

AN ENTHNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE OF FISHERMEN COMMUNITY IN KANYA KUMARI REGION

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Introduction

Objective of the study is to explore on how ethnographical changes play an important role in the life of fisherman community. The paper is not an ethnographical study. Rather, it focuses on the ethnographical perspectives to bring about the various dimensions of the chosen population. It focuses to explain the reason for the life style and educational standard of the fishermen.

Definition

The term ethnography has come to be equated with virtually any qualitative research where the intent is to provide a detailed, in-depth description of everyday life and practice. This is referred to as “thick description” a term attributed to the anthropologist Clifford Geertz writing on the idea of an interpretive theory of culture in the early 1970s. The use of the term “qualitative” is meant to distinguish this kind of social science research from more “quantitative” or statistically oriented research. While an ethnographic approach to social research is no longer purely that of the cultural anthropologist, a more precise definition must be rooted in ethnography’s disciplinary home of anthropology. Thus, ethnography may be defined as both a qualitative research process or method and product whose aim is cultural interpretation.

Food and Culture

Food is a vital need of all living beings. Food consumed will often reflect the culture, custom and believes of the person. Similar is the food habits of the fishermen community. Researcher made it possible to understand the various food and culture of the fisherman community and the reasons to follow. It was understood these people are always fond of fish and stale rice. They do not give much importance to other eatables, vegetables or fruits. Through observation, it was understood their ethnography has an important role for the food. The reason for this is, they do not have much time to spend for preparing other delicious foods. Fishing community always go with stale food and fish, the reason

behind is since they have to go for fishing early in the morning; and it is not possible for them to prepare food. Moreover, it is these foods that can withstand the humidity level in sea and the possibilities of food to get spoiled are also very minimal. Owing to their confinement within the sea shore, chances for them to visit the market in the outskirts are very less.

Food habits of the fishermen community goes beyond the ethnographical perspectives. There were times when researcher has felt why the maids at home also stick on to the same food. The reason was very emotional. It was understood since the men folks carry only the stale food and some fish curry along with them, even women at home adheres to the same. More than the ethnographical role, emotional bonding of these people is very strong. This could be understood well through the novel *Chemmeen* Karuthamma and Chakki who keeps waiting for Chembankunju and Parekutty. These female characters wait at the sea shore with food for their spouse who has gone for fishing. Everything gets transformation according to the present era. Emotion keeps the relationships and culture of the fishermen community strong beyond generations.

Custom - Usual Entertainment and Dressing

Researcher was amazed to see little boys running behind *Urumi* a fish kind of creature at the sea shore. Boys were in the world of happiness where trauma around them faded away. On enquiring, young adults told it was their usual entertainment. They were always puzzled to run behind tiny little creatures. On the other side, some of them were playing cricket in the beach. The researcher also saw people working together irrespective of their age. They dedicated themselves in doing works related to fishing together. It was a blessing when the fishing folks gave an opportunity for the researcher to help them in anchoring boats singing ballads. Sea shore with such milieu was a place for the researcher to learn about dedication, hard work etc. The ethnographical reason behind their orientation towards sea is because life is closely associated to sea living. They are not bothered about anything. Only companion for them is the sea. All their happiness, worries and tears are listened and heard only by the sea.

Dressing style of the youngsters in fisherman community were an imitation of popular actors and followed the hair style, dressing sense, style of riding bike etc.,. They are the ardent worshippers of very strong heroes like MGR, Rajini, Ajith and Vijay. The people stick an image of heroes in vehicles and also wear printed t-shirts of actors. The teenager's attitude of giving importance to heroes depends upon the actors films which depicted the issues of fishermen community. For example movies like *Padagotti*, *Citizen*, *Sura*. Love of these actors could be sensed from their way of dressing. Town's ladies wear bangles, ear drops, necklace made of sea-shells. Though this sounds ages, the culture of fisherman community is still prevailing.

Biculturalism and Bilingualism

Language of people in KanyaKumari district is a mix of Tamil and Malayalam. Earlier before partition, KanyaKumari was a part of Kerala. Even today, since this district is very close to Kerala border, language is always bilingual. Researcher found it very difficult to understand certain words of the people. A small boy by name Stephen confused the researcher totally with a different word to indicate market(sandai) instead of santhai in Tamil. Cultural aspect of the people in this district is also bicultural. Traces of Kerala culture could be found. People following Christianity and Islam occupied the majority of population especially in Colachel (Colachel is a second grade Municipal town situated on the west coast of Kanyakumari District and it belongs to kalkulam Taluk.). It was very rare to see people who followed Hinduism.

Recently, harbor works are on swing at Colachel and Thengapattinam (Thenga pattinam is a major trade Centre in the painkulam Panchayath along the coastal plainsof Kanyakumari district). This could add on to the cultural and linguistic dilemma. When marketization expands, there will be ample possibilities for the foreign people to visit the district often. This could lead to the people coming together on a platform for environment and education influence of varied cultural.

