

Knowledge, Market and the State: The Political Economy and Discursive Construction of India's Fisheries Sector

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Abstract

India is the world's second-largest fish producer, home to ten per cent of global fish biodiversity, and the livelihood base for over 15 million people, yet the sector is governed by two overlapping structures that have received surprisingly little integrated scholarly attention: a regulatory architecture still anchored in a colonial statute and a market structure shaped as much by state intervention and social hierarchy as by price signals. This paper brings together a Foucauldian discourse analysis of Indian fisheries policy with a political-economy account of Indian fish markets to argue that both structures rest on the same underlying pattern — the privileging of expert-, state-, and capital-legible knowledge over the customary, place-based knowledge of fishing communities. Tracing this pattern across the colonial period, the post-colonial developmental state culminating in the Blue Revolution, the contested 2019 Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) and Island Protection Zone (IPZ) notifications, and the contemporary rise of algorithmically managed seafood-delivery platforms such as Licious and FreshToHome, the paper contends that policy language has shifted — from colonial control to post-colonial development to blue-economy growth to platform-era “organisation” — while the underlying epistemic and distributive hierarchy has persisted with remarkable continuity. The paper further traces this pattern across three unfolding moments: colonial-era regulation built to serve extraction and control rather than community welfare; the Blue Revolution's genuine, if incomplete, attempt to reverse that neglect through production and income growth; and a resulting, still-uncorrected regulatory looseness this paper identifies and names a Dheel Kranti (IAST: *dhīla krānti*), or “revolution of looseness” — a pattern the Blue Revolution's own productivist design left undisturbed on the one dimension its success metrics never measured. In it, both traditional and platform-mediated fish sellers' profit from a food-safety enforcement regime that is

¹ This paper draws on research conducted for the author's MPhil dissertation, *Politics of Knowledge in Development: The Study of Knowledge of Aquaculture in India*, Department of Political Science, University of Delhi. The concept of the *Dheel Kranti*, and its accompanying literary and theoretical framing developed in Section 9 (including the epigraph, the Machhli rhyme and its inverted couplet, and the three-stage colonial/Blue Revolution/Dheel Kranti critique), constitute original contributions developed subsequent to, and beyond the scope of, the dissertation.

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long on guidance and short on routine enforcement, with the resulting adulteration risk – chiefly formalin and ammonia contamination – transferred onto the consumer rather than absorbed by the seller.

Keywords: fisheries policy; discourse analysis; political economy; coastal regulation; blue revolution; neel kranti; dheel kranti; market society; app-marketisation; state and knowledge

Abstract

It is often said that to give a man a fish is to feed him for a day, while to teach him to fish is to feed him for a lifetime – an adage conventionally read as an argument for capacity building over charity. Taken literally rather than metaphorically, however, the proverb already names its most fully provisioned beneficiary: fishing communities, whose inherited, place-based craft of catch, coastline and season is the lifelong “teaching” the adage prizes, held not as a gift from the state but as knowledge accumulated and transmitted independently of it. The inverse of the proverb is equally instructive. To obstruct a fishing community’s access to the water for a day — a closed season or a storm warning — harms it temporarily. But to exploit that community through regulatory instruments — coastal zoning that displaces customary fishing grounds, licensing and consultation processes calibrated to state- and capital-legible actors, regulatory looseness that lets the risk of adulteration settle on the least powerful party in the chain, and taxes or cesses layered onto an already precarious livelihood — harms it permanently, converting a day’s obstruction into a structural exclusion from the very resource the community’s knowledge already qualifies it to steward. On the proverb’s own literal terms, fishing communities ought to be the best-provisioned constituency of Indian fisheries policy, rather than the worst. The following discussion outlines how consistently the opposite has been true.

1. Introduction: Two Lenses on One Sector

India is home to ten per cent of the world’s total fish biodiversity and is the world’s second-largest producer of fish; over 15 million people are directly dependent on the sector for their sustenance, and fisheries contribute more than five per cent to GDP and over ten per cent of foreign exchange earnings through the export of fish and marine products. Despite this scale, fish workers and fisheries receive comparatively little sustained policy attention, and the Indian Fisheries Act, 1897, continues to govern the sector with minimal updates to align it with the modern context (Government of India, 1897).

