

## A Sociological analysis: Traditional knowledge among fishermen

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### ABSTRACT

*All communities are going to change but the traditional fishing community is gone modern knowledge. This study mainly focused on the coastal areas of Blagad and Nattika in Chavakkad taluk, Thrissur. The major parts of elders in coastal area lead their life through fish hunting. Today, the life of people influenced the modernization factors but here shows the traditional knowledges still continue among fishermen. The fisher people have no thoughts of progress and also protect cultural identity through traditional knowledge.*

**Keywords:** Fishermen, traditional knowledge, lifeworld.

### Introduction

The traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples has unique features. It is typically unwritten and has been passed down orally for generations from person to person (Johnson, 1992). Some forms of traditional knowledge are expressed through stories, legends, folklore, rituals, songs, and laws. The owner of traditional knowledge can be a whole community or individual. The traditional knowledge is passed down orally and exists as practice and custom, sometimes it is hard to identify its owner (Graham Dutfield, 2005) The fisher people engaged in marine fisheries are dwelling in small houses spread over the coastal areas. The number of fishermen actively engaged in sea fishing is estimated at 2.20 lakhs. The general living conditions and the economic status of the fisher folk in the state is considered not up to the living standards of the general populace of the state.

Historians say that this traditional knowledge system goes back to early historical times in south India, indicated in the rich Sangam literary texts that belong to the period between the 3rd century BC and the 3rd century AD. According to scholars, the southern region - known generally as Tamilakam, which included almost the entire region south of the Deccan - was divided into five geographical segments. The people who inhabited the coasts, known as Neithal, were described as Meenavar or Paravar in Sangam literature. The Sangam texts refer to speak of marakkalam, a wooden vessel that floats on the water. Those who operated the marakkalams later came to be known as marakkars, a seafaring community in the south (Chekkutty, 2010). Even though there are many developments and technological discoveries, here a part of fishermen follows the traditional system of fishing. This study tried to analyses the theory of 'lifeworld' by Habermas.

### Review of literature

Ping Xiong (2008) in his article traditional knowledge and intellectual property protection –the endeavour of Niue, revealed that the special features of traditional knowledge, its relationship with current intellectual property protection, and then considers the particular initiatives being considered by Niue for the protection of its traditional knowledge for the generations to come. It depend on the efforts of each indigenous peoples group, community to find its own way to protect TK, and to promote common understanding in the world. Niue is a small country, and its influence in the protection of traditional knowledge may be limited.

### Analysis and discussion

Plenty of folk knowledge exists among fishing people who are involved in fishery in relation to their life and occupation. When ask above the sources of this knowledge they will ascribed them to the 'age old stories' which they have been hearing from their ancestors and which are getting transferred from one generation to the other succeeding generation. One would never care to think about the evidences to this knowledge nor even consider whether they are "good or bad". This is called the life world of the fishermen which according to Habermas, consists of 'individual abilities, intuitive knowledge of how one deals with a given situation; and socially accepted practices the intuitive knowledge that one can rely on a given situation, not less than that of underlying beliefs of which one is conscious'. Understanding among people is only possible

within the context of a familiar background; this knowledge of the environment is contained in language (Horster 1992).

The natural ability of fisherman lies in the fact that no-one teaches a fisherman his work; he gets it inherited from his preceding generation. He never cares to make any rational thinking, nor does he study about fishing. Instead they act according to circumstances; and they are automatically receiving institutions from their elder person. Fishermen are very intelligent in the case of fishing. They are very courageous and are able to withstand any situation. They say that fishing means a fight between fisherman and the fish. In a war warriors fight according to the situations. In the same way fishermen act according to the situation. They only they can catch a fish. They have the ability to catch fish by knowing the movement of fish which techniques should be followed etc, they do all these quickly and sudden the decisions depend on the situation. They might have gained this ability long ago. They believe that their great power to great grasp the meaning of the situations because of their grandparent 'Vedavyasa'. 'Vyasa' was the son of 'Kaali Arayathi', a fisherwoman. It was because of God's favour that she and 'Parasarathma' were able to get a son. 'Mahabarata' is one of the famous epic in the world. It was written by great sage 'Vedavyasa'. Since Vyasa is believed to be a Kshathriya, fishermen also come under this clan. And perhaps this can provide an explanation for their courage. The Kshathriya blood which circulates in their body gave them their strength. This is how they became fishermen. It was not taught by anyone; it is hereditary.

