



SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG THE FISHING CASTES IN NORTH COASTAL ANDHRA PRADESH

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Abstract: The fishing communities are marginal communities that are dependent on fishing activity. They have economic backwardness and lower literacy levels, which affect their development. This article emphasizes understanding the socio-economic development of marine fishing communities and access to infrastructural facilities. This study has been conducted based on ethnographic fieldwork among the marine fishing communities of north coastal Andhra Pradesh.

Index Terms - Economic Development, Fishing, Livelihoods, Wellbeing

I. INTRODUCTION

The coastline is shared by nine states such as West Bengal (650), Orissa (480), Andhra Pradesh (1030) and Tamil Nadu (1076) on the eastern side bordering the Bay of Bengal, and Kerala (200), Karnataka (320), Goa (101), Maharashtra (720) and Gujarat (1600) bordering Arabian Sea. Several endogamous communities inhabit this coast (about 10 km swathe along the coast of the Bay of Bengal) and depend on marine fishing. These fishing communities are not homogenous, as they belong to different castes and have distinct social, cultural, and economic practices. At least two to three caste groups are exclusively involved in marine fishing in each maritime State of India, such as Jalari, Palli and Vada Balija in Andhra Pradesh; Pattinavars, Mukkuvars and Paravas in Tamil Nadu; Dhevara, Mukkuva and Pooislan in Kerala, Moogveeras in Karnataka; Nayakas in Goa; Kolis in Maharashtra, Kolis, Khairwar and Machhawa in Gujarat; Kaibartas in West Bengal and Jalia, Kaibarta Jalia, and Khandyats in Orissa are a few communities exclusively depend on marine fishing. These communities had different socio-cultural-economic living patterns that differed from the rest of the agrarian communities (Bhargavi et al 2020; Srinivasu & Murali Mohan 2015; Srinivasu 2017).

Scholars explained various kinds of research domains through their fieldwork on the fishing communities. These studies have gained some strength and made a theoretical contribution to the discipline; they also produced ethnographic perspectives of fishing communities (Nuckolls 1996; Kodanda Rao 1990; Suryanarayana 1977; Mathur 2008). The primary study by Acheson (1981) has presented extensive literature on various facets of fishers' way of life and economy by understanding crew organizations, egalitarian emphasis, crew recruitment, kinship, access to fishing rights, markets and fish buyers, cooperatives, miscellaneous institutions, fishing clusters and information management, ritual and magic, under competition, political process and individual strategies. There is always an interconnection between livelihoods and resource management that upholds fishing practices. These sustainable practices sustain their local knowledge, which has been transmitted from generation to generation over the decades (Chandana Sarma and A.N.M.Irshad Ali 2005; Rama Mohan 2016; Bhargavi et al 2020 ;Dalibandhu & Rama Mohan, 2021; Dalibandhu & Sharma, 2020a; Srinivasu 2021a; Srinivasu 2021b, Chandana Sarma and KR Rama Mohan 2022; Raju et al 2022, Vijaya Prakash 2022&2023). Another study by Dalibandhu and Rama Mohan (2022) noted significant changes in marine fishing practices after introducing boat fishing. These changes were not only limited to livelihood practices but also brought changes in the socio-economic conditions of

the Jalari fishing caste. Vijaya Prakash (2022) explored the role of religious institutions and their engagement in the fishing castes, which is significant in understanding lifecycles and fishing economy among the Vadabalija and Jalari fishing castes. Similarly, the article by Dalibandhu and Sharma (2020b) also noted how divinatory functionaries and healing dynamics influence the decision-making of fishing expeditions and exploring fishing economic possibilities. The fishing communities also have strong belief systems regarding the prosperity of the community and social and economic well-being, which influences their occupational health (Dalibandhu and Sharma 2018, Vijaya Prakash 2023).

II. METHODOLOGY

The study has been carried out among the rural Jalari (Pudimadaka) and rural Vadabalija (Mukkam); urban Jalari (Peda Jalaripeta) and urban Vadabalija (Vasivanipalem) are selected. The study used the ethnographic method to understand the nature of the problems faced by the fishing community. All the standard anthropological techniques are used for the collection of the data. Schedules, interviews, and group discussions were used for the in-depth collection of data among the fishing communities.

III. STRENGTHENING FACILITIES AND FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT

The following aspects significantly impact the development of the fishing communities. The local government should provide all the infrastructural facilities that help them enhance community development and economic prosperity.

