

JAL BHAGIRATHI
FOUNDATION

Harvesting Dreams



The Asia Foundation



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1

ANCIENT
SOCIAL
HERITAGE

Emerging trends

The fountainhead of all contemporary social development initiatives, pro-poor campaigns, and related policy and advocacy endeavours has deep-rooted linkages with the predominant cultural doctrine of Indian society



Pure water is the best of gifts that man to man can bring

The existing social commitments, accountability, and sensitivity within Indian society towards creating equal opportunities for all are not recent phenomena. The fountainhead of all contemporary social development endeavours has deep-rooted linkage with predominant socio-cultural doctrine of Indian society. There have been numerous examples like Rajender Singh of Tarun Bharat Sangh, who along with three friends quit their respective professions during the mid 1980's and decided to move towards the isolated and inaccessible

villages of Rajasthan. The single binding factor amongst these four spirited individuals was their passion to make their existence more meaningful by serving humanity without yearning for any personal gains. The essence of such a commitment towards societal development can be traced to the values disseminated by the Bhagwad Gita on *karmyog* (action and work ethics) during the Vedic period. These are still relevant and continue to inspire people today. The core values within the society since the Vedic period have continued to develop and with each



passing phase, the contribution of ancient civilizations, prudent kings and emperors, spiritual teachings, folktales and saints has further strengthened the fundamental nature of social responsibility and action.

During the Mauryan period in fourth century BC, the accountability of the state towards the welfare of its people was instituted. This approach was later recognized as one of the effective forms of governance. During the latter half of Ashoka's reign as emperor, Buddhism was popularized as the *dharma* (duty), which consisted of basic virtuous teachings easily practiced by humans regardless of social origins. He proclaimed, "All people are my children and just as I desire for my children that they should obtain welfare and happiness both in this world and the next, the same do I desire for all people..." and while



Rajender Singh of TBS along with three friends quit their respective professions during the mid 1980's and decided to move towards the isolated and inaccessible villages of Rajasthan

referring to his officers in rural areas, he wrote, "Just as one entrusts one's child to an experienced nurse, and is confident that the experienced nurse is able to care for the child satisfactorily, so my *rajukas* (officers) have been appointed for the welfare and happiness of the country people...". Ashoka attempted to impact the mind of his people by giving extreme importance to human dignity through the concept of *dharma* (duty). He considered no work more important than acting for the welfare and good of all. Ashoka made meaningful contribution to the development of a

more spiritually based political, economic and social system for good governance, which has today become a source of learning.

Interestingly, during the ancient period, apart from the kings and spiritual codes of belief, folktales too were tools for propagating values, ethics and mores essential for nurturing a constructive society. These folktales came in two collections of stories – *Jataka* and the *Panchatantra*. The *Jataka* tales were related with an incident in the life of the Buddha, illustrated with a story from one of his previous lives. In this



Till taught by pain, Men really know not what good water's worth; If you had been in Turkey or in Spain, Or in the desert heard the camel's bell, You'd wish yourself where Truth is—in a well





Ashoka made meaningful contributions to the development of a more spiritually based political, economic and social system for good governance, which today has become a source of learning



Water, water, everywhere, And all the boards did shrink; Water, water, everywhere, Nor any drop to drink

way, the law of karma (or the consequences of actions) was shared with the readers. The *Panchatantra* – a collection of fables - became prominent during the Gupta period. *Panchatantra* means “five formulas” and was divided into five sections of stories – “Loss of Friends,” “Winning of Friends,” “Crows and Owls,” “Loss of Gains,” and “Ill-considered Action.” In these stories, animals and birds play the part of king’s ministers and common men. These animal stories help inculcate moral values among children and are still very popular in India. The values of ancient India inspired subsequent generations towards social commitment and appropriate actions. The conceptual foundation of a dedicated and

perceptive society was laid during this period.

After the decline of the Gupta Dynasty, Harshavardhan of the Pushyabhuti line from Sthanvisvara made a successful attempt to build an empire based on the values of benevolence and altruism. His efforts were directed towards making resource-rich people accountable and receptive towards the disadvantaged sections of the society. To motivate others he himself instituted working examples. A large portion of his treasure was spent on works of public welfare. Every five years he distributed all his wealth amongst the people, especially the disadvantaged and deprived sections of the society. Harshvardhan’s philanthropic approach of

governance remains not only a symbol of a responsive and sensitive state imparting equal importance to social, economic and political requirements, but also an approach for motivating people to get involved in self-sacrificing work.

With times, the efforts and arrangements to integrate and address issues of social betterment also changed proportionately. During the Chola rule, the concept of the formation of village republics (each village was administered by the villagers themselves) was highly favoured. For this purpose, a village assembly was formed, and authority vested in this assembly. The general assemblies included most of the local residents and were of three categories: the *ur* consisted of tax paying residents of an ordinary village; the *sabha* was restricted to the Brahmins of the



These evolving mechanisms proved to be the prototype of today's much sought after governance system.

