



Searching the fading shores

“There was a time when *nalilu* (mole crabs *Emerita asiatica*) were everywhere, scattered across the shore, slipping between waves. Children chased them with delight, their hands scooping them up. Fisherfolk used them for bait, and families cooked them into meals—they were abundant.

“But now, the *nalilu* are gone. The shoreline has shifted, the sea has changed, and with it, they are difficult to find. Very few of them dart between the waves. The loss is not just of *nalilu*, but of familiarity, of a way of life slipping away like the tide. Still, we search. Even if it takes longer, even if we find fewer.”

– Lokanatha, a young fisher, and Ganesh, a young coastal dweller

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Scorched in the heat



“During the summer months, it is not easy to be on the beach. Drying fish is not for a single person. We usually take turns with the buying, processing, and vending. We also take turns to rest. When one of us is sick, the profits are still shared with them. We don’t usually leave any women from the group – we share everything: profits, burdens, and work.”

– *Mangamma, an old dry-fish processor*

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To contain her fury



“Once, the Neelamma temple stood at a safe distance from the shore, a sacred space where the fishers gathered and prayed before they ventured into the sea. Their prayers are carried by the wind, their faith as deep as the ocean itself. We believe Neelamma contains anger, and her presence is a shield held against the fury of the sea.

“But the sea, restless and relentless in her mood, slowly swallowed the temple many years ago. The land beneath our prayers disappeared, as it did with the erosion. Our people refused to let their goddess be lost to the waves. We rebuilt her shrine—this time, standing at the edge of the waters, face-to-face with the ocean’s mood. Now Neelamma does not retreat. She stands guard, watching, listening with the fishers—calming the sea whenever it rises in anger.”

– **Ramudu, an elderly fisherman**

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I wish to see the sea every day



“We used to see the sea when we woke up, when we used to live in old Podampeta. Ever since the place was consumed by the sea, we have had to move. We do not see the sea in the morning, and I think of those days when we woke up to her.

“Even the fishermen, irrespective of whether they go fishing or not, want to go and see the ocean. There might be days when the catch is bad or good, but they go. Things have changed; there is no place to play. I keep worrying about not being able to see the sea. There is a belief that as long as we see the sea, nothing will happen to us.”

– Hadi, a resident of Ganjam

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In the dunes



“The dunes were more than a playground in our childhood. They protected us from big cyclones and the eroding shores. We are alive today because some of them stood in the way of these changes. They held back the sea, slowed the erosion, and protected the land we call home. But now, look around—there is nothing left. The children still come to play, but the ground beneath them has changed. We ask for walls to be built and casuarina trees to be replanted to weather the storms.”

– Nachimi, a coastal dweller

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