CONCLUSION

Fisheries are a key sector of Indian Economy witnessing progressive and drastic changes over the years, both in production and marketing. The goal for women in fisheries, is to make them self-reliant and productive and for improving their own and family’s living standard. Increasing entrepreneurial activities, in the post-harvest segment of fisheries for women, may provide more and more employment opportunities. Fisherwomen should be provided adequate knowledge and training on awareness of natural disasters and its management. Computer based training module should be designed for employment opportunities. If India's fisheries sector is to be satisfactorily sustained, then fisherwomen empowerment, both socially and economically, is essential. Hence skills and use of appropriate technologies will enable them to be empowered socially and economically. This can only be done through education. The knowledge about nutrition, health, sanitation, and child care, and training on current technologies and best practices techniques, along with financial assistance, should be supported by the Government and nongovernmental organisations like Self Help Groups.

The Fishery Division is perceived as a vital employment and income generator, as it animates the development of various backup enterprises, other than filling in as a wellspring of animal protein to meet the food security for future era. Tamil Nadu is one of the important Coastal States in the East coasts, having a coastline of 1076 kms. There are 13 Coastal Districts and 591 fishing
villages, with an aggregate marine fishing populace of around 8.38 lakhs, of which 2.81 lakhs are effectively occupied with fishing activities. The marine fishery assets involve 1.9 lakhs sq. km of Exclusive Economic Zone (9.4% of India's EEZ) and a continental shelf of around 41,412 sq km. Tamil Nadu is one of the main makers of both marine and inland fish and fishery items. At present, around 6200 automated fishing crafts and 50,360 customary crafts (18,727 Vallams and 31,633 Catamarans) are engaged in marine fishing. The yearly yield of marine fish in Tamil Nadu is assessed at 3.93 lakh tons. The State can possibly develop as a noteworthy exporter of marine items. During 2007-08, around 72,644 M.T. of marine items valued at Rs.1, 81,314 lakhs, was sent out from Tamil Nadu.

The inland fisheries occupy around 3.71 lakhs ha of water spread, including repositories, significant water systems and long seasonal tanks, estuaries, short regular tanks and lakes, backwaters, and so forth., which account for both catch and culture fisheries. Inland fishing populace is around 2.16 lakhs. The inland fish catch is assessed at 1.65 lakh tons. Around 5,000 ha are being used for crisp water aquaculture under the program of the Fish Farmers' Development Agency. There are eight fish seed generation sites and 29 fish seed raising sites, situated in different spots with an ability to create 2750 lakhs of early sear every year. The aggregate salty water zone, accessible for aquaculture production is 56,000 ha. Aside from that, shrimp culture is being pursued in 6,066 ha.
There are 1,366 fishermen cooperative societies which incorporate 399 inland fishermen/fisherwomen cooperatives. Tamil Nadu is placed 6th in fish generation in the nation. The tremendous fishery assets of both marine and inland waters have not yet been completely exploited. The fishery assets in the inshore territories have been over exploited, while the offshore resources and deep-sea resources are yet to be tapped to the ideal level. The prime duty of the Department is to wisely, upgrade fish production without degrading the resources. The cooperative societies for fisher community should be utilized and should be accessible for illiterate people also.

Women’s’ traditional role in fishing families has been to support the male fishermen - mainly through managing the shore-side activities like, marketing, bookkeeping and cash management. This was unpaid and went in parallel with managing the household and children. The result has been the emergence of a new role for women, as wage earning contributors to family finances. This has had complex repercussions. While women retain their domestic roles and duties, they have redefined their position in fishing communities. Male domination (as chief earners) has been threatened, and the social balance upset because of the implied emancipation of these women. Women have had to deal with a loss of an established position as core home-based support to the industry and more to the point, had to help their men folk to adjust to these changes. This has led to their activism in pushing for government support to the industry while it is in crisis, at least in part as an act of reassuring solidarity to their spouses.
Women are believed to take a more holistic view of fisheries than men, broadening their concerns to include social and environmental as well as the purely economic/financial elements. This has naturally led to a greater concern with resource-related issues, and a more nurturing approach that considers the longer as well as short term perspectives. With some political activism in this broad field, women are also evident in fields like research, and also in public sector management. In spite of this, they have failed to penetrate into the male dominated management of the sector.

The traditional fishing sector division of labour is replicated within the processing industry. Originally, the gender segregation was taken as natural, and health and safety issues dominated the agenda. Gender concerns related to issues such as full and part time employment (men require the former and women the latter for domestic reasons). Men (although not numerically superior) tended to dominate within the unions and it was their agendas that predominated. Later studies looked more into how gender differentials were built into hierarchies within plants, with jobs denominated “female” or “male”. The supposed justification was that jobs themselves had inherent gender connotations (e.g. some jobs required patience and diligence, seen as particularly female attributes). The net result was clear and women were disadvantaged. This was because monotonous jobs tended to be denominated as “female”, which men supposedly lacked the attributes to undertake them. Thus women were relegated to the less desirable roles, and so ranked lower in the plant’s hierarchies. Attempts to cross the barrier - i.e. women to take
“male” roles, met with resistance, and when women dropped out of their female roles at the bottom of the hierarchy (i.e. found better alternatives outside the sector), then they were replaced by immigrant labour (i.e. those who would accept any paying option). Evidence of differentials in pay and job security (favouring men) reinforced this discrimination.

