



PROFILE

Meet Purnima Meher Growing up in a fishing community, Purnima Meher today is a leading figure in the struggle for women fishworkers' rights

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Purnima Meher is a staunch advocate of women fishworkers in the coastal state of Maharashtra in India. Purnima, who was born into a fishing community, is a postgraduate in Sociology from the prestigious SNDT University, Pune, and has worked as a social activist in her home state of Maharashtra for about ten years. During this period, she had the opportunity of meeting and working with the activist

closely observing the lives and work of women in the community, it was only natural that she gravitated towards the issues of women fishworkers. She observed how the women fishworkers work day and night without any socio-economic security. She saw how they were harassed while traveling to markets in trains and buses for selling fish. She identified the various pre- and post-harvest tasks that women fishworkers engaged in, along with fish collection and selling. Her initiation into this work was through a meeting with Nalini Nayak, then with the National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF), who urged her to take up the role of organizing women fishworkers. This inspired her and she took up the position of Woman Coordinator within NFF. Along with getting women fishmongers their rights, she also worked against the exploitation of workers in fish processing factories in coastal states throughout India.

Purnima has also been associated with the 'World Forum of Fisher People' (WFFP) at the international level, representing India's women fishworkers at the various meetings of the body, including its annual general meetings in Nairobi, Delhi and Paris.

Currently, Purnima continues her struggle for the rights of fisherwomen who are facing increasing marginalization due to large-scale development projects that encroach the seas and coastal areas, depriving the fishing community of their primary means of livelihood, namely, fishing. **M**