CHAPTER – V

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF AQUATIC RESOURCE BASE

5.0 SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECT

In the previous chapters we have got a detailed account of huge amount of aquatic resources of the Sundarbans. Actually the Sundarban region has a large reserve of variety of biotic resources among which the aquatic resource is found to be in a dominating position. It includes particularly variety of fish and other aquatic species found in the extensive water area of the Sundarbans. This vast aquatic resource base has a profound impact not only on the society of the surrounding regions but also on the economy of the entire area. Here lies the socio-economic aspects of the aquatic resource base of the Sundarbans. It is revealed in the present chapter.

5.1 SOCIAL ASPECT

In the northern reclaimed part of the Sundarbans ‘Bheri Culture’ is the most important type of utilisation of vast aquatic resource base. Extensive areas of total twenty three villages of North 24 parganas, five from the block of Sandeshkhali I, five from Sandeshkhali II, four from Hasnabad, four from Minakhan and five villages from Haroa have been studied and surveyed very
## DIFFERENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASSES IN NORTHERN SUNDARBANS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Economic Status</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Source of Income</th>
<th>Properties</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Awareness</th>
</tr>
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</table>

**CLASS**

1. BIG LANDOWNERS & BUSINESSMEN
2. MEDIUM LANDOWNERS
3. SMALL LANDOWNERS
4. LANDLESS LABOURERS
intensively as sample villages (Questionnaire in Annexure 4). These villages have been surveyed and the local people have been interviewed in order to get an idea about the social impact of the practice of Bheri Culture for a long period of time. Some relevant primary as well as important information regarding the impact of bheri culture on the village society have come out of this sample survey for twenty three representative villages of five police stations of the district of North 24 parganas. These information can be tabulated as follows:

5.1.1 SOCIAL & ECONOMIC CLASS CONFLICT

As the most important impact of the expansion of bheri culture in northern part of the Sundarbans the formation of four different socio-economic classes into village society must be discussed. The society in the extensive bheri – invaded areas of northern Sundarbans, has been evidently divided into four major classes. This social disintegration as identified by village survey method has become the sole effect of very quick expansion of bheri-culture in these areas.

5.1.1.1 BIG LANDOWNERS AND BUSINESSMEN

As the highest class of the village society, a handful of very rich, landowners and businessmen has emerged during the last 25 years of intensive bheri culture. They are of the highest income group in the villages. They also belong to the higher social classes like Brahmins, Kayastha etc. to medium class. They are mostly the residents of Calcutta and other towns of
the district. They have occupied major part of the extensive low lying paddy fields of these villages from the local landowners **in terms of lease** for a certain period of 2/3 years at a very low rate of annual payment. Then they are converting those plots of land into saline water *bheries* through saline water intrusion from nearby tidal rivers of the Sundarbans. Thus the practice of large scale commercial cultivation of prawns particularly *BAGDA* into these *bheries* has been continued for the last 20-25 years, though the original landowners are still having their names as owners of land in the last available records from Land and Land revenue Department. In this way rich class of outsiders are raising heavy profit through large scale export of prawn to abroad. In return the actual owners of land are getting only a meager amount of annual payment which is quite insufficient to manage their livelihood. This highest class of rural society is at present having various sources of income other than fishery like agriculture, other business (*Textile*, rice mills, big grocery etc.) in different villages. These people are now the owners of the properties like a number of fisheries, agro-land, big shops, two or three storied house, even personal vehicles (*car*, motorcycle etc). They are very strong supporters of *Bheri* culture and desire to capture more land in future to raise much profit. These people do not have awareness of degradation of physical and social environment caused by the increasing practice of *bheri* fishery.
5.1.1.2 MEDIUM LANDOWNERS

Medium landowners belong to the next or second highest class of the village society. This class is also having more than one agricultural land in different villages and also a number of bheries of their own. They are also taking lease of the other’s paddy fields and are converting those lowlying plots into bheries through the intrusion of saline water. They are also raising high profit through large scale practice of bheri fishery like the people of the highest class of the society. But this class is having a few points of differentiation from the highest class which are as follows :-

a) They are enjoying a number of agro-land and fishery lands but they are not usually having any big business as their sources of income.

b) They are mostly the landowners of the locality, very few of them have come from Calcutta and other towns.

c) They belong to intermediate caste and low income group.

d) They are having comparatively less number of properties like fishery land, agro-land and ordinary brick house.

