



Changing Scenario in Coastal Economy of Purba Medinipur in 21st Century: A Special reference to Fisheries and Tourism

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Abstract:

The East Medinipur district in the Indian state of West Bengal features a coastline stretching 65.5 kilometers. Despite the coastline undergoing various geographical shifts over time, the local population has long utilized this coastal zone as a vital source of livelihood. Since ancient times, places such as Tamralipta, Hijli, Banja, Khejuri, and Haldia have served as hubs for maritime trade; Junput, Shaula, Jaldha, Shankarpur, and Digha have functioned as centers for marine fisheries; and places like Junput, Mandarmani, Tajpur, Shankarpur, and Digha have developed into tourism destinations—collectively creating an economic landscape that has secured the lives and livelihoods of countless people. This research paper aims to examine the evolving nature of this coastal economy in light of historical evidence.

Key Words: Coastal, Trade, Fisheries, Tourism, Scenario.

Introduction

On 1 January 2002, the erstwhile Midnapore district was divided into Paschim Midnapore and Purba Midnapore. It is bordered by West Midnapore to the west and north, Howrah to the east and South 24 Parganas to the southeast. East Midnapore has 4 sub-divisions, 21 thanas, 25 panchayat samitis, 223 gram panchayats and 2535 gram sansads. The district also has a 65.5 km long coastline along its southern and southwestern borders.¹ One of the areas of economic development of the coastal region of East Midnapore district is its coastal trade. Like the producers and products of the region, the economic condition of both foreign and domestic traders and their associates in both regions has been particularly associated with this trade since ancient times. As a result, it has created a market-based economy in the region that has enriched the people directly or indirectly connected with it. Since ancient times, when the name of the place called Midnapore did not exist, the most significant port of eastern India was Tamralipta, now known as Tamluk in East Midnapore. According to some scholars, Tamralipta's fame for foreign trade extended from the 3rd century BC to the 8th century AD. The port was then located on the shores of the Bay of Bengal. Before the emergence of the port of Calcutta, Hijli and Khejuri of the Kanthi subdivision emerged as significant ports after Tamralipta. After the decline of ancient and medieval ports Haldia as associate of Kolkata port emerges. Besides Digha, Shankarpur, Mandarmoni, Tajpur, Junput and Petuaghat etc. in the coastal region of East Midnapore emerge as centers of extensive center of fishing and tourism, which had a huge impact on the economy of East Midnapore.² The said coastal areas of Purba Medinipur district are best known for their colorful seashell and marine material-based handicrafts, which significantly impact the tourism and local economic sectors of the region. The tourists who come from the distant places to enjoy the sea and seaside natural beauty attracted and buy of such products which mostly produced and sold by the local people.

Objectives:

On the basis of the said economic background of the coastal area of Purba Medinipur the following objectives are taken for the research article.

To investigate the coastal trade and its impact on the people of the country since ancient to present time

To show the development of Coastal areas fisheries and its impact on the Economy of Purba Medinipur District

To present the impact of tourism on the economy of the study area

To reveal the impact of the different sectors of Coastal Economy on the development of the people of Purba Medinipur District

Discussion:

Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal is part of the lower Indo-Gangetic plain and the eastern coastal plain. Topographically, the district can be divided into two parts – (a) almost complete plains in the west, east and north, (b) coastal plains in the south. This vast area is made up of alluvial soil and is composed of fresh and coastal sediments. The elevation of the district is within 10 meters above mean sea level.³ The main sea bordering the coastal area of Purba Medinipur is the Bay of Bengal, and the key rivers shaping this coastal belt include the Hooghly (Hugli), Rupnarayan, Haldi, Rasulpur and the canals naming Pichabani, and Champa. Generally speaking, the coastal zone is the meeting point of land, water, and the atmosphere. It is an area where the marine environment exerts an influence on the terrestrial environment.⁴ Since Ancient time the people of Purba Medinipue were blessed by the coastal trade which was seen in the role of the then Tamralipta coastal trade line.