This paper approaches the puzzle from two directions that are typically treated separately but which this paper argues are actually two aspects of a single problem. The first is discursive: what does it mean for a sector of this scale to be governed by a statute drafted under colonial rule, and how has the discourse surrounding fisheries policy evolved — and, in important respects, failed to evolve — from that colonial starting point to the present? The second is political-economic: fish markets are conventionally understood as efficient, self-regulating mechanisms for allocating scarce resources, yet the empirical study of India’s fish markets suggests a more contested reality, structured by direct and indirect state intervention and by deep social rigidities of caste, gender, class and place (Harriss-White, 2005). Read together, the discursive and political-economic accounts converge on the same conclusion: legitimate knowledge, in Indian fisheries governance and in Indian fish markets alike, is knowledge that is legible to the state and to capital, while the customary knowledge of fishing communities is treated as an object of policy rather than a source of it.

A well-known Hindi rhyme teaches every schoolchild that *macchalī jala kī rānī hai, jīvana iskā pānī hai* — “the fish is the queen of the water; water is her life.” Section 9 asks how much of that certainty survives the fish’s actual journey to a plate.

2. Method: Discourse Analysis and Political Economy Together

The term “discourse” is used in everyday language interchangeably with “discussion” or “dialogue”, and “policy” itself brings to mind state or government action. Discourse analysis treats the story of that discussion as its object, aiming to expose the patterns and often clandestine rules by which language is used, misused, appropriated, and turned into narrative (Hewitt, 2009). Truth, on this account, is constructed within a discourse and is therefore relational to the knowledge and practices of that discourse — which means methodological choices in any given research project are driven by the problem at the centre of the research, and the position of the researcher relative to the field matters (Hewitt, 2009). The Foucauldian conception central to this method holds that discourse transmits and produces power, which is precisely why the state deliberately manufactures it: policies are formed, shaped and reshaped in ways that generate discourses which are then maintained by government, and the state empowers itself through the production, accumulation and circulation of discourse (Foucault, 1980).

This discursive method is complemented here by a political-economy framework drawn from Barbara Harriss-White’s account of India as a “market society” and from Karl Polanyi’s distinction between markets embedded in, versus disembedded from, social life (Harriss-White, 2005; Polanyi, 1944). Where discourse analysis asks how the state constitutes what counts as legitimate fisheries knowledge, political economy asks how markets — themselves created, maintained and legislated by political authority — distribute the gains and burdens of that knowledge among fishers, traders, consumers and the state. Applied together to fisheries, these approaches mean examining not only what policy documents and market structures say and do, but also how policy formulation and market-making constitute a single, ongoing public process – one in which the modern state, unlike many of its historical predecessors, does not merely govern from outside social and economic life but attempts, with the aid of modern technology and information control, to enter all of it (Hewitt, 2009).

3. The Colonial Constitution of Fisheries Knowledge

Fisheries lie in the State List under Schedule VII of the Indian Constitution, giving individual states legislative authority over the sector as an allied agricultural activity – a devolution reflected in state-specific statutes such as West Bengal’s Fisheries (Requisition and Acquisition) Act, 1965, and Inland Fisheries Act, 1984 (Government of West Bengal, 1965, 1984). Yet the foundational statute for the sector as a whole remains colonial. Before modern science aligned itself with colonial administration, separate and often interacting epistemologies coexisted in fishing communities across the subcontinent. Colonialism placed a new burden on modern science: it was compelled to claim a monopoly on legitimate knowledge to sustain its claimed superiority, a monopoly resting on the premise that all other epistemologies were worthless, antiquated, or magical and needed to be eliminated. This is not merely a historical curiosity — the Indian Fisheries Act, 1897, the backbone of Indian fisheries law, encodes precisely this monopoly claim into the present-day regulatory architecture, even as the sector’s economic and export significance has grown many times over (Government of India, 1897).

