

F.No. M-93011/7/2019-NWM
Government of India
Ministry of Jal Shakti
Department of Water Resources, RD&GR
National Water Mission

Proceedings of the Thirty First (31st) Water Talk held on 15th October, 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 30 '**Water-Talks**' on a range of topics dominating the sector concerns.
- **Thirty First (31st) Water Talk** in this series was held on 15th October 2021 on a virtual platform organized by NWM with the support of Water Digest, the official media partner for the webinar. The talk was delivered by **Mr. Satyajit Bhatkal, CEO, Paani Foundation**, an organisation which works with the mission of making rural Maharashtra drought-free and ecologically and economically prosperous, through a people's movement. Prior to setting up Paani Foundation, Mr. Bhatkal created and directed 'Satyamev Jayate', India's leading TV show focused on addressing social issues. It sparked crucial conversations and broke several taboos. Encouraged by the show's response and convinced of the need to act on tackling social issues beyond speaking about them, Mr. Bhatkal co-created Paani Foundation. It was in the '90s that he first donned the development lens as a young practising lawyer and for over 30 years now, Mr. Bhatkal has been actively involved in important social causes and has worked to explore and expose the deep-rooted disablers to India's progress. Mr. Bhatkal has also directed the National Award winning documentary, 'Chale Chalo', on the making of the film 'Lagaan'. **Shri G. Asok Kumar, Additional Secretary and Mission Director, NWM** and officials of NWM attended the webinar along with other participants. The talk was also live-streamed through Facebook and other social media platforms of various organizations under Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS). There were over fifty thousand viewers in this e-water talk.
- **Shri G. Asok Kumar, Additional Secretary & Mission Director,**

NWM welcomed the participants to the **31st** Talk 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. He also mentioned that along with Water Talk, National Water Mission also took the initiative of organizing **Water Tech Talk and Water Biz Talk** which are being organized on second & Fourth Friday respectively of every month with people coming from academia and industries and informing us about the various progress which we have made in water sector. Hon'ble Prime Minister launched the '**Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain**' campaign on 22nd March 2021, on World Water Day. He also mentioned the seriousness of Central Govt. in taking steps towards water conservation and numerated that in the last five months approximately 34 lakhs water harvesting structures constructed, 36 Crore tree plantation taken place etc.

- The topic of the e-talk by **Mr. Satyajit Bhatkal, CEO, Paani Foundation** was "**Creating a People's Movement for Water Conservation**". Mr. Bhatkal firstly thanks NWM and its Mission Director for showing such a seriousness/commitment that even on the occasion/day of Dussehra 'Water Talk' is being organized. Starting his lecture he numerated the positive effects of the program Satyamev Jayte and coming to the creation of Paani Foundation in Maharashtra he mentioned that as Maharashtra is his home states and many parts of it are drought hit, he chosen Maharashtra although whole of India is equally important for him but with the limited resources he can't make differences in whole of the India. Shri Bhatkal has narrated his journey as under-

1. We (whole team of Paani Foundation) at Paani Foundation are born with the show Satyamev Jayte anchored by Aamir Khan. In the starting he was susceptible whether he can make a change in society through the medium of Television. However, it was a grand success and makes positive changes at each level of the society e.g., after a show on alcoholism, there is a ten times increase in no. of persons trying to get rid of alcoholism. Similarly on a show of female feticide all sections of the society works together and it resulted in a very exciting increase in the sex ratio at born (SRB).
2. He realized that Television is a very powerful medium in order to bring change on the ground but it has also some limitation as every week you have to change the topic and hence the public attention keep on changing it hampers the last point of impact and hence they have decided to shut down Satyamev Jayte and chosen just one topic to do all the endeavors and that is "**Water**" and decided to work on drought in rural Maharashtra.
3. Maharashtra is experiencing serious droughts since 1972 and its frequency kept on increasing and hence the no. of tankers kept on increasing, no. of drought hit Talukas kept on increasing. We have

researched on the reasons of this increasing drought and found its solution as Decentralized Watershed Management. At the same time when many of the villages reeling under acute shortage of water, some of the villages even in Rain shadow areas by doing Decentralized Watershed Management have sufficient storage of water. When we studied we find that the difference between water sufficient villages and drought hit villages is just ***"People's Participation"***. The Technology of water shed management is "we have to teach running water to walk, walking water to stand and standing water to percolate". In engineering terms "reducing the time signature of water" as water moves under the effect of gravity and follows the slopes and hence if its slows down it will get sufficient time to percolate and hence contribute in raising the water table. Further, Ground water and surface water are related to each other and to solve the problem of surface water, you have to solve the problem of ground water first.

4. Further, for slowing down the time signature of water, it is required to treat the watershed from ridge to valley because making check dam at one place will not solve the problem of water and hence the entire watershed is required to be treated and for treating the entire watershed *People's Participation* is mandatory. But getting peoples together was a big challenge/puzzle. To solve this puzzle we have started a competition named *Satyamev Jayte Water Cop* and the participating unit is Gram Panchayat. Each Gram Panchayat has to create a Gram Sabha and choose 5 persons of them of whom half must be women. We will send them on 4 days training related to watershed management. After getting training they will return to their villages and inspire other villagers. This effort works as a miracle and it became a mammoth peoples campaign saving 550 billion litres of water.
 5. He has proudly mentioned that Paani Foundation has not funded a single penny; this is just with the villagers support and private entities, government entities as well as private individual's donation.
- 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.
