

Chapter 11

A Theoretical Perspective Towards Social Inclusion of Fisher Community in Chennai Region, Tamil Nadu, India

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ABSTRACT

India is the world's fourth largest fishing nation, accounting for over 4.39% of the global fisheries. The country with the long coastline of 8,118 km has an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) for the fisher folks who constitute nearly 0.6% of the total population. The fisheries sector of India is immensely contributing to the economy of the country. It contributes to the national income, exports, food and nutritional security, and in employment generation. India being a sub-continent surrounded on the three sides with waters has a greater chance for fishing and its allied activities. Fishing communities are socially, economically, and educationally disadvantaged. This chapter will highlight the effort of the state governmental initiatives to enhance social inclusion of fishermen community.

INTRODUCTION

Social inclusion can be understood as the process of improving the terms by which individuals and groups take part in society. In framing social policy, initially the focus was primarily on getting people out of poverty, but over time a more multidimensional approach has developed, addressing various forms of discrimination and focusing on such issues as socio-economic condition, health, education, cultural

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and traditional development of the vulnerable section of the society. India, with a long coastline of more than 7,500 kilometers, ranks seventh in fish-production among the marine nations of the world. The total annual fish production is about 2.3 million tons. The fisheries resources vary vastly between east and west coast of the Indian Peninsula. The east coast with a coastline of 2,500 kilometers, contributes about one quarter of the total marine fish landings. Despite the introduction of mechanized fishing boat of varying size during the several plan periods, on the east coast, the bulk of the catches (amount to more than 60 per cent) come only from fishing crafts.

The overall Economic development of the State playing a predominant role in its economic activity by its contribution to direct and indirect employment for more than 11 lakh fishers, contributing food security to a considerable portion of population and earning substantial revenue, especially from foreign exchange. Tamil Nadu State, with its second longest coastline in the country covering 1,076 km in 13 coastal Districts consist of 4 coastal Zones viz., Coromandel Coast, Palk Bay, Gulf of Mannar and West Coast. The continental shelf area of the State is 41,412 sq. km (Inshore area -16,058 sq. km., Offshore area-7,197 sq.km and deep sea -18,157 sq. km). Tamil Nadu ranks 5th in total fish production of the country and the total fish production of the State during 2014-15 is 6.97 lakh tons. (from marine resources-4.57 lakh tons and freshwater and brackish water resources -2.40 lakh tons). Tamil Nadu is one among the leading exporter of seafood with the export of marine products of 93,477 MT and earned a foreign exchange of Rupees. 5,308.17crores during 2014-15. The fisheries sector has contributed 0.7 percent of the total Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) of the State.

Tamil Nadu State with the second longest coastline in the country has a coastal length of 1,076 km along the 13 coastal Districts. The marine fisher population in Tamil Nadu is 9.85 lakh, living in 608 fishing villages. The fishery resources of the inshore waters of 1,016 km length of the East coast and 60 km length of the West coast are on the threshold of maximum exploitation, whereas the offshore and deep sea resources are yet to be exploited to its optimum levels. The marine fish production of the State is presently estimated at 4.72 lakh tons.

Fishery resources of Tamil Nadu are categorized as Marine, Inland and Brackish water resources. The Total fish production of Tamil Nadu during 2016-17 is estimated as 6.69 lakh tons. Tamil Nadu ranks 4th in total fish production of the country, besides exporting marine products of 79,336 MT and earning a foreign exchange of Rupees. 3,914.39crores during 2016-17. About 13 tons of fishes were harvested and earned gross revenue of Rs.35 lakhs. Although technological advances have helped to enhance fish production, there are problems of decline in per capita production, disguised unemployment and growing sectoral inequity disturbing the socio economic framework of the coastal villages.

Marine fishing community, bound to the coastal transects of the country are characterized as one of the least-developed sector almost akin to the tribes. One of the reasons is increase in intermediaries in the channels of distribution marginalizing the producers. Fisheries sector earnings are characterized by uncertainties, leading to indebtedness of the fisher folk to non-institutional agencies in the absence of institutional setup, forcing them to apportion a large part of their income for debt servicing. The potential for growth in primary sector is enormous. Indian economy has been registering fast growth; however, there is significant decline in the share of GDP contribution of agriculture sector from 25 per cent in 1999-2000 to 18 per cent in 2005-06 with the focus shifting to manufacturing, trade and other sectors. Marine fishing community, bound to the coastal transects of the country is characterized as one of the least-developed sector in terms of low level of socio economic status. This is paradoxical in the context of increasing contribution of fisheries sector to forex earnings (Rupees. 8,363.53crores in 2006-07) and

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