Tamralipta:

Tamralipta, the principal port of eastern India at the time, is currently known as Tamluk in Purba Medinipur and is situated on the eastern bank of the Rupnarayan River. Since ancient times, the areas near Tamralipta, such as Santal Paraganas, Singhbhum etc., were famous for their copper ores. Copper was mined in the copper mines located in Rakha of Ghatshila from the first century C.E. It is believed that copper or copper ores came to Tamralipta from all these areas and were exported abroad by sea. Some believe that the region may have been named Tamralipta because of its association with copper. It is believed that this port was built on the banks of the Rupnarayan to meet the needs to export trade in eastern India, which was rich in trade resources. Foreigners did not build this port. Commercial transactions began with South East Asia, East Asia and even Europe on the seabed, centered on Tamralipta. These transactions were sometimes direct and sometimes indirect. In ancient times, people of different countries such as Malay, Jabadwip, Burma, Simhala, China, Japan etc., used to come to the Tamluk port of eastern India to trade. The most distant commercial commodity imported into and exported from the Bengal region specifically from Tamralipta was the Central Asian horse. Additionally, bay leaves from the Himalayan region, aromatic oils derived from crushed herbs, and pearls were also imported. The list of exports included polished glass, high-quality fine cotton fabrics, rice, honey, teak wood, gold, silver, precious textiles, cotton fabrics, aromatic substances, precious stones, pearls, and the like. Some of the goods involved in Tamralipta's maritime trade were sourced locally or from nearby areas, while others arrived from North and Northeast India via river or land routes. At that time, a wide variety of ivory objects, terracotta vessels, toys, and numerous figurines of horses and humans were readily available in Tamluk. These items appear to be of local manufacture. A significant portion of the vast wealth generated through trade at Tamralipta was concentrated in the hands of merchants. It is likely that merchants from Bengal returned with gold and silver coins rather than trade goods. While barter trade also took place, the general public used *cowrie* (a small shell used as coin) for ordinary buying and selling. In the market of Tamralipta, buying and selling was done through the exchange of copper coins, *cowrie* or barter system. This system facilitated the buying and selling of people of all classes. However after the 8th century, Tamralipta's maritime trade does not have a significant place in the economic history of ancient Bengal and India. The main reason of this is that the dry up of the branch of the Ganges on which Tamralipta was located may have caused difficulties in transporting goods from the vast hinterland by river. Moreover the increase in the importance of the Samander (Chattagram located in present day's Bangladesh) port after the 8th century is one of the reasons for the loss of importance of Tamralipta. Therefore it is not true that no ships sailed from Tamralipta after the 8th century. The Deshabali statement, written around the end of the 17th century, states that, traders made great profits in the Tamralipta continent.⁵

Hijli:

After Tamralipta, Hijli of Contai Sub Division emerged as an important port and the then Industrial trade center. When Tamralipta was a great port, Hijli was in the depths in the sea. Many believe that the name Hijli was derived from the abundance of *hijal* (Hajel nut) tree. In 1505 C.E, historical Hijli was full of jungle, undeveloped wetlands and fishermen village. The Portuguese began arriving in this region around 1514 C.E for trade and commerce. However upon landing in Hijli the Portuguese focused more on plunder than on trade. Portuguese pirated captured young boys and sold them to different countries. They used to make a lot of money by selling captured people in the slave markets of Titli, Blashwar and Tamluk. Hijli was a manhunt area for the Portuguese. Even the Indians who sailed to the Ganges for the sake of giving virtue were plundered by the Portuguese on the water, and the captured passengers were not only plundered but also sold as slaves. These bandits kidnapped thousands of people every year and sold them in various markets in Arakan. In the six years from 1629 to 1635, Mughal and Portuguese traders sold about 18,000 Indian slaves in the slave markets of Dianga and Arakan. The Mughals captured Hijli in 1630. Fearing Portuguese oppression; local farmers abandoned their land fled for their lives, causing crop production in the Hijli region to decline drastically. Therefore, the Mughals were forced to expel the Portuguese from Hijli in 1633 C.E. Hijli was frequented by foreign merchants. They often had to stay overnight in Hijli. That is why they built two churches for worship as well as commercial buildings; one in Hijli city and another in Banja village. However, the Portuguese stored the manufactured goods of Southern West Bengal in trading buildings through local brokers or merchants, and only then would they load the ships with the goods collected from there and then set sail. Ralph Fitz wrote that every year many ships from places like Naga, Sumatra, Malacca, etc. came to Hijli, the paradise of trade, and they returned from that place filled with cotton, silk, cloth, sugar, challis, butter and other goods. Fitz also writes that Hijli produced a lot of rice and cotton. Grass-based fabrics (like silk) were made. These fabrics were sent by the people of Hijli to all over India and other places. Many ships from India, Nagapattam, Sumatra, Malacca and other places used to come to the port of Hijli and they would carry a lot of rice, cotton, woolen fabrics, sugar, cloves, narcissus and other liquids. Honey from the Jungal Mahal and the Sunderbans was collected and stored in Hijli region and later exported abroad. However, the gardens of Medinipur, or rather, Bengal, have become rich with the introduction of various types of fruits, vegetables, and herbs brought by the Portuguese. Fruits such as custard apple, *nona*, *sapeta*, and *kamaranga*, ornamental flowers such as rosemary, sunflower and marigold, delicious vegetables such as *kopi*, *ulna*, and cauliflower, *salsa*, *ayapan*, and laxative plants were imported by the Portuguese. The Portuguese introduced the cultivation of the famous 'hijli nut' or cashew nut in Hijli. Sago, Bread, Biscuits, tobacco etc. were the first import of the Portuguese. The items for household items such as almirah, chair, window etc., playing subjects such as *binti*, *coupon* etc., selling and buying system such as cotton and auction etc., house

Changing Scenario in Coastal economy of Purba Medinipur in 21st Century: A Special reference to Fisheries and Tourism

hold items such as canestra, tub, bucket, tijel etc., useful items such as soap, bottle, towel etc., house building materials such as railing, balk, sweet musical instrument like violin etc., were introduced in Bengal by the Portuguese. They used to make delicious desserts and pickles from mango, orange, lemon, ginger etc., in the then Bengal. Moreover in Medinipur, they used to prepare a type of perfume from flower essences and a type of seed. All these perfumes were considered very auspicious to apply on the body at that time. A section of the Portuguese then married girls from Medinipur and started living permanently in the Medinipur District. Firingipara in Mirpur of Midnapur is still the best proof of this. Though the said residents were Christian by religion, their culture was entirely Indian. As a result of residing permanently in Midnapur, the agriculture system of the district was enriched by them. The British rule in India began on June 10, 1687, at the port of Hijli, centered on trade. Later, Sutanuti became the main trading center of the British. Thereafter, as a result of the grant of diwani, the English East India Company extended their dominance over Hijli like entire Midnapur district. Towards the end of the 18th century, the commercial existence of Hijli gradually began to disappear, and the port of Calcutta began to flourish.⁶

Banja:

In spite of this, the maritime trade of Midnapur did not cease with the destruction of Hijli. A few Kilometers from the Sea, maritime trade continued, depending on Banja and Khejuri. Banja, an important trading base for Portuguese merchants, was a famous center for the wax trade. However, the Banja Port was not a complementary trade center to Hijli. It was a center of land trade.⁷

Khejuri:

