

# Changing Roles of Fisherwomen of India- Issues & Perspectives

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## Introduction

*"I have only one request,  
I do not ask for money, although I have need of it,  
I do not ask for meat. I have only one request,  
And all I ask is that you remove the road block from my path"*  
(Quoted by Samantha, 1995)

This is the cry of an African woman. The fact that women, despite the slow but emerging recognition of their silent contribution, still face stumbling blocks in their path towards development, makes this cry reverberated around the world. India, having agriculture as the main occupation and women playing a significant and crucial role in it, is also not an exception. In agriculture, their contributions are at least quantified and are found to be about 50 per cent whereas in fisheries, their picture is not at all visible and their cry is not louder enough to catch the attention of the outer world.

According to a United Nation's report women perform 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the world's work, receive only 10% of the world's income and own only 1% of the total assets. The transformation of fisheries sector, mainly brought by mechanization, has engendered multi-faceted changes in the role and contribution of fisherwomen.

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A study was conducted by Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Kochi to review the role being played by women in marine fisheries sector of India. Both primary and secondary data was collected and analysed. In pre-harvest sector sufficient information could not be derived hence investigations were made in selected area using PRA and interactive sessions.

### Indian scenario

There are about 0.5 million fisher households located all along the Indian coast and a total of 3 million fisherfolk inhabiting the coastal villages. The average number of sea going fishermen is 282 in a coastal village. Out of the 1.2 million fisherfolk in post harvest sector, women occupy a considerable proportion of more than 0.5 million (Sathiadhas *et al.*, 1998). They play a significant role in the pre and post- harvest operations in capture fisheries while their presence is conspicuous in all the stages of culture fisheries. Their role in household management is far higher than the women of other sectors. Majority of the labour force in the pre-processing and processing plants of shrimp are women. Women also occupy a very good proportion of the workforce in export oriented processing of cuttlefish, lobsters, and finfish varieties.

In Tamilnadu, women engage themselves in seaweed collection in addition to the traditional jobs of fish curing, marketing, net making and prawn seed collection. Salt-pans are another major sector, which employs a lot of women in Tamilnadu, where the ratio of women to men is 4:1. In Andhra Pradesh, the main occupation of women include collecting fish, and molluscan shells in addition to their contribution in fish drying, curing, marketing, shrimp processing and net making. In West Bengal, fishermen spend only little time in actual fishing and engage themselves in net making, which in other states is dominated by women. Women from communities other than fisherfolk carry out fish drying and curing. In Maharashtra women play a major role in fish marketing and control

the entire fisheries economy revolving around Mumbai. In Gujarat women mostly do the handling and processing activities.

In Lakshadweep, particularly Minicoy, the major fishery products known as *masmin*, *riha*, and *akru* of tuna are produced mainly by women. However, the overall structural changes in the marine fisheries sector brought about by mechanization, extensive use of ice in local markets and export oriented development efforts have dislodged a good proportion of women from employment sectors like fish drying, curing, dry fish trade and net making. The scope of providing alternate employment for more women in the sector and thereby invigorating their socio-economic progress as well as the growth of marine fishery sector remains unexplored.

