CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY

AND CONCLUSION
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Salt is the most indispensable commodity for humans. Even extreme ascetics do not reject gift of salt (Mhamai 2000: 11). This chapter includes a summary of the analysis of the various Mitagars of Goa which are presented in the substantive chapters from three to seven. It also includes some important conclusions and suggestions made by the researcher.

India has attained a unique position in the world in the production of salt. Being a developing country, India not only stands third in the entire world in salt production but it is also one of the important countries in Asia and Far East producing salt mainly by solar evaporation method. The extensive coastline along the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal facilitate an ideal climate and topography for the solar evaporation of salt in India. The traditional method of solar salt extraction has attracted a large number of labour forces in India. These laborers are commonly known as salt pan workers (Souza 2005: 132).

Apart from the decline of traditional sectors like salt, the territory of Goa has experienced overall socio-economic development for over two decades since the end of Portuguese colonial rule. Such a development was undoubtedly added to the economic prosperity of Goa's population in no small measure. However its lopsided character has led to regional disparities. While the coastal talukas of Tisvadi, Bardez, Mormugao and Salcette have been the largest beneficiaries of economic development, the interior or remote talukas such as Sattari, Sanguem, Quepem and Canacona situated in the foothills range of the Sahaydhrs have been comparatively at a lower level of development (Angle 1983: 3).
Goa’s salt industry, which had been the major exporter of salt to the rest of India and even foreign countries, is declining today and could go into extinction unless the Government takes it upon itself and does something to alleviate the problems faced by the handful of existing salt manufacturers. It was difficult for the researcher to get information on the salt makers of Goa since not many studies have been done on the salt makers of Goa due to this the nuances of the community cannot be captured and has to be done with bits and pieces of secondary work.

Records from earlier decades show that Goa’s salt pans were located in 21 villages in four coastal talukas or sub-districts. However, the salt-industry in Goa declined after Liberation (the end of Portuguese rule in 1961), due to a number of factors. These include the breaching of bunds (embankments that have protected the fields from being inundated with undesirable brackish water), the growth of export-oriented pisciculture, land-reclamation, real-estate developments, labour shortage and water pollution caused due to the growth of industries in some salt-farming areas.

As a result, the number of villages producing salt has declined; so has the number of salt pans. Resultantantly, salt-production fell drastically in Goa. This fall in the number of salt pans and salt-production led to a steady decline of salt-makers in Goa, whom the researcher conceptualises as ‘mitagars’.

The negative impacts notwithstanding, the mitagars of villages such as Agarvaddo in Pernem; Nerul, Arpora, and Calangute in Bardez; Santacruz, Goa Velha, Merces and Batim in Tisvadi, and Cavellosim in Salcette have been striving hard to keep their industry alive. Needless to say, organic salt-production is environmentally clean, non-polluting, low-capital, labour intensive, and an employment-generating rural economic activity which needs to be encouraged.
Goa, with its long coast line and many creeks with large flat fields adjacent to them, its warm climate and perennial soft breezes, and its favorable soil conditions and relative humidity, makes it an ideal place for a large scale salt industry. Goa is in every respect advantageously situated for salt production and, if developed, this industry will meet the requirements of all the adjoining areas besides facilitating the setting up of salt-based chemical industries. For that, it has to draw attention plans to reclaim at least some salt pans. It should with the co-operation of departments concerned, undertake immediate desilting and dredging operations in the surrounding areas of the pans to clear the clogged network of feeder canals, commission a study on pollution, besides providing technical help to salt pan owners to pump out water from flooded pans.

The primary purpose of the present study was to appraise the position of Mitagars in Goa. Therefore, the study was based on the fieldwork in the salt producing villages of Goa. The aim was to discern the forces of change in different salt making villages.

The findings of the study indicate that there are no records maintained by government authorities in Goa about the estimates of the present day salt production in Goa. Hence, the contribution of the Goan salt industry cannot be ascertained with precision. The issue regarding the changing life situations of Mitagars and saltpans have not been taken up in The Goa Assembly although salt was a prominent industry once upon a time.

Most importantly, the Government must formulate a State Salt Policy in line with the National Salt Policy before this industry of the spice of life reaches a point of no return.
The salt makers of Goa differ from other occupational communities because of certain peculiarities and the mode of production. The Bhandaris who are the salt makers of Arpora are not salt-makers by caste but by choice. Persons irrespective of their caste in Goa, pursue salt-making as their occupation.

In Goa, salt makers have not adapted to modern techniques of salt production as compared to salt-makers of other states in India. Local officials and experts should be appointed to educate the Mitagars on improved techniques of salt production.

