



B/BP
LIBRARY

BOBP/MAG/10

OUR FISH- OUR WEALTH



A PUBLICATION OF

B/BP

For Fisheries Development
BAY OF BENGAL PROGRAMME

OUR FISH - OUR WEALTH

For hundreds of years now our people have depended almost entirely on the sea for a livelihood. So dependent are we on her that we revere and worship her.

And yet sometimes when the catch is very poor and seems to decrease day by day whatever we do, we tend to blame her. We say she is angry, she has been unkind. Has she?

Could it be that in our ignorance, our need, our greed, we are taking too much, too soon from her?

Are the fishing methods, gear and craft we use today the best ones?

Do they do the best for us by way of catch weight? If they do not, what can we do about it?

In a series of colourful picture story books like this one, we will discuss these questions one by one and try to understand and learn about what we could do to protect and conserve the wealth that is ours – our fish stocks.

RAGHU

Story and Script: KAMALA CHANDRAKANT

(In consultation with Dr. K. Sivasubramaniam and Rathin Roy of the Bay of Bengal Programme)

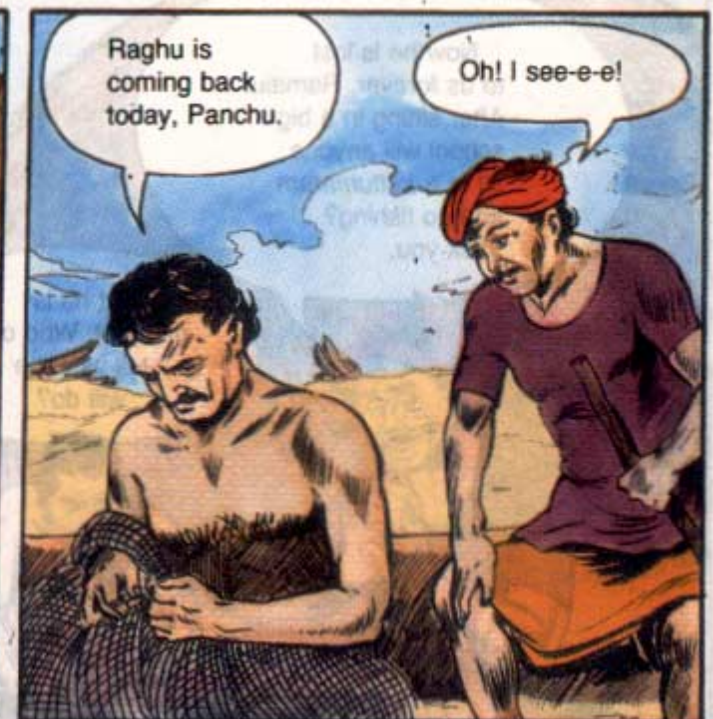
Illustrations: RAZI





Why this feast?
What's going on here,
Ramalu? Who's getting
married?

As though you
wouldn't know if
it were a wedding!



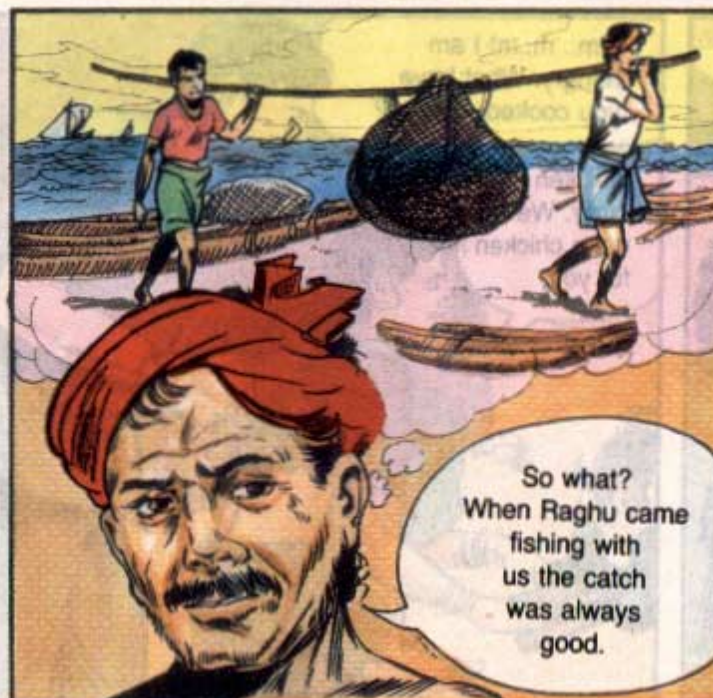
Raghu is
coming back
today, Panchu.

Oh! I see-e-e!

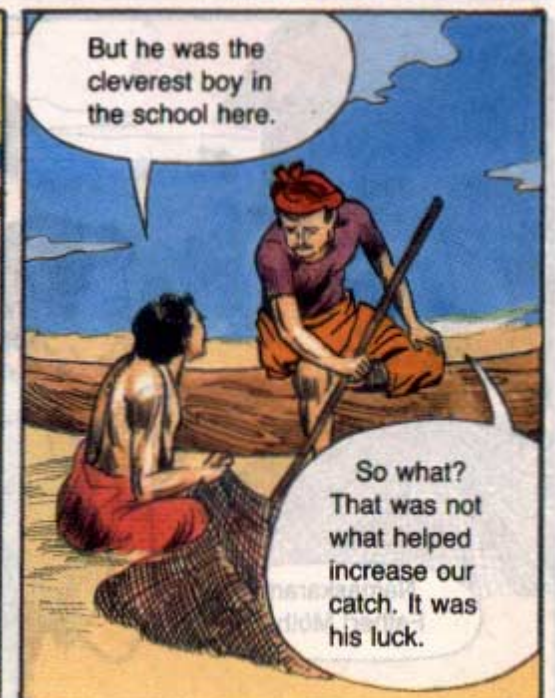


I still think you should
never have sent him out
to study. He would
have become a first
class fisherman.

I have my
other two
boys and you
for that.

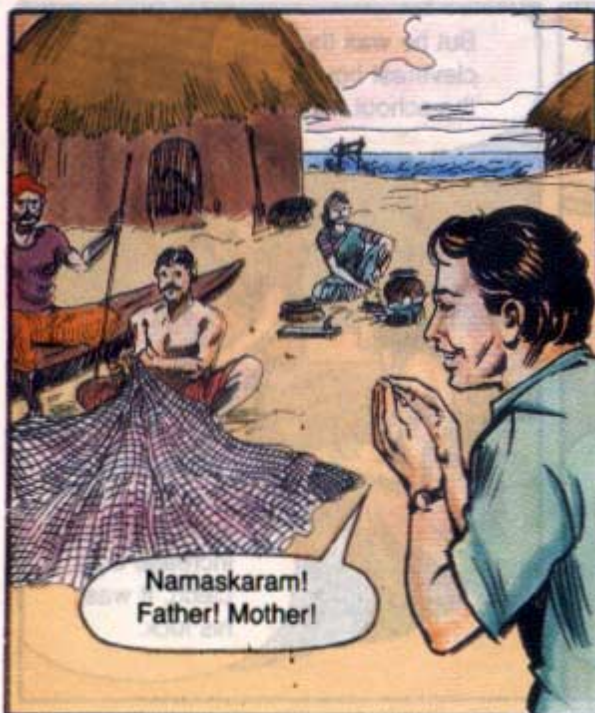
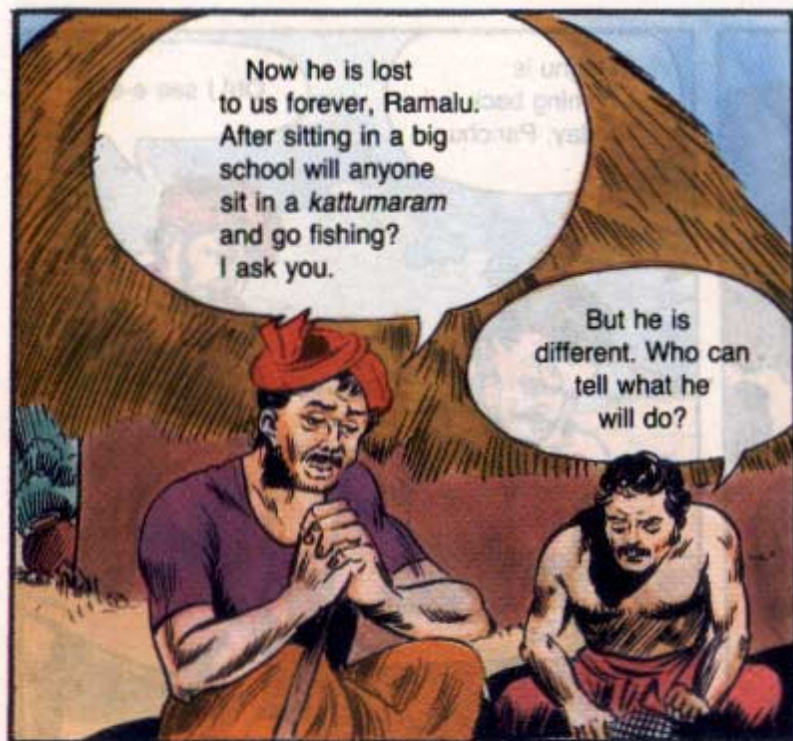


