	5	3
Udma	1	2	1	3	4	1
Bekal	1	2	1	2	1	1
Pallikare	1	1	1	1	1	1
Kanhangad	1	3	1	3	1	1
Nileshwar	1	4	1	3	1	1
Cheruvathur	1	3	2	2	2	1
Padne	1	4	2	3	2	1
Trikaripur	1	2	2	3	1	2

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SUGGESTIONS FOR KASARGOD:

1. Often, trucks carry medical waste to dispose of it at the mouths of the rivers adjoining the ocean in a short distance from the middle of bridges and flyovers connecting both banks. The river or stream then carries the medical waste into the ocean. More **medical waste incinerators** are required in Kasargod to dispose of said waste besides looking into these activities.
2. Some villages are aware and clean up the beaches when they can. These can be turned around into Model Villages to see if education programs and training can be run through them. This would ideally help energize them to continue while increasing impact - **Environment Preservation based Model Villages**.
3. Kasargod city is the most polluted area in Kasargod in terms of solid waste. The outskirts are used to the constant pollution washing up and have acclimated to it. Through the trash at Kasargod beach, people walk down to meet up and take walks. By evening, it turns dangerous with inebriated people walking around, the lack of lighting and roads, along with the pollution (including syringes with needles, and other dangerous medical waste). This meet-up point can be made into a **landmark beach** with lighting, cleaning up and benches.
4. Kasargod 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.

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.