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With ₹80L revenue, 'Matsyaranyakam' boosts tribal lives

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FRESHWATER fish from the Idukki dam have brought in more than ₹80 lakh in revenue within just five years, thanks to 'Matsyaranyakam' — a tribal fish farming initiative launched by the forest department in 2019.

Officials describe it as a model livelihood scheme that has transformed the lives of tribal residents of Kolumban Colony near Idukki dam, while offering the public access to unadulterated dam fish.

According to the forest department officials, the project generates a minimum of ₹15 lakh annually through sales, with ₹7 lakh recorded between April 2025 and last month.

"The initiative ensures that income goes directly into the bank accounts of the tribal



Tribal residents of Kolumban colony sell fish caught from the Idukki reservoir

families, ending their dependence on middlemen," an official noted. The venture is run by the Kolumban Unnathi Fisher-

men Sub Group, a 12-member team that operates a fish stall near the Vellappa forest office in Cheruthoni. Popular species

like katla, rohu, tilapia and goldfish are sold fresh every morning at ₹250 to ₹300 a kilogram. Orders are accepted through a dedicated WhatsApp group, with priority given to advance bookings.

For Ravi Aashan, one of the fishermen, the change has been profound. "We used to get only a meagre amount when we sold the fish to traders earlier. Now, with money coming directly into our bank accounts, we are able to save and live with dignity," he said.

His wife Thankamma, the only woman who joins the men in fishing, echoes the sentiment, crediting the project for

changing their lives. The forest department has also ensured safety, providing life jackets and other support to members.

One person has been employed exclusively to manage orders and sales, while a portion of the revenue is set aside for the welfare of the group.

Launched with the dual aim of livelihood security and fair returns for a marginalised community,

Matsyaranyakam has emerged as a sustainable model.

"It shows how natural resources can be conserved and used responsibly for social upliftment," a forest official said.

