

Traditional Fishing for Food Sovereignty in Sindhudurg

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Abstract:

Food is the most fundamental right of every human being. This right to food is enhanced in the concept of food sovereignty for individuals and communities. Generally, food sovereignty entitles farmers and all food producers to own their resources and production, by defining and playing a significant role in their own agricultural, labour, fishing, food and land policies. The principles of food sovereignty incorporate the process of right to food; decide value for food, localized decision making capacity and also a vision of gender lens and incorporate the sustainable mode of development.

Food Sovereignty is a concretely discussed concept with focus on land entitlement and sufficient nutritious food production, distribution and access by the population for the population. These discussions incorporate farmers, agricultural labourers and hunter-gatherers. However, the debate about food sovereignty for fisher people is yet to gain momentum; the main point of contention being that unlike land, which can be claimed for private or communal ownership, no one can claim or own the sea. Thus the sea being everyone's and no one's it remains neglected politically, theoretically and physically.

This paper tries to analyse the various efforts made by the indigenous small scale fishing community of Sindhudurg district in India to create and uphold their food sovereignty. These efforts range from continued practice of traditional fishing methods to aggressive protests against encroachment in their fishing spaces. Their cultural and traditional practices spell out specific norms for conservation and sustainable regeneration of marine resources, biodiversity and respect for the commons and all its shareholder's rights.

Apart from visible issues of land entitlement, sea and water body grabbing, resulting in denial of small fishermen's access to resources, there are a number of other challenges faced by this sector. One concern is that the many small-scale fishing communities are marginalized and their population is electorally fragmented, which limits their political participation and access to decision making power. Also there has been an increase in systematic violations of rights of indigenous fisher communities since the marketization of the Indian economy; and there has been negligence towards implementation of policies which would ensure enabling space for Small Scale Fishers to exercise their human rights with dignity.

Also, the paper means to discuss the various lenses from which livelihood concerns of marginalized communities are perceived. In the context of fisheries, or in cases of resource

encroachment in general, the legal focus is on environmental and ecological protection; there is an urgent need for paradigm shift to recognize these encroachments as upon the livelihood needs, thus the human rights of the fishing community. Sustenance of human society is essentially interlinked with sustenance of the environment; this link needs more recognition while perceiving such cases.