

The role of mangrove habitat in the life of women in Akshi village, Maharashtra State, India

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Abstract

The present investigation is carried out in the mangrove mudflat of Akshi village, Maharashtra state, India, during 2008-2009 (Latitude 17° 72' N & Longitude 73, 64' E). Mangrove habitat of Akshi region is salt tolerant ecosystem of tropical intertidal region. Unique features of this habitat is extreme shallowness in some region, mild waves and its semi-enclosed nature of ecosystem. Sedimentation is well developed and rich in nutrients and hence support variety of resident and migratory fauna. Mangrove habitat is the life line of the coastal living people in Akshi village, especially of women as fishing in mangrove area is the domain of women while sea is the domain of men. Women are involved in artisanal fishing, collecting oysters, crabs, assisting fishermen, post harvest activities as well as family and community welfare. They play central role and therefore get main focus on their overall activities. Women and mangrove mudflat have maintained closely woven fabric due to their close associationship. Women mainly depend on oyster (*Saccostrea cucullata*), prawn (*Penaeus indicus*) and crab (*Scylla serrata*) which are commercially important and fetch good amount of money. Women spend average 7hrs/day for fishing and fishery related activities which is 1 1/2 hrs more than men in this region.

Mangroves have made the Akshi region more attractive and therefore tourism has increased in this region. This has forced the women to imbibe a foreign culture. Now their lifestyle is changing and so are the requirements. Earlier they required to fish mainly for family. There is more demand of fish, oyster and crab. So their work is getting harder and more time consuming. This finally leads to ecological degradation. Increased requirement of food delicacies in restaurants, households, tourists hinge around the fishing activities of women. So mangrove habitat has given them protective, steady and sure income generating environment and therefore stability in life.

Keywords

mangrove habitat, women, tourism