



Historical Development of Fisheries and Life of Fishermen in Bangladesh: A Qualitative Overview from Ancient to Contemporary Period

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received Date: 15/July/2023	Fisheries is one of the most contributing sectors to the national economy of Bangladesh. The geographical location and features play an important role for the availability of fishes in Bangladesh. A huge number of people are directly or indirectly dependent on fishing. But the fish producers of this country are marginalized in their life and livelihood in the phases of history. The fishermen in this coastal region have historical customs and culture. But deprivation in all sphere of social and economic perspectives is the common feature of their life. The steps taken by government and non-government organizations are not able to root out marginality in fisher's life. The objective of this study is to provide an overview of the fisheries sector and modes or phases of life of the fishermen communities of Bangladesh in the long term historical perspective from ancient to contemporary time period. The study would be accomplished in the historical method. The historical methodology would be applied for the explanation of historical development of fisheries sector and the life of fishermen.]
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Introduction

Bengal is a delta surrounded by lots of water bodies around its territory. This geographical feature has been provided the region plenty of water resources which is the sources of its development and flourishment or reason of sorrows at all ages from pre- historic age to modern era. Fish is such an important part of Bangali food chart that the people of this region is traditionally called '*Mache Vate Bangali*'. Consequently the fishing profession like other parts of the world had developed in Bengal for the nutritional, financial and professional value of fishes. Today 14% of the total population of present Bangladesh are directly or indirectly dependent on fishing for their livelihood.

From ancient to modern age, the fisheries sector and fishermen have gone through numerous development process. But this sector is not always patronized similarly. Especially the fish producers, the fishermen community people have been marginalized in their life and livelihood in various stages. The ancient '*Kaibarta*' fishers were oppressed by the supreme authority of the kingdom and were placed at the lowest stage of '*Kaulinism*'. In the colonial period, the fisheries and fishermen both had to face the colonial deprivation policy. After partition of 1947, a new socio-economic structure did not bring notable changes for the development of this sector. After independence of 1971, in Bangladesh some steps have been taken for the reconstruction of fisheries sector. But all the measures taken from ancient to modern Bengal and today's Bangladesh have not changed the life struggle of these primary producer fishermen community. They are still passing through hardship of life, social deprivation and marginalization.

The objective of the study is to reconstruct the historical development of fisheries and fishermen's life and livelihood as well as the problems of this marginalized community from ancient to modern contemporary period. Archival documents, newspaper reports etc. have been applied as primary sources and novels, books, articles, newspaper publications etc. have been used as secondary sources to accomplish the study.

Results

The present study highlights some specific results. Such as:

1. Fisheries in Bangladesh is a historically common economic sector.
2. The primary producers of fish are marginalized due to social and economic deprivation policies in ancient, colonial and modern era.
3. The fishermen communities have been lived their livelihood in a challenging ways in the historical phases of Bangladesh.
4. The government and other organizations are working for the development of fishermen communities but still they are marginalized in their life and livelihood.

Discussion

Marginalization and Marginal People

Marginalization refers to a condition of human being segregated from society which restrict people from the enjoyment of opportunity and facilities. Marginal people are deprived of freedom of choice and their personal growth. Marginalization is the prime cause of poverty and the marginal people are deprived of all sorts of social development and growth. According to theoretical framework of sociology, people become marginalized for various causes. The people due to migration or marital relation among different nations are called Ethnic Marginalization. Biological Marginalization due to physical disabilities, marginality related to age, economic marginalization due to unemployment or poverty etc. are the some types of marginality. Moreover, marginality due to lifestyle, world perspective and profession is called social marginalization (Asefa, 2000, p. 92-96). The fishermen community due to their profession and lifestyle are faced with social marginalization.

Origin of fish

From where fish came and what is its origin is an ambiguous history. But it is thought fish got its birth in the mouth of rivers and gradually it spread everywhere in the primitive age. There is difference between primitive and modern fishes. Before a fish was very large and was 4 to 5 feet tall. Fish had appendageined its body. The body bones were covered with shiny opens. The front side was round and the back side meant tale was like a rudder. Another kind of fish was like thick dish and tortoise. The larger size of fish had a body structure like arm sajoya so that the fishes can protect them from the attack of enemies. Some

fishes had big teeth. A big size fish could be 20 to 25 feet tall. Due to the natural changes, the fishes had changed their look to keep pace with nature. Many fishes had changed its opens and became stronger and sustainable. The fish bodies started to strengthen. They took sunshine. Gradually a fish got a strong, durable body structure which helped them to sustain in the turbulent waves of the seas (Nazrul, 2022, p. 22-24).

Nutrition Value of Fish

90% of the total population of Bangladesh suffer from malnourishment. Fish is the source of nutrition. It has protein oil and minerals. These notorious food is able to fulfill the demand of nutrition in human body. In the sweet water of Bangladesh, at least 272 species fishes are found where in the salty sea water 475 type of fishes have been identified. The prime elements in fish help people to prevent caries. A physically fit man needs 43.30 gram protein everyday. In it at least 15 gram non-vegetarian protein is mandatory. The main source of non-vegetarian protein is fish and fishes contain 80% of total animal protein. On an average, fishes contain 20% protein and 10 amino acids in fishes are very important for human being. The mineral salt contained in fish is important for the growth of childhood and adolescent period. Fishes with cut have huge calcium. The iron in fishes is important for human nutrition. Sea fish is the main source of Iodin. Evey year, 70% of the total population of Bangladesh lack Iodin. Among them more than half are women. Fish oil contains a kind of unsaturated fati acid- Omega 3. It helps to regulate *Anuchakrika* (Platelets) in blood of human body and so there is no possibility to stop blood vessel. Sea fish helps to reduce Cholesterol in blood and so it reduces possibility of heart attack. Moreover fish contains vitamin A and D. Evey year about 9 lacs children suffer from night blindness. As a result, about 30, 000 children get blindness every year in Bangladesh. Vitamin contained in sea fish can prevent the children from being blind and also Vitamin D prevents Richet disease of children. To form bones and to sustain the normal motion of metabolism, fish is very effective (Nazrul, 2022, p. 67-69).

Financial Value of Fisheries Sector

Fisheries contributes to about 2.46% of the total income by export. It contributes to 4. 39% to GDP and also covers about 22.76% of the agricultural sector. According to the fiscal year of 2011-12, Bangladesh produced 3.26 million metric tons fish contributing to the 60% of the total annual protein. Now annual fish intake by an individual is 17.52kg (Bijoya, 2013, p. 1).

Fish Production in Bangladesh (Contemporary Time period, 2018-2023)

Table: 1

Fiscal Year	Production (Metric Tons)
2018-19	43.84
2019-20	45.03
2020-21	46.21
2021-22	4759
2022-23	49.15

(Source: Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock

<https://mofl.gov.bd/site/page/f810be15-8722-4550-95cf-d7c683a128cd>)

Table: 2 Contribution of Fisheries in the Economy of Bangladesh

Name of the Sectors	Contribution
Annual Production of Fish (2021-22)	47.59 metric tons which is 55.42% more than that of the year of 2010-12
Fisheries contained GDP Progress of total GDP	5.74%

Total contribution of fisheries in GDP	3.57%
Agricultural GDP	26.50%
Export income from fisheries	1.24%
Fish exporting countries	More than 50 countries
Total income from fish export , 2021-22	78 thousand 42 metric tons fishes
Total income from fish export, 2021-22	78 thousand 42 metric tons fishes Total income 5 thousand 191 crore 75 lacs taka which was 26.96% more than the previous fiscal year

(Source: Fisheries Department of Bangladesh and
Bangla Tribune, 8 October, 2022)

But despite that today fishing is one of the most vulnerable sectors. The fishermen communities live from hand to mouth. As they are isolated from the mainstream, they are deprived of many life amenities (Bijoya, 2013, p. 1).

Fishermen Community according to Theoretical Framework

As human being cannot live alone, they are related to surroundings and the people living in the surrounding area form a group. All the people are not the members of a same group. The people who live side by side sustain a deep relationship among themselves. When a few number of people live in a particular place for long time, there would have some common thoughts, a sense of united tradition and a sense of deep unification. The unified lifestyle of people living in a particular territory creates a community.

According to Maciver & Page in Society refers two bases of Community- 1) Locality and 2) Community Sentiment. Every community live in a local area and this locality forms unity among the people of that particular area. The people living in the same community form a strong and unified bridge and unity among them. This unity forms a deep and inner sentiment which is called Community Sentiment. Basically when a common consciousness arises among the people living in a particular territory, a community is formed. In this formation, social coherence is important. When a group of people sustain common language, culture, norms, manners and lifestyle, there a sense of unity grows titled 'We are included in a same community'. This intimate sense of unity is a base of the formation of a community (R., 1950).

A closer relationship is found between nature and human civilization. Nature determines the means of life and culture. Culture refers to the collective actions of a human group. The colonial records show the cultural distinction of fisher's folk. The fishing castes usually worshipped the rivers which is the source of their livelihood (e.g. *Gangayes*). They used to also worship some deities for their security and protection such as *Khala-Kunari*, *Bura* and *Buri*, *Khaza-Khizi*, *PirBadar* etc. Moreover the fishers used to observe some special festival for the sustainability of their occupation like *Jalapalani*. Besides that the collective fishing action in the big rivers or sea with large size boats and nets is a common feature in Bengal. A *sarder* leads them and also solves the disputes among the fishers (Rup, 2008, p. 31-33). So the unique folk culture and collectiveness of fisher's community maintain the bases and characteristics of the formation of a community. So these traditional occupational people are determined as a community.

Condition of the Fish Producers

Fisheries sector contains 60% animal protein source and 12% of the total population of Bangladesh depend on fisheries for their livelihood in Bangladesh. It is a vital source of income and employment and a cheap source of protein. It is a sector of part time employment for 11 million people and full time for 1.4 million (According to the Department of Fisheries). But the fishermen are the most vulnerable community of Bangladesh. They are the poorest of the poor by any kind of stand and over the years. Day goes but this community's economic

condition does not change rather deteriorates gradually. A study shows that the majority of the fishermen are illiterate and literate rate means able to write name 38% of the total respondents, 46% passed primary school, 14% passed secondary school and 2% only HSC. Moreover 26% of the respondents family use *kacha* latrines (raw toilet), 52% semi *paka*, only 6% use *paka* latrines (paved toilets) and 16% had no latrines at all. 14% and 24% of the respondents go to *Kabiraj* and village doctors during any health hazards. 40% get health care from upozilla and remaining 22% go to health care center for health service (Sultan, 2015, p. 23-28).