Khejuri established itself as port and harbour. It was located sixteen miles north west of Contai Subdivision on the right bank of the Hooghly River. During the heyday of Hijli Port, the existence of Khejuri was noticeable. But with the development of the port of Calcutta in the late 17th century; Khejuri also continued to flourish as a complementary port. Since Khejuri was located very close to the sea, it was relatively convenient for loading and unloading goods on ships. Those who sailed from Calcutta would first arrive at Khejuri in small boats or sloops and, after resting there for a night or two, would sail abroad on larger ships. Foreigners also used to come to Kolkata via Khejuri by small boats. The light house at Kaukhali, three or four miles south of Khejuri, began to shine its light on sea going ships in 1810 C.E. If the sky was clear, its light could be seen from 15 miles away. This light was 75 feet above the water level at full tide. This light house was established to guide seagoing ships. Many ships arriving from Europe would stay at the port of Khejuri for a few days to unload and reload their cargo. Therefore, hotels, churches, rest houses and even prostitute centers were built here for commercial purposes. The responsibility of introducing the first telegraph line in India to Khejuri, running the Khejuri Post Office, and establishing working relations with the passengers and sailors of all ships, including European traders, was entrusted to highly-paid English officials. Until the middle of the 19th century, South Bengal exported mainly rice, silk and sugar to Europe and other continents, while European traders imported mainly cotton cloth, cotton yarn, etc. But Khejuri could not survive as a port for long. Just as it originated and grew from the sea, it also disappeared in the sea. The storms and floods of 1807, 1823, 1831, and 1833 had caused considerable damage to the port. In 1834, Khejuri was severely flooded by the destructive waves of the sea. At this time, the name of Khejuri as a trading port was lost to the waves of the sea.⁸

Haldia

Since the mid-1950s, the Kolkata Port had been suffering from navigation problems due to siltation and multiple sandbars in the waterways of the Hooghly River. This siltation problem caused various difficulties for shipping companies, which hampered their foreign trade. As a result, there were repeated demands from both the government and the shipping companies for dredging and construction of an alternative port. Initially, the then Chief Minister Dr. B. C. Roy selected Geonkhali as a suitable site for setting up a suburb of Kolkata and also planned to connect it to Kolaghat by rail for improved transport facilities. Despite various efforts by the state government, the Geonkhali project did not materialize, but Haldia was selected as an alternative as a subsidiary port of Kolkata. It was located on a deeper navigable channel and much closer to the sea than the proposed Geonkhali area; its navigation was quite easy and there were only three sandbars on the way to Haldia. It is located on the right bank of the Haldi River and is 104 km downstream from Kolkata. This favorable situation played a decisive role in choosing Haldia as a suburb of Kolkata. Although the project report for the new port was prepared in 1959, it was delayed due to some technical problems. In the meantime, as the urgent need for an oil jetty to transport crude oil and petroleum products required for the Barauni refinery was felt, the construction of an oil jetty was started in 1965, which was completed in 1968 along with the pipeline connecting the refinery. The master plan envisaged a trident-shaped dock system with two entrance locks, 47 berths, two oil jetties on the river bank and two large dry docks. However, the construction of only 7 berths and one oil jetty was undertaken in the first phase and the civil construction of the dock began in 1967. Finally, the Haldia Dock Complex gained momentum with the commissioning of Haldia Port in 1977. Thus, a new deep-water modern dock system was introduced at Haldia with the aim of expanding trade and industry by handling large cargo and oil tankers. It was India's first comprehensive port project, which would operate integrated cargo handling facilities and help in the development of port-based industries. It was expected that apart from crude oil and petroleum products, Haldia Port would also handle various commodities like rock phosphate and sulphur, food grains, iron ore, coal, salt and other general commodities.⁹

The port, being located close to the Bay of Bengal, is directly connected to one of the world's busiest waterways, making it easy to move goods to and from international markets. It is located on the banks of the Hooghly River, and this

river provides excellent waterway connectivity to the hinterland, making it a suitable location for import-export trade. This makes the port a convenient gateway for almost anything, including manufactured goods, raw materials, and agricultural products.¹⁰ East Midnapore has benefited from economic growth due to the presence of Haldia Port. Its strategic location and wide range of services have attracted many companies, resulting in increased industrialization and employment opportunities.