#### Direct contribution of fisherwomen in marine sector

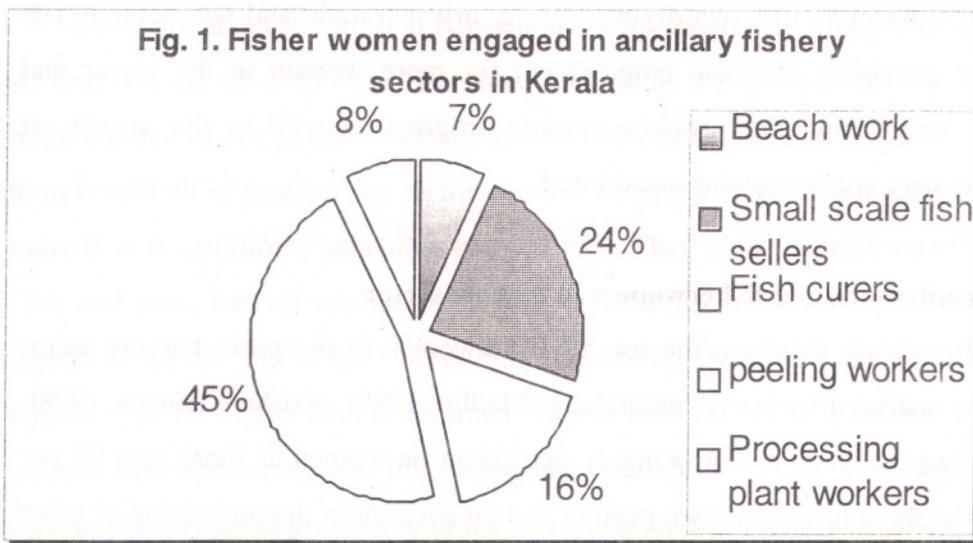
In capture fisheries, the role of fisherwomen in the post –harvest sector had been analyzed by many researchers (Madhu, 1989; Krishna Srinath, 1998). The entire processing sector is highly dependent on women as more than 90 per cent of the work force in prawn peeling and 70 per cent in the processing of other fishery products are constituted by them (Table 1).

Table 1. Direct contribution of fisher women in marine sector

Sl. No.	Category	Total no. of workers	No. of women workers	Percentage
1	Beach workers	20,843	5,612	26.92
2	Small scale fish traders	67,527	20,220	29.94
3	Fish curers	21,103	14,028	66.47
4	Peeling workers	43,620	39,397	90.31
5	Processing plant workers	11,051	6,504	58.85
Total		1,61,144	85,761	53.22

(Source: Velayudhan, 1999)

Out of the total working fisherwomen, maximum number are engaged in prawn peeling sector followed by the small scale fish traders (Fig.1). Women also play a major role in fish marketing (small scale trading), value addition, and aquaculture practices. Still as in any other state, many constraints including occupational segregation and wage discrimination are noticed among fisherwomen of Kerala.



### Indirect contribution of fisherwomen in marine sector

In a fisher's family, the responsibility of household management -food, childcare, education, health, sanitation, financial management and the responsibility of getting and repaying debts will be mostly on the women's shoulders. The burden of her responsibilities doubles in the off-season. After mechanization and intensification of multi-day fishing, the household responsibility of fisherwomen has increased to a greater extent. The Daily routine diagram (Fig.2), of a fish trading woman of Edava, Kollam district of Kerala who purchases her fish from a traditional landing centre and sells at local market reveals the magnitude of strain in her day-today life.

Besides, in many places women are running petty shops, selling different inputs needed for fishing and other household articles. In Vizhinjam landing centre of Kerala the diesel supply units for boats are the monopoly of women. Mobile food selling units run by women in landing centres serve the purpose of supplying break fast and snacks to fishermen. The extent of involvement of fisherwomen in household management in the districts of Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam are shown in Table 2.

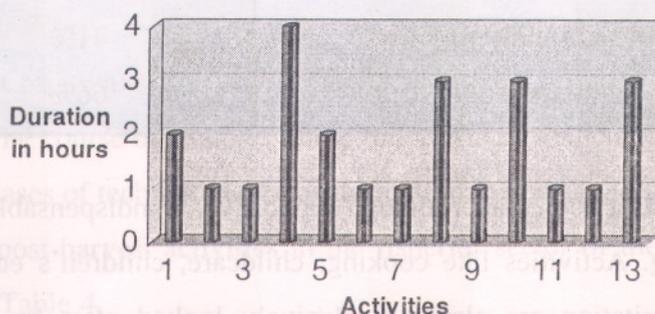


Fig.2. Daily routine diagram of a fish trading woman in Kerala

Sl. No	Activities	Time	Duration (hrs)	Sl. No	Activities	Time	Duration (hrs)
1)	Cooking	4-6 am	2	8)	Fish trading	4-7 pm	3
2)	Landing centre	6-7 am	1	9)	Shopping for grocery	7-8 pm	1
3)	Travelling	7-8 am	1	10)	Household activities	8-11 pm	3
4)	Fish trading	8-12 am	4	11)	Rest	11-12 pm	1
5)	House hold activity	12-2 pm	2	12)	Drinking water collection	12-1 am	1
6)	Landing centre	2-3 pm	1	13)	Sleeping	1-4 am	3
7)	Traveling	3-4 pm	1				

