



सत्यमेव जयते

Government Of India



PROCEEDINGS OF
‘18th WATER TALK’ (6th e-Talk)
16th October 2020



National Water Mission,
Department of Water Resources, RD & GR,
Ministry of Jal Shakti,
Government of India

Background Note

“**Water Talk**” is a lecture series of National Water Mission intended to promote dialogue and information sharing among participants of water related topics, with an aim to stimulate awareness, build capacities of stakeholders and encourage people to become active participants in conserving water.

It is based on the premise that sharing of ideas among people will enhance knowledge, ensure consistent dissemination of information and build capacities in better water management. The first Water Talk was held on 22 March 2019 and is being held on third Fridays of every month since then.

The programme also acts as an intellectual platform to transfer knowledge, solve problems, brainstorm and promote teamwork among the participants of the talk. Since it is intended to serve as a gateway of knowledge, best practices and experiences leading to cross learning of new developments, the speakers invited are scientists, academicians, engineers, scientists and activists or dedicated practitioners in the field of water.

The ‘Water Talk’ provides a space to these water experts to share their views and critically analyse the prevalent water-related issues in practice and highlight the importance of water conservation in the contemporary Indian situation. All speakers have been from different walks of life and have presented a variety of perspectives and practical knowledge in their area of expertise. This has given an opportunity to learn and replicate the best water conservation and management practices in the country.

Following Government's restrictions on public gatherings due to COVID-19 pandemic, the water talks are now being organized as e-Water Talk in webinar format since May 2020. NWM has so far organized **18 ‘Water-Talks’** on the range of topics dominating the sector concerns, out of which last 6 talks have been held on virtual platform.

Eighteenth Water talk

Eighteenth Water Talk in this series was held on **16th October 2020** on a virtual platform from 3.00 PM to 5.00 PM. **The Speaker for the 18th Water Talk was Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Hon'ble Union Minister, Jal Shakti.** Shri U.P. Singh, Secretary M/o Jal Shakti; Shri G. Asok Kumar, Additional Secretary and Mission Director, NWM and officials of MJS also attended the webinar. The talk was held on CISCO e-platform with the help of Water Digest, the official media partner for the webinar.

The webinar was witnessed live by 650 participants logged on to the main- e-platform from across the country from various spheres of life and about 2.4 lakh people through Facebook on the 11 social media platforms of various organizations under DoWR, RD & GR. With intent to inculcate good habits in young children, students & teachers from schools across the country were requested to join the Water Talks. Overwhelming responses were received from students of Kendriya Vidyalayas, Navodaya Vidyalayas and Nehru Yuva Kendras who were regularly participating in Water Talks organised by NWM.

Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat , Hon'ble Union Minister, Jal Shakti in his address congratulated the 'Water Talk' initiative of NWM and holding it regularly every to provide a platform for experienced water experts, activists and academicians to discuss and debate on various topics related to the vast subject of water. He added that such open dialogues would also facilitate the designing of future water policies.

Hon'ble Minister remembered how India has the tradition of respecting water and acclaimed the contribution of our forefathers' to many initiatives in the water sector. He alluded to the ancient Indian traditions wherein it was articulated and established by sages and great men of the past, the importance of water, methods to ensure its purity and protection. He lamented that the native sources of knowledge and traditions have been lost and replaced by ideas flowing from the west. According to him, this notion of deeming western ideas as "superior" has compromised our knowledge, critical thinking skills research abilities.

Drawing from his own experiences, Hon'ble Minister stated that there exists a huge gap between the available technology and work done on ground. He stated that there is a wide gap between the techniques & advanced technologies developed by ICAR & agricultural universities etc and the field practices of the local farmers. Initiation of dialogues and conversations would help reconcile this gap and motivate all stakeholders.

He asserted that India receives adequate rainfall and the focus needs to be shifted to managing the available water more efficiently. Adequate measures need to be taken to collect and save every drop of water that falls on the rooftop and into the traditional bodies like ponds, wells and step-wells to recharge underground aquifers.

Priority should also be to maintain the purity and essence of water. As he emphasised the importance of recycling & reusing of water, Hon'ble Minister while recollecting his childhood memories, shared that in olden days people would bathe with a large vessel placed underneath to collect wastewater and reuse it for watering plants etc. It's a misbelief that reusing and recycling of water is a newly developed concept to fight water crisis.