4. The State as Market-Maker: Direct and Indirect Roles

The colonial-era monopoly on legitimate knowledge did not simply regulate fisheries from outside; it helped construct the market within which fish is caught, processed and sold. A government's mode of intervention in a market system can be direct — operating state-owned enterprises, taking or transferring property — or indirect: enforcing rules and regulations; maintaining infrastructure; planning policy, legislating and executing it; and issuing new regulations (Arndt, 1981). The indirect mode is often invisible to the untrained eye, yet it is the more consequential of the two. Price signals transmitted through a market can coordinate the actions of economic actors without direct orders from government, but there are no formal markets without regulation and infrastructure — these are created, maintained, legislated and modernised by political authority alone. Government thereby creates, legitimises, administers and periodically modernises the frameworks within which economic actors acquire and employ capital and labour to produce, distribute and sell goods — specifying, for instance, the conditions under which fish may be caught, processed, distributed or sold — while retaining, as Weber observed of the state generally, a monopoly on legitimate coercive power that, however popularly invested, always carries the latent capacity to tyrannise (Weber, 1919/1946).

Markets and politics can be compared directly as coordinating systems (Scott, 2006). Markets coordinate indirectly through the price mechanism, in interactions that are anonymous, invisible and automatic; rewarded through profit; and evaluated *ex post* against an ideal of competition whose characteristic perversion is monopoly or insufficient information. Politics coordinates through bargaining and voting, in interactions that are identifiable, explicit and visible; rewarded through power; and evaluated *ex ante* against an ideal of democracy whose characteristic perversions include one-party rule, political inequality and voter apathy (Scott, 2006). Fish markets sit at the intersection of both systems, and much of their observed dysfunction — explored further in Section 6 below — reflects this dual, often conflicting, coordinating logic.

5. The Post-Colonial Developmental State: Blue Revolution

The post-colonial Indian state extended, rather than dismantled, the colonial pattern of privileging state- and expert-legible knowledge through successive fisheries development schemes culminating in the Blue Revolution (Neel Kranti; IAST: *nīla krānti*), which was launched under the Seventh Five-Year Plan and consolidated as a scheme for the integrated development and management of fisheries. The scheme pursued a strategy familiar from developmental discourse more broadly: consolidating scattered prior efforts under a single national umbrella, promoting mechanisation and modernisation as unambiguous goods, and treating increased productive capacity as the primary measure of success. Institutions such as the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute were tasked with maximising mariculture potential through innovative technologies — edible mussel and oyster farming and ornamental fish culture — extending the state's technology-transfer model into ever more specialised domains, while questions of who controls the knowledge behind these technologies and on what terms fishing communities are brought into them received comparatively little sustained policy attention.

6. Fish Markets, Social Structure, and the “Market Society”

Markets are normatively assumed to be vital to the poorest of the poor — women, the landless, and the undereducated — offering an everyday opportunity to acquire the minimum means needed for survival. In theory, a well-functioning market expands production and provides a livelihood for rural masses while limiting exploitation; in Harriss-White’s formulation, it should be efficient not only economically but ecologically and logistically, requiring decentralisation, democratisation, participation and a measure of redistribution of power (Harriss-White, 2005). In practice, this paper argues, the fish market in India illustrates how far actually existing markets diverge from that ideal, and the divergence has less to do with market failure in the technical economic sense than with the market’s embeddedness in specific social and political structures (Polanyi, 1944).

No discussion of Indian markets is complete without Polanyi, whose concept of a “market society” — a society in which exchange is dominated by markets to the increasing exclusion of other forms of distribution, such as reciprocity and redistribution — Harriss-White treats as foundational to understanding India’s political economy (Polanyi, 1944; Harriss-White, 2005). On this account, it is not the job of a market to ensure livelihood or life, but to convey signals to production and to create, extract and distribute the surpluses — the catch, in this case — that contribute to a society’s reproduction. Where Marx saw the state as a precondition for markets to function, Polanyi saw it as the institution that must protect society from the oppressions that markets generate (Polanyi, 1944). Markets, in other words, do not function in isolation: they are structured by social rigidities of class, household, generation, gender, clan, ethnicity, caste, religion, place, language and political affiliation. Harriss-White argues that markets are the building blocks of Indian capitalism and that the state effectively treats those who become the casualties of market functioning as “waste products” of the system — purposely, if not always explicitly, kept poor, sick, ill-educated and disempowered (Harriss-White, 2005).