As elsewhere in the sector, men dominate the senior management roles. Where women have succeeded, they tend to have done so at the expense of family. These few women tended to be better educated than their male equivalents, with the implication being that this superiority was necessary to counter the inherent gender bias against women.

Aquaculture is an expanding sub-sector and the barriers to entry are lower than for fishing although not as low as processing. Interventions here could include focussed training to allow women greater opportunity to enter the more desirable technical/laboratory and managerial positions in the industry. A few components of the aquaculture industry, such as some shoreline mollusc culture, are mainly controlled and undertaken by women. Community Based Management (CBM) is already in place in some cases, and expanding and developing this would repay support, as these activities are particularly appropriate for this sort of management approach.

This is an area where women have made significant inroads, a process likely to continue. The field team identified environmental and resource management issues as becoming key themes for women’s involvement and this
might provide useful guidance to inform educational and training choices. Public sector administration and research are identified as key areas where women’s involvement and equality are relatively high, and probably where there are the best prospects for further enhancement. Thus training directed towards the public sector will probably yield best results.

As far as the socio-economic status of the fishermen in Kancheepuram District is concerned, they earn considerable income from marine fishing and they very well manage their spending on food and other items within their income. However, they are in a such condition that they are unable to meet the expenses on social obligations like marriages and other functions with their regular income sources, and rather they depend on borrowed funds to fulfil such obligations. More than half of the fisherwomen could not adopt the saving habit due to insufficient money left over income. It was against this background that the researcher wanted to test three hypotheses empirically. The first hypotheses was related to the socio-economic problems encountered by the sample population of fisher women. The Table No 5.12 displays the economic status of the fishing families. It indicated a dismal picture because after adjusting the expenditure on children, education, health etc, very little was left for family expenditure. Hence the need for supplementing the family income was clearly felt by the fisher women.

One serious problem encountered by fisher women, at the social plane, was the power of the pervasive ideology of patriarchy. As explained by the Researcher, the power of the ideology of patriarchy was effectively challenged
by the power of the ideology of industrialism. While patriarchy was based on a scripture values, the factory system was based on achievement values. In other words, man as the norm was broken and replaced by the new norm of personal achievement of technical skills required for the modern, industrial system, whether man or women. In the earlier system, man born as man, entitled him to new order, one’s position in the new organization, called bureaucracy by Max Weber, decided one’s authority and this position could be achieved by Man or Woman.

Economically speaking access to market was denied to a woman simply because she was a woman. This is also a result of patriarchy informing economic system also. The Researcher was able to collect lot of data germane to this economic handicap and empirically demonstrate that the first hypothesis: ‘Fisher women encounter a number of social – economic, problem in marketing fish,’ was amply proved.

The second hypothesis was formulated on the role of Self Help Groups in helping women entrepreneurs. Self Help Groups are informal gathering of marginalized groups like women and these SHGs could be observed among fishing communities also. SHGs work under some over arching guidance of a NGO and they are basically intermediaries which link the marginalized group of fisher women and some bank or some financial institution.

Micro credit institutions reach the unreached fisher women through a SHG. These Self Help Groups normally create a corpus of fund by mobilizing
funds from its own members. For larger sums of money, these SHGs help the members to avail loan from a bank. SHGs also monitor prompt repayment of funds. These SHGs also provide a platform for these marginalized fisher women to connect with each other to form a social network. Above all, these SHGs also help fisher women to develop leadership qualities by promoting group discussion and decision making.

The Researcher could observe several business models experimented by different SHGs for empowering the fisher women under study, through entrepreneurial ventures. In this connection, government also help the SHGs by forming Rural Bazaars or Malls to display SHGs produced products and help the SHGs to market their products. The researcher has provided a detailed account of a particular SHG called Thenkumari Self Help Group and how it organized the marginalized fisher women under the Tamil Nadu sponsored Magalir Thittam (Plan for women) and successfully ventured into procuring and marketing fish at five star hotels in Chennai. (formerly Madras). This is a very good example of how SHGs could mobilise women towards entrepreneurial activities. Hence the second Hypothesis: ‘The Micro credit, extended to fisher women through SHGs, has largely benefited them in taking up entrepreneurial word, was sustained.

The third Hypothesis was formulated around the impact of SHGs on the socio – economic status of the study group. The Researcher could observe that SHGs have helped the sample population of fisher women to improve themselves both socially and economically. As explained earlier, the poor
economic status of the fisherfolk compelled the women to share the instrumental role with the fisher men, who once monopolized instrumental leadership under patriarchy. When the Researcher went to the study area to collect the responses in person, the difference between the sample under the influence of SHGs and the sample which was not touched by the SHGs. The improvement in their economic status was palpable. Hence the third Hypothesis: ‘The participation of fisher women in SHGs, has largely changed the socio – economic conditions and paved the way for their economic empowerment was also found to be justified.