

# Distribution and Seasonal Abundance of Macro Benthos of Gangavali Estuary, Uttar Kannada, West Coast of India

**Shirodkar S.R\* and V.N. Nayak**

Department of Studies in Marine Biology, Karnatak University Post Graduate Centre, Karwar- 581303, Karnataka, India

\*Corresponding author, Email: [shantaram\\_6@yahoo.com](mailto:shantaram_6@yahoo.com), [venkat\\_nike@gmail.com](mailto:venkat_nike@gmail.com)

## Keywords

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Polycheata  
Faunal distribution  
Diversity

## Abstract

Distribution and seasonal abundance of Gangavali estuary was studied for one year from September 2007 to August 2008. The diversity, abundance and biomass of macro-benthos were observed selecting four stations along the Gangavali estuary and eleven benthic organisms were encountered in the present study. Polycheates were observed at all four stations with maximum faunal distribution. The diversity of macro benthos was at maximum numbers towards lower reaches of the estuary. The benthic faunal components exhibit bimodal pattern of distribution with monsoon as a period of minimum density and post-monsoon and early pre-monsoon with maximum density.

## 1. Introduction

Karnataka coast on western boundary of India has nine major rivers that meet Arabian Sea and Gangavali is one of them. This river geographically lies between 74°18' to 74°42' N longitude and 14°29' to 14°48' E latitude.

Estuaries are coastal ecological niche, receiving importance in recent years due to industrialization, urbanization, and construction of harbors along the banks of estuaries. The estuaries have gained importance and attracted the attention of scientists and other agencies in view of their importance of coastal biodiversity. Most of the estuarine areas are put in to various uses, such as constant source of fish supply for coastal population with high agriculture potential, important habitat for birds, recreation like navigation bird watching, domestic use disposal of industrial waste and sewage. Estuaries are ideal grounds for aquaculture. The estuarine environment is recognized as a complex ecosystem with widely varying physico-chemical influences and characteristic biota. Benthic community is often used as indicator of ecological status of an estuary (Swartz, 1978). Duda *et al.*, (1982) has established. Hence the benthic macro fauna provides the most accurate and reproducible information of the fertility of water while. Remani *et al.*, (1983) and Schafer *et al.*, (1985) have suggested the use of certain macro benthos as bioindicators of change in the environment. Benthic fauna have a great potential to indirectly control the fate and subsequent bioavailability of sedimentary contaminants in their immediate environment (Sandens *et al.*, 2000), the information gained from monitoring benthic macro invertebrate communities has been used widely to measure the status and trends in the ecological

condition of estuaries. Estimation of benthic abundance is necessary for the assessment of demersal fishery resources as benthos form an important source of food for demersal fishes. Macro benthos has been extensively used for pollution studies. Earlier work on benthos give information on the quantitative and qualitative distribution from different regions of West Coast of India.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The preliminary survey of the estuary was made in the beginning and four sampling stations were selected for macrobenthos studies which represent different zones of estuarine water, i.e. i) lower reaches, ii) lower middle reaches, iii) upper middle reaches and iv) upper reaches.

The water samples were collected monthly from September 2007 to August 2008 during high tide and low tide. The physico-chemical parameters of water were studied using standard methods (APHA AWW and WPCF, 1971). The sediment samples were collected by Pyrex transparent hand core at different stations. These samples were treated with 5% of rose bengal and formaldehyde solution and preserved for further analysis. The grain size analysis of sediment was carried out with the help of different sized sieves. Silt and Clay fractions of dried sediment were determined by pipette analysis as described by Holme and Mc Intyre (1971). The sediment was sieved using a 500 $\mu$  sieve and residue obtained on the sieve was preserved for analysis of macrobenthos, later the samples were studied under microscope to identify up to taxa level as per Gosner (1971) and the density of the macro fauna is estimated for per square meter of sediment. The

animals of each variety were gently blotted and weighed to obtained biomass (gm./m<sup>2</sup>).

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### Hydrological and sediment parameters

The station wise average values of water and sediment parameters were recorded in Table 1. The environmental characteristics of the estuary were found to fluctuate periodically during monsoon, post- monsoon and pre-monsoon. High temperature and high salinity occurred during pre-monsoons season while monsoon is characterized by heavy rain fall leads to heavy reverine

discharges and dilute the estuarine water. The pH range of water generally remained on alkaline side. The estuarine sediment was generally composed of sand and silt. The percentage of clay is more at lower reaches. The concentration of organic carbon is closely related the clay fraction. The average carbon content was low at station 4 because of higher percentage of sand and low percentage of clay, similar observation was made by Parulakar *et al.*, (1980) in Bombay water and stated that the clay and silt-clay had high organic matter than sand and clayey-sand in general.