Table: 3
The Contemporary Features of Fishermen and their Financial Condition

Subject	Statistics
Total Fishers	11 million (Part Time Fishers) 14 million Full Time Fishers 14% of the total population of Bangladesh
Per Capital Income of a Fisherman	Less than 10,000 (The people whose only work is fishing) N.B. The per capital income of a citizen of Bangladesh is now 2824 USD (2, 59, 808 Taka)

(Fisheries Department, Rashid et al, 2022 and Prothom Alo, 23 Jun, 2022)

Historical background of fishing profession

Origin and development of fishing methods

The history of fishing is as primitive as the evolution of human being. But when did men start to fish is not very well known. It is said that when people started to live on ground leaving their tree climbing lifestyle, they started to catch fishes. Human being live aside the water bodies in the meantime of climbing and ground living and at that time they took the caught fish as their foods. In the first age of fishing, people caught fishes by hands and they caught fish getting into the water. People swame in the water and catch fishes and other fishy biodiversity. Then they learned the method of birds how they paw fish. But it was not easy because of the slipperiness of fish. Very often the fishes handed out in the water for its slipperiness. In the next stage, people caught fishes by animals. For example, people tied strong ropes at the throats of *Pankouri*. The ropes were tied at *pankouri* in such a way that the birds could not eat the caught fish. When the *pankouri* fished, the fisherman just pulled up the rope and took away fishes from the beaks of *Pankouri*. People also used 'Bhodor Method' to fish. In this regard, a kind of mammal animal called *Bhodor* was used like the *pankouri* method. The *Bhodor* caught fishes with its sharp nails. Generally, big size fishes are caught in this way and the method is used for fishing in different places of the world. In the modern age, the fishers learned to fish by fishing tools. Fishing by tools had positive and negative sides. Especially at the beginning of Iron Age, they started to fish by tools. During the Renaissance period, this method got importance. At first people used stone tools to fish. In the smooth stick head stone piece was tied and throwing them, the fishes were caught. Later different changes were brought in fishing methods. Specially, due to the revolution in science and technology, the method of fishing developed. Many changes are seen in fishing at natural water sources. For example: invention of nets, trap, *barashi*, arms etc. paved the way of evolution in fishing method. Nets are the main elements of fishing in modern age. Nets are different types on catching process. For example, Trap Net, Jhaki Net, Ber Net, Thole Net etc. Moreover trap system is a way of fishing and this trap is two types- one is creating natural living space of fishes. In this way, the forests are brigaded with nets and then cleaning the jangles by boat or ship and catching fish. In the hilly areas of Bangladesh, this process is followed to fish. Net trap, soil trap, obstacle creating trap etc. are kinds of this method of fishing. Another trap is artificial trap which is made of bamboo beaks. In this trap one side as entrance is opened. Another side is closed. When fishes enter from the entrance

point, they cannot usually go out of bamboo *beaks*. *Chouka*, *Derki*, *Benki*, *Doyer* etc. are notable among the bamboo trap. *Barshi* is another trap tool. In the head of *barshi* different foods are bound to fascinate the fishes. *Barshi* are many types based on foods and area like floating, downed, huk, hand *barshi* etc. *Barshi* is mainly two types- Handi *barshi* and lock *barshi* (Nazrul, 2022, p. 25-30).

Origin and development of fishing

Fishing is a primitive profession. In the Paleolithic Age, likeable sources on fishing had not found. In Mesopotamian civilization, about 10,000 years ago fishing was a common feature along with housing. People use the same tools for fishing which they use for collecting foods. The poor people usually were involved in fishing except the sport fishers. In the paintings of cave dwellers fishers had been discovered. In France, the bones and other paintings curved in the cave had been found. Mainly the figures of Salmon and Trout fish, picture of bison, horses, reindeer and other animals had been discovered. In the Southern France at the bottom of a cave near Niaux, the effigies of Salmon and Trout fish was found. Again in the cave of Narja in material, Spain, picture of fishes and dolphins have been found. During the Mughal reign, the replacement of stone tools by house, ivory and horse brought an advancement in fishing. At the end of ice age, 10000 years ago, this fishing culture perished along with the hunting culture. People followed the retreating of ice area of the South. The melted ice area became sea like South Sea and people of Europe specially started forming culture. In this period, people started to settle in seashores mainly in summer. In Mesolithic age (10,000-6000 BC) the climatic conditions developed and forest areas expanded. So hunting being difficult deteriorated and people started to enter in early farming. Cultivation of plants and nesting up animals got priority. In this regard, fishing in Swamp and tundra area was previously covered by ice got importance. (Sahrhag, 2011, p. 5).

Fishing and Fishermen in Ancient Bengal

Fishing is a traditional profession in India. The geographical location, food habit and availability of fishes in this region have made the profession a common livelihood means. But this profession was not a respectful one in Indian society at all times of history. In this regard, researcher Rup Kumar Barman wrote, 'Fishing as a profession did not have social respect in the traditional Indian society but availability of fisheries, fish and proverbial love of the Bengalis to the tasty fisheries, of large verities had allured few traditional communities of Bengal to adopt fishing as the means of their livelihood. So the traditional fishermen communities of Bengal had established their settlements in the riverbanks or nearby the fisheries. They developed their own techniques and technologies of fishing with a long experience of making fishing implements including nets and boats. Relationship between the fishermen and the fisheries is so close that water, i.e., nature, is the determinant factor of their traditional folk culture (Rup, 2008, p. 13-14)'. Fishing was a primary or subsidiary occupation of many castes or communities in Bengal. It was the primary way of livelihood of some traditional castes. But they were also involved in agriculture and other occupations. Boating was also a traditional occupation of the fishers of Bengal. The castes or communities involved in fishing as primary or subsidiary means of livelihood are identified in the colonial sources. They are- *Bagdi*, *Bind*, *Doai*, *Ganggar*, *Ghashi*, *Gonrhi*, *Jalia Kaibartya*, *Jhalo Malo*, *MaloKeot*, *TryorRabanshi*, *Mal*, *Malla*, *Namasudra*, *Patni*, *Poundra*, *Mahaldar*, *Nikari*, *Bazari* (Muslim) etc. (Rup, 2008, p. 14-15).

History of 'Kaibarta' Nation

Kaibarta nation is the majority in number of population among the Bangali nation. Among them there are two classes- *Halik* or *Chati Kaibarta* and *Jalik Kaibarta* or fishermen. Moreover, one kind of *Kaibarta* class is also found who are involved in cook on area called *Tute Kaibarta*. *Muri Kaibarta* are involved in trade. Moreover some other *Kaibarta* are like

Patni, Malo, Jalodas and Keut etc. In North Bengal and Asam of united Bengal the *Kaibarta* nation existed. Dibbo, a leader of *Kaibarta* was a feudal of Pala kings. He revolted against Pala Empire and established *Kaibarta* rule in North Bengal defeating *Mohipala* the Second. Thus Dibbo, Rudek and Bhim worked in Barendra region. Then during the reign of Rampala, they lost their authority over it. After the Pala rule had ended in Bengal, the Sena rule started and especially in Kaulinism of Ballal Sena, the *Kaibarta* nation was considered middle staged among the four classes. In the beginning of 20th century, the *Kaibarta* nation was divided into two classes. In 1901 it is found that the people involved in agriculture are called '*Mahizya*' and the class who are involved in fishing are called *Kaibarta*. According to the census report of 1911, the *Kaibarta* are divided separately and they are the *Chaki* or *Mahizyo* and the fisherman *Kaibarta*. This people live in Asam, Orissa, West Bengal, Jharkhanda, Khulna, Jessore, Sylhet, Mymensingh, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Chittagong etc. areas. The history of *Kaivarta* is known from *Ramacharitam* by Sandakar Nondi. He wrote this book as a eulogy of Ramapala. It is thought that he was well-wisher of Ramapala and against Mahipala. But his writing is a relevant source on *Kaibarta* nation. Why *Kaivarta* rebellion took place is not clear to historians. But it is thought that the oppressive rule of Pala dynasty was responsible for this rebellion. The Buddhist Pala rulers introduced ban on fishing. So the fishermen *Kaibarta* started rebellion for their existence in traditional fishing profession. Some historians regard that the *Kaibarta* were in favor of Ramapala. But it is not proved as after rebellion Rampala did not come to the reign rather *Kaibarta* king started ruling Barendra. Sondhakar Nondi criticized the *Kaibarta* but he did not criticize the profession or ways of livelihood of *Kaibarta* people. So it is thought that at that time the fishing as a profession was not overlooked rather all types of profession were positively evaluated. In 11th and 12th century the *Kaibarta* were called '*Kebat*' and many of them were involved in literary tasks. It is said that *Saduktikarnamrito*, an ancient literary source of Bengal history was written by a *Kaibarta*. According to Haroprasad Shasri, the *Kaibarta* of Bengal were Buddhist. But the *Kaibarta* people who killed animals and caught fishes were not imitated in Buddhism. From that perspective two kinds of *Kaibarta* emerged- *Hele Kaibarta* and *Jele* (Fishermen) *Kaibarta*. He thought despite not having imitation, they were Buddhists (Nibedita, 2022, p. 16-44).

Before the *Kaibarta* did not have social status and were overlooked as '*Osprishsha*'. Even in *Ballalcharit* they were treated as lower class. But during the reign of Ballal Sena, this nation were provided status in his Kaulinism system. Because he claimed support of Subarnobanik and Zogi. Ballal Sena commented that he would bring them in lower class. So this people extended wages of their workers and a crisis of working class people in the kingdom started. As a result, Ballal Sena employed the *kaibarta* in different workplaces. He ordered them to wear Mala (Garland) and *Tilok* (Religious Symbol) to be purified and so the *Kaibarta* were loyal to Ballal Sena (Nibedita, 2022, p. 97-99).

According to Hindu Kaulinism system, profession is defined like son of a farmer is farmer, son of fishermen is fisherman, son of businessman is businessman etc. But the *kaibarta* class were not such professional parameter rather they were independent nation. Among them many were fisherman, weaver, minister, king etc. In Pala era, they were independent in profession but before that in *Baidik* era, the word '*Kaibarta*' is used for mainly fishermen class people. In present era, based on colonial writings, archival documents, gazateer etc. the *Kaibarta* people were mainly Hindus in religious practice in Hinduanization process and were provided the lower position of Sudra in caste system. In the colonial Bengal, a radical change is noticed in profession as a redistribution of resources was brought at that time. At the end of 18th century and stating of 20th century, professional changing was made. Consequently son of farmer can change profession and be in other profession of a fishermen could be a teacher or doctor etc. According to the census of 1901, the *Kaibarta* people belonged mainly in agriculture and fishing professions. But later noticeable changes took place in united Bengal. For example in Asam and Barak valley area, these people belonged to mainly farmers and fishermen. But in mid-20th century, the *Kaibarta* moved to other

professions also because of education and social consciousness expansion activities among the people (Nibedita, 2022, p. 181-183).