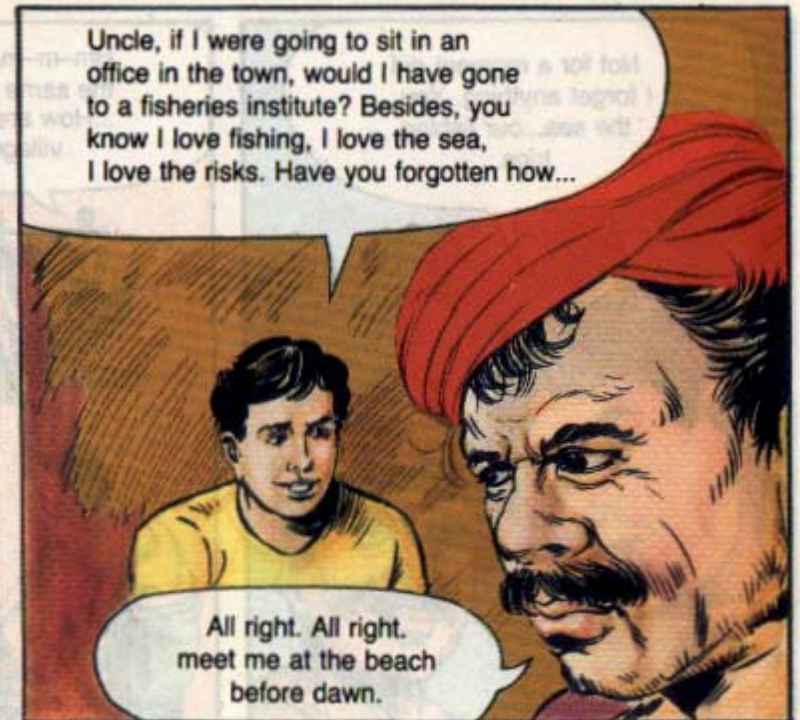
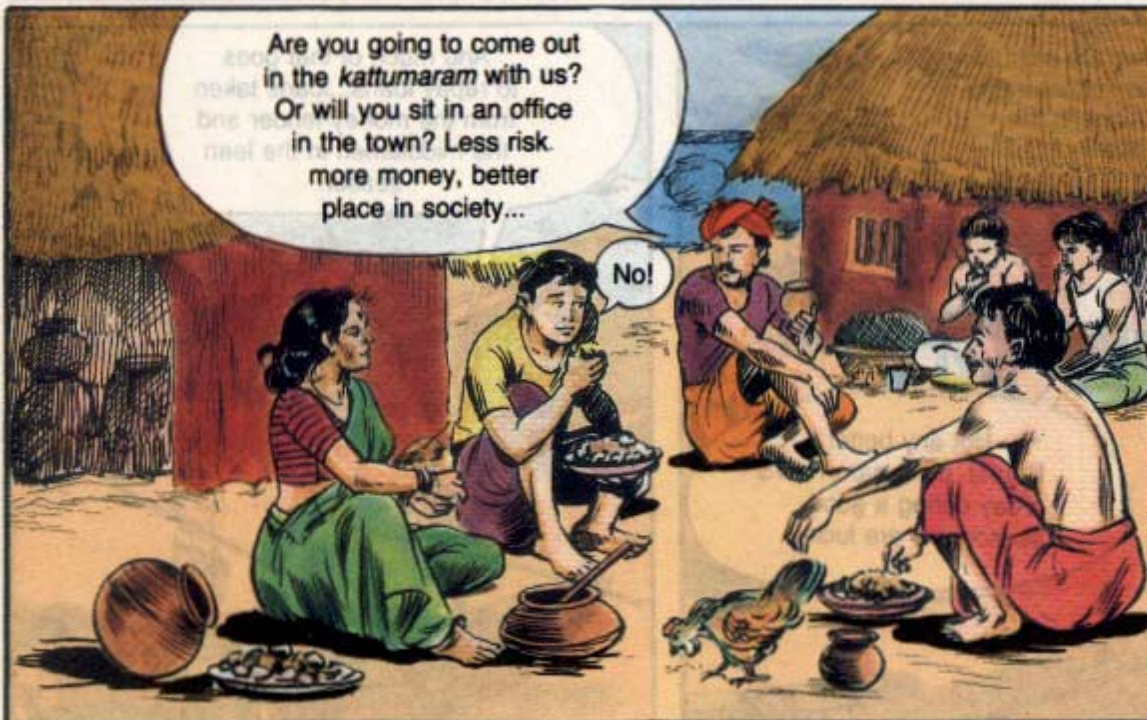
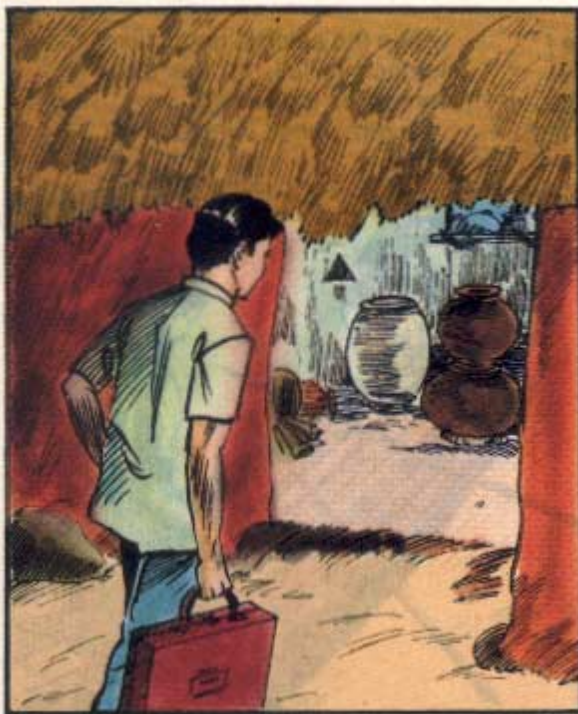
So what?
When Raghu came
fishing with
us the catch
was always
good.



But he was the
cleverest boy in
the school here.

So what?
That was not
what helped
increase our
catch. It was
his luck.





EARLY, THE NEXT MORNING -

Ah! there you are! You are late! The sun will rise any moment now.

Sorry, Uncle! I ate too much. So I overslept.

May the desire to eat much never come to you again, for, a good fisherman feels hunger only when the catch is poor. And...

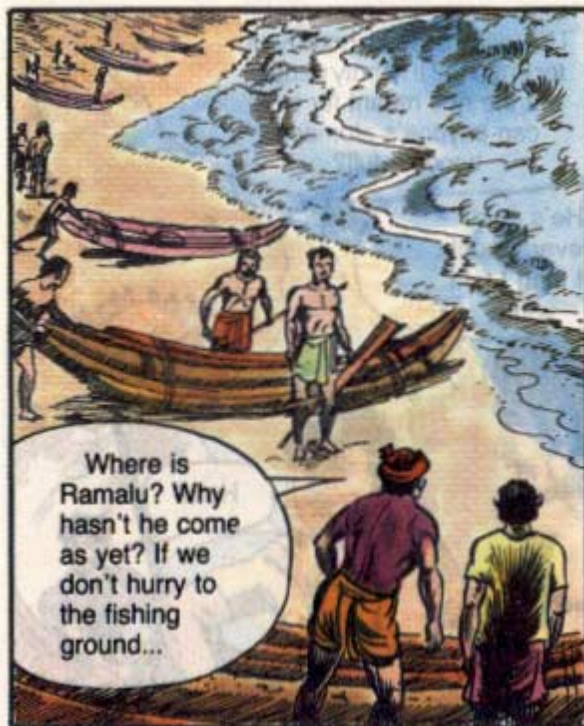
...when the catch is good, his stomach is full, as the old women in the village say. I remember, Uncle.

Not for a moment did I forget anything. You... the sea...our fishing trips...

