

# A STUDY ON SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION OF ARAKHAKUDA, AN ETHNIC COASTAL VILLAGE NEAR CHILIKA LAKE

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## **ABSTRACT:**

*The migrating fishermen from coastal Andhra Pradesh who had sea fishing tradition over one thousand years, settled near the Chilika Lake mouth since about 200 years on a sand dune near the Orissa coast. This village has undergone drastic Socio-cultural changes over last few years. The proposed study is based on the circumstances under which such social transformations have taken place. From the results obtained after the detailed investigations carried out in the field, it is revealed that there is a drastic social transformation, which has taken place during last fifty years. This relates mainly to the changes in their day to day habits, their family nomenclature, their communication skill, their educational patterns, their religious habits and other socio-cultural dimensions . The important issues involved in such a transformation could be most reasonably attributed to the very fact that those people migrated from a complete different environment as existed in Andhra Pradesh , to a new place , where the entire ecological situation is different, from their original habitat Though they migrated to Arakhkuda area for their sea fishing activity, yet slowly the situation changed because of the strategic geographical location<sup>(fig.-1)</sup> and having both sea fishing and lake fishing opportunities. That urged the people to adopt to the new environment , which gradually transformed their socio-cultural dimension.*

## **INTRODUCTION:**

The fishermen of Arakhakuda migrated from coastal Andhra Pradesh and settled near the mouth of Chilika<sup>1-3</sup> Lake about 200 years ago. The settlement place is one of the sand dunes called Arakhakuda \*. At present this place is developed into a large village inhabited by about 5000 inhabitants. It will be pertinent to discuss the different aspects of their original culture and various developments, which had undergone, during the last few years.

## **ORIGIN OF THE FISHERMEN GROUP:**

The fishermen staying in Arakhakuda are originally Telugu speaking fishermen who lived in coastal Andhra Pradesh. According to Sangam Literature, this fishing tradition goes back to one thousand years<sup>4-5</sup>. According to the villagers they are called as "Nolia" in Orissa due to their traditional wearing of golden rings in their ear. These Nolia groups are of two types. One is Jalary and others are orderloo. Jalaries are exclusively fishing groups who fish in the sea with nets and boats where as Orderloos are the groups who

work as laborers in the ships and help in loading and unloading. It is reported by the villagers that Orderloos are higher caste than Jalaries.

The original date of the migration of the villagers is not exactly known; but the earliest reference <sup>5</sup> about the migration is mentioned by L,S,S, 'O' Malley. He mentioned that "the fisherfolk of this location, however have their origin not only in the Kaibarta and Kandara castes but also in the Telugu fisherfolk, who had been invited in the second half of 18<sup>th</sup> Century by the ruler of Machhagaon, Basudev Mangaraj to settle at the mouth of the river Devi to serve him as Pirates".

Another reference is of W.W. Hunter in his book "Orissa"<sup>6</sup>. He had mentioned that "Along the shore are little fishing communities, who get a livelihood by means of trawl-nets, one end being pulled along by a man on the shore and the other end by a comrade up to his waist on the surf. But the fish caught in this way are miserably small. A more profitable trade is dragging with the great net at sea. Two large boats go out a couple of miles, and trawl towards the beach with very strong nets about twenty feet deep.

1-W.W.Hunter, Orissa , Vol-II, London, 1872, P-20.

2-S. Sterling, an account (Geographical, Statistical and Historical) of Orissa proper or Cuttack,Calcutta , 1822, P-16.

3-W.C. Taylor, Survey & Settlement of Khurda estate, Bengal Secretariat press, Calcutta –1877, P-119

\* The other sand dunes which separates the Chilka lake from the Bay of Bengal are Sipakuda and Barunakuda etc.

4-U. Tieze , Artisonal marine Fisher folk of Orissa , Bidyapuri , Balu Bazaar, Cuttack –1985, P-5

5-L,S,S, 'O' Malley, Bengal Dist, Gazetteers, Puri, Bengal Secretariat Press,1908, PP-84,85

6-W.W. Hunter, "Orissa", Vol-II. 1872, P-31.

