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NOTHING STRENGTHENS AUTHORITY AS
MUCH AS SILENCE

It was the month October, the farmers were busy harvesting their crops. A small village, Kunda in Chhattisgarh, is primarily an agricultural society. With their relatively small land-holding, the farmers are able to earn just sufficient to meet yearly expenses.

The government released a circular, mandating every farmers to get themselves registered to avail the benefits of Minimum support Price (MSP). All the farmers went to village level authority for registration.

It was clearly mentioned in the circular that the registration would be free for all.

Despite this, realizing his monopolistic position and the helplessness of the farmers, the Mandi (Village Haat) authority charged them two hundred rupees each.

Even after acknowledging the corruption, the farmers silenced themselves. They had to unwillingly pay the bribe. One after the other, the farmers were getting registered.

Shyam, a young 20-year old farmer refused to pay the bribe. He showed the circular to the officer. The mandi officer tried to silence his voice by refusing to register his name. Shyam, stood firm to his position. He convinced other farmers to raise collective voice.

His relentless effort, and fearless voice

against corruption brought justice for all.
The corrupt officer was suspended and bribe
money returned to all farmers.

Such stories are widely heard throughout
the country. But it needs to be realised that
not always, a shyam comes forward. Majority
of the time silence prevails.

If you can't help yourself, nobody will
help you. Remaining silent to injustice, is
itself unjust. In this essay, we will find,
how being silent cost heavily? How important
it is to speak up?

Silent Spectators

The Indian subcontinent has a long
history of being invaded. The invaders march
in, plunder, loot, subordinate the subjects and

rule. The subject often could do nothing but remain a silent spectators.

The European invasion and subsequent establishment of British Empire in India is one such story. The Britishers subdued the masses. No one could dare to raise voice against the colonial masters, those who did, met the same fate.

The Indians were subjected to unfair, inordinate taxation and trade policies. The East India Company accrued massive profits and drained wealth from India.

The revolt of 1857, was an attempt to raise collective voice and uproot the unjust rulers. But the revolt was brutally suppressed. Many other peasant revolts and local revolts

were similarly silenced.

Even after independence, the 'ruling' attitude of many authority could not be transformed to 'service' orientation. Thus the colonial legacy followed.

The governance in India is beset by rampant corruption. For example, the bribe that is offered to traffic personnel. In many such cases instead of raising voice against it, people have rather internalised it.

A large number of corruption cases arise such as the recent bridge collapse in Bihar. Many such bridges collapsed and corruption washed away with drain.

People develop an escapist attitude with time. Why should I bother in, If I am not

directly affected? Affects every citizen. But, it does not hold true. Environmental degradation, large scale deforestation, burning forest etc directly affects people, but such cases does not get due recognition.

In a free market economy, capitalists try to maximize profit. The profit is accrued by the elite few and the middle class employed by them. The larger bottom strata is at the receiving end. They, however, internalise, their economic status does not allow them to raise voice.

This has led to rampant poverty, proliferation of dilapidated slums, unemployment and other socio-economic problems. Such issues are further reaped by opportunists like mafias and terror organisation such as ISIS to destabilise the

national security and public order.

A similar case of apathetic attitude of people and authority can be seen in dealing with disasters. For instance, Bihar, Mumbai face flood flooding almost every year. However, people have accepted it as a yearly affair.

Being Loud and clear

Having seen the disasters being spectators can create, it is essential to understand if speaking up helps. There is plenty of inspiration to take from the freedom struggle.

The very formation of the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885 was to raise collective demands. INC intended to reach the authorities with the demands of common man.

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Mahatma Gandhi believed remaining silent against injustice is cowardness. His tool of 'satyagraha' compelled the British authorities to correct themselves. For e.g. Champaran satyagraha

It was the relentless efforts of Ishwarchand Vidyasagar that culminated into Hindu Widow Remarriage Act. Similarly, the boisterous raised against the authority's conduct by Bhagat Singh, Shubhash Chandra Bose, Ashtaqullah Khan and others.

