

Vennela Venkatalakshmi and Chetti Srinivas

**RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF CURATIVE PRACTICES
AMONG THE MARITIME FISHING COMMUNITIES
VADABALIJA AND JALARI OF VISAKHAPATNAM
DISTRICT, ANDHRA PRADESH**

Abstract

The present study attempts to analyze the overlapping aspects of religion, social control and health. Dasudu and Bhakthudu (or Bakthurlamma) are the two religious functionaries associated with the deities of fishing community people. Dasudu is the chief worshipper of village deity and serves the interests of the whole villagers. Bhakthudu (Bakthuralamma) is the chief worshipper of lineage deity, and serves the interests of that particular lineage group. Curative practices in fishing communities generally done by divination. Divination determines the causes of and remedies for disruptions in physical health and occupational well-being. Both the Jalari and Vadabaliya believe that spirits attack neither arbitrarily choosing their victims at random, nor directly inflicting suffering on the transgressors. Different curative practices that enfold areas of religion and social control are employed by the Jalari and Vadabaliya. It is observed that there is strong connection between religion, curative practices and social control among fishing populations.

Keywords: Religion, Curative Practices, Jalari, Vadabaliya, Visakhapatnam

Introduction

Religions and beliefs are of great importance for anthropological research on the development of humankind and its history, as they represent the human reaction to an extra human, holy, transcendent, or divine object. Almost no other terms of the mental and intellectual human life seem to have such a big and colorful variety as “belief” or “religion”. Supernatural causes ascribe disease etiology to superhuman forces, such as evil spirits, ancestral spirits, witches, sorcerers, or the evil eye. Non-supernatural disease categories are “those based wholly on observed cause-and-effect relationships regardless

VENNELA VENKATALAKSHMI, Guest Faculty and **CHETTI SRINIVAS**, Field Officer, TCR&Tm, Tribal Welfare Dept., Andhra Pradesh, Visakhapatnam- 530045, Email: srinivas@andhrauniversity.edu.in

of the accuracy of the observations made” (Morley 1978: 2), such as profuse bleeding.

Maritime anthropology has gained its strength from the studies made since 1970s, and has produced ethnographies of fishing communities; cultural histories of sea faring, coastal recreation and tourism. In addition, researchers have examined the diversity of beliefs about fishing regulating, social, curative, political and symbolic aspects (Cordell and Fitzpatric 1987, Hoefnagel 1991, Nuckolls 1981, 1987 & 1991). Mathur (1977) brought out the interrelationships between habitat, technology, kinship structures, socio-religious institutions, rituals and belief systems of Kerala fishermen living on the west coast of India. Palmer Craig (1989,) discusses the ritual taboos of Fishermen. His paper deals with a new explanation of magic and religion to ritual taboos among fishermen. According to Craig, taboos promote cooperation by communicating a willingness to accept traditional pattern of authority. Further this approach predicts that taboos will be more frequent in situations where intensive cooperation between the individuals is crucial. Poggie (1980) explains the role of taboos as a means of psycho-cultural adaptation to personal risk among fisher men in southern New England. Further, he argues that knowledge of wide spread psycho-cultural ritual adaptations would help planners to select appropriate technological innovations, which are more likely to be accepted and contribute to the wellbeing of fishermen in religions of the world where technological development of fisheries is possible.

Visakhapatnam district lies on the east of India and several fishing villages that dot the coast lie consists of two communities – the Vadabalizi and Jalari. As magico-religious personnel mediate with supernatural, a certain body of ceremonial or ritual knowledge evolved over a period of time everywhere. Magico-religious personnel in this region i.e priest, Dasudu and Bhakthudu or Bakthurlamma. The role of gods and goddesses in curing disease is universally acknowledge in a variety of cultures since time immemorial. Even in the developed world, especially among the tribal, rural and fishing communities such appeasement of gods and goddesses associated with specific illness is observed. Such healing gods and goddesses in different cultures are described. The local shaman mediates between the supernatural and the patient.

Theoretical Framework

The psychological theories of religion, particularly the emotionalist theory, according to Hobbes argue that religion was invented to reduce the unavoidable fears, which the early men faced and which were beyond their understanding or control (Eller 2007: 15). Fishing communities are deeply religious and they rely entirely on the sea and other natural forces that control it. Fishermen have different rituals to please the forces of nature. In general, fishermen are also strong believers in the supernatural effect on the body's natural processes. Thus, rituals and magical-religious healing form an

important element in their culture. These beliefs and practices may seem uncontrollable as fishing communities are constantly exposed to the various forces of nature.

Researchers in characteristic analysis and social cognition have anticipated that much of our everyday, applied social knowledge exists in such activities, which they call “schemata” or “scripts” (Agar 1986; Casson 1983; Freundlib 1982; Holland and Skinner 1987; Hutchins 1980; Schank and Abelson 1977).

