



### G. Luther

- Designation at retirement : Principal Scientist
- Period of service: 1957-1994

## Some events of my research career in CMFRI

*What golden moments could be there for a researcher on fish and fishery resources than when he could come out with something new on the resource he was dealing with?*

*When I joined the CMFRI on 5-8-1957 investigations on grey mullets (Mugilidae) was assigned to me as part of my duties. The shift from the Plankton world to this group was both exciting and strenuous, particularly under the ever inquisitive, exuberant and demanding Dr. S. Jones, the Director of the Institute.*

*Taxonomic identity of grey mullets with its array of species was both elusive and baffling. As if that was not enough, soon I got stuck up with the true identity of a food item spuriously looking like "Polychaete moults" as found in literature, forming a significant portion of the gut contents of some individuals. After dauntless effort over a long period, a satisfactory*

solution emerged based on the habit of the Arctic shark shedding its gill rakers in winter. Shaking vigorously a boiled head of a mullet in a dishful of water, lo! the item that puzzled me till then was there in the dish. This focused light on the habit of "shedding of gill raker processes in grey mullets [J.M.B.A.I. 1965,6(2)]. It was heartening to note that this finding triggered further investigations in India and elsewhere. Persistence, sure, will yield dividends.

When my studies could establish the little known wolf herring *Chirocentrus nudus* as the most dominant one all along the Indian coast compared with *C. dorab*, then known to be the sole representative of the genus, my joy knew no bounds. Further investigations brought to light the remarkable variations in growth rate, size at maturity, spawning behaviour, etc., between the sexes of both the species, which grow to size of 60-100cm, for the first time.

My report on whitebait anchovies in 1972 brought to light that *Stolephorus devisi*, not *S. heterolobus*, forms one of the two dominant species of the whitebait anchovy fishery in India. This observation, however, found no acceptance by the leading investigators of that time albeit working along the same stretch of the west coast of India till the DANIDA (FAO) Scientists confirmed my contention in 1981.

I was fortunate to have two able scientific associates for investigating the survival capacity of whitebait anchovy species in captivity by cage

culture in the sea (Vizhinjam Bay) as well as in large fibre-glass tanks in the laboratory. Our findings that *S. buccaneeri* (*Encrasicholina punctifer*) and *S. devisi* (*E. devisi*) can withstand captivity for about three and two months respectively was appreciated as a world record at the workshop on 'Tuna Baitfish in the Indo-Pacific Region' held in Honiara, Solomon Islands (Australia) during 11-13 December 1989, to which I was invited to participate.

The lesser sardine (*Sardinella fimbriata*) fishery along the north Andhra coast which lasts for 8-9 months is characterized by early juveniles in the beginning and by sub-adults at the close of the season. This fishery season coincides with the clockwise movement of the surface water mass in the Bay of Bengal. This coincidence suggests movement of *S. fimbriata* away from the Bay waters to spawn elsewhere in the eastern region.

Career wise, well, the initial period was not that memorable, as I had to remain in the same post for over 10 years. At last my career began to look up with my induction to the Agricultural Research Service in 1975, thanks to the ICAR Society and the Director CMFRI. I retired as Principal Scientist in December 1994.

The early period of my research career (1957-62) was spent at the CMFRI Head Quarter at Mandapam camp, which provided an ideal research atmosphere, inculcating in me a sense of discipline, punctuality and hard work. My posting to Port Blair (Andamans) (1962-64) to start a

*research centre, and being in-charge of the same enabled me to gain all round experience. Back to Head Quarter, and being associated with the MBAI as an officer bearer in various capacities gave me rich experience in the publication of scientific material.*

*My visit to the Marine Laboratory, Aberdeen, U.K. during October - November 1977 for Ship Board Training on the Research Vessel EXPLORER under UNESCO Programme and the varied experiences I gained there are unforgettable. The invitation extended to me by the Government of Australia to participate (which I did) in the work shop, referred to earlier is, in effect, an honour to the CMFRI for the quality work being done at the Institute.*