Fishing and Fishermen in Colonial Period

From the primitive age of Bengal, due to geographical location and various water bodies, a huge number of people have been involved in fishing. In the rural Bengal, the fishermen live in groups with a small area called 'Para' in the hereditary ways of traditional cooperative nature. Traditionally the fishermen are Hindus. In the colonial period, a census of 1872 report was observed by W.W. Hunter and he reached to a decision that the Muslims in Bengal are more involved in land activities like agriculture than that of the Hindus. Even in the workless position in agriculture, the Muslims did not engage them in fishing or other professions. To Hindus fishing was linked to their caste system by born and it was an unchanged way. So due to religious caste system, although fishing was a lower type living mode, the fishermen regarded fishing as holy profession. Kiron Chandra in his research found out 23 different nations in the Hindu fishermen of Asam and East Bengal such as: *Kaibarta, kioyat, karita, Tiwer or Rajbangshi, Das, Shikari, Malo or Jhalo, Nomosudro or Chandal, Berua, Jiyari, karal, Pod, Bindo or Bindu, Bagdi, Patni, Nadial, Mali, Hari, Gonri, Banper, Gonggata, Murari, Surahiya, Lohait* etc.

Before 19th century, the Muslims in Bengal had rigidity to engage in fishing profession. But in the early 20th century, the Muslims had been also engaged in fishing. Then the Muslim fishers engaged in such fishing activities are considered unique groups different from other communities. The Muslim fishermen were also classified in caste system although the Muslims did not follow the caste system like the Hindus. In 1930s in undivided India in Bengal the fishermen's number were the most. In undivided Bengal these two provinces respectively contained 32% and 28 % of the overall fishers in India. In the census report of 1941, it is estimated that in Bengal the number of total fishers were five hundred thousand and the number of fish sellers were three hundred thousand people who usually earned livelihood by selling fishes in different hats and bazaars. 1.6% people of all over India directly or indirectly are dependent on fishing profession. This percentage was almost 2.6% higher in East Bengal especially in Dhaka and Rajshahi areas (Mohammad, 2023).

The Financial Condition of Fishermen in Colonial period

According to K. G. Gupta, a member of Indian Civil Service, looked into the condition of the fishers in Bengal in 1906. His investigation was restricted to the areas of Bengal province which was a newly formed administrative entity but the observations he brought were relevant for the entire Bengal. His investigation report was named as 'Fisheries of Bengal' showed that a fishermen working with parties or himself earned from Rs. 4 to Rs. 12 per month which was undoubtedly a very low income compared to market commodity price (Mohammad, 2023).

An important point he brought out was that no noticeable improvement was made in fisheries sector during the colonial period of 19th century. In this time the fishes of high demand were not patronized. Again the indiscriminate fishing resulted in a great decrease in fisheries sector. The government did not provide any capital or technological support in fisheries sector. Apart from that curing and transport facilities were not being patronized by the government. Even in East Bengal where 80% of fish production was done had no storage facilities until 1960. The fishing sector was regarded as inefficient and wasteful resources. In Asia, Japan developed in fisheries due to capital, technology and other state support but lack of these facilities, fisheries did not develop in Bengal. At that time, in Bengal, the fishers confined their activities in only the inland waters like rivers, jheel, swamps and lakes (Mohammad, 2023).

During the colonial period much resistance against colonial oppression of the peasants took place in Bengal but having the same oppressive attitude in fisheries sector, not much movement took place in Bengal by the fishermen. Although due to geographical location

fishing was easier in East Bengal, fishing was also brought under the similar colonial rule. The fishers must take lease of the rights of capturing fishes in the rivers and other water bodies from the landlords. Again the government belonged to the long navigable rivers. There were some gray zones as well - where the rights were not clearly defined in these cases. Moreover, in some water bodies in Bengal fishing rights were restricted as the ownership was not defined and litigation on ownership of these waters was between the proprietor and the government. Actually the customary rights of fishing of the fishermen in inland waterways was encroached on private interest in 19th century. Thus two negative impacts were brought on the fishing of fishers. Firstly, gradually the fishers lost their rights to natural fishery sector and secondly, the exploitation by the middlemen on fishermen was ensured. Consequently Bengal saw sorts of clashes between the fishermen and middlemen and landlords in the 19th and 20th century (Mohammad, 2023).

According to the report of Dr. Naidu, a fishery officer in 1940 showed that there was more injustice on the fishers than that of the peasants regarding revenue of land. Moreover, the Report made by Land Revenue Commission of prominently known as the report of Flood Commission, showed that in Bengal the real fishermen did not have rights of fishing. Moreover, the report also showed, "there were as many sub-infeudations in the leasing of fishery rights as there was in the land revenue system." The fishery leasing system was organized in a way where the supply of fishes ensured such a rate which paved the high profit from business of middlemen. In this period, the fishermen were used as a source of extra income of owner class people. For instance, when the fishermen of Dhaka returned catching fishes from the rivers, they had to provide a portion of caught fishes to the landlord of *Narinda*. They also provide fresh fishes to police administration (Boro Babus). Moreover, the fishermen had to pay taxes to *Jalker*, owners of the fisheries based on particular rates of fishes. Again the police and officials imposed charges on the fishers when they refused to provide fishes them in free of cost. According to the Canal Act, for obstructing navigation in the rivers, the fishers would be fined fifty rupees and extra 5 rupees as delay fine for every day. For the improvement of the cultivators, although the government passed the Tenancy Acts, Agricultural Debtors Act, and Moneylenders Act to improve agrarian other cultivation, no such steps was taken by the government for the improvement of fishermen. The fishermen demanded that the dispute on the settlement of fishery between the private ownership and the government would be accomplished but their dream did not come true. Even it was not included in national discourses by the politicians. Their marginal social position, weaker strength, uneducation, state attention to land areas etc were perhaps responsible for such state apathy to the improvement of fishermen (Mohammad, 2023).

A step on fisheries was brought in 1937 by Shrish Chandra Chakraverti titled 'Bengal Fisheries Bill' but this bill was never forwarded to the selection committee and consequently it was rejected in 1941. Again a bill titled 'The Bengal Fisheries Bill, 1940' adding a clause for the settlement of fisheries with the fishers with a view to terminating the influence of middlemen was brought and intended to send for circulating to elicit opinions but later it was cancelled. The result of state apathy towards this sector and fishermen was a gradual decrease in the number of people in this occupation. For example, at the beginning of the 20th century, the number of fishers in Bengal was about 1.2 to 1.5 million but it became 0.5 million in 1930s and 1940s. In 1939, the Second World War broke out and with wartime realities, Bengal experienced a devastating famine. So this time, the Bengalis were shocked and among all other social groups, the fishermen were seriously the worst sufferers of war and famine. The war time situation deteriorated the economic condition especially for high inflation. The price of necessary goods went beyond control. So this time the fishing materials like boat, nets, iron yen etc. were very rare in India. In 1942 during the Japanese invasion in the water bodies of India, the government decided to use the boats 10 passengers carrying ability for mainly military purpose from Chandpur at the east to Kharagpur at the west. In November, 1942 two-thirds of the 70,000 registered boats were requisitioned for wartime military use. So this denial policy of the government as well as the famine of 1943

affected the fishermen of Bengal tremendously among all other social groups. Some vital surveys done on the famine by P. C. Mahalanbish, K. P. Chattopadhyay, and Ramkrishna Mukherjee and Karunamoy Mukherjee, showed that the fishermen were the worst sufferers due to the famine of 1943. The Famine Enquiry Commission Report for Bengal acknowledged that the fishermen were severely affected among the craftsmen and the artisans.

Lots of boats requisitioned and used during the wartime were not handover to the fishers. Again the government did not take steps of repairing the damaged boats in the war. In 1947, more than 10,000 boats were beyond recondition. On the other hand due to economic depression, inflation, high price of fishing materials, the poor fishermen could not be able to buy the boats or nets. The famine recovery budget for Bengal did not allow much for the rehabilitation of fishermen. Consequently, the helpless fishers could not buy nets and so the annual caught fishes in Bengal was very low. The government did not provide any actual figure of caught fishes. But according to the fish marketing report, in undivided Bengal at the last few years the yearly amount of caught fishes was not more than 12, 000 tones. This situation not only affects the fishermen's life but also the people who took fishes as their main source of protein. Most of the fisheries of undivided Bengal were situated in East Bengal. 80% of the total caught fishes supplied to Kolkata was from East Bengal before the partition of India. Among the fishers of Bengal most of them were the Hindus but in Punjab and Kashmir, majority of the fishers belonged to Muslim community during the partition of the country (Mohammad, 2023).

To get an overview of the life and livelihood of fishermen of Bengal, the novel written by Manik Bandhyopadhyaya is conspicuous. In this novel, he had brought up the socio-economic and cultural life of the fishermen living on the bank of Padma River. He wrote at the very beginning of the novel,

বর্ষার মাঝামাঝি। পদ্মায় ইলিশ মাছ ধরার মরসুম চলিয়াছে। দিনরাত্রি কোনো সময়েই মাছ ধরিবার বালাই নাই। সন্ধ্যার সময় জাহাজঘাটে দাঁড়াইলে দেখা যায় নদীর বুকে শত শত আলো অনির্বাক্ত জোনাকির মতো ঘুরিয়া বেড়াইতেছে। জেলে নৌকার আলো ওগুলো। সমস্ত রাত্রি আলোগুলি এমনভাবে নদীবক্ষের রহস্যময় স্তান অন্ধকারে দুর্বোধ্য সঙ্কেতের মতো সঞ্চারিত হয়। একসময় মাঝরাত্রি পার হইয়া যায়। শহরে, গ্রামে, রেলস্টেশনে ও জাহাজঘাটে শান্ত মানুষ চোখ বুঁবিয়া ঘুমাইয়া পড়ে। জেলেনৌকার আলোগুলো তখনো নেভে না। নৌকার খোল ভরিয়া জমিতে থাকে মৃত সাদা ইলিশ মাছ। (Manik, 2019, p. 7)

But the caught fishes of poor fishers are sold to the middlemen Mahajan's, dealer or non-fishing traders at very low price. The family members cannot enjoy the fishes rather they have to live from hand to mouth due to poverty. The life of fishermen is as usual and conventional all over East Bengal in colonial structure.

Fisheries and Fishermen in East Bengal (East Pakistan) from 1947 to 1971

In 1947, immediately after the partition of Bengal based on religion the Hindus migrated to India from East Bengal. But the lower class minority communities did not leave East Bengal. Consequently they were tremendously affected by the post partition turmoil. It was not easy for the fishermen of East Bengal to migrate to West Bengal as their occupation was confined in the geographical location of this region. The rivers and many other water bodied were the main source of their livelihood and they could not deny this reality. Moreover their skill of profession was not transferable like others. The Floud Commission report provided opinion of abolition of Zamindari system and it also recommended to settle the fisheries by the acquisition of state. 'The East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, 1950', resolved the rent-receiving intentions in fisheries. The abolition of middlemen influence in *Jalmahal* and providing them as lease to the fishermen was a long-cherished demand.

But this state acquisition did not bring any benefit to the fishermen. The previous middlemen were intact where a new type of intermediate people came to their place. The socio-economic reforms brought after partition paved the way of benefits of Muslim community of Pakistan. Through Commercialization of fisheries based on export, the interests of middlemen were

institutionalized during the reign of Ayub Khan in Pakistan. During 1950s and 1960s a trade war was going on between the newly born India and Pakistan. At that time fish was exported from East Pakistan to India and a black marketing was continuing in regard of export of fishes in Kolkata. The newly emerged middlemen who have money and access to government were benefitted although they were involved in non-fishing business. As a result, the marginalization of fishing community was paved further.

