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RAPAN (ROMPAN)

IV.1 INTRODUCTION :

It is also known as Rapan Sangh. It is a traditional way of collective efforts for catching fish. Its operation is confined to the shore waters. (As) 35 to 65 men (fishermen) from different families working together constitute a Rapan Sangh. This type of fishing is done using large nets to be spread in the coastal waters (only). Though the Rampan system is on the decline day by day, it is still being used in Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts. The fishing net and the carriage craft called Vallah are the most important capital assets in this system.

IV.2 FISHING NET :

i) Rampan Net (Shore Seine) :

The net consists of three types of pieces known as (i) Karel, (ii) Modan and (iii) Ghol; their measurements are as follows :

<u>Piece</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Height</u>	<u>Mesh</u>
Karel	24'	18' to 27'	1½"
Modan	21'	28' to 30'	1"
Ghol	18'	31' to 33'	¾" to 1¼".

In a Rompan net of 100 pieces, Karel part consists of 60 pieces, Modan ~~consists of~~ 22 pieces and Ghol ~~consists of~~ 18 pieces. ^RRapan nets which are used at Malvan and Devgad consist of 200 to 300 pieces in the proportion given above. Approximately 35 to 45 persons (fishermen) are required for dragging the net. Material; used for making the gear ~~in~~ ^{are} Nylon and monofilament and sometimes cotton twine. The net is used for catching shoal fishes like mackerel and sardines.¹

IV.3 RAPAN SANGH AT MALVAN TOWN :

As mentioned above this type of traditional fishing activity is quite old in Malvan town too. The Junay-Rapan Sangh, Dhuriwada Malvan Town was established in 1880 i.e. one hundred years ago. ^{There} ~~They~~ were more than 12 ^{new} Rapan Sanghs fifty years ago, but the number has come down to 7 ~~now~~ active Rapan Sangh^s at present. It is losing its primacy in fishing activity owing to four major causes :

- 1) It is an old traditional way of fishing which requires sustained and collective hard work.
- 2) Day by day the traditional organisation of members (fishermen) is becoming difficulty.
- 3) Fishermen prefer other ^Stype_λ of fishing to this.

- 4) The young generation, particularly with some formal educational qualifications^{is} shunning fishing activity, because of two main reasons :

- a) Hardlife,
- b) low returns.

Therefore, only seven (retire) Rapan Sanghs have survived in Malwan Town.

There are seven Rapan Sanghs in Malwan Town, the oldest ^{is} in Junay Rapan Sangh, 104 years old (established in 1880) ^{and the one is} and latest ^{and it is} 20 years old established in 1964.

There are 343 fishermen members ~~of~~ ^{in these} seven Rapan Sanghs. ^{Their} ~~There~~ annual income amounts to Rs. 3,25,000/-. The rate of savings (for working capital or expenditure) of the Rapan Sangh is determined by the mutually agreed traditional share i.e. 15 to 20 shares, that is 15 to 20% amount set aside from the proceeds of every day. Total savings of the seven Sanghs went upto Rs. 85,430, this year, which is more than ^{the} last years savings. This was possible ^{due} ~~owing~~ to the favourable ~~of~~ ^{and} nature ^{and} the fish catch was good. ~~And~~ Hence substantial savings remained in balance. ^{7.10.11}

The Government gives aid i.e. grant or loan at 50.00% subsidies for fabric and building small boats i.e. Pagar to Rapan Sangh. Only two Rapan Sanghs have taken

TABLE No. IV.1

A NUTSHELL INFORMATION OF MALVAN TOWN RAPAN SANGHS
(1984-85)

