

Har Ghar Jal

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Importance of water and its conservation for the well being of human beings as well our cohabitants in earth cannot be highlighted enough. The government has been working on water issues on a war footing. It sees management of water in a holistic manner. The Ministry of Jal Shakti, created in 2019, has integrated various departments and ministries dealing with water resources and water supply under one roof, with the aim to assure “availability of potable water for all.”

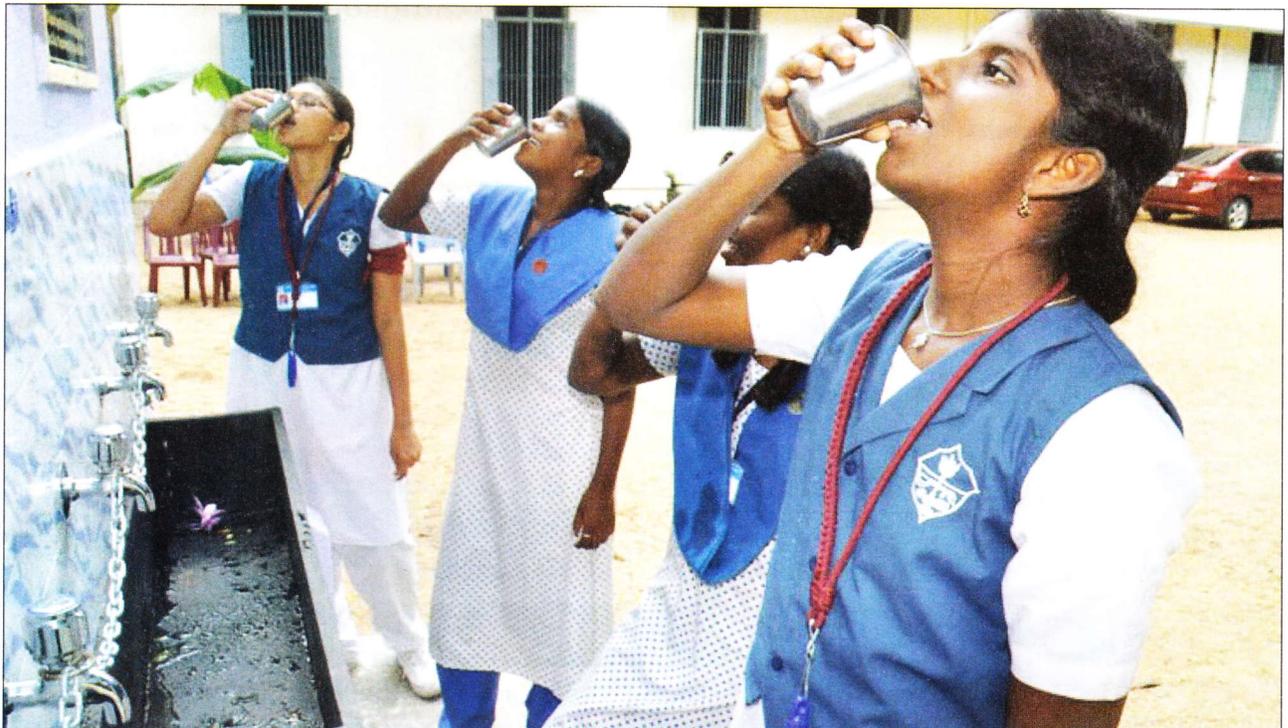
According to a 2018 National Institute for Transforming India, the NITI Aayog report, India is facing the “worst water crisis in its history” which is threatening “millions of lives and livelihoods”. The report paints a gory picture of our water crisis wherein around sixty crore Indians “face high to extreme water stress and about two lakh people die every year due to inadequate access to safe water.” It says that the crisis is only going to get worse and by 2030 the country’s water demand is projected to be twice the available supply. This may further create severe water scarcity for crores of people and may lead to an approximate loss of 6 percent in its GDP point then.

India has more than 18 percent of the world’s population but it only has four percent of world’s renewable water resources of which farmers consume almost 90 percent of the available groundwater.

The National Sample Survey Office’s (NSSO)

76th round, July-December 2018, informs that one in every five (21.4 percent) households in India has piped drinking water connections. In rural India, just 11.3 percent households receive potable water directly at homes whereas about 42.9 percent of the households in the rural areas use hand pump as the principal source of drinking water. In urban India, 40.9 percent households receive piped water into dwelling as the principal source of drinking water.

