

Voice of the Storm



National Fishermen's Forum

VOICE OF THE STORM

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PREFACE

Stand up and watch. Barefoot, they march like armies without boots. "We march to Delhi. We the labouring people from whom they are stealing our sand, sea and fish ; from whom they are taking away homes and occupations. For the sea is the only wealth we have. The sea is the only goddess we worship. We want our sea un-destroyed. We want our occupation. We want our technology and our skills.

"Ban purse-seining. Ban trawling in June, July and August. Do not build luxurious hotels for the white man on beaches which have been our homes for centuries. Aeons ago we protected you from alien invasions and fought your sea wars. But today we who pay taxes and contribute 40% of your marine exports have children wasting away—dead or dying of T. B or hunger. Give us the dignity of our skills, our work and our lives. Do not rob us of the sea—our only wealth."

Those who speak these words are the fisherwomen and fishermen of India, says Vishwa Priya L. Iyengar.

They have struggled in the past. They are struggling today, and they will continue to struggle tomorrow. The nation-wide agitation in March 1987, organised by the NFF, was a great triumph. To press for their 15 demands fisherfolk and their supporters agitated in Delhi, Karnataka, West Bengal, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Kerala, Pondicherry, Goa and Maharashtra. In Kerala fish-workers blockaded Cochin harbour and paralysed fishing activity. And the struggle will go on.....

The last General Body meeting began the work of planning the "Great March to Kanyakumari" scheduled

for Nov/Dec 1988 and agreed on the slogan "PROTECT OUR WATERS FOR FISH AND FISHWORKERS." We expect very good support from everyone. In order to guarantee this, a Seminar and a General Body Meeting was organised from 10th to 14th Dec. 1987 at ISI, Bangalore. All groups prepared for this occasion through study and research. We need such continuous study and research to motivate and strengthen our struggle. That is why the National Fishermen's Forum is very happy to publish this report of the Seminar in Bangalore. I would like to thank all those who attended the Seminar—scientists, lawyers and journalists, the Minister for Fisheries and the Acting Director of Fisheries, Karnataka, Trade Union leaders and fishworkers and their supporters. Their interest and concern made the seminar a success. I would also like to thank Koshy Mathew for the trouble he has taken to prepare this Report for publication.

The National Fishermen's Forum dedicates "THE VOICE OF THE STORM" to the on-going struggle of the fishworkers in India.

Thomas Kocherry
Chairperson, NFF



INTRODUCTION

Growth of NFF

The National Fishermen's Forum (NFF) is a national federation of various state-level fishworkers' trade unions. The formation of the Forum was the direct result of the continuous conflicts and tensions along the coastal belt of our country. The years 1976 to 1978 witnessed a series of violent clashes between mechanised trawlers and traditional fishworkers. In the course of these struggles many were killed and many more wounded.

The fishworkers in the states of Goa, Tamil Nadu and Kerala were the earliest to act by forming local unions and associations. After many informal get-togethers the NFF was founded in 1978 to form a united front for action. The Forum, since then, continues to represent the grievances and demands of the fishworkers. One of the earliest actions was to stage a dharna in front of the residence of Sri Surjit Singh Barnala, then Minister for Agriculture in the Union Cabinet. This drew the attention of the media and of others concerned and this strengthened the activities of the Forum.

The dharna focussed attention on the plight of the traditional fishworkers in our country. One of the concrete steps of the Forum became a demand for the enactment of a Marine Fishing Regulation Act which would protect our marine resources as well as our traditional fishworkers. The Forum worked on a draft bill and got it presented in Parliament as a private bill. But it was withdrawn at the request of the then Prime Minister, Sri Morarji Desai, who promised to introduce a Government Bill along the same lines.

The Majumdar Committee which was appointed by the Central Government in the wake of the clashes in 1976 also proposed a similar bill and recommended that the bill be enacted by Parliament. But when the Indira Gandhi government came back to power following the debacle of the Janata Government at the Centre, it decided to send the bill to the maritime states for enactment. With as many as 9 maritime states involved in the question of legislation, the forces of the Forum

had to be strengthened at the state-level. So the focus of the struggle had to shift from the Centre to the States and this led the Forum to seek allies in all maritime states to prevent any weakening of the struggle. It turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

The apathy of the state governments in enacting marine fishing regulations made fishworkers realise that unless they unite and exert pressure nothing would happen. After prolonged struggles, Goa and Kerala passed such bills in 1980 and received Presidential assent in January 1981. Since then, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Orissa and Tamil Nadu have also enacted marine fishing regulations.

Some of the demands of the Forum included a total ban on purse-seining in territorial waters, a ban on night trawling and a ban of all mechanised fishing during the months of June, July and August. These three demands are vital for the protection of our marine resources as well as for the livelihood of our traditional fishworkers.

Many of these state enactments have been challenged in the law courts. While some cases have been disposed of others are still pending. In all legal battles, the Forum had joined issue with the state.

The International Convention of fishworkers in Rome broke new ground in international solidarity and networking. The delegates at that meeting challenged the FAO to formulate a strategy that would protect fish resources and small-scale fishworkers. The formation of the International Collective of Fishworkers' Supporters (ICFS) is an added dimension to the struggles of fishworkers all over the world.

A Big Step Forward in Goa

When the Forum met in its General Body in July 1986 in Goa, a nationwide agitation was planned to press for the following demands :

1. Enact and implement marine fishing regulations in all coastal states.
2. Ban trawling and purse-seining up to 20 kms in territorial waters.

3. No un-treated effluents should be discharged into the waters.
4. Ban trawling and purse-seining at night and during the monsoon season.
5. Fix the minimum mesh size at 35 mm for purseine and trawler nets.
6. Promote deep sea fishing in public and cooperative sectors with the help of fisher-folk. Stop joint ventures and issuing licenses in the private sector.
7. The right to own and use fishing implements in territorial waters should be exclusively demarcated for the fishermen.
8. Stop eviction of fisherfolk in the name of tourism and national development.
9. Legislate and implement labour laws in processing plants and mechanised boats.
10. Exempt imported out-board engines from excise duties and supply quality kerosene at a reasonable price.
11. Re-orient fisheries research to suit the traditional skills and crafts of the fisherfolk.
12. Control export of marine products to save the fishworkers and consumers.
13. Introduce schemes to supply implements to fisherfolk and for old age pension.
14. Assist and include the inland fisherfolk in all programmes of aquaculture and fish culture.
15. Title deeds of residential sites of fisherfolk should be registered in their names.

The nation-wide agitation was a giant leap forward in strengthening the ongoing struggles. Public attention in the capital was drawn to the struggles of fishworkers.

These struggles are to be strengthened by constant study and reflection. The interaction between fishworkers and others is an important part of this process of learning and struggling together. One such exercise in wider consultation was the National Consultation on "Fishworkers and Fisheries Development in India" held in Bangalore from December 10-14, 1987. This Consultation affirmed the pivotal role of mobilisation of people as the principal force for transformation of the political and economic order. At that Consultation, the Forum attempted to come to grips with the generalities and specifics of the struggles of the traditional fishworkers. The following pages of this volume highlight the proceedings of that Consultation.

THE CONSULTATION IN BANGALORE (1987)

Structure and Composition

The Consultation was structured to facilitate the maximum amount of sharing and group discussion on the following specific issues :

- a. Displacement and problems of rehabilitation of fishworkers.
- b. Problems of building up fishworkers' unions.
- c. Pollution and ecological problems.
- d. Tourism and development projects of the state.
- e. Structure and organisation of NFF, state-level unions and relationship with action groups.

About 63 persons representing various walks of life participated. The group was primarily composed of fishworkers and supporters of their struggles. Also invited and present were scientists with a special working knowledge of the fisheries sector, journalists covering fishworkers' struggles, one official of the Fisheries Department of the Government of Karnataka, and trade union representatives. (See Appendix for list of participants.)

Some Basic Assumptions

Thomas Kocherry, Chairperson of the NFF, in his opening address spelt out some of the basic assumptions and expectations of the Consultation :

- * All states and affiliated groups have been asked to prepare case studies from their regions as background material for the Consultation. Most of the groups sent the studies in advance and these formed part of the documentation of the consultation.
- * The International Collective of Fishworkers' Supporters (ICFS), at their meeting in Trivandrum in 1986 had decided to collect data on fishworkers in about 32 countries—India being one of them. The NFF, as their corresponding organisation in India, has been asked to collect the required data which will be part of the data book, that will be published in 1989. For this too, the affiliated bodies have been asked to co-operate. To assist the process, the NFF had sent out a format for the same. Only a few groups had responded. Therefore, one of the basic tasks of the Consultation was to explain a methodology for the collection of data.
- * The National Fishermen's Forum is a registered trade union and all along the Forum had insisted upon the registration of its affiliate groups as trade unions. As of this day, only three state groups, namely, Kerala, South Kanara and Bay of Bengal (TN) have registered themselves as trade unions. Therefore, on the agenda of the Consultation was the discussion on the factors that hinder mobilisation of people for the registration of trade unions.
- * One of the basic points emphasised in the letter of invitation was the participation of 2 workers from each of the affiliated/associated groups. Of these two representatives one of them had to be a woman. In spite of that stipulation many groups sent large numbers with no women's participation. The issue of women's participation in the Forum will have to be consciously dealt with in the future.

Case Studies shared at the Consultation : An Overview

Many case studies of issues and problems confronting traditional fishworkers were presented. Given below is an overview of those studies, which are found in a later section of this book.

Problems at Pulicat Lake Region

Pulicat is about 60 kms. north of Madras and the lake region which is about 461sq. kms lies in the states of Tamil-nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Both inland and marine fisherfolk live in this region. Some of the problems confronting the fisherfolk of this region are : over-fishing, encroachment of trawlers and the commercial attraction of prawn-fishing. (See Case Study 1 for a detailed account of the problems of this region.)

Fisheries and Ecology of Sunderbans

In the Sunderbans region of West Bengal, the traditional fishworkers face the problem of deforestation and fish-resource depletion. This issue was highlighted at the Consultation by the aid of slides.

This region once had a mangrove forest area of over 4000 sq. kms. At present only a little over half is vegetated and the water area is even less. The mangrove forest was the mainstay of the fisherfolk of this region. But today, coupled with a rising population of the region, the illegal felling of trees for logs and timber, and industrial pollution, the estuarine waters have been rendered useless and the fish resources have depleted. (See Case Study 2 for a complete picture of the situation.)

Problems of Fishworkers in Orissa

Some of the problems confronting the traditional fishworkers in Orissa are displacement/eviction for developmental activities, rehabilitation, trawling, pollution, tourism etc.

Primarily among them is the issue of displacement and rehabilitation. An area measuring about 102 sq. kms. in Balasore district is to be acquired by the Government of India

for a missile testing and launching centre. This will affect about 30,000 traditional fisherpeople. In Puri, about 9000 fishworkers will be affected when the Government implements its decision to construct the Jagannath Puri Sanskrit University there. Also facing the fishworkers of this region is the question of tourism. In collaboration with the World Bank and the ITDC, the Government of Orissa has drawn up a "Master Plan" to develop a 40-km. stretch of Puri-Konarak beachfront.

One of the demands of the Oriya fishworkers is proper rehabilitation. The Government has failed to allocate suitable alternate sites for them to pursue their traditional occupation. Therefore, the struggle is to force the authorities to declare the alternate sites, in consultation with fishworkers' unions, before they can be evicted. (See Case Study 3 for a detailed write-up.)

Tourism in Goa

Prior to, and after the liberation, Goa has been known for its hospitality to strangers and tourists. Excellent cuisines and cheap alcoholic beverages together with miles and miles of sandy beaches and calm blue waters have attracted the rich and not-so-rich alike to Goa making it the "paradise". Hippies once roamed the beaches in their birthday suits. Coastal families hosted budget travellers. All these have changed the face of Goa altogether—to one of a "hot spot" for tourism in India.

What is of prime importance to the fisherfolk of Goa today is the ambitious plan of the Government for the promotion and development of tourism. The Plan envisages a five-fold increase in tourism by the end of this century and proposes the construction of 19 additional five-star hotels. To achieve this the Government will have to evict fishing communities. As such the problem of prostitution in Goa is alarming. Will another tourist paradise be created at the expense of our womenfolk and of our culture? (See Case Study 4).

Beautification of the Marina, Madras

December 3, 1985 was a black day for the fishworkers of Madras. On this day 6 fishworkers were killed by the

Tamilnadu police as their struggle against eviction from their traditional dwelling places in the Marina turned violent. As part of the drive to beautify Marina and to attract leisure seekers, the Government of Tamilnadu had forcibly removed the country craft, gears and nets beached there by the traditional fishworkers. The intervention of the Supreme Court has brought temporary relief to the fishworkers. (See Case Study 4.)

The demand of the fishworkers is "the beach and the sea belong to us" and therefore their rights will have to be protected as the tillers' rights are protected by the Land Reforms Act.

Pollution of Rivers in Karnataka

The pollution of the Tungabhadra river in north Karnataka poses danger to the health and livelihood of the people in Ranibennur taluk near Harihar. The effluents sent down the river by units of the Gwalior Rayon Silk Company has resulted in threatening the livelihood of over 500 inland fishworkers. There have been periodical fish kills due to the lethal effect of the effluents. (Please see Case Study 5 for a full length report.)

Outboard Engines and Traditional Fishworkers

In Quilon, Kerala, the traditional fishworkers, lured by prospects of better profits, took to mechanisation of their traditional craft. In course of time, they discovered that higher turnover need not necessarily result in higher profits. A study of the fisherfolk who opted to equip their craft with outboard engines revealed that the actual beneficiaries of mechanisation were the multi-national corporations. (Please See Case Study 6 and accompanying story.)

Importance of a Standard Format for Data Collection

As mentioned in the earlier part of this summary of proceedings, the Status Report on Fishworkers is a global effort, initiated by the International Collective of Fishworkers' Supporters, to collect authentic data on fisheries and the

status of fishworkers in 32 countries. There is much data available all over. But there is always something lacking. For example, there is not sufficient data that speak of the status of fisherwomen who sell, women who work in the processing industry, etc. There is nothing on craft and gear and such other things that make all the difference to mere statistics.

This being the state of data available, the ICFS has taken the initiative in collecting information in two phases: Phase I will be *qualitative* with details of trade and occupation forming its core, and Phase II will be *quantitative* with details of fish landings and earnings etc. forming its core. This phase will be updated from time to time. The two phases, however, will be woven into one another to form a comprehensive report. The collection of data is in its primary stages and the ICFS hopes to consolidate the findings by 1989.

Mr. Thankappan Achary, a Consultant at the Programme for Community Organisation (PCO), Trivandrum, and a specialist in the area of fisheries has prepared the format and has finalised the Status Report on Kerala Fisheries, which is found in a later part of this report. He conducted a session on the methodology of collecting such information. It is hoped that other maritime states in India will complete their tasks by the middle of 1988 to be forwarded to the ICFS for consolidation and publication.

Interactions With Government Officials

*Mr. Khotbhage, Jt. Director of Fisheries,
Government of Karnataka.*

Mr. Khotbhage, in a 2-hour open session, apprised the Consultation of the development schemes of the Government of Karnataka. He traced the history of the development of fisheries in Karnataka and admitted candidly that "there is no further scope for expansion" as far as mechanised fishing is concerned. He then added that the emphasis will now be on off-shore and deep-sea fishing i.e. beyond 40 fathoms. For this, an Indo-Danish project in the Uttara Karnataka region is being set up. The produce of the deep-sea will be handled by the Karnataka Fisheries Development Corporation (KFDC) and through Co-operative Federations with buy-back arrangements and for exports.

Mr. Khotbhage said that a Marine Fishing Regulation Act was passed in March 1986. One of the salient features of this Act was the constitution of an Advisory Committee that will assist the Government in framing and implementing the Rules. He said that the Maharashtra Act too has an Advisory Committee but its composition is entirely different. As for Karnataka, the Advisory Committee will have representation of different classes of fisherfolk. Officials of the department of fisheries are in constant touch with the fisherfolk to get their views. He outlined some of the protective and conservation measures adopted by the Government. Briefly, they are :

1) There will be a "closed season" - during the monsoon season. But 12 h.p. outboard and 15 h.p. inboard motors with traditional gears will be allowed to operate.

2) There will be "fishing zones" :

- a) up to 6 kms or 4 fathoms (which ever is farther) will be reserved for the traditional fishworkers.
- b) 6 kms to the 20- km zone will be for vessels up to 50 feet, and
- c) beyond 20 kms, for bigger vessels

3) Purse-seining will not be permitted during nights.