The first major change was the Portuguese intervention which had been a consequence of forced Christianization of people of the island of Goa in which some rituals have disappeared and new ones have emerged in its place.

In Goa, the tenants have become the owners (patraos) of the salt-pans, and more and more people are buying the salt pans for various other purposes like fishing and using them for various commercial purposes. Previously, young women from salt-producing families used to get married in the village itself since they were needed in the salt work, but since these jobs are done by the migrant workers, the girls now have started moving out of the village via marriage, although they get married within the same caste, but often to a slightly higher caste.

Overall, this shows that though certain social aspects of the salt making community are changing, the techniques of salt production have remained the same. This shows that from the social side the society is shifting from a feudal colonial to a capitalistic type of society, but on the technical side it is yet to progress. So there is a lapse between the technical and the social.

Goa's salt pans and the salt industry are shrinking, resulting in the further dwindling in the number of salt makers in Goa. Today only a few salt makers exist in Goa. Majority of the younger generation is interested in occupational mobility. The
youngsters are now seeking white collar jobs. Children of salt pan owners are also not interested in continuing their family occupation since the jobs in the salt pans are more laborious and backbreaking and seasonal in nature, besides offering a lower social status.

Salt pan owners and manufacturers need to be familiarized with new methods. The unemployed youth could be made aware of these opportunities by setting up demonstration camps. This would go a long way in breathing new life into this industry.

The change in the traditional occupation of salt farming in Goa is due to several factors, the main among them are (1) The lack of migrant workers who have slowly stopped coming to Goa (2) The breaking of the embankments and the sluice gates and the resulting neglect by the government (3) The switch over of the salt pans to real estate and (4) Tourism.

The salt making community of Goa is a very important community since this industry will be a boon to the people of Goa and it will provide profitable employment to a good section of its population. It will also be a boon to the people of India for it will tap a very rich and unlimited source of raw materials which will provide them with much needed chemicals and raw materials required for their industries and will earn a lot of foreign exchange.

The Goan society provides, in the Indian setting, a unique case to illustrate change which a society exhibits when brought in contact with foreign culture. Although the Goan society experienced qualitative transformation during the Portuguese rule, it did not basically replace the traditional society, nor did it transform itself into a full fledged modern society. It manifested a peculiar blend of modern and traditional systems. The community of Mitagars in Goa exhibits this blend. The
methods used in salt farming are traditional; the marketing procedures are in between traditional and modern.

The unique characteristic of this industry is the advantage of more employment opportunity in less investment and the disadvantage is the distance between the production and consumption centers. Hence, the transportation cost is much more than the salt price in most of the cases. Being a cheap commodity, salt is transported only by rail and roadways are more suitable for transportation rather than sea and airways. But in Goa it is usually transported on head or on bicycles or by road. The salt pans in Goa are not connected with railways and ports and they are almost depending upon roadways which are more costly than rail. It may be noted that practically it is impossible to bring railway line in each and every saltpan.

Due to the nature of work, these saltpans are located in remote corners where there are no transportation, communication, educational and medical facilities and no other basic amenities like housing, potable drinking water, electricity, shipping etc. Further qualified and efficient people are hesitating to come and work in this atmosphere of low technology, lesser recognition in their experience and it is laborious work.

Salt makers sell their salt for the whole year while the production is seasonal. As a result in places like Arpora there is a shift in the economic activities wherein people have switched on to newer means of livelihood that is they prefer to take up small jobs in the hotels or the majority of them work as taxi drivers since this kind of employment provide them wages which can sustain them for the whole year.

Till now, no tax is being levied on salt to respect the feelings of Mahatma Gandhi who fought against the British rulers for levying of tax on salt. At this juncture, it is necessary to clarify that the Mahatma wanted only tax-free salt for
edible purpose and not for Industrial purpose. Actually, Government is losing substantial revenue by salt from excise duty without classifying the usage of the salt since the licenses are issued only for the manufacture of salt irrespective of the quality and usage.

This study was an attempt to study the continuity and change among the salt makers of Goa. It sought to throw light on the social aspects of the people involved in the salt industry.

In the course of the study the researcher had noticed that the Mitagar community needs certain interventions to improve their lives. Some of them are mentioned below

1. Present methods of salt manufacture are too crude and traditional methods are inefficient means of production. So modern techniques used in other States like Gujarat, Bombay etc., should be employed.

2. Salt being manufactured by poor farmers and land owners. Loan facilities may be extended before the manufacturing season.

3. Following new Governmental agencies may be established to help mitagars in solving their problems.
   a. Training officers should be appointed to educate producers on improved techniques of production.
   b. Provide finance and subsidies to salt manufacturers
   c. Set up an agency for marketing/co-operatives wherein a competitive price is available.