

LOCKDOWN LIVELIHOOD: A CASE STUDY OF CYCLE VENDING OF WETLAND VEGETABLES IN KOLKATA CITY SUBURBS, WEST BENGAL

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Lockdown, total or partial, since March 24, 2020 has highly affected the life and livelihood of marginalized communities in India as well as West Bengal. In the light of poor men's panic during COVID-19 pandemic crisis, the present case study of a cycle vendor, KocheMakal (59), from Asuti village of Mahestala-Thakurpukur Block, shows his conviction and courage (Fig. 1) in the face of crisis concern. He becomes familiar to us since July 2020, as a seller of wetland or aquatic vegetables like *kolmi shak* (Water Spinach, *Ipomoea aquatica*), *susni shak* (Water Clover, *Marsilea quadrifolia*), *brahmi shak* (Water Hyssop, *Bacopa monnieri*), *shaluk* (Water Lily, *Nymphaea* spp.), etc., in the morning carrying four bags and a big 'gamla' containing 'sabji' for sale (Fig. 1-4). He works more than twelve hours a day and earns about Rs. 200 - 250/- per day. He has four members in his family; they have had two meals daily due to supply of wheat and rice from ration shop. He is visibly happy and healthy these days (Fig. 5), perhaps for enjoying active life and rewarding livelihood in the pandemic periods.



Figs. 1-5. Showing *sukhicycle* vendor, KocheMakal with *Kolmishak* in hand (Fig. 1), *Susnishak* (Fig. 2), *Brahmi shak* (Fig.3), *Shaluk* (Fig. 4), and a Bengali poem on him (Fig. 5).

MULTIDENT SPEARFISHING IN WATERLOGGED AREAS AT KOLKATA MEGACITY SUBURB, WEST BENGAL

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Spearfishing is an age-old means of shallow water fishing with a long hand-held handle to target the relatively larger gilling fish species like carp, eel, snakeheads and catfishes from embankment; invariably without the use of bait and obviously without any by-catch (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spearfishing>). This may sometimes be tied with a thin rope for distant throwing from water edge. The present report relates to a very simple type and easy to use hand spear which is comprised of two pieces; with six dents made of iron at the top, fitted on a wooden handle for spearfishing purpose. It is used as and when required as a fancy game.

On the night of June 16, 2021 there was heavy downpour (about 144 ml; *videlocal* Newspaper report, dated 17-18 June, 2021), and Kolkata megacity plunged into waterlogging, including the present observation site of Maheshtala area. On June 19, 2021 at 9 am in the morning, a local youth was found to resort to spearfishing in almost waist dip water in a building campus from the boundary wall, and caught a *mrigal* fish, *Cirrhinus mrigala* (Fig. 1). Several children were also seen to catch small fishes, mostly juvenile tilapias using scoop net. Normally night fishing with spear and a lantern is the usual mode of spearfishing in rural West Bengal from freshwater ponds, *beels* and *jheels* of shallow nearshore water (Fig. 2). Such spears are commonly kept in every rural household of remote areas of southern West Bengal for piercing poisonous snakes when seen in holes, hiding places and congested corners.

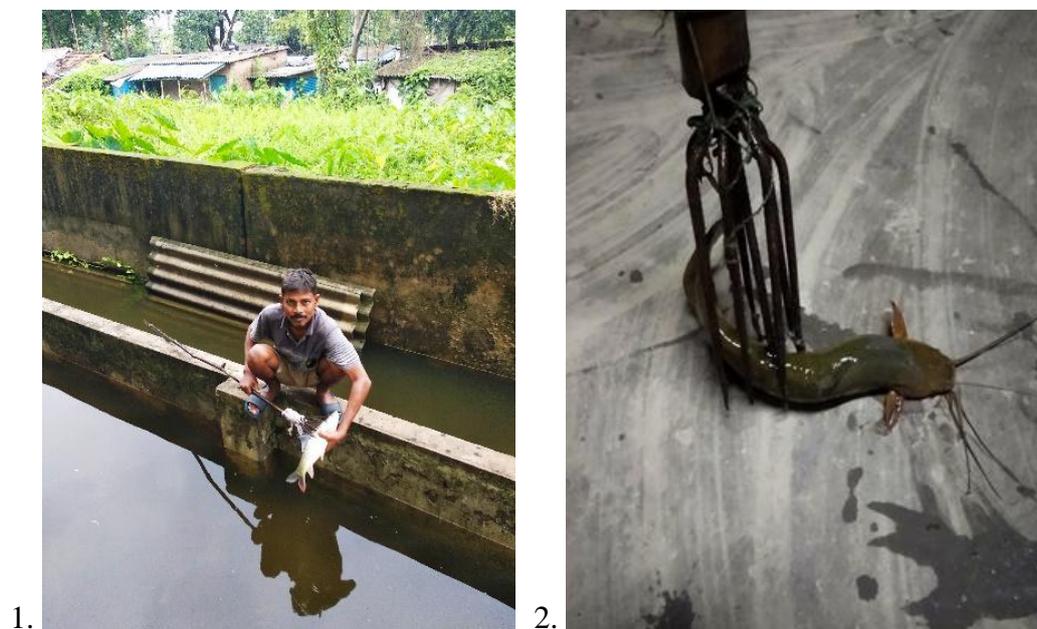


Fig. 1. Spear fishing in waterlogged area. Fig 2. Spear fishing at night in rural West Bengal

REFERENCE

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spearfishing>