Sr. No.	Name of Rapan Sangh	Year of establishment	Total members	Annual average income	Annual average expenditure	Annual average savings	Balance Rs.	Grant loan 50% subsidy	Loan from money lender
A)	Junay Rapan Sangh, Dhariwada, Malvan Town	1880	63 +20	40,000	10,000	10,260	+260	Nil	1000
B)	Kubal Rapankar Sangh, Dandi, Malvan Town	1900	52 +20	50,000	13,900	13,880	+ 20	4837-50 Fabric 17813-00 Boat	Nil
C)	Zalay Rapankar Sangh, Malvan Town	1922	43 +20	45,000	14,800	14,280	+520	1500-00 Fabric	Nil
D)	Nav Rapan Sangh, Dandi, Malvan Town	1940	38 +15	50,000	10,700	14,145	+3445	Nil	Nil
E)	Revatalkar Rapan Sangh, Dhuriwada, Malvan Town	1964	48 +15	55,000	8,900	13,095	+4195	Nil	Nil
F)	Shri Maykar Rapan Sangh, Kotawada, Malvan Town.	1964	48 +15	55,000	8,900	13,095	+4195	Nil	Nil
G)	Dholakar Rapan Sangh	1950	49	45,000	9,850	10,545	+695	Nil	5000
	Total :		343 +120	3,25,000	76,050	85,430	10460	24150-50	6000

+20 or +15 : Share of fish catch from income for savings only.

advantage of the scheme. Others go to the money lenders
 due to illitracy and lengthy paper work at office level.
 convenience and because of the
 combined effect of these factors involved in institutional loans

The balance of this year, will be utilized for
 repayment of old debt and for maintenance cost in the rainy
 season.

Tables ~~IV.2-A~~ IV.2-A and IV.2-B shows the details of
 capital and its investment of Rapan Sangh. It is intere-
 sting to note that all capital assets have been organized
 on a collective basis and without any written contract.
 All the money transaction^s take place near a particular
 pole of their shed. The pole ^{sense symbolism} ~~sense~~ as God's pole and
 hence the transaction is always ^{clear} ~~clear~~. Fishermen will
 never be dishonest to this transaction.

TABLE No. IV.2-A

CAPITAL STRUCTURE OF SEVEN RAMPAN SANGHS

Sr. No.	Net and Patay (Wooden Hooks) Rs.	Boats S: Small B: Big Rs.	Pots (Handay) Rs.	Jotay Rs.	Ropes Rs.	Cottage (Magar) Rs.	Total fixed capital Rs.	Fabric and Wages Rs.	Rope Rs.	Repairing cost of Rapan (Net) Rs.	Repairing and tena cott Rs.
A)	45,000	S: 8000 B: 1400	7000	3000	8000	2000	87,000	4000	1500	3000	50
B)	1,40,000	S: 3500 B: 6000	3000	3000	7200	3000	1,65,700	4000	3000	5000	100
C)	50,000	S: 4000 B: 22000	2000	4000	8000	4000	94,000	4000	3000	5500	150
D)	77,500	S: 10000 B: 21900	2000	1500	6750	3000	1,22,650	3000	2000	4000	100
E)	25,000	S: 4000 B: 6000	7000	1000	4000	2000	49,000	2000	2000	2500	50
F)	30,000	S: 4000 B: 6000	3000	2000	5000	3000	53,000	2000	2000	3000	100
G)	40,000	S: 6000 B: 6000	4000	2000	6000	2000	66,000	3000	2000	3000	100

TABLE No. IV.2-B

FIXED CAPITAL AND WORKING CAPITAL OF
RAPAN SANGHS IN MALVAN TOWN

	Fixed capital in Rs.		Working capital in Rs.
Net and Patay	4,07,500	Fabric Wages	22,000
Boats	1,21,400	Ropes	15,500
Pots	28,000	Repair cost of Rapan Net	26,000
Jotay	16,500	Repairing cottage	6,500
Ropes	44,950	Tea and Breakfast	6,050
Cottage	19,000		
Total of Fixed Capital	6,37,350	Total of Working capital	76,050

Therefore, Fixed Capital + Working Capital = Total Capital
 6,37,350 + 76,050 = invested in
 Rapan 7,13,400

