

Globalization and fisher people in India

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Globalisation

Today we are in the context of Globalisation. The process of Globalisation has ensured the free movement of capital. Market determines investment and production; but market in the context of Globalisation is not to meet the basic needs of the people, but the artificially created needs. Market has no other value than Money-Profit. People have no value. Common peoples' basic needs and aspirations have no value. Those with money look for ways and means of making more money and go ahead to achieve their purpose by hook or by crook. While free movement of capital is promoted, labourers are not free to move. There is no Distributive Justice and Ethics.

Globalisation and Fisheries

Now turning to the fisheries in India, from time immemorial the fisher people have been the defenders and protectors of the coastal territories of India from all foreign invasions and other external threats. Generally we are very strong and lead a very risky life. We are great hunters even of sharks. We have a very rich sea coast and EEZ. The Biodiversity of fish resources and multi species are very rich. 10 million fisher people catch 30 lakhs tonnes of fish every year. The fishing communities are generally very poor. 92% of them live below poverty line. They have very low social status and very low political clout. Despite having had greater importance in the ancient times, fisherfolk were relegated to the status of low caste during the medieval periods. Still the community always enjoyed a certain autonomy and dignity in the past. While menfolk largely concentrated on fish harvesting, the women undertook a number of land based occupations like net making, fish curing and fish vending. Merchants, middlemen and money lenders have been, for long, the bane of this community.

From the time of Independence in 1947, India has attempted to modernise its economy rapidly, inspired by the technological progress of the North. Ignoring the skills and potentialities of the large number of traditional fisher people, the government promoted foreign technologies like bottom trawling, again a war technology to discover mines at the bottom of the sea, misapplied to fishing resulting in indiscriminate, unsustainable and destructive fishing. This depleted the life resources and displaced the traditional fisher people who depend on these life resources. Deforestation due to industrialisation and other encroachments, Construction of Mega Dams, pollution of water siltation and other reclamation Shrimp Aquaculture, all these have drastically reduced fish availability and livelihood of fishing communities in India. All these ventures are taken up by the MNCs and the TNCs in the name of development. The net result: on the one hand quick profit to the big investors who can easily close down their business after the depletion of resources and begin to invest in something else more profitable and on the other hand, complete loss of livelihood and displacement for peoples who lived off these natural resources while caring and nurturing the same.

This threat to our very livelihood has forced the fisher people to forge new linkages and organise ourselves to face the threats. The National Fishworkers' Forum was the result of such efforts in India. Through a long chain of hunger strikes, sit-ins, rallies, picketing national high ways, railway lines, airports, government offices, blocking harbours etc the fisher people were able to obtain marine fishing regulation. Through ongoing struggles the fisher people forced the governments to bring about zonal regulations for the mechanised boats, night trawling ban,

purse seine ban, etc the struggles of the fisherwomen against their displacement from net making as a result of imported Japanese machines need special mention. In 1989 the National Fishworkers Forum (NFF) organised a massive environmental march called Kanyakumari March with a slogan 'PROTECT WATERS PROTECT LIFE'. The large gathering of fisher people in Kanyakumari to highlight their problems, including the threat of the proposed nuclear power plant at Koodamkulam in collaboration with Russia, led to police firing. While uniting all local movements of the fisherpeople is essential; it is equally essential to see our problems in a much larger context of struggles by other dispossessed groups. Therefore, today there is a new alliance of all movements of the dispossessed in the country called National Alliance of people's movements.

In the 1990s fishing reached the point of diminishing returns. Many fish populations have fallen to the levels from which they can no longer recover without significant reductions in the catches or a moratorium on fishing. There are simply too many boats and ships to catch a limited fish resource in the world. The first surge in numbers of fishing vessels occurred during the industrial revolution. These upwell tapered off during the two world wars, but boomed again in the 1950s through 1970s. The world's fishing fleets doubled between 1970 and 1990.

For us fishing is a way of life, not just a source of income. The sea is our mother. Traditionally, small scale or artisanal fishers have provided fish for local consumption, but as fish becomes scarce, its value increases; it enters the global market and become unaffordable to common human being. In the process, we are displaced and the MNCs take over completely. Most governments particularly of the North are trying to prop up an unsustainable fishery. According to the FAO, every year governments world wide pay US\$ 116 billion to catch \$70 billion worth fish. The European Union has around 40% more vessels than necessary to catch fish on a sustainable basis causing 'fish wars'. These huge fishing fleets have depleted all the oceans in the world displacing the fishing communities all over the world depending on these life resources.