Such voices cannot be silenced easily. 'One voice wakes up others, to together be loud and clear'. These efforts culminated into freedom for the country.

In the post independent India, also such

collective and corrective action continued. The JP movement of 1970s against corruption, the backward caste movement in the late 1980s are few examples.

More recently, 'India against corruption' movement led by Anna Hazare, broke the authoritative inertia. The mass movement transformed the perception towards corruption culminating into the Lokpal and Lokayukta Acts.

It was also the result of voices raised against the justice delivery system that brought reforms in judiciary. It led to introduction of e-courts, National Judicial Data Grid etc. Many Public Interest Litigations (PILs) have helped reforming criminal justice system e.g. Section 377 and Section 497 of IPC.

Justice not confined to political sphere but also environmental justice. People's movement such as Chipko movement, Appiko movement and Nazimada Bachao Andolan have led to protection of environment. More recently, the protests against deforestation at Asray Forest Area in Mumbai, led to withdrawal of project.

Speak Up and Stand By

In a democracy, such as ours, being silent against wrong-doing would be equivalent to failing as a citizen. Collective voice helps to 'build better'. Such a correcting instance, is essential for developing countries like ours.

As the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi preached — 'Be the change you want to see in the world. Anything cannot

be allowed to continue just because it has been so. Be it corruption, politics - police - bureaucracy and crime nexus or maladministration it can be changed.

This moral rotteness cannot be allowed to travel generation by generation. The young minds should be shaped for a 'New India'. The 'New India' that is tolerant to plural ideas but intolerant to injustice.

The lesson we must imbibe is -

"There's been an undeniable truth,
Since before we even existed;
Nothing even remains the same,
Change cannot be resisted."

Silence is temporary but the desire for change is permanent. If all Indians take one

step forward, India would be ahead by
130 crore steps.

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Section - B

CHALLENGES OF WATER MANAGEMENT IN 21st CENTURY INDIA

It was the month of June, 2019, three friends Yash, Maya and Ali were travelling to Chennai on Chennai Express. Yash, while reading newspaper came across the headline - "Chennai witnessing worst water crisis"

Yash - The water scarcity at Chennai has worsened this year.

Maya - In 2015, when we were in Chennai, it witnessed catastrophic flooding and now consecutive drought years.

Ali - Exactly! The undulating climatic pattern is the manifestation of the climate change we have entered into.

Yash - Why can't we store water when it is in excess to use during lean period?

Maya - Actually, we can. By rainwater management infrastructure, it can be done. We, however failed to build the same.

Ali - We should make people aware about such technology. Maya, can we use our college's Unnat Bharat Abhiyan group for it?

Maya - Excellent idea, Ali! I should make the plan on our Whatsapp group for this week.

Ali and Yash - Great!

The three friends, continued their journey with their new found zeal. Their conversation however exposed the paradox the country is living in today. The news of

Flash flooding and drought have become normal.

These are pertinent challenges with regard to water management in India. In this essay we will dwell into the current water crisis, its consequences and remedies to look forward.

The Current Crisis

Nearly 70% of the earth's surface is covered by water. This has always created a perception of abundant water resource.

However, it is certainly false perception.

With around 98% water being saline (seawater), only 2% comprises freshwater. Majority of

this freshwater being trapped in glaciers, ice-caps etc, only 0.5% is available fresh water.

The unprecedented growth of industries, urbanisation etc. in 21st century have aggravated the water scarcity. The per capita annual availability of water in India declined from nearly 5100 cubic meter in 1951 to around 1500 cubic meter in 2015.

In India, post Green revolution and subsequent canal irrigation increased water usage, beyond its recovery capacity. Recent NITI Aayog report depicted severe ground-water scarcity in 21 major Indian cities.

The changing nature of monsoon rains further deteriorates the condition. It has led to erosion of drinkable water sources in many parts of the country.

Water being the fundamental necessity spills over its crisis on every other sector. Plethora of issues are associated with the deteriorated water availability.