The export business and marginalization of the fishers created a shortage of fishes in the local markets in 1960s. At that time after export, the rest of the fishes were supplied in the markets were bought by the rich people of the society and restaurants. The East Pakistani newspapers then published at that time on the scarcity of fishes in fishing land of East Pakistan. Moreover, the price of fishing materials was so high that the bonfire fishers were not able to buy them. For example, the price of cotton yarn was 50 rupees per kg which was 30 rupees one year ago. Only some non-fishing businessmen who have power and money were able to buy the materials and lease the fisheries. But the bonfire fishermen were unable to maintain the materials. At the end of 1960s the Daily Sangbad reported that due to the access of middlemen to fisheries like jute businessmen, the bonfire fishers are bound to migrate in India leaving their traditional profession or had been transferred to another occupations.

In addition to that the hydrological problems, drying up the rivers and other water bodies and building of judicial, and surplus extraction to the river water gradually reduced the fishes of Bengal. In Pakistan period, the reckless industrialization along with urbanization contributed to this reduction of biodiversity's roughly which paved the marginalization of fishermen in East Bengal also (Mohammad, 2023).

But some steps taken by the government in fisheries development were noticeable after partition. At what extent benefits the steps brought about is a debtor fact? For instance, during Pakistan period, an act was passed at provincial assembly on November, 1950 for fish species protection. This law was titled as 'The Protection and Conservation of Fish Act, 1950'. According to this act the fisheries sector was protected in such a way that the rivers, canals, fishing by permanent brigades of nets, jag, katha, gora, dam etc. was completely forbidden. Any kind of fish *renu* and *pona* under 9 inch catching was forbidden. Use and business of any kind of current net was forbidden and the act breakers would be punished as 2 years of presentment or 5000 taka as fine (The Protection and Conservation of Fish Act, 1950).

Another step for fisheries sector after partition of 1947 was the establishment of Fisheries Department in 1952. It was a central organization whose center was in Karachi. Under this organization, a provincial division named 'Fisheries Training Academy' was founded in East Bengal. Dhaka was headquarter of this academy. Mainly this academy arranged training for the fisheries officials of Districts, Thana, Mahkuma and villages. The influence of the law was acute on fisheries and fishermen. The fisheries sector was protected as the control over the fishing of fish *renu* and *pona* paved the way of increase in fish amounts in the rivers and other water bodies of East Bengal. On the other hand the fishermen who lived by fishing suffered for scarcity of fishes in different water bodies. So it affected the family maintenance of the fishermen roughly (Fisheries Training Academy, 2024).

Fishing and Fishermen in Bangladesh, From 1971 to 2023

After independence, Bangladesh was a land without resources. The war and colonial rule of Britain and Pakistan affected the economy and society of this region tremendously and the marginal people were the worst sufferers in life and livelihood. The poor professional people became poorer and the post war devastating situation added much sufferings for peasants, farmers, fishermen, industrial laborers etc. So the new government of the country had to take steps for the betterment of working class people.

Legal Actions in Fisheries sector (1972-1975)

1. The Bangladesh Fisheries Development Corporation Act, 1973

This law established a Corporation at the name of the Bangladesh Fisheries Development Corporation. According to the act, the corporation would have some functions:

- (a) To form units for fishing, and units for the conservation, distribution, processing, and marketing of fish and fish products;
- (b) To manage advance debt for the fishing industry and to co-operate the fishermen;
- (c) Inspiring such cooperatives; (d) Control and preservation of fish resources;
- (e) Setting up organizations for the fish exportation and fish products, etc.

The act declares also that the management of the Corporation will be rested on the Board of Directors that would be appointed by the Government. The Government may generate rules for accomplishing the objectives of this Act (Bangladesh Fisheries Development Corporation, 1973).

2. Territorial Water and Maritime Zone Act, 1974

The main issues of the act was the conservation, management and to develop the maritime species especially marine fishes.

Department of Fisheries

In Pakistan regime, Department of Fisheries had worked as main organization which was publicly responsible for fisheries development. In 1971 after independence of Bangladesh this organization was named as Department of Fisheries of Bangladesh in April 1975. After that in 1984 the marine fisheries sector was added to it as the central marine fisheries department. Now it is under the control of the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock which is conducted by a Director General, an Additional Director General, sixteen Directors and 2 Scientific Officers. This organization has divisional, district and Upozilla offices to accomplish the visions. Moreover, it has 3 fish inspection and quality control stations. To look after the marine resources, it has a station of Marine Fisheries Station, a Training Academy, Centers on Training and Extension of Fisheries, and Natural Fish Hatcheries.

Functions:

- 1. To ensure developed technologies for fisheries sector through training and to arrange extension services to the stakeholders.
- 2. To increase fisheries resources through strengthening the management and conservation activities.
- 3. To co-operate the admiration to enact acts for developing fisheries sector
- 4. To impose quality control measures and manage health certificate for the exportable fishes.
- 5. To conduct the fisheries survey for development planning of this sector
- 6. To facilitate credits for fish farmers.
- 7. To reduce poverty from rural area, arranging alternative employment for the poor
- 8. To organize and implement projects for food security
- 9. To improve the fisheries sector through e-extension policies (Department of Fisheries, 2023).

Fishermen Rehabilitation and Fisheries Development Program, July, 1972

From 25 March, 1971 to 16 December, 1971 the Pakistani army destroyed at least 40,000 boats and fishing nets partially or entirely. As a result, 2 lacs fishers were seriously sufferers. At that time there was 7 lac 50 thousand fishermen in East Bengal. Besides that in 1971 due to devastating cyclone, at least 3 lacs fishermen became unemployed in Bhola, Patuakhali, Nowakhali coastal regions. Their nets, boats, other fishing things were totally destroyed. So the new government of Bangladesh after independence looked into the fishermen's rehabilitation and development programs.

During the first government, on July, 1972, 72,000 fishermen all over Bangladesh were rehabilitated. At the same month, a project of 91 crore 2 lacs taka project was taken by the

government for the development of fisheries sector. In this program some steps taken by the government are given below:

1. Construction of 10, 105 boats among them 1205 boats would be engine-boats
2. Providing 5 core pound Nilon cotton for fishing nets
3. Giving away transistors and other goods among the fishermen for disaster-time rescue alarming

The objectives of these activities were described as:

Firstly, to develop the fisheries industry of Bangladesh and gathering foreign exchanges from this sector

Secondly, to stop the oppression on fishermen by the middlemen and businessmen

Through Fishermen Co-operative Association, this large scale program was to be implemented where at first some fishermen were provided boats and Nilon cotton for nets. Some boats were engine-run trailers. By the co-operation of central co-operative, vehicles and trucks were supplied for carrying fishes. Ice mills and cold storage were also established. The total program would be completed by local fishermen co-operatives (Daily Ittefaq, 7 July, 1972).

Five Years Plan and Fisheries Sector

Sheikh Mujib's government formed Bangladesh Planning Commission on 31 January, 1972. It declared the first Five Years Plan of Bangladesh (1973-1978) on 27 November, 1972. This plan had a total allocation of 4, 445 crore taka. The objective of the planners was 30% economic progress by this plan implementation (28 November, 1973). In this plan, the objectives of fisheries sector were:

1. To increase the fish production as 26%. The baseline production of fish was 8.09 lac tons in 1969-70. The five years plan aimed to make it as 10.21 lac tons by 1977-78
2. To ensure high level use of marine fisheries resources in internal and external both sectors
3. To develop the socio-economic condition of fishermen
4. To create larger scale employment facilities in fisheries and fisheries industry
5. To rise the export of fishes and it would reach to 20,000 tons (Latifur, 2022).

Workplan for preservation of Natural Resources, and Rivers, 1973-1874

To protect and develop the natural blessings- green forests, rivers and lots of green lands, Bangabandhu government took huge workplans. In this regard the government accomplished some development activities for fishermen and fisheries sector. For instance:

1. The government expended 5 crore 20 lac taka for the rehabilitation activities of fishermen
2. About 1, 30000 acres waste land was developed for fish cultivation during the first five years plan.
3. 4 Fish fry producing firms were established.
4. Three fishery firms were introduced.
5. 202 Fishermen Co-operative Associations were formed.
6. 700 Fishing boats distribution among the fishermen (H.,2013, p.319-320).

In independent Bangladesh, fisheries sectors have developed in different angeles. Specially, the different government of Bangladesh have brought some legal actions to develop the fisheries sector and life and livelihood of fishermen in inland and maritime sector. For example:

1. Territorial Water and Maritime Zone Rules, 1977

The main objective of the law was to conserve the marine fisheries.

2. The Fish and Fish Product (Inspection and Quality Control) Ordinance, 1983

This act issues was the assurance of quality control on fisheries targeting mainly the export of fishes.

3. Marine Fisheries Ordinance, 1983

The main issue of this act was conservation and preservation of marine fisheries.

4. Marine Fisheries Rules, 1983

The main issue of this act was also the conservation and preservation of marine fisheries.

5. The Protection and Conservation of Fish Act, 1985

This act was passed to regulate the protection and conservation of fish resources. The text of this act contained 11 sections on different steps of protection and conservation of fishes.

6. The Fish and Fish Product (Inspection and Quality Control) Rules, 1997

This act issues was the assurance of quality control on fisheries targeting mainly the export of fishes.

7. National Fisheries Policy, 1998

Its issues were conservation and management of fisheries. It also focused on exploitation of fishermen, control over marketing and quality assurance in control and institutional development of fisheries sector.

8. National Shrimp Policy, 2014

This act aimed to flourish the shrimp industry. It also dealt to raise employment opportunity and alleviate poverty. Its issue was also on export earnings and meeting up the demand of nutrition of the people (Fisheries Lawss, 2024).

Steps Taken for Fisheries and Fishermen in Contemporary Time period

Expansion of Fisheries Resource, 2017-18

Due to pro-extension policies of the government in fisheries sector, the production of fishes had increased more than that of the post-independence Bangladesh. In the 2017-18 fiscal year, the total fish production in Bangladesh has stood 42.77 metric tons. For fry opening and bill nursery activities in 2018-19, 2050 metric ton fishes have increased (Expansion of Fisheries Resource, 2017-18).

Social Fish Management and Sanctuary or Reserved Area

This project has increased the abolished fish species for special security and care in fish reserved area of the sea and rivers.

Development of Fish living area, 2018-19

In this project in 2018-19 fiscal year, 812 hectare water bodies have been restored which has increased on an average extra 6,500 metric tons production of fishes in different water bodies of this country (Development of Fish Living Area, 2018).

Preservation of Natural Hatchery

In the contemporary project, the steps taken for the preservation of fish fry paved the abundance of fish fry. For example: in 2011 to 2019, from Halda river 3757 kg pure fish renu was increased (Development of Fish Living Area, 2018)-.