The Victims of Globalisation - in fisheries

The victims of globalisation have realised the need for establishing their rights. For example, the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) is the result of this realisation. This Forum is involved in a campaign to establish the rights of fishing communities to own water bodies, fishing implements, and the distribution of fish. This campaign comes into sharp focus on WORLD FISHERIES DAY, November 21 every year.

The 10-million fisher people in India were able to change the government policy of Joint and lease fishing through long standing struggles. The Canadian Fisher people have been fighting against huge fishing vessels and ITQs, Moratorium on fishing and reduction of small fishing vessels and small fishing communities. The Gloucester Fisher people in the USA, particularly the wives of fishermen, have succeeded in banning factory trawlers through legislation. In Senegal, fisher people are on a warpath against destructive fishing. In Pakistan the fisher people have succeeded in changing the Joint Venture fishing policy. In Chile, Argentina the fisher people stopped the introduction of ITQ system. In South Africa the traditional and artisanal fisher people are asserting themselves of their political right to exist. We the fisher people in India, are part of a larger alliance called the National Alliance of Peoples Movements (NAPM), all of whom are victims of Globalisation. There are over 150 peoples movements in NAPM, not only struggling to survive but searching for alternatives to the present form of development which in the long run is DESTRUCTION FOR ALL. Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save Narmada Movement) is part of NAPM in India is involved in a life and death struggle. There are 3600 Dams in the river Narmada, which have displaced about 50 million tribals. They are displaced from the life resources. They are in a struggle to establish that water bodies and forest belong to them. Nobody on earth can

challenge their right. The struggle is to establish this natural right. This local and national struggle has a global dimension. Similarly there are Peoples Global Action (PGA), where people are on local actions and global actions against MNCs, TNCs and WTO. It is through these struggles that the WHOLE OF HUMANITY IS GOING TO BE SAVED.

GLOBALIZATION AND AQUACULTURE

The fishing community, coastal farmers' groups and the environment community of India are outraged at the reported decision of the Indian government to introduce and pass the amended (by the Committee) Coastal Mono Aquaculture Authority Bill-2000, in the Parliament. The bill is directly aimed at subverting the coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification and the landmark aquaculture judgement of the Supreme Court on 11-12-1996 by Justice Kuldip Singh. On December 11, 1996, Justice Kuldip Singh ordered that all the Aquaculture Farms except traditional and improved traditional should be demolished before March 31 1997." By the demolition order the SC sought to protect the livelihood of over 100 million coastal people, biodiversity of the ecosystem, estuaries, rivers, seas, 100,000 areas of ecologically fragile coast along the 9600 km long coastline of the country. The Supreme Court ordered this because : 1. Coastal drinking water gets polluted, which in turn affects the poor fisher people. 2. It destroys mangroves, which are the breeding and feeding grounds for many fish species. 3. It pollutes inshore waters, which displaces poor fisher people. 4. It causes environmental destruction. 5. It is a rape and run approach, quick profit and destroys everything else. 6. The Industrial Fisheries and Aquaculture are organically linked. The industrial fisheries that catch everything is converted to feed the Aquaculture to feed the overfed in the world. Globalization looks at quick profit only at the expense and destruction. There is no question of Common good of all, the Kingdom of God.

Movement of Capital-yes, movement of Labour-no

During the Colonial period there was movement of capital along with movement of labour. But today in the new Globalisation era movement of capital is free, but the movement of labour is not allowed. It is controlled by the Nation state theory. In fact the movement of people saved Europe from over population and unemployment. But the very same people, who migrated to all the continents, are now saying that freedom of movement of labour is not allowed. Globalisation is essentially a manifestation of the expansionary needs of the developed industrial world (the first world), and it is being pushed into the Third World policy agenda by international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF. The penetration is as much through power structures as it is through a management of discourse. Democratic mandates of Governments are increasingly considered irrelevant to the economic policy making. Multilateral aid agencies are exercising enormous power in the framing of policies for the third world countries, thanks to the Information Technology Revolution! The fundamental difference between Old Colonialism and Neo colonialism is that mobility of people was free in the first, whereas mobility of people is vehemently opposed to in the second.

The Victims of Globalisation: Feast or Famine

The vast majorities who are the victims of Globalisation also have no access to the information technology. Those who have access to the information technology will increase their wealth. So the gap between those who have access and those who have not will increase day by day. There is no meeting point at all. The information Technology has to address this problem at all levels.

