

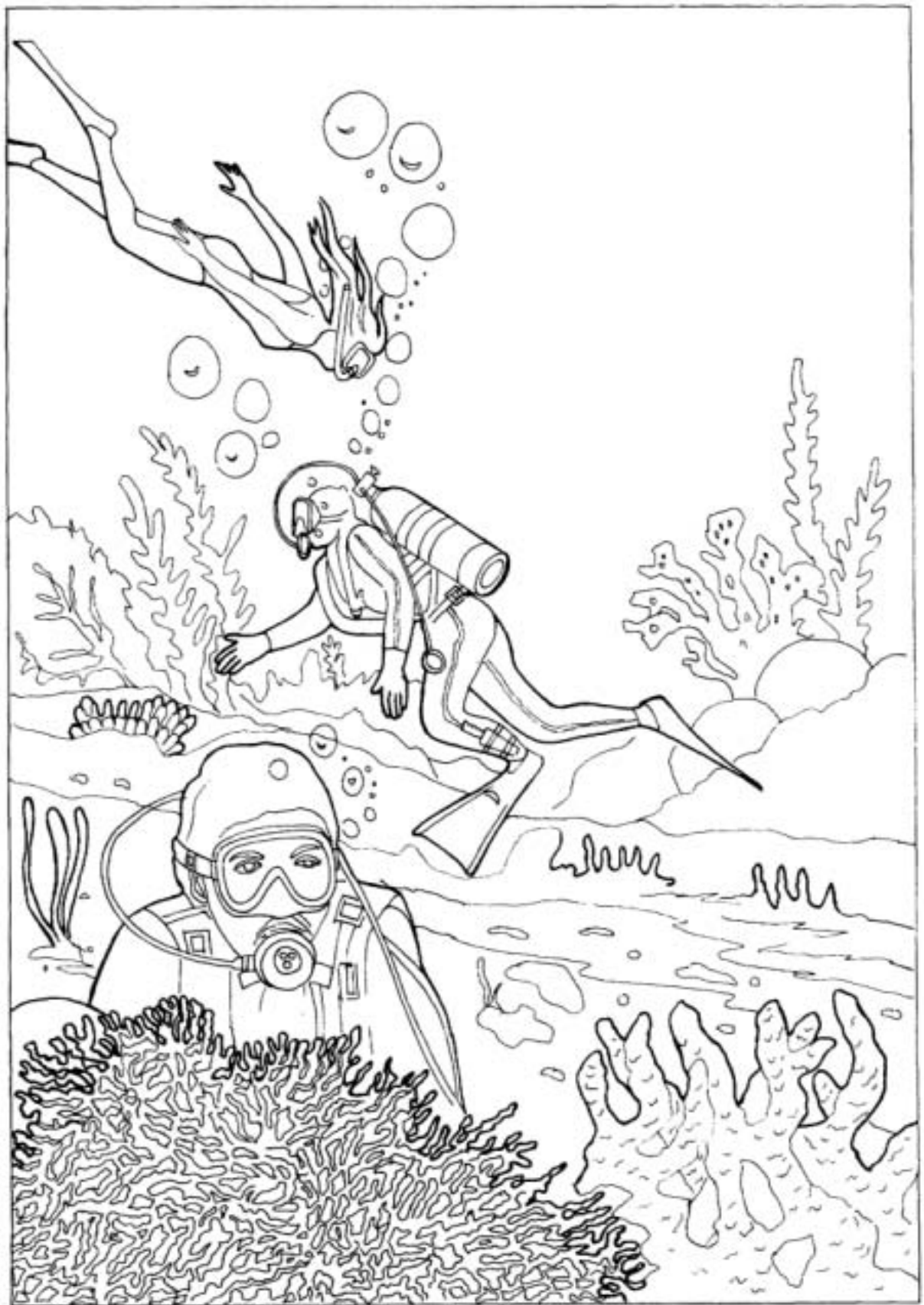


## 27. HOW MAN DAMAGES REEFS?

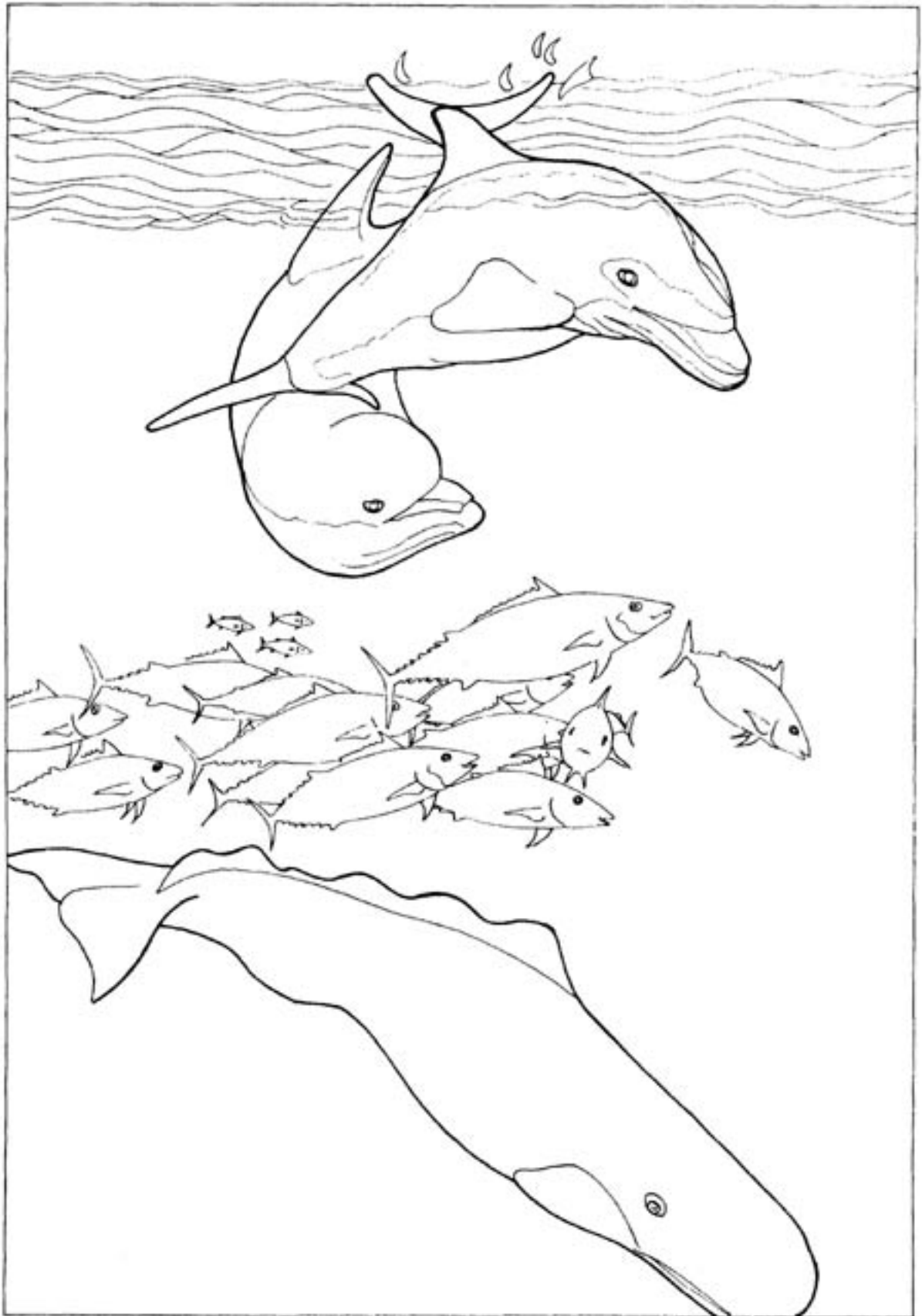
Man damages coral reefs in many ways

- People dump their garbage and waste (sewage) into the ocean. The water becomes so dirty that sunlight can no longer pass through the water. When plants cannot get sunlight, they die and the coral polyps stop growing.
- Oil spills from ships and *dhonis* pollute the water and can kill the reefs.
- When harbours are dredged, the waters become very dirty. Mud covers the tiny coral polyps so they cannot breathe or feed.
- By operating nets and traps to catch bait fish, reef fish and lobster, the reefs get damaged. Even the capture of some ornamental fish for export and the collection of seashells can cause damage to the reefs.
- You have learnt about the food chain. If any one organism is caught (fished) too often, it upsets the way of life in the reefs.
- More and more corals are mined to get the material needed for our houses and for our roads.
- Underwater explosives are used to break the coral and make harbours. This blasts away the work of a thousand years.
- And when *dhonis* drop anchor, the anchors hammer the reef and break it up.

**All of us must be very careful about what we do to coral.**







## 28. WHY ARE CORAL REEFS IMPORTANT?

- When strong ocean waves and storms hit our lovely island beaches, they cause the land to slowly reduce. This is called **EROSION**. The coral reefs act as a barrier and provide protection. The waves hit the reefs and slow down before they reach the shore.
- **Corals built** the reefs that make up the Maldives. They also give us the materials to build our houses. But we must be careful about how much coral we take for house-building.
- The **LIVING REEFS** attract tourists from all over the world. These visitors go diving and snorkelling. Maldivians are needed as guides and to run hotels for them. So, many jobs depend on tourism.
- Coral reefs provide us with reef fish for food and for sale to other countries. They also give us the bait necessary for tuna fishing. Vividly coloured coral reef fishes are kept in aquariums all over the world.
- Some corals are so exquisite that they can be used as jewellery or as decoration in people's homes.
- Chemicals from sponges are used to treat cancer. Poisons produced by coral reef animals and plants are used to fight human disease. Coral skeletons are used in bone surgeries.

As you can see from some of these examples, the reefs can earn money for us because they produce things that we can sell. They also bring tourists, who enjoy coming to see the living reefs.

**SO REMEMBER:** Damage caused by nature cannot be helped. But damage and overuse caused by people can be stopped. Every one of us must help to look after our coral reefs. Why not get together with your friends in school and form a **Coral Reef Protection Club?**

**Help our country to protect its reefs.**