

Mandapam And Its Environs

SOUVENIR

Edited

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Fish And Fisheries Of Mandapam

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Mandapam is one of the important Fish Landing Centres of Tamil Nadu with about 300 mechanised trawlers and a variety of other indigenous fishing gears like hooks and lines, gillnet, shore-seine, olavalai etc.

One of the advantage of the place is its fishing season, extending throughout the year. When Gulf of Mannar covering its southern portion becomes rough during June to September the fishing is carried out in the Palk Bay. When the Palk Bay becomes rough, from October to February fishing activities shift to Gulf of Mannar.

FACILITIES

Fisheries infrastructural facilities of Mandapam include Boat Building Yard, Fishery Jetty, Ice Plants, Fish Meal Plant, Processing Plants, Dry Dock and Good roads. The Boat Building Yard owned by the State Government caters to the need of Government agencies and private boat owners. The Yards owned by the Private Companies take care of the needs of the private boat owners. Marakkayar Boat Building Yard is a well established Dry Dock with repairing facilities. For larger vessels, dry docking and repairing facilities are available at the Great Sea Trawlers Private Limited. In addition, there are many Workshops and lathes owned by private individuals. The Mandapam Jetty is a well developed all weather, Jetty with a break-water and is located on the Gulf of Mannar side adjacent to the Government Boat Building Yard. The jetty can accommodate larger vessels and provide shelter for smaller trawlers during the heavy winds. About 50 numbers of 32' boats can berthed at a time.

There are many ice plants with the production varying from 5 ton to 50 ton. The ice plants provide the ice required for fishermen for the preservation of prawns, fishes and cuttle fishes. Some of the important ice plants are owned by Baby Marine Private Ltd., George Maijo pvt. Ltd., Marakayar Ice Plant, East Bay Fisheries etc. In addition to it, cold storage and freezing plants are also available with the above Companies.

The Fish Meal Plant owned by the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Development Corporation (Government of Tamil Nadu) is located on the Palk Bay side near the Railway Station. It depends for its raw material on the silver bellies landed here. The Fish Meal is used as poultry feed. It cost about Rs. 3/- per kg.

Fish curing (drying) using the abundant Solar energy available is another important fish based industry employing mainly the women. The dried fish commonly known as 'Mullan' is sent to Kerala during June to September when fishing is poor along the South - west coast during monsoon.

Prawn processing forms one of the major Sea based industries here. The Important prawn processing plants are Baby Marine Private Ltd and George Maijo Pvt Ltd. The mobile refrigerated vans bring prawn from distant places like Erwadi, Tondi and other prawn landing centres. The prawns are peeled, degutted, deep freezed and exported. *Penaeus indicus*, *Penaeus semisulcatus*, *P. monodon* are some of the common prawns available. The quality of the prawns available here are considered to be high due its size, taste and texture. The large sized prawns costs about Rs. 100 to 120 per kg.

Cuttle fishes like *Sepia tuethis*, *Loligo* sp are another export commodities. East Bay Fisheries Pvt. Ltd. is mainly specialising in this business. The cuttle fishes are cleaned and its viscera, cuttle bones and tentacles etc are removed. The white fleshy portion of the body wall (Mantle) is deep freezeed and exported. Japan is the main importer of the cuttle fish.

The Beach-de-mar prepared from the holothuria or Sea-cucumber is another product of importance. The holothurians commonly known as 'Atta' are boiled and sun dried. The intertidal areas of the nearby Islands are rich in holothurian. The product is exported mainly to Indonesia and Singapore.

Another important development in the establishment of a pearl culture Centre by Southern Petro Chemical Industries, Tuticorin. The Company named as Tamil Nadu Pearls' works in collaboration with the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department. The nucleus are introduced in the oysters at Mandapam laboratory and the pearl oysters, *Pinctada fucata* are cultured near Krusadai Island after implantation of the 'Nucleus'.

Seaweed Industry also employs a few hundred men and women. The seaweeds like *Gracillaria* and *Gelidium* are collected from the shore adjacent to nearby islands, sun dried and sent to the plants for the production of agar-agar, alginic acid, sodium alginate and other pharmaceutical products.

In addition the fresh fish trade also offers employment. Fishes like *Cybbium* spp, *Lethrinus* spp, Pomfrets, *Caranx* spp and Mulletts are sent to places like Madurai, Coimbatore and Madras by train in icebaskets.

One of the unique features of this place is the availability of the seeds (fry and fingerling) of cultivable species like *Chanos*, mugil, siganus, (oramin) and prawn. Though this aspect (fish fry trade) is not developed, there is vast potentials for the culture of *Chanos* (milk fish) based on the fish fry available here during the months of March to July. Pillaimadam lagoon, Manoli island and Chinnapalam creek in Pamban are some of the areas where the *Chanos* and mullet seeds are available in plenty during the season. The availability of matured prawn of the species *Penaeus semisulcatus* is another advantage for developing a hatchery here.

Ramanathapuram coast is famous for chanks. (*Xancus pyrum*). Though major portion of it is sent to other parts of the country for the manufacture of various items, a few factories in Keelakaral and Rameswaram utilise it for making ornaments and fancy articles. 'Valampuri' chank is often taken from the coast.

Apart from the fishery importance, the coastal area of Mandapam is a grazing ground for the sea-cow (*Dugong dugong*) which is being hunted indiscriminately for its flesh. The cymodocea beds (sea grass) offer a good grazing grounds for the dugongs. Though it is a protected animal under the Indian Wild Life Act 1972, fishermen kill them for food. Along with the marine fishes, coastal birds (Terns and sand ploughers) are also caught in large numbers by the 'Narikuravan' with the specially designed nets along the coast and mud flats. These birds which are commonly known as 'ullan' are a local delicacy.

Due to the rich marine fauna and flora available, the coastal area of Mandapam and the adjacent islands are being declared as a part of the 'Marine Park'.

Thus, Mandapam occupies not only an important place in the fishery map of India, but also it attracts, scientists, students and pilgrims from far and near either for academic research, spiritual solitude or for bread.