The fishing communities, and especially the hamlets of boatmen, are Telinga settlements from Madras coast. They speak a different language, observe different customs and worship different gods from those of the agricultural population and here I may notice, as I shall not again have to recur to the subject, that the boating villages along the whole coast up to the Devi river, and even above it, consist of similar Telinga colonies from the south. They are indistinct remnants of the aboriginal races; and although their separate origin is forgotten they are excluded from the Hindu common wealth. They discharge a thousand customs and scruples religiously observed by the Hindus. There is a little village of them on the sands of Puri, which although situated within the holy precincts, is denied at entrance into the great national temple of Jagannath"

L,S,S, 'O' Malley<sup>7</sup> also mentioned about the name of the village as Arakuda. He wrote that "The Nuliyas are a caste of fishermen and boatman who have migrated to Puri

from Madras. There are two subcastes called Jaliya and Khalasi. The farmer are fishermen, and the latter work in sea-going vessels; some dig earth, pull pankhas and carry loads. The rule among them, as among the kumuties is that a man should, if possible, marry his first cousin. A widow may marry again, and it is thought proper for her to espouse her first husband's younger brother. The sons inherit, but if there are no sons, the property is taken by the community. They profess to be followers of Ramanuja, and worship Baruna, the hindu Neptune, with offerings of flowers and sweetmeats before lunching a boat or casting a net. They are found in Puri, Nuagaon, **Arakuda**, Manikpatna, Khirisahi, Sahadi & Ramlenka”.

The village name Arakhakuda has also been found in the directory of 1886<sup>8</sup>.

According to the statement of an old villager at first sixteen boatmen arrived at this place and finding the environment friendly for fishing, they tried to settle down in a sand dune. Slowly other groups arrived and joined the previous groups and a village was formed.

7-L.S.S. 'O' Malley, Bihar and Orissa District Gazetteers, Patna, Govt. Press, 1929, P-92.

8-Village directory , presidency of Bengal, Vol.XL,Pooree, Bengal Secretariat Press,1868, PP-26

## **PRESENT STATUS**

At present new fishermen groups are not entering the place and the people who have already settled there have got their permanent **Pattas** or permanent ownership of the house. The present demographic study(Table-1) indicates that about 3957 persons are living in 531 families.

Previous studies<sup>9</sup> undertaken during 1996 and the studies made during 2003-04, indicated that a lot of cultural differences have taken place during last few years. This village has been divided into three sectors or zones namely Managalsahi, Majhisahi and Jenapur. Each Sahi has its own **Bhagabatghar** and temples, where Oriya Bhagabat is being read every evening. The village head is called **Sabhapati** who decides the fishing holidays and settles different controversies that occur in the village. Besides that the villagers elect a **Sarapanch** , who is the head of the Panchayat .

The present study is based on cultural transformation of the village which includes slow changes of culture and traditions and also their living styles, their social habits, festivals, rituals and customs and traditions and adoption of different traditions of the migrating place. In the following paragraphs different aspects of culture which has been influenced by the interaction with the local culture and has undergone a drastic change has been discussed . This can be summarized into: -

1. Migrating Place.
2. Language
3. Educational Pattern

4. Fishing in the lake as a Source of Livelihood.
5. Change of fishing technology.
6. Political Involvement
7. Caste as a Symbol of Occupation
8. Influence of Local Festivals and Rituals

All these points have been discussed in the following paragraphs which will indicate their cultural transformation from a Telugu subgroup into a Oriya fishermen sub-caste.

9- S. Mohanty & S. Acharya, Socio Economic study of peripheral villages of Chilika lake, Anthropology Department, Utkal University, 1998, P-9

**1. MIGRATING PLACE:** - The place Arakhakuda situated 45 kms from Puri and only connected by road and waterways through Chilika Lake channel. The old mouth which is situated in front of Motto village is 5 kms ahead towards the sea from this village. Now this mouth is choked and a new mouth has been cut by the government near Shipakuda village which is 5 kms back towards the Chilika lake from this village .The village is situated in a fairly interior site and till today road adjacent to Jadupur on Puri-Satapada road is in a very bad condition . A new person who want to enter the village can only walk down 7 kms to reach the village . The near by villages are inhabited by Oriyas, with whom the village women interact everyday. The migrating place i.e. Arakhakuda is surrounded by the people of different cultures i.e. Oriyas, Who has an influence on the villagers in different ways like social , political , cultural and conflicting interest

**2. LANGUAGE:** The original language of the Nolias is Telugu which is far different from that of the Oriya language. The fishermen everyday come in contact with the Oriya fish dealers who take fishes from them and give them money. Women also involved in fish and dry fish selling. They take a fish or dry fish baskets over their head and they go to different villages for selling everyday. Some of them became familiar with the Oriya villagers by visiting several times to the same village which influenced them to understand their language, customs and traditions. Now almost all the people understand and speak Oriya. Only very old people speak Telugu among themselves. It is interesting to note that at present 90% children under 12 years don't know Telugu.