The schema-theoretic framework is useful model for understanding about the cognitive behavior among the individuals. First, it focuses on unabstracted and everyday processes that make sense to people. Second, it delivers a framework for describing these processes as context-specific phenomena by proposing that explanatory schemata exist in a cognitive “repertoire” and that people choose among the constituents of this repertoire. Third, its illustrations how cultural systems are “operationalized,” by linking beliefs and ideas with the context-dependent characteristics of practical interpretation. In short, because it describes knowledge at the level at which it is actually used, the schema-theoretic approach offers insights into causal and moral universes otherwise accessible only through highly abstracted structures (e.g., “social system,” “ethnosociology,” “theology”). To “see” causal thinking in action, the research concentrated on its most “visible” manifestation, in causal divination. Jalari mediums, known as dasudus, perform or direct four distinct forms of divination, matching patient conditions (physical, emotional, and social) to stereotypic event sequences. These sequences constitute well-organized knowledge structures Nuckolls (1991) describe as “causal schemata” or “causal scripts.” Such structures are of two types. “Primary” scripts describe the reactions of spirits to human transgression. They are used to explain the simple or “efficient” causes of the two most commonly diagnosed events, illness and poor fishing. “Secondary” scripts describe disruptions in social relations Nuckolls 1991: 5). The schema theoretical framework is adopted for the present study on curative practices among fishing communities

Methodology

The present study was conducted two fishing communities, Jalari and Vadabalijain Visakhapatnam coastal region and two villages from each fishing caste are selected by convenient sampling Mutyalampalem, a Vadabaliya village and Jalaripeta, a Jalari village represent the rural sample while Vasavanipalem, a Vadabaliya locality and Pedajalaripeta, a Jalari enclave form the urban sample and subject selection based on representative sampling processor employed in data collection. Anthropological tool techniques like participation observation, interview, and case studies carried out of the study. Data also collected secondary source in internet, Andhra university library and published thesis

and articles.

Ethnographic Profile

Vadas are the numerically dominant fishing caste in Visakhapatnam and Srikakulam districts. Thurston (1909) notes that the sea fishermen in this area “are either Vadas or Jalaris”, both of which are Telugu castes sometimes they (Vadas) are called Kalasis by Oriya people” (Thurston 1909: 298). Some Ethnographers asserted that the Jalari are the original fishing community of this region and the Vadas and Pallis have taken up fishing at a later time. Anthropologists like Kondanda Rao (1975) emphasized that “there is evidence that the other two have taken up fishing as their main occupation in course of time. While we do not come across any Jalari doing agriculture either as a main occupation or even as a seasonal occupation, agriculture is a seasonal occupation for both Vadas and Pallis”. The origin and history of these caste groups is not less known while, Thurston notes that the “Vadas seems to be a section of the Pallis, with whom they will inter-dine and intermarry” (Thurston 1909: 264). Though Vadas and Pallis are two different and distinct caste groups, they agree that they are equal and also that they are descendants of a common ancestor. It is established that these two caste groups follow strict and endogamy. The Pallis and Vadas make claims and counter claims over the superiority. Studies suggest that the Pallis in Visakhapatnam district enjoyed superior status both economically and socially in the past, the Vadas claim equal status with Pallis due to their superior economic condition in the present times. Of the three fishing communities the Pallis and Vadas are influenced by the dominant Hindu religion. The Pallis styled themselves as Agnikula Kshatriyaas and claimed that once they were rulers. The effects of Sankritisation can be observed among them as they started wearing sacred thread. Etymologically the word Vanni is derived from the Sanskrit word Vahini (Agni) which means fire. Pallis claim that they are descendents of Agni god and once, belonged to the ruling caste. Agni is believed to be the original ancestor of all kings. They also wear the sacred thread and as Heningway states the Pallis “declare they are superior to Brahmans, since, while the latter must be invested with sacred thread after birth, they (Pallis) bring their sacred thread with them at birth itself. Similarly, Vadas prefer to call themselves Vada Balijas, the suffix, balija means business (Vanija = a person belonging to a mercantile class or a business man); Vada in Telugu means a ship or any similar vehicle for transportation by water and the specific name Vada Balija denotes a section of People working with boats or ships. It is pertinent to find, many Vada settlements are found near the former, traditional ports like Kalingapatnam, Bheemunipatnam, Pentakota and Kakinada. It is reported that the Vadas were engaged in transshipment from the Cargo Ships that stop in the midstream as many vessels have to halt away from the coast, owing to the shallow waters of the Bay of the Bengal in the Northern part of the Coastal Andhra. Till recently the Vadas have been engaged in the transshipment of Cargo in the older ports

like Kalingapatnam, Bheemunipatnam and Kakinada and when these ports lost their importance until modern ports like Visakhapatnam came into prominence. Subsequently the Vadas were forced to take up fishing as their full-time occupation. Kodanda Rao explains this process to the study of their legends that “Vadas were the people who came on boats (Vada), while Pallis are those who came through low lands (Pallam) clearly implying that they were non fishing castes”.