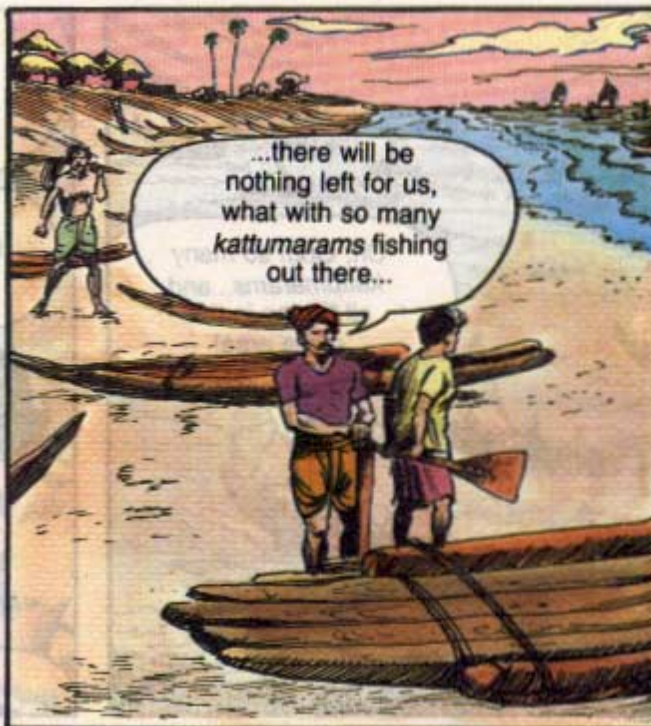
Hm-m-m...we are still using the same old kattumarams ...How are things in the village now?

Not any better, Raghu. If we earn Rs.75 a day during a good season, we are lucky.

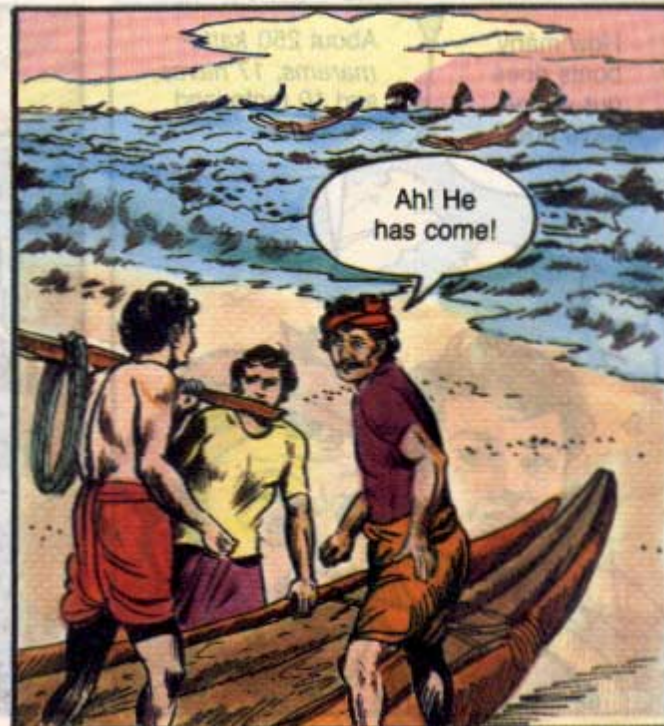
And much of that goes to repay loans...loans taken from the money-lender and the middlemen in the lean season.



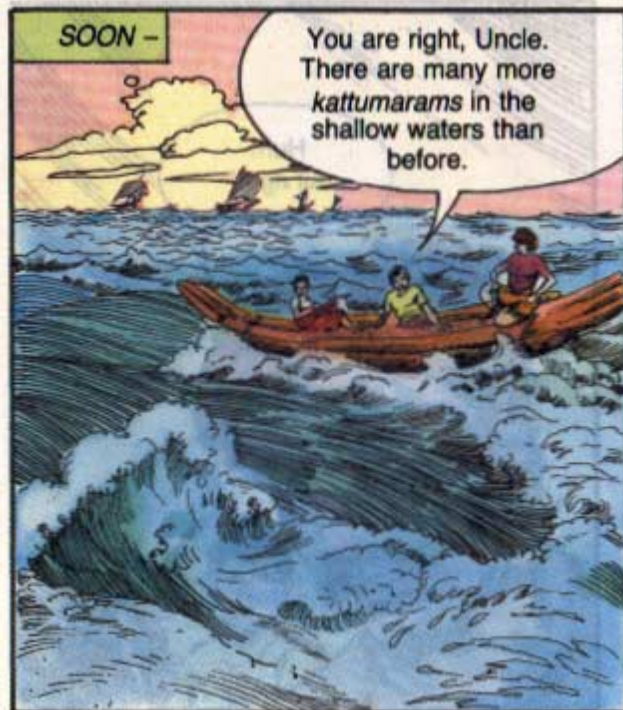
Where is Ramalu? Why hasn't he come as yet? If we don't hurry to the fishing ground...



...there will be nothing left for us, what with so many kattumarams fishing out there...

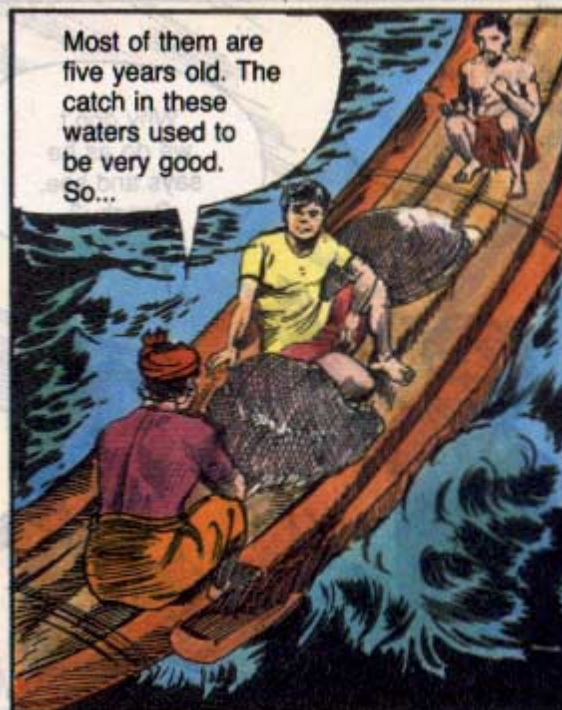


Ah! He has come!



SOON -

You are right, Uncle. There are many more kattumarams in the shallow waters than before.