**Table 2. Indirect contribution of Fisher women in marine sector**

Sl. No.	Activities	Contribution of women
1	Cooking	96%
2	Childcare & education	89%
3	Family health	84%
4	Sanitation	81%
5	Finance (including repayment of debts)	54%
6	Petty shops in landing centre	56%
7	Diesel supply for boats	41%
8	Mobile food units	66%

Women's role as a homemaker, though supportive, is indispensable for the men to go for fishing. Activities like cooking, childcare, children's education, family health and sanitation are almost exclusively looked after by women. However an examination of the demographic development indicators like population growth rate, sex ratio and infant mortality among the fisherfolk reveal the prevalence of gender injustice and socio-economic marginalisation. ( Table 3.)

**Table 3. Demographic development parameters among fisherwomen of Kerala**

Parameters	Kerala	Fishing villages
Population growth rate	1.9	2.3
Sex ratio	1032	972
Infant mortality	40	85

Source: Report of State Planning Board, Kerala (1997-2002)

The much-acclaimed social progress in Kerala, also indicated by surplus females, has found to be lacking among fishing communities. The well being of fisherwomen measured on the basis of capabilities like morbidity, longevity, nutrition and education has been found to be low (Pushpangadan and Murugan, 2000). Even though neo- natal death is more among male children, the high population growth rate among fisherfolk is not reflected in the proportion of girl children. It leads to the assumption that higher rate of mortality is among girl children. The dowry system and marrying the girls off at an early age devalues girl child and the resulting neglect can be one of the possible reasons behind this.

### **Trend in role transformation of fisherwomen**

The course of changes in the role of fisherwomen has traversed during the major phases of technological transformation in household management as well as pre and post-harvest activities in the fisheries sector of the state is assessed and given in Table 4.

The indirect role women play are concerning decision making, financial management, family welfare, net making, running petty shops and mobile food supply for the workers at the landing centres and fish markets. The more direct involvement of women are in post-harvest related activities *viz.* peeling, fish trading, export oriented works, making value - added products, small scale entrepreneurship, fish curing, etc.

Table 4. The trend in role transformation of fisherwomen in Kollam and Trivandrum districts of Kerala after the Indo-Norwegian project

Sl. No.	Role Items	Extent of involvement of women during technological transformation		
		Traditional (1952-62)	Motorization & Mechanisation (1962-98)	Multi-day fishing (1998-)
1	<b>Indirect roles</b>			
	a) Decision making	++	+++	++
	b) Financial management	++	+	++
	c) Family welfare	++	+	+++
	d) Net making	+++	++	+
	e) Petty shops	#	++	++
	f) Mobile food supply	#	++	+
2	<b>Direct roles</b>			
	a) Peeling	+	++	+++
	b) Fish trading	+++	++	+
	c) Export oriented processing	*	+	++
	c) Landing centre oriented works	+++	++	+
	d) Value addition	+	++	++
	e) Small scale entrepreneurship	+++	++	+
f) Fish curing				

+ poor involvement

# Not available

++ medium involvement    +++ high involvement

\* Nil / meager

The general improvement in the well being of the fisherfolk brought about by the twin forces of motorisation and mechanization have lessened the burden of womenfolk to a great extent by freeing them from taking up responsibilities of supplementary income generation, debt management etc., in addition to household management. This change is quiet characteristic of womenfolk in any society that ascends the class hierarchy. The increase in the income of the

husband has made the role of wife redundant or confined to that of a typical housewife. Her role in decision making has declined (Shet, 1994) probably because she is not having any stake in the earnings of her husband. Though the financial dependence makes her less assertive, uncharacteristic of an empowered woman who ought to have an equal say in the affairs of the household, she is able to lead a less stressful life.

