
CHAPTER - V
CONCLUSIONS, OBSERVATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

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5.1 Observations and Conclusions.

5.2 Suggestions.

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5.1 Observations and Conclusions:

The data reported in this Paper indicate the following conclusions:

The importance of the seafood industry in recent times has increased tremendously. This is due to various reasons such as shortage of food, growing population and the development of fishing. This industry has immense potentiality for exploitation and the development of marine resources. However, fisheries development and fisherfolk development have become controversial issues.

An interesting feature of the seafood industry is the equal participation of women labour force. It is observed that the fisherwomen belong to fishing castes only is a misnomer. The study reveals a sharp dichotomy between the fishing and non-fishing castes in the seafood sector. Though the fishing caste, Harikantas, dominate the list with number 49, most of the economically backward castes are also involved in fishing. However, in conclusion, it can neither be accepted as a caste avocation nor be denied as non-caste venture. Thus, it is found that the seafood activity is spread among several communities, though primarily carried on by a few communities.

It is observed that both in fishing and non-fishing castes, marriages take place with the persons of the same caste. Inter-caste marriages are not allowed by elders. The girl goes to her

husband's house after her marriage. Staying at her parents' house is condemned by the society.

Majority of fisherwomen are illiterate. Illiteracy keeps them out of extension activities. Though illiterate, they are quite shrewd in their day-to-day activities. They hold a fairly good status in family too.

Fisherwomen work as casual, contract and self-employed labour. They undertake cleaning, unloading, grading, packing, labelling and selling operations. Their nature of work is marketing, freezing, canning and drying of fishes, etc.

The sex ratio reflects a relatively excess femininity of its population. This is due to the preferential treatment for more female dependents.

The size of the household varies widely from one to ten and above. The average size of the household remained at 6.69.

It is observed that within the labour force, the proportion of fisherwomen labour remained comparatively low. The unmarried girls belonging to fishing castes do not go to work if the number of male earners is more in the household.

Regarding the status of the fisherwomen in the family structure, fisherwomen have a fairly better status than their male counterparts. This is because men are addicted to drinking liquor. The stark reality of poverty and drinking men around them have put upon women the burden of sustaining the family and child-

care. Therefore, they enjoy a better status in the family.

Usually during season, fisherwomen work 10 to 11 hours a day for earning the days' income. They hardly find time to eat and to relax. Sometimes, they are given set tasks and are free to go home when it is finished. The spread-over of working hours is not definite. All fisherwomen, irrespective of the nature of their employment, are not governed by any statutory regulations regarding the hours of work or holidays.

Fisherwomen have no regular employment for the average month. They get employment some days and are available at work place, waiting for work some other days. Thus unemployed days rather than unemployed persons is a severe problem during the season.

Work burden for fisherwomen is heavy. They rarely get an opportunity to take rest and for personal development for they are confined to their household duties too.

The intensity of employment varies during season and off-season. During season, they are fully occupied and during off-season, they work below capacity in seafood sector.

Though fisherwomen work shoulder-to-shoulder with men, they are deprived of equal pay for equal work. Due to domestic work, their earnings are found to be very low. They are not even sure of earning of a particular day.

The income of fisherwomen household is not less during the season though it goes down substantially during off-season.

The income of majority of fishing caste household is mainly from the seafood sector and that of non-fishing castes from both fishing and non-fishing activities.

Regarding fisherwomen household expenditure, the pattern is simple and is mainly confined to necessities. The expenditure on food items constitutes more than 70.17 per cent. Hence, they lead hand-to-mouth income.

Drinking is an evil in the way of their development. Usually women of elder age from fishing castes share liquor with husband though they do not spend much. Addiction to alcohol is traditional and is way and means of overcoming hunger and fatigue.

It is also observed that the income earned from supplementary sources was inadequate to meet the expenditure level of families. Almost all households are found chronically indebted. It is also found that the off-season indebtedness is beyond imagination when they have no source of income. Consumption debt accounts for more than 70 per cent of the total debt. The common source of borrowing is from employers and Kirana merchants.

The pattern of saving shows that their savings are for a short period. They prefer to spend the savings for unproductive work.

All households, irrespective of caste, have their own houses though they are built of mud, bricks and coconut leaves. Fisherwomen belonging to the local area have their own houses which are found on seashore and 'wadas'. Most of the fisherwomen stay in single room tenements without any facilities.

With regard to family planning, there is awareness among fisherwomen though their attitude towards family planning is 50:50. Those who have given unfavourable replies are of the opinion that more the children, better are the prospects for improving their status.

As regards training, they are seldom formally trained in seafood industry. However, they get experience frequently from the local experts on current and most appropriate use of the seafood. It is also observed that fisherwomen prefer their children to be on stable land rather than on wavy sea.