4) Night-trawling will be permitted only beyond 15 fathoms. Mr. Khotbhage, while answering questions from the floor, said that an effective enforcement machinery is yet to be set up. He shared the view of some of the delegates that the Central Government agencies should lend their hands in the implementation of the Rules. He also said that the Advisory Committee has not been able to reach a consensus on the mesh-size so far.

On "schemes for fishermen", he said that the state government is already offering direct subsidy to various categories of vessels. This subsidy, he said, is only through an exemption of the Sales Tax and added that the Central Government has not given any concession so far by way of reduction of excise duty. To avail of this subsidy, the catches

will have to be marketed through the Co-operative or the Federation. Other schemes include the Group Insurance and the Housing schemes. He added that so far 6 housing schemes have been approved.

Mr. Khotbhave said that a massive inland fisheries project with the assistance of the NCDC, World Bank and the European Economic Community (EEC), with about 240 tanks in 12 districts is being launched. These tanks, he said, will be leased out and the first preference will be given to fishermen, followed by co-operatives, unemployed fisheries graduates and the SC/ST. He expressed his disappointment at the state of the co-operatives today and said that schemes and funds will be useless unless the people take the initiatives.

*Mr. M. Raghupathy, Minister for Fisheries,
Government of Karnataka.*

Mr. Raghupathy who addressed the public meeting on Dec. 13th responded to the 'Statement and Recommendations of the Consultation'. He assured the Forum that the priorities of the artisanal fishworkers are uppermost on his agenda. He said that in the short period of 8 months as Fisheries Minister, he had already crossed swords with the Pollution Board and the Industries Department. When a delegate from the Tungabhadra region asked why the erring industries had not adhered to the Court order (re: discharge of effluents into the Tungabhadra river), he said that powerful industrialists were thwarting the plans of the government and he assured the audience that they would be brought to book. When the delegate further said that the people of the region plan to launch a satyagraha, the minister asked them to keep him informed and that if no positive development occurs by then, he too would join their protest fast.

He also took to task the bureaucracy of his own state government. He said that the Chief Minister's orders to rehabilitate displaced fishworkers of Karwar was not carried out by the bureaucrats for over a year. It was only in October 1987 that the application papers actually moved when

public attention was drawn to it. He also said that the CM himself was shocked at the apathy of bureaucrats and called on the people to bring to the attention of the Government such instances. In the case of Karwar, he said the Central Government had displaced the people and placed on the state Government the task of rehabilitating them. He also said that while marine products earn Rs. 900 crores annually for the country, the states got only Rs. 1 crore. This showed the limitations placed on the state government in matters other than those directly related to fisheries development. This situation would have to be corrected and he opined that marine/fish industry will have to be considered as an agro-industry.

Major Issues Taken up for Group Discussion

Arising out of the sharing sessions and other interactions, a small monitoring group prepared a set of questions to be discussed in groups. Very broadly, the issues highlighted were :

- a. Pros and cons of involvement of action groups vis-a-vis independent unions in the context of broader political struggles.
- b. The absence of women in leadership positions of fishworkers' movements.
- c. Ecological problems faced by fisherfolk.
- d. Displacement and rehabilitation of fishworkers in the context of development plans, tourism etc.
- e. Problems and loopholes in implementing the marine fishing regulations in various maritime states.
- f. Rights of fishworkers and possible labour legislation.

Group Discussion and the Statement of the Consultation

Five groups were constituted to discuss the issues. All groups discussed points (a) and (b) along with the specific issue allocated to each group. On the question of "action groups and independent unions in the broader struggles", a consensus was not arrived at. It was left as it is with a resolution to carry on this discussion at future meetings of the

NFF, and in the meantime to reflect on this from specific contexts to arrive at a clearer understanding of the tasks that lie ahead. But it was agreed that the individual members of NFF representing different fishworkers' organizations should be registered under the Trade Union Act of 1926. In the case of all other issues, understanding was arrived at and specific recommendations were made.

The "Statement and Recommendations of the Consultation" was drafted by a small drafting group incorporating the views and opinions of the groups, and presented to them for further discussion. They were officially adopted with modifications and amendments at a plenary session and read out at the public meeting by Mr. Tom Kocherry, Chairperson of the NFF. The final version of the statement that was adopted is published in this booklet.

STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONSULTATION

The Consultation organised by the National Fishermen's Forum at Bangalore from the 10th to the 13th of December, 1987, with representatives of fishworkers from the states of Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, West Bengal and Orissa, having studied the problems confronting the fishworkers, expresses its deep concern over the state of affairs in the fisheries sector.

Over 6.5 million people depend on fishing and allied activities. About 80% of the total sea-going fishworkers are in the traditional sector. They own and operate small-scale traditional crafts and gear. In the case of inland fishworkers too, the situation is the same. Thousands of villages in India are totally dependent on the economy generated by this sector. The National Fishermen's Forum, a forum committed to the struggles of this section of the Indian society is perturbed by the so-called development programmes sponsored and promoted by the Central Government, various state governments and their agencies.

The issue of depletion and destruction of marine resources is of great concern. Though the marine fish catch doubled between 1960 and 1981, the role of mechanisation/modernisation is questionable. A look at the statistics shows that the increase in fish catch was mainly due to the efforts of the artisanal sector. For example, in Kerala, the annual fish catch peaked in 1973 at 4.48 lakh tonnes of which the contribution of the mechanised sector was just 20.6%. Even the catches by the mechanised craft are by intruding into the fishing areas which lie closer to the shore, thus throwing out the traditional fishworkers. Where there has been enthusiastic efforts in introducing the present kind of technological processes such as trawling and purse-seining to enhance production, there is a definite trend towards decline of annual fish yield. This is clearly a warning signal for us. It warns us that the livelihood of the fishworkers are being threatened. It also warns us that grave danger lies ahead for the ecological balance of marine life. Such wanton destruction will destroy life itself.

Thus 'development for whom?' is a basic question that our planners will have to address. Foreign exchange earnings have not benefited the artisanal sector. The bogey of foreign exchange and modernisation are raised to divert the attention of the people from the real issues. It is now proved beyond all doubt that such claims benefit only a chosen few. The Transnational Companies (TNCs) and their local agents, the local capitalists, middlemen, money-lenders, merchants and exporters who sell, and mediate with sophisticated technology, and buy cheap labour are the real beneficiaries. Of late, the small fishworkers have fallen into the clutches of TNCs who have made small fishworkers a big business.

The policy-makers point out that the answer lies in Co-operatives. Co-op societies have been started to help the fishworkers, but unfortunately they have fallen into the hands of the money-lenders and merchants. Hence, Co-operatives have not been able to play the role that has been envisaged for the benefit of the fishworkers.

Thus the artisanal fishworkers, once the guardians and harvesters of the produce of the sea, are caught in the vicious circle of development and modernisation.

The issue of displacement and rehabilitation is yet another concern. Development projects in the fields of space research and defence have displaced thousands of fishworkers' families in Gopalpur and Puri (Orissa), and in Karwar (Karnataka). Tourism in Goa, beach resorts and real estate development in Tamil Nadu, nuclear power station in Kalpakkam, harbour extension projects in Trivandrum and Kanyakumari, and the exploitation of land for minerals (rare earth) in Chavara (Kerala), in Gopalpur and in Manavalakuruchi (T.N.) have also rendered many fishworkers homeless. Their rehabilitation is caught in the web of red-tapism, and even in those few cases where alternate arrangements have been made, they are in areas that are least conducive for fishing. The very social fabric of the community is threatened, not to speak of its economic disadvantages.

The question of deforestation and pollution is a major issue especially for inland fishworkers. Industrial effluents that flow into the rivers poison fish and the people who consume fish. The denuding of mangroves in the Sunderbans (WB) has led to the failure of regeneration of fish resources there. The use of pesticides on plants and trees, in the long run, pollutes the rivers, the lakes and the oceans. Thus inorganic pesticides, industrial and urban effluents and the felling of trees also threaten the livelihood of the artisanal fishworkers.

Attention is also particularly drawn to the fact that modernisation has had its toll on women fishworkers too. Introduction of mechanised net-webbing machines have rendered redundant hundreds of women workers in TN. The upgrading of fish landing centres has restricted access to fish in Tadri (Karnataka), and bulk landings of iced fish by merchants prevent women from participating in the marketing process.

All programmes for modernisation and development have so far been detrimental to the interests of the artisanal

fishworkers. In fact modernisation should aim at maintaining the ecological balance ensuring regeneration of resources and safe-guarding the employment of small-scale workers. Struggles against these trends and for the due protection of the rights of fishworkers have taken place in many parts of the country. The struggles in Goa, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have reached new heights, where the states have been forced to take a serious view of the situation and to initiate certain steps in the realisation of fishworkers' demands. And yet there is a long way to go. Therefore, the only option open to this section of the Indian society is to engage themselves in a continuous struggle that will restore to them their lost humanhood and make them participate in a just social, political and economic order.

The participants of the Consultation, many of whom are in the forefront of the struggles in different parts of the country, reviewed the situation and are now reiterating their unequivocal support and solidarity to the many ongoing struggles of fishworkers in India.

With a view to strengthen the struggles against the oppressive, exploitative and dehumanising forces, the following recommendations are made :

Fishing Regulations

Though many states have enacted fishing regulations, no effective and satisfactory machinery has been set up for its enforcement.

Therefore, we exhort the fishworkers to continue the struggle for the realisation of this demand, and also request the authorities to take the following steps :

a. Electronic devices in mechanised craft

Many states have enacted separate fishing zones beyond a certain depth for the operation of mechanised fishing vessels. But these regulations are not implemented anywhere due to lack of proper devices. Therefore the suggestion : an electronic device which has already been developed to monitor zonal violations should be compulsorily fitted in all craft.

b. Night-trawling ban

To enforce this ban effectively, we suggest that proper personnel be employed at the fishing harbours during nights, and that they be supported by patrolling facilities.

c. Authority to implement fishing regulations

Since there is an ambiguity of fishing rights of Central and State governments the mechanised vessels can avoid the existing regulations. At present, the states administer the waters up to an extent of 22 kilometers, while the Central Govt. has responsibility over the waters beyond. In the guise of going to the deeper waters, the mechanised vessels exploit this region. To overcome this loophole we suggest that the states be vested with complete authority in all matters relating to fishing regulations.

- d.** The Central Government should provide adequate financial support and its infrastructure (like Coast Guards) to the states for the effective implementation of fishing regulations.
- e.** The states should take further steps to provide accurate and reliable data on our fish resources and landings in order to have a proper back-up for fishing regulations. Based on this data, the number of fishing craft should be regulated.
- f.** The right to own and use fishing implements in territorial waters, in rivers and estuaries should be vested exclusively in the hands of workers who are engaged in actual fishing. For this a new legislation will have to be enacted.
- g.** Monsoon fishing in the months of June, July and August should be banned. Strict measures to observe this ban should be implemented.
- h.** As in the marine sector, an Inland Fishing Regulation Act should be brought into force in all states.

Displacement and Rehabilitation

Any displacement of fishworkers from their traditional habitat should be avoided as far as possible. If there occurs a pressing need for eviction, the same should, first, be consulted with fishermen's organisations like the NFF. The decision to displace should follow the consensus arrived at.

Further, when they are to be relocated, the State should first create decent alternate sites which would ensure their continuation of fishing activity, along with adequate compensation. The actual physical displacement should follow only after such measures have been taken.

We note that fishworkers who have been displaced in many places on the basis of promises of alternate sites, jobs, compensation etc. are still languishing as homeless wanderers. While we condemn this action of the State, we exhort the fishworkers to carry on their relentless struggle and also request the state to initiate remedial measures.

Labour Laws

There has emerged a vast migrant labour force in the fishing industry, both from among the fishermen in the mechanised boats and the fisherwomen in the processing plants.

The existing law stipulates the registration and licensing of labour contractors. But, in naked violation of this provision, many contractors are still functioning and they must be taken to task.

Regarding workers in the mechanised boats, they have no job security and can be hired and fired at the will and pleasure of the owners. This should be overcome by the enactment of appropriate legislations ensuring working conditions, minimum wages, over-time, bonus, benefits, etc.

Pollution and Ecological Imbalance

- a. Where deforestation has surely and adversely affected the lives of fishworkers (as in Sunderbans), we demand that

the State take adequate and proper steps to curtail further deforestation.

- b. Where industrial effluents which contain toxic substances such as zinc and mercury are discharged into inland waters (as in Tungabhadra river in Karnataka) which pose great danger to aquatic life and to the health of fishworkers, we urge the Government to take strict measures to ensure that the factories treat such effluents before they are discharged.
- c. We request the research bodies such as the Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute and others conduct studies on the effects of pollution, and further urge the state to implement their recommendations.
- d. We suggest that regulatory bodies such as the Pollution Control Board should be peopled by these who are conscious of the effects of pollution.
- e. Dredging of the river mouths should be undertaken immediately to enable the free flow of water which facilitates breeding of fishes.

The National Fishermen's Forum demands that the authorities concerned should take serious note of the above recommendations and initiate steps to redress the mistakes wherever with a view to safeguard the ecology and the livelihood of the fishworkers. Any further delay in such redressal and legislation will only deepen the crisis for which the state alone shall be responsible.

STATUS REPORT ON KERALA FISHERIES

T. R. THANKAPPAN ACHARI

Resources

The continental shelf of Kerala within the 200 m. depth range sprawls over 36,000 sq. km. The inshore sea within the 50 m. depth is 13,000 sq. km. The Exclusive Economic Zone stretches far beyond the continental shelf.

Resources surveys indicate an average productivity of 30 tonnes per km within the inshore sea and 15 tonnes per km in the offshore sea of the South West Coast region. The aggregate production potential of the continental shelf of Kerala is estimated to be about 8 lakh tonnes, the inshore sea accounting for about 4 lakh tonnes. The maximum sustainable yield of prawns is 56,000 tonnes. The slope region beyond the continental shelf of Quilon coast called the Quilon Bank has also fishing grounds for deep sea prawns and lobsters. The Wadge Bank about 60 km. south of Vizhinjam, having international reputation as a rich ground for perches and other quality fish, provides scope for deep sea fishing.

The resources comprise multi-species, mostly belonging to 0—1 year class group. The important fisheries in the inshore waters are oil sardine, mackerel, lesser sardines, anchovies, catfish and prawns. The dominant off-shore species are perches, ribbonfish, caranx, catfish, tuna, shark and cephalopods. The oil sardine, mackerel and the penaeid prawns in India are found mostly in the inshore sea off the South West Coast region comprising Kerala, Karnataka and Goa.

In the inland sector, Kerala has extensive brackish waters and fresh water ponds, tanks and reservoirs amenable to fish culture.

Fishermen and Fishing Craft

The population of fisherfolk was 8.8 lakhs in 1985-86, constituting 3.2 percent of the State population. The marine

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fisherfolk were 6.8 lakhs (77%) and those in the inland 2.0 lakhs (23%). The entire coastal strip comprising over 300 fishing hamlets is delimited into 222 marine fishing villages. These villages had an average of 590 active fishermen in 1980. The active marine fishermen in Kerala were 131,000 in 1980 as against 74,000 in 1961, the increase over the years being 3.1% per annum. The pressure of fishing in the inshore sea of India is the highest for Kerala. The fishable area per fisherman within the inshore sea was only 10 ha. as against 37 ha. for the country as a whole. In fact, Kerala accounted for 27 percent of the sea going fishermen in the country. According to the State Department of Fisheries, Kerala had, in 1986, a total of 180,000 active fishermen, of whom 135,000 were in the marine sector. Between 1961 and 1980, the traditional fishing craft went up from 21,000 to 26,000 and the mechanised boats from 200 to 3038. The mechanised boats included 2630 trawling boats, 37 purseiners and 362 gillnetting boats. In January 1987, there were 27,700 traditional craft, out of which 7,200 (26%) were motorised. The number of motorised craft increased to 7,500 in August 1987. The mechanised units further moved up to 3400.

The inland fishermen constituted about 40,000 in 1979 and 45,000 in 1985. They are widely scattered. Nearly three fourths of these are concentrated in the districts of Alleppey, Kottayam, Ernakulam and Trichur.