After the death of Harshavardhan there was a lack of central and sustained leadership in the country. During the same period a devotional



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village or else was found exclusively in villages gifted to Brahmins; and finally, the *nagaram* was found more commonly in trade centres. Such an arrangement provided opportunities to the masses to self-assess their worries and work out plausible remedies to transform their existence. Changing the state's priorities towards people-centric governance and popularizing decentralized functional systems in northern and southern India respectively, reiterated the importance of upholding peoples' priorities, requirements and involvement in self governance.

(Bhakti) movement emerged in Tamil Nadu which later had spread all over the country. The Bhakti movement was popularised by lower-caste Hindu saints while Sufi mysticism by Muslim saints in medieval India. Kabir Das (Kabir is Arabic for "great", while Das is Sanskrit for "slave" or "servant") toiled hard to reinforce social ethics and equity within the society. His preaching had strong overtones of day to day incidences moulded as core values mainly to disseminate ways of becoming a responsible and receptive human being. The attempt to transform the



Water is the mother of the vine, The nurse and fountain of fecundity, The adorer and refresher of the world





entity, existence and involvement of women was of vital importance. This issue continues to be highly contextual to the present time and is still being addressed. The contribution of saints helped in establishing and propagating values in the growth and maturity of the society. Spiritual morals were utilized to save the society from disintegrating. In the process, a unique form of social control mechanism was developed, which has today become one of the guiding principles of any civil society initiative.

More often than not, social and economic needs (as arising from geographic, climatic or living conditions) became the primary impetus for the kings to take up works that administered



The contribution of saints helped in establishing and propagating values in the growth and maturity of society. Spiritual morals were utilized to save the society from disintegrating



The rivers are our brothers. They quench our thirst. They carry our canoes and feed our children

society was further supplemented by the efforts of Jnanesvara, Namdev, Eknath, Tukaram, Ramdas, Chandidas, Chaitanya, Ramananda, Tulsidas, Surdas and Farid. Similarly, Guru Nanak Dev not only popularised Sikhism, but also guided society towards a new direction by addressing its ills and proposing appropriate alternatives. Nanak encouraged “community existence” as the basic unit for the evolution of the society. He strongly criticized all those customs that became an impediment in accomplishing the desired outcome. He was against *sati* and promoted equal opportunities for women because he firmly believed that for the society to grow and develop into a conscious

societal advancement. Hence numerous innovations in water-management techniques were carried out all across the country. Under the Sultanate era in Delhi, Sultan Iltutmish and his nobles got large water tanks and *baolis* (step wells) built which enabled people to meet their daily requirements. The old waterworks of Burhanpur town, situated on the banks of river Tapti in Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh, is one of the glorious reminders of Mughal engineering skills. Abdul Rahim Khan had conceived the project with the help of Persian geologist Tabukutul Arz. Likewise, we have other historical evidence wherein the heads of states created water marvels in their kingdom for



making their people water secure and prosperous. Rana Raj Singh II, ruler of Mewar, was known for being instrumental in building the Jai Samand and Raj Samand Lake near Udaipur. Similarly, Maharaja Jaswant Singh II of Jodhpur gave immense emphasis to the water supply scheme in Jodhpur when Kayalana was constructed during the famine year. Ranisar and Balsamand bunds were raised, and long canals were constructed to feed the city tanks. A British engineer – Holmes, designed the Kayalana aqueduct to bring water to Baiji-ka-talab. Maharaja Jaswant Singh II was also responsible for introducing pipe-water supply to Jodhpur. The water harvesting initiatives are just one case in point to exemplify the state’s accountability towards addressing the needs of immediate concerns and to make people responsible in the



The strategy proposed during that period continues to assist the technological, social and even political management innovations being deployed today to address problems concerning natural resources, health, education and political empowerment of people at the grassroots level

process by making them liable towards the management and upkeep of assets. The strategy proposed during that period continues to assist the technological, social and even political management innovations being deployed today to address problems concerning natural resources, health, education and political empowerment of people at the grassroots.

In ancient and medieval India, the social and spiritual value systems based on Vedic and

contemporary discourses guided all societal development efforts. And the contribution by different segments of society helped in creating a favourable platform for advocating equal opportunities for all. Those experiences are still being referred to and adopted in the context of the present nation building processes and for enhancing the effectiveness of civil society institutions.



