

## **Women and Fish Selling Business**

**Dr Shashi A Mishra:** R J College, Ghatkopar (West) Mumbai 400 086

### **Abstract**

*This case study is primarily about women in fish selling business. Along with its Indian focus, the study centers on non-manufacturing informal enterprises owned or managed by women. This study is important because non-manufacturing enterprises are very scarce and are as yet little threatened by large ones. Also, small entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial families tend to multiply their firms. If there had been much concern for women empowerment, ways might have been found to offset the disadvantages imposed upon them. This applies also to the provision of institutional credit for very small enterprises owned by women. Surprisingly, the women in our country constitute nearly 50 per cent of the total population but yet contribute 56 per cent to the total unemployment.*

### **Uttan Village**

Uttan, Pali, Manori Chowk is the village of Koli community where a large number of fishermen population is located. Uttan village is located on a cliff overlooking the Arabian Sea. It comes under the jurisdiction of Thane district. It comes on the way to Manor beach, about 90 km from Mumbai. These villages are having similar information about the Koli people. Here I am analyzing Uttan village in detail which is located near the Essel World area. Majority of the Koli community are staying here for more than 100 years and are from beginning are in this fish business. There are approximately 200 – 300 families. In Koli community most of the occupation of people is fishing. In Uttan village the fishermen population is 12000 – 15000. Two types of fish are sold in the market fresh fish and dried fish. Their major occupation is fishing. Most of the people belong to Christian community and from Hindu Koli Community.

### **Fishing and Its Economics in Uttan Village**

Men go and catch fish but selling of fish is done by their women. The fisher women go to market at 2.00 O'clock in night and come at home in 10-00 morning by selling the fish. After coming from market at 10.00 she does innumerable chores at home like mending fishing nets, fish baskets and drying fish, doing household work sell fish to export company etc. In one round (Trip) catching they earn 1 or 2 lakhs from big boat it depend on fish. More fish more earning from small boat they earn 15 or 20 thousand monthly. In this village there are export company agencies so most of the big fish like papalat (Pomfret), surmay is exported to Chirag International Company then this export company packed this fish in boxes and supplied in foreign countries like Singapore, Malaysia, Japan Company. Fish is depend on quality grade 1 papalate is of 520gm to Rs. 300 Kg. Sea fish surmay is 70 Kg. grade. Defect fish is rejected from the company then this rejected fish is sold in Crawford Market. They also export fish to Aalana and Bombay Sheetal Company in Vashi. By measuring weight the fish is taken is export company.

In Uttan village the women are considered as very strong , they are known as women who are very bindas , use abusive language , are hard bargainers, and have typical

aggressive style of functioning , also on other hand are known to be very helpful to friends and they freely interact with the men. This position and perception regarding fisherwomen their freedom of speech and action is entirely the result of her economic power and independence arising from the kurga ( daily earnings) which she earns entirely on her own hard work and smartness. She has to deal with all sorts of customers ( mainly men) at markets , bazaars and transporters. She learns from childhood days to quickly shed all coyness and start interacting freely with men. The fisher women provides tremendous economic stability to the family and hence will not tolerate a bullying husband. Her financial position makes her a necessity in family rather than just a show piece or housewife. In return of this position she has to pay heavily in terms of hard work. Her day starts at the break of dawn. Collecting of fishes, sorting them and packing them properly with help of other laborers or she herself does the packing for transporting the same to market. This has to be followed up by cooking for the family and completing the household chorus before going to sell fishes in market. Then on home front there are other chores like mending fishing nets, fishing baskets and drying of fishes are also part of their lifestyle.

There are three types of Koli women.

- 1) Koli women who sell the fish in the wholesale market
- 2) Koli women who sell fish from door-to-door
- 3) Koli women who sell the fish near the platform

**Koli women who sell the fish in the wholesale market:**

This category of fisher women are the ones who go by tempo from Uttan machimar at 2 o'clock & reach at 4:00 to 5:00 in the Crawford market or Malad market. There they hire the wholesalers to sell their fish & after selling the fish they come at 10:00 in the morning at home. These categories of fisherwomen earn the highest among the three categories. The earning is kept with themselves as husband is most of the time in sea. She does all the bargaining while buying and selling the fish.

**Koli women who sell fish from door-to-door:**

Now they are doing so because the fishermen of Mumbai called the Kolis are gunning for the north Indians who are in the trade called the bhaiyas (a derogatory term used for north Indians) buy fish from the wholesale market & sell fish door-to-door in Mumbai. So these women started selling fish from door-to-door in Uttan village.

**Koli women who sell the fish near the platform:**

These women go to sell fish near the platform (Bhayander station) .These types of fisher women are small timers who are basically from nucleus families and have to return to their house to take care of house and other family members but want to earn for their daily expense money. Such category of fisher women sell fish for 2 to 3 hrs per day in morning and have almost fix customers.