Fish Production

The average marine fish production during 1951-55 was 131,000 tonnes. During 1961-65 it increased to 264,000 tonnes, production doubling over the years. In 1971-75 it reached an all time high average of 406,000 tonnes. The peak recorded was 448,000 tonnes in 1973. The situation in 1976-80 and 1981-85 witnessed a disturbing trend. In 1976-80 production declined to 332,000 tonnes. In 1981-85 it made a gentle recovery to 348,000 tonnes, but remained much below the 1971-75 level. The very fact that fish catches during 1976-86 stood below the 1971-75 mark despite substantial increase in the number of high and medium tech-

nology production inputs, points to an alarming situation in the sector. On the other hand, in other parts of India, the marine fish production has been rising steadily over the years. In fact, by 1981-85 they marched ahead of Kerala manifesting a better growth index. Kerala which was the leading maritime State in the Indian Union suffered a major setback — receding to second position behind Maharashtra in 1985-86. Out of a total production of 17.16 lakh tonnes Kerala's share was 2.95 lakh tonnes as against 3.88 lakh tonnes by Maharashtra (see Table 1).

The data on major species-wise landing in Kerala are furnished in Table 2.

During the 1951-55 and 1966-70 periods the pelagic species in the landings were 77-79 percent and the demersal species 21-23 %. However, as shrimp trawling gathered momentum the share of demersal catches shot up to 36 percent in 1971-75. Thereafter it slumped to 33 percent in 1976-80 and 27 percent in 1981-85. Normally the pelagic shoal fishes like the oil sardine and mackerel tend to fluctuate widely. But during the last one decade prawns manifested wider variations.

In terms of resources, the pelagic species were exploited to the order of 80 to 90 percent in 1956-70 and oil sardine, the largest bulk species, was more than fully exploited. However mackerel provided marginal scope for additional exploitation. But the demersal species were put to high incidence of over-exploitation during 1971-85. The increase in the number of trawling boats since the middle of seventies has apparently not brought in any improvement in the total catches of demersal fish, but only inflicted a drastic reduction indicating the setting-in of a process of diminishing returns.

Mechanised Fishing and Non-Mechanised Fishing

Mechanised fishing was introduced in Kerala on a commercial level from the second half of the fifties. It was initiated as a community development approach to improve the socio-economic conditions of the fishermen. The early thrust was given by the erstwhile Indo-Norwegian project and the State Department of Fisheries. The small fishing

Table — 1
Production Trend

Period	Kerala		Rest of India		All India	
	Quantity	Production Index	Quantity	Production Index	Quantity	Production Index
1951-55	131	100	435	100	566	100
1956-60	259	198	504	116	763	135
1961-65	264	202	471	108	735	130
1966-70	349	266	582	134	931	164
1971-75	406	310	794	183	1200	212
1976-80	332	253	999	230	1331	235
1981-85	348	266	1191	274	1539	272
1985-86	295	225	1421	327	1716	303

('000 tonnes)

Table — 2
Species-wise landings—Kerala

Period	('000 tonnes)							Total
	Oil Sardine	Mackerel	Other Pelagic fish	All Pelagic fish	Prawns	Other demersal fish	All demersal fish	
1951-55	23	22	57	102	NA	29	29	131
1956-60	110	31	61	202	15	42	57	259
1961-65	145	22	42	209	24	31	55	264
1966-70	203	21	49	273	30	46	76	349
1971-75	124	35	99	258	59	89	148	406
1976-80	110	21	90	221	41	70	111	332
1981-85	131	17	106	254	29	65	94	348

boats 22 of to 25 ft were capable of operating traditional fishing gears like the gill-nets and drift nets.

The trawling experiments attempted by the Indo-Norwegian project during the late fifties and early sixties turned out to be a tremendous success. This paved the way for a new era in Kerala fisheries, going all out for shrimp trawling. The rich prawn grounds, along with Government subsidies and loans, inflow of private capital and bank credits, rising demand for frozen prawn products in USA and the big profitability margins in shrimping operations, contributed to the rapid development of shrimp trawling industry in Kerala. The entry of private entrepreneurs and big business houses into the shrimp based industries elbowed out the fishermen from the mainstream of development.

Although the State Government had issued about 1400 mechanised boats (1200 trawling boats) to fishermen most of them have slipped out of the hands of fishermen. The benefits of modernisation have mainly accrued to a small band of 3000 entrepreneurs. The total labour force employed in the modern sector comprised only 18,000 in 1980, accounting for 14 percent of the personnel. 86 percent of the fishermen still depend on traditional fishing. The large number of fishermen's co-operatives which sprang up in the fisheries sector were all pocket societies, with vested interests and hence failed to serve the aspirations of the fishermen.

The fish landings in the mechanised and non-mechanised sectors are indicated in Table 3.

Purse-seining introduced in Karnataka in 1975-76 was subsequently introduced in Kerala too under private initiative. The purse-seiners capable of catching over two tonnes of shoal fish per day competed in the coastal waters with the artisanal craft for oil sardine and mackerel. A section of the scientists advocated purse-seining as a sure way of increasing over-all fish production.

Fishermen's Reactions and Government Responses

The fishermen realised that the mechanised boats deprive them of their normal catches. The fishing by mechanised

Table — 3
Mechanised Vs. Non-mechanised landings

Period	('000 tonnes)					
	Mechanised Sector		Non-mechanised Sector		Total	
	Total	Prawns	Total	Prawns	Total	Prawns
1961-65	NA	1	NA	23	264	24
1966-70	NA	6	NA	24	349	30
1971-75	92	41	314	18	406	59
1976-80	103	33	229	8	332	41
1976	59	20	272	15	331	35
1977	107	34	238	6	345	40
1978	117	38	256	6	373	45
1979	95	25	236	5	331	30
1980	135	46	145	8	280	54

boats was also destructive. They went on agitations demanding restrictions on destructive fishing by power boats, conservation of fish resources, and protection of the interests of traditional fishermen.

The Government responded sympathetically. The coastal waters up to 20m. depth north of Edava (Quilon) and 30m. depth south of it have been exclusively reserved for artisanal fishing. While mechanised fishing has been restricted in regions beyond this coastal belt, purse-seining, ring-seining, wide water and pelagic trawling have been banned in the territorial waters of the state. This has been questioned by the purse-seine operators in the court. The Kerala Marine Fishing Regulation Act (1980) has provided legal backing for these measures.

The Government also enacted another piece of legislation *v/z.*, the Kerala Fishermen Welfare Societies Act (1980) to provide a strong fishermen's organisation at the grass root level replacing the earlier fishermen's co-operatives. These welfare societies were to function as a model agency in each village integrating production, marketing, credit and welfare measures. They were conceived as organisations of the fishermen, by the fishermen and for the fishermen, the administration to be run by elected representatives of the fishermen.

Two Commissions were also set up in 1981 and in 1984 to study the problems of fishing and to make appropriate recommendations for improving the fisheries of Kerala. The Babu Paul Committee (1982) and the Kalawar Committee (1985) made detailed studies of the fisheries of Kerala and put forth various recommendations to help better conservation and management of the fishery resources. The Kalawar Committee acclaimed the organisational structure conceived for improving the socio-economic conditions of fishermen.

Situation in the Eighties

The sixth Five Year Plan has indeed witnessed a major shift in government policy in favour of development of artisanal fishing. The measures comprised adopting a two-pronged strategy.

- (i) Strengthening of Fishermen's village societies with an apex federation at the State level and District Societies at the District level.
- (ii) Motorisation of country craft with outboard engines. Between 1981 and 1986 a large number of traditional craft have been converted into motorised units by installing outboard motors in them. The motorised units have been able to catch more fish than the non-motorised units. Besides, the operators could be relieved of their hard physical strain. Hence, the demand for canoe engines is picking up.

The impact of fishing in the 80's is highlighted in Table 4.

The artisanal sector in 1981-85 had an average annual production of 242,000 tonnes as against 229,000 tonnes in 1976-80, registering an increase of 6 percent. The share of the motorised sector was 87,000 tonnes (36%) during 1981-1985. Between 1981 and 1985 the contribution of the motorised sector in the total catches of the country craft went up from 11% to 53%. However the total landings in the artisanal sector remained much below the years prior to 1976-80, indicating that motorisation has not been able to regain the loss in the overall production in the small scale fisheries sector.

The mechanised sector which had a total landing of 103,000 tonnes in 1976-80 dropped to 100,000 tonnes during 1981-85. The overall production during 1981-85, of course, registered a marginal increase over 1976-80.

Table—4
Production according to craft-gear combination (Tonnes)

Year	Trawling	Purse-seining	Gill netting	Motorised fishing	Non-motorised fishing	Total
1981	49,313	17,673	6,021	22,897	178,074	273,978
1982	62,321	11,496	11,322	63,101	177,127	325,367
1983	67,908	14,274	15,780	99,190	188,128	385,280
1984	93,835	20,799	14,707	133,613	129,939	392,893
1985	90,808	13,222	10,243	115,376	102,854	332,503
1981-85	72,837	15,493	11,615	86,835	155,224	342,044

(Source of data : CMFRI. The production in 1984 according to the State Department of Fisheries was 424,718 tonnes.)

The average catch per unit operation for the different types of fishing gears is given in Table 5.

Table—5
Catch per Unit Operation/Day (kg)

Year	Trawling	Purse-seining	Gill netting	Motorised fishing	Non-Motorised fishing
1981	184	1,964	120	1,205	95
1982	208	1,277	142	373	73
1983	173	2,039	181	297	87
1984	294	2,971	167	241	66
1985	179	1,978	142	244	63

Source : 1981-1984 CMFRI and 1985 State Dept. of Fisheries.

During the years 1981-85, the average daily catch per trawling operation varied widely between 173 kg in 1983 and 294 kg in 1984. For purse-seining too, the maximum daily catch was 1277 kg. In respect of gill-net operations, the average daily catch reached the maximum at 181 kg. in 1983, as against a minimum of 120 kg. in 1981. Motorised fishing had an yield of 1205 kg. in 1981. However, during 1982 to 1985, it varied between 373 kg. and 241 kg. indicating a declining trend. The non-motorised fishing craft exhibited a fall in productivity during the years. From 95 kg in 1981 it dropped to 63 kg. in fishing units, that is. over the years the productivity dropped by 34% despite a distinct fall in efforts to the order of 13%.

Prior to the advent of purse-seining, the pelagic shoaling species like oil sardine and mackerel were caught by the artisanal units. With the introduction of purse-seining, the conventional species were shared by the purse-seine boats as well. The high technology did not help to increase the overall production of oil sardine and mackerel. See Table 2.

Even the introduction of intermediate technology along with purse-seiners could not help regain production that we had in 1961-75.

Table—6
Competition of different technology for major conventional species
 (percentages)

Technology	Oil sardine		Mackerel		Prawns		Others		All	
	1980/ 1981	1983/ 1984	1980/ 1981	1983/ 1984	1980/ 1981	1983/ 1984	1980/ 1981	1983 1984	1980/ 1981	1983/ 1984
Trawling	0.6	0.9	1.2	0.2	83.4	73.6	40.2	28.7	28.1	20.8
Purse-seining	10.9	9.2	23.2	16.3		0.2	1.0	0.9	6.2	4.5
Gill netting	φ	φ	1.1	4.1			6.8	7.6	2.8	3.9
Mechanised Fishing	11.5	10.1	26.2	20.6	83.4	73.8	48.0	37.2	37.1	29.2
Motorised Fishing	10.5	49.1	0.1	21.8	φ	16.0	1.1	17.8	4.6	29.9
Non-motorised fishing	78.0	40.8	73.7	57.6	16.6	10.2	50.8	45.0	58.3	40.9
Artisanal Sector	85.5	89.9	73.8	79.4	16.6	26.2	52.0	62.8	62.9	70.8
All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(Source of data : CMFRI) φ means less than 0.1

A comparative assessment of the share of production according to different technologies is given in Table 6.

In 1980 and 1981, of the total marine fish production in Kerala, the mechanised sector accounted for 11.5% of oil sardine, 26.2% of mackerel, 83.4% of the prawns and 48% of the other species, the share of the total being 37.1%. The situation in 1983/1984 showed a lower share of the mechanised sector. The share of oil sardine was 10.1%, mackerel 20.6%, prawns 73.8%, other species 37.2%, the contribution of all the species together being 29.2%. The reduction in the percentage share of the mechanised boats in 1983-84 was due to the better competition offered by the motorised craft. The total share of the artisanal sector moved up from 62.9% in 1981-82 to 70.8% percent in 1983-84.

In 1980-1981 motorised fishing covered only 40.6% of the total production. In 1983/1984 it shot up, accounting for 29.9%. The increase was, to a large extent, at the expense of the non-motorised units. For, in absolute terms, while the total production increased from 277,000 tonnes to 389,000 tonnes during the period, the share of the non-motorised units dropped from 161,000 tonnes to 159,000 tonnes over the years. The only sector which suffered a fall over the years comprised non-motorised units.

The catch composition of different fishing techniques is highlighted in Table 7.

Prawns constituted the major shares of the trawling operations. The contribution was 40% in 1980/81; but dropped to 30% in 1983/1984. The by-catches comprised numerous other species including juveniles of conventional species, which if not caught would have grown into adult sizes for more economic exploitation by the country as well. The prawn landings according to the CMFRI prior to

Table - 7
Catch composition of different fishing techniques (Percentages)

Technology	Year	Oil sardine	Mackerel	Prawns	Others	All
Trawling	1980/81	0.8	0.3	40.2	58.7	100.0
	1983/84	1.8	φ	29.7	68.5	100.0
Purse-seining	1980/81	69.1	24.2	φ	6.7	100.0
	1983/84	78.8	11.3	0.3	9.6	100.0
Gill netting	1980/81	φ	2.6		97.4	100.0
	1983/84	0.1	3.3		96.6	100.0
Mechanised Sector	1980/81	12.1	4.4	30.4	53.1	100.0
	1983/84	13.4	2.2	21.2	63.2	100.0
Motorised fishing	1980/81	89.7	0.1	φ	10.2	100.0
	1983/84	63.7	2.3	4.5	29.5	100.0
Non-motorised fishing	1980/81	52.5	7.9	3.9	35.7	100.0
	1983/84	38.8	4.4	2.1	54.7	100.0
Artisanal fishing	1980/81	55.2	7.4	3.5	33.9	100.0
	1983/84	49.3	3.5	3.1	44.1	100.0
All	1980/81	39.2	6.3	13.5	41.0	100.0
	1983/84	38.8	3.1	8.4	49.7	100.0

(source of data : CMFRI) φ = less than 0.1

trawling had reached 23-24,000 tonnes/ year during 1961-70. The prawn landings in 1983/1984 were 33,000 tonnes, i.e. only about 9-10,000 tonnes more than the pre-trawling era. The available data suggest that about 50% of the present prawn landings in Kerala are during the months of June, July and August from Neendakara which comprise the Karikkadij (Stylifera) species. So could we not conclude that the trawlers did reduce the prawn catches of the artisanal craft and helped to catch more of the low priced Karikkadi prawns only? This is a subject which merits discussion. Over 93 percent of the purse-seine catches comprised oil sardine and mackerel in 1980/1981 compared to 90 percent in 1983/1984.

In the early years of motorisation, oil sardine constituted 90 percent of the catches. But in 1983/1984 prawns and other species also acquired growing importance. For artisanal fishing oil sardine and mackerel form the bulk landings—63% in 1980-1981 compared to 53% in 1983-1984. Prawns which figured to the order of 23-24,000 tonnes are reduced to 8000 tonnes. — the distinct loss sustained by the artisanal sector being 15-16,000 tonnes of better quality prawns. In terms of conservative estimates, this would be over Rs. 32 crores loss of gross income to the artisanal sector; i.e. about Rs. 2,740 per capita. At 70% of this as fishermen's share each artisanal fisherman in Kerala has lost a per capita income of Rs. 1900-2000 per annum at current price.

Current Situation

The demand for trawling boats which remained slackened during 1980-84 has now picked up again. This time it is not for prawns but for pelagic and mid-water trawling for fish. This brings a new threat to the fishermen.

There is very heavy overcrowding of fishing efforts in the inshore sea of Kerala, although the KMFR Act stipulates various regulatory measures for control of fishing by the mechanised boats. These are all on paper and not cared for to be implemented. The machinery responsible for implementation is perfunctory and not at all effective.

The 222 fishermen's village societies elaborately set up at the grass-root level is now being replaced by 81 Co-operative Societies. This is said to be for better mobilisation of co-operative funding support. But what is the guarantee that the new societies will not have the bitter experiences of the societies of the sixties and seventies ?