Life after Tsunami

Life of people changed a lot after Tsunami attack in the year 2004. Psychologically, they were in dilemma of fear towards sea. Since, Indians on the whole was not aware of the concept of tsunami. A suddenattack which took away the smiles of millions. While interviewing, Samson a Panchayath member said *“Kadamma was so anger with a few things happening in the society that she took away many lives. We have not seen our Kadamma in such a frightening sense. That huge mammoth wave came from the deepest of her heart just to teach people to respect the gift of nature. After that incident, we are sure even we have changed our way of living completely. We have started respected her so much.”*

Life was happy in thatched huts. But now, persons are confined within tsunami colony. They feel people are looking still as victims. Mr. Nasar a tsunami victim who lives in tsunami colony told atkanyakumari during the month of July 2016 *“we were the victims of tsunami. Yes we are. We saw the anger of sea directly. We experienced the attack more than anyone else. We had the most fearful shower in our life. Now, we are leading a normal life though not really happy. (With tears) we request people to see that we have bounced to our routine life than sobbing. Please do not show us your sympathy but teach our children to learn many more nuances and science of sea”.*

Life after tsunami has brought in many changes in the life of fishermen community. Earlier, they were happy with sea and fishing. But after tsunami, they had understood the

importance of education as well. People suffered a lot without the fishing equipment for a few months. They were not able to do any other works for their livelihood. The days of starvation has given them the wisdom to educate their children says Mr. Peter. Though fishermen have culture bound, started acting wisely to ensure a better future.

In the present era, life of fishermen has changed drastically. Students willingly go to schools and colleges. Sufferings made them understand the importance and need of education. Elders are bridging in between children and education. Complete support is rendered by to educate children in all possible way.

During the research travel, researcher was shocked to see the enthusiasm of the elders and the children to learn English. But at times, people are confused with certain words and usage and hesitate to speak in English. Often, they believe English language is packed with rules and it is not possible to learn the language. Mother tongue influence is a major problem. Impact of bilingualism can be seen in the way speak English. Now, interest is to learn English and get educated. But lack proper support.

Political Views

Fishermen community in kanyakumaridistrict support national parties rather than the regional political parties. The people are updated with all the changes happened in the political perspective. Any announcement or promises made by the rulers for the welfare of the fishermen community is utilized by them properly, and also have the strongest hope that there will be someone who would come to rescue very soon and fulfill needs of their community.

English Language

In today's global world the importance of English cannot be denied and ignored since it is the most common foreign language. English is the dominant business language and it has become almost necessity for a people to speak English and also it is an essential in the field of education. In many countries, children are taught and encouraged to learn English as a second language. Even in countries where it is not an official language, such as the Netherlands or Sweden. In the current scenario companies will take a person who is good in English language, so good communication and understanding in English can make travel any part of the world because it is the international language for foreigners. English skills help to develop any business in the part of the world.

The fisherman community follows ancestor heritage and their life style even in the modern world. The people are not ready to break the rules and regulations of culture. It is considered as a sin among fisherman community. They do not think apart from fishing. The present generation learners of fisherman community face lot of obstacles and feel hard to get job which is related to fishing profession. The talents of the people unseen because

of less English language proficiency so learning an English language will not only enhance the life of an individual. It will enrich the culture of fisherman community.

Osommation

The paper explains food, culture and their emotional bonding even in the digitalized era. It discusses on usual entertainments with reference to their culture and how media created great impact on life of fishermen community. The difficulties of biculturalism and bilingualism are analysed. Life after tsunami of fishermen community and it portrays how standard of living has uplifted. The status of English language understood with reference to business, education and day today life. The young generation perspectives towards English language and the needs of English language for the present generation to get a job is analysed in the paper. In addition the essentials of language help to lead a life in well manner.

References

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Glossary

- **Urumi**- is a small creature which comes along with waves from the sea.
- **Maruthur Gopalan Ramachandran** is popularly known by his initials **MGR**, was an Indian film actor, producer and politician. Well known as a Tamil activist, he served as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu from 1977 until his death in 1987.
- **Rajini, Ajith, Vijay** are Indian actors in Tamil industry.
- **Kanyakumari** - is a district in the state of Tamil Nadu and it belongs to Agastheeswaram Taluk.
- **Colachel**- is a second grade Municipal town situated on the west coast of Kanyakumari District and it belongs to Kalkulam Taluk.
- **Thengapattinam** - is a major trade Centre in the Kanyakumari Panchayath along the coastal plains of Kanyakumari District. It was a portion of Kanyakumari district which was added to the state of Tamil Nadu on **November 1, 1956**.
- **Kadalamma** - is a term where fisherman community addresses sea.

- **Chembankunju** - is a dishonest Fisherman in the novel *chemmen* by Thakazhi Siva Sankara Pillai in 1956.
- **Chakki**- is a spouse of Chembankunju in the novel *chemmen* by Thakazhi Siva Sankara Pillai in 1956.
- **Pareekutty** - is a Muslim Trader who falls in love with Karuthamma in the novel *chemmen* by Thakazhi Siva Sankara Pillai in 1956.
- **Karuthamma** - is a Daughter of Chembankunju in the novel *chemmen* by Thakazhi Siva Sankara Pillai in 1956.