Fishermen explained the techniques of how to catch a fish, how they travels etc. If the fish traveled through the top of water stream, net should be strengthened and it should be closed, making sure that they won't escape when fish entered in to it. This decision had to be made instantly. The same way, when a fish travels through bottom or middle of the water stream the net should be arranged appropriately. A good opportunity for catching fish came and when there was heavy flow of water. Then the fish can be captured with net. But in such a stream, when fishermen see fish and try to catch them the fish would have reached another place. It cannot be caught. So he should be knowing the speed of the water current and the movement of fish- which are fast, medium or slow. Fishermen classified the speed of fish accordingly. They also know that the fish take rest and experience, fear etc. When they travel slowly they are resting, out of danger. But when they are hunted by shark, whale etc they travel in maximum speed. Fishermen won't think that these fishes are hunted by giant animal fishing cannot be done. Traditionally fishermen used to fish by rowing 5-10 fishermen were accommodated in a boat and they go and cross the fishes' path. Here they cast their net and got the fish. The fishermen adjusted their rowing according to the speed of the fish. Each fisherman has required high skills and presence of mind and possesses great intelligence. But the fact is that the outer world does not know the skill and prowess of the fishermen. In fact knowledge these confined among them.

To support this opinion the fishermen share, the following which was narrated story by Ratnaswamy at Blagad, "A proclaimed example for a fisherman's creativity is the 'Mahabarata' story-the greatest epic of the world. 'Vyasa', the saint who lived during Krishnayuga is the author of the work. "Mahabarata says the story of two fathers and their progeny. Among them one father had five sons, who were called Pandavas and other had 101, and were called Kauravas. The main theme of the epic the quarrels between Pandavas and Kauravas for the right over the kingdom. Duryodhana was made the king. Pandavas were his cousins and Krishna was their main supporter. This is because Arjuna's son Abhimanyu had married Krishna's daughter. In the quarrel between the two arrivals Krishna played the role of mediator between Kauravas and Pandavas. On behalf of the Pandavas, who raised the question of handing over five territories to the five Pandus, who were exceptionally good rulers. Duryodhana, ignoring this demand replied that since Pandavas were his subjects, they should live like common people. In reply to this, Krishna put forward the demand of building homes for each Pandava. An intelligent Duryodhana told Krishna that since all Pandavas were the children of Kunti, providing homes for each of them will only result in splitting apart their family. Wearing a small smile on his face, Krishna suggested building a palace like huge home for all five of them. Accepting this demand, a palace was built for Pandavas. Before entering in to their home, Pandavas thought about checking the newly built palace. On inspection it was realised that, the palace was built of gum instead of any metals and other durable materials. Their idea was to trap the Pandavas and destroy them forever; incase if they denied staying there. This purposeful fraud from the part of Kauravas increased the temperament of Pandavas. They asked Krishna to stop the works of palace, or else they would burn it upside down. Krishna told Duryodhana that hence he should not think that Pandavas are coward enough to see his fraud. He also remembered him that his support will be there for Panduputras always, so as to regain their rights. And thus they proclaimed war against those 101 Kauravas. It was Lord Krishna himself who rode the chariot of the warrior Arjuna in Warfield. Pandavas could win the war; since Krishna blocked

all arrows sent against Arjuna with his chariot. Such ability is inborn in a fisherman because he came from the Kshathriya lineage.”

The present generation has vast information regarding fishing. We need an engineer to build a building; we need a degree for his, not only written knowledge but also practical knowledge. Knowledge is necessary for this and then only they will become efficient. But in case of fishermen, they are not having a degree to catch fish. To catch fish one should know the nature of flow of water, and the fish travels bottom, top or middle. One cannot gain this knowledge from standing on the shore. Which direction fish travels, how to drop the net and how to raise it. He should know these cannot be learned reading lessons by written it on a white paper. The fish won't wait for you reading the paper and to catch it. All of the decisions are made when you at sea as in the case of the fight between Pandava and Kauravas. The fishermen believe that both are having the same situation – catching fish and mahabharatha war. When we consider the people who invented atom bomb and about their knowledge; these fishermen were not behind in knowledge, they had their intellect. But fact is that the world doesn't know it. The fishermen were busy. They had no time to announce their knowledge to the world.

### Conclusion

A fisherman receives the basic knowledge regarding his occupation from the community in which he lives, as well as through the understandings from his communication and experience. Elderly fishermen are repeats the story of fishing and their intelligence. In this sense the working of lifeworld of the fishermen and traditional cultural knowledge produces the elder fishing people. The elder fishermen tried to continue the cultural stability through traditional knowledge of fishing community.

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