But these people of medium class are also strong supporters of Bheri fishery like those of high class. They are not having any awareness regarding environmental degradation caused by bheries in the locality.
5.1.1.3. SMALL LANDOWNERS

A huge section of the rural population of the surveyed villages are belonging to third socio-economic class as small landowners. They are not only of lower social and economic class but also of lower caste. They are dwelling in the locality for a long period and thus they are the original residents of those villages. They are mostly of scheduled caste and scheduled tribes. They are having only one or a few small agricultural plots and have no alternative other than leasing out their plot of land to the big bheri-owners. A handful of people of the highest class of the village society have gradually captured most of the plots of land from these small landowners and in return the small landowners are being paid with a sum of Rs. 2000/- to Rs. 3000/- for a period of one year of lease. But this amount is found to be very insufficient to them to run their livelihood. Because now they have to buy everything like milk, ghee, butter, fuel, vegetables, paddy etc. which were available to them before large scale encroachment of their agricultural lands by bheri – owners. Some of them are forced to run very small business like biri- processing, packet – making etc. to support their livelihood. In economic status they are belonging to low income group. They are dwelling in earthen houses ill maintained, roughly thatched but permanent huts mostly of their own. The people of this third social class are having bitter experience regarding the spread of bheri culture in their village. They have the awareness about severe environmental degradation in their locality due to bheri culture. They have confessed it unanimously in all the surveyed villages.
that twenty to twenty four years ago, before the initiation of bheri culture in these villages, the situation was totally different. At that period these people were cultivating their own plot of land. Mostly paddy was being cultivated in most of the present bheri lands, twice a year. Consequently a large section of rural population belonging to this particular class became engaged to cultivation and other field-works almost throughout the year. Thus, even during the post –harvest period the people remained engaged into field related work as a source of continuous income and they could maintain their livelihood properly. Moreover they had enough supply of fuel, milk, vegetables, etc without cost because ample open field was left for large scale rearing of livestocks and kitchen gardening by most of the local individuals. Now they blame the bheri practitioners of high economic class from outside the villages for gradual worsening of their economic condition throughout the period of the last 25 to 30 years. They have openly alleged the highest class of the society for squeezing them out economically for such a long period by capturing their own agro-lands to convert these into bhenes.

Thus this particular class of village society of the northern reclaimed part of the Sundarbans is possessing a strong anti-fishery attitude.

5.1.1.4 LANDLESS LABOURERS

The lowest as well as fourth social class is meant for the landless labourers who are also constituting a sizable portion of the village population.
This part of population of the villages is socially and economically most downtrodden section. All of them are of the lowest caste i.e. scheduled tribes. They are just at and below the subsistence level. They are not possessing any plot of land, even any permanent housing. They are dwelling mostly in the temporarily build up roadside huts which are very ill-maintained and roughly thatched. Sometimes this group of population has to shift frequently from one to another place in search of job. But they are the aborigines of those villages. Living far below the level of subsistence these people are generally found to be engaged into the local bheries for a particular fishing season as bheri-workers. But on one hand, they are not being paid well by the bheri-owners and they can not maintain their daily livelihood at all. On the other hand they become seasonally unemployed and lost work for the rest months of the year when there is no fishing season. At that very crucial period of the year they have to pull rickshaws or vans to run their livelihood. But in most of the surveyed villages, this section of poor socially backward population has to go with complete starvation for several consecutive months of the year.

But they have confessed that long years ago, when there was no sign of bheri culture in those villages, they could become conveniently engaged into year round field work in large number of agricultural land of their locality and maintenance of daily livelihood was not so much tough to them as at present. Due to this worsening of their socio-economic condition they are now having strongest anti-fishery attitude. This lowest class of the rural society is
possessing maximum awareness regarding environmental degradation in the locality due to the extension of *bheri* culture. They are also blaming the highest class of the society for encroaching the local agro-lands for being worstly squeezed out by *bheri* – culture.