If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water



2

PROGRESSIVE SOCIAL RESTRUCTURING PERIOD

Emerging trends

Eighteenth century India saw the stagnation of earlier socio-cultural and religious reforms whereas the neutrality of the colonial rulers in social and religious matters prompted a few progressive and socially conscious persons to instigate change



Rain is grace;
rain is the sky
condescending
to the earth;
without rain,
there would be
no life

Nineteenth and twentieth centuries were a crucial period for the Indian society as it witnessed societal transformations through social, cultural, religious and political adaptation. The state of stagnation and decadence of the eighteenth century and the neutrality of the colonial rule in social and religious matters prompted a few progressive and socially conscious people to revive the process of transformation. Their approach emphasized decentralizing the change process through the extensive involvement of the people. This period

is a watershed for the subsequent development of voluntary work in the country.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy, regarded as the “Father of Modern India”, initiated the social restructuring of Indian society by mainly addressing the distressed condition of Hindu women. His persuasive campaigns centred on the abolition of sati, termination of child marriage and equal opportunities for female education. The campaign’s modus operandi was to transform peoples’ opinion through propaganda (carried out through his widespread and far reaching

writings) leading to agitation followed by impacting the government’s viewpoint through meetings and petitions. He was the first of the reformers to agitate, organize and succeed. His belief in the potential of a sensitized community both distressed and concerned, to reorganise around a problem and to pressurize the state for an amiable solution provided a new approach in addressing issues of concern. His strategy helped people recognize the need for integrating the affected population with the process of change to ensure its sustenance and effective returns. The all-inclusive strategy has today become all the more relevant in addressing local, regional, national and global issues.

The change process during that period was under the constant influence of individuals, groups or institutions demanding fundamental

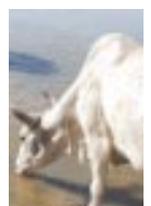


Raja Ram Mohan Roy regarded as the “Father of Modern India”, initiated the social restructuring of Indian society by mainly addressing the distressed condition of Hindu women

change in either the existing social and institutional structures or in their relationships with the society. However few radical and revolutionary people like Jotiba Govind Phule believed in tangible and concrete endeavours rather than being merely theoretical in order to influence the society. With the support of his organization – Satyasodhak Samaj – he started a school for girls and the children of low caste groups, and a fondling home for widow’s children to ascertain the learnings with a larger audience. He went a step further to Raja Ram Mohan Roy’s

strategy of inducing change within the society. With the emergence of a new social reform order in the late nineteenth century, numerous regional groups were provided the required impetus to address local issues. R Venkata Ratnam Naidu (1862-1939) of the Madras province started the “social purity movement” to combat the *devdasi* system prevalent in the region. Hence, the strategy adopted by Roy and Phule had started to influence many others in the country.

Meanwhile, teachings from the Upanishads – “a universal and practical doctrine which was to



In several million years, nothing would grow in beauty if not surrounded by water



With the emergence of a new social reform order in the late nineteenth century, numerous regional groups were provided the required impetus to address local issues



Water has no taste, no color, no odor; it cannot be defined, Not necessary to life, but rather life itself. It fills us with a gratification that exceeds the delight of our senses

be carried into everyday life, city life, the country life, the home life of every nation” remained a source of inspiration for many progressive thinkers. Narendranath Datta, later known as Vivekananda, was one of them. He was of the opinion that in order to regenerate India, it was of utmost importance to empower the masses through education, secure livelihood and a responsive social security net. The issues identified by him still remain areas of major concern and evoke a substantial response in the contemporary period.

The return of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, or Bapu, to India in 1914 and his subsequent involvement with the freedom struggle enhanced

its pace, outreach, visibility and impact, equipping it with a new technique – *satyagraha* - to fight for political and social injustice. Bapu pointed out - “*Satyagraha* is like a banyan tree with innumerable branches. Civil disobedience is one such branch, *satya* (truth) and *ahimsa* (non-violence) together make the parent trunk from which all innumerable branches shoot out.” He firmly believed in the politicization of the masses for a widespread impact of the political, social and economic struggle. He led and motivated millions of Indians to participate in the Indian revolution.

Bapu introduced the concept of self-sufficient and self-reliant villages functioning as Republics.

He believed that every Indian village should have a strong and an efficient participatory democracy, endowed with all the essential and regulatory powers that enable it to function as a government in the true sense of the term. He further suggested that only those powers and functions should be transferred to the government that cannot be effectively discharged at the local level. His concept of the Village Republic proposed a pyramidic form of governance with a broad and strong base at the micro level and a gradually narrowing tip signifying delegation only of essential functions. This is what Gandhi meant by “building from below”. On the other hand, he laid great emphasis on creating opportunities for the Village Republic to become self-sufficient and self-reliant with respect to its basic necessities like



was spearheaded by individuals influenced by the Gandhian philosophy of self-reliant Village Republics and self-control over consumption, and preferred not to associate themselves with the



Mahatma Gandhi firmly believed in the politicization of the masses for widespread impact of the political, social, and economic struggle. He led and motivated millions of Indians to participate in the Indian revolution

food, clothing, shelter, livelihood, education, health, social security, etc. His committed leadership and sustained directives provided the country the ability and vision to establish a strong nation on values of equal opportunity, fair play, justice and liberty.