Fisheries Crisis

Kerala is already in the grip of a unique fishery crisis. The characteristics of the crisis are summarised below :

- * The fishery wealth of the inshore sea of Kerala tends to be diminishing on account of indiscriminate fishing leading to over-exploitation. Several species are on the wane. The striking example is of prawns.
- * After achieving the maximum sustainable yield in the first half of the seventies, production has been lagging behind, despite the fact that high and intermediate production technology inputs have been increasing.
- * Kerala which has been the leading maritime state in the whole of the Indian Union all these years is losing its importance, giving way to better managed States. Maharashtra forged ahead of Kerala in 1985-86. Gujarat too is picking up fast.
- * The monsoon upwellings in the inshore sea (Chakara), a manifestation of rich fishery of Kerala, have become a rare occurrence in recent years.
- * While the offshore resources remain virtually unexploited the inshore sector is over-capitalised with more and more investment. Aquaculture in inland waters is yet to take off.

- * The motorisation of country craft pushed through without any bearing on resources is likely to boomerang on the economy of fishermen just as in the cases of trawling and purse-seining.
- * Conservation and management of marine fishery resources is yet to gain its due importance. Regulatory measures are not effectively implemented.
- * Planning without linking with resource constraints has led to huge infructious investment in the marine sector. This tendency still continues.

Modern technology inputs have led to concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. Artisanal fishermen have become poorer over the years on account of bad planning—opting for trawlers and purse-seiners.

- * Inland fishery resource is also in peril. Extensive reclamation of brackish waters, mangroves and swamps ; pollution of rivers and estuaries ; use of tiny mesh sized nets and other destructive fishing methods cause considerable damage to the inland fisheries. Strict regulatory measures are very much wanting in the inland sector too.

Kerala should have entered into off-shore fisheries development atleast a decade ago in which case the fish economy would have been better developed.

Fisherwomen in Kerala

a. Population :

Kerala, in 1979, had a total fishermen population of 7.79 lakhs. Of this, the females were 3.83 lakhs (49 percent) and the males 3.96 lakhs (51%). The women in the marine sector comprised 2.97 lakhs (77.5%) and those in the inland sector 86,000 (22.5%). There were less females per thousand males, both in the marine and inland sectors. According to one school of thought it is said that the children born in fishermen's families are, to a greater proportion, males because of the dietary (fish eating) habits of the fisher-folk. However, there has been a recent argument advanced by some scientists

that the lower proportion of women in the fishermen's families is due to the fact that the female children are always neglected and less cared for than the male children. There are more infantile deaths of female children than the male children resulting in the special phenomenon. Anyhow this is a matter for scientific enquiry.

The distribution of fisherfolk by age and sex in Kerala is given below :

(in '000)

Age group	Male	Female	Total
Below 15 years	151	145	296
15-44	189	182	371
45-54	31	30	61
55 and above	25	26	51

According to the State Department of Fisheries, 59% of the fisherwomen were literates in 1979 as against 66 percent for the State as a whole. The literacy rate of fisherwomen in Kerala varies between 32% in Malappuram District and 76% in Ernakulam District.

b. Employment Status of Fisherwomen

Out of the total population of fisherwomen of 3.83 lakhs, the number engaged in economic activities relating to fisheries comprised 20,000 in 1979 as against 170,000 males. Fishing as well as fish marketing activities provided employment to the women in the proportion 1:8.5 fishermen. Besides there were also women engaged in agriculture, Government service, and miscellaneous activities other than fishery to the order of 23,000. If we take the entire spectrum of those employed in fishing as well as other activities together, there are 185,000 employed men and 43,000 employed women in the fishermen families, the labour participation in gainful activities being 29.2% in all, which is on par with the state norm. These estimates show that the total employment status in the fishermen households was in the order of one female for every

4.3 males. Obviously the women find more gainful employment opportunities in occupations other than fishing and fish marketing activities. (The female fishworkers in the processing and fishing activities are included in the category of non-fishing activities.)

John Kurien (1986) has estimated the female workers involved prawn peeling at 20,000 and those in fish processing firms at 2,000 in Kerala.

c. Working Conditions of Female workers in Prawn Peeling and Processing Plants

A study of the female prawn peeling and processing workers of Sakthikulangara-Neendakara region was held in early 1986. The study has brought out clearly that the prawn pre-processing and processing female workers hail from depressed backgrounds. The former mostly belong to the fishermen community while the latter largely from other communities. The separation of the fishing activity from the factory complex was a very big blow to the prawn processing workers. While it relieved the processors of the complexities of management of factory labour and their financial obligations, it crippled the workers' movement. Even though there is a Minimum Wages Act relating to the peeling and fish processing workers, it is not at all implemented. The usual working hours ranged between 8 a.m. and 8. p.m. with one hour lunch break, the actual working time being 11 hours as against 8 hours stipulated under the Factory Act.

There is no job security for the processing workers. Their services can be terminated at the whims and fancies of the management. Normally no termination benefits are given to the workers when their services are terminated. The workers are not eligible for any leave or maternity benefits. The minimum basic wage for a processing worker is Rs. 7.40 per day, besides the variable D. A. The female worker in 1985 who was to get Rs. 21.14 per day was actually paid only Rs. 12.71 per day, i.e. a 40% reduction in the wages. The peeling worker was to get Rs. 2.12 per kg as against Re. 1

per kg. she actually got. The income of a peeling worker constituted 30% of her family income while that of a processing female worker 66% of her family income. There had been very few cases of harassment of female fish workers in the area.

A study of the changing pattern of fish vending by fisherwomen in Trivandrum District also yielded interesting data. In earlier years, the fisherwomen procured most of their requirement of fish from their own beaches. But during the last ten years the situation has changed. They now have to go out to other beaches as well as to wholesale markets for supplies of fish for marketing. Nearly one-fifth of the head-load female fish vendors depend on the wholesale markets within and outside the state. As against the early experience, the fish vending women have not got any credit facilities nor adequate quantity of fish during the last 10 years. The mode of transport of procured fish has changed significantly. The use of aluminium containers for carrying fish on head is becoming very popular. Autorickshaws are also engaged in carrying fish from the wholesale market to the retail markets. Special buses are introduced in Kerala as a Government subsidised programme for the benefit of fish vending women.

There has been a significant fall in the quantum of fish marketed per day/fisherwoman. This is largely due to the fact that fish landings in the State have been falling. While in the earlier years barter system was conspicuous in fish vending, it is now almost totally replaced by cash deals. Yet another commendable feature is that physical assaults on women in the market are now rare.

d. Women's Organisations

Women contribute to a significant share of the family income of the fishermen households. Yet they are ill-treated and physically assaulted by their men. They have no equal status. But over the last one to one and a half decades, the women are very much organised under the leadership of women animators functioning in non-governmental organisations. "A struggle within the struggle" by

Nalini Nayak provides a forceful narration of how the fisherwomen of Trivandrum District could organise into a strong Union, capable of even leading their men in militant agitations to protect the fisheries resources and fishermen's welfare. The fisherwomen are no more a lot of shy people, prepared to bear anything pitted against them. They are better exposed to problems of family life, fish vending, transporting, exploitation by commission agents in the markets etc. Their Unions and mahila samajams have been strong enough to impress upon the authorities to extend a number of concessions to fisherwomen. These include special subsidised bus services for transportation of fish, credit for marketing of fish, etc.

Annexure

Excerpts from the recommendations of the State Level Seminar on Fisheries Crisis and Policy Approach, Kerala, August 27-28, 1987.

Some of the leading Trade Unions and voluntary organisations operating in the field of fisheries front convened a State level Seminar on Fisheries Crisis and Policy Approach, Kerala on August 27-28, 1987 at Trivandrum. The seminar was attended by over 150 participants, comprising fishery scientists, officers of the Department of Fisheries, Matsyafed and other concerned Departments of Government, representatives of voluntary organisations, Trade Unions and Fishermen. It was for the first time that all the interests concerned for the fisheries development were brought together to a common forum for discussing the various issues encountered in the sector. The salient recommendations are given below :

Inshore Sea

It was suggested that the intensity of the pressure of fishing in the inshore sea is to be restricted in consonance with the resource limit and the size of fishermen population, the objective being conservation of the marine resources. This is to be achieved by a number of measures, such as :

- To freeze the fleet of mechanised trawling boats at the existing level, and weed out the surplus units over a period of time.

- To ban trawling during the months of June, July and August on an experimental basis for 3 years.
- To enforce strict implementation of the ban on night trawling.
- To register mechanised boats on portwise basis. Operation outside the port jurisdiction is to be permitted only with the concurrence of the local fishery officer.
- To strictly enforce implementation of the ban on purse-seine, ring seine, mid water trawl and pelagic trawl.
- To strengthen the infrastructure for the effective implementation of the Kerala Marine Fishing Regulation Act.
- To enforce construction of artificial reefs for augmentation of resources in the coastal sea.
- To strengthen research and development support for the improvement of craft and gear technology in the artisanal sector.

Offshore Fisheries Development

- To involve the artisanal fishery workers for exploitation of the offshore resources.
- To develop Dory fishing to the benefit of the traditional fishermen.
- To exploit deep sea fishery resources in the public and co-operative sectors only.
- To train the artisanal fishermen and help them in offshore fishing.

Inland Fishery Resources

- To enact an Integrated Inland Fishing Regulation Act for the inland sector on the model of the Marine Fishing Regulation Act.
- To entrust the right of Inland Fishery Development with the Department of Fisheries only.
- To prepare water resource maps at the regional level capable of leading to easy planning for aquaculture.
- To declare the principal river mouths and estuaries covering an area of three sq.km. as fish sanctuaries.

- To take adequate care for effective control of water pollution with a view to saving the fishery resources.
- Conversion of shallow water areas and swamps for agriculture is to be prohibited ; instead it should be preserved for fish culture.
- Government revenue *purampokku* water areas to be distributed to fishermen/fishermen's co-operatives on long term lease basis for aquaculture.
- In order to protect and develop the interest of fisherwomen, there shall be special development wings both in the Matsyfed and Department of Fisheries and a tripartite committee shall be constituted for its efficient functioning. This should have representatives of Government, fisherwomen and Union/Voluntary Organisations for proper management and co-ordination.
- Data on the employment of fisherwomen must be periodically collected and maintained. The women should be given registration and license for marketing fish. They should be provided with transport facilities to reach the fishing harbours and landing centres for procuring fish. Fish storage facilities and travel facilities should be made available for the fisherwomen.
- The fisherwomen must be covered by employment protection to make fishing nets. When mechanisation is introduced in this field, the benefit of this should be reserved for fisherwomen.
- Fisherwomen working in the prawn processing sector from other states shall be given registration here. They should be given the benefit of protection under the Migrant Labour Act. The contractors operating in this front without licence must be prosecuted under the Migrant Labour Act.
- Primary facilities must be exclusively provided for fish vending women in markets. They should be freed from the collection of market tax besides road tax and other taxes for special buses.

PROBLEMS AT PULICAT LAKE REGION

Pulicat Lake Region

This is the region of tension and conflict due to the infighting among the fisherfolk over fishing rights in the lake. Forced migration due to Government policies, over-population and adversely changing ecological patterns have aggravated the situation to make unionisation as something of a very distant dream. While having a natural tendency for collectiveness, they seem to have a low priority in evolving a collective consciousness for their own upliftment.

Pulicat Lake

This is the second largest brackish water lagoon in India lying 60 kms. north of Madras and near the strip of Pulicat town after which the lake is named. It is about 461 sq. kms. in area, 2/3 of which is in Andhra and 1/3 in Tamilnadu. Someone has compared the aerial view of the lake to an inverted bell, the head of which protruding slightly north-eastwards into an estuary and opening into the sea by a narrow mouth. The continuous pumping in and out of sea water through this mouth and the natural creations of this motorism system in the lake has given a conducive climate for prawn breeding.

The People

There are 25,000 fisherfolk living in 52 villages around the lake. They could be classified into two categories:

- 1) People who do fishing primarily in the lake and reside in the main land adjacent to the lake (lake fisherfolk), and
- 2) People who fish primarily in the sea and who reside mostly on the sea bund separating the lake and the sea (sea fisherfolk).

Among the lake fisherfolk there exists three caste groups: the Pattinavas, the Harijans and the Tribals. Of these three, Pattinavas are the predominantly powerful community and then comes the Harijans and then the Tribals. Over the

centuries a system of fishing has evolved in the region which, on one hand, ensures the healthy ecological balance and on the other, gives a fairly equitable opportunity for every member of the community to fish in every spot in the lake. They have even special arrangements for widows who could nominate someone on their behalf. While this system, which is called the 'Paadu' system, ensures a certain degree of social justice and healthy balance in terms of ecology, it tends to be under the total control of the dominant Pattinava community, who claims that they are the 'sons of the water' and who virtually decide who could fish and what gear and craft could be used in the lake waters.

Not only has this system become very stratified over the decades with rigid rules but has also gone so deep that it has become part of the lake fisherfolk psyche. Any challenge to the 'Paadu' system is suppressed ruthlessly. In order to protect the interest of the 'Paadu' system and the general welfare of the communities the 24 lakeside villages located in and around the lake have formed themselves into what is known as '24 villages Union' which is a very well organised structure governed by the elected leaders (Chettiars) of the region. Any innovative model in terms of human development and a just social order with economic growth will have to analyse this 'Paadu' system very deeply.

Now when we come to the sea side and the fishing communities who predominantly go to the seas there, again we have the caste structures; but on the whole everyone is allowed to use the sea in any manner they wish. In rare cases, the lake fisherfolk have given certain concessions to the sea-shore fisherfolk to fish in the lake also. This is not a right but only a privilege extended to these villages on a humanitarian basis by a joint decision of the lakeside villages which was set over decades. Also the sea-shore villages are unionised for protecting their rights and promoting their own welfare.

The Problem

The primary tension in the region often arises out of the sea side fisherfolk trying to do *extra fishing* in the lake; or

one particular lakeside village violating the accepted norms of the 'Paadu' system. So ultimately the conflict is *centred around fishing rights* of the various communities with regard to the lake which is rich in prawns which has a very valuable export market.

The sea-shore fishermen have their own problems. They are often harassed by off-shore trawlers who come very close to the shore damaging their nets and scattering their catches. So far they have not been able to do anything concretely against the aggressive *encroachment of trawlers* in their own territory.

The sand stretch on which the sea-shore fishermen have been traditionally residing is highly over populated today due to the re-settlement of some communities by the government while they were clearing the Sri Harikotta island for Space Research purposes. *Hence, over-population, threats from the trawlers and the ever increasing attraction of the prawn market are some* of the factors that drive the sea-shore fishermen to forcefully fish in the lake thus creating a conflict situation which often leads to violence and police intervention.

Among the lakeside fisherfolk, as mentioned earlier, the social structure is *highly stratified* allowing very little mobility. Communities such as the Harijans, and the tribals are beginning to assert themselves and this automatically leads to the very questioning or even violation of the Paadu system and the citadelled order. Besides this, the agricultural labourers, majority of whom belong to Reddy caste, forcefully fish in the lake overruling this stratified structure of 'Paadu'. This again creates tension among the various lake fishing communities which leads to conflicts and, at times, violence.

Quite often these tensions and minor conflicts are amicably settled by peace meetings conducted between these villages. This of course will be done in a festive manner costing a lot in terms of entertaining the leadership, giving big feasts etc. But when matters go beyond this, people

tend to take the law into their hands and this of course leads to more expenses in terms of spending money in courts and paying police officials.

While looking at these obvious factors, we have to recognise the subtle underplay of the caste system and the stratified status of various categories of fisherfolk.

In this complex context a collective unionisation around the lake becomes difficult. Factors such as over-population, ecological imbalance, depletion of prawns in the lake, rising expectations of the lower castes and the threat of trawlers to the sea shore fisherfolk are some of the factors which have to be taken in to serious consideration while aiming to mobilise these people.

There have been far too many litigations, government orders and magisterial verdicts which has made this problem more complex. Therefore a new ethos in terms of collective gains based on collective participation and mutual trust has to be generally inculcated. It is only within this context of faith and mutual trust soundly based on economic gains and equitable distribution can we hope for any serious attempt towards unionising these people for their own upliftment.

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Development Project,
Pulicat.

FISHERIES AND ECOLOGY OF SUNDERBAN

This paper is based on the primary data collected from Basanti, Gosaba, Diamond Harbour, and 24 Parganas in West Bengal during September–October 1987 through participatory observation and unstructured interviews with the assistance of Shri Ajoy Chowdhuri and Shyamal Dey. Secondary data are used to explain the factors responsible for fish depletion.

Introduction : The Hooghly–Matlah Estuary

The Hooghly–Matlah estuary lies in the coastal belt of Midnapur and 24–Parganas. It leads into the Bay of Bengal and here the sea water and fresh water from land, dominantly through the Hooghly river, is freely mixed.