TABLE No. IV.3MEMBERS OF RAPAN SANGH

Sr. No.	Name of the Rapan Sangh	Men		Women	
		Perma- nent	Tempo- rary	Perma- nent	Tempo- rary
A)	Junay Rapan Sangh	13	50	-	20
B)	Kubal Rapankar Sangh	52	-	-	15
C)	Zalay Rapankar Sangh	43	-	-	10
D)	Nau Rapan Sangh	38	-	-	10
E)	Revatakar Rapan Sangh	50	-	-	15
F)	Shri Maykar Rapan Sangh	48	-	-	15
G)	Dholakar Rapan Sangh	49	-	-	15
07	Malvan Town Rapan Sangh	293	50	-	100

From the above table it is seen that there are seven Rapan Sangh^s in Malvan town. The working of Rapan^{sangh} is totally done by men only. Except Junay Rapan Sangh, other Rapan Sangh^s are having permanent fishermen as their members. The women are purely temporary (daily wages) for loading the fish into trucks i.e. from Rapan on to trucks which are parked on the sea shore only.

The members of the Rapan Sangh come mostly from Hindu (Maratha-Gabit, Bhandari Castes) families and some are from the Christian Community. There ^{has} ~~is~~ never ^{been} any friction from the point of caste~~ism~~.

TABLE No. IV.4

EMPLOYMENT : SEASONAL IN NATURE

Sr. No.	Name of Rapan Sangh	Male	Female	Days
A)	Junay Rapan Sangh	63	20	210
B)	Kubal Rapan Sangh	52	15	200
C)	Zalay Rapankar Sangh	43	10	200
D)	Nau Rapan Sangh	38	10	200
E)	Revatakar Rapan Sangh	50	15	200
F)	Shri Maykar Rapan Sangh	48	15	180
G)	Dholkar Rapan Sangh	49	15	180
07	Malvan Town Rapan Sangh	343	100	-

From the above table it is seen that 343 fishermen and 100 women are seasonally employed in Rapan activity i.e. Rapan is giving seasonal employment for nearly 200 days (out of 365 days) in this traditional fishing.

The majority of the people are illiterate and very few i.e. 10.00% are literate, with schooling upto IVth Std.

TABLE No. IV.5

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE OF THE MEMBERS
(FISHERMEN) OF RAPAN SANGH

Sr. No.	Name of the Rapan Sangh	Income from Rapan	Income from other fish-ing activi-ties.	Expenditure on food and clothing	Expenditure on liquor	Balance
A)	Junay Rapan Sangh	513	1200	700	1000	+ 13
B)	Kubal Rapankar Sangh	694	1200	800	1000	+94
C)	Zalay Rapankar Sangh	714	1200	850	1000	+ 64
D)	Nau Rapan Sangh	943	1200	1000	1000	+143
E)	Revatalkar Rapan Sangh	615	1200	800	1000	+ 15
F)	Shri Maykar Rapan Sangh	873	1200	850	1000	+223
G)	Dholkar Rapan Sangh	703	1200	750	1000	+708
O7	Malvan Town Rapan Sangh					
	Total	5055	8400	5750	7000	+708

Because of this type of employment and very low returns as shown in Table No. IV.5, fisherman have to work in other fishing activities e.g. net preparation, net repairing, daily wage work and sometimes dugout fishing to meet their basic needs. Also, as the job is hard and of uncertain nature the young generation, who have ^{had} ~~takes~~ some education, leaves Malvan to Bombay in search of better jobs.

From the Table No. IV.5 it gives a broad picture of individual annual income from Rapan and other fishing activities. Unfortunately the expenditure on liquor is more than the expenditure on food and clothing. Fishermen can't meet the necessary expenditure on medicine, education, etc. which ^{creates a} ~~creates~~ low standard of living among them. Predominantly it is due to three reasons :

- 1) Low yield (income) from Rapan.
- 2) Wasting (spending) on liquor (which become a must for them).
- 3) The present ~~inflation~~ or rising of prices.

It leaves the fishermen in perpetual debts.

