

Government of India
Ministry of Jal Shakti
Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga
Rejuvenation
(National Water Mission)

**Proceedings of the Twenty- Fifth (25th) Water Talk held on 16th
April 2021**

- National Water Mission (NWM) has been organizing a seminar series-‘Water Talk’ -to promote dialogue and information sharing among participants on a variety of water-related topics. The ‘Water Talk’ is intended to create awareness, build capacities of stakeholders and encourage people to become active participants in the conservation and saving of water. NWM has so far organized 24‘Water-Talks’ on a range of topics dominating the sector concerns.
- **Twenty -Fifth(25th) Water Talk** in this series was held on 16th April 2021 on a virtual platform. The talk was delivered by **Shri Rajendra Singh, Stockholm Water Prize Winner and world renowned water warrior**. Shri G. Asok Kumar, Additional Secretary and Mission Director, NWM and officials of NWM attended the webinar along with more than 650 participants. The webinar included participants from across the country from various spheres of life. The talk was also live-streamed through Facebook on the 11 social media platforms of various organizations under DoWR and there were over 15,000 total viewers watching it live, in addition to the 650 participants on the Webex platform.
- Shri G. Asok Kumar, Additional Secretary & Mission Director, NWM welcomed the participants to the 25th Talk that marks the Silver Jubilee of the ‘Water Talk’ series. He gave a brief overview of the ‘Water Talk’ initiative and mentioned how the switch from the physical to digital platform has amplified the reach of the talks both geographically & numerically with people participating from all across the world from countries like Australia, China, Nigeria. Hon’ble Prime Minister launched the **‘JSA 2- Catch the Rain’** campaign with a tagline- ***Catch the Rain, where it falls, when it falls*** through a digital event attended by all District Collectors and Sarpanchs across the country. PM, in the launch event addressed all officers, Sarpanchs and grassroot level workers to join the campaign and work vigorously towards conserving water and reviving water structures for practicing rainwater harvesting in the coming monsoon. PM called for a ‘Jan Andolan’ for a ‘Jal Andolan’.
- Shri Asok Kumar introduced the speaker, **Shri Rajendra Singh,**

often known as 'Jal Purush' for his tremendous contribution to the water sector. Shri Rajendra Singh was awarded the 'Stockholm Water Award' in 2015, an award regarded as the 'Nobel Prize' in the water sector. Shri Singh has been felicitated by several international organizations and also listed by the Guardian as one of the 15 people who can save planet 'Earth'. His contributions include the revival of 15 rivers and role in making 1500 villages water secure in India.

- The topic of the e-talk by **Shri Rajendra Singh** was **“Catch the Rain: Importance of Water Literacy”**. The tagline of the campaign, *“Catch the Rain- where it fall, when it falls”* - Shri Rajendra Singh felt conveys a significant message that can facilitate the growth of water literacy in the country. Water Literacy can be understood at two levels; water conservation and efficient management of water. India is a water surplus country and what is required is to inculcate a sense of respect and promote efficient water management practices, he added. Nature has provided us humans with all resources in abundance like air and water. However, the never-ending human greed is what makes it impossible meet her requirements.
- Giving a spiritual undertone, he solidified his argument by using the acronym of 'भगवान', which literally means God in Hindi. Here, 'भ' - stand for भूमि (earth), 'ग' stands for गगन(sky), 'व' stands for वायु (air), अ stands for अग्नि (fire) and न stands for नीर. He argued that even before religions were created, our civilization was worshiping the nature as nature has created us and भगवान is the creator of all living beings. The Indian civilization was a global teacher with respect to science and especially water. The 3 R's of water understood internationally are reuse, recycle and rejuvenate. However, what is lacking is deep sense of 'respect' for water in people which can achieved through the Ministry's 'Catch the Rain' campaign. He blamed modern education to be responsible for the diminishing respect for our nature and environment. Shri Singh urged the Prime Minister to revive this respect and introduce 'water literacy' as a compulsory subject in schools. As a country, if we're able to balance between the discharge and recharge of water, India will become a world leader in realm of nature and humankind.
- Climate change and global warming are responsible for migration and displacement of many communities in several parts of Central Asia, Africa and Europe. People are becoming helpless and falling prey to deadly diseases without having access to water thereby accelerating migration & displacement to other countries. These migrants are often known as 'climate refugees' in the regions they migrate to. Shri Singh feared that the tension rising due to migrating refugees in European cities could make water the basis of the third Water World War. However, Indian migrants are often lauded as

economic creators who add value to other countries. In order to avoid a scenario wherein our countrymen are forced to migrate in search of basic amenities such as water, we need to create a balance between recharge and discharge of underground aquifers and water bodies in the coming five years, he added. To reduce net water discharge, there is a need improve water use efficiency in agriculture as the sector is the largest user of water. By linking the crop pattern and the rain pattern, water discharge can be reduced upto 40%. He urged the central and state governments to work in the direction of climate change and water.

