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923 Collection of the sipunculids for bait at Lakshadweep

During a recent visit to Kavaratti Island (Lakshadweep) the local people were seen collecting the sipunculid *Sipunculus indicus* Peters from the intertidal region for using as bait. The same was seen at Chetlat and Kiltan Islands in 1987. Apparently it is collected for bait from all the Islands of the Lakshadweep. Locally it is known as *Kondi* and *Vembolu*.

During the low tide near the high water mark a number of holes were seen in the sand. A few inches away from each hole there was a shallow depression (Fig.1). A spear-like spatula made out of the midrib of coconut leaf is deftly inserted into the shallow depression in stages which pierces into the anterior portion of the worm and fixes it. The fixing can be felt by a sort of 'spring action' felt. After the sipunculid is fixed in this manner, the spatula is held in one hand and with the other hand the sand is dug to a depth of 30-40 cm and the snake like animal is pulled out. It reaches a length of 50 cm. Once it is taken out, (Fig. 2) it is punctured near the posterior end and



Fig. 1. A boy holding the sipunculid worm after taking it out of sand.



Fig. 2. Entire worm with spatula.

the entrails are quickly squeezed out leaving only the tubular body wall. This is dried in the shade and is used even after a few months. When needed it is cut into bits of 5-8 cm length and put into sea water. It absorbs sea water and is ready for use.

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