

**SOCIO ECONOMIC
AND POLITICAL STATUS
OF FISHERWOMEN COMMUNITY
OF WEST BENGAL :**
A Study of Purba Midnapore and
South 24 Parganas District

Final Minor Research Project Report
Submitted to
University Grants Commission

Principal Investigator

SHILPA NANDY

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71/2A, Bidhan Sarani, Kolkata – 700006



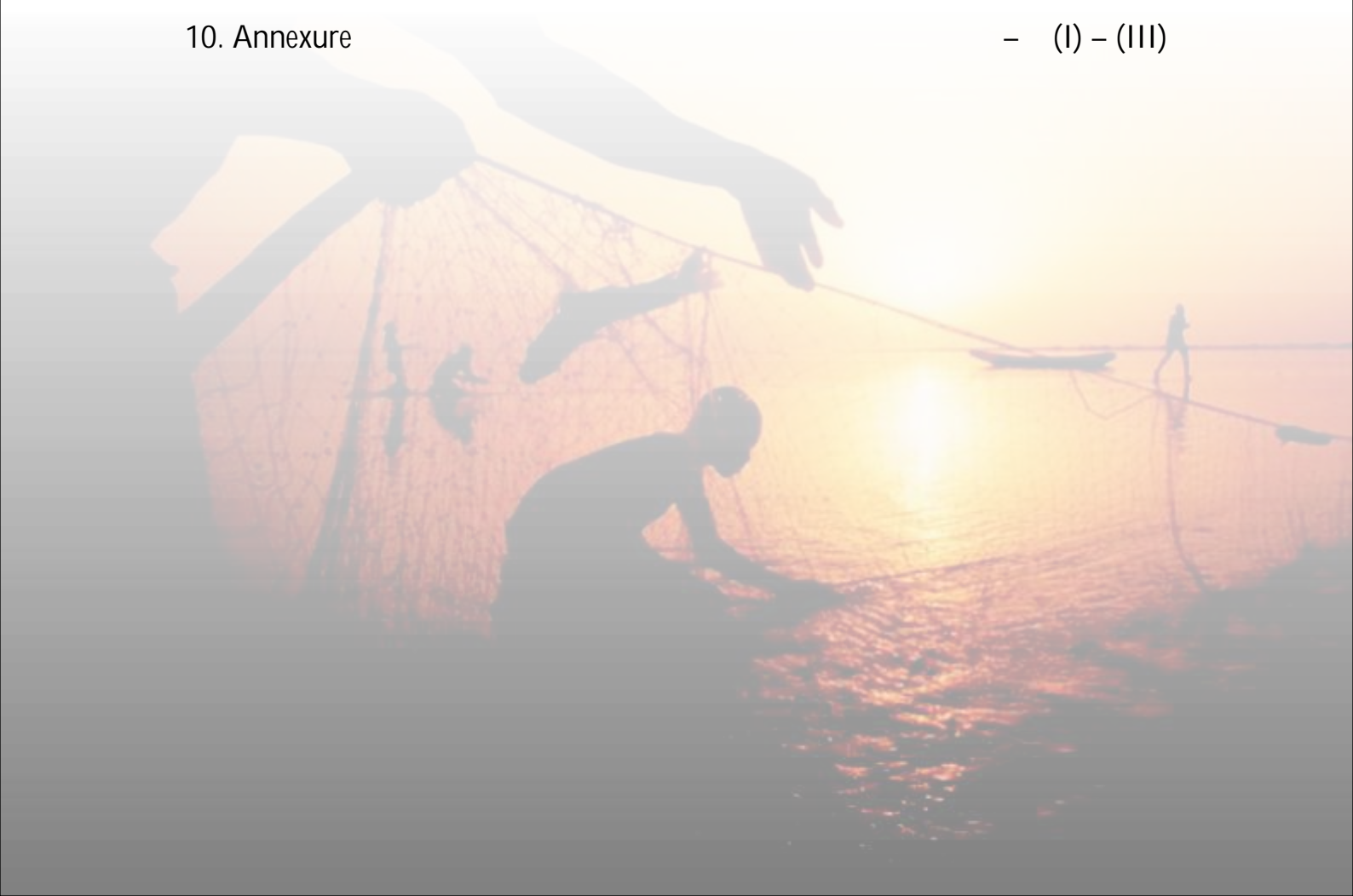
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FOREWORD



It gives me an immense pleasure to state that Prof. Shilpa Nandy has successfully completed her Minor Research project under UGC sponsored scheme under XIth Plan. The title of the project is "Socio- economic and political status of fisherwomen community of West Bengal: A study of Purba Midnapore and South 24 Parganas Districts". It is not an easy task to conduct a survey of two larger maritime districts. The main objective of her study was to enquire about the real problems, struggles and adversities faced by the fisherwomen community of these two districts in earning their livelihood and in their place of working. She also tried to find out the problems relating to establish the fisherwomen's identity by raising their own voice. To make the objective of the study purposeful, both primary and secondary data were used and the survey conducted was based on focused group discussion and participant observation method and Prof. Nandy has devoted her time and energy to represent all the information in a systematic way.

On behalf of the college, I remain deeply grateful to the University Grants Commission for providing financial assistance to the project, as well as others who have contributed to her research work. My thanks are also due to all others who have helped her in the publication of the Minor Research Project.

I wish all success and believe that this Minor Research Project will satisfy the interest and queries of many scholars, students' and readers in this line.

Dr. Subir Kumar Dutta
Principal
Khudiram Bose Central College

MESSAGE



Ms. Shilpa Nandy has extensively studied the fisherwomen community of West Bengal, which is largely an unexplored domain. She has examined the adversities and the problems faced by fisherwomen ; has focused upon the problems of their lives and livelihoods; and has come up with the ways and means of their empowerment. In the study, she has observed the role of the state and the non-state actors and has tried to explore the mechanism of micro-credit as a probable tool of their empowerment. The study has been confined to South 24 Parganas and Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal. It is a relatively a new area, and Ms. Nandy work can throw a light for improvement of the community.

Dr. Rajasri Basu
Associate Professor in Pol . Science
Rabindra Bharati University
&
Director
Women Studies, RBU



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

University Grants Commission, Govt. of India, for financially assisting the project.

President, Governing Body, Principal, all Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff of Khudiram Bose Central College, for their co-operation, support and encouragement during the Project work.

Dr. Rajasri Basu, Associate Professor in Political Science at Rabindra Bharati University and my PH.D Supervisor, for her guidance and valuable suggestions required during the project.

Mr. Pradip Chatterjee, President, Dakshin Banga Matsyajibi Forum and other staff of DBMF, for lending every possible help for field and relevant networks needed for data collection.

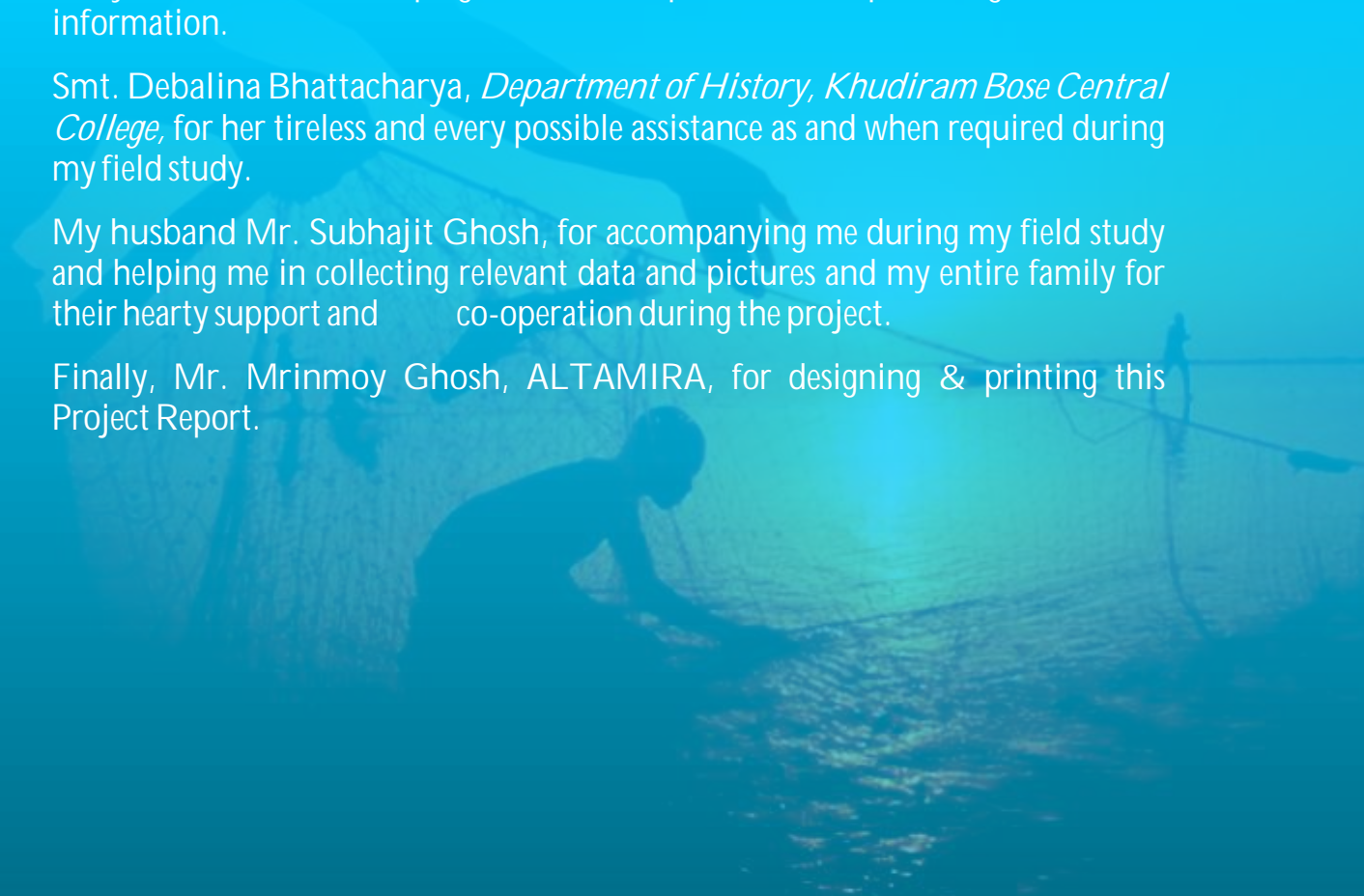
Prof. Krishnendu Acharya, Department of Botany, Calcutta University and Dr. Rupa Acharya, Assistant professor in Botany at Dhruv Chand Halder College, South 24 Prgns, for their inspiration to undertake this kind of project.

Field Workers and Local People of the study area specially the fisherwomen of the study area for their help, guidance, co-operation and providing traditional information.

Smt. Debalina Bhattacharya, Department of History, Khudiram Bose Central College, for her tireless and every possible assistance as and when required during my field study.

My husband Mr. Subhajit Ghosh, for accompanying me during my field study and helping me in collecting relevant data and pictures and my entire family for their hearty support and co-operation during the project.

Finally, Mr. Mrinmoy Ghosh, ALTAMIRA, for designing & printing this Project Report.

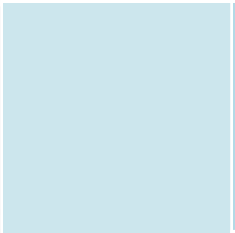
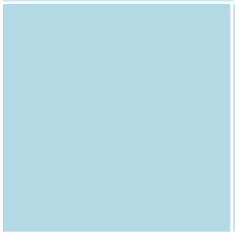
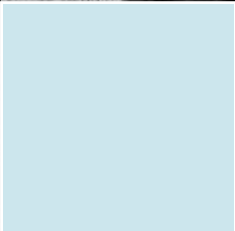


GLOSSARY

1. ADF(M) : Assistant Director of Fisheries (Marine)
2. BLC : Boat License Certificate
3. BPL : Below the Poverty Line
4. CHASI KAIBARTA : A Traditional Cultivator Caste
3. CEC : Centrally Empowered Committee.
4. CIFT : Centrally Institute of Fisheries Technology.
5. CRZ : Coastal Regulation Zone
6. CZM : Coastal Zone Management
7. DADAN : Monetary advance paid by the trader to the artisan (the fisher in our Case) in return of which the artisan is bound to sell the entire produce to the trader

8. DBMF : Dakshin Banga Matsyajibi Forum
9. EEZ : Exclusive Economic Zone
10. EOU : Export Oriented Units
11. FY : Fish Yield
12. FFDA : Fish Farmer Development Agency
13. GOI : Government of India
14. ICAR : Indian Council of Agricultural Research
15. ICSF : International Collective in Support of Fishworkers
16. JELE KAIBARTA : A Traditional Fishing Caste
17. KHOTI : A general term that means Fish Landing Centre and also the Community Based Organisation of Fisher People that manages the centre.

18. KSMTF : Kerala Swathantra Matsya Thozhilali Federation
19. MoEF : Ministry of Environment and Forest
20. NABARD : National Agricultural Bank for Rural Development
21. NCDL : National Cooperative Development Corporation
22. NFF : National Fishworkers Forum
23. NGOs : Non- Governmental Organisations
24. NRSA : National Remote Sensing Agency
25. RSS : Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh
26. ROV : Remotely Operated Vehicle
27. SEZ : Special Economic Zone
28. SHGs : Self Help Groups
29. SIDBI : Small Industrial Developmental Bank of India
30. SIFFS : South Indian Federation of Fishermen Society
31. SGSY : Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana
32. STEP : Support to Training for Empowerment of Women Programme
33. STR : Sunderban Tiger Reserve
34. TED : Turtle Excluder Device
35. UNDP : United Nations Development Programme
36. UNFAO : United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisations
37. WFFP : World Forum of Fisher People



INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

In India and particularly in West Bengal, participation and role of women in fisheries sector include direct and indirect involvement and making significant contribution to the economy of their respective villages and country in general. From their activities, women earn significant and useful supplementary income that in turn considerably increases their family income. But the number of female participation in aquaculture is below than expectation mainly due to some social reasons like absence of literacy among than women, economically less independent, daily work load of household activities, social taboos, cultural constrain, other religious and social reasons.

Women, the oppressed, the uneducated, the poor and the subaltern group as a whole are treated unfairly and need to be heard. It is a fact that women play maximum role in the society: Household, occupation, creative activities, compulsory activities, food security, occupational health hazards, health care, education, child rearing, transport, festivals and like.

As Mohanty clearly mentions, "Taking women as a natural category for application presents problems, often leading to a mode of defining women primarily in terms of their objective status. The way they are affected or not affected by certain institutions and systems". Again in one of his writings she states that women are constituted as a coherent group not on the basis of "natural" qualities or needs but on the basis of sociological "unity" of their role in domestic production and wage labour.¹

Therefore, this project study addresses the problems and adversities face by the fisherwomen community who present a part of the subaltern group of the society. The vulnerable role they had to play in establishing themselves, in earning their livelihood, in creating their own identity, in raising their voice in form of protests and movements for their right to live and livelihood as what we see today in this globalised era. Through this research study, this researcher would therefore like to examine the problems and positions and ways of empowerment of the fisherwomen community from socio- economic- political and cultural aspects. Attempts will be made to qualify and quantify these problems and how research and development can play a role in solving these negative features with reference to role of state and non – state actors and micro – credit schemes as a tool of empowering these fisherwomen community in WB, especially, in S. 24 Pgnns and Purba Midnapore Districts.

Gender analysis shows that women in fishing communities in West Bengal participate substantially in most of the basically household managed fishery and fishery related enterprises. Women are particularly very actively involved in fish processing and marketing, fish culture as well as in some cases in fishing operations itself.

However, their social role and participation in decision making at the village and local administration level is rather limited. It was thought that through social organization, social awareness training, micro-enterprise development and access to institutional credit, women's social and economic role could be considerably enhanced as could be their awareness of the need to adopt family planning and family health care practices.

Modern technology was introduced into fishing in India apparently under the assumption that there were stocks of fish in the sea that could be caught in any quantity, and that the existing

¹ Mohanty, Chandra.Talpade, *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory and Practicing solidarity*(Duke University press: 2003), pp.300.



artisanal technology was inefficient for this purpose. Craft and gear were 'modernised' in order to catch large quantities of traditional as well as hitherto unexploited varieties for the domestic market and to earn the foreign exchange necessary for the import of newer technology. The introduction of modern technology did result in a boom, setting off a spurt in the construction of infrastructural facilities such as fishing harbours, large landing sites, cold storages and processing plants, apart from new markets and marketing infrastructure. Development became synonymous with modern technology that yielded high profits.

It is claimed that fish workers too did benefit by the boom. The larger catches and exports brought added returns. This resulted in a flow of capital into the sector. New employment opportunities were created for women in processing plants and the large landing sites invited surplus labour from inland areas for other jobs. However, it is important to emphasise that as a result of the boom fisherwomen lost out in the traditional occupations of fish vending and net making. The large landings and the increased level of business in the fish landing centres meant that there was little time or patience for the fish vendor. Large truck loads of fish were carried away to distant and lucrative markets and there was little left for rural distribution. Secondly the new gear types, being machine made, ran the traditional net makers out of business. It was this, now largely redundant, work force that was lured into the processing plants to augment family incomes. The hitherto independent working fisherwoman was thus forced to accept low wages and the exploitative conditions of the processing plant. Thirdly, the position and perception of women regarding the fisheries sector presents a considerable degree of commonality. Thus, women feel unwelcome in the seagoing fishing sub sector, but have little interest in participating anyway. In aquaculture women feel discriminated against, but to a much lower extent. Processing is the one sub sector where women are over-represented, but mainly because they predominate in low-grade unskilled jobs. Women have made significant inroads into the management/administration segment both of which are more rewarding and viewed in a more positive light. Finally, the role of women as support to seagoing spouses was found to both very important and highly undervalued by the fishing community.

There have been many studies and research works on fishermen community in India. But all those data does not spell out much on the fisherwomen sector. This research study is therefore unique as it will highlight the position, will analyse the performance and will address the inner voice of the fisherwomen community in West Bengal as no such study has yet been undertaken. The specific objectives of the study will be:

- To collect data on the socio-economic-cultural and political status and activities of the fisherwomen in West Bengal.
- To evaluate the role of the state policies and the role of non- state actors like NGOs, Trade Unions etc in empowering the women of fisherfolk community in west Bengal.
- Policies to identify the reasons, constraints, struggles that the fisherwomen faces in their daily lives and providing suggestions on how they can be empowered in future by which they can have a sustainable and dignified livelihood.
- The way micro- credit schemes are acting as a powerful tool in empowering the fisherwomen community of WB, especially in S. 24 Pdns and Purba Midnapore districts.

It is true that the fast pace of modernization and globalization is jeopardizing the lives and livelihood of the fishermen community as a whole, in which most affected are the women fisherfolk. They are unaware about the governmental programmes and schemes available for them in the country and in their states due to lack of education and patriarchal culture. Their





voices are mostly unheard in the administration. Further this project study also found that in West Bengal, mainly in the two districts --- Purba Midnapore and South 24 Parganas where the study was undertaken fisherwomen are mainly deprived, backward and non - vocal. They have abilities to uplift themselves but lack of capacity building keeps them at back seat. Lack of resources, proper training and skills, assistance from government and non-government sectors, corruption in the disbursement of facilities and beneficiaries available, challenges and constraints face by them from their male counterparts results in their underdevelopment and disempowerment. Thus the relevance of this project precisely lies in highlighting the following issues:

Firstly, “A Short Review of Literature” will basically deal with the authentic study contributing on various aspects of fisherwomen and factors identifying the issues related to their empowerment. The review of literature has been divided into four categories: the first category deals with the notion of the voice of the subaltern women by reviewing the books on subaltern studies. The second category highlights on the study conducted on Fisherwomen in Foreign Countries. The third part reviews on study conducted on Fisherwomen in India and the last category focuses on the study conducted on Fisherwomen in West Bengal.

Secondly, the chapter on “Methodology” will focus on the methods and process of data collection adopted by the researcher. This particular research study adopted mainly survey method based on structured interview schedule, focused group discussion and participant observation method while collecting the data. The study also utilized both primary and secondary sources of data collection. Primary data included socio – economic background, constraints and problems and various other aspects related to socio – economic-political empowerment which was collected through selected survey areas based on interview schedule with the fisherwomen. The researcher was able to interview nearly 200 fisherwomen community of Purba Midnapore district especially Contai block and South 24 Parganas district mainly Kultali block in West Bengal. The secondary data collection was based on government records, journals and documents. Besides the researcher also focus on interviews with government and non- government officials, policy makers, Co-operatives of the Fisherwomen community etc. Apart from these, the research study was based on extensive literature survey like books, journals, internet, records and other relevant documents.

Thirdly, “Globalization and its Impact on Fisherwomen Community” tries to highlight the adverse affect of trawlerisation and conflict related to modern way of fishing and their impact on fisherwomen community of the two selected areas by the researcher from the following dimensions: environmental, economic, social, political and cultural.

Fourthly, “Socio- Economic and Political Profile of Fisherwomen of Purba Midnapore and South 24 Parganas : A comparative Study of the Districts” will present the socio-economic and political status of the fisherwomen community of both the districts mentioned. The main theme of the chapter is the comparative analysis of the fisherwomen community and their role in fisheries in both the district. The researcher examines that in Purba Midnapore district; the fisherwomen are not directly involved in cultivation or capturing fish but are indirectly involved in different fishing activities like netting, sorting, vendoring and like. They are less interested in forming co-operatives and participating in different trainings or workshops conducted by governments, NGOs or others. They are less vocal or almost non-vocal due to lack of education and awareness. On the otherhand, the picture of the fisherwomen sustaining their lives on fishing in the south 24 Prgns District is completely different from the other district. They





are directly involved in fish capturing in the rivers of Sunderban areas with a lots of struggles, challenges and hazards as often they becomes the prey of either tiger or crocodiles. They have a sound knowledge of fishing and they mainly follow the traditional mode of fishing. In this area many co-operatives have been formed by the fisherwomen and they are much more vocal than the fisherwomen of Midnapore district. They are also more interested in participating in the campaigns, movements, workshops and trainings held for their welfare. This chapter therefore is totally based on the data collected primarily from the field selected for the purpose.

Fifthly, the chapter on "Role of Micro- Finance and Self – Help Groups in Empowering Fisherwomen Community" aims to highlight the important role that micro finance has played in empowering different segments of women community, but the chapter will be specifically focusing on how micro finance schemes and formation of other co-operatives can act as a powerful tool in empowering and upliftment of the fisherwomen community of Purba Midnapore and South 24 Pdns districts.

Sixthly, 'Fisherwomen and the State', the main theme is the relationship between the women fishworkers and the state. The chapter is being divided into two segments. The first part points out several national policies which are implemented by Union and State Governments and the second segment highlights the response of the fisherwomen to these national policies and their movements and agitations towards these policies.

Finally, in conclusion "Problems and Prospects" the whole discussion has been wrapped up briefly by pointing out the main objective of this project. The important part highlighted here is the problems of the fisherwomen community of these two districts in West Bengal and the adversities they have to face socially, economically, culturally and politically in maintaining their livelihood. Moreover, the traditional fisherwomen are deprived from their livelihood due to conflict related to modern way of fishing. In order to resolve these conflicts, some practicable alternatives, suggestions and measures have been identified. In brief, it can be only said that cultivation of fishing has become an acute problem in this era of globalization and modernization in India and the condition of the women fisherfolk are worsening day by day.. It has created an adverse effect on their identity and has posed a serious threat to survival of fisherwomen community. All these have given rise to movements and conflict thus destroying peace, harmony and democracy in India.