Preservation of *Jatka* and Development of Hilisha Resource

In every year during the Bangla month of *Ashshin* in four days before moon-time and four days after moon-time and altogether 22 days are prohibited for the fishermen to fish Hilisha in the rivers. In this time period, Hilisha fishes lay down eggs. It is a law corrected from Protection and Conservation of Fish Rules, 1985. As a result of this law, in 2017-18, the Hilisha production has increased in 5.17 lac metric tons (Preservation, 2019).

Development of Human Resource

To activate, develop and to make any sector public oriented, the human resource management is required. So in the 2018-19 fiscal year development plan and 4 lacs fishermen, government officials, NGO workers were prepared by internal and foreign training (Preservation, 2019).

Annual Development Workplan and Annual Work Accomplishment Treaty

In annual development workplan, in 2018-19 fiscal year, 14 development projects have been implemented in fisheries department. Its total expenditure was 3, 55,287 crore taka. Under annual accomplishment treaty in opposite to 4 strategic objectives 17 for fish cultivation, 6 for management of fisheries, 5 for maritime resources that is total 28 action plans were defined and all of these objectives of workplan have been achieved (Annual, 2019).

Fishermen Registration and Identity Providing Guidelines, 2019

In Bangladesh about 1.85 core people are directly or indirectly involved in fishing. Among them many fishers live by fishing for the whole year. Again many of them take fishing as livelihood mode for a certain period of a year. Before 2012 there was no exact statistics of fishermen in Bangladesh. As a result, the actual fishermen were beyond identification and the government faced problems in providing assistance to the bonfire fishermen. So the Fisheries Department started to maintain a statistic in 2016 to register the fishermen from Jun 2012. Under this project 16.20 lac fishermen were registered and among them 14.20 lacs were provided Fishermen Identity Card. To continue this activities to identify the fishers, a guideline was brought titled 'Registration and Identity Card Providing Guideline, 2019'.

The objectives of this guideline was firstly, to identify, register, provide identity card and correction of the registration of fishermen and secondly, to ensure transparency in distributing government assistance and rehabilitation programs.

A fishermen must abide by the following conditions to be registered:

1. To be independent citizen of Bangladesh with national identity card
2. To be a fisher according to the definition of 3(1) article of guideline
3. To be out of the list in case of death of the registered fishermen
4. In case of loss of card, a fisher has to apply to upozilla fisheries department after a general diary at police station. The upozilla fisheries director would issue a duplicate copy of the card and the district director would provide it to the fishermen (Fishermen, 2019).

Financial Support Policies, 2019

For livelihood, a huge number of people are employed in fishing and they have to go for fishing in the rivers or sea even in natural disasters. Among them many fishers do not have fishing nets and boats. They work as day laborers in others boats. During cyclone or flood period, the fishermen sometimes have to go for fishing and consequently, many of them die, disappearing or seriously injured. Even in the fishing boats, no modern safeguard facilities are managed. Moreover, except natural calamities in coastal area, the fishermen are attacked by the pirates, notorious animals like crocodiles, sharks, tigers etc. When the fishermen go for fishing, the other family members sometimes live from hand to mouth. Then when the only earner member of a fishermen family die due to disasters or other reasons, the whole family becomes helpless extremely. In these circumstances, from 2012-2013 to 2016-17 the dead fishermen families were provided financial support under fisheries department. To continue this financial support and to provide support to bonfire fishermen families, some principle have been introduced in 2019 titled 'Financial Support for Dead and Disabled Fishermen Principles, 2019'.

To get the assistance, a fisherman family have to maintain some conditions (point: 6.0):

1. The dead or disappeared or disabled fishermen have to be registered fishermen by Fisheries Department
2. Only the fishermen died, disappeared or permanently injured during fishing due to natural disasters, attack of pirates or attack of notorious animals would be suitable for this assistance.
3. The family must have certificate of union parishad chairman or municipal ward commissioner that the fishermen have died or disappeared during fishing.
4. A medical certificate for the permanently disability of a fishermen is to be attested to application form.

5. The applicant must apply to the Upozilla Fisheries Department within three months of death or disappearing or disability of the fishermen (Financial, 2019).

Food Assistance among the fishermen during fishing ban period

Government in contemporary period has taken various steps to preserve Hilisha and other maritime fishes and among the steps the ban in fishing during breeding period of mother Hilisha, the poor fishermen are provided food security at this time. For instance:

Firstly, In the Bay of Bengal, to ensure continuous breeding of Hilisha and other fishes from 20 May to 23 July, total 65 days fishing is completely forbidden in 14 districts of 19 coastal districts and in the Bay of Bengal. In this time period, the fishermen in this area are provided with 40 kg rice in each family.

Secondly, to protect the mother Hilisha, in October month of every year, total 22 days are banned to fish. In this period, the fishermen are provided with 25 kg rice.

Thirdly, to resistant the *Jatka* catching, four months are controlled strictly to catch fishes in the reserved fish areas. During this time, the fishermen prohibited from fishing are provided 40 kg rice per month.

During the ban period of fishing, the 12, 26, 818 fishermen family were provided 98, 36255 metric tons food during 2022-23 fiscal year (Ministry, 2024).

The Problems of Fishermen

The fishermen in the society have been regarded as the subaltern part in all tempered. The civilization has evolved and developed but likewise many other professions, the life of this community has not changed. They are always used to go through extreme level of poverty, hunger, malnutrition, education and high risk of life threatening hazards. The life they led in the ancient and medieval ages is unchanged in modern age although the colonies have been abolished, the state territory has taken different shapes in different period but the fishermen class people have not got the light of freedom from poverty, oppression or deprivation.

Harishanker Jolodash studied on the life and livelihood of fishermen based on five Bangla novels where he identified the deprived and marginalized livelihood of the *Kaibarta* fishers. He described,

দীর্ঘকাল ধরেই ভারতবর্ষীয় সমাজে মানুষের সাথে মানুষের যে সম্পর্ক, সেটা মোটাদাগে দুভাগে বিভক্ত। এক. সেবাগ্রাহী ও দুই. সেবাদাস। অমানবিক বর্ণবিভাজনের কারণে উৎপাদনশীলতার মূলভিত্তিতে শ্রমের যোগান দেয়া সত্ত্বেও কৈবর্তরা সেবাদাসের অন্তর্ভুক্ত হয়েছে। (Harishanker, 2008, p. 11)

In his research he intended to prove the role of subaltern people in civilization building. In a socialistic view he showed all people with a particular occupation as a natural process. But the primary producers have been neglected for long period of time. He wrote,

মানুষের জীবনের সাথে জীবিকা প্রশ্ন জড়িত। জীবন ধারণের তাগিদে মানুষকে কোনো না কোনো কাজকে অবলম্বন করতে হয়। মানুষের আর্থ-সামাজিক ইতিহাস মানে শ্রমজীবী তথা পেশাজীবী মানুষের ইতিহাস। জীবনের জন্যই জীবিকা। আর এই জীবিকা হিসেবে মানুষ গ্রহণ করেছে নানা রকম পেশা। এর প্রাসঙ্গিক উদাহরণ হল মৎস্যশিকার, মাছধরা বা মৎস্যব্যবসা। পরবর্তীকালে বাংলাদেশে জীবিকার্জনের জন্য গৃহীত পেশা জাতিগতবৃত্তিতে রূপান্তরিত হয়েছে। এইসব পেশাজীবী মানুষরা এদেশে সামাজিক বর্ণবিন্যাসের যাঁতাকলে পড়ে নিঃশব্দে অবনমিত হয়েছে। অথচ, তারাই ছিল আর্থ-সামাজিক অবকাঠামোর মূল স্তম্ভ। এই শ্রমজীবী মানুষরাই 'শুদ্র' নামে আখ্যায়িত হয়েছে। (Harishanker, 2008, p. 16)

In the ancient Bengal, *Kaibarta* people were classified in two types- the farmers (Halik) and the fishermen (Jalik). The fishermen *kaibarta* were deprived of their rights. Even they did not have the freedom of their traditional profession of fishing. In the North Bengal, they lived from fishing in water bodies. But the other communities regard them '*asprishsho*' and were neglected as lower class people. Again the Buddhist Pala rule also looked down them as in Buddhism killing species is forbidden. But the *Kaibarta* fishermen lived their life by killing or catching fishes. Then the *pala* rulers always created pressure on them to be converted to other profession. So the traditional fishers among the *Kaibarta* were bound to change their

religion also and many of them leaving fishing were converted to Buddhism (Nibedita, 2023, p. 16-18).

Then what was the lifestyle of a fishermen during the colonial Bengal? Previously discussed that an inquiry of K.G. Gupta, a member of Indian Civil Service conducted a survey on fisheries of Bengal in 1906. The inquiry was run in West Bengal although the observation was relevant for the entire Bengal. The report was called 'Fisheries of Bengal' which showed that a fishermen earned 4RS to 12 RS in a month. It is true for himself or fishing with parties. He also showed that there was no capital or technological investment in fishing sector and so the Bangali fishermen confined fishing in inland waters of small rivers, lakes, *jheels* etc. Fishing was also brought under colonial rule but not much is known about any resistance in Bengal like peasant movements (Mohammad, 2022). But some social movements took place in colonial Bengal in fishermen communities on the basis of social status in caste system (Rup, 2008, p. 111-116).

Life of Fishermen in 'Padma Nodir Majhi' Novel

Padma Nodir Majhi is a social novel of Manik Bandopadhyay was published in 1936. The novel has a good scenario of life and livelihood of the fishermen fishing in the Padma River and living on the bank of Padma. As literature is the mirror of society and social life, the life, livelihood and politics, economy, culture of that time period has been well reflected in this novel. The two region Faridpur and Bikrampur on the Bank of Padma and Debiganj and Aminbari two villages on the bank of Padma are showed as nesting places of fishermen in this novel. In this novel, the life of the fishermen and boatmen of Ketupur and surroundings and the devastating life of fishermen of this bank had been described.