5.1.2. FORCEFUL CONVERSION

A suitable example of social impact of an astonishingly high rate of conversion of local agricultural lands into saline water *bheries* may be noted here as forceful conversion of land. In majority of the surveyed villages, it has been noticed that a large part of the other villages away from the extensive *bheri*-areas is producing good quality paddy twice a year along with huge production of variety of vegetables. As per conversation with local inhabitants as well as farmers, most of those present *bheri*-based areas were previously good producers of rice, vegetables etc. (for example large section of P.S. Minakhan Sandeshkhali I, Haroa etc). But with gradual encroachment of large *bheries* into the locality, big *bheri*-owners have forcefully converted the rest well productive agricultural lands of the villages into saline *bheri*. As per the allegation raised by majority of the small land-owners, it has been evidently proved that these small and marginal farmers of these villages like Mathbari Abad, Nazat, Dakshin Akhratala, Dhamakhali, Minakhan, etc. have been forced to convert their paddy fields into *bheries*. The forceful overnight intrusion of highly saline tidal river water into their plots of paddy fields has been done by dishonest *bheri*-owners coming from outside the villages.
5.1.3. SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION

All these bheri invaded areas of North 24 parganas were previously dominated by extensive agricultural fields where cultivation was being done mostly twice a year and in some cases once in a year. Thus a large section of agricultural labourers of the locality had enough scope to become engaged into field related work almost throughout the year. They could maintain their daily life conveniently in this way. But at present entire agricultural field of these villages are being very quickly converted into saline water bheries. Consequently large number of landless agricultural labourers are found to be engaged into fishery which may provide job to them for only a particular period of year. But for the rest of the year this large section of fishery workers become jobless. Moreover, large scale conversion of agricultural lands into bheries has left no other alternative fieldwork for these seasonally unemployed youths. These lost work youths of the entire bheri surrounding areas are committing juvenile crime, open daylight murder, anti-social incidents, robbery, pickpockets in the villages viz. Ghosalati, Khorda, Nazat, Bhanga Tushkhali, Bermajur, Mathbari Abad, Rampur etc. Thus increasing number of bheries are worsening the village societies. It is ultimately causing a gradual deterioration of village society and creating social pollution in the bheri areas. Table 12 gives an idea regarding this social environmental pollution :-

Table 12

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Category A – (Villagers supported that a section of lost work landless agricultural Labourers has left the villages)

Category B – (Villagers supported the recent increase in anti-social activities in the villages)

Category C -- (Villagers supported both the situations of Cat.-A & Cat.- B).

Thus, Table - 12 shows that, total 25 persons (Cat.- B & Cat.- C) out of 209 sample villagers (12%) of northern Sundarbans have supported social environmental pollution.

5.1.4. SOCIO ECONOMIC IMBALANCE

With increasing number of bheries in northern part of 24 parganas, a section of very rich businessmen and big landowners are entering the locality in a huge number. But a large section of local lost work youths have already
left their place in search of job to maintain their livelihood. A number of such youth from the villages like Lowgachhi Abad, Kharampur Abad, Dekhnamari, Nazat, Khorda, Bermaiur, Ghosalati, Bhanga Tushkhali etc. have left for Calcutta and other nearby towns to get suitable job. Some of them have to go daily to other agriculturally developed parts of the district to work into the fields. Table 12 shows that 42% (Cat.- A & Cat.- C) out of 209 sample villagers of northern Sundarbans (20%) have supported this fact. Consequently, on one hand a section of very rich businessmen from outside towns are intruding into this northern reclaimed part of the Sundarbans in order to exploit vast local aquatic resources and to make huge profit. On the other hand a large section of lost work labourers are leaving their place of origin to be employed in the outside towns. They are being deprived of utilising local resources. In this way, the rich of the society are becoming richer and the poor section is becoming poorer. Thus an increasing socio-economic imbalance between the richer and the poorer sections of the village society has been proved true through intensive sample survey in different villages of northern Sundarbans.

5.2 ECONOMIC ASPECT

The vast aquatic resources of the Sundarban region influences the economy of the entire region and the surroundings profoundly. This economic aspect of the aquatic resources of the Sundarbans can be well understood if
one goes through the marketing and distribution system, and the economics related to fishing in this region.