Therefore, the efforts at all levels i.e. at the levels of social workers, Government Officials and educationists should be made to reduce the ~~percentage of~~ liquor consumption among them, which will solve many problems of fishermen and their society.

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IV.4 ITS WAY OF WORKING :

Rapan is a seasonal fishing activity extending from August (from Narli Purnima) to January i.e. six months.

1) Actual Working :

If there are several Rapan Sanghs conducting their operations on the same stretch of the shore, each of them gets a chance for fishing by turns. This ~~turning out~~ or rotation system though based on a tacit understanding, is strictly binding on all Rapan Sanghs. When a Sangh's turn of fishing comes, an advance party of two men is sent out in a small dingy (pagar) to look out for and signal the arrival of fish shoals. They get the indication of the fish arrival from the changing colour of the sea surface, from the waves and the wind direction. As soon as such a signalling shout is heard, the net laden craft of the Sangh (Vallah) is launched to discharge and spread the netline in the waters. Meanwhile the remaining members ^{get} ~~remain~~ ready to rope out the net with the fish-catch. After net-casting, the valha is brought back. After about half an hour's interval, the men begin to pull back the net line with the catch.

ii) Rotation of Sangh :

There are seven Rapan Sanghs. Two to three Sanghs can simultaneously operate on a furlong long stretch of the

shore, depending upon the quantity of fish. The men-folk of all Sangh^s assemble at their appointed places twice a day viz. in the morning and in the afternoon and remain waiting for the turn of their respective Sangh. If, for some reason, the number of men of any Sangh present on the shore falls short of the required Sangh, that Sangh has to give up its turn in favour of the next Sangh ^{on} in the waiting line.

iii) Dragging out Rapan Net :

The period as well as the time of waiting is uncertain and unpredictable. It may be day or night time and the waiting which is usually for 4-5 hours, may sometimes extend upto 30-35 hours. The quality and the quantity of the catch also depend on sheer luck. After reasonable waiting the ^{net} with the catch is slowly tugged out by the men on the shore. The fish is removed and sorted and the different parts tied together to make-up the entire length of the net are again separated for the convenience of folding and carrying them back to the shed.

iv) Sharing of Income from catch :

The fish-catch may consist of a single type or a mixed variety. When the catch is ^{an} average ^{size} the entire catch is divided into many smaller lots; to be auctioned on the

spot. The income is then apportioned among the members. Each member's share is determined on the basis of his fiscal contribution or investment in the vallah, the different parts of the net and his own labour. Every member presenting himself for the rapan work is entitled to his due share in the day's total income for his labour for that particular day. Some members who have staked their money for the vallah and the net parts are entitled to additional shares. Generally, 50.00% of the daily earning is earmarked for the capital component - reasonable returns on maintenance depreciation charges (vallah, boat, net parts, etc.) and the remaining amount for the manual work. The amount for manual work is equally divided among all the members. About 15.00% of the money income is set aside for working capital and maintenance cost.

Thus, besides the due share for the day's manual work, a member may also get some additional amount as his proportionate share in the quantum of money set apart as the due return on the capital assets.

v) Rapan Catch and Local Taste :

The rapan sanghs wind-up their operations by January/February end when the operation becomes economically ⁱⁿ ~~un~~feasible with a very negligible fish catch. If they borrow money from big fish merchants during the lean period on the

promise of supplying prawns, sardines, mackarels in their season, they have to keep their commitment of supplying the fish at the contracted rates till the repayment is ~~cover~~^{over}. They cannot take advantage of the higher prices in the local market. Then only the inferior varieties are sold for retailing in the local markets on cash. Prawn catch is likely in August/September; sardine in September, Bumper Mackarel catches are now only past memories. Mackerels have become very very rare in the last 5-6 years. Formerly, mackarel season used to last for over two-three months and everybody earned a ^{lot} ~~lost~~ of profit on that single species. It is a big favourite of people and it is quite suitable for all end uses - cooking, frying, roasting, canning or curing. Large scale deforestation, new plantation of Eucalyptus subabul or such quick growing trees and shrubs in place of sal and timber, have to some extent changed the soil composition, which in turn has affected the quality of water of flowing into the sea which in turn has changed the chemistry of the sea water. This may have something to do with the disappearance of certain fish varieties and the general degeneration in the taste of all varieties. The sardine does not appeal to the local consumer's taste. But in the sardine season, truck loads of sardines are purchased by traders or agents for sale to Bombay based pharmaceutical companies who extract sardine oil for use in their health tonic.