**3. EDUCATIONAL PATTERN:-** There is only one upper primary school where education is imparted in Oriya medium . The students who got admission, learn about Orissa, its customs , traditions, history and culture. The teachers who teach them are Oriya teachers.

The formal education of the village has been given in the table No-2

which indicates that around 11.46 percent of the total population are literate out of Which the No. of higher educated persons are very less . The number of dropouts are higher because most of the children help their parents to go for fishing activity to earn their day to day livelihood.

**4. Fishing IN THE LAKE as a source of livelihood :-**Artisonal Fishing as an occupation needs day-to-day interaction with the consumers. Fish , being a perishable materials and there is no cold storage available near by the fishermen, everyday sale their catch, to the fish dealer, who sale that either in the local market or takes the fish to godown . These fish dealers use their local terms and local language (Oriya) in marketing and weighing. The number of villagers actively taking part in fishing has been given in table No-6. The table shows that more number of fishermen are adopting lake channel fishery than sea fishing which was their traditional occupation. Less number of fishermen are fishing with Kattumarams in the sea which is more dangerous. Adoption of new fishing methods i.e. lake fishing in which use of fishing equipments which are used by the local fishermen and using the names of equipments as local fishermen use, is a significant change. As has been discussed earlier about the occupation of women, which includes fish marketing. Therefore fishing activity as a source of livelihood, has a lot of influence in the cultural transformation.

#### **5. CHANGE OF FISHING TECHNOLOGY :**

It has also been observed that there is a drastic change observed among the migratory fisherman in using fishing methods for catching fish. Originally the fisher folk were using wooden **Cattumarams** \* for deep sea fishing. Due to ecological changes and change in geographical location of the Chilika in-let people of Arakhakuda started fishing in the lake channel and also in the lake with small wooden boats having nylon lets with modern brand names like 'Disco and Super net' etc. They started using mortar driven boats and used different mesh size nets and also fibre sea going boats. These new technique help them to catch more amount of fish in less time without much risk of sea hazards. This also increase their daily income which in term increase their socio-economic and socio-cultural conditions.

\* Cattumarams : One kind of typical wooden boat having 3 to 4 pieces of light wooden logs tied together with bamboo pegs and ropes, which can easily float in troubled sea water without sinking.

#### **6. POLITICAL INVLOVEMENT :**

The political environment has great effect on their socio-cultural activities. There is an involvement of village people in electing leaders from lower Panchayat sectors to higher levels like M.P. and M.L.As. From a study it is indicated that more number of young people are becoming politically conscious and are involved in local politic. The local Sarpanch is a woman from scheduled tribes. Beside Sarpanch there is another caste head in the village called **Sabhapati** who decides all the fishing holidays and use of certain types of fishing nets etc. The present Sabhapati influences the villagers and put pressure on them to change their attitude of worshiping numerous gods and goddess which is a Telugu tradition. Some of the villagers follow him where as some continue to perform **Puja** in the small shrines made up bricks behind their house. The **Sabhapati** became furious and smashed all the small shrines erected for numerous gods and goddess. Only one temple, is now there, the temple of **Masani Chandī**, who is a goddess of Orissa. The name of the other goddess is Amma varimma, sammalama etc. of the telugu tradition.

Now most of the villagers don't perform the Puja in small shrines . This is a pure political influence on the villagers which play a significant role in cultural transformation .

### **7. CASTE AS A SYMBOL OF OCCUPATION :-**

The villagers of Arakhakuda before fifty years had not changed their names and surnames. In Orissa caste is a symbol of occupation. For example *Bhoi* surname is usually a symbol of lower caste and the surname *Sahoo* is the symbol of Businessman caste. In Andhra Pradesh a person is not known by his surname but by the name of his village or street or region. The fishermen group after staying for a longtime changed their surnames to Behera caste which is an Oriya fishermen sub caste (Table No-3). In Table No-4 the occupational status of the village has been given. Now most of the fishermen when asked why they changed their surnames they said that they are happy with this titles. The names, which are given by the parents before fifty years, are names of Telugu origin where as now most of the names are of Oriya traditions.

### **8. INFLUENCE OF THE LOCAL FESTIVALS:-**

The local or Oriya festivals like *Rathayatra* , *Raja* , *Kumar purnima* , *Dola Jatra* , *Mana Basa* are now observed by the villagers. *Makar Sanranti* is their main festival. With that the villagers observe the above festivals influenced by the local people. Some typical Oriya traditional songs like *Pala* , *daskathia* are appreciated by the villagers. The villagers also appreciate the Oriya theater, operas. These are clear indications of socio-cultural changes, which occurred during last 50 years from original traditions of people of Andhra Pradesh to Oriya culture and tradition.