7. Contemporary Contestation: The 2019 CRZ and IPZ Notifications

The clearest recent instance of the state privileging expert- and capital-legible knowledge over customary knowledge is the 2019 Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) and Island Protection Zone (IPZ) notifications (Government of India, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, 2019). Framed in the language of development and tourism promotion, the new rules permit infrastructure construction closer to the waterline than previous notifications allowed to boost beach tourism. Critics have argued that the new policy favours high-end tourism at the direct expense of fishing communities: private beaches and resorts threaten to displace fishing boats from the very beaches fishing communities have customarily used, while offering little protection for coral reefs, mangroves and other ecologically sensitive areas (Kohli & Vivekanandan, as cited in Kukreti, 2019).

The 2018–19 notifications overrule the concerns of an estimated 171 million people – fourteen per cent of India’s population – living in coastal districts, over 12 million of whom depend directly on fishing. This is a change from 1991, when the safety and livelihoods of coastal communities were a main focus; a committee led by M. S. Swaminathan was formed after the 2004 tsunami to suggest protections for the land rights of these communities. Whereas the 2011 notification explicitly stated that fishing activity by communities would not be regulated, the newer notification brings such activity under regulation, even in CRZ-III areas, which are explicitly defined as zones where traditional communities live and subsist on natural resources. The consultation process for the new rules involved the tourism industry far more

substantially than it did coastal and fishing communities themselves — a procedural asymmetry that mirrors, in contemporary form, the same monopoly-claiming logic this paper traces back to the colonial period: state-recognised expertise and capital-backed interests are consulted, while customary, place-based knowledge is not (Kohli & Vivekanandan, as cited in Kukreti, 2019).

8. App-Marketisation: Licious, FreshToHome, and the Persistence of Informality

Against this backdrop of state-mediated market structuring, the recent rise of online seafood and meat delivery platforms represents a genuine structural disruption, though not necessarily the one its proponents claim. Selling meat and fish online is relatively new in India, where an estimated 95 per cent of the market remains controlled by fragmented, unorganised players — local fishmongers and butchers operating on trust built over years, if not generations (Shanthi, 2021). Platforms such as Licious, FreshToHome, ZappFresh and Jalongi promise to “organise the unorganised market” by delivering cut, marinated, ready-to-cook non-vegetarian products through algorithmically managed logistics, targeting a share of a meat and seafood market analysts have valued at roughly \$40 billion, and appealing especially to younger, urban consumers who prefer receiving hygienically packed portions at home over visiting a local vendor (Singh, 2022). India’s online meat market specifically was estimated at \$4.4 billion and had grown by over two-and-a-half times since the onset of the pandemic, as demand for these platforms rose sharply when consumers were confined to their homes and unable to visit physical markets (Singh, 2021).

The promise made by these platforms is explicitly one of quality and trust: organising the market, on this account, means ensuring better quality, hygiene and freshness “from farm to fork”. Yet this promise sits uneasily alongside the persistence of serious food-safety hazards in the wider fish trade – hazards that app-marketisation has not resolved. Fish is a highly perishable commodity, spoiling rapidly outside a narrow temperature band. Where the point of sale is distant from the point of catch, some sellers use formalin — a toxic, carcinogenic chemical otherwise used to preserve bodies in mortuaries — to extend shelf life or mix ammonia into the ice used to keep fish cold. During the 2020 lockdown, Kerala’s Food Safety Department destroyed nearly three tonnes of contaminated fish in a single operation, Operation Sagar Rani (IAST: sāgara rānī), which was part of a wider enforcement programme launched in 2018 to test fish and ice samples for toxic content across the state’s handling and distribution centres (Kerala State Food Safety Department, 2020). Online platforms that encourage cleanliness, along with the ongoing dangers of food tampering, demonstrate that these digital systems change how the market looks without getting rid of the informal and poorly regulated supply chains that still provide the basic products.

9. The Dheel Kranti: A Revolution of Regulatory Looseness

Machhli jal ki raani hai, jeevan iska paani hai (मछली जल की रानी है, जीवन इसका पानी है; IAST: macchali jala kī rānī hai, jīvana iskā pānī hai) — “the fish is the queen of the water, water is her life” — is among the most familiar rhymes taught to Indian schoolchildren, its soothing cadence teaching a simple ecological truth: a fish’s life is inseparable from water. Read against the argument of this section, the rhyme’s premise is not disputed so much as overtaken by economic destiny. In an aquaculture and export economy of India’s scale, fish are destined to be caught, removed from water, and treated accordingly — for the plate or for the port. There is little to fault in that destiny itself: catching fish as yield is not where