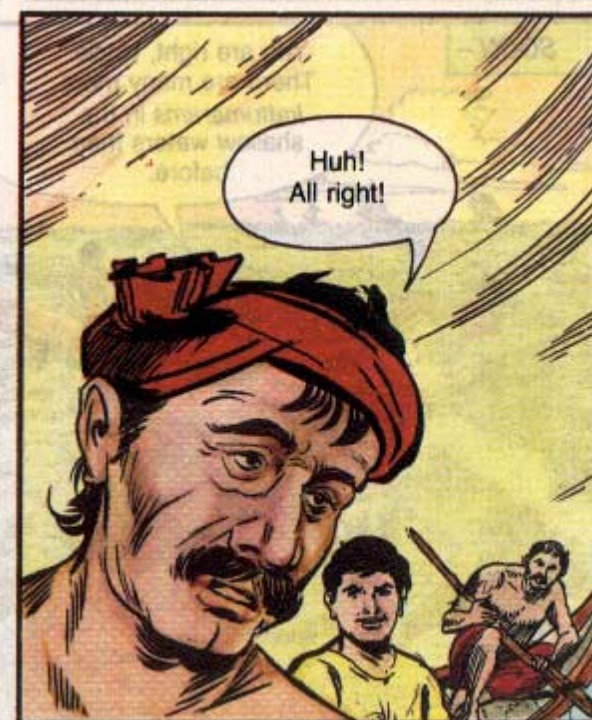
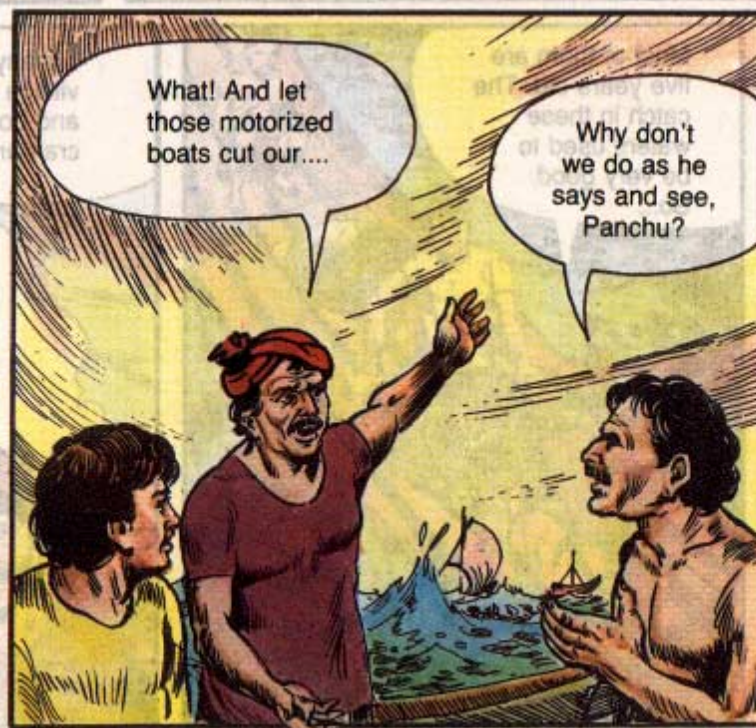
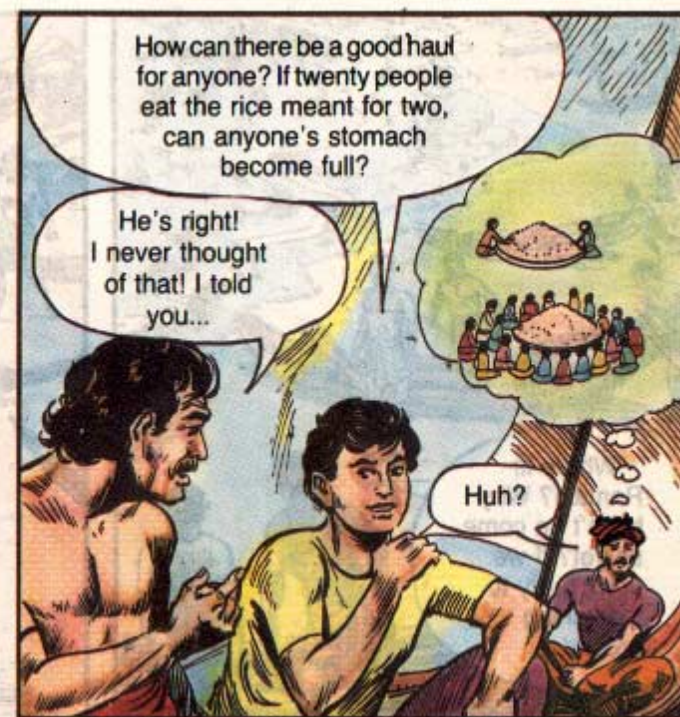
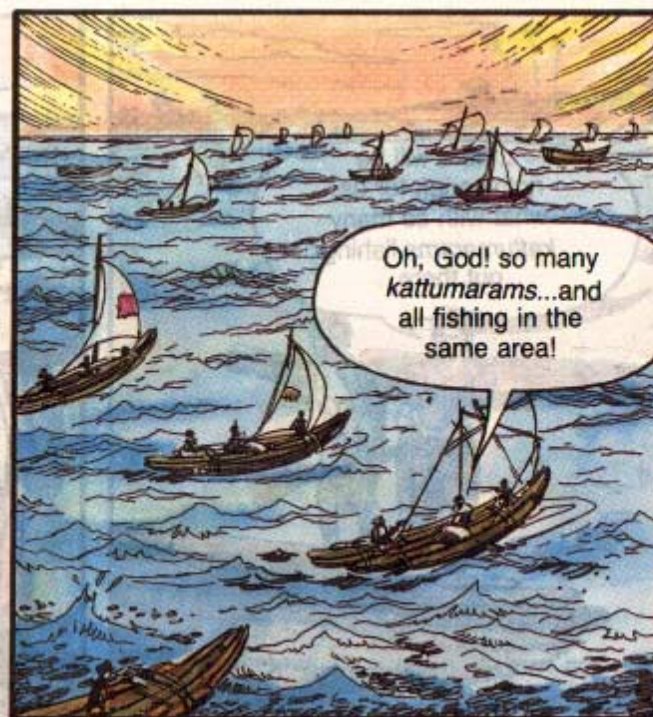
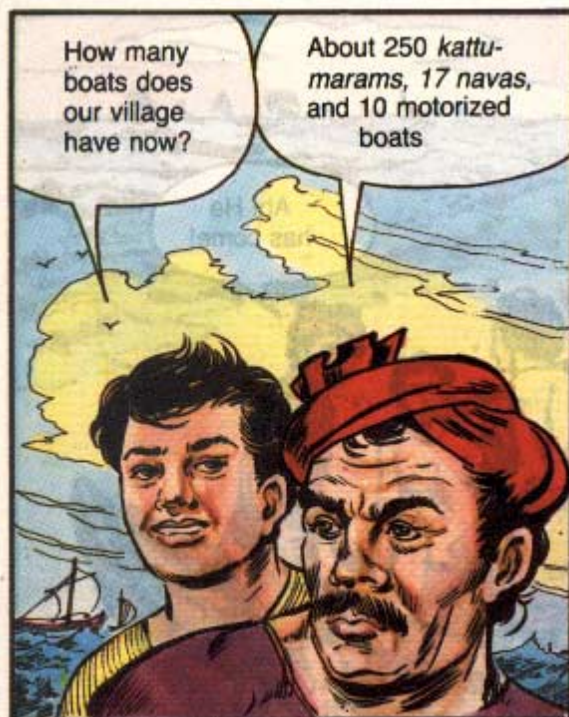
Most of them are five years old. The catch in these waters used to be very good. So...