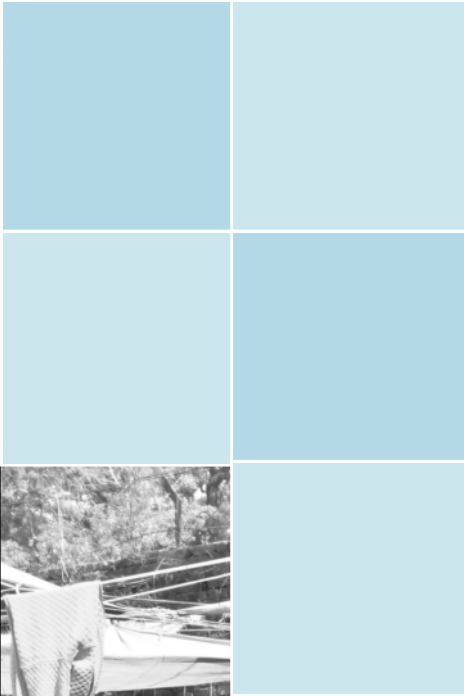
India has its own cultural heritage. Our problem has to be solved by taking into account its own background. Every community in India are inter-connected and inter-dependent. When one structural change is made into one community, it is natural that it will spread its effects on other community. The planners of our country have to think in terms of sustainable development. They should take a keen interest in safeguarding the needs and interests of these poor women fisher folk communities and should also preserve our rich natural resources. This project is not against development and modernization but for judicious and sustainable development.



CHAPTER

I

A SHORT REVIEW OF LITERATURE



A SHORT REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction:

In today's world, positions of the women have changed gradually but slowly. But the fisherwomen communities are still neglected, backward and are being marginalized globally. Although In India, they constitute a major chunk of the population as because India comprises of nine coastal states and five coastal union territories. Therefore, their upliftment, development is of utmost necessity. They cannot raise their voice because of lack of education and knowledge. They can have powerful identity only if they are properly empowered. Fisher women, the oppressed, the uneducated, the poor and the subaltern group as a whole are treated unfairly, and need to be heard. There have been many studies and research works on fishermen community in India. But all those data does not spell out much on the fisherwomen sector.

In India, West Bengal has abundant natural endowments, conventional wisdom and human skills in respect of intensified fish farming and the significant role played by the fisherwomen needs to be examined. But in spite of enormous potentials, much headway has not been made. One of the major reasons for the unsatisfactory performance may be low availability of appropriate reliable data and standardized technologies necessary comparability and aggregation of data over time and across regions. Given the important role of fishing sector and the role of women in it, the review of relevant literature has been explored by the researcher. The review of literature can be divided into the following categories:

- ?Study related on the notion of "Voice" of the subaltern group
- ?Study conducted in Foreign Countries on Fisherwomen
- ?Study conducted in India on Fisherwomen
- ?Study conducted in West Bengal on Fisherwomen

Study related on the notion of "Voice" of the subaltern group

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) in her writing *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, originally published in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg's *Marxism and Interpretation of Culture*, London, Spivak encourages but also criticizes the efforts of the subaltern studies group, a project led by Ranajit Guha that has reappropriated Gramsci's term "subaltern" (the economically dispossessed) in order to locate and re-establish a "voice" or collective locus of agency in postcolonial India. Although Spivak acknowledges the "epistemic violence" done upon Indian subalterns, she suggests that any attempt from the outside to ameliorate their condition by granting them collective speech invariably will encounter the following problems: 1) a logo centric assumption of cultural solidarity among a heterogeneous people, and 2) a dependence upon western intellectuals to "speak for" the subaltern condition rather than allowing them to speak for themselves. As Spivak argues, by speaking out and reclaiming a collective cultural identity, subalterns will in fact re-inscribe their subordinate position in society.

Spivak (1988), in her *Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography*, observes the oppression people face, especially subaltern women. According to many, the subaltern is a person or a group of people that have been excluded from society. They do not have a voice but are lost in the world



due to assimilation and colonialism. She clearly stated that the subaltern have an "inner voice". But this voice remains unheard. Essentially Spivak's argument was that the subaltern cannot be represented. They have their own voice which in Spivak's term is "silent silenced centre". She argued that if the subaltern were able to make herself heard --- as has happened when particular subalterns have emerged in Antonio Gramsci's terms, as organic intellectuals and be spokespeople for their communities ----- her status as a subaltern women would be changed utterly, she would cease to be subaltern.

Ranjit Guha and Spivak (1988) in their book entitled *Selected Subaltern Studies*, published by Oxford University Press, London presents the most wide-ranging essays from the first five volumes of Subaltern Studies, along with an introductory essay by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and a foreword by eminent critic Edward W. Said. Together, the essays examine aspects of the analysis of domination, with special reference to the critique of imperialism, in an attempt to rectify the elitist bias characteristic of much academic work on India. A ground-breaking work of considerable pedagogical relevance for courses dealing with colonialism and imperialism in literature, sociology, anthropology, politics, and history has also been looked into. Also subaltern studies features a comprehensive glossary of Indian terms for readers who are not familiar with Indian history through this volume.

Spivak (1987) in her book entitled *In Other World: Essays in Cultural Politics*, published by Routledge, London, is interested in finding new ways to apply Marxism and Feminism to literary texts. She argues that the traditional ways of reading texts and the traditional canon of knowledge leave out many important voices from Other Worlds. Her essays focus on the growing need for academic departments to become increasingly integrated in order to better understand the world's political, social and economic issues that hegemonically maintain the cultural and economic hierarchy.

Spivak, Donna Landry & Gerald Maclean (1995) in their book *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, London, has relentlessly challenged the high ground of established theoretical discourse in literary and cultural studies in this book. Although her rigorous reading of various authors has often rendered her work difficult terrain for those unfamiliar with post structuralism, this collection makes significant strides in explicating Spivak's complicated theories of reading.

Spivak (2008) in her another interesting work *Other Asias*, Blackwell Publishing, USA, challenges the reader to rethink Asia in its political and cultural complexity. Other Asias is an eloquent plea for pedagogy of continental scope that does not evade or erode the singular, 'textured' life, thought and work of geographical regions and political minorities. The exemplary courage and extraordinary imagination that have distinguished Spivak's work are now engaged in rich reflections on the political art of humanistic education. In the Chapter "Responsibility", she tried to show an extreme case of this, where a woman tried to "speak" insurgency against a regulative psychobiography by inscribing her death body in death, and at a deferred time, and yet was not able to secure a response, from upwardly mobile women of her own family, at two generations removed. Spivak also argued that it seems unquestionable that sustainable change takes place if change in the human mind supplements institutional change.

Spivak (1999), in her writings in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, published by Harvard University Press, London, tried to make the reader think on Are the "culture wars" over? When did they begin? What is their relationship to gender





struggle and the dynamics of class? In her first full treatment of postcolonial studies, a field that she helped define, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, one of the world's foremost literary theorists, poses these questions from within the postcolonial enclave.

In her recent work *Outside in the teaching machine* Spivak (2012) emphasized that women's voices have been largely silent. Paulo Freire invented the term "the culture of silence" to describe the condition in which the impoverished majority of the world's people are living ----- powerless and with little access to the means of communication in which the affluent minority of the world is kept in ignorance and silence. In this book she has mentioned about the fisherwomen in the lead piece 'In a Word'. To quote the context "if one looks a fisherwomen, Does rotten fish smell good or bad?" How will she answer? Thus the shift in her work shows from a strategic use of essentialism to considerations of institutional agency that accompanied the explosion of marginality studies.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) clearly mentions taking women as a natural category for application presents problems, often leading to a mode of defining women primarily in terms of their objective status. The way they are affected or not affected by certain institutions and systems". Again in one of his writings she states that women are constituted as a coherent group not on the basis of "natural" qualities or needs but on the basis of sociological "unity" of their role in domestic production and wage labour in her *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing theory and Practicing Solidarity* published by Duke University press. *Feminism without Borders* addresses some of the most pressing and complex issues facing contemporary feminism. This collection highlights the concerns running throughout her pioneering work: the politics of difference and solidarity, decolonizing and democratizing feminist practice, the crossing of borders, and the relation of feminist knowledge and scholarship to organizing and social movements. Mohanty offers here a sustained critique of globalization and urges a reorientation of transnational feminist practice toward anticapitalist struggles. *Feminism without Borders* opens with Mohanty's influential critique of western feminism ("Under Western Eyes") and closes with a reconsideration of that piece based on her latest thinking regarding the ways that gender matters in the racial, class, and national formations of globalization.

Spivak(2008) in her translated work on Mahasweta Devi's Book entitled *Old Women* pointed out that Mahasweta Devi has made an important contributions to literary and cultural studies in this country through her empirical research into oral history as it lives in the cultures and memories of tribal communities. In this particular book Mahasweta Devi has made the reference of a fisher quarter and Bauri quarter. She also narrated the tale of socio – economic oppression of the women in which they are forced to survive. In the chapter "Statute", a character named Nabin's Pisi has been treated like a neglected soil. She doesn't know how to complain. She forgot to protest against other's behaviour towards herself. Thus the space that Mahasweta's fiction inhabits is rather special, even within this specifying argument. It is the space of the "subaltern", displaced even from the catachrestic relationship between decolonization and the enlightenment, with feminism inscribes within it.

Partha Chatterjee (2012) in his ed. book entitled *The small Voice of History: Collected Essays*, published by Permanent Black, New Delhi stated that these are the small voices which are drowned in the noise of the statist commands. He clearly specified the fact that women's voice, once it is heard, will activate and make audible the other small voices as well. He has made the reference of the adivasis in this book and pointed out that they too have been marginalized and instrumentalized in the statist discourse. For they have many stories to tell --- stories which for





their complexity are unequalled by statist discourse and indeed opposed to its abstract and oversimplifying modes.

Ayesha Shahid (2010) in *Silent Voices, Untold Stories – Women Domestic Workers in Pakistan and Empowerment*, published by Oxford university Press, New York marked the theoretical perspectives on women, law and empowerment. She seeks to dismantle the dominance/subordinate relation through empowering women's voice with a view to legal, social and political equality.

Another important book entitled *Voice and Memory: Indigeneous Imagination and Expression* edited by G. N. Devy, Geoffrey V. Davis and K. K. Chakravarty (2011) published by Orient Black swan Pvt. Ltd, attempt has been made to understand the indigenous people's struggles and movements. The authors discovered that when indigenous peoples speak with their own voices, powerful and highly relevant knowledge is manifested. In this book reference of the story of C.K. Janu has been made. The adivasi is represented as one who is "unable to speak" and who is to be benevolently "rehabilitated", "protected", "developed", "integrated" into civil society. This representation as a people without voice silences them. Thus the adivasi is an eternal "other", defenselessly marginalized and un presentable.

Thus in this literature the key concepts that come out of postcolonial theorizing around questions of identity and post coloniality may not be valid for indigenous people. The voices of indigenous peoples in postcolonial states do not appear to be fore grounded in analysis of indigeneity.

Study conducted in Foreign Countries

Felsing et. Al (2001) while analyzing the role of women in aquaculture in South East Asia, observed that the sector was becoming very important in the region but the role of women has often been adversely affected. In this article ways have been identified to alleviate the problems.

Minh L. T, Huong D. T and Tuan N. A (1996) conducted a study in Vietnam over the involvement of women in fishing activity. The findings of a study on the participation of women in fish nursing in the main fish fingerling production area.

In an article entitled *Fisherwomen in the Turkish Fishery, Southern Aegean Sea* in Journal of Applied Ichthyology, Goncuoglu H and Unal V (2011) tried to analyse that there are no official records on the active involvement of women in Turkish Fisheries nor do governmental institutions acknowledge their participation. The main purpose of the study was to validate their involvement and convey their socio- demographic status and position in the profession.

Flores PE (1996) in her study conducted in Equador examined the role women played in post-larval fishery, not just in the capture and cleaning of post larvae, but in the context of everyday community life. The post – larvae fishery not only serves to provide the basic resource for development of the shrimp industry, but also represents an alternative source of work and income.

Nam S et.al (1998) who conducted their study on fisherwomen in Cambodia, presented a survey conducted among 215 families involved in fish culture in Prey veng and Svey Reing Provinces. The survey identified constraints to, and opportunities for, the participation of women in the sector, and also examined the access to, and control of, resources with regard to





fish culture at the family level, verifying the position of women in regard to these issues owing to the introduction of a new activity.

In another study conducted at the International level, William S. B. et al (2005) observed that fishing communities are faced with massive aquatic ecosystem degradation. The study indicated that women have been associated with resource conservation embedded in traditional belief systems, which have been progressively eroded.

Nandbal S (2005) made an analysis of a fisherwomen group in Fiji. This article documents the success story of a women's group in Driti, a small village in Bua Province, Vanna Levn, Fiji, in the development of aquaculture in the region through Tilapia Culture.

In an international report on *Fisheries in Women*, published by, IRIS Consulting, Greenwich Maritime Institute, offer a basis for identifying how equality of opportunity for women can be achieved within the industry and in influencing its future regulation. Key elements are the role of women in improving the economic efficiency of businesses, their contribution to the social fabric and sustainability of the fisheries and the coastal communities as well as their interaction with management authorities or organizations at the local, national and international level.

In another final report of European Commission, *Women in the Fisheries Sector*, Mac Alister Elholt and Partners Ltd (2002) identified the promotion of equal opportunities and rights for men and women. The commission also addressed the promotion of social and economic cohesion, particularly though lessening the developmental differentials between regions. The study also provided an analysis of the obstacles and the potential related to women's contribution to the socio-economic development and diversification of these communities.

Thus the discussion on the research undertaken overseas also indicates the vital role played by women in the fishing communities, to enhance their role in coastal resources management and their participation in governance and policy processes. Development initiatives focussed on improving women's livelihoods in small scale fisheries industries, generating and supporting entrepreneurship, supporting women's roles in aquaculture, forming and strengthening fish co-operatives, forming partnerships with other development actors such as the state, supporting women's participation in coastal zone management and conserving environment, generating alternatives livelihood options, training women in improved fish processing technologies and so on.

Study conducted in India

Ninawe, A. S, Diwan, A. D, and Narendra (2005) in their book entitled *Women Empowerment in Fisheries*, published by Agrotech Pub. Co, Udaipur made an effort

towards identification of key issues affecting women in the Indian fisheries sector. Efforts have been made to bring together heads of various concerned organizations involved in fisheries research, education and training development to contribute their experiences on the role of women in fisheries. The book serves as an important document and stimulates further discussions and development of appropriate programs in India. The book stresses the importance of education of women and increase in their awareness to various issues in fisheries, provision of credit facilities and the need to develop women friendly technologies.

Vijaya Khader (2008) in his book entitled *Empowerment of Fisher Women* published by Agrotech Publishing Academy, Udaipur incorporates authentic studies on empowerment of





fisher women. Fisher women often occupy marginal roles and live and work on the periphery of the centres of economic, social and political power, they tend to be especially vulnerable. The basic goal for women in fisheries development is to make them equal partners and productive and self-reliant participants in the process of improving their own and their families nutritional and living standards and to enable them to realize their full potential as human beings in their own right as members of their family and community. Fisher women must be given the opportunity to acquire appropriate knowledge, develop adequate skills and use appropriate technologies enabling them to make the greatest possible economic and social contribution.

In the proceedings of a workshop on *Women in Fisheries in India*, Sudhindra R. Gadagkar (1992) tried to analyse the involvement of women in the fisheries sector. The workshop saw the presentation of many useful papers, all those concerned with fisheries planning, development, research, extension, training and industry with special emphasis on women working in this sector.

In a final report submitted to NABARD on *Performance analysis of Fisherwomen Self Help Groups in Tamil Nadu*, Dr. Jayaraman (2005) found in his study that the fisherwomen SHGs performing well in availing and repaying micro-credit which had contributed to the socio-economic empowerment and to better livelihood conditions.

Omajie John (2009) in an article entitled *Fisherwomen in Kerala Fight Back* identified the impact of globalization on Fisherwomen. Modern Technological facilities has drastically limited the role of women in fishing business. This article highlights on the issues that women have existently resisted various forms of imposition, restriction and repression emanating from a more complicated access to marine goods, infrastructure and systems in order to maintain their livelihood.

In a research paper entitled *Socio-cultural life of fisherwomen in India – Continuity and Change (with special reference to Orissa State)* published in International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology, Susmita Pataik, J.K.Baral and Manoj Kr. Dash (2011) tried to explain through this research study the various problems of the fisherwomen in detail such as sex, ratio, age groups, professions, employment, marketing, income, indebtedness, education, residence, water supplies, health care etc. From the study it is inferred that the men take over women's work as production has changed from subsistence to the market economy.

Gomathi B (1998) through his article made a brief account of the experiences of two communities in Tamil Nadu, India, regarding the use of tricycles by women fish vendors in order to reach fish markets quickly. There were numerous management problems that were encountered by women in Periakuppam, near Mahabalipuram—it was difficult to find a reliable driver, the village men were hostile, and the sangam women often quarreled with each other regarding issues such as costs and rights to use the vehicle. This resulted in the fact that much of the time the tricycles remained unused. However, when tricycles were made available to women fish vendors in Nagapattinam, the results were much more successful.

Chaturvedi G (2004), evaluated the Bay of Bengal Programme, which was designed to assess the needs and status of women in fishing communities with regard to their livelihood security, food and nutrition, and community development. This field study evaluates the impacts of the past interventions made by the Bay of Bengal Programme and other agencies, and also determines the level of empowerment at the grassroots. Over 30 villages were visited across Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and West Bengal. Participatory Rural





Appraisals (PRAs) were conducted with women in the fisheries sector. Alternative livelihood strategies were explored and recorded to pave the way for meaningful future interventions by the BOBP-IGO. Self-Help Groups (SHGs) were found to catalyse the transformation of the fisheries sector through viable micro-enterprise development.

Mohapatra B (1998) conducted a study on fish vendors of Odisha. In this study, a brief account is given of the success story of women fish vendors in Odisha, India, regarding the use of ice boxes to maintain the quality of the fish during transportation from the landing centre to the market. A women's group was formed, following assistance by the Post-Harvest Fisheries Project in 1995, to manage four ice boxes. Women entered into an agreement with the traders who brought ice into the village, brought fish, and carried catches back: the traders would give the women ice free of cost and the women would ensure supply of fish in good condition.

Villareal LV and Upare MA (2003) conducted a study in Goa. The authors observed that in most societies, as in India, small-scale fishing and fish farming households are considered to be one of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Microfinance programmes are seen as a means for these households to gain access to much-needed credit services that are appropriate for their needs. Moreover, because women comprise a significant proportion of such households, microfinance should also serve as an effective tool to assist and empower women in fishing communities. It is in this context that the national workshop was organised. The main objective of the workshop was to analyse and document recent experiences with microfinance programmes in support of women and poverty alleviation in coastal fishing communities in India, and to draw conclusions with regard to best practices in this field. The workshop also aimed to provide guidance to financial institutions, governmental and non-governmental institutions involved in fisheries development, fishermen's and women's associations, donors and other stakeholders for the future development of microfinance programmes, and other necessary support services. The workshop was organised by FAO, in cooperation with the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) as the host organization.

Dias JC and Joseph C (1992) also conducted a study on the Bay of Bengal Programme. This document expands on the role of women in India where their potential has often been overlooked and analyses the Bay of Bengal Project (BOBP) experience and the positive results it produced. It calls for a greater involvement of NGOs to stimulate and catalyse women's activities.

Jayaraman (2000 and 2002) reported on the role and performance of fisherwomen SHGs in India. He found that the fisherwomen SHGs have been performing well in availing of micro-credit, and repaying it in time. The micro-credit programme implemented through SHGs contributed to the socio-economic welfare and empowerment of the fisherwomen. It also contributed to the eradication of usury and illicit liquor.

Deepti Agarwal (2001) reported that the status of women is low and their socio-economic conditions are much more depressed than that of men. Jeyesh Talati and Venkatakrisnan (2001) explained women's empowerment in Jhabua district, Madhya Pradesh. The women 'leaders' elected by the group members were responsible for the maintenance of group records and management of group. These women's groups laid the foundation for the empowerment of women.

FAO (2003) reported on the best practices and success stories in micro-credit programmes for women in coastal fishing communities in India.





Senthil Vadivoo and Sekar (2004) stated that the SHGs are a movement for women empowerment; it covered women collectively struggling against direct and indirect barriers to their self development and their social, political and economic participation. Women's empowerment can be viewed as a continuous process of several inter-related and mutually reinforcing components. Empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building, leading to greater participation and greater decision making power and control over the transformative action to overcome the constraints in this process.

The UN Commission on the Status of Women in 2007 advised the leaders of the member countries to fully maximise the role of microfinance tools, and ensure access to them. These tools include micro-credit for poverty eradication; generation of employment—especially for the empowerment of women; encourage the strengthening of existing an emerging micro-credit institutions and their capacities—if necessary, through the support of international financial institutions; and ensuring that best practices are widely disseminated. Microfinance is perceived as an effective strategy to reach the Millennium Development Goals (Elizabeth et al., 2003).

The efforts of the SHGs have played a positive role in helping the fisher folk in their socio-economic development, emancipation and empowerment. Their technical knowledge has improved, and their interpersonal and financial management skills have been sharpened. The entrepreneurship helped them to express their individuality and also increased self-confidence among members. As Muhammad Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank of Bangladesh succinctly points out, “women have plans for themselves, for their children, for their home, and the meals. They have a vision. A man wants to enjoy himself” (Yunus, 2008).

Study Conducted in West Bengal

In the monographs like “*Potentials and Problems of Composite Fish Farming in West Bengal*” By S.M. Murshed, CIFRI Bulletin No.5; “*Scope for Scientific and Commercial Fish Farming in West Bengal*” by A. V. Natarajan, CIFRI Bulletin No.9 and “*Export Prospect of Fish and Fish Products*” (1986) by NCAER, New Delhi, some of the issues relating to the problems of marketing of fish production like have been dealt with.

A. J. Singh and V. K. Gupta (1983) dealt with the problem in relation to demand, supply and production, marketing and distribution of fish seed. In their in-depth study in West Bengal, the biggest seed producing and exporting state in India, they have given a clear picture about the infrastructural developments taking place in seed production.

Sib Ranjan Misra (1987), in his book *Fisheries in India*, published by Concept Publishing Company reveals that poaching acts as a major constraint leading to poor performance of fish production particularly in West Bengal tanks and ponds. Other problems emphasized by him were erratic and inadequate supply of quality fish seeds or fingerlings in time and at reasonable rate, multiple ownership and adulteration of inputs etc. According to Misra, this unsatisfactory performance can be attributed mainly to absence of rational management, judicious utilization and appropriate exploitation of resources. Measures suggested by Misra are the utilization of canal irrigation (from which water can be released to the fish ponds in winter season) or rain fed farming on watershed basis, desiltation of about to dry up ponds, long term lease arrangement, government legislation to eradicate multiple ownership, development of appropriate technologies (keeping in view the regional, environmental and ecological differences), organized marketing channels, mixed farming etc.





M. M. Bhalerao and Kalicharan (1968) described the problems of multiple ownership in most of the private ponds and tanks. Most of the private tanks and ponds are not owned by a single owner. People, particularly in West Bengal have incentives to hold the percentage of ownership of inherited ponds with their other family members and division of the ownership continues from one generation to next generation. Thus, as generation proceeds, share of ownership by single owner decreases, which gives rise to a very complex plurality of ownership. Such problem often impedes new investment for the improvement of ponds and tanks and also the intensive application of new technologies. The existence of plurality of ownership and interference of middlemen as serious deterrents has been another major problem found by the author in his study.

