

Chapter - I

I n t r o d u c t i o n

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Apart from fishes, some of aquatic crustaceans and molluscs are also included among the fisheries of economic importance. In India the most important crustacean fisheries are those of prawns and shrimps; and those of lobsters and crabs are of lesser importance. Crabs are known to occur in sea, estuaries, backwaters along both the east and west coasts of India and river, lakes and other freshwater areas throughout the country.

Among the crustaceans the order Decapoda comprises most of the familiar large shell forms like crab, lobster, crayfish, prawn and shrimp. Several species of crabs are caught in commercial and subsistence fishing in India. The most important are the marine species Scylla serrata, Neptunus sanguinolentus, Paratelphusa spinigiori, Varuna litterata.

In Maharashtra State the crabs are collected throughout the year, peak period being August to October. In Maharashtra State four species of freshwater crabs are dominant -

1) Paratelphusa guerini occurs in Vidharbha region, 2) Barytelphusa cunicularis and 3) Barytelphusa gurini in Marathwada and 4) Paratelphusa jacquemonti in rest of Maharashtra State. At Kolhapur crabs occur on the banks of Panchaganga river in crevices. They are either caught in net from flowing river water or dig out of crevices. Exploitation of crabs remained as subsistence for the local fishermen

during monsoon season. Crabs are consumed by poor people either by steaming or by preparing soup.

Review of the literature shows that very little work has been carried out on freshwater crabs. Patwardhan (1936) ³⁴ briefly described the feeding mechanism and the structure of gastric mill in Decapoda. In spite of its abundance little attention appears to have been paid to study the freshwater crab, Paratelphusa jacquemonti.

Therefore the present work was undertaken to study.

The present work, was, therefore, undertaken with a view to study the gross external morphology, food, feeding, morphology of setae and gastric mill of the crab paratelphusa jacquemonti found at Kolhapur. The present dissertation deals with 1) Introduction, 2) Material and Method, 3) External morphology, 4) Structure of mouth parts, alimentary canal setae and food, 5) Morphology of gastric mill.