



Indian Fisheries - A Retrospect

Part II. Developmental Efforts

Dr. T. K. Govindan

Scientist S-3, Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Cochin-682 029.

Fishing was carried on in India as an occupation for subsistence just like agriculture with whatever crude implements available at hand from time immemorial from both marine and inland sources. The fish caught used to be consumed in areas adjoining the landing centres and when the catches were sufficiently large, they used to be dried as such or after salting for future use. In course of time some exports of such preserved fish to our neighbouring countries also picked up. All such activities were in the hands of private individuals with meagre financial and poor educational background and neither the central nor the provincial governments took any interest or initiative for encouraging them. By about the middle of the last century several dams were built across the rivers especially in south India and Sir Arthur Cotton who pioneered these projects alerted the Government of India that the fishery resources of both riverine and marine origin of the locality might be affected adversely by them. Dr. Francis Day was therefore detailed to look into the matter

and he submitted his report to the Government in 1873 concerning both the fresh water and marine fisheries of India and Burma, for conservation of which he recommended urgent legislation.

Accordingly, the Government of India enacted the Indian Fisheries Act (Act IV of 1897), which besides prohibiting dynamiting and poisoning of waters for killing fish, empowered the provincial governments to frame rules for regulating use of "fixed engines" (meaning devices like dip nets, stake nets etc.), kind, size and mode of using nets for catching fish, construction of dams and for prohibiting fishing in any specified area for periods not exceeding two years. Dr. Day also recommended grant of duty-free salt for curing fish in fenced enclosures put up for the purpose by the governments. The provincial government of Madras appointed Sir F. A. Nicholson in 1905 to study their fishing industry, based on whose report a department of fisheries was established in 1907 under his honorary directorship. This department

carried out some pioneering work especially with regard to preservation of fish by salting and drying, procedures for which were laid down and proportions of salt to be used for each variety of fish were fixed and recommended.

Sir K. G. Gupta was entrusted with the task of investigating into the fisheries of Bangal (which included the present Bengla Desh, Bihar and Orissa) in 1906, on completion of which he submitted a report two years later recommending artificial propagation and short closed seasons as protective measures for fresh water fisheries and elaborate exploration of the Bay of Bengal for development of marine fisheries. A Fisheries Commissioner and a European Expert were accordingly appointed to carry out explorations in the Bay of Bengal and on the hilsa fishery in the fresh water resources. The department of fisheries which had been formed was abolished in 1923; but was revived in 1942 on the advice of an expert from the Madras fisheries department with a view to conserving existing resources, improving yields from fresh water sources and organising fish trade under war conditions.

Mr. H. W. Lucas investigated the fisheries of the Bombay Province in 1908-10, the only important out-come of which was supply of duty-free salt for curing fish. Dr. H. T. Sorley made a further study of the fisheries of the province in 1931, on whose recommendation a Fisheries Officer was added to the Industries Department to assist the fish curing industry and introduce mechanised crafts both for fishing and transport of fish. Dr. H. S. Dunsford studied the problems of fisheries of the Punjab Province in 1911 and recomm-

ended artificial propagation and prevention of wasteful destruction. A Fisheries Department was established in the province in 1912, which was brought under a Fisheries Warden under the Directorate of Agriculture in 1932. Similarly, reports on the fisheries of the United Provinces and Baroda were prepared and published by Mr. E. H. H. Edey in 1923 and Mr. James Hornell in 1930 respectively.

However, it was the inadequate supply of good quality fish to the Allied Army personnel during the second world war that acted as an eye-opener to the then Government of India for getting directly involved in research, development and conservation of the fishery resources of the country. An immediate consequence of this involvement was the initiation of some fishery research schemes under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research which had already been established as a registered society in 1929. A Fish Sub-committee of a Policy Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries appointed by the Government of India recommended in 1945 a comprehensive programme of initiation and coordination of research, conservation, development and exploitation of fisheries after making a careful study of the existing conditions. The committee also made pointed reference to the necessity for improving the socio-economic conditions of the fishermen, providing modern crafts and tackle and organising fish trade on proper lines, for which they recommended setting up of a central organisation, which could also locate suitable fishing grounds by detailed exploratory surveys and provide suitable harbour and transport facilities. Other constructive suggestions of the committee included

organisation of cooperative societies for disposal of catches, supply of materials required for construction of boats and fishing accessories and good quality salt at cheap rates for preserving the fish.