The estuary occupies the marshy deltaic area known as Sunderbans. The approximate area of Sunderbans estuarine waters is 2,340 sq. kms. No tidal river of this region has connection with the upland river system.

Environment

The Hooghly–Matlah estuary is the habitat of the people of Sunderbans, 24–Parganas and, to some extent, central coastal belt, Midnapur.

One of the richest mangrove forests of our country is found in this region due to the expansive intertidal zones, specially in the deltaic part of the southern tip of 24–Parganas. Various kinds of fishes, both migratory and resident, are found in the tidal canals and creeks.

Human Interactions : Economic Activities

In the early years of the 19th century, people started to settle in this area. They cleared mangrove and other forests, reclaimed swampy lands with embankments to keep away tidal floods for settlement and agriculture. The cultivated and captured fish are hunted in the mangrove forests. Mangroves provided the people with timber to construct houses, furniture, boats, etc. and creepers, grass and foliage and bamboos for making different articles and thatching. The

forest also provided firewood, honey and beewax. The resource base of Hooghly–Matlah estuarine environment was being exploited for the occupation of collecting wood, honey and minor forest products and fishing in the tidal canals, creeks and estuary.

The British Government viewed the mangrove forest, according to their forest policy, as raw materials for industry and commerce, and as a source of revenue. The people in general considered it as a source of raw materials and resource base for occupations. This consumer attitude towards nature has continued even after independence.

The estuarine and coastal fishing has gradually grown into the main economic activity particularly since the 50's. Fishing is done in this area by the migratory fisherpeople from many districts of the State, particularly Midnapore, in addition to the local fisherpeople of Sunderbans, 24-Parganas.

According to the 1971 Census, the population of Sunderbans area is about 2 million. The region has recorded a very fast rate of population growth between 1961 and 1971. The projected population for 1990–91 is 3.6. million.

In the man-environment interaction in this estuarine area, demographic pressure has definitely played a part but there are other factors which have had a more negative impact on the environment.

The Degradation

The ecological imbalance is ultimately expressed in the decay of biological and physical environments. That the imbalance in the Hooghly–Matlah estuarine ecology has set in is mainly manifested in the following symptoms :

- a) steady fall in fish catch,
- b) high rate of siltation of the estuarine system,
- c) erosion of creek banks endangering fringe villages, and
- d) recurring distressing floods.

This paper looks at depletion of fish resources as experienced by the small fisherpeople operating in the Hooghly

Matlah estuary, and attempts to find out the reasons for the depletion.

Steady Fall in Fish Catch

The issue of fish depletion has been raised by the small fisherpeople in the fishing villages of Basanti, Gosaba and Diamond Harbour of 24-Parganas, always with much concern. Their experiences can be summed up in the following way :

- the quantity of their catch is steadily falling;
- for a sizable catch (which now seldom occurs) they have to move further from the creeks or coasts which make their fishing trips increasingly longer; longer trips mean more fishing time, ice and diesel oil as inputs for the same quantity of fish; and
- sailing for far-off fishing grounds needs switching over to bigger craft and more powerful engines which is not always possible.

Conditions in Two Villages

(i) Sultanpur, Diamond Harbour, 24-Parganas

Fisherpeople of Sultanpur say that using sail-boats they could get enough fish in the Hooghly near the Diamond Harbour point, a middle zone of the Hooghly estuary, even a decade ago. Now they have to ply for 12 to 24 hours in mechanised boats to reach the fishing grounds, far off the sand head on the South of Sagore Island. The present distances of the fishing grounds make the fishing trips 4 to 7 days long. They say bitterly that they need to move increasingly greater distances and to fish for longer periods of time to maintain the catch size to match their expectations.

(ii) Purandar Basudebpur, Basanti, 24-Parganas

The Hogol creek flowing through Basanti, a marine zone of the estuarine system, could support a good number of fisherpeople at Purandar Basudebpur, even a decade or so ago. Now only a few fishermen who can't afford to go to distant coastal fishing grounds, fish in the Hogol. The fishermen with small country boats and fixed type polyethylene bag net

combination have to be satisfied with a haul of 5 to 6 kg. of trash fish in a day's labour. This means Rs. 20 to 24 for the day. If luck favours, they may get a few high-price fish.

Why this Depletion ?

The fish population in the Hooghly–Matlah estuary have been the victims of an ecological imbalance triggered off by our unwise interactions with the estuarine environment. It is not very difficult to find out the reasons in the light of data that are available. Some of the reasons attributed to the decay are: (i) imbalances in the ecology of mangroves, (2) destruction of ecology through development projects and (3) the lop-sided stress on export of prawns as a foreign exchange earner. Let us examine each of these factors in a little more detail.

Imbalance in Mangrove Ecology

Like in any other estuary, mangroves of Sunderbans in the Hooghly–Matlah estuary is the base for a versatile estuarine eco-system.

The swampy areas formed by the mangroves and the network of waterways, canals and creeks in an estuarine area attract a large number of fishes, prawns and molluscs, specially in the critical stages of their early lives and provide them with food and shelter.

The considerable quantity of dead barks, leaves, etc. dropped from the mangroves and rotted by fungi and bacteria enriches the surrounding bodies with detrital food. This detrital food not only sustains the food-web within the eco-system but also enriches the adjoining inshore marine environment.

But the condition of mangrove forests now is rather bleak. An official report says mangrove forest cover is 4,220 sq. km. Only 55 percent of this area is under natural vegetation, the water area stretches over 41.3 percent and the balance 3.7% is barren and sandy.

A survey of Indian forest resources in 1950 showed that this area had 4,200 sq. km. of mangrove cover. In 1977,

another survey revealed that the mangrove cover came down to 2,000 sq. km.

But according to knowledgeable persons of the locality the actual mangrove cover will be much less now than what is officially claimed due to the continuous and wide-spread illegal felling of mangrove trees.

The need for firewood in the rural areas and the limited options for making a living, drive the local poor to illegal felling of mangrove trees.

But the biggest onslaught on the mangrove forests in the area comes from the well organised racket for felling trees, with good contacts in the corridors of power. The poor are often employed in the racket for a mere pittance.

Even a State Government-run journal expressed concern over the existence of a 'Mafia' group, active in the forest areas of the State for felling trees illegally.

It is reported that there are big open markets in Sunderbans area for selling and purchasing of log, timber and firewood collected illegally from the forests.

Since the food-web of the estuarine fishery largely depends on the mangroves, the present rate of denudation of mangrove cover has definitely affected the fish population adversely. And the death of the fishery is not far off if the process goes on unchecked. It means a lot to the coastal zone connected to it.

Of the 310 commercially important coastal fish species of India, about 130 fish species spend some time at one stage or other of their life cycle in the estuaries. This proves the importance of the estuarine fishery.

Damodar Valley Project : Development without Ecological Dimension

The severest blow to the Hooghly-Matlah estuary system has come from the barrages constructed at the upper valley of the Damodar under D.V. Project in 1956.

The construction of Damodar barrages initiated the distortion of physical environment of the Hooghly river system and consequently of the related Hooghly-Matlah estuary. The decay is manifested in :

- high siltation rate of the river and the estuary beds making them shallow due to debilitated flushing action in the absence of sufficient land discharge,
- diminishing discharge capacity as a result of shallow bed, and
- stronger tide and feeble ebb resulting in
 - (a) increase in salinity, (b) diminished pollutant-dispersing capacity, and (c) further increase in siltation rate.

Diminishing depth due to fast siltation, particularly at the creek of the estuary mouths and removal of essential directive factors in the forms of adequate velocities of flow and volume of discharge due to barrages of the Damodar Valley and Farakka have caused the decline of many fish, particularly of Hilsa ilisa, the major estuarine catch of West Bengal. After 1973 Hilsa has been a non-descript fishery in the Ganga above Farakka Barrage due to obstruction in fish run. The Farakka Barrage has also reduced the spawning area of Hilsa both in moonsoon and in winter.

Rising salinity and pollution due to failure of the feeble and insufficient land discharge in dispersing those are vitiating the ecology of food-web and habitat for the resident and the migratory fish and crustacian species.

The species showing declining trends are :

- a) Resident species like *Polydactylus indicus* (Tapse), *Mugil parsia* (Parse), *Collia ramacarati* (Amodi) and *Lates calcarifer* (Bhetki).
- b) *Pangasians pangasians* (Pangash) and *Macrobrachium rosenbergi* (Galda Chingri) a fresh water species which spawn in the saline areas of the estuary.
- c) Marine species that migrate upstream and spawn in the fresh water area like *Hilsa ilisa* (Ilish).

- d) Marine species like *Polynemus indicus* (Shele) and *P. tetradactylus* (Gurjali) which spawn in the saline areas of the estuary.

Fisheries Development for Prawn Export

In 1986, out of India's total seafood export of 88,283 tonnes valued at Rs 462.40 crores, shrimp alone constituted 52,153 tonnes by weight and Rs. 379.97 crores by value. So, the seafood export has virtually been the export of prawn.

The frantic effort of the Central government to earn foreign exchange from the expanding international prawn market, the big capital lobby eager to take advantage of the trend, and the intervention of the developed Northerners in various forms, specially through their multinationals have, together, shaped an export-oriented growth policy. The policy makes progress in prawn capture and culture the paramaters of our fisheries development.

This kind of development policy has led to ground trawling in the shallow inshore zone for prawns, and mono-culture of prawns in brackish water embankments in the marine states, including West Bengal.

Destructive Gear for Fishery Development

The Roychowk fishing port was inaugurated in September, 1982, 64 km. downstream from Calcutta with a capacity to accomodate 110 trawlers. But before the Roychowk port came in being, trawlers from Visakhapatnam were operating in the inshore fishing zone on the South of Sunderbans. About 200 trawlers, both from the State and outside are operating along this 64 km. coastal stretch. Knowledgeable persons believe that in addition to these, a number of foreign trawlers are poaching there.

Small fishermen of gillnetter groups of Sagore island, Diamond Harbour and Kultali areas expressed their sore feelings about their operational constraints and wastage of fish resources due to the presence of big trawlers in the shallow coastal zone. The problems they confront are :

- they face uneven competition from the aggressive mechanised gears of the big trawlers operating in the same shallow inshore fishing grounds,
- the ground trawling for prawns disturb the water column of the fishing grounds by violent mechanical action and sound. This disturbance scares away their target fish, shoals of Hilsa, pomfret, etc., making their catch uncertain and meagre,
- trawlers often damage and even destroy their drifting type gill nets incurring heavy losses,
- their free movements over the fishing grounds for casting nets get restricted by the physical barrier created by the trawlers, and
- since the trawlers are after prawns alone, they throw away all incidental catch dead, constituting about 90 percent of the total.

In January this year, the Central Government decided to permit large industrial houses falling under the ambit of FERA and MRTP to establish joint ventures with foreign companies in coastal fishing. The step is welcomed in the business circles. So, the stage is set to replace the small fishermen by big capitalists in a bigger way and to erode the coastal fishery more relentlessly.

Paddy or Prawn ?

The brackish water embankment fisheries in West Bengal have shown a phenomenal growth after 70's often violating the rules restricting the conversion of croplands into fisheries.

According to Shri Debabrata Bandopadhyaya, the State Irrigation Minister, a vast stretch of agricultural land has been converted into brackish water fisheries in South 24-Parganas by certain people without prior approval of the Government. Under rule 3/A of West Bengal Land Reforms Act, 1984, nobody can convert agricultural land into fisheries, said the minister. (The Telegraph, Friday, 3 July, 1987).

Increasing thrust on prawn culture through lucrative incentives by the Central Government agencies has resulted in the monoculture of prawns in these brackish water embankment fisheries, in North and South 24-Parganas.

According to an unofficial estimate the conversion of valuable paddy land has crossed 34,412 hectares by now. Earlier, before 70's, multi-species fish culture was being practised in the brackish water embankment fisheries of West Bengal. But now almost the whole area of the fisheries are used for mono-culture of tiger prawns.

To cater to the brackish water monoculture of prawns, post-larval prawn is being scooped up from the extensive network of tidal canals and creeks of the Hooghly-Matlah estuary system.

Hundreds of men, women and children of each tidal canal and creek side village are now engaged in collection of post-larval prawn with micro-mesh scoop-nets either wading in the shallow shore or using combinations of fixed type micromesh bag-net and country boat in deep waters. The mushrooming of collection centres and wholesale prawn seed markets and collection centres throughout the market places of estuarine fringe of Sunderbans speak of the enormity of prawn seed trade. But the most disturbing part of the process is that the incidental catch during prawn seed collection is thrown away dead. And this discarded incidental catch, composed of the whole range of resident and migratory fishes and crustacians at the early stages in the estuarine nursery ground, constitute more than 95 percent of the total.

This colossal waste of several species of fishes and crustacians at their early stages is causing unprecedented effects on their very regeneration processes. Thus, there is no doubt that the multinational connections in our fishery development is devastating our fisheries and the fish resources.

Conclusion

Our option for Damodar Valley Project neglecting the traditional experience of the lower Damodar Valley people have been tragic.

The price of technology is going to be as high as the Hooghly–Matlah estuary system, the artery of West Bengal economy, comprising industry, agriculture and obviously riverine, estuarine and coastal fisheries.

It may not be out of place to mention who stands to gain most and who lose most in the business of transfer of technology. Out of Rs. 24 crores spent on the Damodar Valley Project, 21 crores went to America and Britain. Now the Dredging Corporation of India is entering into a collaboration with a foreign firm to restore the 4.5 meters draft of 1982 at Balari Bar in the Hooghly which has now dropped down to 0.5 meters.

The whole cycle illustrates how our craze for exotic development models traps us in a labyrinth. First we import a technology which devastates our environment and then we decide to restore it which needs fresh import. Ultimately, to balance the import payment, we are to export what the importers want us to do, and, almost always, it is the raw materials or items at the expense of our environment, people's basic needs, development and above all the process of self-reliance.

Steps Suggested

- i) Revise the export-oriented fisheries policy of the Centre with clear priority for the development of our people in terms of economy and nutrition. Apply efficient yet ecologically sound fish capture and culture technology in participation with the fisherpeople.
- ii) Introduce multi-species aquaculture in the brackish water embankment fisheries in place of mono-culture of prawn.
- iii) Stop trawling in the shallow inshore zone in the south of Sunderbans to save the small fisherpeople operating in that zone with mechanised boats and conserve estuary-cum-inshore fish ecology.

- iv) Increase the volume of water flow in the Hooghly river and the Hooghly-Matlah estuary systems and desilt these systems through corrective measures.
- v) Make real provision for firewood plantation in the social forestry programme and alleviate the poverty of the forest-fringe people by introducing more programmes.
- vi) Encourage the formation of vigilant activists at local levels to fight illegal felling of the mangrove trees.
- vii) Take up programmes offered by the government and non-governmental agencies for building up awareness at the grass-root level for the conservation of mangrove forests and fish resources of the Hooghly-Matlah estuarine system through group discussions, consultations, workshops, audio-visual shows, etc.

Pranab Ray
General Secretary
National Fishermen's Forum

A REPORT OF THE CONDITIONS OF TRADITIONAL ORIYA FISHERMEN

The 342-km. coastline of Orissa runs through four districts—Balasore in the north, Cuttack, Puri and Ganjam in the south. All along the beaches in numerous hamlets, live 1,00,000 artisanal fishermen. Fishing, the traditional occupation of these people, is becoming increasingly difficult for a number of reasons. And, as a result of this threat to their very existence these fishing communities have begun to organise and agitate for their rights showing a determination and militancy that had never been a characteristic of these peaceful communities.

For decades now these people have been subjected to regular economic exploitation by non-fishermen traders, merchants, middlemen, and money-lenders. After independence, instead of an end to such exploitation, a number of other problems have cropped up which are threatening the very existence of these people.

With the introduction of highly mechanised fishing gears in the coastal waters of India, fishing began to attract big business capital and export houses. This new 'growth' in the marine fisheries sector has only intensified the economic exploitation. This type of fishing is also adversely affecting the marine ecology resulting in reduced catch and earnings for the traditional fishermen. Compounding these problems is the threat, and reality, of eviction to make way for tourism development and the establishment of military bases on these beaches.