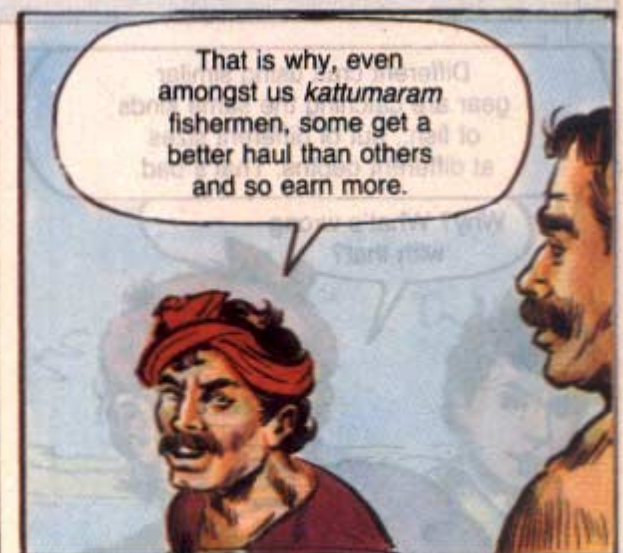
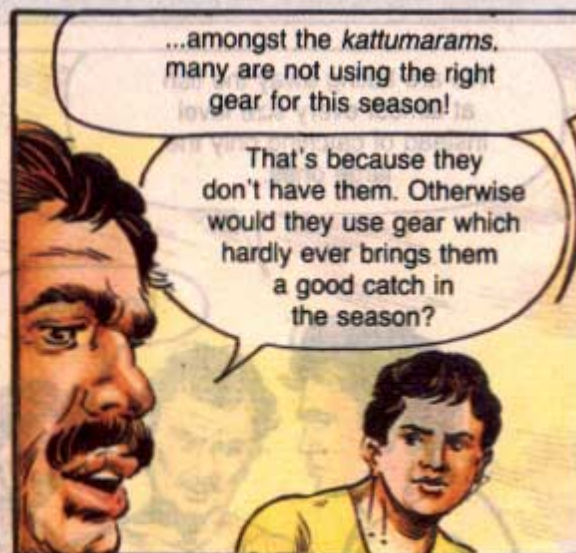
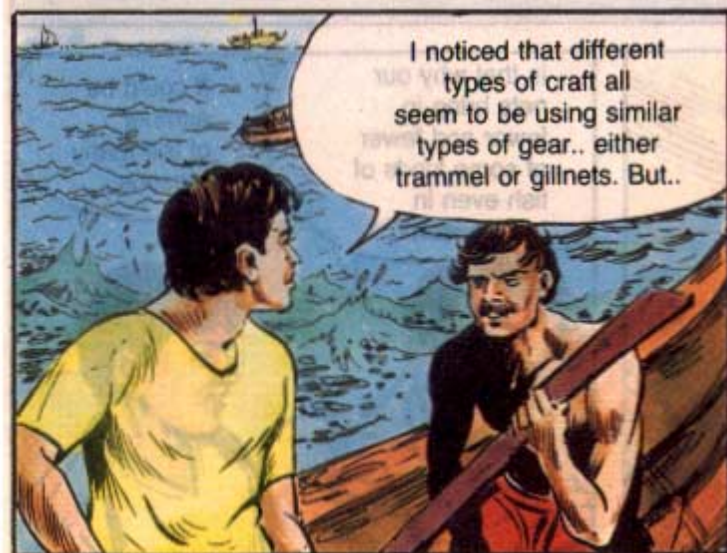
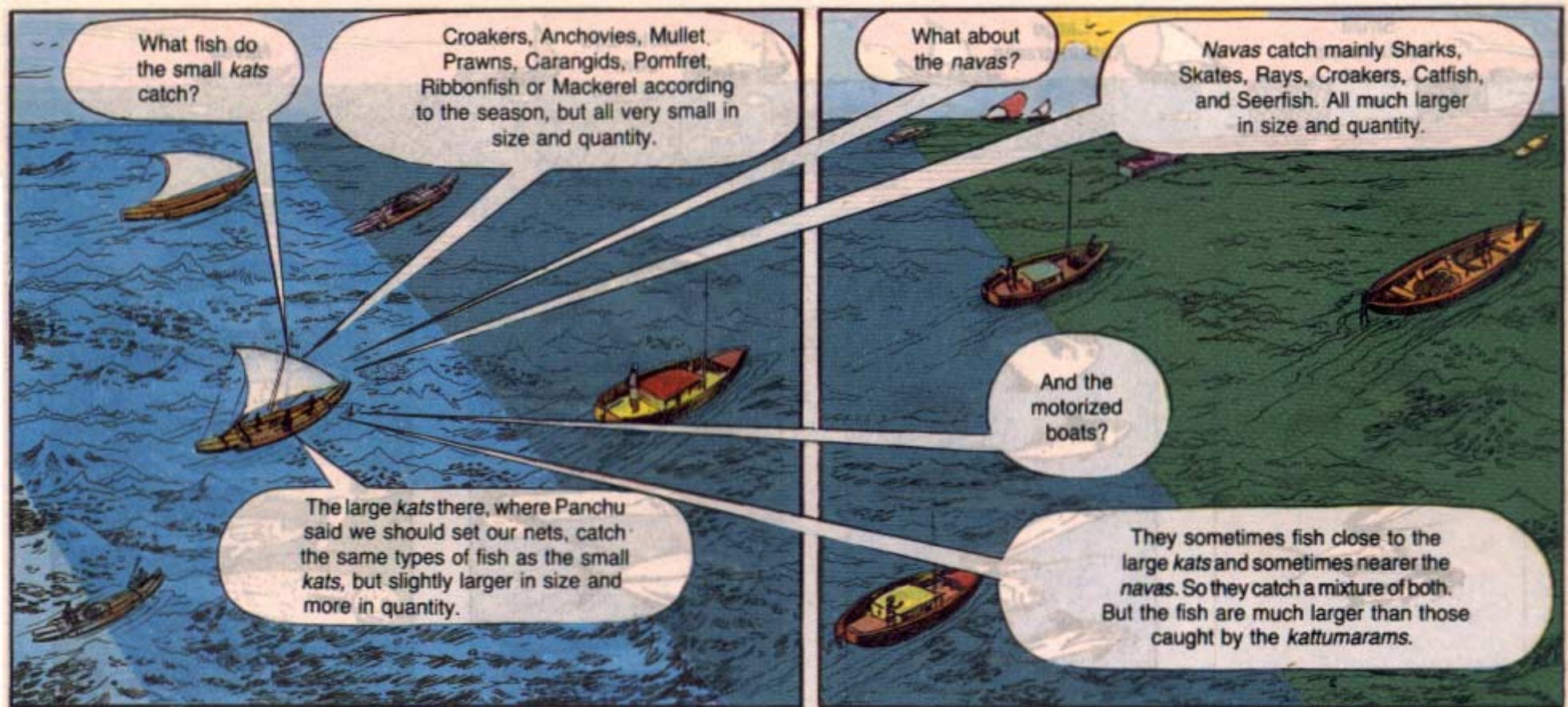


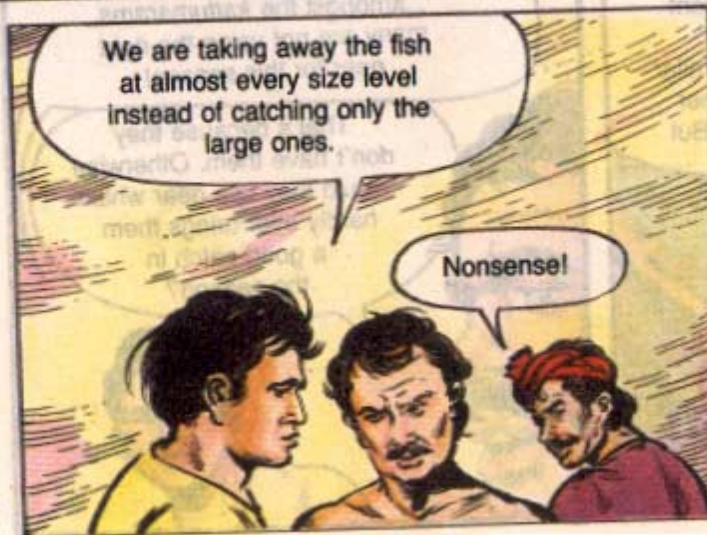
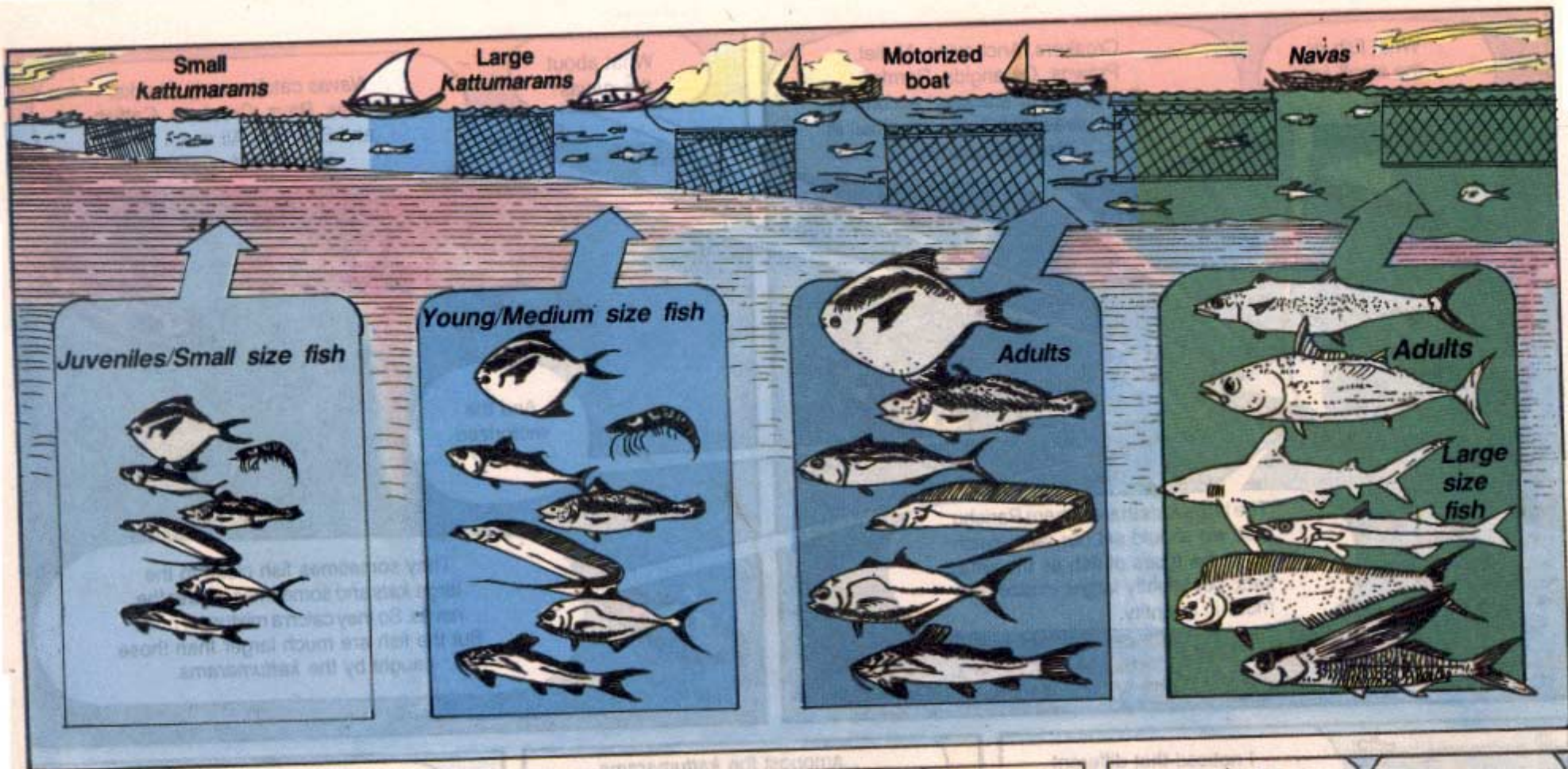
...many in the village took loans and bought more craft and gear.