5.2.1 MARKETING & DISTRIBUTION

The Sundarban region has a number of fishing ghats distributed in different P.S., for examples:- the catch of the fishing trips is found to be unloaded in the fishing ghats like Harwood Point, Steamer Ghat, Paka Pul, Narasingha Ashram, Narayanpur, etc. within P.S. Kakdwip. Thus huge amount of daily and periodical catch of the entire Southern Sundarbans is found to be unloaded by the trawlers and country boats at these fishing ghats at completion of each fishing trip. This heavy amount of catch from different fishing ghats of southern part is generally marketed readily by trucks through roadways sometimes by railways. Table no. 13 shows the marketing and distribution system of the catch of the Sundarbans.

Five major police station areas like Kakdwip, Namkhana, Diamond Harbour, Canning and Roydighi have been selected for very intensive sample survey. (Questionnaire in Annexure 3A). As a result of this survey, it can be apprehended that more than 75 per cent of the total catch from different areas of southern Sundarbans goes mostly to the Calcutta markets. Thus Calcutta and the Sundarban areas serve as the most important and largest market for the entire catch of coastal Sundarbans. During the last few years 25per cent - 30per cent of the total catch of Sundarbans is found to be transported to far located markets of North Bengal & N.En. zone of India like Siliguri, Assam, Tripura, etc., This increasing demand as well as spread of market areas of
Table 13
MARKETING & DISTRIBUTION OF THE CATCH OF SOUTHERN SUNDARBANS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY COLLECTION CENTRES</th>
<th>SECONDARY COLLECTION CENTRES</th>
<th>TERTIARY COLLECTION CENTRES (per cent of catch send to)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CANNING GHAT</td>
<td>Local centres, Regional centres, Zonal centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSAM, Siliguri</td>
<td></td>
<td>Canning markets, Sealdaha Patipukur, Behala, Sarisha, (80 per cent of catch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSAM, Siliguri, Tripura</td>
<td></td>
<td>(5 per cent of catch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSAM, Siliguri, Tripura, ETC.</td>
<td></td>
<td>(25 per cent of catch)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DIAMOND HARBOUR (Jetty Ghat)</td>
<td>Regional centres, Zonal centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gariahat, Lake Market, Sealdaha, Manicktala (100 per cent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(70 per cent of catch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOWRAH, Sealdaha, SARISA, Patipukur</td>
<td></td>
<td>HOWRAH, Sealdaha, Manicktala, (70 per cent of catch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOWRAH, Sealdaha, SARISA, Patipukur</td>
<td></td>
<td>(5 per cent of catch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kakdwip (Harwood Pt. Pakapul Steamer ghat, Narshinga Ash)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Regional centres, Zonal centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sealdaha, Gariahat, Behala, Manicktala (70 per cent of catch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ASSAM, Siliguri, Tripura (5 per cent of catch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KHALISTAN, JAMMUDWIP.</td>
<td>ROYDIGHI GHATS</td>
<td>Regional centres, Zonal centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ROYDIGHI MARKETS</td>
<td>HOWRAH, Sealdaha, Manicktala, (70 per cent of catch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 per cent</td>
<td>(5 per cent of catch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NARAYANPUR, BAKKHALI KHALISTAN, JAMMUDWIP</td>
<td>NAMKHANA GHAT (Narayanpur)</td>
<td>Regional centres, Zonal centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DIAMOND HARBOUR MARKET 5 per cent</td>
<td>HOWRAH, Sealdaha, Manicktala, (70 per cent of catch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(25 per cent of catch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(via D. Harbour)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Sundarban catch proves that the Sundarbans with its vast biotic resources is becoming more and more important resource base of a large part of our nation.

5.2.1.1. TRANSACTION OF COASTAL FISHING

After unloading the catch transactions start around evening and are over by 10-30 at night. After the catch arrives, weighing is done at the wholesalers place which is called the Kanta. The accounts are kept pending because immediately after the weighing is done the fish traders both sellers and buyers are busy in selecting the fish and making it for transportation to various local markets and of Calcutta. The buyers inspect the fish in different Kantas and select the ones they need. The orders are booked and the operations are taken over by fixed labourers or monthly wage-earners employed by the wholesalers for the purpose of grading, icing and packing. These operations are complete by midnight after which some two-three hours’ rest is taken by everybody connected with the business. Between 4.00 and 4.30 the accounts for the purchasers are settled and then the fish moves towards Calcutta market by trucks or by earliest train. After the fish is exported out settlements of accounts between wholesalers and the fishermen takes place. During this time other matters related to the time, advances, materials requirements etc. for next fishing expedition are dealt with. The business comes to an end by 8.30 in the morning. (M. Das, 1990).