The situation in Orissa is gradually heading towards an irreversible point which may become uncontrollably violent in the future. The situation is all the more delicate because confrontations are likely to assume ethnic colouration because, the majority of the small marine fishermen are Telugu speaking who had migrated from Andhra over the last one century. The last wave of migration was about 30 years ago. The

area up to Puri was under the Madras Presidency at one time, with Puri and the coast northwards from these coming under Bengal Presidency. Almost all the settlements here date back to the period before the states were organised along linguistic lines in the 1950s. Yet these people are treated as second class citizens by the Orissa government authorities. The fisherpeople seem to be acutely conscious of this and in turn have little faith in the local administrative machinery.

As discontent spreads among the communities all along the coast, the governments drag their feet and continue to support big capital, and promote export policies, and developmental activities that continue to victimise the traditional fishermen.

Baliapal

On May 21st 1986 the Central Government officially announced its intentions to set up a missile testing and launching base at Baliapal in Bangalore district. If and when this base is set up, 41 villages in Baliapal block and 13 villages in Bhograï block will be directly affected and their population displaced.

Baliapal has been in and out of the news recently as protests and people's opposition to the missile base escalated. In September of last year a fact-finding team constituted by All India Federation of Organisations For Democratic Rights toured the area and came out with a preliminary report.

The team's investigations revealed that 102 sq. kms. are to be acquired immediately for the missile range, and this threatens to evict 45,000 people from their homes and directly affect their occupations of farming, beetle-leaf raising, and fishing. The setting up of this range will directly affect 30,000 traditional fisherpeople. The government has been promising rehabilitation. The report points out that these promises are, by and large, extremely dubious and the local people have little faith in them. Indeed what kind of rehabilitation is it if fishermen, born and living on the coast for generations, is suddenly transported to homestead land 10 kms. inland on a mountain !? The government, however, has

dubbed the people's struggle to retain their homes as the work of "vested interests, political parties and anti-nationals".

The report states, "The team reiterates that the question is not one of hiking the rates of compensation. We emphatically state that the land, the produce, the river and the sea, and the social and cultural life here, cannot be compensated for". And finally, "... in this context it (the team) is opposed to the project as a whole, as well as this type of project—whatever the site in India. It is clear from the offensive nature of the project, the chain of dependence it will tie us into, and the associated danger to Indian people in case of war, that the project itself is violative of democratic rights of the Indian people to live in peace, and to have access to information regarding issues of life and death".

Puri

Puri, about one hour by bus from Bhubaneswar—the state capital—is a well known tourist and pilgrimage centre famous for the Jagannath Temple. Just outside Bhubaneswar is yet another, lesser known, important historical spot—the fields on the bank of the river Daya, where the Kalinga war was fought. On the horizon is a hill on which stands the huge striking milk-white structure of a Buddhist temple erected by some Japanese to commemorate the conversion of Ashoka the Great to Buddhism after being overwhelmed by the Kalinga war.

Recently Puri had attracted the interest of the media and the public when the government began evicting 9,000 fishermen from their homes in order to make way for the construction of the Jagganath Puri Sanskrit University on a part of the beach.

A public protest meeting attended by over 6,000 people at the Pentakotha fishing village on the northern edge of the Puri tourist complexes had drawn quite a bit of attention. The meeting was addressed by Opposition party leaders, members of the National Fishermen's Forum, and local fisherpeople. Later, the General Secretary of the NFF P. K. Roy,

and Executive Council member P. C. Jena prepared and circulated a report documenting the crisis and suggesting alternatives.

In spite of the local people's resistance evictions were carried out, and today the squat white concrete structure of the university stands on the beach; waiting for Sanskrit scholars to come and enjoy the sea breeze while they burrow themselves in ancient texts. The 1,200 huts which were the homes of the fisherpeople are gone. Only the raised rectangular mounds of sand on which they stood remain as evidence of their existence. Barbed wire fences run around encircling the 100 acres of the campus waiting to be beautified by casurina plantations.

The people evicted from the site had to shift to a nearby settlement and put up their huts wherever they were granted some space by friends and relatives.

In this area, this university is neither the start nor the end of these people's problems. There is another juggernaut at work in the name of tourism development through agencies like the Puri - Konarak Marine Development Trust, Indian Tourism Development Corporation, and the World Bank. A 'Master Plan' to develop the 40-km stretch of beach from Puri to Konarak is being gradually executed.

Such a development of the area is going to displace, and possibly destroy, the lifestyle of 40,000 marine fishermen living in at least three villages of Bali Sahi, Nus Sahi and Pentakotha.

It is already known and admitted that even the 'trickle down effects' of tourism development for the poor and labouring section of the people are virtually non-existent. Instead, experience shows that such developments in the Third World (as was evident in Goa as well) far from benefitting, what really happens is the engagement of local people in drug and sex trafficking and other milder forms of vulgar 'entertainment facilities' all of which snowballs into a socio-cultural degeneration specially affecting the youth from all classes and castes of the local population.

In Puri one can already see these tourists, mostly white foreigners, attired in loose hippy styled clothing roaming around barefooted or on hired bicycles, or sitting around small *dhabas* and tea-stalls or taking in the sun at the beach. These people hardly use the elaborate complexes and plush hotels, preferring instead to take up lodging at the houses of local people for half the standard rates, and eating local food at small cheaper places. Not only is this form of living much cheaper but also more bohemian and a 'richer Indian experience'.

The Chilika Lake

On the road southwards from Bhubaneswar to Gopalpur-on-sea is an ecological marvel, the Chilika Lake, a huge brackish water lagoon. It covers an area of about 1,165 sq. kms. spread over two districts — Puri and Ganjam. Fed mainly by the two rivers, Baya and Bhargari, it turns into a sweet water lake during the monsoons. It is connected to the village of Arkhakuda through a narrow and deep zig-zag channel of 35 kms.

Around the lake are 122 villages with a population of 55,880. Most of the inhabitants are Kondra, Nolia and Oriya fishermen. The other major occupation of the people is paddy cultivation. Around the lake there are 17 centres where fish is collected before it is distributed far and wide. 160 varieties of fish can be found in the lake. However, only 28 of these have any commercial value, the most common ones being prawns, mullets, lobster, turtles, crabs, marekali and mezi.

The flat surface of the lake is dotted by 96 islands. Some of these bits of green, like the Parikud, Nuapara and Satapara islands, are the homes of black buck, spotted deer, sambar and other small animals. Nalabana island becomes the seasonal home of many long range migratory birds, and Bird island is a regular breeding ground for a variety of birds. Some of the islands are also inhabited by fishing communities.

But the beauty and calm of the area has been threatened for sometime now as poaching trawlers are reducing the

catch of the traditional fishermen. A number of confrontations have already taken place between trawler operators and small fishermen. As the level of antagonism and frustration rises the fishermen have begun to organise themselves into societies and unions to fight the sociological destruction that trawler overfishing causes.

Fed up and frustrated with trying to make the authorities protect their rights and habitat, a number of fishing villages in the nearby Ganjam area boycotted the last general elections. And in separate incidents the *catamurum* fishermen rounded up poaching trawlers by force and handed over the crew to the police. The government showed its concern by harassing a number of individuals and local groups accusing them of instigating the fishermen. Because of this these people were unable to carry on their work of adult literacy, child education, and running the *mahila samajas* for a number of months. But this did not stop the protests of the fishermen or their attempts to organize themselves into co-operatives.

Gopalpur-on-sea

It is a small town with the old area concentrated at the centre. Lodges and guest houses for tourists and new buildings are straggled along the beach front between the lighthouse in the north and a creek in the south.

Around this town live about 4,500 fishermen. On the town side of the creek is a small settlement which has just fought and won a stay order to prevent their being evicted so the spot could be beautified for tourists. On the other side is the village of Bandara – an important export point for dried fish. Years before independence, Gopalpur was a flourishing port town and an important export–import centre. But this boom abruptly vanished after 1947, and many of those, who were not by skill or tradition either fishermen or cultivators, found themselves unemployed. This vacuum began to give rise to a new breed of people who had to resort to other ways of making a living — this is the genesis of a parasitic class of petty traders, middlemen and touts. These people soon honed to perfection the art of exploiting other people's labour for their own profits.

In 1974 when Nageshwar Rao, an advocate, first began to work in Gopalpur, his hometown, he discovered that though there were two groups of fishermen with their own leaders the people themselves were divided while the leaders were on very friendly and co-operative terms. Moreover, both were well under the control and patronage of the agents in the fish procuring business.

He discovered how the *sondia*, who supplied liquor and lent money to the fishermen, exercised control by giving exorbitant *chandras* for the yearly village festivals. And also how they supply liquor free of cost during election time. Another strange thing he found was that though Gopalpur had a 90% fishermen population their representation in the Panchayats was nil.

Having grown up in the area Rao realized that building up awareness and unity among the fishing communities was a far from simple task ; and yet without being organized they could never put an end to the various ways in which they were manipulated and exploited. At first, he tried through the CPI, and later on through Janata party. Dissatisfied, he has now finally settled down to working on his own. Besides the cases he takes up on behalf of the fishermen and tribals in the area, he helps out with legal advice to other a political groups or individuals who live and work among these people. Rao had realized early that simply talking to these people about the causes of their problems was not going to be of much use because the culture and lifestyle of these people allowed little time for them to attend meetings and listen to speeches. The men would go out to sea in their *catamurums* very early and often return late tired from a day-long battle of wits and strength with the sea and the fish. Naturally, they would want just enough food, and some liquor, if they had a good catch. Theirs is a peculiar hunter's life with a clear division between the time to work and the time to relax. So strong is their desire to be left alone that for any sort of business it is the women in the community who manage the whole show from the moment the catch has landed on the beach.

Knowing all this, Rao, aided by a few active and concerned local youths, began with the exercise of illustrating

the people's condition to them through their own experiences. They patiently pointed out the critical aspects of events as they unfolded before the victim's eyes.

During those early years the main issues they tackled were those of immediate concern to the people. There were two. The first was the unfair advantage the police took of some of these fishermen's love for liquor. At the slightest pretext of drunkenness or brawling they would be locked up. The women then would have to go to the *thana* to seek and beg for their release, because if the men did not go out to sea the next morning they would earn nothing. This system developed a set of touts specialised in negotiating the release of the men for certain sums of money of which they got a cut.

Another problem was the molestation of the communities' young women. Often well-to-do youngsters of the area and tourists would lure away these women with false promises of money and other presents. This form of informal prostitution had landed many a young woman as unwed mothers, and they would eventually turn to full fledged prostitution for their, and their child's, survival.

Only when they began to unite and file petitions, and protested publically did they realize that they could fight these problems. And though there wasn't and still not is, any drastic changes their organized protests had led to some actions being taken against some police officials and politicians. It has also deterred many others who thought they could do as they pleased with these people.

Today many new woes have been added to the old ones. The main threat to a decent existence today comes from evictions for tourism development, and overfishing by trawlers which result in the ecological destruction of the inshore seabed. The latter means a depletion of fish resources and consequently very meagre catches for these people.

For five long years the fishermen of Gopalpur have been complaining to officials at all levels of the State and Central government administration, from the PM downwards. But the

trawlers continued their rape of the seas on which the very existence of these fishermen depends. Even the official enactment of the Marine Fishing Regulation Act in 1984 by the Orissa State government had no real effect. So finally unable to bear the frustration anymore, this year in October hundreds of *catamurums* took to the seas, forcibly captured 7 trawlers and beached them on the shore. The police were forced to arrest the trawler crew and the Fisheries Department was informed. The trawler crew was produced before the court, only to be released on bail and no case was filed, no punitive action taken. Instead, the fishermen report that some officials came and threatened to prosecute the villagers if they did not release the trawlers. The trawlers were put to sea, and though they are not off the Gopalpur shores they are still reportedly operating out of Pardip port further north.

Ajoy Choudhury

Freelance Journalist



CASE STUDY — 4

TOURISM : THE OTHER SIDE OF THE GLAMOUR STORY

All along the Indian coastline, communities of fishworkers are being uprooted and displaced to give way to tourism development projects. Stories from Madras, and elsewhere speak volumes of the callousness of our planners and administrators.

An Elitist Vice : Beautification of Marina

November 1985 witnessed the struggle of the catamarum fishworkers of Madras to assert their rights to beach their craft on the Marina. The Corporation of Madras and the PWD in an 'Operation Beautification' programme cleared the Marina of 1000 catamarums on 3rd November. That it took 7000 officials and 1500 policemen for the mopping up operation is in itself a commentary on the strength of the Marina fisherfolk. But the peaceful community who had valued their livelihood 'co-operated' with the officials in removing the catamarums, nets and dried fish to another area in Triplicane.

'Operation Beautification' of Marina was undertaken by the State Government to get rid of the 'eye-sore' that kept leisure seekers away from the Marina. Marina, the longest sandy shore on the East Coast has been a family picnic spot for many. It has also been the home of thousands of fishworkers for generations. The two had existed side by side for years. No one is sure what triggered off the present drive for beautification. While some say that powerful contractors and politicians were involved, others say that certain VIPs, including ministers, who usually take their walks in the morning on the sea-shore found these catamarums inconvenient, and that they had influenced the present initiative.

What happened a month later — on December 3, to be precise — is even more shocking. The provocation for the December demonstration was the move taken by the Slum Clearance Board to evict fishermen from their tenements for non-payment of rent arrears. Groups of fishworkers who had

gathered in front of the Slum Clearance Board were jostled by the police which sparked off a chain action of throwing stones, putting up road blocks and finally police firing which resulted in the death of six fishworkers.

Adding insult to injury, it appears, is the pastime of officialdom. As if not content with the loss of their livelihood they were further evicted for non-payment of rent arrears while living in a slum. What has the State turned into? Slumlords?

The collective action of fishworkers and their supporters prompted the Supreme Court to issue an interim order to the State forbidding them to remove fishermen from their habitat or to collect any rent from them. Veteran jurist Mr. V. R. Krishna Iyer, commenting on the Marina episode said, "beautification of a city at the expense of humbler people is a satanic delight. Perversion of values and morbid obsession of beautification is now a contagious disease of the upper class who control the civic machinery. The Marina episode is another pathological manifestation of the beautification syndrome." The Supreme Court has held that "right to life" as enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution is a "right to livelihood", and that the latter can be disrupted only by a "procedure established by law".

Goa : When The Tourists Go Marching in

Goa, to the world outside, is presented as a highly westernised society than the rest of India. A connotation of licentiousness is added to tourism promotion by both the Government and private agencies. Wine, women and song are portrayed as the ultimate attractions, along with the 'unspoilt' beaches. This is a very distorted and artificial image of Goa and the culture of its people.

Instead of taking measures to reverse this trend, the Goa Government itself has chosen to reinforce this image by consciously promoting tourism. Tourism is declared to be an industry and therefore activities related to it are eligible for subsidies and incentives. It is no longer a trade from which the small tour operators and the small hotels and restaurants

can make a decent living. The 'big boys' with all their industrial clout have stepped in to change the shore-line, and the skyline, of Goa. Five star hotels and its accompanying culture will change the Goan village atmosphere. In this, the Government and the ITDC are the chief architects of a "Master Plan" that will provide Goa with another 19 five-star hotels by the end of this century.

According to the Plan, Goa will be carved into three concentric zones centring around Panjim, the capital. In these zones 'beach development' is the primary strategy. What types of tourism facilities are being promoted in these zones? Broadly speaking, they are called village tourism areas (VTAs) with guest houses and hotels of up to 10 rooms, tourism development areas (TDAs) with hotels of less than 100 rooms and tourist resort areas (TRAs) with resort hotels of 100 rooms and above. According to the figures available, the total number of beds in 1986 in classes A, B, and C types of hotels were 9,886. By 2001, this figure will be 52,530—a five-fold increase in 15 years! It is estimated that over 2.25 million tourists will visit Goa annually by the turn of the century, while the figure for 1986 was 834,081.

What does this all amount to? The next few years will witness a temporary boom in the construction industry. It, then means the eviction and displacement of villages along the coast. It is the traditional fisherfolk that will be the worst hit when their villages are acquired for the big hotels. Their livelihood is at stake. It also means that migrant labour force from Karnataka and Maharashtra will have to be accommodated in Goa as they form the bulk of the labour forces in the construction industry. It is likely that in the long run there is bound to occur cultural and linguistic tensions as has been witnessed in other cities which have depended primarily on migrant labour. But what is of great concern for the people of Goa today is the decadent culture that is part and parcel of big tourism promotion. Experiences of other Third World cities such as Manila and Bangkok are too well known and they emphasise the point in question.

