INTRODUCTION
The people were aware of the two major coastal processes that led to the accretion of sand along the shore—the ferocious waves that kept on lashing the beaches. These sea tribes led a simple life in small hutments drawing very little from the environment for food and shelter like their counterparts of hills and forests. Akanaanuuru and Natrinai bring to the fore the carefree lifestyle of the sea tribes. Like farmers do in times of harvest, fisherfolk fill the vessel of all those who approach for alms and then he goes to the lies down there peacefully with little worries over the next day. The shark hunters, overjoyed by the grand catch of striped shark the previous day, refrain from fishing the day after. Mathurakaanachchi speaks of Korkai Barathavar who were engaged in pearl diving and chank diving ventures.

Coromandel Coast
Coromandel had no well defined limits and often was held to extend as far as Krishna river or even to the coast of Orissa. Barbosa defines the limit from Point Calimere to Krishna delta. Some modern writers follow this. Nachinarkkiniyar in his commentary on Tholkappiam, a classical Tamil epic, mentions the limit of east coast as Verkadu (Pulicat). Arasaratnam bifurcates the area north of Pennar as Northern Coromandel and south up to Point Calimere as Southern Coromandel. A modern Research Scholar bounds the Southern Coromandel from Cape Comorine to Madras. Arasaratnam names the coastal territories from Point Calimere, to Tuticorin as Madura Coast and beyond south of it as Fishery Coast. To Burtan Stein, the Coromandel Coast corresponds more or less with the territory of the Imperial Cholas from Point Calimere to Krishna deltaic region.

The coast, a narrow transitional ribbon that occurs where a continental land mass meets a tidal sea, is among the most productive zones of the world. The coastal zone is a buffer to the accretion of sand along the shore—the ferocious waves that kept on lashing the beaches. These three tribes led a simple life in small hutments drawing very little from the environment for food and shelter like their counterparts of hills and forests. They let nothing come between their happiness and daily chores. Natrinai bring to the fore the carefree lifestyle of the sea tribes. Akanaanuuru speaks of Korkai Barathavar who were engaged in pearl diving and chank diving ventures.

Coromandel Coast
Coromandel had no well defined limits and often was held to extend as far as Krishna river or even to the coast of Orissa. Barbosa defines the limit from Point Calimere to Krishna delta. Some modern writers follow this. Nachinarkkiniyar in his commentary on Tholkappiam, a classical Tamil epic, mentions the limit of east coast as Verkadu (Pulicat). Arasaratnam bifurcates the area north of Pennar as Northern Coromandel and south up to Point Calimere as Southern Coromandel. A modern Research Scholar bounds the Southern Coromandel from Cape Comorine to Madras. Arasaratnam names the coastal territories from Point Calimere, to Tuticorin as Madura Coast and beyond south of it as Fishery Coast. To Burtan Stein, the Coromandel Coast corresponds more or less with the territory of the Imperial Cholas from Point Calimere to Krishna deltaic region.

The coast, a narrow transitional ribbon that occurs where a continental land mass meets a tidal sea, is among the most productive zones of the world. The coastal zone is a buffer to the accretion of sand along the shore—the ferocious waves that kept on lashing the beaches. These three tribes led a simple life in small hutments drawing very little from the environment for food and shelter like their counterparts of hills and forests. They let nothing come between their happiness and daily chores. Natrinai bring to the fore the carefree lifestyle of the sea tribes. Akanaanuuru speaks of Korkai Barathavar who were engaged in pearl diving and chank diving ventures.

The fisherfolks of the ancient period heavily relied upon the coastal water bodies rather than on the sea for sustenance. Significant among these are the estuaries. Going by the classical definition of Donald Pritchard, the estuary is a semi-enclosed coastal body of water which has free connection with the open sea and is strongly affected by tides that mix sea water. The estuary is an ecotope—a transition zone between marine and fresh water habitat. It forms the junction zone or tension belt with considerable linear extent, yet narrower that the adjoining community areas themselves. The estuaries are endowed with rich biodiversity which fall into three categories—residents, transients and migrants.

The sea coast of the Tamil country was dotted with fisherfolks’ settlements, small or hamlets called paakkam or seaside towns called pattinam. These settlements were not evenly distributed but selectively placed close to freshwater bodies confluent with the sea. The brackish water bodies that lay connected to the nearshore waters formed the habitats of many a killer shark. Along the littoral regions of these waters were seen the Neithal plant that cast an expanse of its flowers—enthralling like the blue gem stones. Pollens from the flowers of Pandalis and Calophyllum kept falling on these flowers covering their petals like a carpet.

The chest-high-huts of fisher folks were so small and as simple as a cow hide placed over a spear would appear. The hutments faced the coastal water bodies rather than the sea. These prismate water bodies were sandwiched with lush green vegetations called Sholas. They made their roofs either with dry grasses or dry palm leaves that kept falling from nearby trees occasionally.

A poet stands aversestruck at the high heaps of sand along the shore. Most of these sand dunes have grown to the extent of almost covering the top of tall palmyrahs. These high heaps of sand gathered by winds are detailed in Kurunthokai. The people were aware of the two major coastal processes that led to the accretion of sand along the shore—the ferocious waves that kept on lashing the beaches. One could see along the South West Coast and the undeterred wind as occurs along the east coast of Tamil Nadu. What the streams were to the hilly terrains, the sand dunes were to the coast.

These sea tribes led a simple life in small hutments drawing very little from the environment for food and shelter like their counterparts of hills and forests. This was due to the simple reason that they could finely fit themselves into nature. Akanaanuuru and Natrinai bring to the fore the carefree lifestyle of the sea tribes. They let nothing come between their happiness and daily chores.

The sea tribe’s life was guided by contentment and not by insatiable desire, a mark of modern living. Though their hutments were very small and humble, any visitor who happened to spend a day with them in their huts will forget their own houses for good.

Fishers of the Sangam period celebrated egalitarianism. Social equity celebrated by the fisher folks is a feature common to hunter-gatherer community. In a fisher family, both parents were
labouring in order to raise the income. While the father had gone to the sea for shark hunting shortly after recovery from injury on previous expedition, the mother had set out for salt trade.

Sea watching is part of the Barathavar’s traditional avocation. It is by such keen observation that a traditional fisherfolk decides upon the appropriate season time of the day to venture into the sea. And seldom do their predictions fail.

The fisher boys who remained the poet of the jungle boys mounting on tall woods in order to keep watch and block the herds of deers. Line fishing was common in shark hunting. Shark axes well fastened to mature bamboo poles were employed in the hunting of horned shark. Sometimes the fishers used axes with ropes tied to one end. Akanaanuru picturises an unparalleled and first hand experience of the deep sea shark hunting expedition.

Conclusion
The mighty shark got trapped by the piercing axe of the bold Barathavar, bleeds profusely, turning the meat smelling sea, red. Unable to bear the agonizing pain, the beast agitates vigorously, darts listlessly to no avail and jumps high on the sky like the arc of the rainbow and dropped by the side of the fishing boats, thoroughly exhausted. Such true-to-life experience of deep sea fishing is hard to come by anywhere since the Sangam Literature except for the recent exposition by Joe D Cruz in his fiction work Aazhi Soozh Ulagu.

References
7. Encyclopaedia of the Social Science XII and XIV combined, p. 658.