Andhra Pradesh

The coastal area has been classified into north, central and southern zones based on the geographical, physical and environmental features. Each of the zones is also represented by one major fishing caste. The major fishing case of Andhra Pradesh include the Vadabalija, Jalari’s, Pattappu, Palles.

The **northern zone** is characterised by open surf-beaten coasts, extending from Donkuru on the Orissa border to Uppada, is dominated by fishers of the Vadabalija (Vādabalija) caste, interspersed with a smaller caste group called Jalari (Jālari); The Vada balijas are present all over the zone and also have a strong presence in Orissa. It is a hard core marine fishing community like the Pattappu and unlike the Palles who have one foot in the riverine and brackish water sector. Negligible numbers of other castes are also engaged in marine fishing in the north. At the basic level, the members of the Vadabalija fishing community constitute the general body of the Panchayat. The leaders are called Peddalu (elders; singular: Pedda) and these elders play an active role in the social sphere of activities. The members themselves are called simply ‘sabhyulu’ (members). The powers of the elder are derived from their role as the custodians of the Kula Kattadi, or the Caste Code. This is an unwritten code of conduct for all community members, which is interpreted by the elders in dealing with the day-to-day issues of community life (Salagrama, 2003). A significant minority in the north zone is the Jalari community which is backward on most socio-economic indicators but is a much more skilled and adventurous group with respect to marine fishing.

The shallow **central zone** is influenced by the large inflows of waters from the Rivers Godavari and Krishna, extending from Uppada to Nizampatnam. The delta zone is the exclusive preserve of the Palle fishermen who prefer to be called agnikula kshatriya. The exception to the Palle occupation of the coast comes in the small transition zone in the northern end from Kakinada Town to Uppada where the Vada balijas reign supreme. The agnikula kshatriya fishermen are involved in both riverine and sea fishing with the sea going proportion varying from village to village based on many factors like distance from the sea, availability of agricultural incomes and skill. A good number are involved in both marine and riverine fishing, shifting from one to the other seasonally. In a study carried out in Boddu Chinna Venkataya Palem (BCV Palem), Salagrama (2003) notes that members of the Palle community refer to their Panchayat leaders as Pethandarlu (managers; singular: Pethandaru) or Peda Kapulu (caretakers; singular: Peda Kapu). They have an important economic function, managing the access and use rights to fishing. The members themselves are called ‘Paallu’ (meaning, shares; singular: Paadu), once again demonstrating the economic roots of organisation of the later system. The Palle here are also known to form smaller groups made of people with similar fishing orientation, in order to better manage and organize access and user rights to fishing grounds.

The **southern zone**, extending from Nizāmpatnam to Tamil Nadu border, comprises of the districts of Nellore, Prakasam and part of Guntur district. It is characterised by open surf-beaten coasts, and by fishers of Pattapu caste group, who are closely related to the
Pattinavar fishers from the neighbouring stat of Tamil Nādu. While the Pattappu fishermen have the exclusive use of the coast in most of Nellore, from the Kavali mandal of Nellore and throughout Prakasam district, they co-exist (albeit in separate hamlets) with the Palle fishermen who have adopted many features of the Pattappu community including their fishing technology.

For further reading:

Salagrama, V. YEAR. Traditional community-based management systems (tcbms) in two fishing villages in East Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh, India. Case Study for World Bank/SIFAR-funded project, "Study of Good Management Practice in Sustainable Fisheries". Submitted to IDDRA Ltd. U.K.