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Book unravels several mysteries of the sea



• [Sarath Babu George](#)

: The book 'Kadalarivukalum Neranubhavalum', authored by marine researcher Robert Panipillai, can be regarded a treasure trove of information on the fishing community and the vast traditional knowledge they possess.

Many mysteries of the Thiruvananthapuram coast are unravelled in the 155-page book through extensive research that was undertaken by the author over a period of around 15 years. Particularly engaging is the chapter that has findings on the Dutch ship that sank off the Varkala coast in 1754.

A team led by Mr. Panipillai, which included two divers, conducted the expedition from Anchuthengu (or Anjengo) earlier this year to find the wreckage of the ship, nearly 9.7 km northwest of Anchuthengu at a depth of 43 metres.

The ship was later identified as 'Wimmemum' (named after a place in Holland) of the Dutch East India Company, as per information obtained by the researcher through archived documents in the Netherlands. The ship had been built in the Amsterdam wharf in 1752. It sank after being attacked by 'Angrians', believed to have been a group of pirates, in the Malabar coast, as per the Dutch archives. The ship had a crew of 356 members.

Visuals that were obtained by Mr. Panipillai during the expedition found the wreck to be home to a large number of varieties of marine species. It had a length of around 8 metres, while the archived documents showed that the ship had a length of 42.25 metres and weighed 1,150 tonnes.

The book also traces the link that ship had with the 'Dutch Bell', made of brass, at the Janardhana Swamy Temple in Varkala.

The bell, which has been found to have been made from Wimmemum, has the inscriptions of Michael Everhard, who was a soldier aboard the 'Wimmemum' ship, and of Pieter van Belson, a person who hailed from Middelburg in the Netherlands and had manufactured the bell.

"Several facts that have been obtained for the preparation of the book were from local fishermen. It was a matter of shame that the traditional knowledge of the community remained largely ignored by scientists and others in positions of authority. I hope the book serves to ensure that the authorities regard fishermen in an entirely new light and appreciate the vast knowledge they possessed regarding marine life," Mr. Panipillai told *The Hindu*.

The book, which has been published by Current Books, was jointly released by Thomas, a fishermen, and Thiruvananthapuram Archbishop M. Soosa Pakiam, here on Saturday. Among the other attractive features of the book are the images of marine species and also those that reflect upon the lives of fishermen.

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