A.V. Natarajan (1985) in a study at 24 Parganas observed that a number of tanks and ponds are used for seasonal irrigation purposes. Contradiction and antagonism come up due to the conflicting use of water for irrigation and for pisciculture.

An in-depth study by Visva Bharati, Santiniketan (1986), on the *“Use of Tanks for Minor Irrigation and Pisciculture in West Bengal”* tried to explain the actual position of uses of tanks for irrigation and fisheries purposes. The main contention of the study is that the scope of using tanks for irrigation is rather limited, while potentialities of pisciculture are quite large.

K.S. Chattopadhyay (1987) in his *“Problems and Prospects of Pisciculture”* discussed various institutional, technical and financial factors, which are found detrimental to smooth functioning and enhancement of fish production in a district like Birbhum in West Bengal. He severely criticized the role of the government while rendering extension programmes at the grassroots level. The functioning of F.F.D.A was subjected to criticism in the study area. It is worth mentioning here that, K.S. Chattopadhyay suggested that where canal irrigation is the source of water, there water should be released to fishponds at a very nominal rate.

In an article entitled *“The Bergram Majhipara Common Pool Fish Ponds”* by K. Singh and S. Bhattacharya (1994) in the anthology *“Managing Common Pool Resources: Principles and case Studies”* by K. Singh, it is observed that in case of West Bengal ponds and tanks under common property regime have a low fish productivity. In this context, Marothia, in his article *“Village Ponds and Aquaculture Development: Is Conflict Inevitable?”* stated that the multiple uses of Common Village Ponds created disorders between the fishers and the village community.

S. R. Misra (1995) in his project entitled *“Identification of constraints in the Development of Inland Fish Cultivation with special reference to West Bengal”* suggested that when canal irrigation is the source of water, then water should be released to fishponds at a very nominal rate.

A review of the existing literature on this issue reveals that no systematic and comprehensive study has yet been made on the problems, challenges and prospects of pond based small fish farming at the village level in West Bengal. Also the developed technology, that seems technically attractive, has failed to produce substantial results in real world. Moreover, it appears that the role of women involved in pond based small fish farming at village is mainly as a part of family business but no such data has been available in the literature reviewed.





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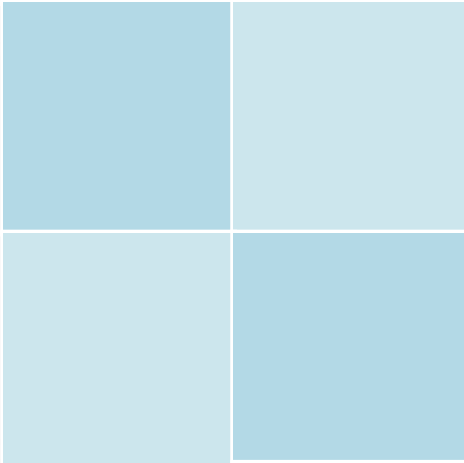
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CHAPTER

II

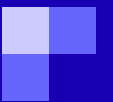
METHODOLOGY



Dadanpatrabar,
Ramnagar II Block,
Purba Midnapore



Purba & Madhya Gurguriya,
Kultali Block,
South 24 Pgn.



STUDY TEAM

SHILPA NANDY
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

DEBALINA BHATTACHARYA
FIELD ASSISTANT
DURING MIDNAPORE FIELD VISIT (4TH- 5TH FEB, 2014)

JABA BARMAN, SUJOY JANA &
ACHINTA PRAMANIK
LOCAL FIELD WORKERS,
MIDNAPORE AREA
(28th – 29th JAN, 2014; 4th – 5th FEB, 2014; 15th – 16th FEB, 2014)

MILAN DAS
LOCAL FIELD WORKER
KULTALI BLOCK, S. 24 PARGANS
(22nd – 23rd FEB, 2014)



Study Area



Map showing
Study Area 1 :
Ramnagar II Block
Purba Midnapore
West Bengal



Map showing
Study Area 2 :
Kultali Block
South 24 Parganas
West Bengal

METHODOLOGY

“We must learn truth from facts” – Mao-Tse-Tung.

The fourth most populous state in India, West Bengal spreads over 88,752 Km². It has a coastline of about 160 Km. 51% of its mudflats and 49% marshy. On the basis of soil characteristics and climatic conditions, West Bengal is divided into six – agro climatic zones.

- i) Coastal and Saline Region: This region comprises of parts of North and South 24 Parganas, Howrah and Midnapore districts. Soils are of tidal origin in this area.
- ii) Old and Alluvial Region: Comprising Murshidabad, Hooghly districts, Parts of Birbhum and Bankura districts, Central part of the Burdwan and Midnapore. Soil reaction ranges from acidic to neutral.
- iii) New Alluvial Region: These regions are Nadia, Parts of Malda, Murshidabad, West Dinajpur, Burdwan and Hooghly. Soil reaction ranges from neutral to alkaline in reaction.
- iv) Red and Laterite Soil Zone: Purulia, Parts of Birbhum, Burdwan, Bankura and parts of Midnapore with small pockets of Malda and West Dinajpur comes under this category. Soils are mildly acidic in nature.
- v) Terai Region : Areas of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts, Siliguri and Sub – division of Darjeeling and Islampore Sub – division of West Dinajpur . Soils are deep and light textured, highly permeable and porous in this region.
- vi) Hill Region: Soils in this region are generally shallow, coarse textured and acidic in nature. It comprises of Darjeeling district excluding Siliguri sub – division and northern fringe of Jalpaiguri districts.

Identification of Study Area with reference to KHOTI

In this study the researcher has purposively selected two important coastal districts of West Bengal – Purba Midnapore and South 24 Parganas. Purba Midnapore Coast is characterized by sand dunes and its total length includes 60 km. The South 24 Parganas along with its adjacent district of North 24 Parganas are home to Sunderbans. Sunderbans have an intricate coastline, clusters of deltas with interlinked channels, creeks and estuaries. Extensive portions of this area are under various degree of protection. The Sunderbans are a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

In Purba Midnapore, the study covered Dadanpatrabar area of Ramnagar (II) and Contai Block. The study mainly focuses on two significant aspects in this area ----

- The Dadanpatrabar (Kharpai) Fish Landing Centre and the Khoti (Community based organization) that manages the landing centre and the role of the women fisherfolk associated with this landing centre.
- The researcher also surveyed four important markets of Pruba Midnapore where women as vendors played a very important role. These four markets are – a) Kathi (Contai) market which is further divided into two sub markets – Mishti and Nona Fish Market. b) Pichaboni Market c) Ramnagar Market d) Digha Mohana Market which is also the largest fish landing centre in Purba Midnapore district.



In ontological and temporal terms, the khoti is the fishing camp that comes up at the landing centre and manages it for the duration of the full fishing season – roughly from July to February. During the full fishing season, the khoti manages and governs the fishing activity, settles disputes and tries to take care of the needs and grievances of its members – the fishers and the fishworkers'. The Purba Midnapore coast has no pure fishing villages. The Khoti may be near a village inhabited largely by fishers but it is nevertheless a Trans – village entity. The study also found that mostly a fisher travels about 15 – 20 km from his own village to be a member of a khoti through which he/she operates. The khoti thus has an identity of its own. Therefore the importance of studying the khoti regime lies in the fact that it is the organization through which the marine fishing activity of the coast takes place. Dadanpatrabar in Purba Midnapore is one of the oldest and largest khoti in West Bengal and moreover, this is a khoti that can boast of having played a key role in the movement of fishers' rights. This khoti has therefore naturally commanded researcher's interest.

In South 24 parganas with reference to Sunderban, the study area selected by the researcher was two Gram panchayats of Kultali Block – Madhya Gurguria and Purba Gurguriya. Unlike Purba Midnapore, the concept of Khoti (Fish Landing centre) doesnot prevails here. Neither the fisherwomen in this area are associated with any khoti or market as such. Thus the researcher attempted to study the women fisherfolk who are directly involved in fish capturing in the rivers of sunderban area struggling with the natural disaster and wildlife attacks everyday in order to survive and maintain their livelihood.

The names of the selected blocks in each identified districts has been presented in the following Exhibit No.1

District	Block	Area Covered
Purba Midnapore	Ramnagar (II) Contai	Fish Landing Centres (Khoti) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dadanpatrabar ● Digha Mohana Fish Markets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kathi Mishti and Nona Market ● Pichaboni ● Ramnagar ● Digha Mohana
South 24 Parganas (Sunderban Area)	Kultali	Madhya Gurguriya Gram panchayats Purba Gurguriya Gram panchayats

Reasons for Site Selection

The primary objective of this research study aims to highlight the socio – economic and political status of the fisherwomen community in West Bengal. Due to the limitation of time, the researcher carefully selected these two contrasting coastal districts of West Bengal in order to have a comprehensive and comparative view points.

Mostly the fisherwomen in Purba Midnapore District, are directly not involved in fish capturing in the sea and rivers rather they are involved in other allied activities related to fishing





like fish sorting, drying, vendoring, sewing fish nets, feeding the fishes, helping their husbands in fish markets and like. Study found that only 2-3 fisherwomen of this area have the experience of sailing the boat in the sea and capturing the fishes directly.

On the other hand, Fisherwomen in the South 24 parganas, Sunderban area are directly involved in fish capturing in the rivers and Sea. They have the experience of sailing the 'dingis' (small handmade boats) into the dense forest area in capturing the fishes. Mostly these women have to face stiff challenges of natural hazards like heavy rain, wild life attacks like tiger and crocodiles and the like.

Period of Study

The duration of this research study period covers from March 2013 – September 2014.

Sources and Modes of Data Collection :

This research study is based on both qualitative and quantitative methods. The Qualitative mode of data collection has been given below:

- Examining the earlier studies on Fisheries and Fishworkers' with special reference to Fisherwomen in West Bengal. This has been obtained by visiting different libraries of fisheries department, W.B like CIFRI (Barrackpore); National Fishworkers' Forum Office, Kolkata; Labour Commissioner Officer, Kolkata (records obtained of registered fish workers' trade unions, W.B) and also other places of concerned interest.
- Review of the existing literature on Fisherwomen at regional, national and global level has been done. Also review of literature based on fishers' rights, struggles and movements in West Bengal has been collected from the National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) Offices in form of leaflets, newsletters, reports published by them.
- Review of Statues: examining the central and state legislation, rules, orders etc that have any bearing on fisheries resources and rights of traditional fishers' with special focus on women fisherfolk community.
- Interaction with Authorities: The researcher got a scope to collect information by interacting with the fishers', Government officials in charge of fisheries department, NGO Officials working for the rights' and welfare of the fisherfolk community in West Bengal by attending workshops, training programmes organized by NFF in collaboration with DISHA (NGO) and other national and international organization in Kolkata and other districts of West Bengal. Some of the important questions raised in the workshop were : i) What are the social security/ community benefits schemes offered by the government in the area, their mode and degree of availability? ii) What legislations/ notifications/circulars/orders are referred to by the department to protect the coastal water and resources? iii) What are the facilities available for the women fisherfolk in the state and how to avail them?

Quantitative Method:

The researcher used three methods in collecting the data --- Field Survey, Focused Group





Discussion and Key informant interviews

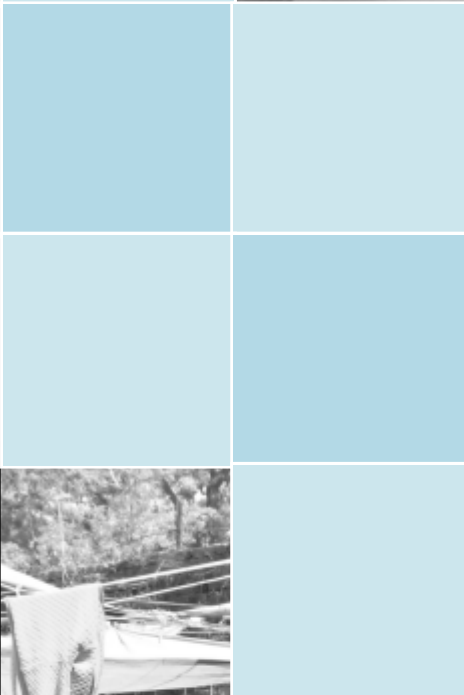
- Field Visit to selected research study areas and interaction with the Fisherwomen communities was carried out by the researcher during Jan-April, 2014. In Purba Midnapore districts, the researcher visited the markets and Khotis (already stated earlier) and interacted with the fisherwomen involved in vendoring the fishes, sorting, drying and other allied activities related to fishing excluding fish capturing. In South 24 parganas, the researcher directly interacted with the women who are involved in fish capturing. Also the researcher visited the places of their fish capturing.
- In both the selected districts by the researcher, focus group discussion was used as it is the most commonly used participatory rural approach. Women fisherfolk associated with self – help groups/ co-operatives/ Vendors' Trade Unions were interviewed in a very informal manner in a meeting arranged by the local fishworkers' union body in their area. Initially the researcher met with the focused groups an established rapport with the participants by introducing the facilitators and providing background information on the visit and discussion. The researcher also explained the general purpose of meeting emphasizing that the groups' assistance was needed to ensure that the project met it needs.
- Semi structured interviews with the key informants was done in both the districts with Commune Women's Union Members, Members of District Action Groups, Members of Fish Trade Unions, Leader of Vendor's Women Union, Leaders of the Community Based Organisation, Fisher women receiving Awards – National and International in order to get their opinion and views about fishing practices, difficulties confronting the communities, Khoti administration, realities in fish capturing, struggle with their male counterparts, participation in movements and so on. About 100 fisherwomen has been possible to interact by the researcher at Purba Midnapore district, while the interaction at the South 24 – Parganas, West Bengal covered 120 fisherwomen by applying this method.



CHAPTER

III

GLOBALISATION AND ITS IMPACT ON FISHERWOMEN COMMUNITY



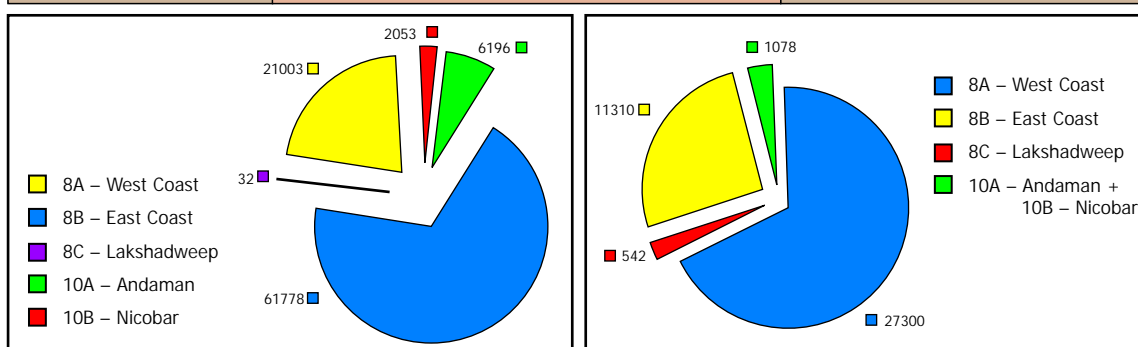
GLOBALISATION AND ITS IMPACT ON FISHERWOMEN COMMUNITY

We are in a world of capitalistic globalisation, where free movement of capital is taking place for profit making. There is no question of social justice and distributive justice. 'Development' means profiteering and modernization at the expense of the vast majority of traditional labour-intensive units of production. Coastal development including urban and industrial expansion and aquaculture and industrial activities by using destructive fishing gear like bottom-trawling without subscribing management plan in the hinterland pose many threats not only to the health of marine ecosystem (by polluting and degrading critical coastal habitats), but also adversely affect the livelihoods of coastal fishing communities through a reduction of the sustainable yield of fish-stocks, modification of the resource species composition, health and diversity, an increase in ecosystem instability and variability and a reduction of sea food quality and safety which are in a way linked to human sustainability.

India is a peninsular country. Across the nine maritime states and four Union Territories covering reefs together with their shelves, lagoons and submerged banks have a potential yield of 10% of the total marine fish catch. The Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) cover an area of about 2.02 million square km enclosed within 200 nautical miles (370.4 km) from the land. About 90% of the traditional fishing areas that were situated in international water are also under the jurisdiction of coastal states now. In the tropical world, especially in India, the continental shelf (4, 68,000 sq km) has a special significance, as it is a zone of intensive bio-geo-chemical activity. A large proportion of marine productivity takes place in this shelf, so it is necessary to protect and restore this marine bio-diversity upon which millions of Indian people are directly or indirectly dependent for their livelihood.

The coastal zone of India has been classified into the following five Biotic Provinces. This has been shown in the following table and diagram below

Area (Sq.km)	Biotic Province	Coastal wetlands(Sq.km)
8A – West Coast	21,003+ intertidal & subtidal areas	27,300
8B – East Coast	61,778+ intertidal & subtidal areas	11,310
8C – Lakshadweep	32+ intertidal & subtidal areas	542
10A – Andaman	6,196+ intertidal & subtidal areas	1,078
10B – Nicobar	2,053+ intertidal & subtidal areas	
TOTAL	91,062+ intertidal & subtidal areas	40,230





In this paper the researcher does not aim to focus on the entire coast of India rather will highlight only on the coast of West Bengal as her research area and a brief state wise description is given in order to understand the vulnerability associated with the coastal populations, mainly the poor, traditional coastal fishermen who are facing the problems in maintaining their livelihood due to the introduction of modern, mechanized fishing which uses the destructive gears like bottom trawlers and the exploitation of oceanic resources as well.

Coast of West Bengal is the deltaic region of the Ganges and Brahmaputra. Coastal wetlands are in three districts, viz, 24 Parganas, Howrah and Midnapore. Mangroves, tidal mudflats and estuaries are major ecosystems, although aquaculture ponds(428.6 sq km) have encroached upon large natural wetlands. Sunderbans delta in West Bengal is the largest delta in the world and harbours, the largest chunk of mangrove vegetation. It is a large inter tidal area of approximately 26,000 sq km. The Indian part of Sunderbans covers an area of about 9,630 sq km.

These ecosystems constitute a rich marine resource which is also the source of livelihood for many fishing villages of India's coastal states. But due to globalization and modernization, these fishing villages are getting submerged day-to-day and facing stiff challenges in surviving.

The fact is that the 'superstructure' built in the name of modernization and development has become too heavy and burdensome for the fishworkers whose labour converts the marine resources into commodities with exchange value. The marginalisation of fish workers is becoming wider with the advent of new technologies. Again within this marginalization, the most affected, abused, exploited are the women fish workers rather than men.

Fishery communities are endowed with sea as natural capital but this capital has become a common property for the stakeholders and rich boat owners to plunder, leaving these poorer section in a deplorable condition by creating a situation of decline in employment opportunities, deviating them from their cultural livelihood as they do not have the human capital (education skill) and social capital (organizations) which help to turn natural resources into physical assets and protect those assets from degradation. Besides, exit and entry of new techniques lead to further resource depletion and hence more stringent resource limitation and thereby leading to a phenomenon which may be called 'tragedy of the commons'.¹

Historically, the fisherfolk have been a downtrodden and neglected group in society. Modernization ideologies of the 1970s of most of the developing countries in Asia have favoured almost exclusively large scale in industrial fisheries using modern technology for fishing like bottom trawling. The early success of these programs in increasing the catch and income of the first few to acquire the new technology gave added impetus to alternative mode of intervention to ensure sustainable livelihood for the small-scale fisheries. But it failed to address and understand the economic condition of fisherfolks in the small scale sector in the context of change in access to and degradation of marine resources and to develop policies and actions that would promote sustainable livelihoods in major areas of economic life in the small scale fishery sector. While we stress the need for safety that the houses should be away from the waves, we should also not forget that the life of the planet and the dependent health and the welfare of the whole humanity should not be sacrificed to the greed of a few.

Foreign trawlers entered the Indian coastal fishing zone as a part of the global joint venture. The globalization that we are talking about is actually a post- phenomenon. But globalization started much earlier. Even in mid- 20th century, particularly from 1940s, a lot of changes took place in





the fisheries sector as a result of the external global market related changes.²

In India, however, this mechanized way of fishing began in 1960s, when an Indo-Norwegian project which emphasized capital intensive technology was first implemented along the Travancore- Kochi coast during 1959-63, and then in the Karnataka and Tamil Nadu coast in 1963-73. The project implemented on the south-western and south-eastern coasts, was a three party agreement signed by the United Nations, Norway and The Government of India. The project was based on a model successful in Norway and Sweden. It promoted a western style industrial fishery development strategy that proved to be disastrous for traditional fishermen in South Indian coastal villages. The shift from traditional fishing to a capital-intensive industry, focusing on exports led to over exploitation and speedy depletion of marine resources. So the traditional fishing sector in India has been exposed to an unequal competition with modern mechanized fishing. John Fernandez, a leader of the Kerala Swathantra Matsya Thozhilali Federation (KSMTF) who died a few years ago, described the process as “ Trawlerisation” – an unchecked exploitation of coastal shrimp, which further marginalized and pauperized fish workers and destroyed coastal habitats.³

Traditionally, fishing was carried out by small, unpowered craft confined to shallow waters. Bottom trawling or dragging, is a common mobile marine fishing method for catching certain types of fish or shrimp. Boats or ships with heavily weighted nets scrape the sea floor and catch everything in their paths.

The large and heavy nets scour the seabed, killing organisms by crushing them, burying them and exposing them to predators. Scientific studies show that structures in all types of habitat including mud, rocky reefs, boulders and cobbles are affected by trawling which reduces the structural complexity needed by many marine species, particularly juvenile fish, to survive.

Traditional fishing, on the contrary, was much more eco-friendly. The fishing community in India, with their traditional knowledge of the sea and its environment harvested the resources on a moderate scale. The craft and gear deployed were the most appropriate to suit the environment and these were developed by the fishworkers themselves with centuries of skill and experience. The catamarans, small canoes, big canoes and different gears were all results of traditional innovations to meet the dynamics of tropical waters, multi-species, fish behaviour and seasonal changes.

The fishworkers never overfish the resources which they recognize as their common property. But surface and mid water trawling using non- mechanized craft have been long in practice among traditional fishworkers. But, bottom trawling, used by the industrial fishing vessels, is regarded as a controversial and destructive technique by most of the maritime countries.

Therefore, this mechanized operation of fishing in the form of bottom trawling, which has been introduced in the name of modernization and commercialization has created massive destruction over the last few decades not only in the marine eco system but also in the human survival system. Developmental pressures, over exploitation of juvenile fishes, depletion of marine resources, pollution, destruction of mangroves and beach vegetation and serious interference in the estuaries threatening the ecology and the livelihood of the inhabitants.

It is true that millions of people are directly and indirectly related to this process of mechanized way of fishing which has become a good source of sustaining their livelihood. Besides, the government of India is also earning both foreign and domestic exchanges from export of trawl fishing. The net result of all these is that a majority of the population of coastal India is now





without any source of earning. This mechanized trawl fishing is basically operated by rich boat owners where as the traditional poor fishermen are sidelined from their profession. Moreover, this method of alternative fishing has also affected the natural rhythm of the oceanic system and marine habitat. The fact is that trawling, while increasing the production of fish, leading to economic benefits of the rich, has caused, at the same time, poverty, unemployment and marginalisation of the traditional fishermen and the destruction and devastation of both biotic and abiotic communities in the coastal areas.