The Vadabaliyas are divided into two clans (*gotramulu*), like Kasigothram and Nagari gotram. However, the entire Vadabaliya community has only one gotram i.e., Nagala gotram. They have a number of surnames (*inteperulu*) which are exogamous in nature. The members belonging to the same surname group are prohibited to marry and consider themselves as brothers and sisters (*annathammula varasa*). They are aware of the ‘varna’ system, and recognise their place under the Sudra of the four-fold Varna order. They perceive themselves superior to the neighbouring fishing communities such as Palli and Jalari.

Like the Jalari, Vada Baliyas also live-in homogenous villages. Their men spend most of their time at sea and women involve in domestic spheres and in selling fish that was harvested by men folk. Their interactions with castes are more or less similar to that of the Jalaris. The general social status of the fishing communities in the Hindu caste system is low. Other castes do not distinguish between the Pallis, Vadas and Jalaris and refer to all these groups as Chepalavallu and a low hierarchical status is given to them. Fishing as an occupation is considered unclean and the fishing habitations bear pungent odor. Fishermen, however, are treated as Hindus and their superiority over service castes like barbers and washer men is conceded. The ex-untouchable castes such Mala and Madiga, in turn are treated by fishermen as inferior on their part, the fishing castes the superiority of the other castes.

Inter caste relations

In heterogeneous villages, each caste maintains strict social and physical segregation. This is clearly seen in any multi-caste village in this region where each caste lives separately from others. Caste specific habitations are clearly bounded in the village geography and these distinctions are passionately guarded. In the case of homogenous villages, social and physical segregation is clearly demonstrated where the village itself is usually identified by the name of that caste. Ritual status, exclusiveness and separation of a caste determine the commensal (eating together) and connubial relations. These relationships are maintained meticulously and, a Vada and a Jalari do not eat together publicly or marry each other’s women. Fishing castes accept food from all the higher castes, but do not take food from the lower castes, that is, from both the service castes and the untouchables. The latter, however, take food from the fisherman castes and accept their superiority. Thus,

existence of communal relations between two castes is considered as a sign of equality. This is observed among Vadas and Pallis. When exchange of food takes place unilaterally between two castes, the caste at the receiving end is considered inferior. Thus, endogamy serves to maintain the ritual status of a caste and separates it from other caste groups. Therefore, fishing communities identify caste as an exclusive and separate entity, along with other attributes such as economic, political, purity and pollution statuses in maintaining their relationships with other castes.

On the other hand, Jalaris have limited interaction with the other castes of this region, especially with the Brahmin and Land owing communities. The local astrologer whom they consult frequently to fix up auspicious timing for marriage or for construction of a new house belongs to Jangama caste. Traders visit Jalari villages frequently to sell rice, clothes and other necessities, but their transactions are limited. Before the advent of marketing facilities for fish and cash economy Jalaris used to have relations with the neighbouring agricultural castes such as Reddi, Kapu, and Velama etc. They used to supply fish in exchange for cereals and other agricultural produce at the end of the agricultural season. These informal relations have now discontinued because of the growth of “market places”. The fisherwomen go now to these market places and sell their fish for cash with which they buy household necessities at the same market place.

Fishing communities in a village or locality also depend on potters who live in distant villages. They buy earthenware needed for domestic purposes in the weekly shandies. For pots used in ceremonies and rituals of lineage and village deities, the Jalari go to the potter’s village and order for such specially decorated pots called as *Neralu Chatti*. Barbers visit the Jalari villages and serve the needs of the Jalaris for which collect fish periodically and are paid annually at the end of the big-net season. Washermen offer their services in washing soiled clothes and also play a significant role in the rituals of Jalaris. The services of washerman are required at birth, puberty, marriage and funeral rituals and during all other occasions which, Jalaris believe, entail pollution i.e., when the woman is said to be in a condition of Maila (pollution). The washerman’s function is to clean the house and clean off ritual impurity from clothes. Like the barbers, the washerman also collect fish from the families they serve. Jalaris do not have any functional relations with other low caste groups such as Mala and Madiga. Jalari maintain their corporate identity and this exclusiveness and separation is maintained by a strict adherence to endogamy which keeps up the values of ritual status and common descent and heritage.