After India’s independence, the socio-political struggle branched into two streams – political and voluntary work. A few institutions inspired by Gandhi started to either receive the state’s assistance or became a part of the government machinery. However, most of the voluntary work

government. Such individuals allied together under the umbrella of the Sarva Seva Sangh, and worked out of ashrams located in remote areas of the country. A training centre was established at the Shram Bharti Ashram in Munger district of Bihar with the purpose of imparting orientation to interested individuals, known as Sarvodaya workers. Other Gandhian followers like Manibhai Desai of Bhartiya Agro Industries Foundation (BAIF); Baba Amte, of Anandvan and many more started their individual ashrams and organizations in different parts of the country. On the other



When the well is dry, we know the worth of water



There were few Gandhians who were totally against institutionalization and favoured individual or group voluntary action and Vinobha Bhave was the proponent of this group

hand, there were few Gandhians who were totally against institutionalization and favoured individual or group voluntary action; Vinobha Bhave was the proponent of this group.

Apart from the Independence struggle, the second most popular peoples' initiative was the Bhoodan movement. Spearheaded by Vinobha Bhave it addressed the burgeoning conflict over the issue of unequal land holding in rural areas. The movement initiated in the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh and later spread all over the country lasting for 14 years. In this movement approximately 4.2 million hectares of land were donated to landless villagers. The success of Bhoodan once again highlighted the potency of

mass mobilization leading to organized peoples' movement.

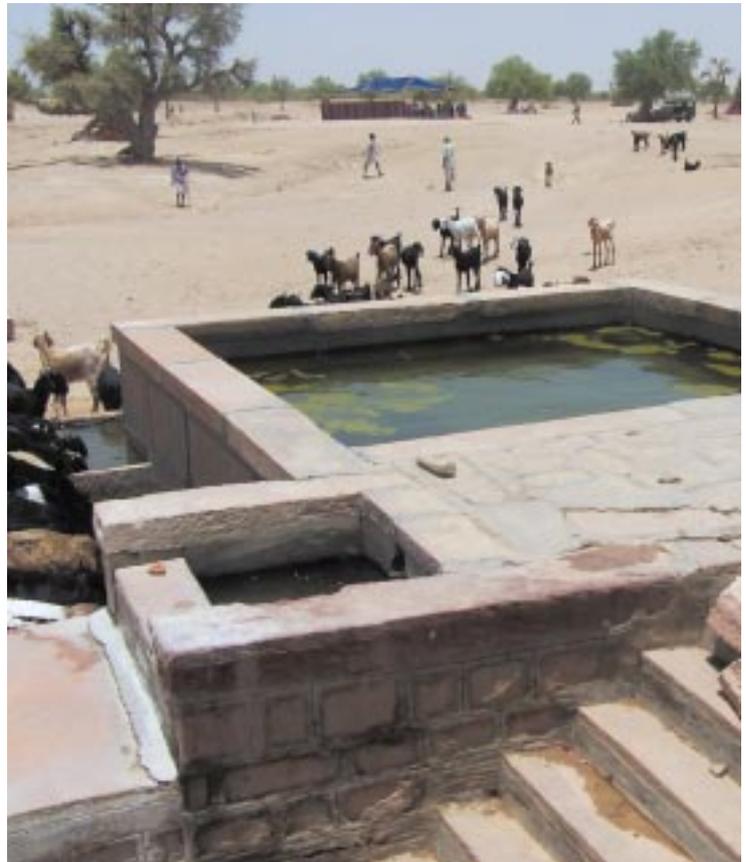
During the 1966 Bihar famine and later the Bangladesh refugee crisis, a new trend in voluntary work was observed. During the relief work, apart from the Sarvodaya volunteers, young people from urban areas came forward to serve the people. The same volunteers were seen during the 1971 crisis. After contributing in these crisis situations, they preferred to establish their own voluntary organizations. Joe Madiath and Bunker Roy who later set up Gram Vikas and Social Work and Research Centre respectively are examples of this phenomenon. Their efforts attracted a new generation of young people from



High quality water is more than the dream of the conservationists, more than a political slogan; high quality water, in the right quantity at the right place at the right time, is essential to health, recreation, and economic growth

the urban middle class who preferred to work in the remote areas despite having access to mainstream opportunities. This trend became instrumental in strengthening voluntary groups in the country. It was around the same time that international relief and development groups such as OXFAM (UK), Bread of the World Germany and Catholic Relief Services etc began working in the country. They gave funds to local voluntary groups for implementing development programmes. Many of the established voluntary organizations for instance MYRADA, Karnataka; AASEFA, Tamil Nadu initiated their work with the support of these international donor agencies.

While the foundation of the voluntary sector was being strengthened, simultaneously another form of voluntary action was just beginning to emerge in the country. And that was of the



A new trend in voluntary work was first observed during the 1966 Bihar famine with young people from urban areas with access to mainstream opportunities preferring to serve in remote area. These people organized themselves with NGOs

conscious yet disillusioned youth taking up armed struggle against the centralised and state controlled system. The genesis can be traced back to the late 60s during the uprising of the peasants at Naxalbari village in North Bengal.