In this chapter, the researcher would therefore like to highlight the adverse impact of trawlerisation from the following dimensions: Environmental, Economic, Social, Political and Cultural Viewpoint. Besides, the researcher aims to focus on the serious problems and challenges faced by the fishermen, mostly the fishworkers community in West Bengal due to the advent of modern and global method of fishing which has jeopardize their lives and livelihood and has resulted in their loss of identity and disempowerment as well as posing a threat to their survival and existence.

Environmental Impact

An ecosystem consists of plants, animals and micro-organisms, which live in biological communities and interact with each other, with the physical and chemical environment, with adjacent ecosystems and with the atmosphere. They are complex systems that exhibit a diversity of structural and functional characteristics, which affect both their sustainability and their relationship with their users. So well functioning ecosystems are pre-requisite for economic and other human activities.

Sustainability of oceanic resources is challenged now-a days by bottom trawling which has both direct and indirect impact on the marine ecosystem as well as bio-diversity, as this method of fishing collects and kills huge amount of non-target species and young ones of commercially valuable species, mechanically disturbs the sea bottom and injures a wide variety of benthic marine creatures and rich marine habitats such as sea grass, meadows, coral reefs, sea mounts and deep water areas subject to little natural disturbance. Besides, it also removes the colossal amounts of high biomass organisms in the seabed that help in increasing the seabed complexity and thus offers shelter for young organisms and therefore reduces their vulnerability to predation. A single passage of beam trawl has been reported to kill 5-65% of the resident fauna and mix the top few centimeters of sediment. The area of seabed-trawled worldwide is nearly 150 times greater than the area of forest-clear-cut each year. It is equivalent to half the world's continental shelves.

According to Watling and Norse, the environmental damage caused by bottom trawling can be substantial and irreversible. However, most of the disturbances in the sea-bottom remain unrecorded as they are hidden from direct human observation.

The impacts of trawling on the physical, chemical and biological environment of the marine ecosystem and the diversity and quantity of by-catch and discards remain poorly documented for the tropical waters.

Trawling is also considered as the most important source of human induced physical disturbance on the sea floor throughout the world. Bottom- trawl nets can plow deep furrows on the sea floor, remove rock and coral, stir up sediments that smother benthic organisms and smooth out natural topography, thus resulting in the reduction of structural heterogeneity, an





important factor contributing to the abundance of bio-diversity at the sea bottom. The impact of trawling on the sea floor, which depends upon the speed towing, the size and weight of the net, type of seabed and strength of currents and tides, may remain as a transitory phenomenon in shallow waters affected by strong tides or persists for several years in deeper areas with lesser disturbance.

Auster et al used a *Remotely Operated Vehicle* (ROV) to obtain video images of the sea bed to quantify the physical effects of trawling on the sea bottom. They concluded that both visually and statistically, trawlers greatly reduce the textual complexity of the bottom. The biological and geographical implications of the resuspension of sediment due to trawling have also been found to reduce photosynthesis.⁴

The immediate effect of bottom trawling on the physio- chemical parameters in the inshore waters of Kerala, recorded increase in temperature and nitrates and decrease in dissolved oxygen, organic matter and organic carbon due to the churning action of the trawl net on the sea bottom. Trawling activities may affect sediment community function, carbon mineralization and biogeochemical fluxes, because the physical effects of trawling are equivalent to those of an extreme bioturbator.

The seawater benthic habitat interface is similar to any ecotone in the terrestrial realm. The mechanical penetration of the seabed by the ground rope and tickler chains of the trawl net upsets the delicate physical and chemical properties of the habitat, leading to direct mortality of the benthic fauna. Several organisms that occur in the path of the net are killed as a result of direct contact with the gear and exposure to predators. The impacts are more severe with beam trawl because of its deeper penetration, even the low impact of trawling may significantly affect sensitive in faunal and epifaunal species inhabiting the upper zones of the seabed.

The decline and/or elimination of these species and the disturbance to their habitats may affect both structural and functional biodiversity. Intensive trawling has been recorded to decrease the density and depleting the abundance of sea grasses, polychaetes, molluscs and echinoderms.

The trawl net, being an efficient but unselective fishing gear with a small cod end mesh size, captures numerous small-sized species as well as juveniles of larger species, compared to any other fishing gear. Intensive trawling during the breeding season of fish and shell fish may affect total marine fish landings.

Besides, there are studies that showed changes in community composition of marine benthic communities as a result of trawling. Benthic communities play an important role in mineralization and release of nutrients in marine eco systems. The dragging of trawl nets may decrease dissolved oxygen, which may be due to the mixing of reduced products such as methane and hydrogen sulphide or the resuspended bacteria attached to sediments exerting an increase in oxygen demand in the water column. Formation of sediment clouds in the sea bottom may affect natural balance between physico- chemical parameters in the ocean, further depleting the availability of oxygen. Trawling was also found to flush out nutrients and contaminants, and there are possibilities of rise in lethal gases such as ammonia, methane and hydrogen sulphide, affecting the life of organisms in water.⁵ Moreover the trawlers use crude oil and oil spillage in water pollutes the water thereby endangering the lives of the marine habitats.

So, unlike the traditional aquaculture, which being natural, created no environmental hazard,





modern aquaculture has not only caused ecological imbalances in coastal India, but also has undermined, at the same time, the livelihood of lakhs of fishermen in the country. And, yet, modern commercial shrimp and prawn farming is officially engaged in all coastal states of India — W.B, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra and Gujrat. In all these states, the environmental pollution caused by these shrimp farms has increased skin, eye, and water borne diseases among the local populations.

In different coastal states in India, these mechanized trawlers have affected the shrimp cultivation with its effect on marine eco system. In Orissa, the lack of sensitivity of the trawl net and the resultant capture of a huge quantity and diversity of non-target species has endangered species such as sea turtles resulting in the decline in their population. In W.B coast of India, this trawl fishing has its adverse impacts on mangrove cultivation at Sunderban.

Therefore, trawling remains a controversial method of fishing. This active fishing with synthetic fibres, propulsion with outboard motors and modification of crafts and gears, including indigenization of fishing techniques such as mini purse seining and mini trawling also are instances of ecological destruction. It has also resulted in a high level of wasteful by-catch and also has led to large scale destruction of egg-bearing and juvenile fishes. This was not the case with the nets that traditional fishermen used. Their nets had bigger holes and fish eggs and baby fish escaped to restock the ocean. The marine ecosystem can be replenished each year if given the chance. But mechanized fishing does not allow the ocean to replenish itself. And so the fisherfolk often return with empty nets. So the ecological price of mechanization is too high.

Economic Impact

By the early 1970s the regular fishing grounds of the USA and Japan were already depleted. At the same time the global demand for fish was rising sharply. For India, this meant a great opportunity to earn through export. So newer grounds needed to be explored to meet the growing demands. The Indian Ocean that covers an expanse of 74.917 million sq kms has an estimated capacity to yield 14.39 million tones of marine products. Most of this would come from the narrow strip of water that borders the land or the inshore waters.

So in 1977, the Indian government declared a 200mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in the Indian Ocean. This declaration gave it the sovereign rights to exploit the resources of the sea commercially. At that time the government said that the vast economic zone had remained untapped because of the lack of modernization and technology. And so the government began to introduce mechanized trawlers.⁶

Trawling in India for catching fish is a result of global changes which is linked to the global market and in turn influenced by the global trends from a very long time.

With the new mechanization, the catches promised to be huge, but the production exceeded local demand. The scale of operations widened and the market became bigger and fish began to be sold further a field. This required better preservation technologies, which were available through financiers. The poor fisherfolk could neither afford mechanized boats nor the preservation techniques. So the middlemen stepped in. These were the people with the money. They bought boats and not only controlled the market but also the profits. Therefore, the traditional fisher people were left out of this new system.⁷

India is one of the 20 countries in the world known for rich inland fisheries resources. With





approximately one million tons of annual fish production contributed by inland capture fisheries, India is the second highest in the world in terms of inland fish production.⁸

Great potential exists for expanding the nation's fishing industry. Fish production in the country has registered tremendous growth over the last two decades or so, ranging from 5.5% to 5.8% per annum, which is much higher than that for the agricultural sector as a whole. The increase in inland fish production was even more dramatic, increasing almost eight fold from 218,000 tons in Fish Yield 1950 to 1.7 million tons in Fish Yield 1990. the value of fish and processed fish exports increased from less than one percent of the total value of exports in Fish Yield 1960 to 3.6% in Fish Yield 1993. The value of fish and fish products exported from India was Rs 6,188 crore.⁹

So there is no doubt that the fisheries sector occupies an important place in the socio-economic development of India. It is a source of cheap and nutritious food and is an important domestic and foreign exchange earner. Besides, it is considered as a major source of livelihood for 11 million people in the country, engaged fully, partially or in subsidiary activities.

The post harvest infrastructure consists of freezing plants, canning plants, ice-making plants, fishmeal plants, cold storage and peeling sheds which together cater to a sizeable labour force of one million people engaged in fishing and another 0.8 million in post harvest operations. This is one side of the story which we find is very positive, beneficial to the country's economy.

The other side of the story of this marine fisheries sector which has a very vast potential for further development is equally negative, having an adverse impact on the community and posing a threat to the greater society as well.

Trawl fishing plays a socio-economically destructive role as well. Unregulated access to marine fisheries creates a decision making environment in which incremental private benefits to an individual fisherman from the increased capture markedly exceed the incremental private costs associated with the increased capture. Under these circumstances, each rational fisherman is motivated to capture more and more of the fish till the harvestable fish stock is completely exhausted a result of un-cordinated actions of all the fisherman in the community. The world fish catch has increased more than four times in the past 40 yrs, but over- intensive use of modern technology and search for short term benefits coupled with continuous government support for otherwise uneconomic production has had a devastating impact on many important fish stocks.

Another result of over- fishing is the poverty off fishermen. In the absence of any other alternative source of livelihood, fishermen are compelled to indulge in over- fishing, knowing fully well that this is irrational for the fishermen community and this level of catch is not sustainable.

Everywhere it first boosts the catch of fish through mechanized and intensive fishing. Everywhere it drives out the traditional fishermen from the trade. And then it entails gradual depletion in catch caused by its wasteful and destructive fishing technique. Fish scarcity and eventual price hike are natural impacts. Sometimes due to the problem of stocking the over supplied fish, the price of the fish decline and the poor fishermen do not get the exact price from the market.

Over fishing also has another serious problem of declining yield in many inshore waters that were previously high yielding, supporting large number of traditional fishermen. Although the real causes of this phenomenon are difficult to identify, generally new fishing technology characterized by mechanized trawlers is blamed for this.





With the increase in the number of mechanized trawlers in the late 1970s in Kerala, the total catch of marine fish declined significantly, with the mechanized sector capturing a lion's share in the declining catches. An analysis of the catches revealed that many demersal species had declined, indicating over-fishing by the trawlers.

So the main economic challenges facing the inland fisheries sub-sector in India are the lack of any scientific assessment of fishery resources and their potential in terms of fish production, low productivity, lack of eco-friendly modern technologies for harvest and post-harvest operations, pollution of fisheries leading to fall in fish production and inadequate infrastructure facilities for processing and marketing, presence of free market and super market.

Cultural Impact

After the emergence of trawl fishing in India, the traditional fishermen are getting uprooted and diverted from their cultural livelihood and occupation since they could not afford to invest so much money in modern fishing craft and gears and hence are compelled to join the rank of casual labourers. So a cultural conversion is noticed.

Modernization ideologies of the 1970s off most of the developing countries in Asia have focused almost exclusively on large-scale industrial fisheries using modern technology. But the planners of our country fail to take into account the fact that the 'development' introduced for uplifting the poor and giving them a sustainable livelihood, is in actual sense, hurting them the most.

A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living. But when this means of living become an open access for the modern technocrats then the livelihood of traditional fishermen are virtually destroyed. The socio-cultural characteristics of small-scale fishermen may lead not only to the dissipation of economic surplus but also to the impoverishment of fishermen themselves.

Besides, lack of occupational and geographical mobility, low educational level, advanced age, preference for a particular way of life, caste restrictions, just inability to liquidate one's assets, decline in employment opportunities along with decline in market price of fish due to over fishing and increasing resource crisis are a number of factors which lead the way of exit for these traditional fisherfolk not only from their source of earning but also from their socio-cultural life. So this small boat fishermen ability to secure a livelihood has become severely restricted.

As mentioned earlier, use of trawling and over production of fishes is also related to the question of economic sustainability. It is creating intermediaries and super markets. But the poor fishermen are not getting the exact price of the fishes. As a result, they are deviating from their cultural way of living

So we find almost the livelihoods of around 1.7 million full time fishermen, 1.3 million part-time fishermen and 2.3 million occasional fishermen, many of whom worked as saltmakers, ferrymen or seamen or operated boats of hire are in stake.¹⁰

It is true that the government is providing subsidies to poor fishermen so that they can motorize their traditional craft to increase the range and frequency of operation, with a consequent increase in the catch and earnings. A total of about 26,171 traditional craft had been motorized under the program by 1992 [science, technology and society]. But out of all these returns to the traditional fishing community are poverty, unemployment, hunger and difficulty of sustaining





and surviving their livelihood. Because they lack skill and knowledge of operating these modern equipments of fishing, all these block the source of employment for them. Traditional fishing provided much more employment as it was labour intensive.

The introduction of trawling and purse-seining technologies, borrowed from the western countries, was motivated to increase fish haul through better exploitation of the marine resources. The western economies, characterized by scarcity of labour and rich uni- species fish potential, wanted these high technology fishing gears to harness their resources. But the scientists and bureaucrats in India, who advocated these gears for Indian coastal waters on which thousands of fishworkers subsist and earn their livelihood never bothered about the damages these technologies could inflict. A country like India cannot afford to apply capital- intensive labour saving devices for development.

All over the Indian coastline this encroachment of the foreign vessels into the fishing area has generated conflict situations based on heavy losses forced by the traditional fisherfolk in terms of depleting fish catch and uncompetitiveness of traditional of fishing craft and gear. Almost about 85% of the fishing community is socio- culturally marginalized. The fact is that the communities who depend directly on natural resources for their livelihood are very poor, ignorant and have no alternative employment opportunities and are compelled by their circumstances to over exploit fishing, the benefits of which are reaped by the richer section of the society.

Social Impact

Fishing communities are marginalized from the rest of the society. The mechanization of the fishing industry further accentuated poverty and social backwardness of the community. Besides, there is an increasing exposure to the vagaries of catch and price fluctuations. The debts to the moneylenders and the fish traders-financers have multiplied their grievances. Very little of the profits and foreign exchange generated by fish export markets have benefited the local fishers and fishing control over marine resources increasingly concentrated, the lives and livelihoods of fisherfolk have become increasingly precarious. So there has been a marginalisation of the small artisanal fishers. They today are greatly weakened by increasingly unsustainable livelihoods by alienation, by lack of use rights, by loss of common property resources, and due to lack of easy alternatives.

As a result of all this, conflictual situations are on the rise. There are conflicts between small- scale fishers and mechanized fishers, between fishermen and boatowners, between one region and another, and most critically between one nation and another.

Over the last four decades, the south western coast has witnessed a series of violent clashes—those between traditional fisherfolk and the speed boat fishermen, and those where Hindus clash with Muslims or Christians. In the southern part of India, it was between Christians and Muslims, rampant mainly after the '80s, although some places like Maradu in Kerala, have a history of communal violence right from the early '60s. Maradu witnessed two violent incidents. Minor communal clashes are common in the entire region, resulting in loss of human life and property. According to police sources, there are dozens of sensitive pockets along the coast.

Also a coalition between state and market results in creating a breach within the fishworker





community. Dr. K.N.Ganesh, who did a major study of the social and economic factors leading to communal tensions huge in Maradu, describes it as a state of total helplessness caused by intense competition, huge indebtedness and poverty and no effort on the part of the government or any other agency, to help the fisherfolk survive. Many have left their homes looking for alternative jobs and these internal displacements added a new dimension to the existing social tensions. K.V. Devdas, who has observed the changing lives of the fisher people in Madapally, in the northern belt, asserts that while one section continued to live in abject poverty, a class of 'newly rich' emerged.¹¹ Jona Halfdanadottir, a scholar from the Netherlands, in a study on the social mobilization of fisherfolk in Kerala, has observed that political parties, both left and right, showed no interest in mobilizing fishing communities, nor did they even try to address their problems.¹²

Therefore, the fisherfolk movement emerged against this mechanized way of fishing to defend their right and control over their traditional livelihood resources. This movement stands out as a prolonged and sustained struggle by traditional fisherfolk, supported by a wide coalition of voluntary organizations, religious groups, environmental groups, academic and policy institutions, media etc.

So we find social life along the coast became a hotbed of communal politics, a tragic turn of events as these fishing communities, through generations, had developed their own effective system of self-governance that would have emerged as natural centers of secular social and political organizations. What happened instead was the destruction of these organic structures by the invasion of new forces and new techniques. Also the miseries of the impoverished class of people became fertile ground for the spread of communal and diverse ideologies, with communal organizations playing on people's fear.

Political Impact

Since sea is a common property and there is no legal regime like that in land administration, it has become anybody's field of plunder. The sea today has become a place of bitter competition and conflict between the powerful, on one side, and the people fighting for livelihood, on the other. Marine ecology and bio diversity have been worst affected. A very strong nexus of corrupt bureaucrats, trawler lobbies, politicians and importers operates in our society. A new commercial business interest from outside the fishing community jumps into the sea taking advantage of institutional finance marginalizing the traditional fishermen.

People with the sole motive of profit went in with big investments and employed 'over-efficient' gears. The bureaucracy ignored its ill effects and patronized its growth. Even the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) has come out to patronize this destructive technology with lucrative schemes. Of late they ask for a deposit of Rs 5 lakhs worth trawler. The scheme, or paper, is meant for the upgradation of the traditional fishermen. But in practice, any well to do financier who has connections to manage a certificate from local bodies showing a fictitious group of 10-12 people gets the trawler.¹³

So to counter the depletion of resources, and to improve the life of the poor fisher folk, several kinds of campaign, protests, and agitations commenced for the enactment of a Marine Regulation Act in line with the recommendation of the Government of India. Also the National Fishworkers' Forum and several other fisherfolk federations demanded not only the imposition of state restrictions on deep-sea fishing by mechanized trawlers, but also a total ban on trawling





during the monsoon, which is the breeding season of most fishes. On Jan 9, 2005 The Hindu published the views presented by Fisheries Minister of Kerala, Dominic Presentation, who said, "no mechanized boat will be allowed to go into the sea during the ban period. The ban does apply to traditional fishing craft and canoes fitted with motors. Mechanized boats from other states too will not be permitted to enter the territorial waters". He urged the traditional fishermen to cooperate with the state government in preventing destructive modes of fishing. They should not use mini trawlers or prohibited fishing nets during the ban period.

When the congress came to power in kerala, the Kerala State Fisheries Act of 1980 was enacted. But no effort was made to implement the provisions of the Act. As a result the government of Kerala set up a series of commissions like Babu Paul Commission (1981), Kala War Commission (1984), Bala Krishna Nair commission (1989) to look into the issue of implementation.

Even the political parties have co-opted the fishermen's unions and transformed the fisherfolk into vote banks. Welfare schemes are now being distributed by political parties to those who are close or affiliated to them. This has considerably weakened the organizations and divided them along partisan lines. This political vacuum was eventually filled by communal organizations that slowly began to dominate the lives of the fisher people. Association with political parties allowed the campaigners to carry out lobbying among legislators and policy makers.

The state largely supported and promoted the interests of the politically more influential and resourceful mechanized fishing industry, while paying lip services to the demands of the artisanal fisherfolk. In a classic case of double speak; the state accepted the traditional fisher folk's demands for welfare measures, while undermining the source of livelihood, by delaying and subsequently removing the ban on monsoon trawling as well as restrictions on trawlers. It appears that the state was motivated more by a desire to contain the intensity of the protests rather than making any substantial change in the situation of the artisanal fishermen. But, in recent years, it is also found that fishermen too have developed a political response and have used their voting power to defeat political parties and coalitions which have opposed their cause. The failure of the right wing coalition in Kerala in the 1987 Assembly election is an example.¹⁴

Since millions of traditional fisher people of India along with many academicians activists, and civil society groups, concerned with conservation of coastal resources and sustainable traditional livelihood, raise their voice of protest, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) had constituted an Expert Committee under the chairmanship of Prof. M.S. Swaminathan in July, 2004 to review and make recommendations with regard to implementation and amendments if necessary, of Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 1991. The Expert Committee submitted its report along with this recommendation, which were accepted by the MoEF in April 2005.¹⁵

However, what came in was the CZM (Coastal Zone Management), which is nothing but a blatant effort to facilitate greater commercialization of the coastal zone. The zonation, particularly CZMII, paves the way for the proliferation of SEZs (Special Economic Zones). It also paves the way for displacement of fishing communities from their habitats and the area they have traditionally used and fished especially as the Swaminathan Committee has not, in its recommendations, recognized the traditional and customary rights of fishing communities to their habitat, highlighted in the 1991 Notification. Even area declared as CZM I, for conservation, are likely to pose as much threat to livelihoods of fishing communities. Besides, the Indian Government, in 1977 declared a 200-mile EEZ in the Indian Ocean. Therefore, we





find that all these proposed notifications gave sovereign rights to exploit the resources of the sea commercially and also poses a serious threat to livelihoods of coastal fishing communities and to coastal ecosystems. It is true that the Government of India has made some positive legislation for proper management and control of the fisheries sector. The 2004 policy seeks to address the concerns of traditional and coastal fishermen together with those of the other stakeholders in the deep-sea sector, so as to achieve harmonized development of marine fishery.¹⁶ But the absence of a strong will and lack of proper machinery and infrastructure have resulted in non-implementation of the policy provisions of the Acts made for the betterment of the fishery sector.

Impact on fisherwomen:

It is therefore understood from above that globalization has spread its impact at all the levels of fishing and fishing community in India. Since this chapter is specifically focusing on the global impact on fisherwomen community, therefore it is significant to state the problems and adversities face by this women fish workers due to global and modern method of fishing which has made their survival at stake. In India women constitute around 50% of the total population and comprise one-third of the labour force. It is estimated that there are 5.4 million people fully engaged in fisheries activities, of which, 3.8 million are fishermen and 1.6 million are fisherwomen.¹⁷

The major activities, in which women's contribution can be noticed throughout the country, are fish processing and fish marketing. They play a significant role in pre and post harvest operations in capture fisheries while their presence is conspicuous in all the stages of culture fisheries. A study was conducted by Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Kochi to review the role played by women in marine fisheries sector of India.¹⁸ In Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Southern part of India women engage themselves in seaweed collection in addition to the traditional jobs of fish curing, marketing, net making and prawn seed collection. Salt pans are another major sector which employs a lot woman in Tamil Nadu, where the ratio of women to men is 4:1. In Andhra Pradesh, the main occupation of women include collecting fish and molluscan shells in addition to their contribution in fish drying, curing, marketing, shrimp processing and net making. In Maharashtra, women play a major role in fish marketing and control women in fisheries. In Gujrat, women mostly do the handling and processing activities. In Lakshadweep, particularly Minicoy, the major fishery products known as masmin, riha and ahru of tuna are produced by women.