Life Cycle Events

The present study found that the Rites de passage among the Jalari and Vada Balija are similar to a large extent with few variations. Ceremonies

related with pregnancy are performed both during pregnancy and after child birth. The Jalaris and Vadas believe that the birth of a child is auspicious. It is informed that the first and second delivery of a woman generally takes place at her parent's house. It is customary that the first delivery to take place at wife's natal dwelling. Generally, the parents bring their daughter home at her seventh month or the ninth month of pregnancy. Pre-delivery ritual (*seemantham*) is observed by the Vadabalija and Jalaris during the sixth or seventh month of pregnancy. Delivery is attended by *mantrasaani*, the local midwife, an elderly and experienced woman in the neighborhood. After the birth of a child, the umbilical cord is cut with a knife brought by the mid-wife. Naming ceremony takes place on the ninth or eleventh day of child birth. Fishing communities considered puberty as an important life cycle. On the fifth day, cow dung is smeared to purify the place where the girl is made to sit and a feast is arranged to all relatives and friends on that day. The parents of the girl consult a Brahman to fix the auspicious time to perform puberty ceremony.

The fishing communities are patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal. The connubial relations among fishing communities are generally limited to a radius of below 10 kms and the general preference is to look for a mate among the close relatives. In most cases the affines are closely related. Two types of marriages are noticed among these fishing communities, they are marriage by negotiation and marriage by elopement. It is learnt that monogamy is the common form of marriage. However, polygamy is also occasionally seen among the Jalaris and the Vadas. The marriageable age for males is about 21 years while 18 years for females. The marriage alliance system is divided into two descent groups, marriageable and non-marriageable descent groups. Though marriage is conceptualized as an alliance between descent groups, the effective units of marriage alliances are households. The preferential marriages among the fishing communities are cross-cousin marriages. The Jalari and the Vada as a rule follow incest taboo and clan exogamy that compel one to enter into marriage alliance with those households that stand in the relationship of cross-relatives. Rules of marriage require that the wife should be of younger age of her husband and most preferred choices are the cross-cousins. In conformity with these rules, girls belonging to categories of *maradalu* (MBD, FSD) and *menakodalu* (ZD) are the usual categories of acquiring a mate among the fishing communities. Death rights in the field area is after hearing the news of death, his kinsmen assemble at the departed house. The corpse is given ceremonial bath and dressed with new clothes. It is carried on a bamboo pyre (*nancham*) covered with long cloth. The funeral procession starts from the house accompanied by musical instruments. Death pollution lasts for eleven days. The '*dasudu*' perform death rites. On the third day, *chinnadinam* (initial obsequies) is observed.

The basic domestic group among Jalaris and Vadabalijas is the family.

The term *kutumbam* is invariably used for family in its wider context and is applicable to any close-knit kin group, from a household to a lineage. The household is a small, patrilineal kin group of narrow range. It always consists of a family unit i.e., agnatically related kinsmen, their wives and children. Rarely does the household include non-agnatic kinsmen such as, sister's children and wife siblings etc. The female members are usually the spouses of the male agnates of the household. On marriage, a woman is brought into her father-in-law's household and the process of extension, in normal conditions, continues after the marriage of other sons of the household. On the death of the old man, the tendency of the married brothers is for division of the household and its property. The family among Jalari and Vadabalija is characterized by patrilineal descent, patrilocal and neolocal residence and patriarchal authority. All related households constitute a lineage and these lineages are local descent groups which play vital role in common economic, political and religious activities. Each local descent group is identified with its surnames (*intiperulu*) which are exogamous. Affinal kinship is generated through exchange of marriages between different groups. Ritual presentations express the affinity between the families and descent. The fishing communities have patrilineal descent groups called *intiperulu* (surnames) which are exogamous in nature.

Fishing villages are generally administered through village headman (*kulapedda*) and caste council members (3-5 members depending on the size of the population). The *kula pedda* holds office through hereditary rights and they are vested with powers. They control the law and order among Jalari and Vadabalija communities. The caste council has jurisdiction over the inter-family relations, elopement, disputes due to marriage alliance, dowry, divorce, adultery, festivals etc. Any matter to be settled is canvassed, through the village assistant (*sammiti*).

Gods and Goddesses

The life of fishing societies is rich in ritual activities and their religious institutions are closely connected with their habitat and important features of their social organization. Fishing communities mostly worship Goddesses which are considered as the lower order of Hinduism but some households embraced Christianity later on. They mostly believe in Gangammathalli a female deity as the embodiment of sea and she is worshipped in different forms and name. Though the religious life of fishing communities is dominated by the local village and lineage deities, they propitiate occasionally Gods of the great tradition Hinduism such as Rama, Krishna, Venkateswara, Ganesh, Hanuman etc., Ammoru (The mother Goddess) are the female deities in whom the fishing communities have belief. At the community level, fishing societies have village deities who are called *Gramma Ammorlu* (*peddammorlu*) while the deities associated to a particular lineage group are generally called *Inti Ammorlu*. Each female deity is considered to be special for protection of their community

and their habitation. It is their belief that Polamma protects fishermen from fever, Nookamma protects the fishing community from small pox and Peddammavaru prevents the boats being capsized or damaged. All the fishing communities believe that these deities protect them from evils, epidemics and from natural disasters such as storms and tidal waves. Samuel (1998) study reveals that the perception of the *Mukkavas* about cholera and typhoid to be caused by spirits, ghosts and demons. Therefore, a campfire is lit in the outskirts of the village to prevent evil from entering the village. Magical rites are also performed before sunrise or sunset to ward off the effects of evil shadows on new nets.