The dissatisfaction of civil society towards the political leadership increased, leading to a student movement spearheaded by Jai Prakash Narayan, popularly addressed as JP. In repercussion, the state crushed the movement by repressing the student groups, political leaders,

voluntary activists and concerned citizens. This was the first post- independence wrangle between the state and civil society. The state went one step ahead and enacted the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act in 1976 to control the inflow of foreign funds to voluntary organizations which were being referred to as (non-governmental) organizations (NGO). Although the voluntary sector was being noticed for its efforts, at the same time the state was trying hard to vanquish this growing force.



Children of a culture born in a water-rich environment, we have never really learned how important water is to us. We understand it, but we do not respect it

3

CONTEMPORARY ERA OF VOLUNTARY WORK

Emerging trends

With the emergence of a considerable force from within the society for streamlining democratic governance, the state had no option than to recognize its existence. It was during the seventh five-year plan that the issue of partnership between the government and NGOs was formally accepted



Of all our planet's activities, no force is greater than the hydrologic cycle

The JP movement was largely responsible for restoring peoples' faith in the potential and strength of mass collective action. The movement also inspired the emergence of two distinct groups within society. One group got directly involved in the active political processes while the remaining preferred to operate at the grassroots level along with the rural masses towards decentralizing and executing the concept of "*Swayam-vikas*" (self development). On the other hand, the growing disenchantment and loss of faith in the state and its institutions also led to the

creation of strong civil society institutions. This period remains a significant era in the evolution of voluntary work. Numerous interest groups spearheaded their initiative by either forming formal groups or through a series of organized protests and well-defined campaigns against the state's authoritarian and indifferent approach and oppressive mode of functioning.

The example of the efforts of four committed urban youths in Gopalpura village of Thanagazi block in Alwar district of Rajasthan showcases the evolving voluntary moment in India. The initiative

from a single village later spread in the entire region. Today the youthful force is recognized as Tarun Bharat Sangh. The organization continues to disseminate Gandhian and Sarvodaya values amongst the locals and empowers them to further propagate them in a larger audience. A similar initiative was witnessed in Mahishi, a remote village located in Saharsa district of Bihar. Rajendra Jha, an active member in the JP movement established Kosi Seva Sadan to carry forward his experiences and learnings during the student movement by working with the locals. In the entire length and breadth of the country, development work got a boost through the voluntary groups functioning in remote areas where locals languished in a state of despondency and seclusion.

The country witnessed another form of the



to diverse groups comprising social activists, the affected population, academia, professionals, concerned citizens, etc. to converge and create a common platform to raise their voice against the State's might. The efforts of Sunder Lal



Development work got a boost through the voluntary groups functioning in remote areas where locals languished in a state of despondency and seclusion

peoples' movement in Gujarat. The local milk producers were organized into cooperatives and their livelihood was streamlined. Hundreds and thousands of families benefited from this initiative, popularly known as the Amul dairy cooperative which laid the foundation for future cooperative movements in India.

The apathetic approach adopted by the state towards promoting and executing macro-projects while perpetuating skewed governance, instigated series of organized protests by the civil society. These protests provided an opportunity

Bahuguna, Baba Amte, Medha Patkar, Chandi Prasad Bhatt, Aruna Roy, Dinesh Kumar Mishra and many more in organizing pressure groups like the Anand Van Declaration, India's first collective response from civil society against big dams, Narmada Bachao Andolan, Chipko movement, Mazdoor Kisan Sangarsh Samiti and Barh Mukti Abhiyan provided an effective medium to the social activists to highlight and oppose the inadequacies and repression of the state machinery. On the other hand, groups like the Centre for Science and Environment led by the



If you could tomorrow morning make water clean in the world, you would have done, in one fell swoop, the best thing you could have done for improving human health



flexibility can achieve a lot more compared to the government's initiatives. The setting up of the Council for Advancement of Peoples' Action and Rural Technology (CAPART) was primarily to route government funds to be utilized by NGOs. Such initiatives initially helped strengthen the existence of NGOs in the country. But soon their growth was marred by political ambitions and processes.

With the growth of voluntary work in India, NGOs started to attract and train young professionals to contribute towards rural development. The working method shifted from volunteerism to professional volunteerism. The functioning of Jal Bhagirathi Foundation in recent



With the growth of voluntary work in India, NGOs started to attract and train young professionals to contribute towards rural development. The working method shifted from volunteerism to professional volunteerism

late Anil Agarwal not only initiated the environmental movement in India but also demystified an issue earlier considered elitist and transformed it into a grassroots' level concern.