In the Sundarban region a number of secondary collection centres are found namely Diamond Harbour, Kakdwip, Namkhana, Canning, Champahati,
etc. These secondary centres are always getting catch from higher numbers of primary collection centres distributed in different police stations of the Sundarbans. These are Gosaba, Basanti, Jharkhali, Masjidbari, Sutahata, Khejuri, etc. The trawlers and country boats are to load their catch at the end of fishing trips at these primary collection centres from where the fish is found to be readily transported to nearby secondary or large collection centres. From these centres the catch is finally transported to the local, regional and sometimes zonal markets, 2 per cent to 5 per cent of the local catch of southern Sundarbans is being consumed locally, only in case of the collections made from Canning, Roydighi and Namkhana P.S. 70 per cent to 90 per cent of the catch goes to the markets of Calcutta and 20 per cent - 30 per cent of it is very recently being consumed by the population of North Bengal and of N.En hills states of India like Assam, Tripura etc. Fig-14.0 has depicted the amount of catch to be marketed from different police stations of southern Sundarbans.

5.2.1.2. DRY FISHING

A special feature of commercial coastal fishing developed in the southern part of Sundarbans is dry fishing. In an extensive coastal area along the Bay of Bengal, in a few southern most islands dry fishing is being practiced at a high rate. A no of trawlers as well as country boats which usually trawl from Kakdwip fishing ghats, go for long distance deep sea fishing to catch huge amount of species like Bhola, Lalpata, Bhomla, etc. These species are usually of less market value but these are very suitable to
be dried up and packed as 'Shutki' (dry fish) and also to be preserved and transported longer distance for longer period than other fresh fish. Thus nearly 25 per cent to 30 per cent of the total trawlers from Kakdwip carrying these types of catch go to southernmost islands of the Sundarbans namely Jammudwip, Khlistan, and also the extensive coastal area of Bakkhal in Namkhana P.S. This huge amount of catch is dried up in scorching sun during the months of October, November, and December. This vast coastal area where the catch is found to be dried up is locally known as "Sabar". It has been found that some fishermen families have shifted to these islands permanently to run profitable business based on large scale export of dry fish. After getting dried for a few months, these huge dried fish is found to be exported to the N.En. Hill states of India like Assam, Tripura, also to the markets of Calcutta (particularly at Sealdaha) and to Siliguri market. This dry fish is having increasing demand very recently because it is being utilised as edible fish and also as the raw materials for the production of fish meal, poultry meal, etc.

As per a newspaper report (Bartaman, 23.12.1999), 120 families have taken shelter permanently in the reserved forest area of Jammudwip and they are practicing export business of dry fish without legal permission. All of them are not the local residents of the island. It has been suspected that they have probably come here from Bangladesh and have encroached into the jurisdiction of the Forest Department of West Bengal.
FIGURE 14

AMOUNT OF CATCH TO BE MARKETED FROM DIFFERENT POLICE STATIONS OF SOUTHERN SUNDARBANS

DIAMOND HARBOUR  CANNING  ROYDIGHI  NAMKHANA  KAKDWIP

AMOUNT OF CATCH IN PERCENTAGE
5.2.2. THE TRANSACTION OF PRAWN FISHING

In the *Bheri* invaded northern part of the Sundarbans *Bheri* culture is the most important type of commercial fishing. Variety of prawns including highly profitable *galda*, *bagda*, *tiger prawn*, *Hanney*, *Chamne*, etc. are the major catches from the *bheries* of northern part of the Sundarbans.