Irrespective of the age group, illiteracy is higher among fisherwomen. It is a fact that parents just cannot afford to send their children to school. A child's labour is required at home to supplement the family income.

Recreation is low among fisherwomen household as they afford to spend much of their time for economic work on the one hand and household chores on the other hand. Their main entertainment is going to cinema.

Voting right is exercised by fisherwomen which, to a great extent, is dominated by male counterparts. Marital status is a factor which affects the franchise. However, they have no place in power structure because of social restrictions and constraints.

It is also observed that fisherwomen have no organization of their own to protect their interest which is partly responsible for their low status.

Thus, though the seafood industry has immense potentiality and has thrived over the years, the men and women catching, processing and selling the fish have remained what they were. Off-season, they remain unemployed and even during season, they remain underemployed though the outlook for future is quite promising. The above problems require immediate attention and demand prompt action.

5.2 Suggestions:

Keeping in view the above observations and conclusions, the following measures have been suggested for improving the socio-economic status of the fisherwomen.

Work burden of fisherwomen is excessively heavy during season. It is obligatory to pass statutory regulations regarding the hours of work and holidays, so that women may get time for rest and personal development.

Most of the labour problems arise due to unemployment days during season and unemployment during off-season. To solve the problem of unemployment days during the season, a portion of heavy fish catch be preserved so that work would be available for the days when there is no catch. Arrangement for preservation be made available by having more cold-storage facilities.

To solve the problem of unemployment during off-season, it is necessary to persuade the workers to take up subsidiary occupations like poultry, dairying, fruit canning, etc.

Seafood merchants and owners of the seafood processing units who employ fisherwomen should not take undue advantage of the illiteracy and the low bargaining capacity. The principle of equal pay for equal work be followed and implemented.

Economic status of women be accepted as an indicator of the society's stage of development. There is an urgent need not only to improve the income level but also to control unnecessary expenditure. They may be advised through education programmes to reduce the expenditure on liquor and social ceremonies.

Education on evil effects of drinking be imparted. All the liquor shops nearby the residences of fisherwomen households be shifted to far-off places which would reduce addiction to drinking though not eradicate it completely.

The income of the fisherwomen households falls short of the minimum desirable expenditure which forces them to borrow from employers, Kirana merchants, etc. It is, therefore, suggested that they may be made aware of the suitable sources for borrowing from appropriate financial agencies.

Fisherwomen have little habit of thrift. Banks, financial institutions and voluntary organizations should take steps to induce the workers to save something for off-season days.

Housing of fisherwomen is poor. Efforts to raise the standard of living would fail if there is no early solution of the housing problem. To keep the workers healthy, housing should be improved. The children are to be brought up in sanitary and healthy conditions, for which it is necessary to take care of housing.

The Housing Board may plan in this regard.

To maintain health and hygiene, tap water and construction of public lavatories near the residences of fisherwomen be provided.

Poor health is another dimension of poverty. Health programmes should be the integral part of development programmes with special focus on fisherwomen. They may be made aware of the importance of proper nutrition, safe drinking water, environment and sanitation, etc. Superstitious belief in having more children for better status be removed through educational programmes.

There is a wide gap between the awareness about family planning and the acceptance of family planning. Mass propaganda alone is fruitless. It is necessary that personal communication through neighbours, local leaders be made. Face-to-face contact would be more effective. Family Planning Department should take steps in that respect. Efforts be made to educate women to remove wrong concepts that more children would increase their status.

To improve the efficiency of the workers, more training programmes be organised and to encourage the workers, training be imparted free-of-cost by the Government.

The main thrust of the educational activities be towards the promotion of quality and excellence. It may be proposed that education is the most influential factor for bringing about a change in the demographic behaviour. Education for female be free at all stages. Non-formal education and open learning system should be

encouraged not in letter but in spirit. Determined efforts be made through educated persons of their own community.

Recreation is very much essential for it is the part and parcel for mental and physical development. Fisherwomen society and voluntary organisations should undertake to provide the same.

Fisherwomen be encouraged to have their own Trade Union to protect their own interests.

To support the economic conditions during the time of difficulties, a separate fund be created in which fisherwomen may contribute from their income during season.

Fisherwomen co-operative society should play an active role in meeting the financial needs during off-season in order to meet their day-to-day expenditure and to escape from the clutches of the money lenders.

Thus, to support their development, Legislations to regulate working conditions, to give security of employment and social security be passed which would lead to accelerate the progress and prosperity.

In brief, the workers eating barely meal a day need special and comprehensive programme of education, health care and economic support. There is a need for feminist focus on all programmes of fisherfolk development.