vi) Fish-catch and Local Market :

When the catch is of average quantity and mixed variety, it is first classified according to the varieties to prepare for its sale. Sometimes the lots so classified *are* ^(on) auctioned on the spot. But general fish lots are taken to the Malvan fish market by head loads, hand carts or bullock carts depending on the quantity and then they are auctioned. Only 5.00% of the total fish ^{is} sold for local consumption. Bulk of the fish is purchased by middlemen and traders who purchase it on commission basis on behalf of the fish-sellers of Kolhapur, Satara, Belgaum and other places in those districts, quite a few traders have their own trucks and a team of sales-women to facilitate immediate transport and sale of the fish at different places in the hinterland, upto 35 miles from the coast.

IV.7 STORE SHADE AND OTHER JOBS :

Every ^Ropan partly has a couple of temporary shades of coconut fronds on the shore. Such shades are erected on leased land. These shades they use for waiting by day or night, for relaxing or retiring and for their tea, lunch, for oiling and servicing the boats and nets. When rapans are suspended the vallah and the boats are stationed in these sheds for protection in the hot summer months and the rainy season.

When rampan operations are suspended in January/February; every year, some people in Malvan owing land go in for cultivating water-melons and vegetables. Quite a few have to do sundry menial jobs, or to seek employment as a casual labour. The elder members cannot find employment elsewhere. So they are entrusted with the work of mending old nets, crimping new ones, oiling and servicing the boats and attending to other necessary repairs. Such jobs are of part-time nature and short duration.

IV.8 LOW EARNING AND NET DAMAGE :

The average earning of the rompan worker is very low, it cannot meet their basic needs e.g. food, clothing and shelter. The hard work and company spreads the habit of drinking, which claims a sizeable portion of their income.

The gargling sound of mechanised craft scare away shoals to the deep sea. Rapan nets are frequently damaged by the propellers of mechanized craft, leaving off entering the port ~~leading~~ to quarrels and clashes. All these factors are responsible for the decline of this type of fishing.²

IV.9 PROMINENT DEMANDS OF THE RAPAN SANGH :

1) The Government should protect and safeguard the Rapan works, in view of their employment potential and cost efficient working and security, by suitable legislation and schemes.

2) The Trawling creates a lot of problems e.g. damaging nets, and scaring away the fish, from the shore waters with its sound. Government should been their shore- activities and give full protection to Rapankars. The sea-shore should be reserved for Rapan only, this is the major demand.)

3) Marketing is also ^{a problem for} ~~troublesome~~ to them. Hence the marketing side should be handled through cooperative societies of fishermen. But proper rates and ready cash should be paid to Rapankar.

4) The fisheries department should provide cold-storage facilities in their yards. It should also run factories for fish-oil and for pulverizing non-edible fish into manures or poultry-feed.

5) A special bank should be established to assist, guide and develop the fishing activities ^{on} of the coastal area. The bank officials should have ^o ~~through~~ knowledge of all aspects of fisheries so that they can understand the problems peculiar to fishing industry. Cash advances should be disbursed in rainy season well in time.

6) Proper education facilities should be created, technical knowledge of modern fishing practices should be

imparted to the young generation. Medical ~~aid~~ and health centres should be started in their area. Sometime sea snake and vagali fish bites causes terrible pain and poisoning.

7) Last but not ^{the} least, this industry should become a modernised, well organised and highly productive activity (through organized marketing) so that the younger generation will stay in Malvan instead of rushing to Bombay.³

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