

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONSA. Standard of Living.

As mentioned earlier, the average household income of the fisherman is estimated at about \$73.00 per month. Of this about 67 per cent is spent on food, 12 per cent on non-food items and 14 per cent on durable and semi-durable goods, capital creation and recreation. This simplified pattern of expenditure, according to Engel's Law which states that "the proportion of the outgo used for food, other things being equal, is the best measure of the material standard of living of a population",¹ clearly indicates that the standard of living of the fisherman is low, and that after spending his income on food he has very little left to spend on other necessities of life.

However, in a community such as the fisherman in Beesarch, where the traditional consumption habits place more stress on the satisfaction derived from the consumption of non-home-prepared food than from any other necessities of life, the consumption pattern alone is not a satisfactory criterion to measure the material standard of living of the fisherman. But it may be used to some extent with caution.

1. C.C. Zimmerman, Consumption and the Standards of Living, Williams and Morgate Ltd., London, 1936, p.99.

B. Consumption on Food.

The marginal propensity to consume on food among the fishermen was found to be exceptionally high and a rise in income, for example, during the good fishing season, will mainly be spent on food which mostly takes the form of cakes, vermicelli, sweets and snacks. It was also learned that the fishermen seldom take eggs, and meat is only taken on rare and ceremonial occasions. With a rise in income it was expected that some of the extra money would be spent on such food items that will give them a more balanced diet, but it was found with surprise that such changes in expenditure do not take place. It is the opinion of the writer that the change in the expenditure pattern on food resulting from the rise in income will not increase their nutritional food intake, since sweets which form most of the non-home-prepared food, are mainly rice in composition. A more rational way of spending their extra income, if ever it should be spent on food, might have been on eggs and meat, if greater nutrition was desired.

The Monsoon which greatly affects fishing activities in the east coast also has a strong influence on the consumption pattern of the fishermen. As soon as the Monsoon sets in fresh fish become scarce and generally there is not enough money

to spend on food. In general there is a short period of distress and poverty. From the sudden changes that take place in the expenditure pattern, it is obvious that during the off-fishing season the fishermen are hopeless and that they could not do much to reduce the ill effect of the Monsoon.

The writer is of the opinion that, because of their low income, their traditional consumption habits, which make savings almost impossible, even at the peak of the fishing season, and the effect of the Monsoon, perhaps fishermen co-operative credit and marketing society, besides organising the fishermen into efficient producers, would also even out the fluctuating expenditure pattern of the fishermen. These co-operative societies besides, helping members to get capital, organise the marketing of their fish, so as to give them better sale price, supply them with credit when it is necessary, could also undertake savings schemes that will provide their members during the Monsoon. The plausibility of the above suggestion can be shown by the fact that the handliners who are members of the fishermen co-operative credit and marketing society in the village, besides, having higher incomes; are better provided for during the Monsoon than those who are not members of the co-operative society.