Therefore, in almost all the coastal states, fisherwomen are basically engaged in prawn peeling sector followed by the small scale fish traders, fish marketing, value addition and aquaculture practices. In West Bengal, also fisherwomen are engaged in these activities of fish sorting, marketing and drying. Also they purchases fish from a traditional landing centre sells at local market. In many places, women in West Bengal also run petty shops, selling different inputs needed for fishing and other household articles. Further, mobile food selling units are also run by women in landing centre serve the purpose of supplying breakfast and snacks of fishermen. So study reveals that women constitute a good proportion of workforce to this fishing industry.

West Bengal is always known for its unique network of productive fishery resources including brackish water fisheries because of the extensive saline soil water resource, human resource, favourable agro-climatic condition, productive estuarine ecosystem including the Sunderbans and also abundance of prawns and other brackish water fisheries. All the shrimp are creek based





and are located within the CRZ. The traditional shrimp farming practices are also commonly known as “Bhasa Bandha” fishery. Excepting for 4678 ha under improved traditional shrimp farming, the remaining area falls in the category of traditional type with trap and culture locally known as “bheries”. The average production of the state is about 436kg/ha.

West Bengal is one of the pioneers in export of shrimps. These however, are the common problems in all the coastal states practicing this modern aquaculture. In recent years, the shrimp-farming sector has received criticism for excessive use of fishmeal in formulated feeds.

In the researcher recent field study at Dadanpatrabar of North Midnapore district, Ramnagar2 Block, in West Bengal, I found that about 300 ponds were constructed under the World Bank Funded Project for the BPL people mainly for shrimp cultivation. The project was started in 2002 as World Bank Fishery Project and thousand of hectares of fertile land were used but the project has failed because it was mainly capital- intensive and the dwellers of Dadanpatrabar were mainly poor traditional fishing communities. The locals informed me that due to this project, thousands of families were uprooted from their livelihood, thousand hectares of land are now of no use, have become totally barren. So the project, which was mainly introduced with the purpose to uplift the BPL people by the government, has been wrongly taken. The locals protested for this but all in vain.

Due to this project, the local mangroves were all destroyed thereby creating a great environmental damage and natural resource loss to the society.

Another district field study at Sunderban in West Bengal, (known for the largest mangrove forest covering about 10,000 sq km) and also in other maritime states in India, these natural resources has been threatened due to pisciculture and aquaculture and are in the way to extinction. Mangrove ecosystems have great economic value because of their contribution to the floodweb in supporting rich estuarine and marine fisheries upon which lakhs of people sustain their livelihood.

Therefore, it is clear that shrimp farming has its adverse impact not only on environment but also on livelihood and human rights. Government of India records that in West Bengal alone 20 billion fry are wasted during seed collection which is only 400 million.¹⁹

A sad aspect of this collection is the employment of children, who have to suck the 'fry' on to their tongue and split them into a mud water containing water. This creates health hazards. Besides, the women involved in different activities related to traditional fishing today left with no employment due to aquaculture and trawlerisation. Traditional mode of fishing created different kinds of fishing related work like fish sorting, fish drying and also weaving of fish nets. But due to aquaculture and shrimp farming, these activities are no longer required.

Moreover, during their off season of fishing, these fisherwomen managed to survive their life and livelihood by working in agricultural lands. But most shrimp farmers in coastal areas have converted agricultural lands into shrimp ponds, i.e, the loss of human sustainability as Vandana Shiva (1994) notes that shrimp farming will employ only five workers for 40 ha area while agriculture would employ 50 workers for the same area.

Further, the women of the fisherwomen community has to face severe problem of drinking water, high levels of pollution, fish mortality, contamination of ground water and health hazards caused due to modern method of fishing. Calm beds have been wiped out by pollution from aquaculture farms. Drinking water became saline after shrimp farms were established.





Fisherwomen are resisting such developmental projects because their fish catch has decreased due to the cutting down of mangrove trees and the pollution of the sea by chemicals discharged from prawn farms. In this context, similar kinds of adversities are faced by fisherwomen outside our country also.

For eg. In southern Thailand, a woman in a beautiful fishing village near Trang in the southern border area, was trying to recover the coastal environment and said, " Don't eat too much shrimp, please. Why do we have to lose our traditional peaceful life in such a way?"²⁰

Actually, prawn cultivation has spread all over the coastal zones in Asia. It is not only fisherfolk but also farmers that are affected, because their farmlands are taken away and used as prawn and fish ponds. In Bangladesh, tragic incidents have taken place in last several years in the coastal areas in the south. According to a testimony at the Asian Women's Tribunal held in Bangkok in 1994, a group of women farmers had taken out a protest march to the developer of prawn farms, shouting " Don't take our land!". The developer sent a team of armed men and they fired at the demonstrating women. One woman was killed and several were injured.

The tragedy was caused because the Bangladesh government promoted prawn cultivation together with the World Bank and IMF as a part of the structural adjustment programme to earn foreign currency. In this kind of poorest countries like India, Bangladesh, where the mal nutrition rate of children is very high, due to lack of enough food, people are not allowed to produce their own food. Instead they are forced to cultivate food for export. Women and children are losing their lives by both starvation and violence in the name of development. Thus globalization threatens food security and destroys the environment and causes people extreme pains and agony.

However these are mostly the evils of globalisation in the area of fishing but as every dark cloud has a silver lining. So, besides negative aspects, the positive factors that helped the fisherwomen community in empowering themselves is that they started developing themselves through organizations and groups in the form of co-operative societies. Again, coming back to India, in West Bengal

Sarada Samudrik Mahila Cooperative Society is a women's cooperative organization based at Dadanpatrabar, Contai, Ramnagar Block, Midnapore district in West Bengal. In this area, there are four more co operative organizations of which two are just formed.²¹ The total members in these society are about 400-450. The cooperative was formed in 1991.

Ratna Majhi, who is also the winner of Green Peace Award, said that this cooperative is yet to receive government grants. Every member has to give Rs 150 to take the membership. This business is mainly related to dry fish.

She told us that the Fishery Board has given them identity cards and has also asked to make an insurance card. As a result of their protest the government has restricted issuing licenses to the trawl owners. But as Ratna Majhi said, they have to face other problems. They are not getting the proper market for dry fish. The fish catches are also getting decreased day by day because of trawling. Besides construction and development of industry has caused further miseries for them. She argued that the government is unable to take a clear decision. On the one hand it is supporting the trawler and on the other hand it is also focusing us by providing us identity card, insurance card. But the fact remains that the traditional fishing community is getting displaced day by day.





Therefore, the negative impacts of globalization were a death blow on the fisherwomen in general, and particularly on the inland fisherwomen. The impact of globalization and the new development initiatives on the livelihood on the conditions of fisherwomen is ironical.

The injustices suffered by the fisher women can be summarised as follows:

- They are forced to play the major role for the domestic economic survival as men lost their traditional role due to modernization of the fish production process.
- They are denied entry in the market.
- They are denied basic infrastructures like sheds, tables, chairs, iceboxes etc. and other facilities such as drinking water, toilets, and place for changing dress etc. in the market.
- They are brutally exploited by middlemen, moneylenders etc. Traditionally, women used to collect and sell fish caught by community's men. But now they are forced to buy fish from big contractors or merchants and have to take great effort to sell it in the market.
- Often they are being physically attacked by goondas of the market contractor.

Finally, it can be seen that the modern technological facilities go in favour of men who can easily access it and make use of. Though fisherwomen contribute half of the workforce but their social status remains poor. The fact remains that women, despite the slow and silent contribution, still face stumbling blocks in their path towards development, mainly brought by mechanization and modernization mode of fishing which has engendered multi – faceted changes in the role and contribution of fisherwomen in India and specifically in West Bengal as the researcher made an investigation in selected area of West Bengal. Thus it can be concluded by stating that in this era of Liberalisation- Globalisation – Privatisation, where on one hand nation is progressing becoming a source of investment activity by a few who have access to capital, power ,resources and thus extracting all the benefits of nature at the expense of local communities and their livelihood options. On the other hand, posing threat to human and marine life. It is true and unavoidable that every nation wants to progress and powerful. With this purpose India is also being driven by LPG model of development. In this context, it may be remembered what Mahatma Gandhi said, “India live in its villages”. In a country like ours, where majority of population lives in villages and are largely illiterate depending mostly on natural resources (jal, jamin and jungle), such modernisation and liberalization which does not take into account the availability of natural resources, is bound to be self-defeating. And importantly, in this developmental process women as the marginalized entities within the marginalized groups are often forced to shoulder the negative effects of development at large.





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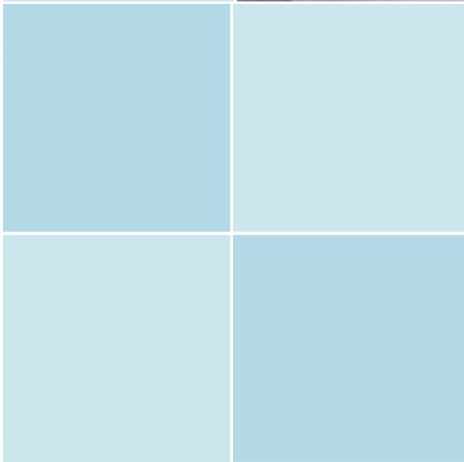


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CHAPTER
IV

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROFILE



SOCIO –ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROFILE OF FISHERWOMEN COMMUNITY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TWO DISTRICTS

Understanding the livelihood systems of the poor is crucial to effective poverty reduction. It is true that livelihood of the poor can never be understood in any one track logic --- be it economic, social, technical, cultural or political. The livelihood systems are made up of very diverse elements which taken together ---- contribute the physical, economic, social, cultural and political universe where in the families live. The livelihood approach puts households of the poor as its central focus.

There is no denying the fact that West Bengal has observant natural endowments, conventional wisdom and human skills in respect of intensified fish farming. But negative socio- economic – political factors responsible for the fisher folk communities development and upliftment. Further, it has been also examined the condition of the poor, backward, silent fisherwomen are more underdeveloped, disempowered, disoriented and suffering from lack of identity and failing in identifying their rights and oppurtunities.

In this chapter, attempt has been made to examine the socio- economic and political status of the fisherwomen community of Ramnagar Block – II of Purba Midnapore and Kultali Block of South 24 parganas Districts with special reference to Sunderban area and also to identify the factors that impede the development of the fisherwomen of these areas. Also effort has been made to evaluate the role of the government and non- government organizations towards the upliftment of the fisherwomen community of these two districts. Besides, the researcher also aims to compare the status of the fisherwomen community of both the selected district in order to arrive at a conclusion. Keeping in view the objective, age, caste religion, educational staus, family size, occupational structure, income level, gender based division of labour, co- operative membership, political participation and awareness have been discussed in this chapter under the following heads.

Table 1 : Age-wise distribution of fisherwomen operating in the mentioned study area are:

Area of study	No. of Young Fisherwomen (below 30yrs)	No. of Maturated Fisherwomen (30-50yrs)	No. of Old Fisherwomen (Above 50yrs)
1. Ramnagar – II Block Contai Purba Midnapore District	87	103	29
2. Kultali Block, South 24 Parganas District	93	119	19
TOTAL	180	222	48

Source: Data collected through field visit by the researcher, 2014



Table 2: Caste wise and Religion wise distribution of fisherwomen operating in the mentioned study area are

Area of study	Caste	%	Religion	%
Ramnagar –II Block, Purba Midnapore	Rajbanshi	41.29	Bengali Hindus	96
	Namashudra (sc)	8.73		
	Jele Kaibarta (fishing Caste Like Bor Surnames)	1.25		
	Chasi Kaibarta	43.84		
	Brahmin	1.50	Muslims & Rest	4
	Santhal (ST)	1.25		
	Muslim	0.90		
	OBCS	1.25		
Kultali Block, South 24 Parganas	SC	36	Bengali Hindus	84
	ST	32		
	OBCS	12		
	Fishing Castes	8	Muslims & Rest	16
	General	2		
	Others	10		

Source: Field study and records of ICSF Report

Table 3: Distribution of family size of the fisherwomen in the mentioned study area are

Area of Study	Small (<5 members)	Medium (<7 members)	Large (>7 members)
Ramnagar Block, Purba Midnapore	46	37	17
Kultali Block, S. 24 pgns	69	21	10

Source: Field study, 2014

Table 4: Educational level of fisherwomen operating in the mentioned study area is;

Area of Study	(%) of illiterate	(%) of Signature literate	(%) of Literate below secondary	(%) of Secondary literate	(%) of Above secondary literate
Ramnagar Block, Purba Midnapore	5	47	31	14	3
Kultali Block, S. 24 pgns	4	53	35	7	1

Source: Field study, 2014

Table 5: Distribution of the No. of Fisherwomen on the basis of membership in Co-operatives/ SHGs in the mentioned study area are

Area of Study	No. of Female Co-operatives/ SHGS	No. of Fisherwomen	Membership Fees In (Rs)
Ramnagar Block, Purba Midnapore	16	207	130 – 200
Kultali Block, S. 24 pgns	10	130	100 – 200

Source: Field study, 2014



Area of Study	Bio Metric Card Holder	Non-Bio-Metric card Holder
Ramnagar Block, Purba Midnapore	58%	42%
Kultali Block, S. 24 pgns	6%	94%

The Process of Bio- Metic card is still going on as recorded on the day of visit in both the district by the researcher

Source: Field study, 2014

Area of Study	No. of Interviewee fisherwomen's family having the property in terms of (%)	No. of fisherwomen family having Immovable Property (%)			Number of fisherwomen having Domestic Animal (%)					No of Family of Fisher – women in Cultivation (%)		Estimated Monthly Income of Fisher – women	
		Home	Farm Land	Pond	Cow	Goat	Sheep	Pig	Duck	Hen	Rice		Veg
Ramnagar Block, Purba Midnapore	100	88	32	26	7	15	–	–	24	31	17	4	Within 5000 – 7000
Kultali Block, S. 24 pgns	100	89	27	34	16	15	2	–	36	52	12	39	Within 3000

Source: NFF Report

Area of Study	Total no. of Fisherwomen inooved in Fishing process	Category of Work	(%) of Fisherwomen Involved
Ramnagar Block, Purba Midnapore	452	1. capturing Fish in the sea, river	1
		2. other fishing related activities like sorting, drying, helping husbands, net sewing, feeding the fishes , fertilizations in the ponds, cutting the mud, weeding and like	77
		3. Vendoring & marketing	22
Kultali Block, S. 24 pgns	568	1. Capturing fish in the river	76
		2. Other fishing activities like fish sorting, drying, helping husbands net sewing, fertilizations, weeding, feeding and like	4
		3. Vendoring	2
		4. Other work like cutting mud as 100 days work, honey collectors, hatchery	18

Source: Field study, 2014



Table 9: Gender based Division of Labour in both the Study Area

In this study, it is examined that as women is helping her husband and family in fishing and fishing related other activities in order to maintain their livelihood. On the otherhand, it is also found that the husbands and the children are helping their wives in different household and other aquacultural activities

Study Area 1 : Ramnagar Block –II , Purba Midnapore District	Tasks	Men	Women	Both	Children
	Fish capturing	Mostly	Very few	✓	–
	Fish sorting, Drying	–	✓	–	–
	Fish Vendoring	–	–	✓	–
	Packing	–	–	✓	–
	Transportation	✓	–	–	–
	Net sewing, Repairing	–	✓	–	–
	Feeding and preparing the feeds for the fishes	–	–	✓	✓
	Stocking	✓	–	–	–
	Harvesting	✓	–	–	–
	Fish Health Check and Disease	✓	–	–	–
	Pond Preparation like Removal of rock stones, Liming, Fertilizations, Drying the pond Bottom	✓	–	–	–
	Weeding	–	–	–	✓
	Cutting mud	–	–	✓	–
	Household activities	–	✓	–	✓
Other works like raising Poultry, Growing Vegetables, honey collection	–	–	–	–	

Study Area 2 : Kultali Block, south 24 pargans District	Tasks	Men	Women	Both	Children
	Fish capturing	–	–	✓	–
	Fish sorting, Drying	–	✓	–	–
	Fish Vendoring	–	–	✓	–
	Packing	–	–	✓	–
	Transportation	✓	–	–	–
	Net sewing, Repairing	–	✓	–	–
	Feeding and preparing the feeds for the fishes	–	–	✓	✓
	Stocking	✓	–	–	–
	Harvesting	✓	–	–	–
	Fish Health Check and Disease	✓	–	–	–
	Pond Preparation like Removal of rock stones, Liming, Fertilizations, Drying the pond Bottom	✓	–	–	–
	Weeding	–	–	–	✓
	Cutting mud	–	–	✓	–
	Household activities	–	✓	–	✓
Other works like raising Poultry, Growing Vegetables, honey collection	–	✓	–	–	

Source: Field study, 2014





Table 10: political Status of Fisherwomen Operating in the Mentioned study Area:

Area of Study	Activities	Level of participation	Status	Issues
Ramnagar Block, Purba Midnapore	Training, Workshops, Rallies, campaigns	More men, Less women	Women are silent, passive, not vocal	<p>Women felt too shy to attend mixed group training programmes</p> <p>Women had multiple work burdens in the house</p> <p>Both men and women thought that most women were slow learners</p> <p>Women encountered cultural barriers and are dominated mostly by male members</p> <p>Non-decisive in nature, less aware about the rights and benefits available at the government level.</p>
Kultali Block, S. 24 pgnos	Training, Workshops, Rallies, campaigns	Equal representation	Vocal, participative and active	<p>They are dynamic as they are directly involved in fishing and have sound knowledge of fishing skills.</p> <p>They are fighting for their traditional rights like right to fish in the dense forest of sunderban area</p> <p>They are not aware of the schemes available to them . so they are keen in attending the workshop in order to improve</p> <p>They are daring and courageous so they do not have any mobility barriers.</p>

Source: Field study, 2014





Table 11: A comparative analysis of the fisherwomen Community operating

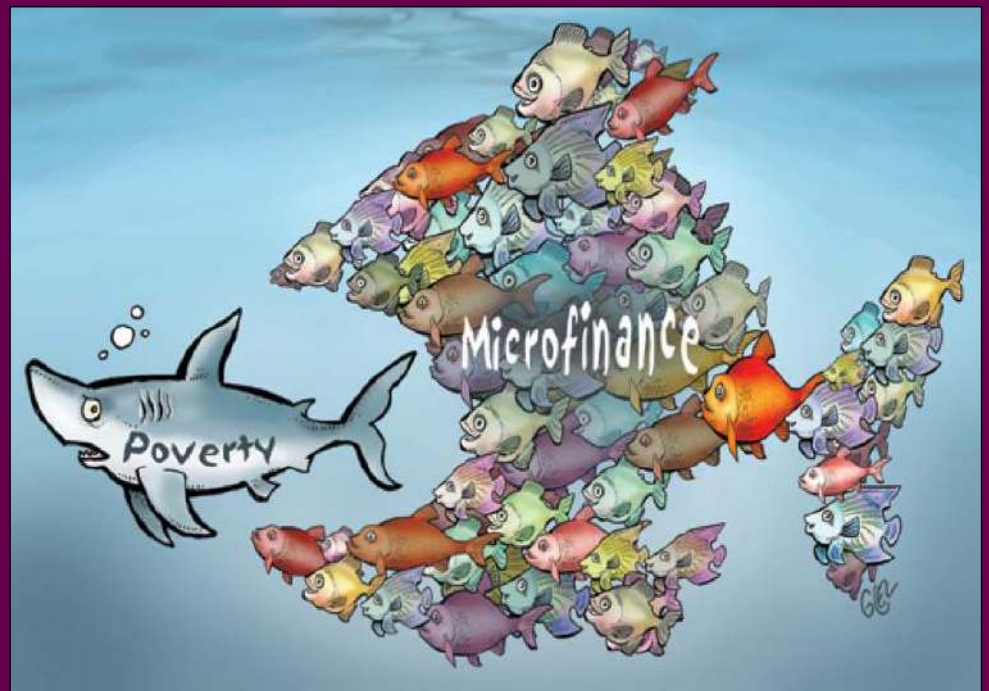
Sl No.	Fisherwomen of Ramnagar Block – II, Purba Midnapore	Fisherwomen of kultali Block, South 24 parganas
1.	Fisherwomen of this area are not directly involved in fishing. One group of women who are involved in fish sorting, drying, helping their husbands and remain in the fish landing centre area are not so smart, sharp decisive and vocal in nature. On the otherhand, women who are directly involved in the fish vendoring and trading in the market are much more vocal, dynamic, decisive and confident in nature	Fisherwomen of this area are directly involved in fishing in the dense forest river of Sunderban area and are therefore daring, courageous, smart, vocal and decisive as they capture fish in adverse situation facing the stiff challenges of wild attacks like tiger, crocodiles.
2.	Lesser participation is found in the training and workshops, rallies, movements as they lack interest and are dis-oriented in their livelihood	More participation is visible and they are fighting continuously for securing their traditional livelihood
3.	Education level is low	Education level is high
4.	They are more dominated by male members	Less domination by male members
5.	Fisherwomen co-operatives are also mal functioning due to influence by male trade unions	Fisherwomen Co-operatives are working in good condition without any influence
6.	The standard of living Like dressing, food habits, Life styles is better than the fisherwomen of counterpart area	The standard of living is very much poor
7.	Economically more empowered as these women have easy access to market and are involved in fish selling	Economically not so sound as they do not have easy access to market
8.	Governmental benefits, schemes, assistance like gloves, cycles, ice-box were avail by few fisherwomen of this area	No such governmental assistance available to the fisherwomen of this area
9.	Most of the fisherwomen now have the Bio-Metric Cards	Very Few fisherwomen is having this Bio-Metric Cards
10.	Children of the fisherwomen who are living in the market place are getting proper education but children of the fisherwomen residing near the fish landing centres are deprived due to no school facility	Children are getting education as schools are properly operating in this area
11.	Fisherwomen of this area do have knowledge of using mobiles, television at home. Also Few fisherwomen know the use of motor vehicles	Fisherwomen are not so in use of this modern technology due to poverty, no electricity and like facilities.

Thus, in conclusion it can be seen that the fisherwomen of two maritime districts in West Bengal have many things similar and dissimilar. On the basis of above analysis it can be drawn that the working mode, fishing related activities, their role in society highly differ from one another in terms of geographical, social, economic, cultural and political aspects. The fisherwomen of Midnapore districts are relatively less vocal in terms of their counterpart district. On the other hand, the living conditions of the Midnapore fisherwomen is better than the fisherwomen of South 24 Pargans Districts. In spite of all these, it cannot be denied that the significant role they play in the fishing process, but still they lack identity, recognition, voice and are still neglected oppressed, marginalized not only by their male counter parts but also in the society. So their socio-economic- political upliftment is highly required for the sake of justice and for a developed society.



CHAPTER
V

ROLE OF MICROFINANCE AND SELF-HELP GROUPS



ROLE OF MICROFINANCE AND SELF-HELP GROUPS IN EMPOWERING FISHERWOMEN COMMUNITY

“Lasting Peace cannot be achieved unless large population groups find ways in which to break out of poverty. Micro credit is one such means. Development from below also serves to advance democracy and human rights” — The Norwegian Nobel Committee, 2006.

A significant development in recent years has been the mushrooming of community based organizations and initiatives at the local level for women. Reports indicate that self help programmes often in the form of savings and credit or micro credit schemes, have succeeded in changing the lives of poor women, enhancing incomes and generating positive externalities such as increased self-esteem. Women in India constitute about 50% of the total population but due attention is given to their socio-economic empowerment. In India, the major activities in which women's contribution can be noticed as fish processing and marketing. The involvement of women in these activities generates supplemented income to support their families. Micro credit for self help groups is fast emerging as a promising tool for promoting income generating enterprises for reaching the “unreached” for credit delivery in rural areas, particularly the women who are often considered to have low net worth for availing any credit facilities formal financial institutions, the banks etc. Micro credit is also considered as the vehicle for achieving empowerment of the women in all spheres — social, cultural, political and economic. It is a way of self- sustenance without looking for financial help or subsidy from 'elsewhere'.

