

## Fishing trauma

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The Tarun Bharat Sangh (tbs), together with the people of the villages around Akhari river in Alwar district, Rajasthan, has launched 'Jalchar Bachao Andolan' in protest against the government's move to give contract to private parties to fish in the river.

On November 21 last year, when Latif Khan, a private contractor, got the contract to fish in the river near Hamirpur village, people opposed and prevented him. When he insisted, the children, women and men gathered to protest, seeing which Khan had to leave the place. The event was repeated the next day when Khan reached Samara village.

The villagers tried to explain that it was by their own efforts that they had been successful in preventing the river from becoming dry. The native people over the last 11 years had built some 161 dams over the river. Other villages of the area like Bhonvata, Bhuriavas, Lalpura, Plasana, Savatsar, Khadata, Khatala, Dumolim Chausala, Nagel, Chava ka vaas and Jaganathpura have also put in efforts to bring back water into the otherwise dry river. The locals appealed to the state fisheries department that the contracts should be given to fish in the river only after consulting or informing them.

When the contractor complained to the fisheries department, the department wrote to TBS that if any obstacle is created in allowing the contractor to fish in the river, necessary legal action will be taken against them. The police too threatened to arrest the villagers in case of any opposition by them.

The crucial questions that get raised after these incidents are that if this is the attitude of the state, why should the community do water harvesting or protection of local biodiversity? Can there be any water harvesting or protection of biodiversity after negation of the traditional practices of the people and the communities by the state?

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