Padma is one of the largest rivers of Bangladesh. The common devastating figure of this river is its tendency to break and the destructive nature has named it as 'Kirtinasha'. The lifestyle of poor fishermen living from the city area on its bank is the main plot of this novel. Every day of these fishermen goes through hunger and poverty. At the beginning of the novel, the miserable figure of the fishermen para (village) has been described,

পূর্বদিকে গ্রামের বাহিরে জেলেপাড়া। চারিদিকে ফাঁকা জায়গার অন্ত নাই। কিন্তু জেলেপাড়ার বাড়িগুলো গায়ে গায়ে ঘেসিয়া জমাট বাঁধিয়া আছে। প্রথম দেখিলে মনে হয় এ বুঝি তাহাদের অনাবশ্যক সংকীর্ণতা, উন্মুক্ত উদার পৃথিবীতে দরিদ্র মানুষগুলো নিজেদের প্রবঞ্চনা করিতেছে। তারপর ভাবিয়া দেখিলে ব্যাপারটা বুঝিতে পারা যায়। স্থানের অভাব এ জগতে নাই। তবুও মাথা গুঁজিবার ঠাই এদের ওইটুকুই। সবটুকু সমতল ভূমিতে ভূস্বামীর অধিকার বিস্তৃত হইয়া আছে, তাহাকে ঠেলিয়া জেলেপাড়ার পরিসর বাড়িতে পায় না। একটি কুঁড়ের আনাচে কানাচে তাহারই নির্ধারিত কম খাজনার জমিটুকুতে আরেকটি কুঁড়ে উঠিতে পায়। পুরুষানুক্রমে এই প্রথা চলিয়া আসিতেছে। তারই ফলে জেলেপাড়াটি উঠিয়াছে জমজমাট। (Manik, 1995, p. 329)

The fishers have to struggle to eat two times and physical sickness cannot resist them from going to the rivers to fish as their main source of income is fishing. Poverty and lower lifestyle and a life full of struggle with natural disasters and vigorous ruining Padma River are the daily companions of the fishermen of this novel. Moreover, deprivation of *Boro korta* or upper class people, deprivation from legal price of fishes etc. were the social figure of this novel. The blessings did not visit to the fishermen villages (*Jelepalli*). In fishermen's life, touch of education is not possible. So the generations of this *palli* go beyond an unconscious life, without the light of civilization. In health issue, they also suffer from various diseases, malnutrition due to unhygienic life in this para. No active steps are taken here to spread education and health facilities among the fishermen. In this regard, Manik Bondopadhyay said,

জেলেপাড়ার ঘরে ঘরে একদিন মেজবাবুদের যাতায়াত ছিল, শিক্ষা ও স্বাস্থ্যের জ্ঞান বিতরণ করে মাঝিদের জীবনগুলো উন্নততর করিয়া তিনি অভিভূত তুলিয়াছিল। শিক্ষা মাঝিরা পায় নাই মাঝিদের বৌ-ঝিরা শুধু পাইয়াছিল দুর্নাম। গ্রামে গ্রামে খবর রটিয়াছিল যে কেতুপুরে মেজকর্তা জেলেদের ঘরে ঘরে রমনী চাখিয়া বেড়াইতেছেন- জেলেপাড়া মেজবাবুর প্রণয়ীনির উপনিবেশ। (Harishanker, 2008, p. 120)

In this novel, through the character of Kuber Maji and Kapila, a natural romantic plot was made in poverty and struggling life of the fishers on the bank of Padma. But such romanticism could not surpass the sorrowful story of these fishermen. The Padma and its fishes were the only source of life and livelihood of people living here. But life became full of distress when this river did not respond with abundance of fishes. The novelist wrote,

ইলিশের মৌসুম ফুরাইলে বিপুল পদ্মা কৃপণ হইয়া যায়। নিজের বিরাট বিস্তৃতি মাঝে কোনখানে যে সে তাহার মীনসন্তানগুলোকে লুকাইয়া ফেলে খুঁজিয়া বাহির করা কঠিন হইয়া দাড়াইয়া। নদীর মালিককে খাজনা দিয়া হাজার টাকা দামের জাল যাহারা পাতিতে পারে তাহাদের স্থান ছাড়িয়া দিয়া, এত বড় পদ্মার বুকে জীবিকা অর্জন করা তার মত গরীব জেলের পক্ষে দুঃসাধ্য ব্যাপার। ধনঞ্জয়, যদু জোড়াতালি দেয়া ব্যবস্থায় যে মাছ পড়ে তার দুতিন আনা ভাগে কারও সংসার চলে না (Manik, 1995, p. 326)

The atrocity and scarcity in rivers are the source of livelihood of the poor fishers. Besides that they have to suffer from hardship and risks of existence due to the natural disasters. The writer showed the struggle of fishermen against nature,

মুসলমান মাঝিদের মধ্যে ক্ষতি হইয়াছে আমিনুদ্দির বেশি। প্রকাণ্ড একটা সিঁদুরে আমের গাছ গোড়া শুদ্ধ উতলাইয়া যে ঘরে আমিনুদ্দির বউ ও ছেরেমেয়ে তিনটি ছিল সে ঘর খানাকে মাটির সঙ্গে মিশাইয়া দিয়েছে। আমিনুদ্দির বউ খেতলাইয়া মরিয়াছিল সঙ্গে সঙ্গে, সকালে টানিয়া বাহির করার সময় ছেলেটার প্রাণ ছিল, ঘণ্টাখানেক পরে সেও শেষ হইয়া গিয়াছে। শুধু মেয়েটার কিছু nq bvB| (Manik, 1995, p. 356)

The poor fishers have also family life, culture, social bonding and sexual or biological interest like all other people of the human society. The overall figure of the novel also provide a social stratification, the influence of upper and powerful wing of the society. A quotation is remarkable in this regard:

কাদার মধ্যেই একটি লোহার চেয়ার ও কাঠের টেবিল পাতিয়া চালানবাবু কদারনাথ মাছ গোনা দেখিয়া খাতায় লিখিয়া যাইতেছে। একশ মাছ গোনা হইবামাত্র তাহার চাকরটা ছোঁ মরিয়া চালানবাবুর চাঁদা পাঁচটি মাছ মস্ত একটা কেরোসিন কাঠের বারে ভরিয়া ফেলিতেছে। (Manik, 1995, p. 328)

The fishermen also want to come out of poverty and dream to be free from oppression, poverty and struggle. In this regard, the dreamer Hossain Miya wanted to build a classless society in Moyna Deep and proposed to the helpless fishermen to settle there.

This novel provides an overview of fishermen's life, livelihood, and social attitude to fishers, women in fishermen's society, culture, and economic condition of the fishermen in colonial Bengal under British Rule. All the features of this novel bring up a deprived and underprivileged life and livelihood of the fishermen in colonial Bengal.

Fishermen in the Novel of 'Titas Ekti Nodir Nam'

Titas Ekti Nodir Nam was written by Adwaita Mallabarman who was originated from Malo community of fishermen. In this novel, he described the life and livelihood of fishermen of Malo community people. The novel brought the *malo* people of *Gokarnapur* on the bank of Titas River. The sorrows and struggle of *Malopara* provided this novel a unique feature of Bangla literature. The environmental intimacy, variety in socio-cultural life of the Malos was a faultless art of the writer. It focused on the limitless struggle, sorrows, and tragedy of the subaltern class people of the society. The characters of this novel- Subol, Kishor, Anantom etc show the riverside fishers sorrows due to the waterless situation of Titas and Bijoy River of today's Brahmanbaria. Due to scarcity of fish, oppression of *Morol* class people, village politics, hunger, poverty etc. are the main subject issues of this novel. The novelist describes the poverty stage of the fishermen:

মাছেদের মতো তখন জেলেদেরও দম বন্ধ হইতে থাকে। সামনে মহাকালের শুষ্ক এক কঙ্কালের টায়া দেখিয়া তারা একসময় হতাশ হইয়া পড়ে। তাদের কোন চিন্তা থাকে না। হাতের টাকা ভাঙিয়া এই দুর্দিন পাড় করে। কিন্তু যারা বর্ষায় চাঁদপুরের বড় গাঙ এ

নৌকা লইয়া প্রবাস বাহিতে গিয়াছিল তারা সেখানে নিকারীর জিম্মায় নাও জাল রাখিয়া রেল চড়িয়া আসিয়া পড়ে। তাদের কোন চিন্তা থাকে না। হাতের টাকা ভাঙিয়া এই দুর্দিন পাড় করে। কিন্তু যারা বর্ষায় ঘরের মায়া ছাড়িয়া বাহির হয় নাই তারাই পড়ে বিপদে। নদী ঠনঠনে। জাল ফেলিবে কোথায়। তিনকোনা ঠেলা জাল কাঁধে ফেলিয়া ঘুরিতে থাকে, কোথায় পানাপুকুর আছে। মালিকহীন ছাড়া বাড়িতে। ...হাতে ঠেলা জাল লইয়া চুনোপুটি যা পায় ধরিয়া পোয়া দেড় পোয়া চাউলের জোগাড় করিতেছে। (Adwaita, 2000, p. 400-401)

This novel is published in 1956 but the writer wrote it in 1930s. So the overall social condition of fisher's community of 20th century in Bengal has been drawn here. To describe the helpless poor lifestyle of the fishers on the bank of Titas River, the writer wrote,

খড়ের চাল ফুটো হইয়া গিয়াছে। রাতদিন জল ঝরে। বেড়া এখানে ওখানে ভাঙিয়া গিয়াছে হু হু করিয়া ঠণ্ডা বাতাস ঢোকে। পরনের কাপড়খানাতে ভাল করিয়া কোমড় ঢাকিতে গেলে বুক ঢাকা পড়ে না। বুক ঢাকিতে গেলে উরু দুইটির খানে খানে ফরসা চামড়া বাহির হইয়া পড়ে। যেখানটাতে জল পড়ে না তেমন একটা জায়গা দেখে অনন্তকে লইয়া চুপ করিয়া বসিয়া থাকে। কাঁথা বালিশ ভিজিতেছে দেখিয়া সেগুলোকে কাছে আগলাইয়া বসে। এভাবে অনন্তর মার দিন কাটিতে চাহে না। (Adwaita, 2000, p. 476)

Fishermen in the Novel of 'Gohin Gang'

Gohin Gang is a novel based on *Kaibarta* life and livelihood. The novel was written by Sadhon Chattapadhyay in 1980. In this novel, the writer focuses on the marginal life of the fishermen of Sundarbans region. This novel describes the sorrowful struggling life of fishers of *Malopara* on the bank of *Betna* River. In the second edition of the novel in introduction Sadhon Chattapadhyay said,

বিশেষ প্রয়োজনে সুন্দরবন অঞ্চলে কাঁটাতে হয়েছিল বেশ কিছুদিন। প্রত্যক্ষ করেছিলাম অরণ্য, নদী ও মানুষের জীবিকার সংগ্রাম। প্রতিদিনের বেঁচে থাকার লড়াইয়ের পাশাপাশি ধর্ম, লোকাচার, স্বপ্ন ও বিশ্বাসের দোলাচলে যে মানুষ বাঘ, কুমির-কামোট ও মনুষ্য দাপট বুক নিয়ে নোনা গাঙ এর গোন বেগোন- এর মতো, ইতিহাস তৈরি করছে- আধুনিকতা যাকে বলে সাব-অলটার্ন- এ উপন্যাস তাদের জীবনের কয়েকটি দিন কয়েকটি দিন কিন্তু খণ্ডকালের আভাস। (Sadhon, 1996, Introduction).

