

*Short Communication*

## RITUALISTIC IMPACT OF FISHING, AMONG TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

Indrani Sah

Dept. of Fishery Extension, Faculty of Fishery science, West Bengal University of Animal & Fishery Sciences, Chakgaria, Kolkata-700094, India

\* Corresponding author Email: isah0800@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

India is a land of infinite customs and peoples. There, are some states in India where positive number of tribal population is present. Tribal people are the genuine riches of our countries. Tribes have evolved ritualistic fishing that is vital in conservation of natural resources. An attempt has made with the help of several evidence available from different sources to analyze the ritualistic impact of fishing, among Tribal communities. The ritualistic belief system of conservation of fisheries has been discussed.

**KEYWORD:** Fishing, Tribal, Ritualistic, Conservation.

### INTRODUCTION

Conservation of nature and natural resources has been an important part of cultural ethos, especially in Tribal and indigenous communities in many parts of the world, including India. These communities consider themselves connected with their biophysical surroundings in a web of divine connection. These tribal communities consider specific plants, Fish, animals, or even rivers and mountains as their ancestors and protect them. In India, nature worship dates back to the pre-Vedic period (5000 B.C.) and is based on the intention that all creations of nature have to be protected. The forefathers of these communities were fully aware of the importance and significance of natural resources and the necessity of their conservation for the sustenance of future generations. They lived in harmony with nature and thereby played an important role in conservation of biodiversity. According to Radcliffe Brown (1959) rituals have a useful function in ordering society and this function is the essential and ultimate reason for their existence.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to achieve authentic information, several evidence from different sources and participatory observation method for the collection of data was adopted. In order to analyze population growth and other demographic attributes, data from census and Department of Tribal Welfare information have been used.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conservation practices gleaned from literature, from discussions with the tribal community members, and observation during field visits are listed below. These were discussed with the community members. The tribals were involve in ritualistic fishing are Muria, Kurumans, Kurichyas, paniayas, Bagatas Oraons and Akas.

#### *Muria, Chhattisgarh*

Bastar is a district in the state of Chhattisgarh in central India. Bastar is the largest tribal district of Chhattisgarh. The major tribes of the Bastar region are the Gond (largest tribal group of central India in terms of population), Abhujmaria, Bhatra. Gonds tribes of Bastar being the most prominent among them. The Gond Tribes include Muria tribes. The Muria prioritize collectiveness and they are divided into different phratries one of them is Bodminkvans (Fish Race). They are not allowed to eat their totem animal, and must grieve for dies. As a way of conservation of nature, tribal communities proven to be a well-ried and tested method over thousands of years.

#### *Kurumans, Kerala*

Wayanad, district is situated in the northeast of Kerala, India. Fish and Fishing have great significance in Kurumans, Kurichyas and paniayas tribes of Wayanad. In Kurumans and Kurichyas fishing is associated with their marriage, death and important festivals. Newly arried Kuruman bride has to go for fishing and she has to show her skill in fishig. Another ritual is associated with post death ceremony. On 3<sup>rd</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> day of funeral, women go for fishing. Before returning to the settlements, they take bath in the water body and do final fishing operation. Whatever fish caught in the operaion, they leave on the bank. Kurumans believe that life originated in water and after death life goes into water.

#### *Bagatas, Andhra Pradesh*

Machkund (fish tank) is one of the important rivers which forms boundary between Orissa and Andhra Pradesh in the North-Eastern part of Visakhapatnam district. The Machkund River profoundly influenced the socio-religious lives of tribals of Paderu region. A section of

Bagatas whose name is Matsya (fish) worship fish of a pond near Paderu area.

#### ***Oraons, Jharkhand***

Chhota Nagpur division, also name as the South-West border of Jharkhand. The Oraons tribe inhabit in Chhota Nagpur. The Oraons follow certain traditions of totemism. Totems could be as many as there are natural objects. The legend is that an Oraon was fishing in a stream. A Xalxo and Minj clan belongs from fish, Xalxo fish which was caught in his net, managed to escape. Henceforth, the Xalxo fish became taboo to the man, and his descendants came to be called as Xalxo clan. Folk of the inj clan never hunt the Minj fish.

#### ***Koras, West Bengal***

The Kora is a small tribal community having a restricted distribution in the eastern India. West Bengal they constitute only 3% of the total tribal population. The Kora community of Rindanga is divided into different clans. The members of a clan believed to have descended from a common ancestor. They believe that the spirits of the animal inevitably form their clan signifies one of the animal inevitably form their clan signifies one of the animal as their totem. For this belief they stick to the rule of clan exogamy as the members of a same clan are bound together as brother and sister. Among the Koras, Samar (Sole fish) are object of religious sentiments and taboos on the use of their meat are still adhered with great tenacity by those Koras of whom those are totems.

#### ***Aka, Arunachal Pradesh***

The Aka tribe conserves the fishes indirectly by practicing traditional techniques such as netting, angling. Diversion of river course, tuvo peo (use of bamboo traps), hujii-dow (community fishing-diversion of big river course) Miinow (baiting) etc. Which are less accurate? They spare small fishes even when caught. The local people do not allow the use of chemicals and blasting. Anyone found break the custom is fined and the amount is kept as the progress fund of the village.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The tribal's in order to meet their day to day needs and requirements largely depend on the natural resources. The traditional and ritualistic ways of fishing are sustainable and conservative. The in-built mechanism in their social and cultural tradition have made them thrifty on over exploitation and contributed towards protection of the biodiversity. Hence, it is hoped that the study could help researchers and scholars working on biodiversity in formulating plans for sustainable utilization and biodiversity conservation. Policy makers should consider traditional ways of management of their biodiversity to bring more fruitful result and cooperation from local people, rather than imposition of new policies on them.

#### **REFERENCES**

- Brown, R. (1959) Structure and function in primitive society. London: Oxford University Press.
- Das, S.T. (1989) Life style\_Madhya Pradesh. *Life style, Indian tribes: Locational practice*, Gyan Publishing House. Vol. 3, 193.
- N. Gibji, Joshi, R., and Dai, O. (2011) Role of indigenous knowledge system in conservation of forest resources- A case study of the Aka tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. *Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge*. 10 (2): 276-280.
- Paul, K. (2004) Kora religious belief: a fusion of traditional tribal faith and Hinduism. *Stud. tribes Tribals*, 2(2):81-87.
- Performance Budget (2004-2005) Department of Tribal Welfare, Government of Andhra Pradesh.
- Prajith, K.K., Remesan, M.P. and Edwin, L. (2016) Traditional wisdom of fishing techniques and rituals of Kuruman tribe of Wayanad, Western Ghats. *Asian Agri-History*. 20 (2):119-126.
- Tirkey, A. and Jain, S.K. (2006) Tradition of clan names and conservation among the Oraons of Chhattisgarh. *Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge*. 5(2):224-226.