Museum of Miseries

Agriculture employs nearly half of Indian population. As per Central Water Commission, nearly 85% of total water consumed is meant for agricultural activities. India has one of the worst water to crop ratio. It is leading to virtual export of water from India.

The absolute neglect of agro-climatic conditions and cropping pattern is adding to the crisis. Water scarce region are also cultivating succ, sugarcane like crops due to the support

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price accorded to it.

Another major problem with regard to water in India is the social perception. Water is taken 'for granted'. Since a price is not attached to it, it is rampanly exploited. For instance, subsidised electricity, pumps etc have led to unfettered use of groundwater in agriculture in India.

Over extraction of water leads to pollution in ground water. Heavy metals and other toxic substances dissolve in it. Fluorine contamination leads to skeletal fluorosis.

Even Uranium contamination has been detected from many locations across India including Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand region.

Water pollution is not restricted to groundwater. As per Central Water Commission

research, India's 42 ivers have atleast two toxic metals beyond permissible limits. Visuals of foaming in Delhi's Yamuna stretch, pollution in Ganga river is very well known.

Mumbai's Methi river have been reduced to a drain due to discharge of untreated waste of the city. Every major city have done same thing to its major water source.

Water management also holds importance in the context of cross-border rivers. China's large dam's on Tsang Po (Brahmaputra), Indian projects Kudare Kishanganga on Jhelum and Rattle on Chenab river raises serious management challenges.

These reservoirs also lead to disasters. For example, Kerala floods in 2018 was

primarily due to mis-management of dams.

Such disasters affects the socio-economic conditions of people severely.

The disasters can also be attributed to rampant disruption of wetlands. Wetlands are pristine source of water for varied activities and for sustaining biodiversity. Thus polluting wetlands affects the such flora and fauna and even the migratory birds.

The contamination of aquatic system has magnifying effect and affects health of all.

Minamata disease caused by Mercury, and Itai-Itai disease caused by Cadmium in water are the worst examples.

The Silver Lining

Robert Frost says —

"Two roads diverged in a wood and I... I took the one less travelled by, and that has made all the difference."

If it has to be started someday, it is today. Water crisis have gone from bad to worse. The need is to adopt an all round approach to prevent further worsening.

National Clean Ganga Mission was adopted with this aim. Cluster based management was followed. Both cleaning and preventive measures were taken collectively.

River-water linkages are envisaged to tackle dual burden of floods and droughts. Ken-Betwa interlinking project and

Kosi-Mechi project in Bihar are at their advanced stages.

At local level integrated watershed development is undertaken. Creating durable assets using MGNREGS labour work is envisaged. Model villages like Piplantasi which transformed from barren land to nearly three lakh trees have become international case-study at Denmark.

Waste-water can be another potential source of water. Scientific wastewater management using siltation, slow sand filter, coagulation and flocculation techniques can be game-changer. It is high time to focus on use, reuse and reduce, e.g. Singapore model

Newer avenues of water source like Israel's technology of converting water from air, sewage reverse osmosis can be further assessed.

The changing rainfall pattern makes rainwater harvesting system, a must. Traditional water storage systems like Ahar Pynes of Bihar, Thalerg of Rajasthan and Tanks of Hyderabad needs to be promoted. Telangana's Mission Kakshiga is one such step in this direction.

By using wisdom even floods can turn to fortune. For example Delhi's Yamuna flood plain groundwater recharge plan. But it must be accompanied by increased efficiency. "Per drop, more crop" should be the motto of research or agriculture.

Creating water resilient crops should be explored. Adoption of micro-irrigation techniques like drip and sprinkler irrigation needs further impetus.

Government's Jal Teenan Mission to increase citizen participation in water management is much anticipated step. The Jal Shakti Mission to ensure functional tap to every household must be accompanied by water management education for all.

While reading the newspaper, Yash came across a quote, which is very pertinent in this situation. It reads -

"Woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep."

The world together needs to adopt the attitude of falling down seven times and standing up eight. Water crisis is global challenge and world needs to come together and uphold ideals of "Yaadhum Dore, Yaavaaram kelim" i.e. "To us, all towns are one, all humans our kin"