Basing on the local descent group organization, the other female deities who belongs to the lineages of the village are propitiated and worshipped, and are closely related with their economic organization. The goddesses are categorized as village level goddesses and household level goddess. Village goddesses can become House Hold goddesses, but household goddesses can't be Village Goddess.

As the relative isolation of the fishing villages decreased, there has been influx of religious institutions into the villages influencing the world view of the fishing societies. In the last two decades temples are constructed for several major Hindu deities like Rama, Vishnu, Krishna, Venkateswara, Ganesh and Hanuma. Hindu cults like Satya Sai, Siridi Sai, Ayyappa, are gaining in followers. More are less in the same regard; several denominations of Christian churches are found in the fishing villages in the urban vicinity. The spread of Christianity is not much pronounced in rural areas but there are some followers among the fishing populations. Under the influence of the Hindu as well as Christians religious traditions the patriarchal values have been reinforced and the younger generations are much influenced. As a consequence, the relative autonomy of the fisherwomen in matters of economy and other aspects in comparison to the caste Hindu women is under revision. The women belonging to the younger generation are thoroughly being influenced and as such they are becoming willful subjects to the dominant Hindu patriarchal values.

Religious Personnel

Dasudu and Bhakthudu (or Bakthurlamma) are the two religious functionaries associated with the deities of fishing community people. Dasudu is the chief worshipper of village deity and serves the interests of the whole villagers. Bhakthudu (Bakthuralamma) is the chief worshipper of lineage deity, and serves the interests of that particular lineage group. Dasudu is a much respected and significant person in the village. Dasudu is the eldest of members of the lineage group of. The services of the Dasudu, plays a vital role in village's magico-religious life and are utilized in distress and for finding a solution for domestic troubles and difficulties. Dasudu employs a system called chupu, a

magico-religious form and content to identify the phenomena and finds the solution for the troubles. It is reported that, while in *Chupu Dasudu* goes into trance and communicates with the deities to find out the solutions for problems. He explains the situation with an intimate knowledge which is sufficient to convince the villagers in distress of the nature. All difficulties and troubles are invariably attributed to the anger of the deities. The villagers try to find out solution through *Dasudu*. His patent solution consists of a ritual sacrifice of a fowl which is an integral part of magico-religious system to appease deities. *Dasudus* are of two types – *Amma Vaari Dasudu* and *Chupu Dasudu*. *Amma vaari Dasudu* is the career of goddess (ghatalu) and makes the offerings during festivals and performs rituals for the first use of net and at the sacrifice of seshapotelu. The *Chupu Dasudu* attends the activities such as ‘*naadichudadam*’ (reading the pulse, *chupurayi* (to ascertain the causative goddess for the illness), *dandaalupettatam*, an offering for compensation at times of illness, attending to resolve family disputes and divorces, assisting the Brahmin, *chukketagadu* and *ustapodu* at the death ceremonies.

Bakthuralamma is a designated woman, who offers prayers to the goddess and takes care of the *Peddillu*. *Peddillu* is the social, economic, political and religious hub of the surname group (lineage) among the fishing communities. They keep their goddess in *peddillu* which build and maintain collectively. Any occasion in a family should start by offering prayers at the *peddillu*. When a woman is considered for the selection of *Bakthuralamma*, they call *Dasudu* on a specific day to the beach and go on fishing after the *Dasudu* spells out the name of the person under consideration. If they get good catch on that day, it is an indication that the woman is favorable to serve the goddesses. Then she is taken to Simhachalam temple accompanied by thirty members and *Dasudu* from Mutylampalem. They carry the *taalalu* (cymbals), three kolas (lamp stands) and offer prayers to the *Pydemma* goddess at *Adivivaram*. Then the *Dasudu*, *pujari* and *Bakthuralamma* take bath at the temple pond of Simhachalam. Accompanying members may sprinkle water from the pond on their heads. The group breaks a coconut at the first doorway and climb up the hill. They cook *madapalapanti* (a preparation made out of rice, pulses and vegetables) and offer it to the ancestors. Wicks are arranged on the lamp stands and lighted. One kola is given to *Bakthuralamma* and she holds the light stand with her wet clothes on. Then the *Dasudu* and other elders offer prayers to their goddess with an expectation that the goddess possess the *Bakthuralamma*. If the goddess comes on the *Bakthuralamma*, she will fall down to a side. She is lifted up by the group and they cook their lunch there, eat and return. They have to wait till the goddess possesses the *Bakthuralamma* which may take till evening. After returning to the village, *Bakthuralamma* is taken to *Dibba* (a place on the beach) and offer prayers. *Bakthuralamma* then is taken to *peddillu* and again they wait for the goddess to possess her. Thereafter *Bakthuralamma* takes up the responsibility of offering prayers to the goddess at *peddillu*. The *Jalaris* informed that this process costs