The vast majority of people in the world are struggling to survive. The basic needs of people like food, cloth, shelter, education, and health are not met. Has information technology anything to

do with this? Today more and more activists are also using information technology to gain support for their struggles against Destructive Development and the politics of MNCs and TNCs. At least some centres of Information should pass on these to the Majority of people in the world to step up their struggles. Information technology should be made use of to counter all forms of destruction of life, accumulation of wealth and exploitation of all kinds. It has to expose class contradictions, gender contradictions, Development contradictions, and environmental contradictions. This has to pass on to the people at large to step up their struggles against all forms of contradictions. The Natural Capital - land, water and forest has limitation and it cannot grow. Similarly, fish resource has a Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY). Petroleum resource, too, cannot grow. The growth model development can be achieved only by depleting these natural resources (capital). Thus a development with ZERO GROWTH alone can be sustainable. But true production and development has to be coupled with distributive Justice and Purpose.

Neither a society nor a world can survive that is based on the principle of feast and famine--feast for the few who have more than enough of the common resources at the expense of famine for those who have little or nothing of them.

The Process of Struggle

Our struggle is against all those people's institutions and gears, which have no regard for ecology, and sustainability and who exploit and displace fishing communities. The last General Body of the NFF worked out a charter of demands containing 42 demands. They are either already made agreements with the GOI and not implemented like implementation of 21 recommendations of Murari Committee, Saving cum Relief Scheme, Adequate subsidised supply of Kersene and Diesel, stop import of 32 items of fish, etc.. The NFF is preparing for a very big mobilization in the coming July 25th onwards in all the Capitals of Coastal states and Delhi.

The process of struggle and the process of building up go hand in hand. There is no blueprint of chronological order. These stages can be over lapping.

Our aim is to protect the fish resources, fishing communities, and the fish consumers. In order to achieve this, the problems of the local areas should be addressed. While tackling the problem of overcapacity, the smallest and the least that are fishing for his livelihood should never be disturbed. The top most capacity has to give way to the lesser ones and the process should continue till the level of sustainability is reached. This is not a matter of pity for the poor but it is a question of restoring Social Justice, which has been outraged by Globalisation and Liberalisation.

We can fight globalization only if we are able to stop buying and selling of the Natural Capital-Land, Water and Forest. Those communities like Dalits, Fisher People and Tribals that depend on these for their livelihood should own and manage the same. This is going to be our Do or Die agitation in the coming months and years. These should be owned and managed by these communities. Land water and Forest should become the Common Property Right of these communities. God has created this earth for the good of all.

An American View

David C. Korten, the author of "When Corporations Rule the World" and "The Post-Corporate World: Life After Capitalism," has written to me: "I've come to realise that we tend to use the word 'capital' very loosely--with devastating consequences. Basically, external capital flows to developing countries and translates into a transfer of foreign exchange, which by its nature is only useful in buying things from the countries that provide it, inherently creating dependence on their economies. Rarely are such financial flows actually invested in enhancing the productive capacity

of the receiving country, and even when they are, it often involves inappropriate technology, such as the import of trawlers, and/or it establishes foreign ownership of the trawlers and de facto ownership of the fish they catch. In my experience, when foreigners send money, control invariably follows.

"Since I've come to really understand the reality of what we call 'capital' flows, I've been communicating the message that the people of the Third World are not poor because foreigners have not sent them enough foreign money. It is because foreigners have taken over control of too many of their resources."

GLOBAL CAMPAIGN

There is a need for a global campaign to achieve the above. All over the world people must demand these. We need to organise in the line of Global peace march, peoples global action, WFFP's campaign for the ownership of water bodies, fishing implements by the small fishing communities. Here information technology has to be used massively. All these different movements in the world must see that they work in a complementary manner. The NFF and the WFFP were there in Seattle, 1997 and Doha in 2001 and did protest against WTO. We were there in Brazil at the WORLD SOCIAL FORUM meet in 2002. Thousands of movements all over the World like National Alliance of Peoples Movements(NAPM) of India, Via Campasina, Peoples Global Action, Interenational Forum on Globalization are involved in these struggles against WTO , Corporations and Globalization.

There is a need to create a new paradigm of development and politics, in which all human beings have right to live, with equal access to the resources and opportunities. Development cannot be measured solely by the quantity of production, but by its sustainability by its capacity to protect the livelihood of all human beings. Production should be coupled with Distributive Justice. True Globalisation should make free movement of labour unhindered by national boundaries. The year 2000 should be a real jubilee year by letting nations feel true freedom and equality by unburdening them of their debt. Information technology should be made use for this campaign and change in the world. The general norm for social change has been "Think Globally and Act Locally". But in the context of globalisation we need a new dictum -'**Think Globally and Act Globally**'. To do this we must make use of information technology in a massive way.

True development is not by conquering and enslaving, not by accumulating and centralizing, not by displacing peoples and destroying cultures. True development is only by integrating and working together, through distributive justice and decentralization by nurturing and including natives, tribals and indigenous peoples.

The life of the planet and the dependent health and welfare of humanity must not be sacrificed to the greed of the few.