However, the advent of multi-day fishing in recent times seems to have altered this pattern. Adoption of modern equipment like fishfinder, GPS, and mobile phone has enabled the fishermen not only to venture for deep-sea fishing but also to extend fishing trips up to 10 days. In Kerala the gross earnings realised for a multi-day trawler per trip is Rs. 24935 with the operating cost of Rs.15433 (Kumar and Sathiadhas, 2001). Though the family income is more, the continued absence of fisherman for a long time forces her to bear more responsibilities.

A number of interventions both by government and non-government agencies have acted as catalysts in this process of transformation. The social mobilization (and consequently unionization later) among the fisherfolk in Kerala for the first time was spearheaded by an agitation led by a *Mahila Samajam* in Trivandrum district for a statutory right to use public transport by women fish vendors (Meynen, 1989).

The research institutes like CMFRI has been in the forefront of developing women-friendly technologies like *Mahima* shrimp feed, which was popularized through new models of women empowerment. Various extension interventions for propagating mariculture technologies among the women fisher-folk have been attempted at coastal villages of south-west coast (Immanuel *et al.*, 2000). Nevertheless, the follow-up studies have indicated that the sustainability of most of these interventions is at stake.

## Major issues confronting the fisherwomen of capture fisheries

### *Social issues*

In a fishers' community women either like taking the roles of a housewife or go for some income generating occupation. The various social issues concerned by the fisherwomen and their perception towards the issues were ranked and given below in Table 5. In a traditional fisher's society, women's social status is often referred with respect to that of her husband. When a fisherwoman goes for some job, it will be mostly counted as the inability of her husband to support the family. Because of the same reason the women usually do not enjoy the freedom to go for some work or interact with change agents, especially when the agents are males. Nevertheless, few exceptions are there who overcome the barriers of society in the struggle for existence and they, in due course develop behavioral modification, characteristic of androgyny (Viswanathan, 1996).

**Table 5. Perception of fisherwomen towards various social issues**

Sl. No.	Issues	Rank
1	Poor social status	I
2	Poor social acceptance	II
3	Lack of representation in fishery cooperatives and other local bodies	II
4	Heavy dowry system	IV
5	Lack of platform to express	V
6	Restriction to go for work	VI
7	Men do not take supportive role	VII
8	Less interaction with development agencies	VIII
9	Division of labour and wage discrimination	IX

2. The respondents did not perceive division of labour and wage discrimination as important. This problem can be either due to society's wrong concepts about male- female roles or based on the level of physical ability and most of the fisherwomen found to be supporting the latter view. Fisherwomen were found to lack an overall picture of their works environment and accept whatever meager facilities provided to them. The tendency of profit being fixed as the sole motivation coupled with autocratic style of management prevailing in majority of the seafood processing centres of Kerala as reported by Sassi and Ramachandran (1998) could have worsened the extent of marginalisation of women labourers.

#### *Economic issues*

Fisherwomen in any work sector can be found occupying the position of a sub category or performing supportive roles. At landing centers women engaged in fish drying collects small sized by-catches. Though highly nutritive and helps to meet the nutritive demands of the low income groups, by-catches fetch very low price and a poor profit margin for the women. In Kerala there are 2703 fish markets comprising 185 wholesale and 2518 retail outlets which includes 1126 wayside markets (Anon., 2000). In markets women usually sell low value products in a remote corner. Wholesalers among women are very few. Exceptions like the women dry fish traders operating at *Chala* market in Trivandrum, who procure the products in bulk from markets as distant as Mangalore, are very few (Muhammed, 2000). The major economic constraints ranked by the respondents are given in Table 6.

Though many of the respondents rated poor income as one of the major economic problems, it is only symptomatic of some other institutional issues. Lack of alternate employment in off-seasons lead to many complications. They are forced to borrow money usually from private moneylenders at very high interest rate of 10% /month or even more. Though they work hard in peak season,

they can hardly pay back the money, as it would have doubled by then. The vicious circle of indebtedness continues. The problem is not the lack of opportunities but is of unawareness about the avenues.