Marine Fisheries:

The sea is an inexhaustible reservoir of fish. The Bay of Bengal has provided East Medinipur and its people with the opportunity to harvest various types of fish from this reservoir almost throughout the year. Marine fishery resources can be broadly categorized into three types: 1. coastal and inshore fishing, 2. offshore fishing, and 3. deep-sea fishing. Inshore fishing refers to fishing within coastal waters up to a depth of 10 fathoms (1 fathom = 6 feet). In India, fishing in coastal areas is typically carried out using small boats that operate only from morning until evening. Offshore fishing refers to fishing in areas with depths ranging from 10 to 40 fathoms; this is primarily conducted using mechanized fishing vessels. Deep-sea fishing refers to the harvesting of fishery resources at depths exceeding 40 fathoms. This activity is carried out using large boats and large vessels equipped with freezing or preservation facilities.¹¹

The major marine fishing centers of Purba Medinipur are Junput, Saulaghat, Jaldah, Sankarpur and Digha.¹² Fishermen of the said area capture pomfret, hilsa, seer, croaker, catfish, bombay duck, ribbonfish, small pomfret, shrimp, penaeid and non-penaeid, threadfin, ray, large perch, polynemus, Sardine, non penaeid shrimp, ribbon fish, prawn like fishes from the Bay of Bengal for whole the year.¹³ Among the fishing gear used by traditional fishermen of the East Midnapore coast, the behundi net or set bag net is undoubtedly the most important. It is used by about 90% of fishermen during the normal fishing season. The relatively well-off fishermen (about 20% of the fishing population) use gill nets for catching Hilsa during the rainy season, from July to mid-September. Other gears used are the danga behundi, kati net and shaola net; these are small bag net-like gear used by a small section of fishermen (mainly the very poor) to catch fish from the shore. An important aspect of the kati net is that it is often used by women. The boats used by traditional fishermen of the East Midnapore coast are divided into two categories: traditional non-motorized and motorized. Here, a distinction must be made between 'motorized' and 'mechanical', which refers to much larger boats used for large-scale commercial fishing – such as trawl netters and gillnetters.¹⁴ Local people catch fish from the digha mohana and at the meeting point of canal or river with the bay of Bengal with the help of *fela jal* (handmade round shaped net). Moreover, they use 'bindha jal' for fishing during the tides.

Tourism:

The Government of West Bengal constituted the Digha Development Authority (DDA) as a statutory body under the Urban Development Department (Town and Village Planning Branch) in 1993. Later, in 2003, Shankarpur was included and the authority was renamed Digha Shankarpur Development Authority (DSDA), which brought under its jurisdiction 8,752.66 acres of land comprising 42 mouzas adjacent to the sea coast. Subsequently, for the purpose of coastal tourism and orderly development of those areas, Mandarmani and Tajpur, which have a total area of 8,467.92 acres spread over 9 mouzas, were brought under the jurisdiction of DSDA, resulting in an area of 17,220.04 acres under the jurisdiction of DSDA being declared as "Planning Area". Digha Shankarpur Development Authority has been working on enhancing tourism infrastructure on one hand and strengthening the existing infrastructure in the area under its jurisdiction on the other. In addition, the road connectivity has also been improved to facilitate the travel of rural people to tourist destinations. Major emphasis has also been placed on increasing tourism infrastructure in this area.¹⁵

Digha

During the 18th Century, Digha village was under the "Birkul Parganas". Digha is adorned by the virtue of her own natural beauty with the broad and vast blue sea and intoxicating rows of casurina trees overlooking the sea. Digha is famous for its beach which is considered as the finest hard beach of the world. Sir Warren Hastings called Digha beach as the "Brighton of the East". Digha first came to knowledge of the People through Mr. J.F. Snaith, an English businessman who built a bungalow here during about 1939 CE and tried to popularize it through own endeavours. Afterwards, Digha caught the attention of Dr. B.C. Roy, the well renowned visionary and Chief Minister of West Bengal during 1950's who with his imagination took up all round development of Digha as a Tourist spot and as well as to help the growth of a new township at this charming sea destination. What we now see and enjoy at Digha is, definitely, the positive result of imagination and attribution of Dr. Roy who is called the father of Digha. Digha located in Ramnagar-I-Development Block, is a sea side Town in Purba Medinipur District of West Bengal. It is the most popular Sea Side Tourist Place in West Bengal. It is famous for its 6 K.M long stretching beaches picturesque Casurinas plantations, Cyclical receding tides etc. Over the years it has emerged as a weekend hot spot. The Tourist arrival remains steady throughout the year. The Govt. of West Bengal has a vision of upgrading Digha into prime sea side destinations of the Country.¹⁶