Many protests and demonstrations have been staged against the Master Plan. Fishermen's associations and other

citizens committees are already engaged in legal battles with the State trying to prevent the eviction and displacement of traditional Goan fishing villages and communities. In November last, many Goans picketed the airport against the booming number of tourists from the West, particularly Germany. They printed and distributed leaflets in German to impress upon them what the majority of the Goans feel about tourism. Tourist buses and hotels were at the receiving end of cow-dung plastering which amply depicted the contempt of the people. Such protests are likely to grow in the future.

The people are aware of the fallouts of tourism. They are aware that poverty and prostitution are the concomitant results for those alienated from the mainstream of the economic system, and that it is the big companies and their multinational counterparts that will be the actual beneficiaries of this development. The people are determined to stop the rape of Goa by the capitalists and the bourgeoisie.

**Based on presentations
by Muthuvel and Mathany
Saldanha.**

ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND INLAND FISHERIES

Introduction

Rapid industrialization, since independence, has seen the growth of a number of industries—fertilizer, paper, rayon, pharmaceutical and others. All these industries consume water in large quantities and it is natural that they be located close to major water sources—mainly the river banks. Industries and inland fisheries became competing forces in the sharing of inland water resources, especially because the industries in both the private and public sectors paid scant attention to effluent treatment, discharging millions of litres of poisonous chemical wastes directly into the rivers every day.

Riverine life has its own distinctive culture and the dependence of the people on the rivers for their agricultural, animal husbandry, food and drinking needs is well known. Large-scale river water pollution thus began to adversely effect every sector of the peoples' lives on the river banks, marginalizing whole communities of specialized professions such as washerwomen, fishermen and landless shepherds. Landed armers depending upon the river water for irrigation also suffered a steep fall in their productivity. Lack of consciousness on the part of the people and the industry-government nexus based on greed (for profit) failed to check the pollution of our major riverine systems until the tragic consequences began to attain high proportions. Those specially hit were the fishermen as continuous pollution of the rivers destroyed the fish population and their resistance to overcome ecological disasters.

Experience of River Pollution by Rayon Industries Near Harihar

My colleagues and I at the Samaj Praivartana Samudaya, an environmental group, have been direct witnesses to one such instance of river water pollution viz., the Tungabhadra in Ranibennur Taluk near Harihar. The villagers in this area were seriously concerned about the adverse effects of pollution

caused by the two industries at Kumarapatnan, Ranibennur Taluk, Dharwad district, viz., the Harihar Polyfibres and Grasilene units of the Gwalior Rayon Silk Manufacturing (Weaving) Company Ltd. (GRASIM). The poor were feeling that many aspects of constructive work they had undertaken with support from the voluntary agencies were being negated, to a great extent, by the water, soil and air pollution caused by these two industries. These aspects were: Health programme for people especially the fishermen, washermen and women, the dairy programme involving health aspects of cattle and the shepherding community project involving the health aspects of sheep.

Periodical fish-kills have deprived more than 500 fishermen-families on both sides of the river of their livelihood and animal husbandry. Life has come to a virtual stand-still as the animals suffered increased rates of abortion on drinking the polluted river water. Even agricultural produce fell by half; people's health, especially of the fishermen, suffered badly.

While the villagers were observing these effects and seeing them first hand, the company was denying there was any pollution at all and there were almost no studies done by the government as to the effect of this pollution.

It was then that we made visits to the sites of other rayon factories at Mavoor, Kerala and Nagda, Madhya Pradesh, both highly polluted, to share our experiences and learn from those of others.

Effects of Pollution on Fish and Aquatic Life

The effects of water pollution on fish and aquatic life were demonstrated most dramatically in one episodal fish-kill that took place on 14th February 1984, when lakhs and lakhs of fish came floating down the river dead. The local fishermen's and concerned citizens' groups such as the Tungabhadra Parisara Samithi, Citizens' Environment Committee, Ranibennur and others showed remarkable awareness in documenting the fish-kill, collecting samples, and contacting Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute, the Bangalore Water Pollution Control Board and pursuing the matter. Thereby,

we learned first hand of the effects of water pollution on fisheries.

The water analysis of the Tungabhadra river showed the dissolved oxygen content to be near zero at the time of the fish-kill, improving to 2.0 ppm after nearly 3 days. The dissolved oxygen content was subnormal (2.8 ppm) at a distance of 30 kms from the discharge point even two days after the episodal fish kill.

Such a fish-kill would destroy the breeding stock of fish in the river causing a drastic reduction in the fish catch in the entire following season. Various fish-food organisms such as phyto and zoo planktons and insects would also be lost and the growth of fish depletes as a consequence. In the case of the February 14 fish-kill the report documents :

“There was absolutely no fish catch for about a week after the fish kill”.

Zinc was also found in lethal quantities in the fish.

In addition to the lethal effects, pollutants can have sublethal effect on fishes or other aquatic organisms. This includes reduction in growth and development, effects on reproduction and metabolism, changes in behaviour like feeding inhibition, inactivity etc. The most toxic pollutant in the effluents discharged into the river is zinc and it gets accumulated in the fatty tissues of fishes. Such stored zinc can find entry into the human body and can cause harmful effects.

The Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute performed a detailed study of the fisheries in Tungabhadra a year later and found that downstream, far from the factory effluent discharge point, both the number of species and numbers of each species had declined considerably. The detection of mercury in fish flesh and sediments is a matter of serious concern.

Effects of Fish-kills and Fish Depletion on Fishermen

Needless to say that fish depletion on such a scale grievously affects the livelihood of the fishermen. CIFRI, Barrackpore, West Bengal, in its preliminary report, estimated that this single episodal fish-kill caused a loss ranging from Rs. 5, 263.50 per head per year (at a distance of 12 km. from the discharge point) to Rs. 172,80 (at a distance of 30 kms). Fish-kills, though on a smaller scale have occurred twice more in 1986. Fishermen say that in contrast to a catch of 4 to 5 kgs. which they obtained in a few hours before commencement of the factory, these days they have to fish for over twelve hours for a meagre catch of 3/4 to 1 Kg. The fish in the polluted waters do not stay fresh long enough for sale and spoil even during cooking. The market prices of fish caught downstream has plunged compared to those caught upstream in the local markets and at the Harbour. Water pollution has meant economic disaster to fishermen.

Organization and Development of Fishermen

It was realized by the fishermen that if their lot was to improve, the only way was to organize and carry on their struggle at various levels—scientific, legal and through local voluntary committees. They formed "Fishermen's Committees" in three village clusters of Hirebidari, Medleri and Airani, as a part of the Tungabhadra Parisara Samithi. More recently, the fishermen expanded their organization by creating a Tungabhadra Parisara Kendra Samithi consisting of 4 Talukas—Ranibennur (Dharwad Dist.) Harihar (Chitradurga District) Harapanhalli and Hadagali (Bellary District).

The Government agencies such as the research institutes, fisheries department of the Government of Karnataka and other officials at the district and state level have been extremely co-operative and have helped the fishermen through objective investigations and recommendations of relief and compensation. The Legal Aid Board has helped the fishermen to file cases seeking compensation in the local courts at Ranibennur. But the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board has been ambivalent and not very co-operative in stemming the water

pollution. It is a matter of genuine regret that the very body responsible for control of pollution has failed to do so.

Conclusion

February 14 of each year is a day of special protest against water pollution for the inland fishermen of Karnataka. The first anniversary in 1985 saw a massive protest programme with the support of noted environmentalist and Gnanapeeth award winner Dr. K. Shivaram Karanth. More and more people from different walks of life are joining the fishermen in their struggle for a clean environment.

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CASE STUDY — 6

OUT-BOARD ENGINES AND FISHERMEN IN QUILON

In the 5-km. coastline of Quilon town area there are over 2000 fishermen's families. They are continuously threatened by sea erosion and fire accidents, and when they do occur, their huts and fishing implements are destroyed. Of late, there is yet another problem they have to come to grips with – that of the outboard engines.

Prior to 1982 the entire fishing community used catamarans and small dug-out canoes with sail and oars to go into the sea. The outboard engines made their first appearance in 1982. In the initial period, there was some hesitation on the part of fishermen. But Yamaha donated a free engine to a group of four fishermen on an experimental basis, and some more groups of fishermen agreed to be part of the experiment. After a few trial runs it was discovered that the fishermen were able to make some tangible profits. By using these engines they were able to go farther into the sea, fish for more time and they were physically less strained. All these brought them to the erroneous conclusion that outboard engines were the answer to their problems.

High-pressure selling

By 1983 different companies entered the scene with promises of brighter tomorrows for the fishermen. Fishermen became the objects of high pressure selling. Four multinational companies, through their marketing agents, began to pressure and influence fishermen's organisations to endorse their products. The four companies are : Yamaha, through George Maejo, Johnson through Khemka Spares and Accessories ; Suzuki through Three Crescent Builders, and Evinrude through Cleatus Vincent & Co.

The distributor of Johnson engines was able to convince the South India Federation of Fishermen's Societies (SIFFS) and entered into a working relationship with them. Through SIFFS, 58 Johnson engines were sold to fishermen in Trivandrum and Quilon. Yamaha stepped up their campaign and influenced the Government-managed Fishermen's Welfare Corporation, through which 22 engines were sold in Quilon.

Likewise, many fishermen's co-operatives and welfare societies became willing allies of these multi-national companies. No one cared to study the real and long-term impact of mechanisation on a mass scale.

The outboard engines were originally designed to fit into light sailing craft used for pleasure trips or by the customs and coastal patrol. Its main purpose is to achieve greater cruising speeds. It cannot travel fast with nets, catches and crew. Only later experience taught the fishermen that its performance would be sluggish when loaded. Moreover, the fuel that is required for these engines has to have a higher octane content, which is not freely available in India. By using ordinary fuel, the engines are susceptible to faster wear and tear.

Either by suppressing these facts or by purposely misleading the Societies, the Companies carried on their marketing strategies by influencing agencies of the Government and the Banks. In 1983, FCDP, a voluntary organisation began to help the fisherfolk to acquire implements with the help of NABARD. They worked out a scheme and began to grant loans to buy boats, nets and outboard engines. Loans ranging from Rs. 26,000 to Rs. 30,000 were made available to as many as 155 groups of fishermen. Quilon Social Service Society (QSSS), another voluntary organisation, made loans available for another 60 engines. All these loans were distributed through commercial banks at different rates of interest which ranged from 4 to 12 percent per annum.

Confused Scenario

By the end of 1984 there were about 260 outboard engines in the short stretch of 5 kms. of the Quilon shoreline. Of these 173 were Yamahas, 32 were Evinrudes, 23 were Johnsons, 25 were Suzukis and 7 others were of different makes. The scenario became totally confused when fishermen began to compete with one another for better catches and bigger profits. But the reality was not to be one of self-sufficiency and economic well-being as was their dream when they threw away their sails and oars into the sea.

In the early stages they could net a decent margin of profit, but as time passed and the engines began to need constant attention, their sea-time became less and the bills mounted. They found that spare parts were highly priced and the servicing contract itself was for a high figure. These are neatly tied-in to the purchase and cannot be violated. There can be no self repairing because once the fishermen open up the engines for repairs, the companies refuse to honour the service contract. Also, the spares have to be purchased from the same Company that sold the engine. So there was a monopolistic control over the sale of each and every engine. The constant repair bills, higher fuel bills, and the loss of sea-time amounted to actual loss for those who opted for mechanisation.

Hopes Betrayed, Dreams Shattered

A survey conducted by the FCDP in the four areas of Pallithottam, Vadi, Moothakkara and Tangassery showed that fishermen could not repay the loans because of the high operational costs. Twenty-four fishermen's groups – six from each of the four areas – that availed the loans were studied and it was found that they had higher incomes than when they were using traditional methods, but they also had higher expenses for machine repairs and spares. This showed that the real income of fishermen have not gone up in spite of the mechanisation.

The study also showed that they have become more indebted to middlemen and money-lenders. They had to borrow money to maintain themselves and their vessels, very often at higher rates of interest, because it was believed that their income potential was better after mechanisation. Pallithottam area recorded the highest income and expenditure and also had the most indebted outboard engine owners.

Slowly the fishermen are beginning to realise who stood to gain by the process of mechanisation. In this case, it was the multi-national companies and their agents who took them for a ride. In the process the money-lenders and the middlemen made their hay. The fishermen, by whose sweat of the brow these groups flourish, are the real losers.

J. Jerome
General Secretary, KSMTF

THE SAD TALE OF JOHNSON OUT BOARD MOTOR OWNERS IN KERALA

This is the sad tale of a few hundred families of traditional fishermen families in Kerala who have incurred heavy debts and are unable to clear them due to a confidence trick played upon them by a foreign manufacturer of out board engines and their unscrupulous dealer in India. The following is the shocking tale of how our ignorance and illiteracy has been exploited and we are left in dire straits languishing in hunger and with the ever present threat of action by banks and money-lenders who lent us money to acquire these motors.

Since 1982 many of our brother fishermen have started acquiring out board motors for use on country craft as a means of increasing their fish catches and to come out of poverty. At the beginning there was only one make of out-board motors available to us and imported from Japan. It is in 1984 that two or three other makes of imported OBMs came to the market through some Indian dealers. The Johnson out-board motors were the first among these new makes that entered the market. We were then subject to a high pressure promotional campaign by the company and the Indian dealer. We were made to believe that Johnson motors are superior to other motors, have lower running and maintenance costs and greater durability. We were promised that a good network of workshops will take care of after sales and spare parts at reasonable price will be made available to us. Moreover, these motors were made available to us through the Kerala Fishermen's Welfare Corporation initially and through the Matsyafed later on as well as some private agencies whose association with the motor gave us confidence to purchase these motors. As the cost of these motors (Rs. 13,250/- initially and Rs. 14,620/- later on) was beyond our capabilities to buy, we availed of loans from different sources: commercial banks, relatives, money lenders, etc. The investment we made was not only in motors but also in suitable craft and gear so that the operations will be more profitable. Each of us invested totally in the range of

Rs. 30,000/- to Rs. 50,000/- for a motorised fishing unit using Johnson motors. As all the agencies like the Matsyafed and commercial banks seemed to have confidence in Johnson motors we were able to obtain finance quite easily.

Once we started operation with the Johnson motors we ran into the following problems :

- 1) The running costs were found to be very high due to high fuel consumption giving us very little profit from fishing operations.
- 2) The maintenance costs started mounting. We found Johnson having an abnormally high failure rate. Most engines broke down within the first 6 months itself.
- 3) We found that the cost of spare parts were so high that to revive the broken down engines we had to spend between Rs. 5,000/- and Rs. 7,000/- and that too within a few months' operations. This is like asking Maruthi Car owners to spend Rs. 20,000/-, or Rs. 30,000/- in the first year of operation.
- 4) Most of us could not afford these repairs and the company was unwilling to treat these repairs as guarantee repairs. Even the guarantee provision was completely withdrawn by the Indian dealer of Johnson motors !
- 5) Very few of us could afford these repairs and we approached banks and other institutions to lend us money for the repairs. But seeing that the investment could go down the drain because of the failure of Johnson motors, banks refused to advance us further loans for repairs.
- 6) Even for those who preferred to get the motors repaired even at high costs it became impossible to do so in view of the non-availability of spare parts. Even the organisations like Matsyafed and SIFFS which supplied these motors do not have spare parts

as the Johnson dealer, M/s. Khemka Spares & Accessories Ltd. has not made proper arrangement for spare parts supply. Every body expresses their helplessness saying that M/s. Khemka Spares & Accessories Ltd. are no more in the field and cannot be even contacted for spares.

- 7) We have brought our plight to the notice of the Johnson Company representatives when they visited us months back. But so far nothing has been done by them also.

The net result of all this is as follows :

- 1) Over 75% of the Johnson motors are not in operation as the fishermen cannot repair for lack of finance as well as spare parts.
- 2) The motors in operation are kept running by fishermen after enormous maintenance costs which put them in the same financial difficulty as those who have stopped using Johnson motors.
- 3) All Johnson motor owners have huge debts to banks and money lenders which they are unable to pay and the interest charges are mounting.
- 4) Banks have started hounding the Johnson motor owner for loan repayment and lawyer notices have been sent.
- 5) The families of the few hundred Johnson motor owners are in dire straits unable to go fishing without a proper motor. Hunger and action by banks are staring in their faces.

In view of the above serious situation we are making the following demands to the Government of Kerala :

- 1) The Government should immediately take action against the Johnson company and their Indian dealer M/s Khemka Spares & Accessories Ltd. and seek compensation from them for the huge losses sustained by the fishermen.