- The global problem of water crisis has local solutions to it depending the region and geology. Shri asserted that the 'Catch the Rain' campaign should be implemented in the form of a community- based decentralized water management model. He was confident that a very good model would be extracted from the slogan of the campaign that can take the country forward in climate change adaption and mitigation. The strength of a community- driven decentralized management system lies in the fact that its people are invested in the cause and connect with it emotionally. It leads to people taking ownership of their resources and nature overall. Further, he stressed on the integration 'science' and 'sense' while working towards water management. If tradition, culture, collective wisdom and emotions are channeled into protecting nature and implemented using the technologies developed by the technocrats, even common people would be equipped to efficiently revive lost rivers and water bodies. What is required to find make the rainwater falling on the earth's surface flow into the underground aquifers without any evaporation loss.
- 'Sanatan' is not just a religious term but holds greater scientific significance. It signifies the process of rebirth of both humans and nature. Through the process of rejuvenation our country could move towards what he called 'Santan development'. To understand this better, one needs to understand the geology of the region, the typology of the river basins, condition of underground aquifers, process of fixing the problem areas, conservation and disciplined use of natural resources. He stressed on the need of a community driven decentralized water management that focuses indigenous knowledge systems and traditional water management systems for people to connect emotionally with the cause of water.
- Involvement of the youth is imperative and young people must be imparted training on resource mapping, site selection, mobilization and overall decision making process. This will help build sense of belonging and ownership in them towards their local water resources. Focusing on the engineering aspect, Shri Singh explained that in case of steep slopes, convex design dams should be constructed and in an area of natural depression, concave structures may be constructed whereas in a gentle slope region, a simple check

dam may be created. He reaffirmed the importance of respecting nature and ecological diversity while working towards sustainable development. Under Rajendra Singh's guidance and leadership, 11,800 structures have been constructed, 2.5 lakh wells were recharged and more than 17 lakh youth in 19 districts returned to their land to practice farming. Surplus water flow in villages forced people to return to their homes to begin a new life.

- Shri Rajendra Singh shared an impact study of a project undertaken by his NGO- Tarun Bharat Sangh in the extremely hot and dry Aravalli region of Rajasthan. He along with the local community worked towards water conservation & its impact on climate change through Mitigation and Adaption. The speaker elaborated on the entire process of the exercise carried out by the team to improve rainfall density in the region. He termed the sun's heat falling on the sea as 'red heat' that desalinates the sea water and accelerates cloud formation through evaporation. The clouds or 'blue heat', as he likes to term it moves towards the 'green heat' or simply green vegetation due to the process of trans-evaporation. As soon as the 'green heat' meets the 'blue heat', both generate discharge in the form of 'rain'. The discharge or rain falling on the green cover was further diverted to existing water bodies turning them into traditional water bodies. This gave birth to agriculture and increase in green cover in the region. Evaporation from the perennial water bodies increased the humidity and led to the formation of 'micro clouds'. These newly formed 'micro clouds' started attracting macro clouds originating above the Arabian sea. The union of the clouds led to a remarkable increase in rainfall in the area since 1985. This entire exercise helped in reducing the heat and increasing the rainfall and soil moisture in turn improving the green vegetation of the area. The water supply in the wells accelerated the process of reverse migration which Shri Singh terms as a successful exercise of adaptation and mitigation of climate change.
- The speaker gained international recognition after his slogan '**Water is climate and climate is water**' was accepted by the United Nations (SDG 2015) and by COP21 (Paris Agreement). The success of a small experiment conducted by the NGO in Rajasthan paved the way for a change in global water policy. The talk was followed by a session of questions and answers wherein members from the audience were invited to discuss their queries with the speaker. The webinar saw some interesting and unique questions from people across the country.