With the emergence of such a considerable force within the society for streamlining democratic governance, the state had no option but to recognize its existence. It was during the seventh five-year plan that the issue of partnership between the government and NGOs was formally accepted. In its plan document, the government has acknowledged the vital role NGOs can play in the socio-economic development of the country. The government also admitted that NGOs with their knowledge base, motivated teams and organizational

times suggests the same. This group has been successful in getting two diverse interest groups - local wisdom and external professional skills, to collectively and comprehensively address issues of concern in their area of operation.

In order to keep up with the changing pace and complexity of society, the voluntary sector has been transforming its operations accordingly. In the contemporary period, the sector has adopted a multifaceted role. Voluntary organizations are considered to be service providers and they function in situations with limited resources, even where the government finds it difficult to work efficiently and the private and profit-making institutions do not have the willingness to intervene. In recent times, these



Water is the blood in our veins

organizations are looked upon as associates of the government and corporate sector in activities where community mobilization and implementation is mandatory. They are expected to be partners in the designing of programmes and in policy reforms. To keep pace with the dynamic problems existing in the country, these voluntary organizations play the role of social trendsetters, which involves them in innovating newer technologies and approaches of social mobilization, community organization and programme development, with the purpose of addressing the issue comprehensively. With the increasing cynicism in society with regard to the state's social, economic and political governance arrangement, the organizations play the role of social reviewers and policy advocates. The intention is not only to confront the system but



During the first half of the century, the state institutions dominated, irrespective of being in a capitalist or communist society. In the last two decades of the twentieth century, market institutions reasserted themselves. The communist states collapsed, central planning lost its reliability and the public sector began to be privatized and the welfare state dismantled. This development once again raised the issue of state regulation



In order to provide an alternative to balance the conflict between the state and market institutions, it became crucial to develop and strengthen civil society institutions

also to recommend policy alterations based on their experience of grassroots level work and lobby with people within the system to bring about desired changes. Last but not the least the voluntary sector has a crucial role to play in the public arena of streamlining and strengthening civil society institutions. A public arena can be defined as a triangle, whose three vertices are the state, the market and the civil society institutions. In the twentieth century, globally, there was a constant struggle between the state and the market for gaining authority over the other.

being the only legitimate option in the existing scenario. In order to provide an alternative to balance the conflict between the state and market institutions, it became crucial to develop and strengthen civil society institutions.

Thus the social development processes in India evolved from merely being motivated by religious sentiments to a state-dominated activity to an ideology driven initiative. Finally, it is now being considered as an established third force in the public arena.



The wars of the twenty-first century will be fought over water

4

LOCAL ACTIONS FOR A GLOBAL CHALLENGE



Emerging trends

With the contemporary development paradigm negatively impacting the social structure, economy and environment of rural areas, and threatening the resources available to urban populations, the time has come to return to traditional natural resource management practices at the micro level



Fierce national competition over water resources has prompted fears that water issues contain the seeds of violent conflict

The blazing summer *loo* (hot dry air in summer months) pierces the flesh as one drives towards Piparli, a village in Jodhpur district. In this hostile environment, the enthusiasm of the villagers towards a collective good is overwhelming. In gay abandonment with complete disregard of the weather, they have come together, as one cohesive unit, admirably led by local “social leaders”, to de-silt the *Malher talab* (pond) - the lifeline of the Piparli village. *Malher talab* was one of the earliest initiatives of the Jal Bhagirathi

Foundation (JBF). It is a fine example of courage, conviction, community strength and the potential of social capital to effectively address local water problems.

Till late 2001, the village of Piparli lay desolate, bereft of even a drop of water. The existing *talab* was too small to qualify as a pond. The fast depleting groundwater and its deteriorating quality worsened the situation. This resulted in an acute shortage of water for human consumption and for the sustenance of the local



livestock-based economy, leading to a detrimental impact on the life of the village. The severe conditions forced the villagers into purchasing drinking water on loans, thereby pushing them into the vicious cycle of debts and repayments. The situation was further exacerbated by inadequate rain-fed agricultural produce and a dwindling natural resource base for fodder and fuel wood, forcing the people to adopt alternative livelihood options. The pastoral community resorted to migration along with their livestock to places with adequate resources. Others with limited wherewithal preferred to venture to nearby rural, semi-urban and urban areas as skilled and manual labourers. With these men migrating, the women had to manage households under harsh and restrictive conditions. Hence, they had to depend on their young children for support.



circumstances in the region.