the dheel (IAST: *dhīla*) traced in this section lies, and it is not the harm this paper argues needs fixing. The harm lies in what is done to the fish afterward. A darker, inverted couplet captures this displacement more precisely than the original: *baahar nikaalo, mar jaayegi; andar rakho, sad jaayegi; aur yahi machhli phir ghar jaayegi, chemical se bhar jaayegi* (बाहर निकालो, मर जाएगी; अंदर रखो, सड़ जाएगी; केमिकल से भर जाएगी; और यही मछली फिर घर जाएगी, IAST: *bāhara nikālo, mara jāyegī; andara rakho, sada jāyegī; chemical se bhara jāyegī, aura yahī macchalī phira ghara jāyegī*) — "Take her out, she will die; keep her in, she will rot; and this same fish will then go home, filled with chemical." The couplet names exactly the bind this section's account of the Dheel Kranti traces empirically: a fish removed from water begins to spoil; spoilage threatens the seller's margin; and it is in the space between catch and consumption – not in the catch itself – that formalin and ammonia are introduced to arrest a decay the seller has every incentive to disguise rather than disclose. The nursery rhyme teaches a child that a fish cannot live without water; the inverted couplet names what this section shows empirically – that once a fish leaves the water, what should not survive alongside it is the seller's ability to profit from concealing what was done to it in the interim.

The relationship between the Dheel Kranti and its two chronological predecessors is best read as an unfolding across three moments, not a single cause. The colonial constitution of fisheries knowledge, traced in Section 3, established a foundational looseness of a particular kind: a regulatory architecture built to serve extraction and control, rather than administrative neglect. The monopoly claim encoded in the 1897 Act had no obligation to serve the welfare, safety, or economic advancement of fishing communities, because it was never designed to; colonial priority ran toward securing modern science's authority over customary knowledge, not toward protecting the people who held that knowledge. The Blue Revolution (Neel Kranti), on this reading, was a genuine attempt to reverse that colonial priority. Its declared goals — tripling production, doubling fishers' incomes, expanding export earnings, and modernising a sector the colonial state had left underdeveloped — aimed explicitly at the welfare that the 1897 Act's architecture had never prioritised, and this paper does not treat that ambition as a pretext. The Blue Revolution's shortcomings lay not in replicating colonial extraction but in leaving one of the core structural features of colonial regulation curiously undisturbed, even as it corrected others. A scheme measured by tonnage, income and export value had every institutional reason to fix what colonial neglect had left underproductive and no structural reason to fix what colonial regulation had left unenforced: traceability, cold-chain integrity and routine – rather than episodic – food-safety inspections. In this narrower but consequential respect, the Blue Revolution did not merely inherit a pre-existing looseness passively; its design reproduced a version of it, in developmental rather than extractive language, on the one dimension its success metrics never measured. This paper terms the resulting, still-uncorrected pattern the 'Dheel Kranti': not a revolution of capacity but of regulatory slack, in which sellers across every channel through which fish reach a buyer – the offline wet market, the online delivery platform, and the export consignment – profit from a food-safety and quality-assurance regime that is long on guidance and short on routine enforcement, with the resulting risk transferred onto the party least able to detect or refuse it: the domestic consumer in the first two cases and the importing country's regulator in the third.

The evidence for a genuinely structural, rather than incidental, looseness is strongest in how formalin and ammonia adulteration have actually been governed. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, jointly with the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, has set ad-hoc permissible limits for

naturally occurring formaldehyde in fish — 4.0 mg/kg for freshwater fish and 100.0 mg/kg for fish of brackish or marine origin — and has developed a low-cost rapid detection kit, CIFTest, that sells for roughly ₹2–3 (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India & Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, n.d.). The guidance based on these standards is meant for both consumers and traders: consumers should wash fish well under running water because formaldehyde dissolves in water, and they should cook it to an internal temperature of 75°C or higher, as heat helps remove it. Regulation, in other words, has formally named the hazard and quantified its acceptable limit but has practically delegated a meaningful share of detection and mitigation to the household kitchen — precisely the kind of shift of the burden onto the least state- and capital-legible actor in the chain that Sections 3 through 8 identify as the structural pattern of this sector.

