



Opportunities for MSME's in Indian aquarium industry post COVID-19

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Indian aquarium trade was very low volume till the end of 20th century with most of the aquarium shops limited to metro and major cities of the country. It started growing faster with the beginning of 21st century and even much faster during the present decade. The domestic aquarium trade of India is presently valued Rs. 500 crores. It is estimated to grow to Rs. 1200 crore in next 4-5 years and Rs. 3000 crores by 2030 or may be more as ornamental fisheries is identified as an important sub-sector under recently announced “Pradhan Mantri Matsya



About 1.25% urban house-holds keep an aquarium in India while it is 10-20% in developed countries

Sampda Yojna”. There are four major components of aquarium trade viz; aquarium and aquarium accessories, ornamental fishes, feeds and aquarium servicing. Although, the key component of the aquarium trade is ornamental fish but it contributes only 20% to the total

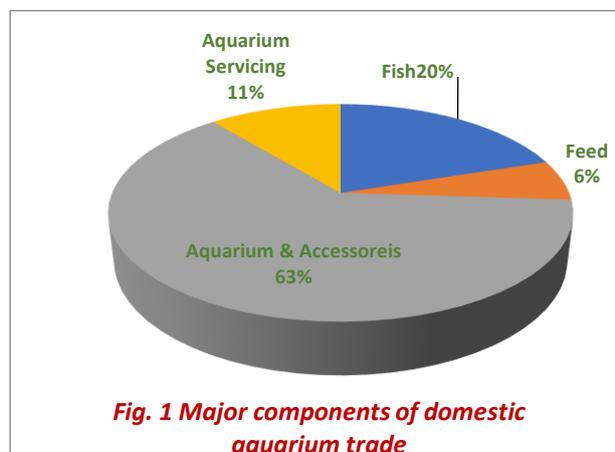


Fig. 1 Major components of domestic aquarium trade

trade. It is mainly the aquarium and aquarium accessories which contributes highest (Fig. 1).

An important factor in the growth of Indian aquarium trade was increased average annual income of the Indian house-holds which stimulated the desire of spending to nurture a hobby such as ornamental fish

keeping. But few other important factors were easy availability of aquarium products in the nearby market, ease of maintaining an aquarium due to availability of various aquarium equipment and most importantly the low cost of good quality products which were of exotic origin mainly China. It can be easily



Fig. 2 The Indian air pump (left) was superior than Chinese air pump (right) but could not compete on price.

explained by a simple example that the MRP of an indigenously manufactured air pump was Rs 150/- during the year 1995 while an exotic air pump is available to the hobbyists for the same price presently after 25 years (Fig.2).

A further analysis of the Indian aquarium trade data may force one to think if the growth of ornamental fish keeping hobby will be of economic advantage or disadvantage to the country. It will be definitely of advantage for the reason that it will support to enhance the income of large number of farmers and generate a source of livelihood to more and more numbers of both rural and urban youth. But simultaneously it will be of disadvantage for FOREX earnings of the country as 95% of all the items marketed as “Aquarium and aquarium accessories” are of Chinese origin. It values about Rs. 299 crores of a total domestic aquarium trade of Rs. 500 crores at present. As such the total expenditure on import of aquarium and aquarium accessories from China may be about Rs. 149.5 crores (50% Rs.299 crores) considering 50% is the overhead expenditure and profit margin of whole sellers and traders along the supply chain. It is important mentioning here that country is exporting ornamental fish worth about Rs. 7.5 crores only to the world. It means that with addition of every new aquarium keeping hobbyist who may be spending as low as Rs.2000/- for the aquarium there will be a burden of Rs. 600/- on the FOREX of country.

The world economic structure including of India may be altogether different post COVID-19 in many ways. The demand and supply equation of numerous products including products manufactured by Indian MSME units is expected to shift. Hon’ble Prime Minster of India has announced special schemes to support operations of MSME’s and also proclaimed of “Self-reliance India” and “Make in India” as visions for a developed India. A number of other countries are also looking at India as a mega manufacturing hub and a substitute to China

under present circumstances. It is certainly the right time for Indian MSME's in different sectors (Table-1) to take up manufacturing of aquarium and aquarium accessories.

Table-1 Nature of industries and list of items required in aquarium trade			
S.No.	Nature of Industry	ITEMS	Remarks
1.	Glass	Glass tanks of various sizes and shapes	It will require fabrication of glass tanks with moulded front in different shapes (C, U) and dimensions.
2.	Acrylics	Acrylic panels of large sizes and thickness for large aquarium tanks and public aquarium galleries.	The high import cost of large size acrylic panels is a major limitation to take up mega public aquarium gallery projects in country.
3.	Electricals	Air pumps, Compressors, blowers, Thermostatic heaters, Filter pumps, Lights etc.	Very high demand on day to day basis. A few of these products were being manufactured indigenously but could not compete with Chinese products in terms of price, quality and variants hence all the units were closed.
4.	Plastic	Parts for air pumps and filters, Aquarium covers and base, Artificial aquatic plants, Aquarium toys, Aeration tubes, Joints, Regulators, Siphoning pipes, Glass wipers, Magnetic cleaners etc.	Very high demand on day to day basis. Manufacturing of good quality products may generate very high demand.
5.	Printing	Water proof background posters, Packaging for aquarium and aquarium accessories.	Background posters are laminated sheets which are in high demand but not manufactured indigenously.
6.	FRP	Aquarium decorative items.	Only few local manufacturing units are functional but mainly imported due to high cost and a smaller number of new designs.
7.	Metal	Aquarium cover & frames.	It will be an integral part of glass tanks.
8.	Wooden	Aquarium stands	The availability of folding structure and easy assemblage of the units has created very high demand while the quality of imported product is inferior.

The demand of ornamental fishes may reduce significantly post COVID-19 as it is a non-essential commodity but definitely there will be an upsurge once the economy will revive and stabilize. However, the Indian MSME's should

All the developed countries where ornamental fish keeping is highly popular fulfil their major requirements of ornamental fishes and fish keeping products from Asian countries only

also consider the demand of these products in international market. The hobby of ornamental fish keeping is very popular in the countries of the Europe and the United States where 10-20% of the households keep an aquarium either at home or work place. The MSME's in India could take the advantage of this opportunity post COVID-19 through manufacturing different products related to fish keeping and target both domestic and international marketing platforms.