With the growing population and increasing pressures on water resources, the demand for water is going up. Alongside the water losses already occurring through evaporation and in the form of non-harvestable water, our nation hardly manages to save about 10% of the water in entirety. Need is therefore to initiate a public movement or a 'Jan Andolan' towards water conservation. Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi integrated multiple departments and ministries dealing with water to form the "Ministry of Jal Shakti", for integrated water resources management and policies. He added that the benefits of a unified ministry have also enabled the government to develop IEC activities to influence behavioural change in people. Awareness among common people should be created to make them understand the importance of water and the role they can play in conserving water. Hon'ble Prime Minister has persistently underscored the importance of water conservation through his "Mann ki Baat" programme and initiated dialogues with Gram Pradhans through writing personalized letters. His relentless efforts in discussing the subject through multiple mediums has sensitized the masses and actuated their consciousness with respect to water.

Advancing towards the subject of water availability, the Minister cited the example of Israel successfully turning itself into not just a water secure nation, but a water surplus nation through efficient water management. Israel is the world's first country to filter ocean water, desalinate it and transport it within borders and outside through trunk-line. The successful water model of Israel has equipped the country to also supply water to its neighboring countries. Israel's successful mission is inspirational and commendable as is the Israeli people's commitment towards water management. There are thousands of similar examples from our country wherein individuals, communities and certain groups who have accomplished in making their villages water secure through public movements. He continued that these water warriors have also revamped the image and destiny of their villages and the areas surrounding it. Hon'ble minister urged the audience to draw inspiration from these success stories and replicate good practices in their respective areas.

One of the global sustainable development goals is sanitation, ensuring that all people are liberated from open-defecation. India, which had more than 60 crore people defecating in the open five years back, had sparked a revolution by making the country open defecation free within a span of five years under the leadership of the PM. Hon'ble minister shared that leaders of many African nations he had met at the Stockholm Water Week program were motivated and inspired by India's success story.

He said that it took about 30 years for transforming the Thames and Rhine into pristine rivers. This Government has stepped up the efforts to clean up Ganga and assured that it will be cleaner than both Rhine and Thames within the next 5 years. Hon'ble Prime Minister has been the driving force behind the "Clean Ganga" campaign and has actuated the government machinery through persuasion, perspective and guidance. A holistic approach has been adopted by ensuring people's active participation to revive Ganga. He said that the learning and experience gained from this project would be applied on the critical stretches of other rivers identified by the Central Pollution Control Board and also for five major basins of the country. Groundwater is the backbone of the country and forms the main source for the irrigation, drinking water and industrial verticals. 65% of India's water needs are met through groundwater resources.

The advent of Green revolution has transitioned India from a food deficit country to a food surplus country. The credit for this achievement undoubtedly goes to the farmers and agricultural scientists and those who relentlessly worked in the irrigation sector. As agriculture is the largest consumer of water, the over exploitation of groundwater has stressed our underground aquifers, giving rise to critical, semi-critical and over exploited regions in the country. To battle these challenges, the focus is slowly being shifted to demand side management and participatory management. In this direction, the 'Atal Bhujal Yojana' was launched on 25th December 2019 under which 79 districts have been identified as critical. Hon'ble Minister announced that a well-planned movement with support from World Bank has been launched to generate awareness amongst the masses in a bid to make India a water secure nation. He urged for everyone to come together and collaborate with the government to make the initiative successful.

Initiatives like "Jal Shakti Abhiyan" and "Catch the Rain" have awakened and mobilized people into working towards water conservation. The campaign model can be divided into five verticals namely- government machinery, education sector, media and opinion leaders and community efforts. Prominent names from the government, film industry and district collectors have joined hands to motivate people to conserve rainwater and store it in a structure or local water bodies. The Ministry of Jal Shakti has collaborated with the education ministry to amend the curriculum to include activities associated with water and nudge students to be the medium of change in the society. The third vertical is the media industry that also reinforced the importance of water conservation and rainwater harvesting through both print and electronic mediums. He also expressed gratitude to all celebrities, opinion leaders and religious for collaborating with the ministry and inducing behavioral change amongst their followers. Hon'ble Minister concluded his talk by reiterating on the significance of public participation and community efforts for making India a water secure nation.

The talk was followed by a session of questions and answers wherein members from the audience were invited to discuss their queries with the Hon'ble Minister. The webinar had some interesting and unique questions posed by people across the country.

In the end, Shri G. Asok Kumar, Additional Secretary & Mission Director, National Water Mission expressed his gratitude to Hon'ble Minister for delivering the Water Talk. He thanked all participants and urged people to practice rainwater harvesting, save every drop of water falling on the roof and ended with the quote "Ghar ka Paani ghar mein aur khet ka paani khet mein," which is a tagline for "Catch the Rain" campaign.