

TRADITIONAL FISH TRAPPING PRACTICES ALONG ENAYAM COAST OF KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU

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(Accepted 18 June 2017)

ABSTRACT : The study was conducted at Enayam (Lat. 77° 11' E; Long. 8° 13' N) fishing villages of Kanniyakumari district of Tamil Nadu with the objectives of understanding the present status of trap fishery of Enayam revealed that fisherman of Enayam have updated their knowledge to design a Non-collapsible trap suitable to capture finfishes using MS rods and Polyethylene webbing as trap materials. Seven fish traps along with 20 lobster traps per fishing trip to a fishing ground depth ranging from 8 to 10 m located 1.5 km off the coast of Enayam deployed by using a FRP carrier *Vallam* of 9 m OAL. Subsequently catamarans of 7 m OAL were found engaged for day to day fishing activities. Each fish trap was baited either with 4 to 5 kg of broken bivalves or crabs. The traps were observed after a soaking period of 24 hrs by engaging a catamaran. It was found in the study area that there is organized trap fishing for seven months in a year from October to April clearly indicated that this period is relatively calm with less current action along the coast of Enayam, which facilitated the operation of fish traps. The domination of members of the family Siganidae in the trap fishery revealed the vulnerability of the members of this family to trap fishing.

Key words : Fish trapping practices, Kanyakumari.

INTRODUCTION

Traps are simple, passive fishing gears that allow fish to enter and then make them difficult to escape. It is a conventional and versatile gear and is a suitable device to fish even in rough fishing ground with rocks and corals (Rajan & Meenakumari, 1982). It is one of the oldest fishing methods and is widely practiced throughout the world in both tropical and temperate regions. It is generally used in small-scale fishery (Buesa, 1965; George, 1973). Traps can vary, from simple structures such as rock corals which are capable of holding various fish species passing by; to highly specialized device like mechanical trap where in the entry of fish trigger a mechanism for the closure of the trap there by ensuring the capture of the fish that entered. They are made with various materials like wood, bamboo, steel, iron, netting, *etc.* and have one or more opening or entrances. They are usually set on the bottom, with or without bait. The fishes captured by traps and pots include inshore fishes such as eels, terapons, wrasses, sea bass, breams, croakers, rock lobster, crabs and deeper water fish and shellfish such as snappers, grunts, trevallies, squid, octopus and prawns, hermit crabs and shrimps. Among different groups of fishes perches are found to be easily vulnerable to traps.

As far as India is concerned trap fishing is one of the indigenous methods of fishing and the term pot and trap are interchangeably used by fisherman and scientists.

Colachal trap made of Palmyra leaf-stalk is used as traditional gear in south-west coast of India (Miyamota and Shariff, 1961). In the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay of Tamilnadu, fish traps, locally known as 'koodu' are extensively used in this area of perch fishery. Catching ability of the traps mainly depends on the shape of the trap, though various other factors also influence it (Munro, 1974; Recksiek *et al*, 1991). Rajan *et al* (1988) reported that trap of semi-cylindrical shape performed better than traditional traps used by fisherman of south-west coast of India. Mandapam and Keelakarai coast of Ramanathapuram district and Enayam coast of Kanniyakumari district of Tamilnadu are found to be ideal for trap fishing as these areas are found either with corals or rocky substratum. Therefore, naturally organized trap fishing presently exists in these areas but till date no study has been conducted in documenting the trap fishery along Enayam coast. Hence, the present investigation was undertaken to know the status of trap fishing this coast.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted at Enayam (Lat. 77° 11' E; Long. 8° 13' N) fishing villages of Kanniyakumari district of Tamil Nadu (Fig. 1), where there is organized trap fishing for seven months in a year from October to April. Seven fish traps along with 20 lobster traps per fishing trip to a fishing ground located 1.5 km off the coast of Enayam deployed by using a FRP carrier *Vallam*