

An Overview on Behaviors of Fishing, Fish Consumption and Preservation Techniques of Indigenous Community in Sri Lanka. With Special Reference to ‘Dambana’ Indigenous Community

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Indigenous communities can be identified as culturally distinct ethnic groups who are native to a particular place. The Veddas, the indigenous community of Sri Lanka are numerically small people verging on extinction (0.20%). Dambana, the most renowned original settlement of the Veddas in Sri Lanka has been arguably considered as the hub of Veddas over the past half a century. Food consumption patterns of the Veddas had been greatly altered during the recent past with the dynamic process of modernization and also with changing nature of lifestyle. An adequate and updated attention has not been paid by the existing literature on the consumption of fish along with the processing techniques of the indigenous community of Sri Lanka. Hence, this study examines the level of fish consumption and preservation methods practiced by the indigenous community in Dambana region in Sri Lanka. A structured questionnaire based interviews with the indigenous people were conducted along with Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and a desk review to collect the required data while a descriptive analysis employed to accomplish the objectives of the study. The study observed that a higher preference on fishing (85%) compared to hunting. Previously, the indigenous community used the pots made by crushing the wild herbs, spikes made of iron and wood for fishing. Currently, several fishing gears (net gear and spears) are being adopted to increase the quantity of catching which is required for their growing consumption. Moreover, the results indicate that their fish consumption has increased approximately by 95%. Furthermore 65% of them consume fish mostly at once/twice a week. Moreover, the study examined that traditional techniques used for cooking, processing and preservation of fish (specific woods such as *Cassia fistula* and *Manilkara hexamer*) have been gradually altered and being used modern technology such as refrigerators. Additionally, preference on different fish species in the market has been enhanced (20%). Under this scenario, the study emphasizes the need of protecting traditional fishing and preservation method while facilitating in order to increase the level of fish consumption of the indigenous community through appropriate strategies.

Keywords: Fishing; Fish Consumption; Indigenous community; Preservation Methods; Veddas