**Table 6. Perception of fisherwomen towards various economic issues**

Sl. No.	Issues	Rank
1	Lack of fool proven marketing channel	I
2	Poor income	I
3	Improper saving scheme	III
4	Lack of marketing information	III
5	Poor working capital	V

Women in value addition sector indicated low price for products and lack of assured markets as main constraints. They sell their products to local petty shops and house holds. The improper information support on markets and lack of sound distribution networks are the reasons behind this. The exploitation by middlemen is a menace in markets. The non-availability of raw material in off-season makes the regular supply of the products difficult, which also hinder the prospects of a consistent market. But there are a few groups, which circumvent these problems. The Azhikode fisherwomen welfare society is a case in point.

*Product development and market diversification: Azhikode fisherwomen welfare society*

The society was established four years back under the auspices of the MATSYAFED of Government of Kerala. A total number of 9 women, who have undergone training on improved method of producing value added fish products under Integrated Fisheries Project (IFP), are engaged in value addition of fish, shrimp, clam etc. Initially they had a marketing outlet under the MATSYAFED.

Supply of raw materials is entrusted with the menfolk from their own families. They collect fresh raw materials from landing centres directly and the items are processed within four hours, giving much attention to the quality standards. The high quality of the products helped them to fetch good price and assured market. Now they supply the products to leading super markets and even export agents. Assured quality of products, integrity of group members, training in improved and hygienic methods of handling and above all their enthusiasm helped the group to reap success.

#### *Institutional issues*

It is seen from Table 7 that the inaccessibility to credit was perceived to be the most important institutional issue by the respondents. The fisherwomen are often denied credit from public sector institutions due to lack of ownership of assets. The too-formal administrative procedures for obtaining credit also make it inaccessible to small-scale entrepreneurs.

**Table 7. Perception of fisherwomen about institutional issues**

Sl. No.	Problems	Ranks
1	Inaccessibility to credit	I
2	Improper saving schemes	I
3	Lack of location specific development projects	II
4	Shift in focus from local markets to export markets	IV
5	Lack of job security	V
6	Insufficient information support	VI
7	Improper supply of production inputs	VII
8	Lack of professional expertise in NGOs	VIII
9	Improper legislative support	IX

Most of these institutions do not have safe saving schemes suitable for fisherwomen or they come forward to introduce innovative schemes. In this context it is worth mentioning the statement of one of the bank managers - "I don't want to create a headache unnecessarily." The gravity of the problems faced by the fisherwomen in this regard is exemplified by the case of Omana.

*Easy Duck before the private money lenders: Case of Omana*

*"Omana is a peeling worker in a private peeling centre at Aroor in Kerala (the area with maximum number of peeling sheds and peeling workers). She has been working for the past 20 years and in season she works for about 8-10 hours per day. She is paid Rs. 3/kg (one basin full) of prawn and her monthly income ranges from Rs. 750 to 800. But there is a general complaint of underpayment - a basin full of prawn mostly weighs more than one kg. The rate paid by the peeling shed owner, though seems to be low, is surprisingly higher than the standard rate fixed by the Government. (The present rate of Rs.2.50/kg. was fixed almost twenty years back). Further, the present rate does not reflect the commensurate increase in wage rate of other sectors in agriculture and industry. The notoriously tedious job provides her poor income without any other benefits like provident fund, pension, accident insurance etc.*

*Omana has got four girl children and two boys and from whatever she is earning she wanted to save a small portion for the future. The only option she knew was a private chit company near her house where her fellow workers also deposit their savings. For one and a half years she deposited the money at the rate of Rs 150 per month. One fine morning the chit owner vanished. Omana along with other ladies made all efforts to get the money back. They even filed a suit but everything went in vein".*

This is not an isolated case. Quiet often it happens, but they have no other way. The problem of unawareness about the safe saving schemes can be solved.

But the formality of procedures coupled with lack of awareness makes them shy of starting accounts in either Post Offices or similar financial institutions. The chit agents collect the money personally and all the transactions can be done orally. None of the financial institutions under the government sector have this much flexibility in their operations.

Projects designed by development agencies are often not suitable to specific locations. Quite often, some non-fishery enterprises may prove more remunerative than fishery enterprises. In such circumstances organizing fisherwomen groups for starting a plethora of fishery enterprises will in no time become lifeless.

As in any other low-income group, the infrastructure facilities are also not satisfactory. Even the basic amenities like drinking water facility, toilets, rest rooms etc. are not provided in the work places.