This chapter therefore aims to highlight the important role that micro finance has played in empowering different segments of women community, but the chapter will be specifically focusing on how micro finance schemes and formation of other co-operatives can act as a powerful tool in empowering and upliftment of the fisherwomen community of Purba Midnapore and South 24 Pdns districts.

The focus on women's empowerment and micro finance is not new, nor is it a northern imposition. It dates back in the 1970s and the beginning of the international women's movement. Many women's organizations worldwide set up credit and savings components as a way of both enabling women to increase their incomes and come together to address wider gender issues. All donor agencies CGAP have a gender policy. Not only 'reaching women' but 'empowering' is the second official goal of the Micro Credit summit Campaign.

Empowerment thus includes encouraging and developing the skills for self- sufficiency with a focus on eliminating the future need for charity or welfare in the individual of the group. Empowerment is closely related to the concept of power which can be understood in terms of 'power to', 'power within' 'power with' and 'power over'.¹

'Power over' is the controlling power; 'Power to' is the generative or productive power creating new possibilities and actions; 'Power with' is relational and 'Power within' is seen in terms of self-reliance and self- esteem. The three levels of empowerments which are closely interlinked such as 'Power within', 'Power to' and 'Power with' to help women to tackle 'Power over'. Empowerment process thus addresses various combinations of these dimensions by affecting at various levels such as household, community, national and international.



However, with increasing dominance of the 'financial sustainability paradigm' as donors have required micro finance institutions to rapidly become financially sustainable, definitions of empowerment have become diluted to mean insignificant increases in individual income and self confidence. The current concern with poverty targeting conflates women's empowerment with household well – being. This is despite the overwhelming evidence of both women's own demands for gender equality and the need to overcome constraints achieving them.

There are a range of contrasting views on the relationship between micro finance and empowerment. These views are captured in three key 'paradigms' — Feminist empowerment Paradigm, Financial Self Sustainability Paradigm and Poverty Alleviation Paradigm. Each paradigm has its own interpretation of concepts like 'Sustainability' and 'Participation' as well as its own priorities in microfinance delivery, complementary services and organizational structure.

So what is needed is a new empowerment vision for micro finance which places the empowerment vision firmly in the context of micro and macro level strategies to attain gender equality in rights, power and resources.

Micro Finance Programs like the Self Help Groups (SHGs) or formation of Co-operatives in West Bengal have been increasingly promoted for their positive economic impact and their role in the empowerment of women. This chapter contributes by putting forth the question that whether micro credit programmes are tools for empowering poor traditional fisherwomen community? Therefore the objective of the study is to highlight the role micro finance played in the economic upliftment of women, especially fisherwomen of the selected area by the researcher and enabling them to become self- reliant.

The growth of fishing industry has been spectacular over the past few decades and in addition to its role in conservation of fish. It can be credited with creating employment and helping balance of pavements through foreign exchange earnings on exports.

In 2008-09, marine products exports topped 6.03 lakh metric tonnes valued at Rs 8608 crores, with the volume and value being respectively higher at 11.29% and 12.95%. More than 50 different types of fish and shell fish products are exported to 75 countries around the world. 14 million employment opportunities have been generated by this sector till 2008 – 09.2

Since the traditional fisherwomen community belongs to a weaker section of the society. So the traditional fisherwomen mostly borrowed from the moneylenders, merchants and middlemen, in spite of keenly aware of the malpractices of the agents as because due to the lack of collateral security they can take loans and credits from the banks. Hence a significant number of fisherwomen remain outside the ambit of the institutional finance.

Therefore the objective is:

- To discuss the micro credit loan extended to fisherwomen community.
- To examine how fisherwomen used the loan for their livelihood promotion.
- To analyse the level of fisherwomen community.

Therefore empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. In this background the micro- finance services extended by NGOs to the sector appears to be noteworthy.



Micro Credit, Fisherwomen and Other States

Micro-credit made a difference in the life of coastal traditional fishermen from the clutches of merchants, middlemen and power agents and used micro credit programmes as tools to empower poor fishermen community particularly the women folk. Micro finance interventions among fisher folk have been concentrated mainly in the states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh in South India and mainly a few initiatives in Orissa and West Bengal in East India have been taken. For instance, The South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies (SIFFS) is a NGO working in the marine fisheries sector in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, providing loans for fishing equipment, facilitates marketing of fish caught by the members and promotes savings.

Even the state level workshops in Orissa and Maharashtra made specific recommendations as to what kind of assistance is needed so that poverty in coastal fishing communities can be reduced and livelihoods improved and diversified through micro- enterprise development and microfinance and training support. In recent years, through the efforts of NGOs, the marine wing of the Fisheries Department of Orissa and the initiative of other government departments, many women self help groups (SHGs) and cooperatives have been formed and training has been provided to their members in the field of fish processing and marketing.³

Diverse as the cases may be, the common theme running through them is the ultimate objective of uplifting the social and economic positions of women in fishing communities.

Recognizing the importance of micro finance in fisheries development, FAO in cooperation with the NABARD as the most organization organized National Workshop on "Best practices in micro-finance programmes for women in coastal fishing communities in India" from 1st – 4th July, 2003 at Panaji, Goa for reviewing micro-finance programme and suggesting best practices for replication. As a follow up of the workshop, and the year 2005 being "International Year for Micro finance, declared by UNDP, FAO instituted study on 'Livelihood Assessment and Micro credit Programmes in support of women in coastal fishing community, Orissa'".⁴

In order to provide the credit linkages, the NABARD implementing the biggest outreach programme with 58 m population by linking over one million SHGs. 90% SHGs are women members. This chapter further proceeds by highlighting on few important tasks in which the coastal fisherwomen communities are involved:

- In Coastal fishing community, women take lead role in fish marketing. In all the coastal district of the state, coastal itinerant women vendors take up fresh fish vending within a radius of 5–10 km mostly.
- Dry fish production is the age old livelihood of major coastal fisherwomen. In this process surplus fishes and prawns are sundried for preserving the same for later use. In recent years through technological intervention of Department Of Fisheries in few states like Orissa under Support to Training for Empowerment of women Programme (STEP), effort of some of the NGOs under REDP assistance of NABARD, training of fisher women has brought perceptible changes in their attitude for production of various quality



products. Under STEP fisherwomen are motivated to form societies and are trained, among others, on production of quality dry fish and other value added products in scientific manner.

- Fish farming, in recent years has taken a centre stage in providing livelihood to coastal fisher women as an alternative livelihood. In many cases the entire operation starting from leasing to various farming practices like pond preparation, management of water quality, stock manipulation, health cheque up, marketing etc are taken up by women.
- Considering the involvement of women in various agricultural and allied activities in their day to day life, women can very well take up integration of allied activities with pisciculture. The concept of "Precision farming" promoted by Swaminathan Foundation with the assistance of NABARD at Manitri (Kendrapara) District, Orissa is a worth mentioning.
- Women in some coastal districts also take up production of sea shell crafts.
- Women can also take up weaving of nets as a supplementary activity in coastal area. Therefore with proper training and marketing, the said activity can help coastal women in generating additional income. The impact of SHGs on women's empowerment and social security has been invariably an improvement from the status quo but there is a need for support in several areas.⁵

Thus, women play a pivotal role in fisheries. They are engaged in a wide range of activities in the fisheries and fishing community.

1. As workers (Paid & Unpaid) within the fisheries, in pre and post harvest activities, including liaison work with institutions and agencies. In many countries, it is mostly women who are engaged in inland fishing and aquaculture.
2. As workers in sea- food processing plants.
3. As care givers of the family and in maintaining social networks and the culture of the community.
4. As members of fishworker movements and fish organisations.

Besides the present availability of credit for women in India comes from the following sources:⁶

- Formal credit structure which represents banks, cooperatives, regional rural banks and other financial institutions like NABARD, SIDBI (through NGOs).
- Quasi informal which represent linkage between banks and self help groups, providing bulk financing for NGOs for lending to set up of a National credit fund for women by Govt. of India (Rashtriya Mahila Kosh).
- Informal credit from relatives, money lenders, wholesalers, self help groupings and credit groups of women.
- Women Development Corporation providing loans for margin money, training and assistance in arranging credit. Thus these kind of institutions are employed for providing financial services to the poor all of which focus on women.



Micro Credit and Fisherwomen of West Bengal

The researcher was able to interact with the fisherwomen who have formed co-operatives or are members of self – help groups of Purba Midnapore and South 24 pgnos districts. The detail discussion on the matter is as follows:

I) Purba Midnapore Fisherwomen and Micro Credit Schemes:

The researcher in her study found that about forty two co-operatives are working in this district of West Bengal in a very poor and unstable condition. Among these, only nine co-operatives are run by women fisherfolk. Out of nine, only one or two co-operatives are in a sustainable position in this area.

The researcher was able to interview the members of the SARADA SAMUDRIK MAHILA CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY LTD which is based at Dadanpatrabar, Ramnagar Block – II, Contai Midnapore. In this area, there are four more co operatives organizations of which two are just formed.⁷The total members in this society are about 300. The cooperative was formed in 1991. The a detail regarding the co-operative is as follows:

CBO	Establishment	Membership	Main Purpose
Maa SaradaMahila Marine Fisherwomen Cooperative.	1991	357	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organising the women members for self-employment & Income generation through sorting-drying and if possible through other activities 2. Receive and distribute benefits provided by government 3. Members' welfare

Source: Field study, 2014

Ratna Majhi, who is also the winner of Green Peace Award, said that this cooperative is yet to receive government grants. Every member has to give Rs 357 to take the membership. This business is mainly related to dry fish.

She told us that the Fishery Board has given them identity cards and has also asked to make an insurance card. As a result of their protest the government has restricted issuing licenses to the trawl owners. But as Ratna Majhi said, they have to face other problems. They are not getting the proper market for dry fish. The fish catches are also getting decreased day by day because of trawling. Besides construction and development of industry has caused further miseries for them. She argued that the government is unable to take a clear decision. On the one hand it is supporting the trawler and on the other hand it is also focusing us by providing us identity card, insurance card. But the fact remains that the traditional fishing community is getting displaced day by day.



Fisherwomen's' Cooperatives as an institutional measure seem to have a good potential to improve the well being of poor fisherwomen and regulate the harvesting of fish. Co-operatives were developed to get the loans from government. But it has been found that these co-operatives became the centre of individual self interest. They failed due to corruption and anti – democratic process. Besides, it is also a fact that the participation of women members is less than the male. The reason is that due to their ignorance and voicelessness, the women fail to avail the scope of forming the co-operatives and self –help groups.

ii) South 24 Pdns Fisherwomen and Micro- Credit Schemes

The special characteristic of the fisherwomen of this district is that they are directly involved in the activities of fish capturing. The women fisherfolk actively participate in the fishing process along with their male counterparts. As a result, they are well versed with the fishing process. But it is very sad to found that inspite of their capabilities and capacities, they are deprived, underdeveloped and very little attention has been given for their development and upliftment in the society. They are ignorant about different welfare schemes and financial assistance provided by the central or state government due to their lack of education and unconsciousness. There are many Co-operatives or Self- Help Groups created by NGOs or trade Unions or sometimes by Fisherwomen themselves but the upliftment of the women have not improved. The central government does not have a scheme specifically and exclusively targeted at women in fishing communities. Initiatives for women in these communities are integrated and subsumed in the government's programmes for women in general. As state governments are primarily responsible for the overall development of the fisheries sector, they are motivated and encouraged to formulate proposals and avail themselves of the various development and welfare schemes implemented by other departments and technical institutions of the central government.

The government of West Bengal is implementing fisheries projects that could be potential livelihood projects for women. These include an integrated fishery culture in the tide-fed canals of the Sunderbans, the establishment of a crab hatchery in the Sunderban region and the establishment of a rearing centre for potential brackishwater ornamental fishes. Fisherwomen's SHGs are being encouraged to take up crab culture in identified areas and the extension services of the Directorate have been consolidated for this purpose.

However, the researcher was able to conduct a survey with the fisherwomen of Kultali Block. In this block, two villages ---- Madhya Gurguriya and Purba Gurguriya (located at the border of sunderban) was visited by the researcher.⁸ A focused group discussion was arranged with the help of the local fishers, associated with Dakshin Banga Matsyajibi Forum --- who are also fighting for their rights and demands of having a sustainable livelihood for the fishermen community as a whole. The researcher interacted with around TWELVE women fisherfolk self-help groups based at these two villages and derived the following information related to their Self-help Groups and its activities. Around 100 fisherwomen participated in the interaction session.



SL. NO	NAME OF SHG/ CO-OPERATIVES	BLOCK	VILLAGE	NO. OF MEMBERS	WORKING SINCE	ACTIVITIES
1.	Vidyasagar Mahila SHGs	Kultali	Purba Gurguriya	10	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Netting • Loan for hatcheries are given to the members • Crab cultivation • Work in the forests • 100 days work from Govt. • Participates in different training, workshop organised by NGOs, fisheries department • Organises campaign and right based movements at the local, state and national level
2.	Sarada Mahila SHGs	Kultali	Purba Gurguriya	10	2004	
3.	Swarnajayanti Swanirbhar Mahila Goshthi	Kultali	Purba Gurguriya	10	2004	
4.	Maa Durga Mahila SHGs	Kultali	Purba Gurguriya	10	2007	
5.	Shib Durga Mahila SHGs	Kultali	Purba Gurguriya	10	2005	
6.	Maa Bhagabati Swanirbhar Mahila Gosthi	Kultali	Purba Gurguriya	10	2007	
7.	Sathiseba Mahila SHGs	Kultali	Purba Gurguriya	10	2008	
8.	Lokenath Mahila SHGs	Kultali	Purba Gurguriya	10	2007	
9.	Maa Manosha Mahila SHGs	Kultali	Purba Gurguriya	10	2007	
10.	Rishi Bankim Ch. Mahila Samity	Kultali	Purba Gurguriya	10	2008	
11.	Saradamoyi Mahila SHGs	Kultali	Madhya Gurguriya	10	2004	
12.	Bhagini Nibedita SHGs	Kultali	Purba Gurguriya	10	2007	

Source: Field study, 2014

Therefore, the interview revealed that a good number of SHGs are operating in this block but the conditions of the women are not satisfactory. Economic upliftment of the fisherwomen has not been possible. The reason behind this was that the women of the SHGs clearly stated that the SHGs were formed by the NGOs in order to get some financial assistance from the government or from international monetary agency. After the fund is received, a little assistance was provided to some women and not all fisherwomen were able to avail the benefits. Now, these SHGs are





run by the fisherwomen themselves with very low membership, without any financial assistance or aid from anywhere. They are still under the umbrella of poverty, illiteracy and thus bare disempowered.

It is true that The Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing the Support to Training-cum-Employment Programme that aims to upgrade the traditional skills and knowledge of women through training, credit and market linkages in the traditional sectors, including fisheries. There is also the Swaranjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) programme, which extends assistance in the areas of training, credit, technology and marketing through SHGs.⁹

Despite, the increased support for micro credit in empowering fisherwomen in india, there seem to be an on going debate in effectiveness of micro- credit in the empowerment of fisherwomen. The dilemma is whether access to micro- credit per se had an explicit ability to empower fisherwomen considering its size and population. Majority of the fisherwomen lacked control of the loans but had responsibility of repayment--- interpreting this as widespread loss of control hence disempowering micro- credit is no better than ' Nothing'. The tasks required from fisherwomen were often difficult to perform, their products had little market potential and the implementing agencies had no technical competence. Organisational dealing with micro credit had not developed a method for tracking changes in levels of fishermen's empowerment as a result of their access to micro-credit.

Micro credit has emerged as a potential tool for poverty alleviation with particularly focus on women. NABARD, the nodal agency for micro credit in India, has set a target of linking 1 million groups in a decade's time, that is by the year 2008.

There have been a diverse innovations in savings, credit and micro finance across the globe. Infact, the very sustainability and future of the micro credit programme across the world is believed to lie in adopting realistic innovation in these areas. Some suggestions can be put forwarded in having successful empowerment of fisherwomen community through micro credit schemes.

- Micro credit should not be only a economic support. It should also have a capacity building training programme for economically deprived communities.
- Infrastructure facilities should be maintained in their localities because regarding fisherwomen the success of micro credit depends on the state of infrastructure and amenities.
- Close interaction among the members have to be build.
- Self-confidence, financial independence and personality development should be enhanced.
- Greater awareness about useful skills and various government programmes.
- Emphasising psychological empowerment and awareness generation.
- Greater participation in family decision making
- Improved family income and better access to education.
- Access financial support to strengthen their husband's occupation (especially in fishing).

Therefore, development alone cannot bring peace and prosperity unless social justice and gender





equality are ensured. The government's recent initiatives to streamline credit operations and delivery system through micro-finance movement and strengthening and expansion of credit institution (SHGs) can definitely help in the revival of rural economy and empowerment of the rural poor.

In India, micro- credit is making a strong headway in its efforts to reduce poverty and empower the rural poor. The impact of the programme of fisherwomen empowerment is great. Microcredit through SHGs is now a vital weapon for the coastal poor to fight against poverty. Both government and non- government organisations are working in this field. Credit alone is useless unless packaged with training, awareness programme depleting market support strategies, the members could effectively build enterprises as a source of their employment and income. Therefore, training to potential leaders must be imparted with focus on developing skills, group dynamics and group conflicts. Empowering of the traditional fisherwomen means not only lighting hope for future of the traditional fisherwomen but also for the world at large. Fisherfolk have always been very poor and amongst the most marginalised communities, especially the women faces a lot of difficulties, often exploited by merchants and middlemen. The condition of the fisherwomen of West Bengal, mainly the two districts referred are even worse. The fisherwomen of Kultali Block of South 24 Pdns have been pathetic. They have to sustain their livelihood with hard struggles.

Thus, Micro finance in this context is seen as the provision of a broad range of financial services such as deposits, loans, payment services, money transfers and insurance and is characterised most commonly by micro/nano loans to meet urgent family cum production expenses.¹⁰

Globally women constitute the majority of Micro finance clients, primarily because of their excellent loan repayment records and micro- savings. They play an important role in fishing communities, encompassing social and economic responsibilities and duties, within and outside their households.

Women are particularly involved in productive activities directly related to fisheries production, processing and marketing as well as in non- fisheries income- generating activities. Micro-finance also helps in managing risks and reducing economic and social vulnerability.

In conclusion, it can be said that the fishery sector plays a strategic role in the state economy by contributing towards exports, food, nutritional security and employment generation in coastal and inland areas. The involvement of fisherwomen is substantial. Thus it has been the high time that considering the backwardness of the position of fisherfolk women, there is a need for support from international organisation for preparation and implementation of technical cooperation project for giving boost to initiative of micro finance programme in the state covering capacity building, exposure visit, implementation of pilot projects etc. besides the initiatives taken by government and financial institutions in implementing microfinance programme for improving livelihood of coastal states in India and specially the fisherwomen of the South 24 Pdns and Purba Midnapore districts of West Bengal.





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CHAPTER
VI

FISHERWOMEN AND THE STATE





FISHERWOMEN AND THE STATE

The relationship between the fishermen and the state is one of conflict. This conflictual relationship started cropping up since 1960s when the government of India decided to collaborate with the government of Norway and launched the modern technique of fishing through trawl and purse seine boats first in Kerala. From this, stiff competition started between the rich boat owners on one hand and the poor traditional and marginalized fisherfolk on the other. In this context, it is to be mentioned that the role of the state became very important as it promoted and facilitated the interests of the rich trawl owners and overlooked the interests of the traditional fishermen who are unable to afford those foreign trawlers and therefore started facing difficulty in maintaining their livelihoods.

Coastal development started increasing rapidly and in this development process, women as the marginalized entities within the marginalized groups are often forced to shoulder the negative effects of modernization and development. In India, women in the fisheries play a very significant role. Mostly they are involved in the post harvest fishing process directly like netting, sorting, vendoring. Very few fisherwomen experience capturing fish in the sea and river. Therefore, this modernized way of fishing has created serious threat not only in sustaining their livelihood but also poses great threat to ecological and marine resource degradation. As a result, coastal regulation measures have been in demand all over the country by fish workers' organizations, trade union bodies, NGOs, environmental and civil society groups since the 1980s. Numerous protests, dharnas, marches, rallies, demonstrations, movements, strikes, agitation started against this new intervention and demanded from government of India policies and legislations in favour of the traditional and artisanal fisherfolk in India.

This chapter basically focuses on all those policies, drafts, and regulations implemented by the government of India in the fisheries sector. But due to space constraint, it is not possible to mention all policies implemented in different parts of India. So the researcher aims to highlight mainly the policies and its implementation in West Bengal context and some of the major fisheries policy and regulations which in a way benefited and the other way also affected the impoverished fisherfolk in India are being discussed here. Also in this context it should be mentioned that very few policies on women fisherfolk has been implemented which will be also pointed here. This discussion is basically divided into three sections—the first section highlights the government's perspective on the fisheries policy drafted for the fishermen community as a whole and the second section dealing with the fisherfolk's perspective on the fisheries policy implemented by the state. Lastly, the researcher also examines the role of the fisherwomen and their movement in context to all these policies and drafts.

I. State's Perspective on Fisheries Policy

The government gives top priority to the fisheries sector because---

- 1) This sector provides employment and income to more than one million people, either directly or indirectly.
- 2) It satisfies the protein requirements of a considerable chunk of the population
- 3) It provides considerable revenue, especially in foreign exchange, to the exchequer of the state.





Hence the government has undertaken projects and programs for increasing production for conserving and ensuring sustainable exploitation of fisheries wealth, for promoting cultivation of fish and prawns, for development of fishing harbours and facilities for landing of fish, for strengthening facilities for marketing of fish, and for the upliftment and welfare of the fisherfolk.

In this respect, the Government of India announced the first national policy for managing fisheries in 2004. This was a good step as an enabling legal framework is a pre requisite for proper management and control of the fisheries sector. Under Article 21 of the Indian constitution, management and control of coastal fisheries is vested with the maritime and union territories. At the same time the union government carries out management and control of the fishing activities beyond territorial limits in the EEZ.¹

The 2004 policy provides for reviewing the existing legal framework for regulating the fishing operations. It also envisages the introduction of additional legal instruments in such areas as operation of Indian flag, vessels in the EEZ, introduction of new fishing units, ensuring conservation of marine resources, especially in limited access fisheries and fishery harbour management.

The 2004 policy seeks to address the concerns of traditional and coastal fishermen together with those of other stake holders in the deep sea-sector, so as to achieve harmonized development of marine fishery both in the territorial and extra-territorial waters of the country.

The policy objectives are:

- i) To augment marine fish production of the country up to the sustainable level in a responsible manner so as to boost the export of sea food from the country and also to increase per capita fish protein intake of the masses.
- ii) To ensure socio economic security of the artisanal fishermen whose livelihood solely depends on this vocation and
- iii) To ensure sustainable development of marine fishes with due concern for ecological integrity and bio diversity.²

The Government of India had also established several fisheries research institutes under the aegis of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) to undertake research for development of a composite fish culture. It also launched a national level programme, Fish Farmer Development Agency (FFDA) in 1976 with initial assistance from the World Bank to promote aquaculture in the country. The State Fisheries Development also promote inland culture fishery through granting leases to poor fishermen to take up culture fishery in public/common pool village water-bodies with provisions of subsidies.

