

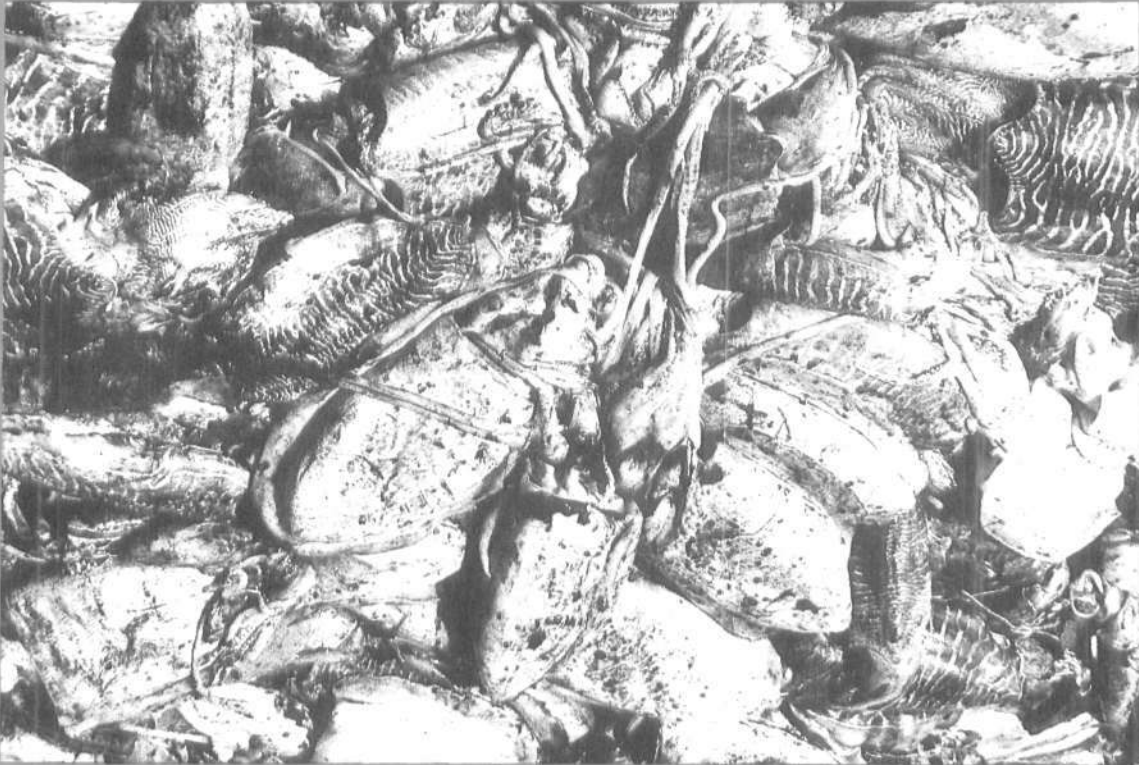


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**BUMPER CATCH OF WHITE PRAWNS (*PENAEUS INDICUS*) BY DISCO NET
(TRAMMEL NET) ALONG THE TUTICORIN COAST ***

Like trawl net, prawns are also caught by the traditional gill net (single layer) during the post monsoon months (January - June). The most interesting fact is that these gears generally catch large sized prawns occasionally in large

quantities, from near shore waters which fetch very high prices. The catch is composed of large sized white Prawns *Penaeus indicus* (125 - 185 mm) and *Penaeus semisulcatus* followed by *Penaeus monodon*.

From April, 1984 onwards sporadic fishing with the newly introduced Trammel net (*Disco valai*) was carried out in most part of the Tamilnadu coast. Due to its good return in terms of catch and money, this has become one of the most selective and successful indigenous gears for catching prawns around Tuticorin in recent years.

The bottom of the sea is full of coral rocks covered by the sand to a height of about 1 m and there are a number of projecting rocks scattered around, where bottom trawling by mechanised trawlers is not preferred. These areas have become quite ideal for the operation of disco nets operated by Tuticorin type of boats. The fishery has commenced from the mid February '90 and lasted till April '90. During this period 10,292 kg of prawns were landed which fetched roughly Rs. 8,74,820 by selling them at the rate of Rs. 85 per kg.

During the above season, bumper catch of *Penaeus indicus* was seen for three days, they being 16-2-'90, 17-2-'90 and 19-2-'90 with the landings of 1,005 kg, 1,175 kg and 1,587 kg respectively. With the catch rate varying from 20.5 kg/unit to 25.9 kg/unit.

Month-wise particulars of units operated, estimated catch, CPUE and species composition, are given in Tables 1 & 2. Along with prawns, fishes like sciaenids, *Therapon* spp. and *Sillago* sp. were also caught.

Normally the boats will leave the shore around 0500 hours in the morning and return between 1600 hours and 1800 hours after making 2 to 3 hauls at the depth range of 15 - 20 m. Prawns were procured at prices between Rs. 82 and Rs. 105 per kg fixed by the private companies.

Analysis of random samples revealed that the females were predominant over males with the ratio of 64:36. While the size of females ranged between 130 and 185 mm with the dominant mode at 150 and 170 mm, the males ranged between 125 and 155 mm with a single dominant mode at 140 mm.

In the midst of mechanised gears like bottom trawl which needs a huge investment and skill and also does not have scope for further expansion of fishery in the inshore waters, indigenous gears like trammel net (*disco valai*) with low investment can play a supporting role, in the exploitation of prawns.

TABLE 1. Estimated fishing effort and catch

Centre : Tuticorin		Period : February '90 - April '90			Gear : Trammel net (Disco valai)	
Months	Effort	Catch in kg			% of prawn in total catch	CPUE
		Prawns	Fishes	Total		
February	589	6,223	1,492	7,715	80.6	10.5
March	274	1,596	890	2,486	64.2	5.8
April	547	2,473	948	3,421	72.3	4.5
Total	1,410	10,292	3,330	13,622	75.5	7.3

TABLE 2. Estimated species composition of prawns

Centre : Tuticorin		Period : February '90 - April '90				Gear : Trammel net (Disco valai)	
Months	<i>P. indicus</i>		<i>P. semisulcatus</i>		<i>P. monodon</i>		Total
	Catch	%	Catch	%	Catch	%	
February	6,106	98.1	84	1.4	33	0.5	6,223
March	1,386	86.8	180	11.3	30	1.9	1,596
April	2,473	100	-	-	-	-	2,473
Total	9,965	96.8	264	2.6	63	0.6	10,292

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