Though NGOs take some effort for promoting small-scale entrepreneurial development in culture fisheries, they are not receiving proper attention. It is disheartening to note that women spending their lifetime as peeling workers are still not included under the category of fisherwomen by the state government and are not provided with benefit of any of the welfare measures.

#### *Technological issues*

Technologies, as technique, affect the ways in which people do things and as a system of knowledge, affect the ways of thinking and in the same way they are not value free or gender neutral (Mukherjee, 1983). The extent of technological marginalisation experienced by fisherwomen is evident from the perception of majority that technological progress has lead to unemployment (Table 8).

**Table 8. Perception of the fisherwomen towards various technological issues**

Sl. No.	Technological issues	Rank
1	Technological progress leading to unemployment	I
2	Lack of innovative equipment/ method	II
3	Lack of technical advice/supervision	III
4	Lack of training opportunities	IV

Women engaged in various fishery occupations are technologically marginalised to a greater extent e.g. in clam fishery a metal toothed dragging net (*Palli*) for collecting clam is introduced which is very heavy and women can not handle it. As a result the male workers go to deeper areas and collect huge quantities in less time outsmarting the women clam collectors. The negative impact of the technological changes on the small-scale entrepreneurs is often ignored.

The women fish traders form a good proportion of petty fish traders (in Kerala out of the 67,527 small scale fish traders 20,220 are women). The fish trading women face severe competition from not only the menfolk who use two-wheelers in domestic marketing but also the agents of the export companies resulting in the non availability of quality finfishes which commands high consumer preference in local markets. Currently, they also face the same fate of the net makers who have almost vanished from the scene.

The root causes for these problem lies somewhere else. Why the women are not forth coming to use two wheelers? The fish marketing ladies of Kerala generally belong to middle aged and above categories for which it would look funny to ride bicycle or mopeds. If so why youngsters are not there in the field who could have made such an attempt? It is against the social values of the fisherfolk to send an unmarried, young girl (*komary*) for fish trade. Establishment

of fish booths for women at retail level in prominent places including markets, preferential allocation of prominent place in markets, etc. can be tried. But even in Kerala where women form major chunk of extension personnel farmwomen are not generally contacted by extension workers (Menon and Bhaskaran, 1988). This may be the reason for the delayed /not even delayed reaching of technological inputs to fisherwomen.

### *Personal issues*

When the women fishers were asked about the problems they experience at personal level, they listed a number of issues. It may be seen from Table 9 that ergonomic problems were rated as the most important issue. This is not surprising as the working climate for most of the fisherwomen is deplorable whether it is a market or a peeling shed. The case of a peeling worker, Mrs. Gracy highlights the poignancy of this problem

### *Poor ergonomics taking its toll: Case of Gracy*

*Gracy was working in a private peeling center for the past fifteen years. Like her fellow workers she also had to do the job in squatting position on the wet floor, which may be often slippery. Once she fell down and had a serious fracture in her leg. She had to spend a huge amount for treatment for which she received no support from the owner. Now Gracy, who is unable to do any work, is idling at home. Complaints of arthritis, skin disorders, back pain are common among the peelers. (Arpita, 2000). Even though MPEDA has stipulated stringent guidelines for scientific design of peeling sheds minimizing the hardships of peelers, majority of the pre-processing centers have not adopted it. The various labour welfare measures are also not provided to mitigate their suffering, as they are not in the organised sector.*

**Table 9. Perception of the fisherwomen towards various personal issues**

Sl. No.	Personal Issues	Ranks
1	Ergonomic problems	I
2	Lack of alternate employment opportunity in off season	II
3	Lack of access to change agencies	II
4	Lack of ownership of assets	IV
5	Irresponsible nature of counterparts	V
6	No time to look after household activities	VI
7	No time / mind set to keep social contacts	VII
8	Low literacy rate	VIII
9	Lack of political commitments	VIII

Poor access to change agents is not due to their dearth but their apathy towards their mission. Simultaneously the change agents concentrate on menfolk who are more socially visible by virtue of the traditional patriarchal social system.