around Rs.30,000. A woman who became Bakthuralamma cannot discontinue her duties for the goddess will not allow her and pester her in case she derelicts her duties. A Bakthuralamma has to be a married woman. In case the goddess chooses women, who eloped with a man and begot children, she has to be given the status of married woman. A Brahmin priest is summoned and marriage ceremony is performed to her in order to be eligible to take up the responsibilities of Bakthuralamma.

These fishing communities believe that failure of catch has something to do with the normative behavior of the surname group. If members belonging to a peddillu experience low catches while other could get good returns, they feel that something went wrong either with the behavior of men or their women that caused the ire of their goddess. This leads to verification in the *chupurayi* by Dasudu as to which member of the family transgressed the normative behavior of the Jalari culture that resulted in the wrath of the super natural. After ascertaining the wrong doer in the family, Dasudu asks the goddess about an appropriate penalty. The punishments vary from *medalotaadukattatam* (tying a rope around the neck), *valakaraabucheyatam* (damaging the net or tying a piece of a net around the neck) and *maddili* (tying a long stick on the shoulders) and making the offender goes around the village. The offender has to confess his/her folly before the goddess at peddillu. They believe that it is the spell of the goddess that makes the fish to get caught in the net (*valaloguchchukovatam*). The goddess blurs eyes of the fish and they fall in to the net. In case the goddess is furious at them, she makes the net to flash as bulb so that the fish can escape. Then in spite of abundant fish in the sea, their children go hungry.

The members of all the peddillus celebrate festivals to goddesses annually. The specific month and day of the festivals are decided by collective opinion. The goddess will indicate the day on which the whole catch should be earmarked for the annual festival. It costs around 5 to 6 lakhs for celebrating a festival and the family contribution ranges from 10-20 thousand. On the festive day they take out the two vodalu (figurines of boats) from the peddillu and keep them on the heads of Bakthuralamma and Baktudu. Dasudu offers prayers to the goddess while the Bakthuralamma goes in to trace as being possessed by the goddess. They go round the village and reach the shrine of the goddess for whom the festival is being celebrated. They offer two rams which are called *seshapotulu* to the goddess. Before making sacrifice, the rams are given bath with water mixed with neem leaves. Then they pour water mixed with turmeric and vermillion on the heads of the rams three times. If the rams do not shrug away the water, they believe that there is something wrong in the process of worshipping the goddess. They ask for the forgiveness through Dasudu. Similar pattern is followed in selection of the Baktudu.

With regard to Christianity, in quite number of village churches of different denominations belonging to Catholic and Protestant missions like

Baptist, Church of South India and different Fellowships which are established over few decades. The churches are involved in rendering different humanitarian services besides preaching Gospel.

Curative practices

Nuckolls (1991) stated that the curative practices in fishing communities generally done by divination. Divination determines the causes of and remedies for disruptions in physical health and occupational well-being. Both the Jalari and Vadabaliya believe that spirits attack neither arbitrarily choosing their victims at random, nor directly inflicting suffering on the transgressors. Spirits select individuals who either transgressed the societal norms or young children and pregnant women that are innocent and valuable persons and therefore most vulnerable to spiritual attack. Different curative practices that enfold areas of religion and social control are employed by the Jalari and Vadabaliya.

Religion being a dominant culture character among fishing communities, attention is paid in these studies. Charles Nuckolls's (1991) study of spirits and social relations is worth debating in the context of disruptions among Jalari fishermen community. Divinations of chupuraaii (seeing stone) performed by the traditional priest dasudu, as inside activity of identifying disruption (lopalaa), while kaniki (the practitioner) from outside (bayata/pai) activity, the former being "primary" and the latter "secondary" spirit attacks among Jalari community are ultimate causes for disruptions.

Nadichudadam

When a person falls ill in the fishing community, the members of the family call *Dasudu* to examine the decease. The Dasudu picks up the patient's left hand and detect the arterial pulse (Nadi). This is called as *nadichudadam*. Dasudu invokes the attack of household spirits. When all the spirits deny the responsibility, Dasudu conclude the illness as *daktarjabbu* (Doctor's illness) and advise the patient to take him for medical treatment. If it is confirmed that, it is the spirit attack, then the Dasudu initiates the spiritual treatment. Dasudu re-invokes the goddess by taking a *mudupu* (small amount of money), which he ties into a small bundle. The family will make the offering only after all signs of illness abate, which completes in a specified period of time. The mudupu is removed and buried outside. All that remains is to wait and watch.