Mandarmoni:

Mandarmoni, located in the Ramnagar II Block of the Contai Sub-Division of the District of East-Medinipur in West Bengal has all the natural wealth of a wide beach inhabited by millions of red crabs, landscaped by sand dunes and screw pines and seasonally visited by thousands of local traditional fishers. The symbiosis evolved through ages

Changing Scenario in Coastal economy of Purba Medinipur in 21st Century: A Special reference to Fisheries and Tourism

witnessed the traditional fishers protecting the beach by conserving and planting screw pines along the beach, which in its turn protected the sand dunes and stalled erosion. The fishers protected the red crabs and never destroyed other coastal life forms. The beach in its turn provided suitable access to the sea and a wonderful platform for fish drying, thereby providing livelihood to thousands of fish workers. The legend behind the name Mandarmani is that the pile of red crabs on the seashore looks like a bunch of *mandar* flowers, while some say that the bunches of flowers on the red mandar tree look like pearls from a distance - hence the name Mandarmani. Sonamui is nearby; the sea has entered a little inland here. Along with Sonamui, there are several villages - Seelampur, Dadanpatrabar, Dakshin Purushottampur, Shaula - which together form the larger Mandarmani. There are three fish *khotis* (Dadanpatrabar, Chenashuli and New Jaldha Khoti) in this larger Mandarmani. Various types of marine fish attract the public in these *khotis*. There is also an intensive fish farming project behind Mandarmani. It is worth enjoying the diverse game of live fish. Mandarmani's 14-kilometer long Sea Beach for driving car is the longest beach in India. Mandarmani has more than 50 small, big and medium-sized hotels. The pristine natural beauty of Mandarmoni made it irresistibly attractive to beach lovers.¹⁷

Tajpur:

Tajpur Beach is located in the East Medinipur district of South Bengal, one of the southern districts of West Bengal. Situated along the shores of the Bay of Bengal, Tajpur is a serene and picturesque beach. Nestled between Mandarmani and Chandpur beaches, it sees relatively fewer crowds and less commercial bustle. The beach is surrounded by eucalyptus, tamarisk (jhau), and casuarina trees. A major attraction here is the multitude of red crabs scattered across the sands; seagulls can also be spotted at dawn. Encircled by small patches of woodland, this coastline offers tourists stunning scenery and a delightful travel experience.¹⁸

Shankarpur:

Shankarpur is a virgin beach town located 14 km east of Digha in West Bengal. It is also a regular fishing harbor. The mornings are cool, when fishermen can be seen hauling their huge nets out of the sea. The morning sun reflecting on the sea waves in the east, and the local fish boats on the coast offer excellent photographic opportunities. For the development of Shankarpur as a tourist resort of international standards so as to attract the elite/up-market section of the tourists, the Department of Tourism, Government of West Bengal has undertaken ambitious plans over an approximate area of 1040 hectares. In addition, supporting tourism facilities like beach front recreation, water sports, cultural activities, etc. have also been contemplated. It is expected that the spill-over of high spending group of tourists can be comfortably absorbed by the proposed tourist resort at Shankarpur.¹⁹

Junput:

The sea beach is located 8 km east of Kanthi; this is where the Ganges meets the sea. Vast forests of casuarina trees, the blue sea, and fishermen catching fish are the main attractions here. Facilities for training in marine biology are available, and research on saltwater fish farming is underway. There is also a dried fish processing unit. The *Poush Sankranti* fair held here is famous.²⁰