*Prawn fishing and packing* needs special mention. Immediately after unloading the entire catch is washed with fresh water. Then prawn is kept into chilled water in order to kill them completely. After the consignment are booked between by the buyers it is weighed and immediately put into metal containers in between layers of solid ice. Now these containers are transported to various prawn processing units in Calcutta as soon as possible. In Calcutta these processing units are mainly located at *Manicktala*, *Rajabazar*, *Nagerbazar*, *E.M. Bypass*, *Salt lake*, etc. Before some consignments are booked for overseas export, the prawns have to go through several important stages in the processing units. The prawn is weighed immediately after taking it out of the ice-cold water. At the first stage the heads are detached and the shells are pealed off. At the next stage these are graded according to the size. After grading the head less bodies are packed in solid ice at the third or last stage of processing. Then those are finally despatched to overseas markets in tin cans. The processing is generally done by both men and women against fix job rates. A few eminent prawn processing and also exporting units of Calcutta are ITC, IFB, Madhumita Construction Ltd. (*Aqua*) etc. At present more than 80 per cent of the total
prawn production is being exported and Indian prawn has captured a sizable market of England, Japan, France, USA, etc.

5.2.3. THE ECONOMICS OF FISHING

The economics related to commercial fishing in the Sundarban region varies with the variation in nature of fishing practice. The economics related to the Bheri culture of northern Sundarbans is quite different from that related to coastal fishing practiced in southern Sundarbans.

5.2.3.1. ECONOMICS OF BHERI CULTURE

Bheri culture is found to be practiced very intensively in a large section of northern reclaimed part of the Sundarbans. Large scale conversion of low lying paddy fields (BILAN) into extrusive saline water bheries is the most important feature of the north 24 parganas during the last 18 to 20 years. Generally two systems regarding bheri culture are existing at present in this region. Some of the landowners are also bheri operators and they are practicing bheri fishing into their own plots of land. They employ a large number of agricultural labourers into their bheries to run bheri operation. These owners themselves bear entire expenditure of bheri operation and also enjoy the total profit gained by selling out the catch giving a fixed percentage of this profit to the labourers working in the bheries throughout the season. In another type of bheri operation some landowners usually lease out their plots of land to a section of bheri operators at a fixed yearly rate which varies from 2000/- per bigha to 4000/- per bigha in different areas of the Sundarbans.
depending upon the location of the plot, productivity of the *bheri*, etc. In this case the *bheri* operators mainly from Calcutta and other towns generally come here in large number to take lease of these *bheries* to make a big profit for a long time. The minimum expenditure behind entire *bheri* operation in one *bigha* of land is of about 8000/- in a season of one year. This amount is to be invested by the *bheri* operators initially. The ultimate profit is not less than 4000/- per *bigha* of land in case of normally productive *bheri* in a season. After the payment of 2000/- to the *bheri* workers the rest amount would become net profit to the *bheri* operators. Thus this type of practice of *bheri* fishing has become the most profit earning business and it ultimately forces a large section of agro-land of northern Sundarban to be converted into extensive *bheri* at an increasingly high rate.

A considerable amount of prawn produced in the *bheries* is found to be transported to Calcutta markets and headless prawn is being sold at the rate of 850/- per kg at present. But more than 70 per cent of the *bheri* production is readily being exported after processing at the rate of 13-14 dollars per kg. At present Japan, France, USA, Britain are importing prawn from India. Headless tiger prawn is having highest export price among all other species of prawn.

5.2.3.2. ECONOMICS OF COASTAL FISHING

The economics related to coastal as well as deep sea fishing practiced very intensively in the southern part of the Sundarbans is quite different from
that of the *bheri* culture of the north. Usually three modes of financing are found in distant water fishing in southern Sundarbans.

In each fishing group generally 12-15 persons are found. Finance comes from wholesalers of fish in the shape of advances. These advances are adjusted against the wholesale price of the fish. It is to be sold entirely to those who advance the capital. The total catch is divided into certain shares, one share each for every participant, one for the boat and another for the net. Thus if there are 12 persons including the owner of the boat and the net there will be 14 shares. If the boat and net belong to same person who also happens to be a member of the team then he gets 3 shares.

The second mode is that only the boat is borrowed and rest of the finance comes from the wholesalers. The rent which is mostly fixed amount is paid for a month to the boat only.

The third mode is when the boat, net and all other provisions are supplied by a single individual. In this case the entrepreneur gets nearly 75 per cent of the total catch. There is another mode in which boat, net, capital in both cash and kind are provided by the wholesaler himself. His profits, in this case include the rent for the boat, net, the interest on the borrowed capital, shares of the catch for the boat and net and all other advantages of having a guaranteed supply.

In case of river-water fishing, the number of participants may increase depending on size of the boat and net. All other costs are proportional.