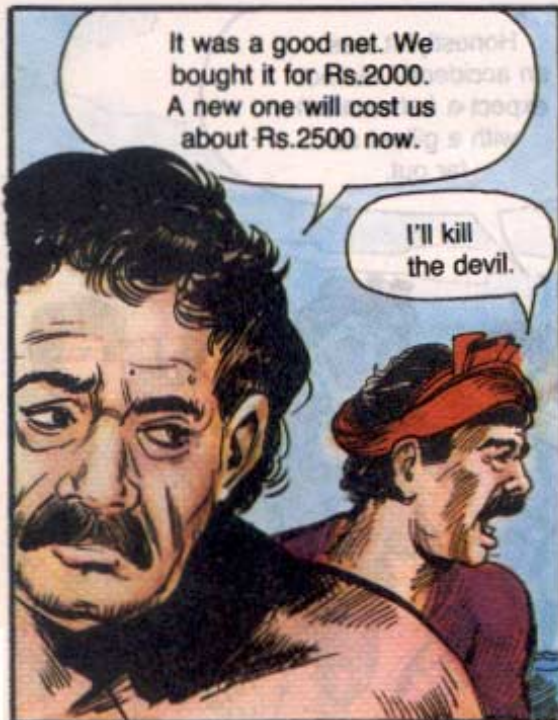
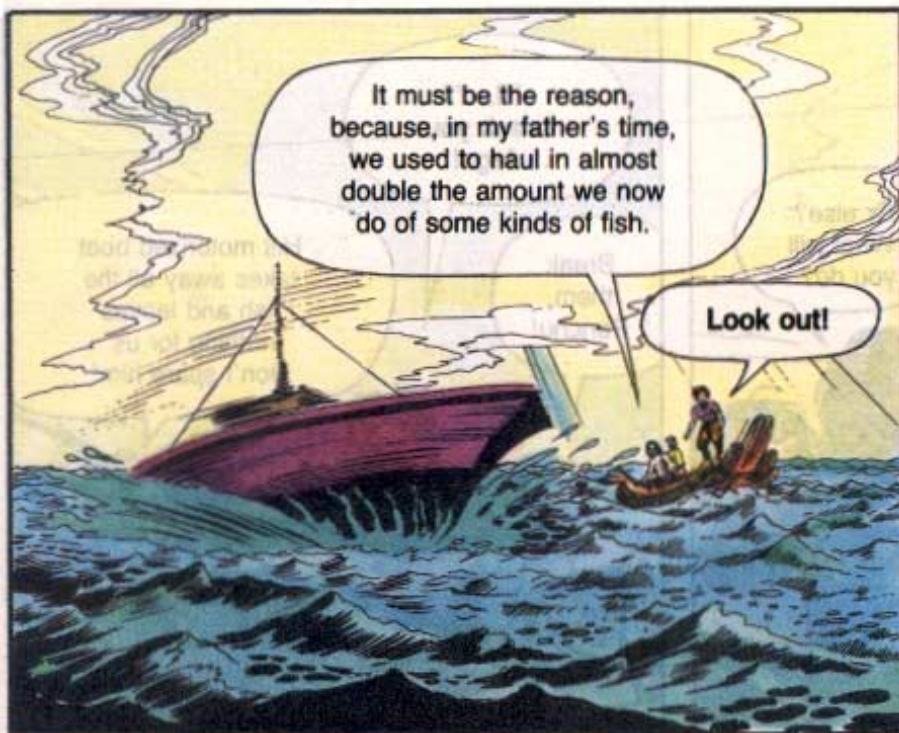
We, too, bought our second kattumaram then... the small one.... for boat-seining.

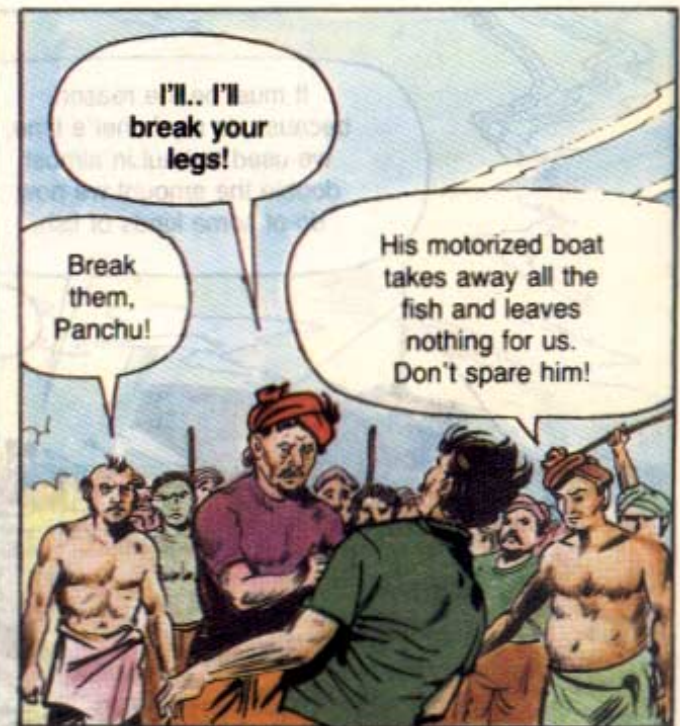
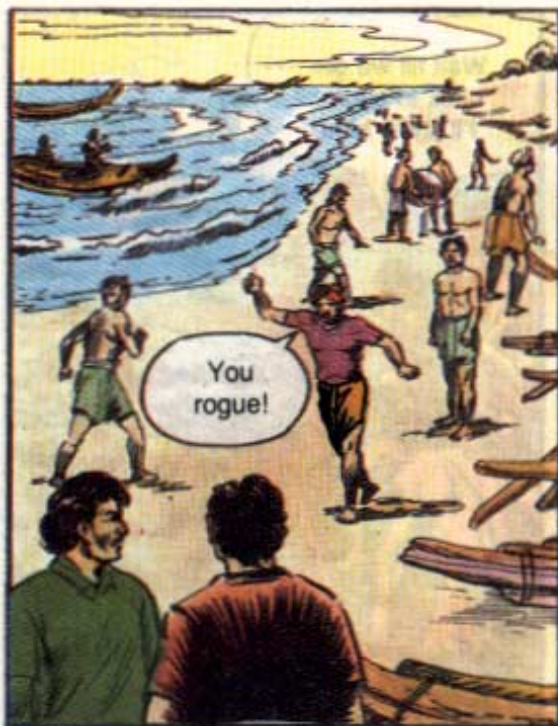
Oh!