To describe the sorrows of fishers, he brought the stories of usual death for diseases, hunger, accident, incident etc. The writer wrote,

মালোপাড়ার অন্য নাম বিষাদপল্লী মালোদের মধ্যে এমন কোন পরিবার নেই, যাদের কোন বউয়ের দেহে কালোপাড়ের থান ওঠেনি, লোকের শেল তোলেনি হাহাকার। এমন কোন কুটির নেই যার বড় ছেলে অশৌচ পোশাকে খড়িদার মহাজনদের পায়ের তলায় ঘণ্টার পর ঘণ্টার বদলে দুদশ টাকার সাহায্য পেতে সুদের গভীর বন্ধনে জড়িয়ে পড়েনি। (Sadhon, 1996, p. 19)

Fishermen in the Novel of 'Abogahan'

Abogahan is a political novel by Ghonosham Chowdhury which was published in the year of 2000. The plot of the novel is based on fishermen, their life and their resistance. The novel is written on Nokshal Movement in West Bengal. The timeperiod of the novel is determined from 1967 to 1977 where the politically conscious people of Calcuta and poor Kaibarta people of Charsultan on the bank of Bhagirati was described. The fishermen Kaibarta people are poor, uneducated and struggling for livelihood. The fishers of Charsundor are influenced by Nokshal Movement. But their livelihood is based on fishing. The writer wrote,

ভালো মাছ উঠলে হাসিমুখ মাছ না উঠলে ভারী চিন্তা হয় নদীপাড়ের জেলেদের। (Ghonosham, 2000, p. 41)

The poor fishermen have to struggle with natural disasters, scarcity of fishes in the rivers and the human disasters also. The powerful block of the society who are involved in politics uses them. The fishers have to fight against them also and consequently have to endure the humiliation, rebuking and physical torture etc. Even the *kaibarta* people are randomly killed by the powerful group. In this novel we find such events. The writer wrote,

শালা জেলের বাচ্চা! জেলের বাচ্চার মতো থাকবি। মুখ তুলে কথা। লিডার হয়েছিস খানকির ছেলে দল মারাচ্ছিস ছোটোলোকের বাচ্চা ছোটলোকের মত থাকবি। বল গোপাল রাজবংশী এখন কোথায় থাকে? (Ghonosham, 2000, p. 51).

Specific Problems of Fishermen in Contemporary Bangladesh

The fishermen are one of the most marginalized social groups in contemporary Bangladesh. The ages of centuries have gone but the life of the fishermen is unchanged and has no variety. Rather the oppression, deprivation, struggle etc. they have been faced with have become worse and more devastating. The contemporary world economic depression has added double marginality to the life of these poor people. In Bangladesh the government and non-government sectors have been working for these people so that life becomes normal as human being deserve. But these primary producer fishers cannot change the wheel of their life. The more they contribute to economy or advancement of civilization, the more they lag behind the life reality.

Dadni System and High Interest of Mahajoni System

'*Dadan*' or '*dadni*' means advance is originated from certain language. As an advance in trade called *Dadan*. It was used as commercial term by East Indian Company in Bengal in the 18th century. The company used this system to collect products from the market due to language problem and other limitations. For product collection, the company employed local businessmen were called as *Dadoni* Traders. They received capital in advance from the company on some conditions. Among the *Dadni* traders many failed to pay him *dadan* in time. Again many of them went out of company border with the *dadni* money. So in 1753, the *Dadni* system was abolished. Then the company decided to collect products by native 'Gomosta' broker class people. In this way, many people from different professions alleged the brokers for corruption. So the company introduced *dadni* system again in a controlled way. But the traders of *mofswal* pressurized the company to introduce the Gomosta system again but then the weavers alleged against the *Gomosta* for unfair means. Then Lord Cornwallis introduced Agency System to collect products in trade (Sirajul, 2004).

But the influence of *dadni* system in fishing existed in different modes from colonial to present age. The fishermen are oppressed by the *dadni* system historically. In all decades, the fishers are helpless to this system due to their poverty.

The fishers take small amount of capital as *dadan* from the local fish traders. When the *dadan* is insufficient to fulfill their demand, the fishermen go to the local interest of *mahajans*. In fishing season when they are not able to fish as their expected amount, these *dadan* and interest bind them in existence crisis. If the fishers do not pay the borrowed money on time, they are tortured, rebuked or prisoned. Many of them have to flee away from their house or village when they cannot pay the money. As the fishers do not have alternative way of business or agriculture as they do not have enough agricultural land, they are bound to take loans as *dadan* or interest. Again due to longer process of Bank system, they usually do not go to the banks. But although Bangladesh Bank policy banned *dadan* system, it continues in the village areas randomly (Daily Manobjamin, 17 January, 2023).

In a feature of Daily Manojamin on 18 August, 2021 by Md. Atiyar Rahman provided a figure of a Jelepura of Patuakhali oppressed by *Dadni*. He wrote,

সর্বদা জেলেদের চেহারা মলিন বিষাদের ছাঁপ দেখে মনে হয় এঁরা যেন কোন এক শ্রেণির মানুষের কাছে সারাজীবনের জন্য দায়বদ্ধ। ব্যাপারটা ঠিকই তাই। জেলেপাড়ায় সারাদিন যেন জনশূন্য সুনসান বাতাসে উড়তে থাকে জড়াজীর্ণ বুলড়ি ঘরের গোলপাতার ছাউনি। এঁদের নেই কোনো বিনোদনের ব্যবস্থা। প্রান্ত থেকে প্রান্তের সকল খবর থেকে যায় এই জেলে সম্প্রদায়ের অগোচরে। বিকেল গড়িয়ে সন্ধ্যা লয়ে সারাদিনের সঞ্চিত সম্ভল নিয়ে হাজির হতে হয় দাদনদাতা মহাজনদের মতস্য আড়তে ভয়ে ভয়ে মেপে দিতে হয় নদীর ডেউয়ের সাথে জীবনযুদ্ধ করা উপার্জিত সব কয়টি মাছ। বর্তমান সভ্য সমাজে যেন এক নতুন ইংরেজ শাসনের শাসিত জগত জেলেদের দাদন দাতা মহাজনদের। আর এই দাদনদার জেলেদের ভাষ্যমতে কোনো কোনো অংশ থেকে ইংরেজ শাসন আমলের নীল করদের থেকে একটুও মানবতা দাদনদারদের হৃদয় স্পর্শ করেনা। (Daily Manobjamin, 18 August, 2021)

Natural Disasters

Bangladesh is the world's fifth disaster prone country. Topogeographical and geo-physical position has made Bangladesh a land of regular flooding, cyclone, and river erosions etc. which bring about sufferings for millions of people. About 44 million people living in the coastal zone of Bangladesh have to face life-threatening cyclone and other disasters. After every 3 years, a catastrophic cyclone attacks in coastal zone. It is said that the hazards made by a cyclone is natural but disasters are usually man made facts. Although the precautions and warning is always ensured in the coastal region, the people of this region are always continued to be affected. Although Bangladesh has developed in preparing for cyclone sufferings, institutional and infrastructural support is needed (Bishawjit, 2013, p. 1).

Natural disasters are the main threat for the people living in the coastal area. In the coastal regions, the main livelihood of people is fishing. Most of the fisher's family dwell in the coastal regions. Moreover, the boats going to fish in the deep sea face cyclone, tsunami etc. As a result, lots of people die due to such natural disasters. A newspaper report of 24 September, 2018 shows that due to light pressure in the Bay of Bengal in July and August, 75 fishermen are disappearing. On 21 July, 2018 due to low pressure 54 fishers did not come from the sea. In August another 21 fishers are also missing from the sea due to cyclone. On August, 2022, 113 fishers of greater Barishal region were missing from the sea for cyclone (Ajker Patrika, 2022). In March 2023 fisherman Ruhul Gazi of Satkhira died in the Sunderbans due to Tornado (Prothom Alo, 2023). During Cyclone Sidr on 15 November, 2007, at least 375 fishing trailers were missing and 280 were obstructed in different places of embankment (Beribadh). Hundreds of fishers were missing from the sea in Barguna district. Among the fishers of 100 took place in Myanmar and Indian areas. 100 fishers from Pathorghata, Barguna were prisoned in Urisa prison of India.

Generally, the fishers go to the sea to fish for 9 to 10 days. They don't have enough chance to get radio signal or any precautionary signals of disasters. So they fall on the attack of the natural calamities and loss lives.

Unjust Fish Price

The fishermen go for fish in the sea with life risk. They have to leave their family for many days. The family members look for their earning person (might be only one earning person) that the fishermen with abundance of fish would return home and would buy all necessary daily goods of the family with money sold by fish. But in most cases, the fishers are either bound to *dadanders* with very low price of fish or have to sell the fishes to the *Arotders* (wholesale fish dealers) with very low price compared to their labor in the sea with risk of life. This is the traditional feature of the Jelepalli. In *Phadma Nodir Majhi* novel, Manik Bondopadhyay showed how the fishermen are low paid or totally unpaid by the powerful people of Ketupur. In *Titas Ekti Nodir Nam* this injustice to the poor fishermen is also showed. Mainly the fishermen class people are the primary producers. But they sell the fishes to the wholesaler *Arotder* at a very low price but the *Arotder* traders supply the caught fishes to the city areas at a very high price. The fishers are bound to obey the syndicate but have compressed grief and sorrows in their heart. The fishers sell Hilisha caught in the coastal areas at 500-600 taka per kg but they are sold at 1200 to 1400 taka in city areas. The middle size Hilisha are sold by the fishers 300 to 400 taka but they are sold in the market at 700 to 800 taka. A report shows that due to steps taken by the government, the Hilisha production has increased as 80% and the total market price (external and Internal) is 34 thousand crore taka which is 1% of the total GDP. But the main producer of this fishers are deprived of the legal price of fish historically from generation to generation.

A report of DBC news provided a survey that the fishers are deprived of legal price of 475 species of fishes along with Hilisha in the coastal regions of Bangladesh. Among the fishes poya, Churi, Bhola, Rupsa, Tuna, Black Marlin etc. The fishers show the causes behind the low price is lack of demand and branding by the market authority. Again the fishers do not get the legal price due to lacking in manufacturing facilities. The poor fishers do not have

modern preservation process. So the caught fishes gradually decays. So the poor fishers cannot sell the fishes at legal rate (Daily Janakantha, 18 September, 2021).

Scarcity of Fishes

In the novel *Titash Ekti Nodir Nam* the writer shows how the river is empty of fishes and so the fisher's suffer from livelihood. In contemporary period, due to various natural and manmade causes, the water bodies are being gradually empty of biodiversity specially fish species. A fisher named Khalil Majhi retorted crying,

সাগরে ইলিশ নাই। দেড় দুই লাখ টাকা খরচ কইররা সাগরে যাইয়া হুদা আতে (হাতে) ফেরত আওয়া লাগছে। বাড়িতে বাজার সদয় নাই, পাওনাদারগো ডরে বাড়তেও যাইতে পারি না। হাচা কথা ভাই, মোরা এহন অসহায় (Bangla News 24, 23 November, 2022).

