

In Extremis: The depleting water-resources of India

Anyone who has resided in Chennai or has been there for a considerable span of time must have been around or crossed Adyar which is a major stream transiting the city. It's actually appalling that it is called a 'river' even after it has been reduced to nothing more than a stream of black fetid water. The river that was once known for its beauty, gives out unbearable stench today. A plethora of rivers in India share similar desolate stories. We are collectively killing the water-bodies of India, which are our lifelines and what our civilization thrives upon. Our ignorance and malpractices are pushing us towards a dystopia where we would not have a drop of clean water for survival. Bengaluru has lost almost 79% of its water bodies in the past forty years. The mighty Yamuna, which is considered to be sacred by us, is crippled by unchecked discharges and overflows with toxic froth of industrial wastes. By the year 2030, the demand for water will be twice as its supply and currently, no less than 600 million Indians lack access to safe water for drinking. It's high time that we realized the gravity of the situation. We are already in dire straits and if we don't act now then our future looks bleak.

But it's probably true that there is nothing human beings can't achieve. If we take a serious oath of saving our lifelines, we still have chances of doing so. But first, there needs to be a covenant amongst all levels of the society on this issue. For that to happen, there is a necessity of making everyone aware of the current state of affairs and the imminent danger. In fact, there are already existing exemplars that we can follow to revive our water bodies. Like many of the large cities of India, Seoul was established along one of the major rivers of Korea known as Han. During the rapid growth of the country, the river was the victim of atrocious levels of pollution and it is said that it used to be so filthy that the banks of used to be lined up with dead fishes. Due to booming industries and ignorant and impoverished population, the river was used as an outlet for every sort of discharges which eventually befouled the river tremendously. But, in the year 1982, the government launched an ambitious project of \$470 million to bring the river back to life and with active involvement of the citizens of the city, the mission was a huge success.

Back at home, a number of environmental paladins are doing their bits to preserve and resuscitate the sources of water. Ramveer Tanwar, who is an engineer from Greater Noida took it upon himself to save the lakes of the nearby villages and initiated his conservation project named Jal Chaupal. With the help of the villagers, he started saving the lakes by

cleaning them up and shielding them against further contamination in the year 2014. Currently, the project has an expanse of more than 50 villages in the area. Lawyer and environmental activist Afroz Shah, who came to limelight after the highly successful Versova beach cleanup in Mumbai, didn't really halt there and has recently embarked into a new journey of reviving the Mithi river with the assistance of volunteers comprising hugely of the local slum-dwellers. If we start seeking, we will surely come across numerous such examples of determination and heroism.

If we want, we can and if we can we have to take measures to reverse the consequences of our wrongdoings, for the sake of the survival our future generations. We are alive because of the resources that nature gives us and as human beings, it's our responsibility to protect them and keep them pristine.

By
Agnimitra Das
PGDM No. 18129