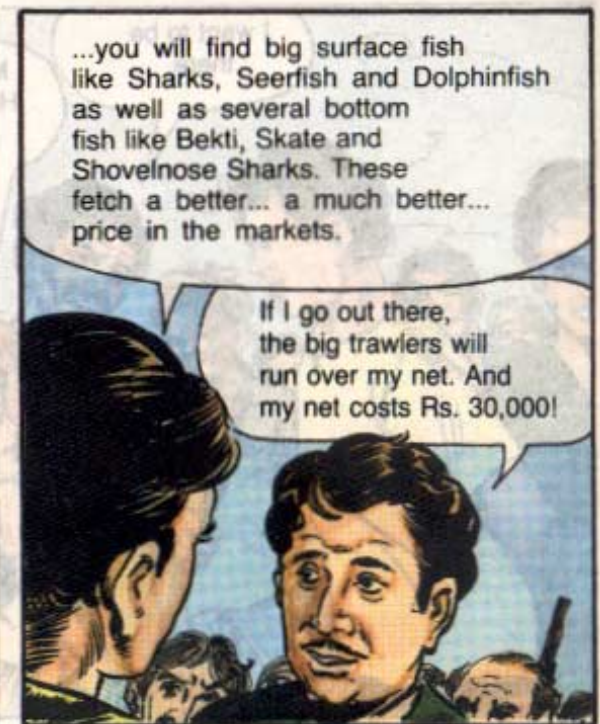
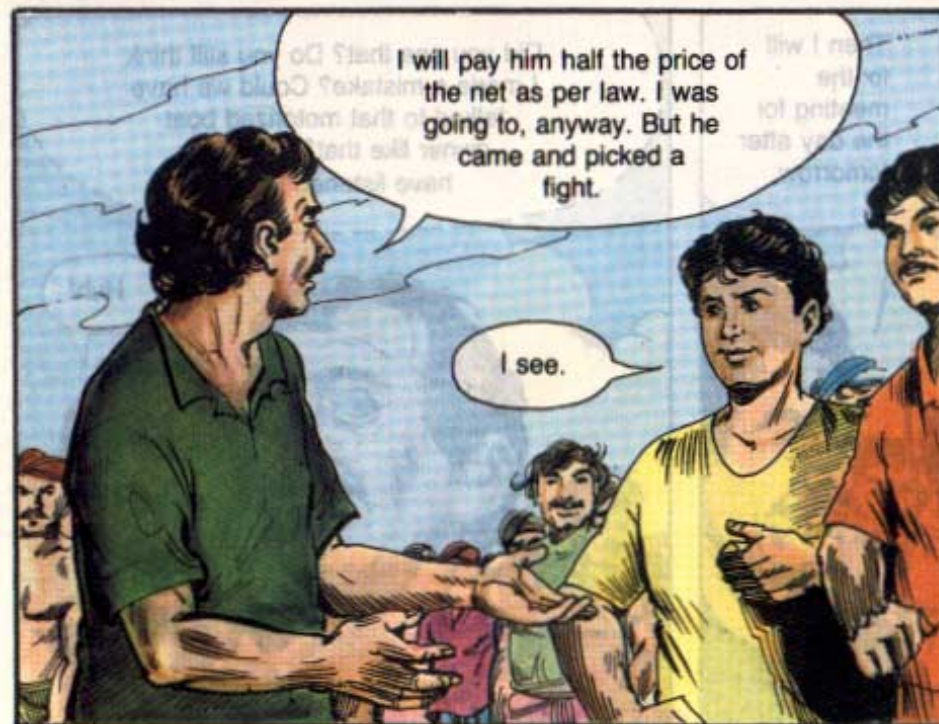
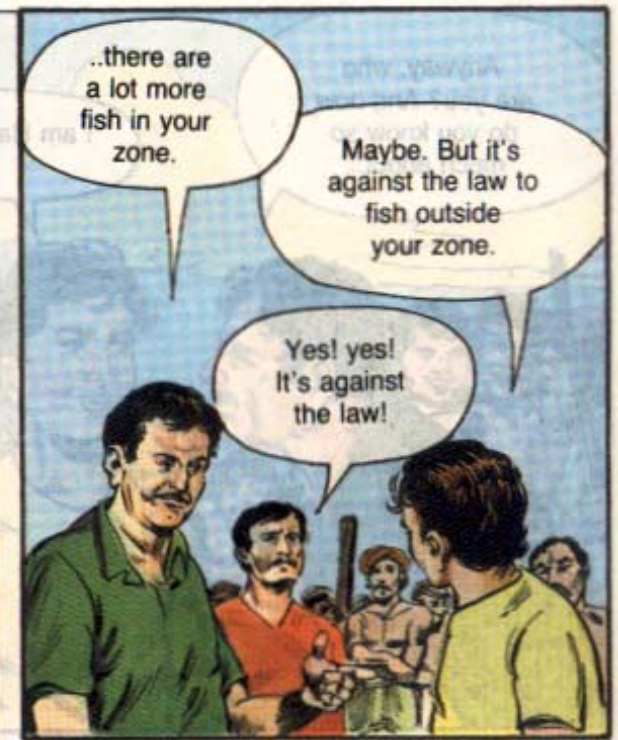
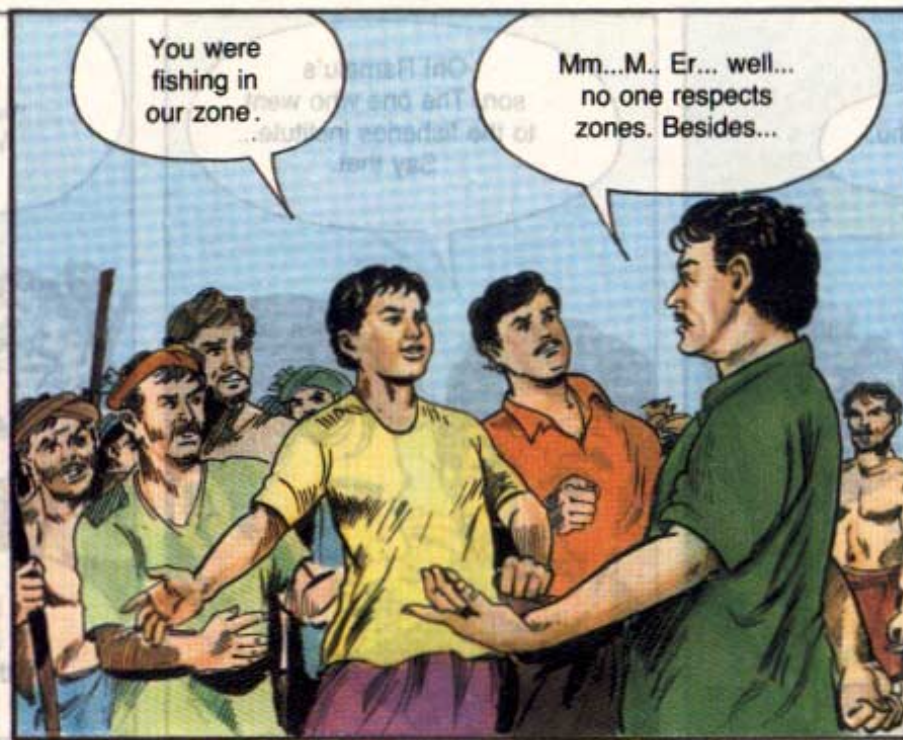












THE DAY OF THE MEETING

Ah! Everyone is here. Shall we begin?

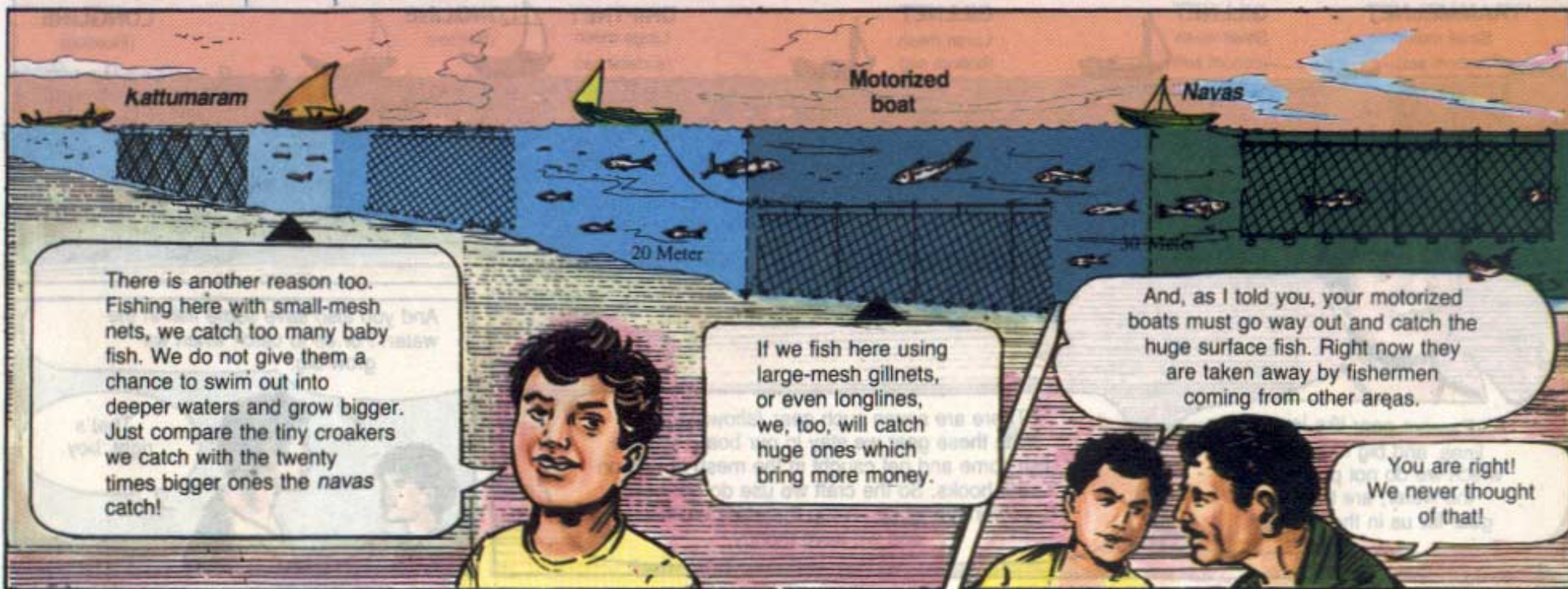
Day by day our catch is becoming...