The recurrence of the problem over time reinforces the point. The mixing of formalin in Indian fish markets was a big enough problem that it led to Kerala’s Operation Sagar Rani in 2017, a well-known contamination issue in Chennai in 2018, joint advice from FSSAI and CIFT later that year, and a new three-tonne seizure under Operation Sagar Rani in 2020 (Kerala State Food Safety Department, 2020). Three years, and at least one national guidance note, separate the operation’s launch from its widely reported 2020 enforcement action, with the underlying practice essentially unchanged in the interim. This situation does not indicate that a problem is being solved; rather, it reflects a pattern where periodic, high-visibility “operations” temporarily tighten enforcement, while routine practices gradually relax — resulting in enforcement that is adjusted for episodic crackdowns instead of continuous deterrence.

Crucially, this looseness is agnostic to the sale channel. The wet-market fishmonger who mixes ammonia into ice to disguise a stale catch and the platform whose cold-chain claims are not independently audited both operate inside the same regulatory floor, and both are positioned to capture the resulting margin: the wet-market seller by extending shelf life at negligible cost and the platform by economising on the very cold-chain and traceability infrastructure its “farm to fork” branding claims to guarantee. The consumer, meanwhile, bears the food-safety risk in both channels and, per the FSSAI’s own guidance, a share of the compliance burden as well – testing, washing and cooking around a hazard that origination and sale were supposed to have already excluded.

The same looseness recurs, in starker form, at the export end of the value chain, where it is not the domestic consumer but the buyer’s own government that has typically had to act as the last resort enforcer. Indian shrimp exports have been repeatedly refused entry by the United States Food and Drug Administration for residues of antibiotics banned in aquaculture, such as chloramphenicol and nitrofurans: the FDA refused twenty-seven shipment lines in 2017–18 and a further twenty-six shipments in a single month in early 2019 (Chemical & Engineering News, 2019). Over the next ten years, monitoring showed that most alerts from the European Union about antibiotic-contaminated shrimp came from India and Vietnam, leading the EU to require that all Indian shrimp shipments be tested before they can enter (Southern Shrimp Alliance, 2025). It took the concrete threat of losing continued market access under a new round of EU antimicrobial residue rules — with an estimated \$1.125 billion in fisheries exports at stake — to prompt India’s Export Inspection Council to overhaul its official control, inspection and certification systems in 2026 (The Tribune, 2026). The sequence is instructive: similar to Operation Sagar Rani’s episodic domestic crackdowns, the compliance gap was closed not through routine domestic oversight but by the binding threat of a border rejection — in this case, the actor compelling correction was a foreign regulator rather than an Indian household armed with

a CIFTest kit, and the cost of the looseness, until corrected, was quietly absorbed by both importing countries' consumers and India's own export earnings.

Read this way, the Dheel Kranti is not a break from the discursive pattern this paper traces from the colonial statute through the Blue Revolution to app-marketisation; it is that pattern's logical extension into food safety and quality assurance specifically, and it holds across online, offline, and export channels alike. Just as customary fishing knowledge is treated as an input to be managed rather than an authority to be consulted (Section 10 below), the vigilance required to catch adulteration — whether exercised by an Indian household, a platform's unaudited supply chain, or a foreign import inspector — is treated as a substitute for structural domestic enforcement rather than a supplement to it: a looseness that is profitable precisely because it is diffuse, difficult to prosecute, and borne, in the end, by whichever party happens to be furthest from the point of profit.

In summary, the Blue Revolution's record has both positive and negative aspects. On the credit side: production grew substantially toward its stated targets, mechanisation modernised harvest and post-harvest handling, and export earnings rose well beyond the colonial-era baseline this paper has traced — real gains, not manufactured ones. On the debit side sits the Dheel Kranti this paper has named, and what is striking is how consistently its costs surface from every vantage point in the sector, not merely one:

- to the market broadly, a persistent gap between the quality claims made at sale and the quality actually enforced behind them;
- to fishers themselves, it is a reputational and price risk they did not create but disproportionately absorb — public distrust and crackdown-driven price crashes following each “Sagar Rani”-style seizure fall on catch and reputation built on years of trust, not on the sellers actually adulterating it.
- to interpret the rise of cloud kitchens — delivery-only operations that prepare and sell fish and seafood dishes through the same aggregator platforms examined in Section 8 — as an added layer of opacity that serves as a structural extension of the previously identified pattern, rather than a separately evidenced exception. A consumer who might once have inspected a fillet before purchase now sees only a photograph and a rating, one further step removed from the point of catch, sourced through supply chains no more independently audited than those feeding the retail platforms already discussed.