The divination process consists of stages. Initial divination is to identify the attack of spirits. The "initial divination" focuses on restoring the sick person to health or to restoring the fish catch to its previous abundant level. If symptoms fall down during the period in pulse diagnosis or problem diagnosis, it is concluded that the divination was correct and the cause is identified and correct remedies were given. Until the precipitating causes are evaluated, they bargain on the promised offerings to the attacking spirits. On the success,

which indicates that the Dasudu was on right path, it is inquired further into precipitating social causes.

Subsequent divination begins where initial divination ends, in search of precipitating causes. The social condition of the client's family is examined for disruptions that could have precipitated the spirits' attack. This is aimed to address these disruptions. This can be done only through the thorough argument structure, made up of inferences whose logical links to each other can be investigated and confirmed. In this subsequent divination a rigorous argumentation assumes high prominence.

Chupu Rayi

ChupuRayi and *Kaaniki* are the two forms of subsequent divination. In *ChupuRayi* (Seeing Stone), Dasudu visits the pretentious family's house and gives a stone called *Chupurayi*. Then the Dasudu starts the subsequent divination by sitting on the floor, right elbow balanced on his knee. The *Chupurayi* (seeing stone) is suspended from his right hand. Several series of questions are asked by the Dasudu addressing the spirits. The answers from the spirits are given in the form of making the stone swing back and forth swinging of the *chupurayi* means "Yes".

Kaaniki

Kaaniki is the second form of subsequent divination, in which the Dasudu along with his client visit a practitioner called as *Kaaniki*. Questions are asked by the Dasudu to the practitioner (*kaaniki*). After each question, the practitioner drops a handful of rice into a vessel which is filled with water. If the rice sinks it means 'yes'. This *kaaniki* diagnosis process is performed in public, and in the presence of honest observers.

Depending upon the cases the seeing stone and *Kaaniki* divinatory practices differ. Seeing stone (*chupurayi*) is the form of divination used to evaluate the issues which are less severe, less threatening or less difficult. *Kaaniki* is used to address the social causes that people believe that are more serious or more difficult to find remedy. The performer of the *Kaaniki* doesn't belong to fishing community, but usually a member of the washerman (*Chakali*) caste.

Pati

The process of identification and synthesis using relevant scenarios basing on the available information is called *Pati*. In *pati*, the *pati* practitioner and the client, have understanding between them to achieve the results. *Pati* contains the series of activities in which, in the first stage the client's house hold spirits are identified. Then series of activities takes place like then identification of efficient causes, identification of precipitating causes and finally prediction, solution and final synthesis.

First, the pati practitioner recites the list of relevant names by making small verbal gestures of the community pantheon for approval and identification of the household spirits. Basing on identification process, the practitioner initiates the second stage “identification of relevant causes” which represents the most possible causes of diagnosed events and instantiates two initial scenarios. In the initial scenario, “one’s own spirits (inside spirit attack)”, the failure to propitiate the household spirits which cause illness to the family members of the client’s family is traced. Next is the other scenario “outside spirit attack (other people’s spirit’s attack)” traces the cause for creating illness and problems to the client’s family by the other family’s spirit.

The pati practitioner investigates the background previous circumstances of the “inside or outside spirits attack on the client’s family in the third stage. Basing on the preceding inquiry which demonstrates whether the attacked spirit is ‘inside or outside’, the practitioner constructs a secondary scenario. If “inside” spirit is responsible, then it is assumed that the social disputes within the household are responsible and a scenario is constructed which attributes the failure to offer the household spirits resulting in the disputes within the household. Required offerings to the ‘inside’ spirits are made. If ‘outside’ spirit is responsible, then the practitioner assumes that some disputes between the households are responsible. This scenario mainly focuses on the relations between the affinally linked families. Offerings to the attacking spirit are made by the client, as soon as the attack ends. The social dispute causing the spirit to attack must be corrected. Unless it is done, and the promised offerings are made, there is a possibility that the attacking spirit may attack again. Attention is focused, on selecting strategies for social action. The selection process lasts for some time, as the practitioner proposes and the client accepts, amends, or rejects various alternatives for corrective action. Finally, the practitioner assimilates the accepted solution to the argument and represents it to the client as a solution, if it is any good, successfully incorporates all the details that the client considers relevant to the case.

