No. 157 OCTOBER, NOVEMBER 1998
A note on chank fishery in Gulf of Kutch, Gujarat

The Sacred chank, Xancus pyrum var. acuta (Bolten) is exploited commercially from the intertidal and reef habitat in the Gulf of Kutch along the Jamnagar District. Important centres of collection are Okha, Salaya, Aramda, Poshitra, Badia Is., Nora Is., Bharana, Vadinar, Sikka, Pirota Is., Bedi, Adata, Beyt Balapur and several small centres in the Gulf of Kutch (Fig. 1).

Fishery is mostly done by hand picking at low tides in the intertidal zones. The Sindhis, Vadhers, Medhwas and other local communities are involved in this work. Now-a-days most of the fisherwomen are also engaged in this, to enhance their economic standards. Around 50 to 60 fisherwomen are engaged in the Okha Mandal area. The annual chank production during 1975 to 1985 varied between 1,114 and 20,899 numbers, averaging 8,726. The highest yield of 20,899 nos was recorded in 1984-’85. From 1985 onwards there has been a decrease in chank production, average annual yield being 3,362 nos. Table 1 indicates the chank production in the Jamnagar district of Gujarat during 1995-’97 period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Large</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Small</th>
<th>Worm eaten</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1975-’76</td>
<td>1,185</td>
<td>6,644</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>2,368</td>
<td>10,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-’77</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>776</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>1,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977-’78</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>1,223</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1,153</td>
<td>2,582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-’79</td>
<td>1,002</td>
<td>4,702</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>1,372</td>
<td>7,270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-’80</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>2,126</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>1,761</td>
<td>4,509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-’81</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>2,549</td>
<td>1,050</td>
<td>2,162</td>
<td>6,101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-’82</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>1,372</td>
<td>5,134</td>
<td>3,561</td>
<td>10,329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982-’83</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>1,592</td>
<td>4,697</td>
<td>4,233</td>
<td>10,907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983-’84</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>2,633</td>
<td>6,639</td>
<td>4,554</td>
<td>14,360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984-’85</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>2,063</td>
<td>8,667</td>
<td>9,898</td>
<td>20,899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-’86</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>3,276</td>
<td>3,552</td>
<td>7,531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986-’87</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>1,045</td>
<td>7,874</td>
<td>2,031</td>
<td>11,067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987-’88</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>2,143</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>2,942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988-’89</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>2,340</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>3,257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-’90</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>1,651</td>
<td>835</td>
<td>2,792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-’91</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>2,044</td>
<td>1,040</td>
<td>3,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-’92</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>1,671</td>
<td>932</td>
<td>2,744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-’93</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>824</td>
<td>1,813</td>
<td>2,709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-’94</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>2,017</td>
<td>827</td>
<td>3,041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-’95</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>2,092</td>
<td>1,037</td>
<td>3,245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-’96</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>1,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-’97</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>798</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 1. Important centres of chank fishery in Jamnagar Dt. of Gujarat.
The chanks collected are graded according to diameter as large: 10 cm & above, medium: 8-10 cms, small: 6-8 cm, worm eaten and under sized and are purchased by Fisheries Office, Govt. Of Gujarat at fixed rates according to the size. These chanks are then auctioned mostly to Calcutta based cottage industries. The Table 2 indicates the prices prevailed during 1980 and 1977.

**TABLE 2. Prices per chank in 1980 and 1997 compared.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size dia. (cm)</th>
<th>Price (Rs)/piece</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 &amp; above (big)</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-10 (medium)</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8 (small)</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worm eaten</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although this is a highly priced item and private entrepreneurs are willing to pay high prices for it, production trends over the last few years give reason for concern. The sudden decline in production from 1987 onwards may be either due to depletion of resource due to over-exploitation or disinterest on the part of the fishermen caused by the nominal government rates of purchase. Detailed investigations are essential to analyse the real cause for decline in production and to study the possibility of reviving/extending chank fishery in this area.

Reported by: Sujitha Thomas, Joe, K. Kishakudan and B.V. Makadia, Veraval Research Centre of CMFRI, Veraval-362 265, India.