Importance of water and its conservation for the well being of human beings as well our cohabitants in earth cannot be highlighted enough. Mentioned as one of the five elements in vedic literature, water is ‘aapah’ in Sanskrit. As is written in the Rigveda, an ancient Hindu book, “May the water available from the skies as rain, the water available in the culverts/canals, water flowing in streams and rivers and the water flowing towards the ocean be instrumental in increasing my happiness.” There are hymns praising water and



praying for it. Human civilizations came up at river banks, this further emphasises the importance of water and the need of it for furtherance of human progress on earth.

All the other great religions of the world including Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism stress on the importance of water. According to Islam, water belongs equally to all and falls down as God's mercy as rain leading to giving new life to dead land. Sikhism stresses on water being a community resource and directs to respect water, earth and wood for God is found in these elements. Also, all these great religions have long list of rituals associated with water.

Water and Government Initiatives

The Government has been working on water issues on a war footing. It sees management of water in a holistic manner. The government has created a new ministry—the Ministry of Jal Shakti in 2019, in the beginning of its second term, to integrate various departments and ministries dealing with water resources and water supply under one roof. The key goal of the newly created ministry is to assure “availability of potable water for all.” Accordingly, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi announced Jal Jeevan Mission-Har Ghar Jal from Delhi's Red Fort on 15th August 2019. The scheme promises piped water in every rural household by 2024 and aims to provide 55 litre per capita per day drinking water, as prescribed, regularly, to every household through a functional household tap.

Emphasising on the importance of water for all citizens, Shri Modi said,

“It is over 70 years since Independence. All governments have done a lot of work in their own way. Every government, irrespective of the party, be it the central or the state, has tried in its own way. But still it is a fact that today almost half of the houses in India do not have drinking water. People have to struggle to get drinking water. Mothers and sisters have to travel 2, 3, 5 km carrying the load of water on their heads. A large part of their lives is spent in struggling for water. Therefore, this government has decided to emphasise upon a special task and that is - how to ensure availability of water in every house.”

In the same speech Shri Modi announced the Jal Jeevan Mission saying, “how does every house

get water, pure drinking water? And so I declare from the Red Fort today that in the days to come, we will take forward the ‘Jal-Jeevan’ Mission.”

He said, the mission will be implemented in partnership of Central and the State Governments and more than 3.5 Lakh Crores rupees will be spent on this mission in the coming years. Also, its aim is to provide functional household tap connection to every household by 2024.

In the speech, Shri Modi also remembered the words of Saint Thiruvalluvar who had said *NeerIndri Amiyadhu Ulganein* which means “if water starts disappearing, then nature's processes get disrupted and eventually come to an end. This initiates the process of total destruction.”

The Government of India understands that management of water resource is of highest importance for India as it is rising to claim its place in world's economy and its importance for uninterrupted economic advancement can never be highlighted enough. According to the Jal Shakti Ministry's data, by 2030 Indian industries will be using four times more water than they use today, hence it is pertinent that the country takes its water management issue seriously.

Moving forward, the government made an outlay of 3.60 Lakh Crore rupees for this mission with Central share of 2.08 Lakh Crore rupees and the states will bear 1.52 Lakh Crore rupees of the total budget announcement for the scheme. According to Jal Shakti Ministry, a country wide revalidation exercise of households and status of tap water supply was taken up and it was found that as on 1st April 2019 of 18.93 Crore rural households in the country, 3.23 Crore households have tap connections and the rest 15.70 Crore households will be provided with tap connections.

Salient or Key Features of the Mission

In a report published on the occasion of completion of one year of the Jal Shakti Ministry it has highlighted important features of the mission as:

- a) Emphasis is on ‘service delivery’ rather creating infrastructure; Gram Panchayat and/or its subcommittee, i.e. Village Water & Sanitation Committee (VWSC) / Paani Samiti or user group to plan, implement, manage, operate and maintain their own water supply system.