Now a day marine fisheries and Tourism has become two more important economic resources for the people of Purba Medinipur District. Fish are of great economic value for man. In addition to serving as an important item of food, it provides several items of by-product also. Fish uses as food for cattle, preparation for liver oil and body oil, fish manure (contains a high percentage of phosphate and nitrogen) and guano (uses to prepare excellent manure), fish silage (uses as animal feed), fish glue (an adhesive for stamps, labels, etc.) and isinglass (used in confectionary as a substitute for gelatin), fish leather (used for making shoes, bags, suitcase and other ornamental articles), fish sausage and soup, fish flour for making Biscuits, artificial pearl (from the scrapping of the silvery covering of the scales of some fish species), preparing insulin (prepared from pancreas of sharks and other large size fishes), biological control and for decoration also.²¹ Many people—both locals and those from outside the area—are engaged in activities such as sea fishing, selling fish, manufacturing fishing gear, producing dried fish, fish preservation, marketing to local and distant markets, and fish transportation. For all of them, the coastline of the Bay of Bengal in East Medinipur has become a source of livelihood. Beside Marine fisheries tourism popularizes this area not only as an arena of natural beauty but an attracting market context where the people of the said area sell their local as well as imported products in such a way that it has become their means of livelihood.

Beside hotel business numerous small and big shops can be seen on and around the beach sidewalks of Old Digha, New Digha, Shankarpur, Jaldha, Tajpur, Mandarmani, Petuaghat etc., where decorative items, candle holders and animal figurines made of finely carved conch, oyster and sea snail shells are available. Along with this, garlands made directly from polished snail, coral and pearls; earrings, bracelets, bangles and hair accessories, as well as wind chimes, lamp shades and photo frames decorated with various sea, river and conch shells are also available.²²

Most of the said materials are produced by the local women. One of the Coastal side Police Station of Contai Subdivision is Ramnagar. The oyster industry in Ramnagar is entirely controlled by women. The women of Padima - I and Padima - II of Ramnagar P.S who are in Self Help Group are engaged with this industry singly or jointly. The raw materials of this industry, i.e. various types and shapes of oysters, come from the neighbouring state of Odisha. In various places of the creeks and canals of the Odisha Sea adjacent to the vast coast; various people of South India artificially cultivate different species of oyster pearls. All those oysters are brought in unpeeled state by wholesale traders. The traders give oysters to the women of villages like Jati Mati, Chapaboni, Mandla etc. of Pratima Gram Panchayat No. 1 and to the women of villages like Jagadishpur, Alankarpur, Dahdaya, Harpur etc. of Pratima Panchayat No. 2. The

women of the village first boil the mussels by mixing acid and bleaching powder in water, then remove the fleshy substance inside the mussels, which helps them move, and then clean them in the sun. After drying them in the sun, they clean them with a cloth. The previously discolored mussels, which are washed with acid and bleaching powder, turn white. The pearls turn from dark to shiny. Then the artwork is done. In Digha region, moneylenders and traders give oysters to the women of these villages and tell them what crafts to do. The art of mirror making here is famous in India. The traders cut different shapes of mirrors and give them to the women. The women make beautiful eye-catching mirrors by attaching different shapes of oysters on the glass mirrors with Feviquick glue. All these mirrors are exported not only to different parts of the district, but also to different states and even abroad. In return, the moneylenders give cash to the women as remuneration. Apart from this, they make various types of dolls, idols of deities, flower tops, vases, pen stands, showpieces for decorating tables, and various crafts of different shapes for keeping in wall cupboards. They put other oysters that will match these oysters, apply feviquik glue, and when they dry, they create beautiful pictures with paints and brushes. It is clearly understood that women are born artists when they see all these works of art.²³ Besides, a number of people are engaged in the business of selling *galar putul*, different types of jute product, wooden crafts, *patachitra*, and different design based mat, attractive utensils from brass for uses in household activities and worship etc.

In this way, since ancient period the people of the coastal are enriched with the blessing of coastal trade, fisheries and tourism activities though natural disasters—such as severe floods and cyclones, and storm surges like Aila, Amphan, Yaas etc.—have caused extensive damage to the local population over time, the coastal economy has inspired them to rebuild their lives.

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