On the other hand, fishermen Jalal Gazi, Chan miya, Jamal Miya fishermen of Bishkhali river, Barguna said,

নদীতে মাছ নাই। ত্যালের দাম অয়না। এক খেয়াতে ৮৪০ টাকার তেল খরচ হয়, মাছ পাওয়া যায় ৪০০-৫০০ টাকার। ২২ দিনের নিষেধাজ্ঞার পর থেকেই এ অবস্থা। কেমনে মাইয়া পোলা নিয়া খামু কইতে পারি না। মোগো কতা কেউ ভাবে না। (Bangla News 24, 23 November, 2022).

A report of Bangla Tribune shows that the fishers of Mongla and Passure River are disheartened due to not having available fishes in these rivers near Sunder bans. (21 September, 2023). The fishers of Padma are also disheartened as fishing from day to night they do not catch expected fishes in this river. The fishers of Padma river of Pubna and Rajbari district return home without plenty of fishes. So they are facing a great problem in supporting their family.

The specialists say that due to climate change the fisheries sector is also affected. 40% of the total production of fishes are from natural sources like rivers, canals, bills etc. and another 60% is produced from fish cultivation. Generally the fishes broom from eggs in February to August. In the contemporary period due to drought, this natural process is hampered. Lack of rain, the natural production process is disturbed and so the fish production in natural process is comparatively low (Dhaka Post, 6 September, 2023). In a study it is showed that from the year of 1980 the prawn fry is caught randomly in Sundarbans. The other fish species are also caught with prawn fry. So the fishes are decreasing day by day (Daily Prothom Alo, 22 July, 2022).

The huge fishery resource of Bangladesh is reducing day by day due to lack of proper and planned use and reconstruction of these resource. Another reason is the sources of fish-River, canal, bill etc. are being filled by silt. Research shows that 40% ponds and Dighi are filled with silt and trees. In the rainy season, the fishes go out of water bodies and are caught by the other species. The owners of water bodies do not provide foods to fishes. The fishing of *pona* fish is also responsible for decreasing fishes. The government rules against *pona* fish is violated. Moreover the egg bearer mother fishes are caught before laying eggs. So the fishes are not increasing (Nazrul, 2023, p. 32).

Health Hazards and Malnutrition

90% of the total population of Bangladesh suffer from malnourishment. Fish is the source of nutrition. It has protein oil and minerals. These notorious food is able to fulfill the demand of nutrition in human body. In the sweet water of Bangladesh, at least 272 species fishes are found where in the salty sea water 475 types of fish are identified. The prime element in fish helps people to prevent caries. A physically fit man needs 43.30 gram protein every day. In it at least 15 gam non vegetarian protein is mandatory. The main source of non-vegetarian protein is fish and fishes contain 80% of total animal protein. On average fishes contain 20% protein and 10 amino acids in fishes are vey important for human being. The mineral salt

contained in fish is important for the growth of childhood and adolescent period. In mineral salt of human body, calcium and phosphorus (3/4) (Nazrul, 2023, p. 67-68).

Poverty is a daily companion of the fishermen. The fishermen due to scarce fishes in the water bodies cannot earn much from fishing. Then they do not usually manage any fish nutrition for themselves as well as family members. So the fishermen suffer from malnutrition and family members also are devoid of enough nutritious foods. So the influence of malnutrition affects them in health durability. Besides that the fishing in the sea with excessive pressure on health and high risk of different contagious diseases is also a life threatening issue for the fishermen.

In the contemporary time period, the ban of fishing during laying eggs of the mother fishes also affect the fishermen. Because in this time the fishermen suffer from food crisis. Although the government provides 40 kg rice in 22 days ban-moment of fishing, it is too insufficient to arrange two times fulfillment of the fishers and family member meals. So it is also responsible for the degradation of fisher's health (Daily Prothom Alo, 21 September, 2021).

Child Labor and Uneducation in Jelepalli

The child born in a family of a fishermen is not welcomed at all time (Phadma Nodir Majhi). Because the children have to struggle for existence in the family of a poor fisherman. The children in their very tender age are bound to fish or catch *pona* in the water bodies. In childhood they should have gone to school with books but go to fish in the rivers with fishing nets. They take rudder of boat in change of pencil to draw pictures. The childish eyes in *jelepara* do not dream of a nice future. They should have spent their time in jolly mind but struggle to be a fishermen in future. They have to earn for their family depriving them of education and other rights.

In a newspaper report on the children of fishermen of Kalapara of Patuakhali District shows that the fisher's children are deprived of education and dream to be a fisherman in future. At the age of 7-8, the children catch fishes in the Bay of Bengal. The facial depressive mood of these children say that poverty has bound them to come out of home to earn in the sea. The adolescents in this upazilla fish alike the older fishermen. Most of the children never go to school. Although the government has laws against child labour but the laws are inactive in *jelepalli*. In 20 November, 1989, the UN Children Rights Certificate has been formed. Bangladesh government has introduced National Children Policies, 2011, Child Act-2013, National Children Labor Resistance 2010. These acts are not active in the coastal fishermen's life and livelihood (Sadash Protidin, 3 February, 2023).

Problems of Women Fishers

All over the world, the women fishers are double marginalized among the fisher's folk although they work with men counterparts with same parameter. For example, although women contribute to 20% of the total production of fisheries in Latin America, very few studies enlist and recognize the contribution. Again a survey shows that in Brazil in 2010, women comprised 4% of the total fisheries but the role is beyond recognition (Alam, 2015, p. 1).

In Bangladesh the women also fish in the rivers. With nets. Many of them are divorced or their husband are sick. Many women fish with her husband at the same boat. Some women fishers are floating fishers. They don't have any house in land. Boats are their only home.

A recent roundtable discussion shows that how the women fishers are deprived and faced with violence. This meeting discussed that the women fishers are paid less than that of the fishermen. Moreover the women in a fishermen's family are faced with various violence in every time. A research titled 'Khomotayn Surer Baire Upokuliyo Jele Paribarar Nari: Teksoi Motso Khater Jonno Narir Sokrio Angshogrohon Abosshak' was accomplished on 1200 fishers family in Bhola, Cox's-bazar and Bagerhat districts. This research shows that the women fishers gets 25% less than the male fishers in coastal region. In buying any wealth of family 31% women are not asked for their opinion. In general expenses, 58% women's

opinion are not asked. Only 2% women had contracts with union parishad in different issues and 82% women are not involved in any kind of arbitration activities. 65% of the women are the victims of violence (Daily Desh Rupantar, 23 November, 2020).

Attack of Pirates and animals

The fishermen have to struggle with life risks due to the attack of pirates and notorious animals or sharks. When the fishermen go for fishing, they are faced with such threat and at all fishing moments they spend in panic of death. The pirates not only take away everything from the fishers but also kill or hurt them. As a result, many fishers die or seriously injured. Sometimes they face the terrible paw of sharks or gigantic animals of the sea. Sometimes the fishers who fish near forests are faced with furious paw of tiger, snake etc. So their life is always at risks in the sea.

On 1 August, 2022, a report of Prothom Alo shows that 15 fishing trailers were attacked by the pirates and the pirates took away fishes, diesel, other goods from the fishers. The fishers were from Patuakhali district. On 25 August, 2019, Mannan Miya, a fisher from Pathorghata was beaten and was thrown into the sea by the pirates. Moreover another boatman Mijan was also thrown into the sea and the traller engine was destroyed. 8 fishers floated on the sea and after eight days another taller rescued them (Daily Amader Somoy, 6 September, 2019).

On 27 January, 2023 a fisherman named Anukul Gyne (42) was seriously injured by the paw of tiger at Morolganj, Bagerhat (Bangla News 24, 27 January, 2023).

A list of number of fishermen died by the attack of the pirates, tigers or other notorious animals in Sundarbans area and Bay of Bengal in the last few years is given below:

Table: 4

Year	By Pirates	By Tigers	By Others
2023	03 (Bangla News 24, 1 October)	02 (Somokal, 27 January, 2023 and Dhaka Post, 18 February, 2023)	01 for unknown reason (News Bangla, 15 gczdrzV, 2023)
2022	01 (Jamuna Tv, 16 September, 2022)	01 (Jamuna TV, 22 May, 2022)	01 by Snake at the Bay of Bengal (Prothom Alo, 13 November, 2022)
2021	01 (Dhaka Times, 17 November, 2021)	02 (BD News 24. com, 22 January, 2021)	-
2020	04 Injured (Janokantha, 15 January, 2020)	-	01 by snake at Sunderbans (Banik Barta, September, 2020)
2019	01 (Barta 24, 15 March, 2019)	01 Injured (Barta 24, 2 January, 2019)	-
2019	01 Injured (Barta 24, 2 January, 2019)	2 January, 2019	-
2018	4 Injured, 1 (Corporate Barta, 3 July, 2018)	-	01 by crocodile (Noya Diganta, 18 July, 2018)
2017	-	02 (Jago News 24.com, 13 January, 2017)	01 by snake (Protidiner Songbad, 23 August, 2017)
2016	01 (n tv, 20 cRhzsWfdv, 2016)	-	-

2015	01 (Jago News 24, 22 January, 2015)	-	01 by crocodile (BD News 24, 12 January, 2015)
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Recommendations to Solve the Problems

The problems faced by the fishermen have made them marginalized community of the country from ancient to modern age. Basically state apathy to the fisheries sector and fish producer class people is the main cause behind this marginalization. Some steps have been taken by the government and non-government authorities. But the social status of the fishermen communities have not brought much change in their life and livelihood. In this study, some recommendations are given below to solve the problems-

- The strong legal actions against the oppressive *Dadni* System and *Mahajani* interest rate must be addressed by the government.
- The rehabilitation programs for disaster affected fishers have to be extended and organized by special national committee.
- The assistance by government during the fishing ban-period is not sufficient. The government should take steps to extend such amount of necessity goods. Moreover the government and non-government organizations should arrange alternative work facilities for the fishermen during this period.
- Proper legal actions and market monitoring system must be ensured by the government for legal price of caught fishes.
- The distance of middlemen businessmen must be controlled by the government.
- An accurate and justified list of fishermen in sub-district level must be made and it would be strictly maintained during providing government assistance and rehabilitation support.
- A unique fishermen bank should be introduced to provide loan in low interest or without interest to eradicate poverty from this communities.

Conclusion

The fishing is a traditional primary profession of the world. In Bangladesh based on the land of rivers, this profession has been a vital mode of livelihood for millions of people from ancient to modern age. But the life and struggle for existence is a common feature for fishermen at all time. The ancient Bengal has seen the distressful struggling life of the *Kaibarta* fishers. Again the same feature is noticed in medieval and colonial period. In contemporary period, the fishers are more helpless due to not only for human oppression but also for natural causes. The global climate change affects the fishermen adversely. Climate change has been decreasing the amount of biodiversity in the water bodies. In Bangladesh, the negative effects of climate change reduce the fish species. So the fishermen are in the threat of existence and gradually change their traditional profession. Although the government of Bangladesh from the beginning of its birth have been taking steps for the welfare of fishermen, the wheel of their life is unchanged. The struggle of fishermen in all regions against poverty, malnutrition, oppression of middlemen, uneducation, gender inequality etc is as usual to the ancient to modern contemporary period.

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