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CHAPTER SIX

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FISH MARKETING AND ECONOMICS OF FISHING COMMUNITY

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Cooper (1986) and Singh (1972) have conducted an excellent anthropological survey on the Kuruk fishermen of Bastar District, Central India where they found out that inspite of the Social changes Kuruk have persisted in presming age-old ways that sustained their ancestors and which continue to fulfil the basic requirements of the local fisherfolk population. According to the workers the close articulation of the foregoing strategies with the ecological background becomes apparent.

The fishing done in the remote areas in the PRS is mainly a subsistence fishing. This is done by fish poison, hook and line and cast nets. Only when the fish catch is more or fishing is done as the main occupation by traditional fishermen the surplus catch, after using the necessary subsistence fish, is sold. This fish catch usually being small in quantity and assorted, was sold at the site or in the neighbouring villages (Plate IV-B ). Only the big fishes caught in gill nets if not sold at the site were brought to the fish market in Kolhapur where it found a buyer.

The drag net catches are usually sold at Kolhapur fish market by auction to the retailers. Occassionally when the expected price was not received the fish was sold in retail by the fishermen themselves.

Fisher women took very little or no part in either fish collection transport or marketing of fish like in the marketing of the main fish. The prevelant fish prices during the experimental fishing were from Rs.6/- to Rs.18/- depending on

the type of fish and market conditions. The deciding factors in the sale of fish are seasons, holy festivals, availability of marine fish in the market, etc. Because of the lack of preservation facilities usually the riverine fish did not fetch good prices. Also due to the recurrent mass fish mortalities in PRS, in the recent times, people look at the fish suspectedly and even good fish from unpolluted upstream stretches of the river system was difficult to sell.

It was noticed that the riverine fish was the main supply of cheap priced animal protein to the thousands of poor people, road labourers, peasants etc who could not afford to go in for meat, poultry or even better quality marine or exotic tank fish varieties.

The daily income of an average fishermen, whose main occupation is fishing is estimated from gill net and cast net fishing to be Rs.8-9/day and from Drag net Rs.10-15/day, during season it is upto Rs.20/day. Considering the investments made in the form of fishing gear and their regular maintainance, and the hardship, man efforts, uncertainty of the fish catch and ever degrading quality and quantity of fish resource the fishing in PRS and particularly the life of fishermen community was in a very bad shape.

It was recorded that a large proportion i.e. 269 out of 870 fishermen families had already left their main traditional occupation of fishing and had shifted over to other petty jobs and occupations. During the experimental fishing and fisheries

survey it became clear that 292 out of the remaining 601 households were now involved in land labour. Thus now only 309 traditional fishermen families depended solely on fishing for their livelihood.

Tandon and Sharma (1965) reported that to supplement their income, the fishermen, working, on the water flour-mills, popularly known as 'Gharats', resort to fishing in their spare time. This only indicates the lack of faith in the fishing profession which requires encouragement to the fishermen from all quarters.

The second major occupation of the traditional fishermen of the PRS was agriculture labour. It was noted that in many cases the secondary income from agriculture labour, service, animal husbandry etc. was more than the traditional fishing occupation.

Tandon and Thind (1963) noted the absence of an organised fisherman community in Punjab. Similarly fishermen in the PRS are also not organised for their rights, really speaking, inspite of some fishermen cooperative societies, most of which are defuse.

Despite the hard work put in by the fishermen for fishing efforts, the fishing business, mainly whole sale fish marketing is in the hands of middle men who perhaps make more profits in the fish trade.

Studies based on the fishermen survey data suggested that more than 64.87 % of the households had total average annual income less than Rs.5000/- per year. Also if we consider the



'poverty line' sanctioned by the Government of India in the VIIth five year plan i.e. below Rs.7800/- per year for a rural household of six individuals as a cut off limit about 79.14 % of the fishermen households had total annual income less than that of the poverty line (Table No.19).

The income from fishing to the traditional fishermen families was quite meagre inspite of the man efforts and the hard work involved in it. Table No.20 reveals an interesting picture. The 89.26 % families had income below Rs.4000/- per year from fishing and only 9 % families had little higher income. Only two families had income above Rs.7000/- per year. Also a peculiar trend was revealed in the income pattern from fishing in the PRS (Table No.20). Though on all the tributaries of the PRS the annual total fish income was upto Rs.5000/- only in river Panchganga and to certain extent in river Krishna. The total annual income was beyond Rs.5000/- and in one case it was as high as Rs.9000/-. This is because three individuals from the some undivided family are engaged in fishing in comparatively fertile fishing grounds.

Among the different tributaries of the PRS, the fishermen households from river Panchganga showed the widest spectrum of range of total income i.e. from Rs.1001 to above Rs.10,000/- per annum per family. Next was river Bhogawati-Tulsi which also showed little similar trend mainly due to the larger and more perennial Bhogawati river. This was also attributed to job opportunities as agriculture labourers provided by the fertile river basin.

Table No. 19 : Total annual income of Fishermen families from the PRS.

Income RS.	Bhogawati & Julsi		Kumbhi & Dhamani		Kasari		Panchganga		Krishna		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Upto 1000	1	1.66	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.59
1001-2000	4	6.66	-	-	3	14.28	1	1.49	-	-	8	4.76
2001-3000	17	28.33	5	38.46	7	33.33	10	14.92	3	42.85	42	25.00
3001-4000	8	13.33	2	15.38	6	28.57	14	20.89	1	14.28	31	18.45
4001-5000	10	16.66	1	7.69	2	9.52	13	19.40	1	14.28	27	16.07
5001-6000	6	10.00	1	7.69	1	4.76	6	8.95	-	-	14	8.33
6001-7000	2	3.33	-	-	-	-	2	2.98	1	14.28	5	2.97
7001-8000	1	1.66	-	-	-	-	3	4.47	1	14.28	5	2.97
8001-9000	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2.98	-	-	2	1.18
9001-10000	5	8.33	-	-	-	-	4	5.97	-	-	9	5.35
Above 10000	6	10.00	4	30.76	2	9.52	12	17.90	-	-	24	14.28
	60		13		21		67		7		168	99.95

Table No. 20 : The annual income from fishing of fishermen families from the PRS.

River	Bhogawati & Tulsī		Kumbhi & Dhamani		Kasari		Panchganga		Krishna		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
No income	1	1.66	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.59
Upto 1000	20	33.33	2	15.38	13	61.90	5	7.46	-	-	40	23.80
1001-2000	32	53.33	7	53.84	8	38.09	10	14.92	-	-	57	33.92
2001-3000	6	10.00	3	23.07	-	-	25	37.31	3	42.85	37	22.02
3001-4000	-	-	1	7.69	-	-	14	20.89	1	14.28	16	9.52
4001-5000	1	1.66	-	-	-	-	8	11.94	1	14.28	10	5.95
5001-6000	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	4.47	1	14.28	4	2.38
6001-7000	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.49	-	-	1	0.59
7001-8000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	14.28	1	0.59
8001-9000	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.49	-	-	1	0.59
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Total No. of Fishermen families	60		13		21		67		7		168	99.95