The term “organisation” used in this paper does not apply to the underlying supply chain that supports online fish and seafood marketplaces. This is where the Blue Revolution's pros are counted in tonnes and export dollars; its most consequential con is counted in trust — and it is precisely because that con has become visible across so many differently positioned actors, rather than confined to one, that this paper treats the Dheel Kranti as a structural pattern rather than a series of unconnected lapses.

10. Concluding Discussion: Whose Knowledge Counts?

The discursive and political-economy strands of this paper converge most sharply here. If markets are, as Harriss-White argues, structured by state intervention and deep social rigidity rather than by efficient price signals alone (Harriss-White, 2005), then a platform's promise to organise a market through logistics and branding addresses only the visible, consumer-facing symptom of disorganisation, while leaving the underlying structure of who catches, who processes, and who ultimately profits substantially unchanged. The traditional fisherperson selling catch at a physical market and the fisherperson supplying

a cold-chain platform both remain subject to the same underlying market-and-politics dynamics described in Section 4 — state-created infrastructure and regulation; caste- and class-inflected social structuring of who can participate on what terms; and a coordinating logic in which the fisher's own knowledge of catch, freshness and handling is rendered invisible behind a platform's consumer-facing guarantee of quality.

This is, in substance, the same pattern traced discursively in Sections 3, 5, 7 and 9: from the colonial-era monopoly claim of modern science, through the Blue Revolution's technology-transfer model, to the 2019 CRZ/IPZ notifications' asymmetric consultation process, to app-marketisation algorithmic "organisation" of an already functioning informal market, to the Dheel Kranti's displacement of food-safety enforcement onto the consumer — in each period, the knowledge that is recognised as legitimate is the knowledge that is legible to the state, to scientific expertise or to capital, and the knowledge that fishing communities hold about their catch, coastline and craft is treated as an input to be managed rather than an authority to be consulted. Analysed across the colonial, developmental, contemporary-regulatory and platform-era periods, Indian fisheries policy and Indian fish markets display a single, consistent pattern: legitimate knowledge is that which is legible to state administration and market actors, while customary and place-based knowledge – long-tested or however central to the livelihoods of millions – is at best an object of policy and of market design rather than a source of either. The persistence of a colonial-era statute as the sector's foundational law is not simply an administrative oversight; it reflects the durability of the epistemological hierarchy that the statute helped establish, a hierarchy that later resurfaces in the state's role as market-maker and, most recently, in the platform economy's promise to "organise" what was, in fact, already a functioning — if informal — market. Analyse across three moments rather than one; the argument advanced here is not that the Blue Revolution's architects intended the looseness this paper documents nor that colonial regulation and post-colonial development are morally equivalent. Colonial-era regulation was built to serve extraction and control, with no obligation to fishing communities' welfare; the Blue Revolution's stated goals – tripling production, doubling incomes, and expanding exports – were a genuine attempt to reverse that neglect, and this paper does not treat them as a cover for indifference. Its lacuna was one of measurement, not motive: a scheme whose success was tracked in tonnage and export value had no built-in reason to track and, therefore, no built-in reason to close the enforcement gap it inherited from the colonial statute examined in Section 3 and so reproduced, on that one dimension, a version of the very looseness it was otherwise built to correct. The Dheel Kranti identified in Section 9 shows the resulting hierarchy operating in its starkest, most literally embodied form: where fishing communities' knowledge is discounted as an input to be managed, the ordinary consumer's safety is discounted to a compliance task to be self-administered, and the resulting margin of regulatory looseness accrues, quietly, to sellers on both sides of the wet-market/platform divide. So long as the knowledge and labour of fishers and fish workers remain structurally invisible behind expert consultation processes, branded platform "freshness", or blue-economy growth targets — and so long as food-safety enforcement remains episodic rather than routine — genuine reform of Indian fisheries governance and markets alike will require more than updated technical content; it will require revising whose knowledge the law and the market are designed to recognise and whose safety they are designed to actually guarantee in the first place.

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