The following personnel are conducting divinations in the villages:

Pathulu – Kaanikalu

1. CheekaKanthamma (OC): PeddaAmmoru (Polamma Thalli) – Pathi + Kanika- Vasavanipalem village
2. SattibabuVadamodulu – Durgamma thalli – Pathi + Kanika – Jalaripeta village
3. VadamoduluMathamma – Polamma thalli – Pathi + Kanika – Peda Jalaripeta village
4. TedduGangamma – RamanammaBakthrulamma – Pathi + Kanika - PedaJalaripeta village

5. OlisettiPedapolappa – Nookamma thalli - only Pathi - PedaJalaripeta village
6. OlisettiEllamma – Durgamma thalli – only Pathi - Jalaripeta village
7. ChintakayalaMutyalamma – Mutyalamma thalli – only Pathi – Mutylamapalem
8. SuradBangaramma – Bangaramma thalli – only Pathi - Mutylamapalem

Seeing Stone (chupuraayi)

- | | | |
|------------------------|---|----------------|
| 1. TeddiSatyya | - | PedaJalaripeta |
| 2. RomoluBuggala babu | - | PedaJalaripeta |
| 3. VadamoduluDandakoru | - | PedaJalaripeta |
| 4. VadamoduluGanganna | - | PedaJalaripeta |
| 5. RamoluSorapababu | - | PedaJalaripeta |

Conclusion

It is witnessed that there is strong association between religion, curative practices and social control among fishing populations. All the fishing communities believe that these deities protect them from evils, epidemics and from natural disasters such as storms and tidal waves. These communities exhibit an interesting phenomenon that illness is assumed not just an issue of health but associate with supernatural wrath as a consequence of wrongful act. The *Dasudu*/shaman performs different techniques to ascertain the causative supernatural in order to make propitiations for on behalf of the victim. The curative process intersects aspects of social control magico-religious practices followed by pluralistic medical practices.

References

- Agar, M.
1986. Speaking of Ethnography. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Casson, R.
1983. Schemata in Cognitive Anthropology. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 12:429-465
- Craig T Palmer.
1989. The Ritual Taboos of Fishermen: An Alternative Explanation, Phoenix College.
- Cordell, John, and Judith Fitzpatrick.
1987. Cultural Identity and the Sea in Torres Straight. *Cultural Survival*

Quarterly 11(2):15-17.

Eller, J. D.

2007. Introducing anthropology of religion: Culture to the ultimate. Routledge.

Freundlib, D.

1982. Understanding Poe: A Schema-Theoretic View. *Poetics* 11 (9):25-44.

Hoefnagel, E.

1991. Seaweed, status and the symbolic domain. *Maritime Studies* 4(2): 40-61.

Holland, D., and D. Skinner.

1987. Prestige and Intimacy: The Cultural Models behind Americans' Talk about Gender Types. Cultural Models in Language and Thought (D. Holland and N. Quinn, eds.), pp. 78-111. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hutchins, E.

1980. Culture and Inference: A Trobriand Case Study. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kodanda Rao, M.

1975. Family and Kinship among Jalaris of Coastal Andhra. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis. Visakhapatnam: Andhra University Library.

Mathur, P.R.G.

1977. Mappila Fisherfolk of Kerala. Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society Publications.

Morley, Peter.

1978. Culture and the Cognitive World of Traditional Medical Beliefs: Some Preliminary Considerations, in Peter Morley and Roy Wallis (ed.) *Culture and Curing: Anthropological Perspectives on Traditional Medical Beliefs and Practices*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Nuckolls, C.

1981. Interpretations of the Concept of Karma in a Telugu Fishing Village, *The Eastern Anthropologist*, Vol. 34, No. 2, pp. 95-107.

Nuckolls, C.

1987. Causal Thinking in Sakuntala: A Schema-Theoretic Approach to a Classical Sanskrit Drama, *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 286-305.

Nuckolls, C.

1991. The Cultural Construction of Diagnostic Categories: The Case of American Psychiatry, *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 35, No. 1, pp. 37-49.

Poggie, J. J. Jr.

1980. Maritime Anthropology: socio cultural analysis of small-scale fishermen's cooperatives introduction, *Anthropological Quarterly*, 53(1):1-3.

Schank, R., and R. Abelson.

1977. Scripts, Plans, Goals, and Understanding. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Samuel, J.

1998. The Mukkuvar: A Fishing Community. In: *Lifestyle and Ecology*. New Delhi, Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts.

Thurston, E.

1909. AES Reprint 2001. Castes and tribes of southern India. Vol. 7, T-Z: 80. New Delhi & Chennai, Asian Educational Services.

RECEIVED: 26TH MAR 2023

REVISED: 10TH NOV 2024

ACCEPTED: 15TH JAN 2024



This document was created with the Win2PDF "print to PDF" printer available at <http://www.win2pdf.com>

This version of Win2PDF 10 is for evaluation and non-commercial use only.

This page will not be added after purchasing Win2PDF.

<http://www.win2pdf.com/purchase/>