These villages are a part of the Marwar region (consisting of seven districts – Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Barmer, Nagaur, Pali, Jalore and Sirohi) in the Thar Desert which is known for its fragile and hostile eco-system. This eco-system is characterized by



The harsh environment became the primary reason for the rise in maternal and infant mortality. Thus, the inadequacy of resources and lack of livelihood opportunities in the village severely impacted and fragmented the majority of the underprivileged households

The involvement of the children especially, girls, in household chores prevented them from getting educated and loaded them with responsibilities normally handled by adults. It also exposed them to hazardous activities. The harsh environment became the primary reason for the rise in maternal and infant mortality. Thus, the inadequacy of resources and lack of livelihood opportunities in the village severely impacted and fragmented the majority of the underprivileged households. This is not a stand-alone example - there are thousands of villages in similar

sandy soils low in organic matter, low and erratic rainfall, depleted and saline groundwater, sparse vegetation cover, low humidity and high transpiration, high solar radiation, and strong winds. Apart from the existing hostile eco-system, mindless environmental degradation and an exploitative land use pattern have also been largely responsible for the extreme economic backwardness of the region. The existing ecological misfortune impacts a human population of twenty million and a still larger population of livestock in the region.



Little drops of water, Little grains of sand, Make the mighty ocean And the beautiful land.



The average rainfall in the region varies from 100–500 mm, distributed over three months – July, August and September. In the absence of sufficient rainfall, there is great dependence on groundwater for irrigation



Be praised, My Lord, through Sister Water; she is very useful, and humble, and precious, and pure

In the Marwar region, agriculture is by far the dominant activity in areas receiving more than 250 millimetres (mm) of rainfall and animal husbandry in zones receiving less than 250 mm of rainfall. The average rainfall in the region varies from 100–500 mm, distributed over three months – July, August and September. In the absence of sufficient rainfall, there is great dependence on groundwater for irrigation. In the given conditions, the total area irrigated by tube wells to the total irrigated area is above 85 percent except in Jaisalmer where it has been projected at a mere 8 percent. The total irrigated area to the total geographical area varies between 0.62 percent in Jaisalmer to 31.29 percent in Jalore.

The water status of the Marwar region is a micro reflection of the larger reality at the state level. Rajasthan has 5 percent of the country’s population and 10 percent of the total land; its share of the country’s ground and surface water resources is under 2 percent each. Rainfall, the primary source of water in the state is scanty and varies between 190 to 900 mm. Availability of water from all sources has plunged to 800 cubic metres (cum) and is expected to decrease further owing to the current water utilization practices.

Rajasthan’s total surface water availability from internal and external sources is 3394 million cubic metres (mcm) and approximately 71 percent of it is being utilized. Rajasthan receives 1789 mcm of surface water from neighbouring

states; the heavy dependence on neighbouring states has added to the existing water uncertainty within the state.

The net groundwater availability in Rajasthan is estimated at 11,159 mcm. The annual irrigation draft of groundwater is 10,454 mcm and 1181 mcm for irrigation and domestic use. Hence the total draft is calculated as 11,635 mcm, which indicates that the level of groundwater development is placed at 104.26 percent. Groundwater caters to 90 percent of drinking water and 60 percent of irrigation requirements. In regions of intensive commercial cultivation, private investments in the development and extraction of ground resources have been high. Rajasthan has been divided into 594 groundwater potential zones. Of these, 322 zones fall in the “White” category where ground water



India are in Rajasthan. According to recent estimates, 54 percent of villages and habitations in India having high levels of nitrate have been identified in Rajasthan. And Rajasthan has 29 percent of Indian villages and habitations confronting fluoride problem in groundwater. The declining groundwater quality within the state can be largely attributed to widely spread polluting industrial units and uninhibited groundwater mining through deep wells. The



The annual per capita of renewable freshwater in India has fallen from around 5,277 cubic metres in 1955 to 2,464 cubic metres in 1990. Given the projected increase in population by the year 2025, the per capita availability is likely to drop to below 1,000 cubic metres

development is less than 65 percent, 71 zones fall in the “Grey” category having 65 percent to 85 percent stage of development. The remaining 201 zones have been categorized as “Dark”, where the stage of groundwater development is more than 85 percent. Of these, 173 zones are over-exploited, having a stage of development that is more than 100 percent.