Table 1. Average Hydrological and Sedimental parameters of Gangavali estuary

Parameters	Stations			
	I	II	III	IV
Air Tem o <sup>c</sup>	29.17	28.67	29.25	28.8
Temp o <sup>c</sup>	28.79	28.21	28.10	28.9
pH %	7.60	7.40	7.39	7.30
Salinity%	13.06	8.94	4.39	1.37
D.O ml/lit.	5.13	4.94	5.23	5.46
Susp.Load	0.29	0.28	0.23	0.23
Org.Carbo %	2.41	2.55	2.12	1.61
Sand %	24.91	23.1	32.43	53.00
Silt %	57.18	60.61	51.49	34.48
Clay %	14.08	16.00	14.10	13.05

#### Population density and Biomass

The data on population density and biomass of the macrobenthos collected from four stations of Gangavali estuary is presented in Table 2 & 3 and Figure 1. Among the species community a few are abundant but some are rare. A critical analysis of this data revealed the following facts.

Fig. 1: Population density of Macrobenthos (no/m<sup>2</sup>) of Gangavali estuary (%)

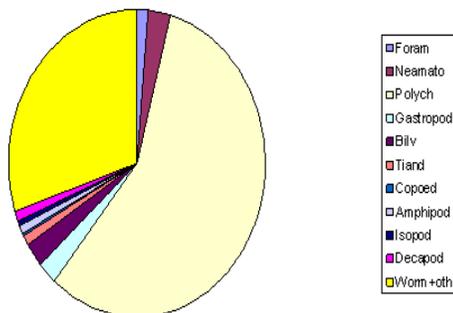


Fig. 2: Seasonal abundance of Macrobenthos of Gangavali estuary

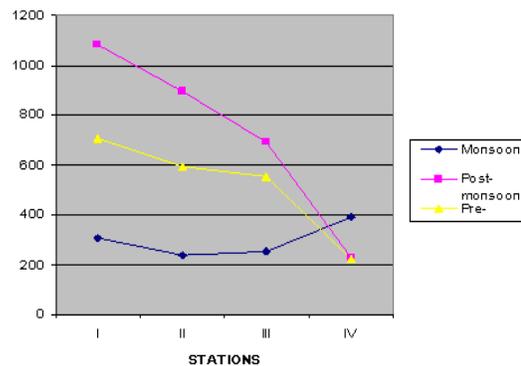


Table 2. Density of Macrobenthos (no/m<sup>2</sup>) of Gangavali estuary

Group	Station				Total	%
	I	II	III	IV		
Foraminifera	207	130	0	0	337	1.38
Neematoda	332	260	64	34	690	2.82
Polychaeta	4340	4170	3664	1684	13858	56.76
Gastropoda	448	178	12	0	638	2.61
Bivalvia	250	282	88	0	620	2.53
Tanaidacea	76	128	86	0	290	1.18
Copepoda	20	10	4	0	34	0.13
Amphipoda	20	134	62	26	242	0.99
Isopoda	0	98	0	0	98	0.4
Decapoda	142	120	38	12	312	1.27
Worm+others	2340	1770	1960	1226	7296	29.88
Average	743.18	661.81	543.45	271.09	2219.53	

Table 3. Station wise Variation in Biomass of Macrobenthos (gm/m<sup>2</sup>) of Gangavali estuary

Group	Station				Average
	I	II	III	IV	
Foraminifera	0.023391	0.01469	0	0	0.00952
Neematoda	0.083	0.065	0.016	0.0085	0.043125
Polychaeta	32.5066	31.2333	27.4433	12.6131	25.94075
Gastropoda	340.0365	135.1037	9.10812	0	121.06210
Bivalvia	189.75	214.038	66.792	0	117.6450
Tanaidacea	0.01482	0.02496	0.01677	0	0.014138
Copepoda	0.0072	0.0036	0.00144	0	0.00306
Amphipoda	0.012	0.0804	0.0372	0.0156	0.0363
Isopoda	0	1.028	0	0	0.2570
Decapoda	15.0236	12.696	4.0204	1.2696	8.2524
Worm+others	14.742	11.151	12.348	7.7238	11.4912