The Government of India has also paid due attention in the past decade to the development of deep-sea fisheries in the country. The declaration of EEZ in 1976 facilitated the exploration, exploitation and utilization of marine living resources in the sea around India extending to 200 nautical miles, thereby giving the fishermen immense opportunities and challenges to harvest the resources and to manage them on sound scientific basis.

In 1986, a revised charter policy was pronounced. This charter policy envisaged acquisition of vessels by Indian companies either through import/construction in India or through joint ventures. As a result of the charter policy, 97 companies were permitted to operate 311 foreign fishing vessels. Besides, augmenting the marine fish production in the country, the policy also facilitated greater inflow of foreign exchange through export of fish caught by these vessels. All





these vessels were operating on 100 per cent Export Oriented Units (EOU) basis. The conditions for acquisition of vessels of adequate type and number by the Indian companies who chartered vessels helped the growth of Indian deep sea fishing fleet within a short span of time.

From the beginning of 1994, the Deep Sea Fishing Policy was criticized by various fishermen groups, members of parliament, MLAs, mechanized fishing vessel owners, fish processors and other stakeholders. The fishermen groups also resorted to agitation stating that their operational area is being encroached under charter, joint ventures and lease arrangements. In response to those criticisms and agitations, the Government of India (GOI) appointed a committee to review the deep-sea fishing policy. The committee submitted its report in 1996.

Since 1980s, GOI appointed several committees and commissions at different levels to enact the Marine Regulation Act in line. In Kerala, State Marine Fisheries Act was enacted in 1980. This legislation was a landmark in the history of the fisherfolk movement in Kerala and included the following provisions: ³ like banning of purse-seines, mechanized boats and trawlers during the monsoon seasons, protecting the marine zone of the traditional fish workers with state police.

However no effort was made to implement with provisions of the Act. As a result the government set up a series of commissions to look into this issue of non-implementation.

The Babu Paul Commission was set up in 1981 which was divided in regard to the specific need for conservation of marine fishery resources during certain seasons of the year. There was lack of unanimity over the recommendations of the Babu Paul Commission over the issue of banning monsoon trawling. In view of this, and in response to the continuing unrest in the traditional sector, the Kalawar Commission was set up in 1984. It did not agree to ban on monsoon trawling but suggested a series of measures for the conservation and management of management of fishing resources. Amongst others, these included a reduction in the number of trawling boats, motorized boats and non-motorized boats, a ban on purse -seines as well as setting up a scientific committee to plan out the total allowable catches on the basis of a resource assessment. The recommendations of this committee were virtually not implemented.

The Balakrishna Nair Commission was appointed in 1989 following an increase in agitation after the left democratic government came to power in Kerala in 1986. The committee recommended the banning of trawling during the monsoon months. The order for banning trawlers during monsoon months was cancelled by the Fisheries Minister under pressure from the mechanized trawl owners lobby and this struggle recurs every year during the rains.

Besides, the government of Kerala was also forced to announce a few welfare measures such as the Old Age Pension for fish workers and for fish workers and Educational Lump Sum Grant for the fishworkers' children. According to the Kerala Fisheries Minister, Dominic Presentation, the Kerala Government had also strengthened its rescue machinery. Control rooms had started functioning at district fisheries offices and an information network would become operational soon, linking the control rooms. At Vizhinjam, Neendakara, Vypeen, Beepur and Kannur, the Fisheries Department would keep ready two rented boats each for rescue operations, Mr. Presentation said. He said two lifeguards, armed with rescue gear, too had been posted at each of these places. ⁴

As a measure of sea turtle conservation, the government of Orissa prohibits fishing within a sea ward radius of 20 km from Gahirmatha area of Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary. The Government of Orissa also prohibits fishing by trawlers up to a sea ward distance of 20 km from





the high tide line (shore) of Orissa coast from Jatadhar river mouth to Devi river and from Chilika mouth (Magarmukha) to Rushikulya river mouth for a period of 5 months from January to May every year.

The coastal states and union territories on the east coast viz, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry have notified under their Respective marine Fishing Regulation Act insisting the use of Turtle Excluder device (TED) by trawlers shrimping in the waters under their jurisdiction.

The Government of Kerala state has notified under their Marine Fishing Regulation Act, insisting use of TED by trawlers shrimping in the waters adjacent to Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam Districts of the State. These regions have been identified by GOI as regions requiring TED installation by shrimp trawlers.

The Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) has developed TED suitable for operation in Indian waters and commercial production of the TED has been undertaken by MPEDA. MPEDA organizes workshops and training camps on TED fabrication and installation, in association with CIFT, State Governments/ State Fisheries Training Institute, Boat Operators Associations, Wildlife Institute of India etc in order to educate the boat owners and crew.

Some of the states including Orissa and Andhra Pradesh have demonstrated the use of TED on board fishing vessels for training the crew on proper installation of TED.

The State Fisheries Department in West Bengal filed an affidavit refuting the charges and conclusions of the Centrally empowered committee (CEC) and upholding the rights of the fisher people. They submitted that the state government desired to earmark 100 hectares of Jambudwip for fish drying activity.

The CEC submitted its report on 20th December 2002 and directed the state government to remove all traces of encroachment by 31st March 2003. The CEC totally ignored the vital issue of traditional right and right to life. But the then State Fisheries Minister Shri Kiranmay Nanda and Shri Manoj Bhattacharya MP assured that the fisher people's right to livelihood would be protected.⁵

Moreover the Fishery Department of West Bengal has also undertaken certain welfare measures like providing rubber shoes and gloves to almost around 1000 fishworkers. Also the department provided cycles and plastic containers for carrying fish to 300 traditional fishermen of Ramnagar Block, Contai, Midnapore district in West Bengal.⁶ Also at Dadanpatrabar, Midnapore in West Bengal, in an interview, the women fishworkers said that the fishery department of West Bengal has provided them Bio-metric identity cards as well as asked to have health insurance policies. At Dadan patrabar it was found that a health centre has been opened from government where a medical officer is posted with basic medicines to be freely provided to the fishermen community. Also a new scheme has been launched for the fisherwomen named "MATSYAKANYA" which will assist them with financial loan. Another scheme for the fishermen community was implemented known as "GITANJALI PRAKALPA" through which fishermen will be given finance to build their own houses and therefore looking after the interest and welfare of the fishermen community. Besides, the following table on social security and benefit schemes, represents the responses given by the fisherwomen of the two areas visited are:



Scheme	Nature and Benefits	Status	Remarks
Old Age Pension	Monthly Pension of Rs. 300	Not available to fishers due to Panchayat favoritism	Old fishers to be enlisted for the benefit.
Accident Insurance Coverage	Full: Rs. 30,000 from Block Administration Rs. 50,000 from Benfish Partial : Rs. 15,000 – Rs.25,000	Not Effective	The mechanism should be made easily operable and effective.
Relief cum Savings	Rs. 600/- per year from Beneficiary and Rs.600/- per year from Government Total Return Rs. 1,200/- per year. Presently 7,000 in East Medinipur and 3,000 in 24 Pgs avail of this scheme	Inadequate	Both extension in number and enhancement in amount is needed.
Medical Assistance	First Aid, Bleaching powder, Halogen Tablet, Phenyle, ORS	Very inadequate	Needed - Upgradation of local Primary Health Centres, Ambulance service, Female Medical Attendant
Medical Insurance	Provision of medical treatment Benefits	Does not exist	Necessary
Plantation/Social Forestry	For income generation and environmental protection	Yet to be available to fishers in general	Hopefully the Forest Dept. will take up the matter
Govt. supported Marine Fishing Cooperatives for women fisherfolk	Subsidies for boats, fish seeds and nets	Does not exist. The co-operatives which exists are either run by NGOs or are SHGs	Govt. co-operatives should also be there
Provision of Working Capital	Protection from putting out system	Yet to be available	Govt. should arrange with banks through Khoti Committee
Crèche and Education Schemes	Crèche needed for children of working fisher women. Schools needed for children of fisherfamilies.	No crèche. Children of fishworkers who have to be brought in with their parents to the Khoti during the full fishing period miss out on their schooling during that period. A school was in function at Dadan patrabar Khoti during 2001- 07 period but now it has been closed due to non-availability of teachers and the reason is government was unable to pay the salaries of the teachers' in time.	The issue of crèches and schools should be taken up seriously by the Government, Ngos and Local Government institutions.

However, among all these supposed to be available schemes, only three – namely, 'relief cum savings', insurance and fishworkers' cooperatives formed by themselves are actually within the reach of the community under survey.



But on the other hand, there are some policies and acts which became highly debatable and controversial when the government of India tried to implement in the fisheries sector like the plan of implementing the Coastal Zone management (CZM) by Swaminathan Committee in place of Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) of 1991.

In response to growing environmental deterioration in the 1980s and 1990s, and prompted by an earlier letter on coastal protection from the then Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, in 1981, the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF), of the GOI, introduced Environmental Guidelines for Beaches in 1983. It followed this with the promulgation of environmental legislations such as the CRZ Notification of 1991. The CRZ Notification applies to the entire Indian coast including Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar island groups. The notification regulates a range of activities along the coastal stretches on the landward side measuring a width of 500 meters from the High Tide Line. The notification also covers the area between the High Tide Line (HTL) and the Low Tide Line (LTL). The notification prohibits certain activities within the CRZ, which could have a detrimental effect on the sensitive coastal ecosystem.⁷

The entire CRZ of the country is further classified into different zones : CRZ I , II, III and IV.

CRZ I (i) – areas are those that are ecologically sensitive areas including marine parks, national parks, sanctuaries, mangrove areas, wildlife habitats, heritage area, historically important areas likely to be inundated by global warming etc

CRZ I (ii) – areas refer to the inter-tidal zone lying between the HTL and the LTL.

CRZ II – areas are those that are already developed close to or up to the shoreline. These “developed areas” are only those within municipal limits or in other legally designated urban areas.

CRZ III – areas are those which are relatively undisturbed and which do not belong to either category I or II. These include the coastal zone in rural areas and also areas within the urban areas.

CRZ IV– are those coastal stretches in the Andaman and Nicobar islands, the Lakshadweep islands and small islands, except those designated as CRZ–I, II or III.⁸

The CRZ notification was far-reaching in its vision and scope, and was unique in attempting to bring under a single directive, the effective management of the Indian coastline under a sustainable and multiple use paradigm. Since its introduction, however, the notification has been amended 21 times over the subsequent years, each year amendment permitting more activities within the area declared as CRZ. The MOEF and the state governments constituted several committees to review matters related to its implementation.

In July 2004, the MOEF set up an Expert Committee headed by Prof. Swaminathan to carry out a comprehensive review of the CRZ notification. The Swaminathan committee submitted its report in February 2005, a month after the Indian Ocean Tsunami. Its mission was to enable the MOEF base its coastal regulations on strong scientific principles and to devise regulations that would meet the urgent need for coastal conservation and development/ livelihood needs.

Principally, the Swaminathan report recommends:

- i) A rationalization of management boundaries based on coastal vulnerability.



- ii) Moving away from mere 'regulation' to the larger concept of 'integrated management' and replacing the categories of 'CRZ I to IV' with 'CZM I to IV', based on ecological importance, coastal vulnerability and socio-cultural concerns. However, there has been some reshuffling of activities to be permitted under each of these categories.
- iii) Creating a new institutional structure specifically geared for coastal management, including the establishment of a National Institute for Sustainable CZM.

The Swaminathan committee identifies 12 guiding principles that should determine decisions on CZM. Principally these include:

- i) Ecological, cultural, national and livelihood security.
- ii) Inclusion of a wider coastal zone comprising the offshore waters 12 nautical miles from the coastline in addition to the coastal belt on the landward side.
- iii) Adoption of a participatory approach for coastal management.
- iv) Ensuring conformity with national and international laws while outlining revisions of the law.
- v) Adopting sound scientific and ecological principles for CZM.
- vi) Adequate utilization of the precautionary principle, particularly to overcome the problem of scientific uncertainty while deciding on the negative impacts of human activities on the coast.
- vii) Polluter Pays' principle and the 'public trust' doctrine to regulate coastal development.
- viii) Promoting the regeneration of coastal ecosystems such as mangroves and coral reefs including coastal forestry.

Therefore, it is evident that the Swaminathan report makes changes in the existing categorization of the CRZ, by changing the term 'regulation' to 'management'. The proposed CZM notification is yet another example of the MOEF's "double speak" on environment issues and recent policy/legal reforms. The notification espouses politically correct objectives -- "sustainable development", "sustainable livelihoods" and "conservation of ecologically and culturally significant coastal resources" but the subsequent clauses contain no indication of how these objectives will be achieved. The CZM is the death certificate of CRZ.⁹

The past three decades have witnessed rapid initiatives by government and private agencies in the marine fisheries sector of the country. But, as has been already mentioned, certain policies and regulations have not been acceptable to the fishing community especially; the shift in focus from regulation to management proposed by the Swaminathan Committee is nothing but an attempt at diluting the regulatory aspects of the 1991 notification, by facilitating greater 'development' activities in the coastal zone. It paves the way for unsustainable developmental activities in large area of the coastal zone that can be classified as CZM III. Since the recommendations from the Swaminathan committee do not explicitly state the necessity of protecting traditional and customary rights of fishing communities in the coastal zone, so several national campaigns against the CZM notification has been launched by the fisher people and other coastal communities to pressurize the Government of India to halt all policies, laws and notifications that are causing destruction of coastal lands, environment, fisheries and natural resources. This committee did not even care to consult organizations of fishworkers who are the largest stake holders of the coastal land and waters.



II. Fishworkers' Perspective on National Fisheries Policy

A planned law on Indian Coastal Management threatens marine ecosystems and the livelihoods of thousands of fishermen favouring development over conservation; The draft CZM law is basically a response to India's drive for development as well as strong lobbying from business sectors as tourism and construction.

According to Sudarshan Rodriguez from the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment the new law does not recognize the rights of fishing communities and allows for development to take place almost anywhere along the coast. It will devastate fishing communities and destroy vital marine ecosystems. The traditional fisherfolk are being marginalized as big business moves into these lucrative resource-rich areas.¹⁰ Sand mining, tourism, fish farming and other types of aquaculture, land reclamation, hydrocarbon exploration and port development are all taking their toll on India's case.

The CRZ law actually does not permit development for up to 200 meters from the coast and also recognizes the customary rights of fishing communities. So the fishermen communities are demanding the scrapping of the new draft act and actively enforce the existing law.

The traditional fishing community will find themselves in troubled waters, if the government succeeds in having a new set of rules passed on the management of coastal zones in India. A major criticism of the recommendations of the Swaminathan Committee is that although it considered the interests of all the stakeholders in the CZM plan, it never consulted the traditional fishermen while making recommendations for the new draft.¹¹

The draft also mentions an Integrated Coastal Zone Management plan that is to be executed by a National Board of Sustainable CZM, to be formed to provide policy advice to the Central Government. The state governments would also be required to set up CZM Authorities.

So dissonance and protests have ranged widely throughout the country on the new notification of CZM. The fishing community have also organized an 'All India Protest on 9 August 2007' to dismantle CZM notification and to replace it with CRZ notification of 1991.

The National campaign against the CZM notification was supported by the group of activists, traditional fisherfolk community, National Fishworkers Forum (NFF), from all over India – Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal who are demanding the rejection of the proposed CZM notification and the campaigners stressed the need to strengthen the existing CRZ by making relevant amendments. The national campaign fears that the proposed new notification would take away the special identity enjoyed by the coastal villages by clubbing this area with the developed region.¹²

As a consequence of all this, fishworkers' protests have gained momentum. The National Fish Workers Forum (NFWF) the then President, Late Hare Krishna Debnath and Tamil Nadu Fish Workers Forum Secretary, K. Lakshmi took strong objection to the Central Government's move to amend the CRZ. They questioned the reasons for allowing construction activity within the prohibited areas near the coast and sought immediate remedial action.

In Ongole, the fishermen took out a rally to protest against CZM. They pointed out that the aquaculture boom that came in the wake of globalization 15 years ago polluted drinking water sources in coastal areas and wrought havoc with the lives of fishermen. However, the Central Government got a new set of recommendations by the commission headed by Swaminathan





prohibiting fishing activity by local fishermen from 500 meters to 12 nautical miles. So the government is trying to throw out the fishermen from their habitat. So they are protesting to protect their right of access to the sea.¹³

Huge mobilization of fisherfolk and their supporters in more than 50 locations spread over all the maritime states demonstrated from resolve to defend coastal lands, environment and marine resources and not to allow the anti-people CZM to be notified or implemented. Fishworkers in thousands congregated into mass rally, dharna, picketing, blockade etc. in Nagercoli, Rameswaram, Tuticorin, Jagathapattinam, Thiruvananthapuram, Sirakali, Karaikkal, Poraiyar, Nagerpattinam, Cuddalore, Pondy, Sedhubava, Chatram, Ponneri, Mammallapuram, Chennai, Ongole, Nizampatnam, Vishakhapatnam, Chatrapur, Puri, Kendrapara, Contai, Porbandar, Palghar, Dahanu, Bassein, Bandra, Karwar, Udipi, Mangalore and Trivandrum and submitted its memorandum to the government officials.¹⁴

In view of all these, it is clear that CZM is a big departure from the CRZ notification which recognized fishing settlements and permitted certain rights and protection for the same. But in the CZM notification, there is no concern or focus on the rights and access of coastal communities especially fishing communities.

Moreover, the CZM notification states that the coastal panchayats with more than 400 persons/sq km shall be declared as CZM II areas. This means that many of the earlier CRZ III categories would now become CZM II. The CRZ notification had stringent regulations and 'No Development Zone of 200m for CRZ III' areas that were characteristically coastal towns and villages with low levels of development. By putting these areas under CZM II, the precautionary principle and livelihood protection measures that were applicable to the CRZ III areas to restrict urbanization pressures and ensure livelihood security, rights and access of coastal communities had been done away with.¹⁵

So the CZM notification is nothing but a blatant effort to facilitate greater commercialization of the coastal zone. It poses serious threats to the livelihoods of the coastal fishing communities and to coastal ecosystems. The CZM notification in its present form exemplifies the recent negative trend of "regulatory capture" – a conscious process where environmental governance is influenced by commercial lobbies and environmental laws are dictated by investment priorities. While the concerned citizenry busies itself demystifying this implausible law, the MoEF needs only to acclimatize to another era of non-implementation under the CZM notification.

Moreover, the developments in Indian fisheries over the past decade further underscore the importance of having fisheries legislation for the entire EEZ. Conflicts between the active and passive gear groups in the territorial waters are also taking place in the EEZ. Further, in the light of new developments in relation to oil exploration and exploitation, it is important to adopt new legislation not only for living resources like fish and other forms of bio-diversity, but also to manage exploration and exploitation of non-living resources of the EEZ. In this context, there is also a need for effective legislation to prevent marine pollution from fishery and non-fishery sources both in the territorial and national waters.

The fishermen community also suggested that in addition to government initiatives, local fishing communities should also be involved in taking up fleet reduction and effort control programmes.





III Right to Regime, Role of DBMF and Fisherwomen in West Bengal

It is therefore clear from the above discussion that the fishworkers have strongly agitated against the national policies all over the country under the leadership of National Fish workers' Forum and other Civil Society Organizations. In West Bengal also the sparks of the movement began under the leadership of Late Hare Krishna Debnath, Former President of National Fishworkers' Forum and still the forum is working successfully in put forwarding the demands, rights and protection of the coast in front of the society and state under the leadership of Mr. Pradip Chatterjee, President of Dakshin Banga Matsyaibi Forum (DBMF). The researcher found that this forum is actively mobilizing the fisherfolk community all over the West Bengal. Numerous campaigns and programmes like capacity building, training, workshops, conferences, interactive sessions of fisherfolk and the government officials are organised aiming to uplift and development of the fisherfolk community as a whole. This Forum is also giving importance on Formation of the Co-operatives among the fisherfolk in order to enhance their economy and thus their livelihood.

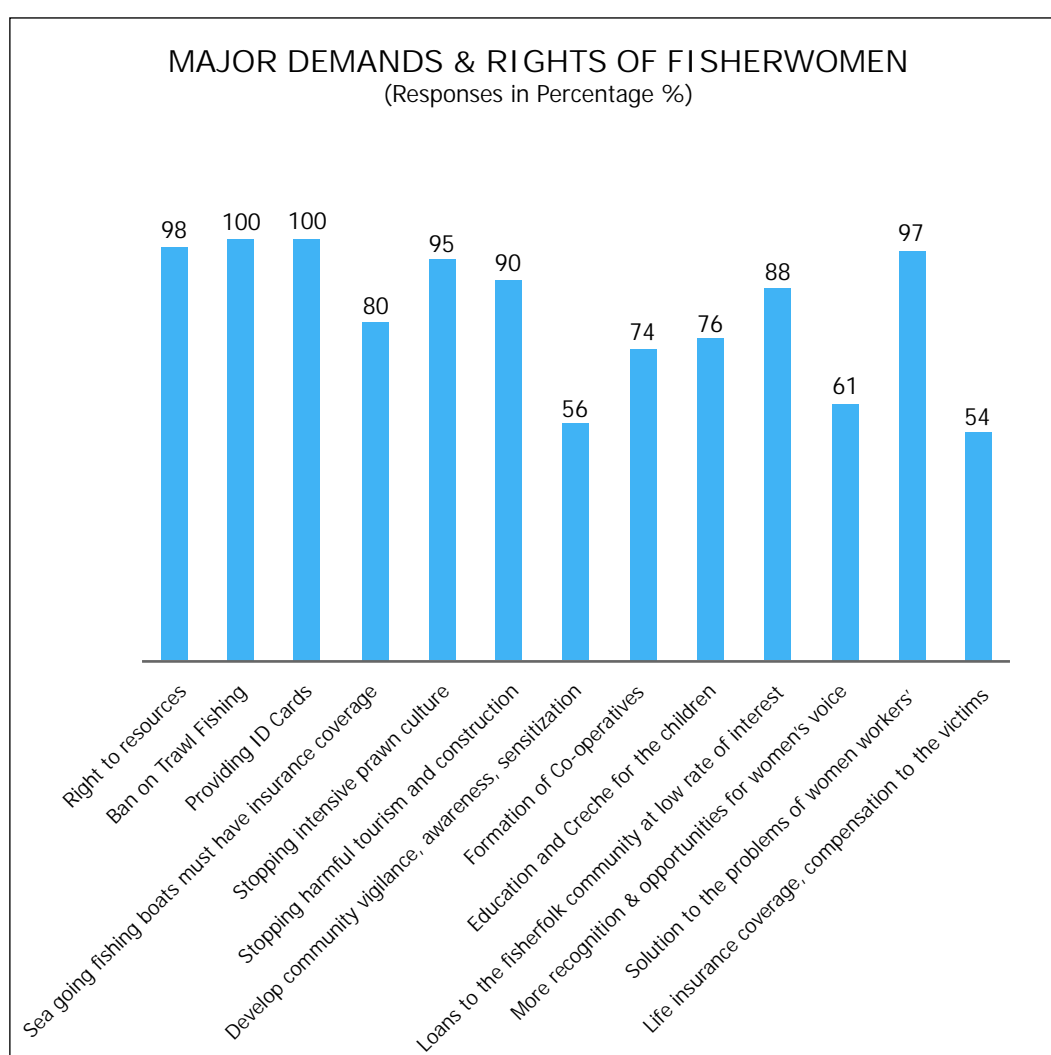
The researcher got the scope to visit several workshops and training programmes organized by DBMF where the researcher was able to interact with the fisherfolk and mostly the fisherwomen community. It was found that very few women fisherfolk participated from Howrah, Hooghly, Bankura Districts. Active participation of Fisherwomen were visible from the districts like Purba Midnapore and South 24 Parganas – mainly from Canning, Basanti, Gosaba and Kultali Block. *The fisherwomen pointed out several problems related to their occupation in front of the officials of Fisheries and Forest Departments, Govt. Of West Bengal. The government officials also made them aware of several policies and beneficial schemes available for them and also explained the process of availing them.