Lack of ownership of assets is also discussed under institutional problems, which is an outcome of the social marginalization. Irresponsible nature of spouse indicated by alcoholism, gambling etc. was another major complaint. Interestingly this was found related with the introduction of mechanization. Lack of time to look after household affairs and keeping social contacts create some imbalance both in the family and society but these are minor consequence of the technological as well as social marginalisation, which are to be dealt with appropriate measures. Low literacy rate and poor political commitment of fisherwomen seems to be very minor in their view, but are most important factors underlying the above issues.

#### *Psychological issues & methodological issues*

All the above issues cannot be solved by equipping or empowering

women as the issues are overlapping and are of course linked with the problems and prospects of their counter parts. Even though some important psychological as well as methodological factors were identified which needs attention.

A fisherwomen should develop interest in and desire to seek changes in existing practices related to farm and home and adopt changes as and when practical and feasible *i.e.* she should get enough opportunities for developing her *innovation proneness*. The perception of women on the improved practices could be marred by the results of their past experience and knowledge. Thus, the extent of *risk orientation* is highly important in leading a successful career. *Self-awareness* shows that the level of awareness a fisherwoman has about her potentials and drawbacks, which is directly related with entrepreneurial skill development. An individual's orientation towards achievement of maximum economic benefits in his or her profession indicates the extent of *economic motivation*.

Even the most conservative program planner seems to be convinced that any development program should be charted out taking these issues as a main concern of the program. Here the role of HRD programs is to be mentioned separately. HRD training, interactive discussion sessions on successful cases, different motivation techniques and above all close monitoring and follow up- all in a participatory mode are to be taken seriously while implementing development programs.

Many of the research works / development programs aimed at the empowerment of women themselves are gender biased which indicates some *methodological bias*. The objective of most of these efforts will be women oriented, attempting to give autonomy to the women. These programs forget their counter parts or treat them as a separate entity. For example impact of mechanization on fisherwomen is analysed from the women's angle. According to Shet (1994) women have less decision making power in the mechanized sector. In

all these cases the role of husbands as an intermediary as well as impact point in the change process remains under investigated. In other words an integrated approach is necessary for a sustainable development. The role perception of fisherwomen is to be studied along with the role expectation of their husbands to arrive at meaningful solutions. Even then as Muylwijk (1995) said, women themselves have to decide which aspects are more important to them and what mode of approach they need. If the need felt is an integrated approach, then autonomy means integration.

### **Conclusion**

An improvement in the fisher's economy alone cannot be taken as the symbol of development. Empowerment of the individuals, both male and female members should be assured which gains significance in the context of ever changing technological options in marine fisheries. There are many areas in capture fisheries sector with ample scope for employing fisherwomen. Currently, there are about 50 factories in the country manufacturing *agar agar* and *algin*, for which seaweed is the only source. Now 60-70 per cent of the industrial need is met by imports. The seaweed farming technology developed by CMFRI can not only reduce the dependence on imports but also create substantial employment opportunities especially for women. Several mariculture technologies ensure enough scope for accommodating women in large numbers. In inland fisheries, the total production has increased ten fold over four decades, while that was only four times in capture fisheries (Gopakumar, 1998), which indicates the scope for generating more employment avenues in culture fishery enterprises like backyard prawn hatchery, integrated finfish culture, crab culture/fattening and shrimp culture in coastal villages. Although attempts have been made to achieve convergence in the sector by various government departments and agencies, the possibilities of social and economic development through incorporating more

women participation has not yet been successful. More effort is to be put towards filling the gaps in program planning rather than program implementation. The various social, psychological, institutional, and economic issues challenging empowerment of fisherwomen have to be seriously taken into consideration while chalking out new development strategies. Researchers also have to pay sufficient attention for identifying the needs of fisherwomen and thereby generating women- friendly technologies.

Women empowerment and thereby the community development through combined efforts of men and womenfolk requires a holistic approach. As Amartya Sen (2001) has rightly observed *"there are no good reasons to abandon the understanding that the impact of women empowerment in enhancing the voice and influence of women does help to reduce gender inequality of many different kinds, and can also reduce the indirect penalty that men suffer from the subjugation of women"*.

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