Table: 4. Distribution of Macrobenthic fauna in Gangavali estuary

Sl No.	Species	Stations			
		I	II	III	IV
1	Foramenifera	+	+	-	-
2	Nematoda	+	+	+	+
3	Neries	+	+	-	-
4	P.pinnata	-	-	+	+
5	G.alba	+	+	+	+
6	L.leteropoda	+	+	+	+
7	T.attenuata	+	+	+	-
8	N.tigrina	+	+	+	-
9	N.rumphii	+	+	-	-
10	E.fluviatilis	+	+	+	-
11	M.meritrix	+	+	+	-
12	M.casta	+	+	-	-
13	P.malabarica	+	+	-	-
14	Black calm	+	+	-	-
15	Villorita	+	-	-	-
16	Cyprinoids	+	-	-	-
17	Tanaidacea	+	+	+	-
18	Copepoda	+	+	+	+
19	Ampelisca sp.	+	+	-	-
20	Melita sp.	-	+	-	-
21	Corophium sp.	+	-	-	-
22	Cyathura sp.	-	+	-	-
23	Chiridotea sp.	-	+	-	-
24	P.indica	+	+	+	+
25	M.dobsoni	+	+	+	+
26	M.monocercoc	+	+	+	+
27	C.caridina	+	+	+	+
28	Sylla serrata	+	+	+	+
29	Matuta lunaris	+	+	-	-
30	Charybdis sp.	-	+	-	-
	Station wise	25	26	15	10
	Total Types				

Eleven benthic groups were encountered in Gangavali estuary at all four stations during the study period. These are Foramenifera, Nematoda, Polychaeta, Gastropoda, Bivalvia, Tanaidacea, Copepoda, Amphipoda, Isopoda, Decapoda and Worms and others. The over all macro faunal density and biomass varied from 34no./m<sup>2</sup> to 13858no./m<sup>2</sup> (av. 2219no./m<sup>2</sup>) and 0.0036gm./m<sup>2</sup> to 340.0365gm./m<sup>2</sup> (av.25.88gm./m<sup>2</sup>) respectively. The important group in terms of number and species were Polychaeta (13858no./m<sup>2</sup>) followed by Nematoda (690no./m<sup>2</sup>) and the highest biomass 484.24gm./m<sup>2</sup> contributed by gastropoda to the benthic population.

The groups occurred in the following order of abundance were Polychaeta (56.76%)> Worms and others (29.88%)> Nematoda (2.82%)> Gastropoda (2.61%)> Bivalvia (2.53%)>Foraminifera (1.38)> Decapoda (1.27%)> Tanaidacea (1.18%)> Amphipoda (0.99)> Isopoda (0.40) and Copepoda 0.13no./m<sup>2</sup>. During the period of study tenure, Copepoda has low density with biomass of 0.01224gm./m<sup>2</sup> and their distribution was seasonal and found only during post-monsoon period and

not noticed during pre-monsoon and monsoon. During the study period, station 1 had shown large biomass values due to presence of gastropoda. The station 4 had shown the lowest of biomass values. It is because of gastropoda, bivalvia and other groups like foraminifera, tanaidacea, copepoda, isopoda not noticed at the upper reaches.

The maximum population density was found during post-monsoon. A substantial decrease in benthic fauna during monsoon has been reported by Chandramohan(1987), Srinivas rao and Rama sarma(1983). The species diversity increases towards the sea with decreasing organic enrichment (Mishra, 2002). But in the present study the highest population density shown towards lower reaches and lowest population density was observed at station 4. This is clearly showed that increase in organic enrichment had shown increased population density towards the sea. Ansari *et al.*,(1986) made the similar observation in Goa estuary that the benthic population and biomass was significantly higher at the site of organic enrichment.

The type of sediment factor determines the macro benthic community (Muniz and Piers, 2000) and deferent functional groups have been defined in association with deferent substrate type. Debasish *et al.*, (2009) described the impact of monsoon is not drastic up on the macrobenthic organisms. The hydro-chemical parameters have more influence on distribution of population density, species richness and diversity. Other than hydro-chemical and sediment factor, environmental characteristics are another factor determining the community of macrobenthos. Bhat and Neelakantan (1988) described the environmental characteristics of an estuary fluctuate periodically depending on three seasons i.e. pre-monsoon, monsoon and post-monsoon. The post-monsoon is known for stable environmental condition and increasing benthic production. In present study, the seasonal variations in abundance and biomass followed a similar pattern with low values in monsoon and pre-monsoon.

#### 4. Conclusion

The present study revealed higher benthic density and biomass during post-monsoon towards the river mouth and decreased towards upper reaches. The environmental patterns of Gangavli estuary fluctuates periodically. The pH range of Gangavali estuary generally remained on alkaline side which suggests that the estuary water is not polluted during the period of present work. The stable environmental condition of post-monsoon season which favors the growth of benthic population. The benthic faunal components exhibited bimodal pattern of distribution with post-monsoon and early pre-monsoon as a period of maximum density and monsoon with minimum density.

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