Some of the major demands and rights issues which were voiced in limelight were:

- ?Demand for the fishing rights and other fishing activities related rights
- ?Right to resources to be given to the fishermen community
- ?Ban on Trawl fishing during their breeding season.
- ID cards to the fisherfolk community from the Marine Fisheries Department must be issued at the earliest.
- ?All crews aboard sea going fishing boats must have Insurance coverage.
- ?Stopping intensive prawn culture.
- ?Stopping harmful tourism and construction.
- ?Protection of sand dunes, beach vegetation, beach plantation.
- ?Develop community vigilance, awareness, sensitization.
- ?Formation of co-operatives and co-operatives must be free from corruption and political or any other influences.
- ?Government schemes and benefits must be visible and transparent and must be easily accessible.
- ?Grameen Banks to provide loans to the fisherfolk community at low rate of interest so that the money lenders and advance payers domination will become less.
- ?More recognition and oppurtunities for women's voice.



- ?Solution of the problems of women workers' like demands of crèche, proper latrines near work places and like.
- The more specific issue was raised by the fisherwomen of Sunderban, South 24 Pdns District that they have to face the stiff challenges while fishing like facing the natural disaster, becoming the victims of tiger and crocodiles. So they demand for life insurance coverage, tiger and crocodile victims' family compensation and like. In the below figure, the details percentage of the women fisherfolk demands have been given:



What is significant is that these complaints, demands and arguments were voiced not only by formally educated interviewees but also many sorters (almost all women), with very little or no formal education. The interviewees were asked about the steps taken by fishworkers' organizations to realize the demands. Almost everyone interviewed were seen to be knowledgeable about such steps as preparing charters of demands, organizing local meetings, local rallies/ street meetings, deputations at Block Development Office, Coastal Padyatra, organizing meetings at the district headquarters. Many were seen to know about deputations and National meetings at the National Capital, Delhi. Most recently, at Sunderban Tiger



Reserve Head quarter Canning, South 24 Pdns District, a three day sit in fast agitation was held on 3 – 5th March, 2014 by DBMF & Sunderban Matsyajibi Joutha Sangram Committee. In Protest of

- Recent prohibition on use of dry fuel wood and Traditional Tools like Choppers and Axes in Fishing Boats;
- Non-Implementation of Forest Rights Act (FRA) in Sunderban;
- Illegal and Unjust Harassments and Tortures by Forest Department & Tiger Reserve Officials;
- Denial of the Right to Livelihood of Fishers, Wild Honey, Shell and Dry Wood Collectors;
- Black Marketeering in BLCs because of the wrong and anti-people policy of the Forest Department;
- Denial of Compensation and Insurance Claims to the Tiger and Crocodile Victims and Their Families;
- Degradation of Natural Resources of Sunderban due to Destructive Trawl Fishing, Large Scale Tourism and Pollution.

The poor, deprived and persecuted small fishers of Sunderban are fighting for their livelihood rights and rights to protect natural resources. More than 1,000 fisher women and men lay seize today, September 4, 2014, at the Sunderban Tiger Reserve (STR) Headquarters at Canning in the district of South 24 Parganas defying heavy rains. In the face of widespread anger and the agitation of fisher people the STR authorities officially suspended the order banning the use of firewood in the fishing boats. They also submitted that no forest officer will bar the use of traditional tools like axe and chopper in the fishing boats.

They admitted that the system of licence (Boat Licence Certificate, BLC) initiated by the forest department/STR in the 1980's was faulty and needs to be replaced. Further they admitted that the demand for recognition of the right of every forest dependent fisher to fish in the forest of Sunderban is a just one and they have also proposed the same to the authorities. They gave the union an official copy of their proposal. They said that they have already instructed all officers not to misbehave with the fishers and also to issue seizure tokens in case any confiscation is made.

The union representatives said that they welcome these decisions as interim measures. But all the restrictions imposed by the STR and the Reserve Forest on the livelihood practices of forest dependent people of Sunderban including fishing communities are illegal. As such the Dakshinbanga Matsyajibi Forum and Sunderban Matsyajibi Joutha Sangram Committee, together with all the associated organisations, will fight those restrictions to the last to establish the right to livelihood of the fishing and other forest dependent communities.

Therefore, it can be said that, the political and social issues are complex and resistant to easy solutions. However, broadly it can be said that the need of the times is to transcend the unfettered processes of capital accumulation as the development metaphor. We need to simultaneously contest, interrogate and reverse state anxieties. The fishermen's right to resources and livelihood have always been ignored. Institutionalization of the rights of these coastal fishermen is not only needed to protect their interests, but is also needed to lead to a





reduction in cross-border tensions and for the restoration of peace and democracy. The concerned government officials should always consider the interests of the traditional fisherfolk in India while implementing any fishery policy as majority of the people in India are directly dependent on fishing as their only occupation and any improper legislation might directly affect their lives and livelihoods and pose a great threat to their existence. So the National or State Marine Fisheries Policy should always ensure the “socio-economic security of traditional fishermen”. And if it is the question of women, then the institution like state must think it sensitively. This goodness and sustainability dictum has to be taken care of by these players in today's era of modernization and globalization.





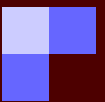
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CHAPTER
VII

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS



PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Fishing in India has become a subject of controversy and conflict. The cultivation of fishing has created adverse impacts on environment and people. The present management of fisheries in the country is woefully inadequate. Traditional practices of fisheries management are rapidly becoming obsolete because of the clashes between traditional and modern fisherfolk. The sea is the under assault from destructive fishing gears overcrowding of fishing vessels of different categories, particularly ill regulated mechanized boats, in the territorial waters and the contiguous EEZ area resulting in overfishing in that zone pollution from all sources ultimately finding their way to the sea.

But as history has shown time and again, coastal and marine conservation cannot simply be implemented by fiat. Something as vast and complicated as environmental conservation cannot simply be achieved through policy announcement, bureaucratic pen pushing and administrative policing. There is a large and vibrant community that is dependent for its existence on natural yield of the sea. Therefore, in this respect, not only the government but also the whole society has to think in terms of introducing new policies, rules which will benefit the traditional fisher folk; fruitful charters bearing new and easy developmental schemes have to be prepared, new suggestions and alternatives needs to be highlighted through which the coastal resources and the people dependent on it may have a sustainable livelihood rather than destructive.

This project study therefore aims to highlight the problems and prospects related to Fishing in West Bengal. More specifically, the study revolves around different problems, adversities; struggles face by the women fisherfolk in West Bengal, mainly in the selected districts by the researcher – Purba Midnapore and South 24 Parganas after the advent of globalised and modernized way of fishing. It is true that women fisher folk play a vital role in the fisheries sector. The researcher in her survey found that women fisher folk were not only involved in fishing related activities like sorting, vendoring, giving feeds to the fishes, fertilization of ponds or netting as it is mainly assumed but also they are very much active in inland fish capturing or in the sea. Although the ratio of the latter category of the women fisher folk is poor but still there are women who are earning their livelihood with stiff challenges and troubles. Besides, some women were not only involved in aquaculture but also in many other activities, such as raising poultry and livestock, home gardening and family welfare work at home. As a result the total time inputs of women in aquaculture production and household chores were found to be generally higher than those of men.

Thus, women were involved in various activities as found in the selected study area of Dadan Patrabar, Ramnagar Block, Contai, Purba Midnapore District and Purba and Madhya Gurguria, Kultali Bock, South 24 Prgns District. With the exception of harvesting and marketing, most of the women interviewed reported that they usually had to do everything related to fish farming within their households. They were also likely to be responsible for growing vegetables and raising poultry along with fishing and fish farming in ponds. Although the geo- socio- economic and cultural aspect of the fisherwomen of this two districts are contrasting in nature which has been already discussed in the chapter on “Socio- economic – Political Profile of the Fisherwomen – A Comparative Study of Two Districts”. But still the problems encountered of the women fish workers were mostly common. Women's status at household level, the strict gender division of labour, religious – cultural norms and values, and



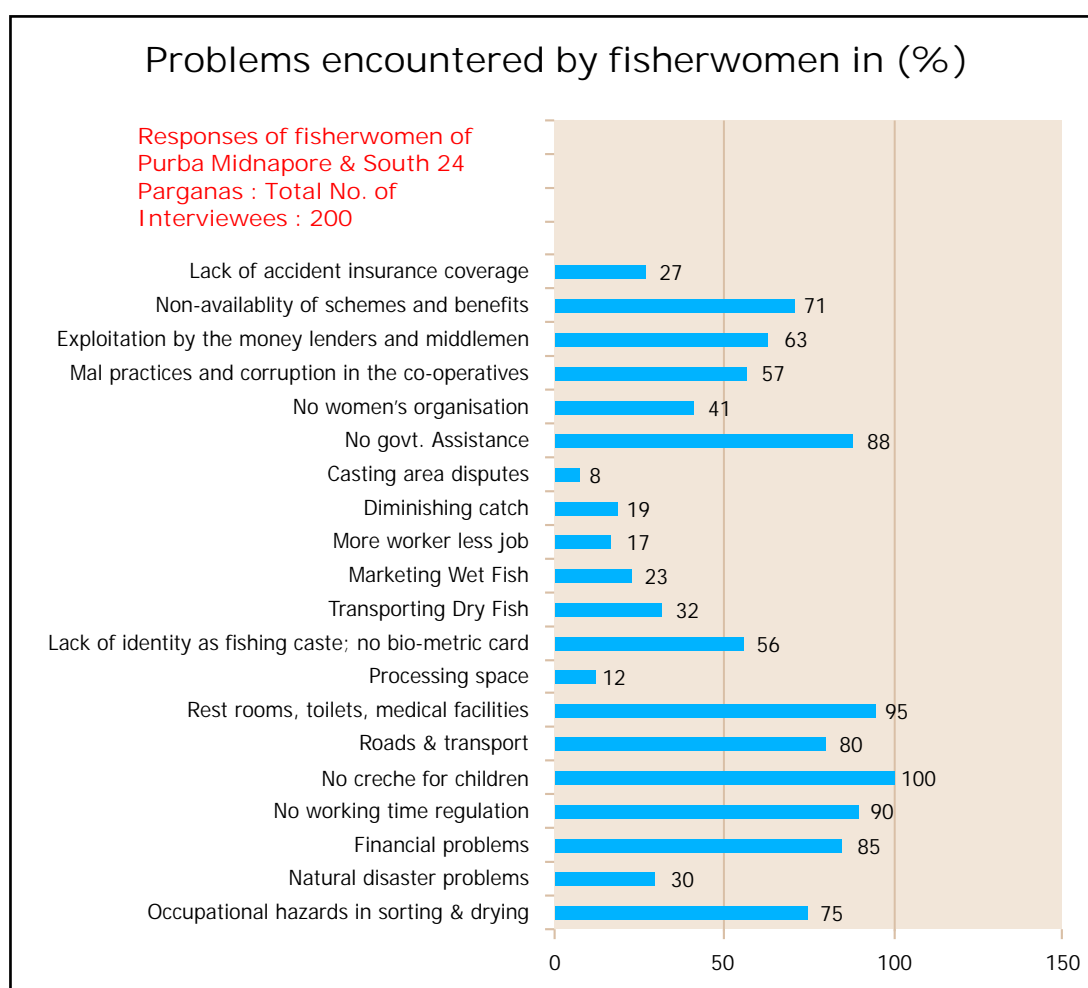
the extent to which traditional customs prevail and influence women's lives, can be great constraints on women's active participation in fisheries sector. Moreover, women fisher folk face particular barriers to participation in decision making process to the management and conservation of their fisheries. Developing institutions engaged in fisheries management, which are modeled on those, are mainly male dominated. Moreover, they are under the umbrella of illiteracy, veil of ignorance and knowledge. As a result the status of fisherwomen in the society continues to remain low due to all these factors. Therefore, what is important here is to note that the overwhelming majority of the women fish workers believed that neither the authorities nor the society recognize their role they play insignificantly in the fisheries activities. Fisherwomen communities are still neglected, backward and are being marginalized although they constitute a major chunk of the population as because West Bengal comprises of two major coastal districts.

Next the interviewees were asked to comment on the problems encountered in exercising their rights to fisheries. Here are the responses of about 200 fisherwomen from both the selected districts by the researcher. The responses were many and varied in nature.

- Lack of infrastructure like proper roads, proper and adequate fish sorting and drying space, transportation of dry fish, market access for wet fish, restrooms, toilets, crèche and necessary medical facilities including female medical attendants were mentioned.
- Lack of preparedness to cope with natural disasters was mostly mentioned among other problems. It included lack of early and effective warning system, wireless communication, land-based signal, protective measures to protect dry fish from rains and squalls etc.
- Financial problems mentioned included dearth of resources to directly access the market, resources to procure and repair boats and nets, procurement of seeds.
- The problem of getting a fair prices
- The number of Fishworkers was increasing while the quantity of jobs was shrinking. Some fishers also reported diminishing amount of catch as a problem confronting their livelihood.
- Non-availability of subsidies on diesel and kerosene made it difficult to procure fuel for both sea-bound fishing crafts and fishing related work after dusk.
- The putting-out system, i.e. the system of giving money in advance to the fishers by traders to get the fishers sell their catch only to them at relatively low price.
- Trawling, both national and foreign should be ban totally
- Intra-and inter-Khoti disputes over the net casting area.
- Pollution from industries, effluents and emissions.
- Occupational hazards like frequent fish bone prick injuries
- No protection from the scorching sun
- No crèche to look after their children
- No separate toilet at their work place
- Separate transport facilities should be made available for the fisherwomen who have to visit the main fish landing centres and have to face problems in travelling with their male counterparts.
- ?Lack of fixed working hour



- Problems in protecting their life and livelihood in the absence of separate sorters' organisation and women's organisation.
- Mal practices and corruption making the women fisherfolk co-operatives inactive and dead in functioning.
- Problems of getting loans from government in purchasing items for the procurement of ponds.
- Exploitation of the money lenders towards the fisherwomen.
- Problem of accident insurance coverage.



What immediately strikes the eye in this section is the richness and variety of response. In order to expose the reader immediately to the details thereof the relevant charts are imported directly into this write-up.

Therefore, the need of the hour is that a viable alternative needs to be suggested in order to enhance the livelihood of the deprived fisherwomen of the states and more specifically of these two districts.

- The social security and benefit scheme launched for the fisherwomen needs to be properly delivered by the responsible authorities.





- As literacy in the coastal areas is low, the benefit of the research reaches to the fisherwomen particularly very slowly. The government should organize awareness programs at important fishing centers to educate the fishermen about the importance of resource conservation. To organize the fishing sector to act in a more effective manner, the government should enact and enforce suitable legislations. Implementation can be monitored with the help of organizations like coast guard.
- Government organizations like the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) should be given power to control over the designing of fishing gear used by commercial vessels so as to curtail the use of totally destructive gears.
- Even though better designs have been forwarded by researchers which facilitate by-catch reduction in trawl net, policy makers often fail to make use of these technologies because of various reasons, primarily anticipating resistance from mechanized fishing sectors. This situation warrants for more awareness programmes, highlighting the need for reducing by-catch levels and conserving of endangered species.
- Effective surveillance system should be set up to prevent frequent violation of rules by trawlers and their entry into sea-shore waters should be checked.
- Use of trawl nets with lesser cod end mesh size should be banned. Researchers have established that large meshed trawl nets perform better in the Indian coast without much reduction in catch.
- The quick release of non-target species back to the sea may also help in reducing their level of mortality. As occurrences of by-catch and their mortalities are recorded during night hours, night trawling should be banned as stipulated in the Marine Fishing Regulation Act.
- Individual quota system as practiced in the west is not sustainable in India considering the free access to oceanic resources and the large number of fisherfolk involved in fisheries.
- Considering the severe ecological and eco system damages caused by trawling and aquaculture, adoption of a precautionary approaches by regarding 'no discards' as norm would be appropriate for the conservation of marine bio diversity and eco system. But any attempt to implement the by-catch reduction strategies without the support of fishermen and boatowners would become a futile exercise.
- Some collective and democratic initiatives are required for the preparation and implementation of the CZMs by the government of India. Area and region specific plan must be prepared. There must be a regulatory framework for the implementation of these plans.
- Local self-Governance must be encouraged. The jurisdiction of various departments needs to be clearly defined. Environmental and social impact assessment must be carried out for coastal development activities.
- The problems, demands as highlighted above must be addressed quickly for the benefits of the poor fisherwomen mainly the problems of toilet, crèche, access to market.
- Not only the NGOs, Trade Unions, NFF but also it is the government who have to play a very vital role in enhancing the economic power of the fisherwomen by supporting finances, grants, loans in formation of co-operatives.





- The Fisherwomen of Sunderban needs to be covered with some compensation schemes as they are often the victims of tigers and crocodiles.
- The government should build more and more capacity building programmes at the local areas like training, awareness programmes, how to develop modern skills in preparing nets or fish capturing. As it is often found that even few initiatives from government exists in holding training and workshops but they are either held at the district headquarter or at the city, so the poor, illiterate, non- vocal fisherwomen cannot attend them.
- The government and policy framers of our country should include the fisherwomen also in policy making and decision making process.
- As every dark cloud has a silver lining, it is seen that the appropriate government regulations may brought positive changes. But the only thing is that they should be introduced and enforced wherever possible in the best interests of both conservation and management of marine fishery resources as well as safeguarding the needs of the coastal fisherfolk. And Some new policies and schemes should be implemented in favour of fisherwomen as they are the most marginalized entities of the society.
- Finally, role of the society as a whole is required to improve the living conditions of the fisherwomen. They should be given recognition for their huge contribution in the fishing sector. They should be stopped from exploitation from the money lenders, or the challenges they face from their male counterparts at their work place. They should be allowed to participate in the campaign more actively. Moreover the fisherwomen themselves should come forward in empowering themselves.

It is true that there is a discrimination against fisherwomen in all walks of life despite the provision of their constitutional guarantees. The traditional attitude of our society does not encourage women to utilize their human potentials fully. They are not ranked according to their capacity to do particular job due to sex, caste and kinship. The major challenges faced by rural women are illiteracy, lack of vital information, fear to take risks, lack of experience and training, feeling of insecurity, rampant corruption, lack of infrastructure, lack of finance etc In addition these are structural constrains in the form of inequality, limited purchasing power, condemnation by local elite and like. Although the principle of gender equality is enshrined in our constitution which guarantees equality to women, and empowers the state to adopt measures of positive determination in favour of women for removing the cumulative socio-economic, educational disadvantages faced by them. Within a framework of democratic polity, our laws, developmental policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres.

Therefore it is very clear that in order to achieve a decent livelihood for the women fishworkers and to increase the production of nutritious food for the masses, the above suggestions should be implemented. The transition from conflict to harmony necessitates a holistic approach. The experience from the region, particularly from the two districts of West Bengal, indicates that initiatives for remedial action will necessarily require the active participation of the fishworkers. In fact, in recent years, many social scientists too have argued that renewable resource scarcity (eg Land degradation, deforestation and fisheries depletion) increasingly has become a factor of conflict. This factor does not only highlight environmental crisis as the sole reason for this conflict, it also highlights the renewable resource scarcity and its effects on the conflict in the social, economic and political field.





In conclusion, it can be said that every nation wants to progress and become more powerful. With this purpose, India is also being driven by modernisation, liberalization and privatization. But in this context, it may be remembered what Mahatma Gandhi said, "India lives in its villages". In a country like ours, where majority of population lives in villages and are largely illiterate depending mostly on natural resources (jal, jamin and jungle), such modernisation and liberalization which does not take into account the availability of natural resources, is bound to be self-defeating. This kind of modernisation only takes into account the economic aspects where profit is the only motive. As a result the other aspects of society like ecology, culture are being neglected.

Thus, the coastal districts of West Bengal are becoming the hot bed of conflicts. In order to have peace, harmony and sustainable development, policy makers must take into consideration the interests of the poor fisherfolk and involve them also in the decision making process. The planners of our country should take firm steps and enforce suitable policies so that the needs and interests of the fishermen and more specifically the fisherwomen and their traditional rights are properly safeguarded and maintained.

We definitely should aim at development but that should be 'sustainable' rather than 'destructive'. We have to enact an effective and enforceable legislation to control all the ills of modernized way of fishing. The state should sustain its natural resources. So that people living on such resources could live in peace and harmony. For this while strong legislation for the protection of natural resources is a must, the people exploiting the natural resources at the same time, should be made aware of the adverse effects of over-exploitation, control measures and prevailing legislation.

Thus, the above project study justifies the fact that it is not only economic upliftment of women fishworkers' is required but their social status and identity in society should also be uplifted. Their role as catalysts in effacing the social maladies cannot be ruled out. So one can be anything one want to be, do anything one set out to accomplish if one hold to that desire with singleness of purpose. The first and foremost requirement of any social movement is the role of a catalyst in mobilizing the members assuring them of an affirmative result and making them well familiar with the possible means to accomplish the task. If society thinks women should be empowered, fifty percent empowerment takes place; If family thinks women should be empowered, seventy five percent empowerment takes place; If a woman thinks women should be empowered, hundred percent empowerment takes place. So the conscience of the women needs to be augmented. It is true that "if you give a fish to a man, he eats the day; if you give a fish to a women, she, her children and the family eats the day". Therefore the above study highlights the different socio-economic-political status of the fisherwomen of Purba Midnapore and South 24 Parganas Districts of West Bengal and how they are wrapped under the umbrella of Poverty, illiteracy and patriarchy.



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Annexure – I

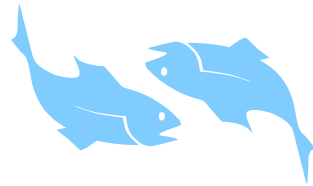
Discussion with Fisherwomen at Purba Gurguria Kultali Block, South 24 Parganas, W.B



The researcher and
the fisherwomen group interaction



Data Collection



Discussion with fisherwomen at Dadanpatrabar, Ramnagar -II Block, Purba Midnapore, W.B



Fisherwomen of Dadanpatrabar
at NFF office



Registration of fisherwomen for
Biometric ID card at Contai Office

*Source of picture: Field visit by researcher at Midnapore on 4-5 Feb, 2014
Field visit by researcher at South 24 Prgns on 22-23 Feb, 2014*

Annexure – III

In Action : Fisher women of the Study Area (Midnapore & S. 24 Pgns)



Fisherwomen helping her husband
Midnapore



Fisherwomen of Sundarban
works in danger, S. 24 Pgns



Fish sorting at Midnapore



Capturing fish, S. 24 Pgns



Fish vendinging at local market, Midnapore



Capturing fish with her son, S. 24 Pgns



SOCIO ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STATUS OF FISHERWOMEN COMMUNITY OF WEST BENGAL
A Study of Purba Midnapore and South 24 Parganas District

Final Minor Research Project Report Submitted to University Grants Commission

Principal Investigator : SHILPA NANDY, Assistant Professor, Deptt. of Political Science, Khudiram Bose Central College

