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**Fishermen's Tales:
Fictional Representations of
Communities in Transition**

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The literature of communities in transition acquires abiding significance when it formulates a discursive critique of the socio-economic-cultural milieu against which characters can be evaluated. And what better litscape and more myriad an era to study the evolution of the social relationship between humans and their surroundings than the late colonial mid 20th century, as reflected in vernacular novels of the period in India! This paper intends to examine two such novels that are stories of fishing communities from two parts of our country—Manik Bandyopadhyay's *Padma Nadir Majhi* (Boatman of the Padma) in Bengali, published in 1936; and Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai's *Themmeen* (meaning Shrimps) in Malayalam, published in 1956. The objective is to look for epistemic shifts that were influencing lives of vocation based communities at a time when the nation was socio-politically at the crossroads. It should also be noted in the same breath that fictional representations of such communities was never part of mainstream nationalist discourse; which is what accounts for the rise of subaltern genres of literature. For the present however, we leave that out