- 2) The Government should ask the banks and financial institutions to stop legal action and harassment of Johnson Motor owners.
 - 3) The Government should declare a moratorium on interest payment by Johnson motor owners till an honourable settlement of the whole matter is made.
 - 4) The Government should make a thorough enquiry into the import and sale of an unsuitable motor like the Johnson motor so that similar exploitation of fishermen does not take place in future.
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SUMMARY OF OTHER SHARING SESSIONS

Felix N. Sugirtharaj on "Problems of building-up a fishworkers' Union in T. N."

The Association of the Rural Poor (ARP) is a community organisation group working among landless agricultural labourers in Chingelpet district from 1974 onwards. Since then it has been instrumental in the founding of an agricultural workers union with a 3000-strong membership.

In 1983 some fishworkers contacted the ARP who responded by sending some of its staff to conduct adult education classes, cultural and leadership development programmes. The work slowly spread to about 30 villages in Chingelpet district where village-level sangams were formed. Eventually, this type of work was carried on in the neighbouring South Arcot district. In 1985 a mass meeting of fishworkers was organised when it was decided to call itself a union and the same was registered under the name of 'Bay of Bengal Fishermen's Union'.

There are constraints placed on the people working as animators. Eventually the leadership roles will have to be assumed by the fishworkers themselves.

Since voluntary organisations are required by law to register as a society and because of their status as recipients of foreign funds, they are not in a position to support or openly identify with trade unions. Some fishworkers feel that their unions will collapse if voluntary agencies withdraw their support.

Another problem is the question of the impact of the work. In spite of all the conscientization work, people have not been able to break away from the clutches of the middlemen and money-lenders. Structures have remained unchanged, rather they have been adapted to the situation, and still hold the poor to ransom. Many fishworkers, even if they turn to prawn-fishing, find it difficult to repay their debts. One definite impediment to unionisation is the frustration one

feels at the strangle-hold of subtle exploitative relations in rural India.

Furthermore, leaders of the union have confined themselves to immediate and short-term goals. They have launched agitations for small objectives such as drinking water, drainage, etc. while they have not made attempts to gather as a force on a larger platform, say the state-level, and on larger issues. It appears then that their perspective and perception of the struggle is rather limited. Very often, it appears, the union leadership is not able to carry on the agenda of struggle it has adopted for itself. This is mainly due to power-struggles within the unions.

This presentation by Felix Sugirtharaj sparked off a lively debate on the role of voluntary agencies in promoting genuine people's movements. Some of the questions that were part of the discussions were :

- (a) How long can action groups support the functions of a union ?
- (b) Can action groups ever play a positive role in the formation of a union ?
- (c) Should the animators working in the action groups leave them completely and join the unions ?
- (d) Should there be a neat compartmentalisation of social action groups and unions, who will carry on the task of network building ?

While these questions were not immediately answered it was the general feeling of the participants that action groups and development activists, consciously or otherwise promote a style of life and work that is not in consonance to the struggles of the mass. This may be pointed out as an obstacle to the process of mobilisation. As long as foreign funds corrupted these organisations and individuals, their demands and struggles were bound to remain stereo-typed and localised. Added to this was the problem of inter-group rivalry. That makes it difficult to raise people's issues at the state or national levels.

Christy on "problems of unionisation in Nagapattanam, Tamilnadu."

We were a small group of social activists working among fishworkers. Attempts to bring the fishworkers in a union have not borne fruit for various reasons. One of the primary reasons is the resistance of the fishworkers themselves. They are caught in the complex socio-cultural and economic pattern of village life and they see no way out of it for the present.

Many of the boat-owners are merchants, money-lenders and petty traders on whom the poor fisherfolk are dependent. People are afraid of unionising for fear of incurring the wrath of this class from whom they borrow money and/or take provisions on credit. The fisherfolk has no other way to live since fishing is a seasonal activity.

Another problem is the cultural factor. Many of the boat-owners and workers are related to each other. Here they see the 'advantage' of sticking together but they forget that it is always to the advantage of the owners. Like their rich cousins, the fishworkers also aspire to be owners. There are instances when five or six people have pooled their resources to buy mechanised craft.

Thus, in this area, the question of unionisation on the basis of real initiatives are set side.

It is hoped that one day people will realise their misguided course of action and unite to fight the exploitative structures.

One of the key issues raised from this presentation for the continued discussion of the Forum is the question of solidarity within the Movement. Here is an example of one group of fishworkers, having acquired surplus, aspiring to be owners. In this light, the question open to the NFF, and others engaged in mobilising people, is: "What kind of democratic norms can we devise to avoid this kind of class polarisation within the Movement"?

Lucas on "Problems of unionisation", Kanyakumari

The situation in Kanyakumari is quite different from other parts of T. N. Fisherfolk who hail from different religious communities are strongly bound together in their communities. There is also the caste factor. Kanyakumari is noted for its recurring communal tensions owing to the strong presence of the RSS there. So the slightest conflict even in the other sectors of the society is often attributed to the fishworkers who are made scapegoats. Christian and Hindu fishworkers are found in opposing camps during these times. This can be attributed to the communal interests.

Another factor is the high number of action groups. Each of them has its own trade union front and recent experiences have shown that a common agenda has been elusive. However their role is relevant and welcome provided they can sink their differences.

Recently different organisations of fishworkers engaged themselves in a leaflet campaign over the issue of a common banner to press the government for some demands in the wake of an accident at sea. The atmosphere is vitiated with different political parties joining the fray and backing up various fishworkers groups. Even the authorities of the District are confused and have declared that while they wish to help the fishworkers, they cannot as long as they are not united in their efforts.

Mr. Anthony Fernando on "Fishermen in Tirunelveli and Chidambaranar Districts in Tamil Nadu"

The work in this area is still in the stages of infancy. No concrete association has yet been formed. There is a 60,000-strong fisherfolk community, the majority of them belonging to the Christian community. Though Christians for centuries, they consider themselves to be from the backward community and claim to be Paravas (caste). Socially and politically they are marginalised and economically they are weak. The average income of a fishermen is about Rs. 275 per month.

In this coastal belt there are about 26 co-operative societies which were primarily opened for the welfare of the fisherfolk. But they are either controlled by traders and middlemen or are shut down due to lack of funds.

One of the problems in the region is the constant tension between the traditional fishworkers and the mechanised boat owners. The traditional fishworkers who lose their craft and nets during times of confrontation with the boatowners are not compensated in any manner.

A recent phenomenon is the change in attitude of the traditional fishworkers. At one time they were totally opposed to the mechanisation of boats. But today more and more traditional fishworkers themselves are purchasing outboard and inboard motor engines for their country craft.

A. J. Vijayan on 'The issues in the Fishworkers' struggle and the developments and problems in the Movement'.

Kerala, which had many district level independent unions, is now moving towards forming one state-level union. This is one of the fundamental changes that has been effected in the structure of the Kerala Swatantra Matsya Thozhilali Federation (KSMTF). Membership campaign is organised very systematically.

There have occurred some changes in the focus of demands. In the early days of the struggle the major focus has been on the demand for banning of fishing in the monsoon season. While this is still part of the total struggle, the major focus now is 'sea to the fishworkers', more or less along the lines of the demand "land to the tiller". The Union, in its charter of demands, has called for a legislation asking for the ownership of fishing craft and implements to be exclusively vested in the hands of the actual sea-going fisherfolk. Among the demands is the demand for the proper implementation of social welfare measures like old age pension. This provision is already there for those above 60 years of age. But its implementation is haphazard and tardy. One fresh demand is the granting of a lumpsum grant to children of fishworkers. This, though new to fishworkers, is already given to those belonging to the scheduled castes.

The village fishermen's welfare societies, which were 226 in number have now been re-vamped into 81 co-operative societies mostly with the motive of availing the resources that were available with the NCDC. Though this is a welcome step for the positive involvement of the fishworkers, it has its aberrations. The co-op societies have become arenas of power struggle by the political factions edging out the actual needs of fishworkers. Therefore one of the tasks and demands of the Kerala Swatantra Matsya Thozhilali Federation KSMTF is to free the co-operative societies from the clutches of the political power lobbies and to make them truly independent with mass representation of fishworkers, and to hold free elections based on membership.

Other aspects in the struggle of fishworkers in Kerala include the problems of women in the fish-processing industry. So far the union has not been able to address this issue in a concrete way. So is the case of the cycle-load fishsellers. Efforts are being made to bring these two sections of people into the ambit of the unionisation process.

The Union has not been able to extend its work to all the maritime districts of Kerala due to various factors. Some of them are : lack of personnel, religious differences and differences in issues. Trichur, a strong-hold of the RSS-Hindu combine and Malappuram, a Muslim belt have not come into the fold of the Union.

Kerala too has its share of problems with action groups. Some action groups have fishworkers' interest groups but many do not have. Some collaborate while others do not. The problem is in the fundamental differences of perception. While the Union is an organisation with political action as its main agenda, the action groups shy away from this and narrow down their scope to mere development and economic activities.

In 1985, and later, KSMTF joined with other left Trade Unions for joint action. Also in 1985, it launched a fortnightly of its own - *Alakal* (Waves).

NATIONAL FISHERMEN'S FORUM

Decisions of the General Body meeting of 13th December, 1987

The General Body unanimously re-elected Thomas Kocherry and Pranab Kumar Roy as Chairperson and General Secretary respectively. The members of the newly-elected Executive Committee are : Matanhy Saldanha, Pascoal Diaz, Ms. M. D'Souza, Joychan Antony, Abdul Rassik, Ms. Mercy Alexander, V. Muthuvel, Mariadasan, Ms. Rani, Kishore Kumar, and Jaganadha Rao.

The General Body also ratified the decision that the NFF be part of the militant trade unions of India. But the NFF should also seek for greater collaboration with the leftist trade unions and the National Campaign Committee.

The General Body calls upon all its state units to get themselves registered under the Indian Trade Union Act of 1926 within the next three months. If the NFF is to have any bargaining capacity with other trade unions it has to show itself in the light of a collective body of registered trade unions and not as a group of individuals. Therefore the request to all trade unions to begin the process of registration at the state levels without any further delay.

Towards the end of the year the NFF will organise a MARCH TO KANYAKUMARI, the southern tip of India. 'PROTECT OUR WATERS FOR FISH AND FISHWORKERS' will be the slogan of this long march. Representatives from all fishing villages are requested to start their marches by the beginning of December and plan to reach Kanya kumari by the end of that month. Though the march is organised under the banner of the NFF, all units are requested to mobilise maximum support of other like-minded unions and groups. The final decision on this will be taken by the Executive Committee scheduled to meet on 3rd July, 1988 at Thirumalai Ashram, Chunkakadi, near Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Ajoy Choudhari, Freelance journalist from Calcutta and supporter of the West Bengal Fishermen's Union.

Abdul Rassik, President of the Calicut District Committee and Vice President of the State Committee of the Kerala Swantantra Matsya Thozilali Federation (KSMTF).

Andrew A., fishworker, author of numerous articles on the problems of fishworkers and fisheries. Secretary of the Quilon District Committee and member of the General Council of the KSMTF.

Antony Ferando G., an advocate actively involved among fisherfolk in Tuticorin, TN.

Anton Gomes G., works among the fishworkers in Maharashtra.

Balachandran D., a fishworker from the Pulicat lake region in Tamil Nadu.

Bovi.S H., an activist fighting pollution in Karnataka

Chandra Mohan, Field Officer of a non-governmental organisation working among the fisherfolk of the Pulicat lake region in Tamil Nadu.

Christy P., actively involved among the fisherfolk in Nagapattanam, Tamil Nadu.

Dominic George, Director of the ISI-Training Centre, Bangalore and a member of the State Council of the KSMTF.

Dewaguppa Burki, a fishworker actively involved in the fight against pollution in Karnataka.

Diaz P., actively involved in the struggles of the fishworkers in Goa.

David S., actively working among fishworkers in Kanyakumari.

Ethiraj, a fishworker from the Pulicat lake region in TN.

Elsamma Prayikalam, lawyer from Kerala actively involved with the litigations appearing on behalf of the fishworkers.

Felix N. Sugirtharaj, staff of the Association for Rural Poor and a supporter of the Bay of Bengal Fishermen's Union.

Foranes Perura, a fishworker and leader of the All Goa Fishworkers Union (AGFU).

Hiremath S.R., a scientist and activist fighting pollution of the Tungabhadra river in Karnataka.

Haripada Das, a fishworker and an active member of the West Bengal Fishermen's Union (WBFU).

Jaya, activist from Orissa.

Jaganadha Rao, member of the National Committee of the NFF and actively involved in the Co-operative movement in Ganjam District, Orissa.

James Culas, Member of the General Council of the KSMTF and actively involved in education and struggles of fishworkers.

Joyachen Antony, President of the KSMTF and member of the Executive Committee of the NFF.

Jerome J., General Secretary of the KSMTF and member of the National Council of the NFF.

Jesuratnam, lawyer and woman-activist in the fishworkers' struggles in Tamil Nadu.

Jayaraju, activist from Orissa.

Kalidas Naik, fishworker and an active member of AGFU.

Kaleyya Nanda, fishworker actively working among the fisherfolk.

Kumar S. De, fishworker and an active member of the WBFU.

Lal Koilparambil, Secretary, Alleppy District Committee, member of National Council of the NFF and member of the Executive Committee of the KSMTF.

Lucas A., chief organiser of the Fishermen's Co-operative societies in Kanyakumari district.

Matanhy Saldanha, Secretary of the AGFU, member of the Co-ordination Committee of Trade Unions in Goa ; first Chairperson of the NFF and member of the Executive Committee.

Mahalingam, fishworker from the Pulicat lake region in Tamil Nadu.

Melkies, fishworker from the Pulicat lake region, Tamil Nadu.

Muthuvel V., Secretary of the BBFU and Convenor of the Ad-hoc Committee of the Tamil Nadu Fishermen's Federation (TFF).

Mariadasan, President of the South Indian Federation of Fishermen's Societies (SIFFS) and member of the National Council of the NFF.

Murugesan V., actively involved among fishworkers in Pondicherry.

Marslin Louis G., fishworker and activist from Tamil Nadu.

Maria Susai, organiser and Director of an NGO, working among fisherfolk in Tamil Nadu.

Nalini Naik, researcher and scientist, Indian representative to the International Collective of Fishworkers' Supporters and founder-member of the Programme for Community Organisation, Trivandrum.

Narasinghu, fishworker from the Pulicat lake region, Tamil Nadu.

Nageswara Rao M., lawyer by profession, actively involved on behalf of the fishworkers in the legal battles in Orissa.

Pranab Kumar Roy, teacher by profession and General Secretary of the NFF.

Peter T., works among the inland fisherfolk in Tamil Nadu.

Parimal Das, fishworker-activist from West Bengal.

Patricia Kuruvinakunnel, actively involved among fishworkers in Kerala.

Partha Dutta, fishworker and an active worker of the WBFU.

Rajendran, a fishworker actively involved among the fisher folk in Nagapattanam, Tamil Nadu.

Raja G., Scientist and developer of artificial reefs ; hails from Madras.

Raj, a fishworker from the Pulicat lake region.

Ramesh Chandra Das, fishworker and active leader of the WBFU.

Rajashekar, a fishworker from the Pulicat lake region.

Ravi P., an activist of the Bay of Bengal Fishermen's Union (TN).

Sekar, a fishworker from Pulicat.

Sunagur K.M., fishworker-activist from Karnataka.

Sukharanjan Das., a fishworker and activist of the WBFU.

Simon Raj G., a fishworker from Tamil Nadu.

Subhayan G., an activist from Tamil Nadu.

Shyamal Dey, a fishworker and activist of the WBFU.

Thankappan Achari, a fisheries scientist now in charge of the Fisheries Research Cell of the PCO, Trivandrum ; formerly Special Officer in the Fisheries Department of the Government of Kerala.

Tilar, an organiser of the fish marketing societies in Quilon, Kerala.

Thomas Kocherry, Chairperson of the NFF ; lawyer specialised in fishing regulations appearing on behalf of fishworkers.

Vincent A., a fishworker from Tamil Nadu.

Vimala, activist from Tamil Nadu.

Vijayan A.J., member of the Executive Committee of the KSMTF and Editor of 'Alakal' (Waves).

Vishwa Priya, Delhi-based journalist who has written numerous articles on the struggles of fishworkers.

Viswanath Naik, fishworker and active member of the AGFU.

Vikraman Nair, Chief Sub-Editor of Ananda Bazar Patrika, Calcutta; has published many articles on the struggles of fishworkers.

William Lourdayyan, lawyer-activist from Tamil Nadu.

Yesoda Jiban Das, fishworker and active member of the WBFU.