### **CONCLUSION:**

From the above studies it could be concluded that significant socio cultural transformation has taken place amongst the fishermen groups who migrated from Andhra Pradesh and settled down near Chilika lake mouth in Orissa Cost. The important forms of Transformation could be stated as follows :-

- Their language changed from Telugu to Oriya medium, which change their communication medium.
- The day to day life style like food, habits, dress and even wearing apparels like wearing golden ornaments such as using golden rings by men, changed to that of traditional wearing used by oriya people
- ‘- Their education pattern has changed from Telugu to Oriya medium.
- Their observations of various festivals and rituals now are like those of Oriya fisher folk and not like that of Telugu fisher folk as discussed above.
- Their income generation activities now are not only sea fishing but also traditional lake fisheries, which has greatly influence their socio-economic and socio-cultural dimensions.

**TABLES****TABLE-1****PAPULATION OF VILLAGE ARAKHAKUDA**

AGE-GROUP	NO OF MALE	NO. OF FEMALE	TOTAL	%
0-5	267	301	568	19.21
6-10	240	238	478	16.16
11-15	140	153	293	9.91
16-20	149	179	328	11.09
21-25	143	164	307	10.38
26-30	138	113	261	8.48
31-35	121	74	195	6.59
36-40	76	68	144	4.87
41-45	47	38	85	2.87
46-50	48	48	96	3.25
51-55	25	21	46	1.56
56-60	31	30	61	2.06
60 and above	62	43	105	3.55
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1487</b>	<b>1470</b>	<b>2967</b>	

**TABLE-II  
EDUCATION**

EDU STATUS	MALE	%	FEMALE	%	TOTAL	%
Illiterate	1241	83.46	1377	93.67	2618	88.54
Literate	20	1.34	9	0.61	29	0.98
Lower Primary	150	10.09	65	4.42	215	7.27
Upper Primary	40	2.69	13	0.88	53	1.79
High school	29	1.95	6	0.41	35	1.18
Intermediate	3	0.20	0	0	3	0.10
Graduate	4	0.20	0	0	4	0.13
<b>Total</b>	<b>1487</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1470</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2957</b>	<b>100</b>

**TABLE – III**  
**ACTIVE FISHERMEN**

BOTH IN LAKE CHANNEL AND SEA WITH BOAT AND CATAMARAMS	26	50	126	33	93	176
IN THE LAKE CHANNEL WITH MECHANISED BOATS	25	50	113	30	83	163
IN THE SEA WITH CATAMARANS	8	14	30	9	21	44
IN THE LAKE CHANNEL WITH NON- MECHANISED BOATS.	218	416	826	221	605	1242
WITHOUT ANY BOAT ON THE LAKE AND THE SEA	197	350	560	185	375	910
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>474</b>	<b>880</b>	<b>1655</b>	<b>478</b>	<b>1177</b>	<b>2535</b>

**TABLE – IV**  
**CASTE PROFILE**

<u>DIFFERENT CASTE</u>	<u>NO. OF FAMILIES</u>
BEHERA(FISHERMEN)	487
BISOI(FISHERMEN)	10
BARIK(FISHERMEN)	2
DATTA (FISHERMEN)	4
ACHARI(GOLD SMITH)	1
PANDA & DASA(BRAHMIN)	4
NAYAK(SC)	15
MAHAKUDA( GAUDA)	1
BARALA, GHADAI & DASA(GUDIA)	4
SETHI(SC)	1
MAHAMMAD(MUSLIM)	2
<b>TOTAL FAMILIES</b>	<b>531</b>



**TABLE-V**  
**OCCUPATIONAL STATUS**

NATURE OF OCCUPATION	NO.OF FAMILIES	PERCENTAGE
FISHING	474	89.27
BASKET MAKING	15	2.82
PRAWN SEEDLINGS BUSINESS	10	1.88
PRAWN SELLING	2	0.38
GROSSERY SHOP	5	0.94
CLOTH STORE	2	0.38
FISH WEIGHING	1	0.19
OFFICIAL SERVICE S	3	0.56
DRY FISH MAKING & SELLING	6	1.13
CONTROL COMMODITIES DEALER	1	0.19
SMALL FISH & CRAB SELLING	4	0.75
MILK BUSINESS/ CLOTH WASHING/ ORNAMENT MAKING	3	0.56
PRIEST(BRAHMIN)	3	0.56
BOAT REPAIRING	1	0.19
BEGGING	1	0.19
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>531</b>	

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