Co-operative Societies

Marine fishermen co-operative societies are in the Visakhapatnam region (Districts of Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram). Most of the fishermen have enrolled as members of these societies, which support the fishermen by arranging government relief for the affected persons during natural calamities and off seasons. These societies recommend sanctioning government loans for member fishermen under different schemes at subsidized rates.

Fishing Harbour

The Visakhapatnam Fishing Harbor is part of the Visakhapatnam Port Trust (Visakhapatnam Port is one of the leading major ports in India and Asia). The fishing harbor was constructed in 1977. The harbor provides handling/berthing/out filing, repair complex, dredging and reclamation auction hall, administrative office, electrical substations, canteens, rest shelters and out filing stores, water power supply, bunkering arrangements, and navigational facilities. The Fishing Harbor has been catering to 65 fishermen villages in Visakhapatnam district and 20 villages in Vizianagaram district, besides fishermen urban agglomerations of Visakhapatnam city. The primary function of the fishing harbors is to operate boat vessels and trawlers to catch seaboards and dispose of them at local, national, and international markets. This is where the fisherwomen indulge in the fish trade; many use the fishing harbor as their primary occupation center.

Inshore Fishing Station

One of the inshore fishing stations located at Visakhapatnam surveyed inshore waters to locate new fish and prawn grounds and demonstrated to the fishermen the suitability of the application of different gears and tackles aimed at diversifying fishing methods to increase catches and thereby improve the economic conditions of fishermen.

Training Centre

The Department of Fisheries maintains a service centre and workshop for repairing and supplying spare parts to the boat owners. A training centre was established to maintain marine diesel engines, navigation, and seamanship.

Maintenance-Cum-Service Centre

A maintenance-cum-service centre and a base workshop are maintained by the Department of Fisheries. The primary function of this center is to repair and service both motorized and mechanized fishing crafts and supply spares for boat operations.

Supply of OBM / IBM Engines on Subsidy

The Outboard motors and board motor engines are being supplied to traditional marine fishermen to promote the motorization of traditional fishing craft with more than fifty percent subsidy under plan schemes.

Saving-Cum-Relief Scheme

To assist the traditional coastal fishermen during the lean period, the Government of Andhra Pradesh and the Government of India are releasing a matching grant to each beneficiary to their savings deposit account as a cent percent grant.

Supply of Rice to Coastal Traditional Fishermen during Closed/Off/Lean Seasons

The government of Andhra Pradesh imposed a ban on marine fishing from April 15th to June 15th to conserve the broad stock and control overfishing. During the closed seasons, the marine fishermen households are assisted with 40 kg of rice per family for two months.

Supply of Ice Boxes to Fisher Women

Iceboxes are being supplied to fisherwomen to avoid fish spoilage and extend hygienic handling of the fish on a 50 percent subsidy from the Government of Andhra Pradesh.

Revolving Fund to Matsya Mithra Groups (MMGS)

The SHG (self-help group) members of fisherwomen co-operative societies were organized into these MMGs to promote microfinance and microenterprise through group activity. The revolving fund is released as a percent grant to these MMGs for taking up their income-generating activities.

Supply of Distress Alert Transmitter

These transmitters were developed by ISRO (Indian Space Research Organization) and help transmit the type of distress from mechanized boats from sea to land. DATs are provided with built-in GPS (ground positioning systems) so that if any mechanized boat in the sea is distressed, it has to push the button indicating the type of distress (fire, medical and health, maneuver, boat damaged). The same signals were caught by satellite and sent the information to the Coast Guard Headquarters at Chennai. Based on the longitude and latitude, the Coast Guard will come to rescue the fishermen who are in distress.

IV. CONCLUSION

The fishing communities in rural and urban areas have socio-economic backwardness that impacts their fisheries' development. Over the decades, they have depended on modern fishing boats for fishing expeditions and continue their livelihoods. While fishing expeditions, the communities needed to invest more in modern boats than traditional boats, gradually becoming an economic burden. There is an urgent need to provide and create infrastructural facilities for the fishing communities to help them improve their economic conditions. Despite all these facilities and encouragement from different sectors, the socio-economic status of marine fishers has yet to show much change. The attributed reasons are multi-thronged for not being developed on par with the neighboring farming and agrarian communities.

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