A Fisheries Development Adviser was soon appointed by the Government of India to help the provinces in drawing up fisheries development schemes, financial assistances for which were provided under its "grow more food" campaign. The Adviser has recently been re-designated as Commissioner and a number of Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners and other paraphernalia added to cope up with the increased work load under the successive five year plans.

One of the most important developments in the fishing industry in the world over during the past century and a quarter has been the application of power for propelling the fishing crafts. It was steam trawlers that were employed for the purpose in the early years. In India, the first ever attempt recorded in the matter of mechanised fishing was in the year 1900 by a small steam trawler in Bombay waters. Subsequently, sporadic power trawling was attempted in 1902, 1906, 1907, 1913, 1920, 1924 and 1927 in south Indian waters, in 1908 and 1923 in Bombay waters; and in the northern portion of the Bay of Bengal in 1908. These explorations were carried out partly by Government and partly by private agencies. Some of the vessels which served as mine-sweepers during the second world war were converted into fishing trawlers after the war and used for such exploratory work.

These isolated experiments could not yield any tangible results and hence the Government of India established the Off Shore Fishing Station (present Exploratory Fisheries Project) at Bombay in 1947 based on the report of the Policy Committee on Agriculture submitted two years earlier to carry out systematic explorations of the deep sea and chart out areas of availability of various types of fishes. This institution soon opened regional bases at all important fishing centres on both west and east coasts in order to extend its activities and assist the industry throughout the country.

The establishment of the Indo-Norwegian Project (present Integrated Fisheries Project) at Quilon in Kerala in 1952 was another milestone in the development of Indian fisheries on modern lines in so far as it gave a lead in each and every aspect of the subject right from design and construction of mechanised boats, design and fabrication of different types of nets and their operation from mechanised boats, through handling and preservation by modern methods of refrigeration and freezing, ice manufacture, internal distribution and marketing of the fish and improving the socio-economic conditions of the fishermen community.

In the period immediately following the country's independence, research activities in fisheries were carried on in a very limited way by the Central Fisheries Stations (both Marine and Inland) under the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, some of the Provincial/State Fisheries Departments (like those of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Maharashtra), Marine Survey of

India, Zoological Survey of India, the Zoology Departments of some of the oldest Universities (like Calcutta and Madras) and the Biological laboratories of some of the well established colleges. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research acted as the coordinating body in such activities and provided financial assistance. At present investigations on fisheries are carried on in all the states of the country.

Massive developments of the existing institutions besides establishment of new ones in subsequent years in the Central Sector like the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (1957), Central Institute of Fisheries Education (1961), Central Institute of Fisheries, Nautical and Engineering Training (1960) as parts of the developmental programmes under the successive five year plans provided the required fillip to the research and development efforts in the field of fisheries in the country. The nett result of all these has been that India has now established itself in the fisheries map of the world as the 7th in rank in the matter of fish production and first in prawn production. Her foreign exchange earnings by way of exports of processed fishery products have touched a record figure of Rs. 361 crores in 1982-83. With a mechanised fishing fleet of about 19,000 belonging to various size ranges and 1.4 lakhs of country crafts and catamarans in the marine sector alone, India's annual fish catches are of the order of 2.4 million metric tonnes. With all the infra-structural facilities provided in the matters of harvesting and post-harvest technologies of fish, the country can legitimately aspire for a much brighter future in its fishery industry in the years to come. ○

ORIENT TO ORIENT

NEW TOYO SEAFOODS COMPANY LTD.

IMPORT

- FROZEN SHRIMPS
- LOBSTER HEAD
- FROG LEGS
- OTHER MARINE PRODUCTS

EXPORT

- FISHING TRAWLERS
- FREEZING PLANTS
- ALL KINDS OF FISHING
GEARS AND EQUIPMENTS

OFFER

ALL TECHNICAL KNOW-HOW

Address :

ISHIKAWA BLDG.,
20-1, 2 Chome,
Misaki-cho - Chiyoda - ku
TOKYO, JAPAN-

Telephone : Cable Address :
264-4373 "Newseafood Tokyo"
262-4408 or
402-7830 Res: "Banerji Tokyo"
Telex: Newfood J 25220