...insufficient for our livelihood. What is the reason? Is there anything we can do?

Raghu has already given us two reasons. There are too many of us fishing too near the shore. And..

...almost all of us use the same kinds of gear and catch the same kinds of fish.

By doing this we do not leave enough of those fish in the water to mate and make more fish like themselves.



There is one more thing
Too many of us use boat-seines.

What is wrong in that? Our people have always been using boat-seines.

Perhaps that is one big reason why your catch is always poor today. Small mesh nets are bad.

But small mesh nets which we drag through the water are worse. They catch even more young fish than bottom-set small mesh nets.

And, as you now know, when too many young ones are caught over many, many years, there will be fewer fish in that area.

Then what gear are we to use?

20 YRS AGO

10 YRS AGO

5 YRS AGO

2 YRS AGO

TODAY

TRAMMELNET
Small mesh
(bottom set)

GILLNET
Small mesh
(bottom set)

GILLNET
Large mesh
(bottom set)

DRIFTNET
Large mesh
(surface set)

LONGLINE
(Bottom)

LONGLINE
(Floating)

HANDLINE

PASSIVE GEAR

Passive gear like long-lines, and big mesh gear which we do not pull through the water, are the best gear for us in the long run.

There are seven such gear (shown above). With these gear we stay in our boats and the fish come and get caught in the mesh or bite on the hooks. So the craft we use do not need powerful engines. A trip therefore costs less and we save money.

And you also save some fish in the water! For us to catch when we grow big.

That's right, boy.

THESE GEAR ARE BAD

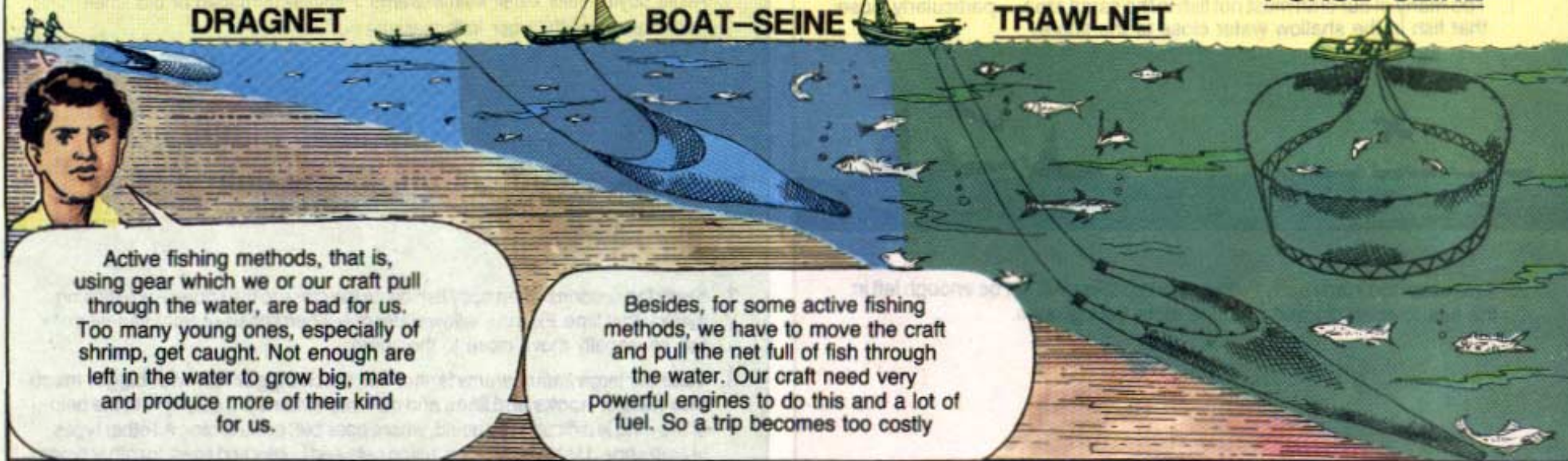
DRAGNET

ACTIVE GEAR

BOAT-SEINE

TRAWLNET

PURSE-SEINE



Active fishing methods, that is, using gear which we or our craft pull through the water, are bad for us. Too many young ones, especially of shrimp, get caught. Not enough are left in the water to grow big, mate and produce more of their kind for us.

Besides, for some active fishing methods, we have to move the craft and pull the net full of fish through the water. Our craft need very powerful engines to do this and a lot of fuel. So a trip becomes too costly

Why do we find so many young shrimp near the shore in some seasons and hardly any in other months?

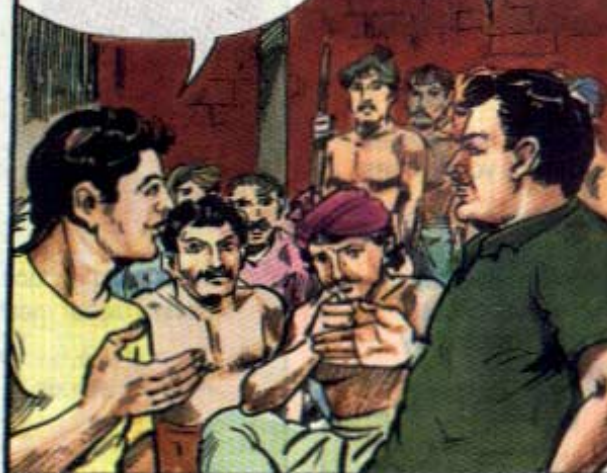
A good question, indeed!

I will have to tell you how a shrimp is born and where it grows and becomes a big shrimp. It's a long story. So I will tell you all about it in the next meeting.

Thank you, Raghu. Then we will meet again like this next week.

LATER-

Yes, Ramalu. You were right. It was good you sent Raghu out to study about fisheries. We know how to fish. We know the catch is decreasing day by day. We did not know why... where we were going wrong. Now we do.



WHAT WE LEARNT FROM RAGHU

1. Too many of our craft must not fish in the same area — particularly those that fish in the shallow water close to the shore.



2. If we catch too many baby fish and shrimp there will not be enough left in the sea to grow big and produce more young ones.

3. Adult fish and larger-sized fish are generally found at distances where the depth is greater than 20 m.



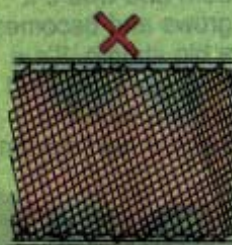
4. We must stop using nets with very, very small mesh, dragnets, boat-seines and beach-seines because with these gear we catch too many young ones.
5. Active fishing methods cost more because they need high-powered engines, more fuel, generally larger boats and more expensive gear. With active gear and methods, we take away too many fish in a short time. If we are not careful about this today, there will be less fish for us traditional fisherfolk tomorrow, **and one day there may not be enough fish left for anyone to catch.**

WHAT WE CAN DO

1. Avoid buying new small *kattumarams*. Replace damaged or old small *kattumarams* with larger *kattumarams*.



2. Study the seasons when baby fish come too close to the shore. Avoid fishing there at that time. Fish in shallow water only when shoals of small varieties of fish seasonally move close to the shore.
3. Take our large *kattumarams* farther out, **catch bigger fish with bigger mesh size nets or hooks and lines** and earn more money. If sailing with the help of the wind is difficult, we should, where possible, use a motor. All other types of craft should fish well beyond, using nets and hooks and lines, for other types of fish which cannot be caught by the *kattumarams*. There will be fewer problems of competition and, therefore, fewer quarrels amongst us fisherfolk.



4. We should replace our damaged small mesh nets and boat-seines with gear having bigger mesh.
5. Try and use, as far as possible, passive gear with larger mesh and passive fishing methods.

Look out for our next picture story book. In it I will tell you about the life stories of some of the commercially important fish we catch. For instance, I will tell you how a shrimp is born and where it grows and becomes a big shrimp. These stories will help you to catch fish that will bring you high prices.

RAGHU





***Did you like this book?
Do you want to read more books like this one?
Have you any suggestions to offer?***

Then please write a postcard to us at this address:

The Information Department,
The BAY OF BENGAL PROGRAMME,
91, St. Mary's Road,
Abhiramapuram,
Madras – 600 018.

BOBP/MAG/10/English
Resources