- b) SHGs/community-based organisations/NGOs involved as Implementation Support Agencies to enhance community's capacity to implement the mission making JJM, truly a 'people's movement'.
- c) Safe water to be ensured in water quality affected areas on priority. Other priority areas are water scarce areas, aspirational districts, SC/ST majority villages/habitations, villages under Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) and PVTG habitations.
- d) Villagers to be skilled as masons, plumbers, electricians, fitters, etc. so as to ensure long-term maintenance of water supply systems.
- e) In order to instill the 'sense of ownership' among the community, communities to contribute five percent of the capital cost in cash/kind /labour in villages of hilly and forested areas/NE and Himalayan States and villages having more than fifty per cent SC and/or ST population; for other areas, the community contribution is ten percent of the capital cost.
- f) GPs/ VWSCs/Paani Samitis to be provided ten percent of the 'in-village infrastructure' cost as performance incentive after completion of the scheme and successful demonstration of O&M.
- g) Strengthening and setting-up of water quality testing laboratories at State, district and block levels to monitor quality of water supply and open those to public.
- h) Five persons, preferably women, in every village to be trained to check quality of water supply using simple ready-to-use test kits.
- i) Public Financial Management System is mandatory to be used for all financial transactions to ensure transparency as well as tracking of funds.
- j) Ministry of Jal Shakti has set up Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) for monitoring of physical and financial progress and the same is linked with dash board.
- k) Rashtriya Jal Jeevan Kosh (RJJK) has been set up to mobilise and accept contributions / donations from various sources towards achieving the goal of JJM.

The same report also informs about the progress the mission has made since its inception.

According to it, in 2019-20, Rs. 10,000.66 Crore was provided and during 2020-21, provision of Rs. 23,500 Crore has been made. And, it was in 2019-20 that 84.84 Lakh households were provided with tap connections. The report further informs that daily one lakh families are being given tap connections. Further, in 2019-20, 71 lakh people in Arsenic contaminated areas and 5.3 lakh people in Fluoride contaminated areas, were provided with safe drinking water.

Another highlight of this report is that as a futuristic approach states are to pilot 'Sensor based IoT solution' to monitor regularity of water supply, quantity and quality of water. This would help enhance decision making and performance of water supply utilities.

Mission Under Lockdown

It is like a cliché to say "the show must go on." Following this maxim, the government has not let the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown to hamper the Jal Jeevan Mission. According to the Ministry of Jal Shakti, in the current year, so far the Central Government has made 8050 Crore rupees available to the states for implementation of the mission. In the first quarter of 2020-21, 19 lakh tap connections have been provided in villages across the country. This has been made possible because of concerted efforts of the states despite adverse working conditions due to COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the ministry, during the lockdown months, National Jal Jeevan Mission of the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation is constantly interacting with States/UTs through Video Conferencing to finalise the roadmap as well as to review the progress of implementation. During this period, the Annual Action Plans of States to provide household tap connections during 2020-21 was approved with a focus on monthly physical and expenditure plan.

Further, the National Jal Jeevan Mission is working closely with the States to accomplish the task i.e. 'Har Ghar Jal' in mission mode and through time-bound manner. The states are laying emphasis on retrofitting and augmentation of existing water supply schemes to provide household tap connections to the remaining households of the villages belonging to poor and marginalized people. The states have been asked

to start this work in 'campaign mode' as this would provide household tap connections within minimum possible time since the basic infrastructure is already in place and it is the household connections which needs to be given. The states have not only prepared the roadmap to provide household connections for this year but also, a detailed plan has been put in place for complete coverage of all the villages by setting a target for themselves.

When the whole country is fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, the Central Government is making all efforts for 'provision of safe drinking water in rural areas' by providing tap connections in rural households, so that people can get water in their premises so as to avoid gathering at public stand-posts to fetch water and this has also helped provide employment to locals as well as the returnees, which in turn boosts rural economy.

The ministry, following the principles of Mahatma Gandhi ji's 'Gram Swaraj', under Jal Jeevan Mission aims to involve the local village community/Gram Panchayats or sub-committee i.e. Village Water and Sanitation Committee/Paani Samiti/user groups, etc. This involvement having ten to fifteen members has fifty percent women to be involved in planning, implementation, management, operation and maintenance of water supply systems to ensure long-term sustainability to achieve drinking water security.

The mission also aims to ensure a collective effort engaging citizens of the country to achieve the Prime Minister's vision of ensuring potable water to every rural household i.e. to make Jal Jeevan Mission, a 'Jan Andolan'- a people's movement as rightly suggested by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in his 15th August 2019 speech from the Red Fort when he had said, "We are not to get tired in our efforts, nor shall we halt or hesitate in moving ahead. This campaign on Water conservation should not just remain a government initiative. It should become a people's movement like our Swacchh Bharat Abhiyan. We have to carry forward this movement with the help of common man's ideals, aspirations and efforts."

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Ways to save water every day

- Turn off the tap during washing your hands
- Reuse greywater for gardening
- Plant trees frequently
- Switch to twin-pit toilet technology that uses less water

Act before it's too late