In their family the male member (Husband, Sons) are going to catch the fish in the sea. While women (wife, daughters) are doing household work and also sell fish in the market, their husbands help them in their household work. Both husband and wife take decision. Wife is the head of the family she has all the account and profit in the hand. This community is very helpful to each other. They don't want to change their business. They are very happy with their business.

### **Problems Faced by Fisherwomen in Uttan Village Major Problem in this Village is of Alcoholic & Gutaka**

Alcoholic problem in this village is very strong among koli men. There were many andolan done against problem without any success, today also this problem is major in this village. Many of the koli people die due to alcoholism & for this reason many wife, mothers, daughters have become widows. After andolan also this alcoholic problem has not stopped & still is continued in this village for which the death rate has increased. They think that if they do not drink alcohol they cannot do the fishing activity, so thereby going in trolley, catching the fish, pushing the boat up & down in the sea they need power which they get from alcohol. Guttaka is another severe problem in is this village. Alcohol is banned in this village by the Government, but still people are drinking alcohol. Almost all the people in the trolley are drunk.

#### **Education**

In Uttan village the koli children get free education in Saint. Joseph Mar. med. High School. This school consists of primary, secondary & also the Junior Collage. Even after having free education to the koli children, they study only up to 4<sup>th</sup> standard & leave the school. Then, they join with their parents in the fishing business. Many of their children only studied up to 4<sup>th</sup> standard. Their thinking is that if they studied at higher level, they do not get Government job as there are many unemployed people in India. So they are involved in their own fishery business. Due to this problem, there is lack of education; a lack of communication is developed. In Uttan village, the fishery is done by the koli people, but the mechanical job & the repairing work is done by other people, i.e why most of the people are unemployed. To solve this problem the government should introduce a technical subject in the school to koli children. So there will be no unemployment in Uttan village among kolis.

There education status is very low in this community.

1.	Upto IV Std	-	60%
2.	Upto X Std.	-	30%
3.	Upto and above X to 12	-	07%
4.	Graduate	-	03%

Today there children education level is much better than previous. Their children are studying and also helping their parents in their fishing activities. Their parents trained their children from childhood

#### **Population of Good Fish Detoriating:**

Today fish population rate has decreased due to various problems:

- 1) Essel world has created a tremendous effect on fish population. Chemical are left in the sea which affect the fish rate.
- 2) Second problem is of gutters. The gutters are open & dirty water of gutters is released in the sea which also has affected the sea.
- 3) The Tsunami has also affected the fish population. To check the Tsunami, earthquakes in water, the Government has introduced the mechanical equipment in water; the ONGC survey has also affected the fish population.

- 4) The ONGC survey has also created a problem for the koli people because of this survey, the fishermen's are not allowed to catch fish in that area. They are given a particular area to do fishing. Restriction has been imposed in terms of area to fish.
- 5) Also due to oil leakage in various parts the fishes are affected.

### **Basic Amenities**

The Mahilya Samaj do not actively participate in activities such as good toilets, drinking water facilities, proper basic amenities or infrastructure near fish collection centers, easy installment loan availability. In the Uttan village, women have to go to the toilet near in the sea in open place. The koli people do not make toilets in the houses. There is no good hospital in Uttan area. There is no place to keep their boats in rainy season. At the same time there is very less place to dry the fish.

Education does have a big impact on urban women working in informal sector. In future if government or NGO's come forward and provide formal training in financial matters or the modern art / technique of preserving the fishes for longer period of time which inturn will help in avoiding wastages, or even help women to go for shrimp farming which again is a very growing business it will definitely help in empowering women in much bigger way. This can be achieved only by having higher education. Shrimp fishing should be taught to literate women easily.

Literate women know the importance of education in any field and would like to educate their children to get themselves in a better business.

Illiterate women sellers find it very difficult to handle situations where legalities are involved. That is the reason why they are not able to grow fast in this business.

Night classes for education of illiterate women, clean work area; financial and legal awareness should be created by providing free classes, seminars and similar workshops by prominent personalities in respective fields.

### **Bibliography**

1. Agrawal Bina & Krishnaraj Maithreyi:(1988), Self Employed Women work In The Informal Sector Seth Publishers. Delhi.
2. Anita Sharma:(1990), Modernization And States Of Working Women In India , (A socio-economic study of women of Delhi), Mittal Publications New Delhi.
3. Bal .D.V , Rao K.V: Marine fisheries.
4. Banerjee, Nirmala:(1989), Why They Get A Worse Deal , Siddhi Publishers.
5. Bates Ulku, Dorothy, Florence Helly:(1983), Women's realities women choices Hunter college, Oxford University Press.
6. Breese,Gerald (1966), Urbanisation in The Newly Developing Countries - Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall.
7. Dak T.M: (1988), Women and Work In Indian Society Discovery Publishing House, Delhi.
8. Das NP, Gandotra M.M, Panday Divya, Shah Urvi:(2001), Status of Women And Reproductive Behavior , Hindustan Publishing Corp India.