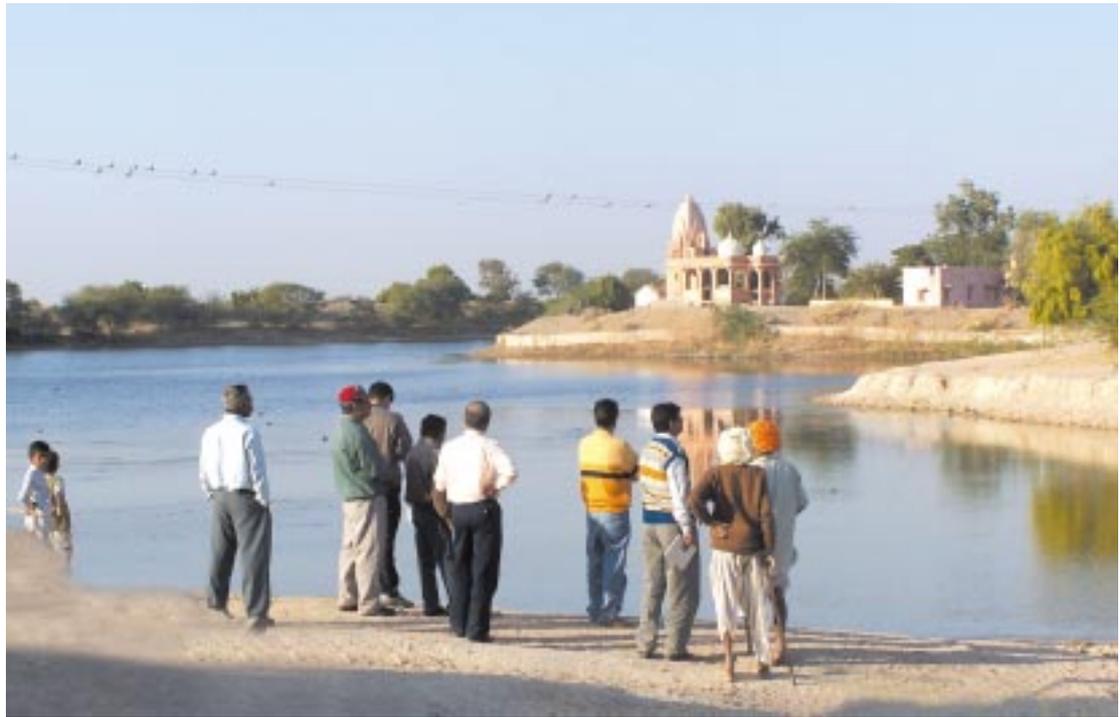
Deteriorating groundwater quality has added to the already precarious water status within the state. Approximately 74 percent of total villages and habitations with multiple quality problems in

present deteriorating water status of Rajasthan is a reflection of the existing scenario in India.

The annual per capita of renewable freshwater in India has fallen from around 5,277 cubic metres in 1955 to 2,464 cubic metres in 1990. Given the projected increase in population by the year 2025, the per capita availability is likely to drop to below 1,000 cubic metres. If availability falls below 1,000 cubic metres, the situation is labelled as one of water scarcity. India’s groundwater resources are almost ten times its annual rainfall. According to the Central



You think we have bad fights over oil. Just wait until we start fighting over water. It’s predicted in the Koran



According to estimates of the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) the groundwater reservoir will dry up entirely by 2025 in as many as fifteen states in India – if the present level of exploitation and misuse of groundwater continues



The problem with water, though, is that the shortfalls don't show up until the very end. You can go on pumping unsustainably until the day you run out

Groundwater Board of the Government of India, the country has an annual exploitable groundwater potential of 26.5 million hectare metres (mham). The importance of groundwater in the Indian economy can hardly be overemphasised. According to researcher Marcus Moench, groundwater accounts for as much as 70%-80% of the value of farm produce attributable to irrigation. With agriculture contributing roughly 29% of India's GDP and production from irrigated land claiming the lion's share, a large percentage of the country's GDP is closely tied to the availability of groundwater. Besides, groundwater is now the source of four-fifths of the domestic water supply in rural areas, and around half that of urban and industrial areas.

Further, in drought years, groundwater is the predominant source of irrigation. While groundwater development has had important implications for the economy, the overuse of groundwater is emerging as a major concern. A burgeoning population is overdrawing aquifers in several states, including Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The latest data indicate that in Punjab 84 of the 138 blocks have been rendered "dark". According to estimates of the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) the groundwater reservoir will dry up entirely by 2025 in as many as fifteen states in India if the present level of exploitation and misuse of groundwater continues. A glimpse of this trend can be seen in the recent report

prepared by the Ministry of Water Resources (MOWR) on the decline in water level in the last 20 years (1983-2002). The Water Resources Minister's response to starred question on July 15 2000 in the Lok Sabha giving details of the years 1981- 2000 during the pre-monsoon period is an eye opener to the impending catastrophe.

According to the ministry's report 14 of the 20 states listed have experienced groundwater depletion in more than 50 percent of the districts. The names of the states in descending order are Andhra Pradesh (100 percent of the state is affected), Rajasthan (96.8 percent), Haryana (89.4 percent), Karnataka (85.14 percent), Maharashtra (82.8 percent), Punjab (82.35 percent), Madhya Pradesh (82.2 percent), Orissa (80 percent), Tamil Nadu (73.30 percent), West Bengal (72.20 percent), Gujarat (72 percent),



entire humanity relies on a mere 0.5 percent for all its fresh water requirements. Globally 10,000,000 km³ of water is stored in underground aquifers, which caters to 50 percent



The global water scenario is not encouraging either. Less than 3 percent of the world's water is fresh while the rest is seawater and undrinkable. Of this 3 percent over 2.5 percent is frozen and inaccessible to human population

Delhi (66.6 percent), Uttar Pradesh (60 percent) and Chattisgarh (56.20 percent).

The groundwater quality status in the country is abysmal. A total of 216,968 villages and habitations are confronted with fast depleting groundwater quality and the number of affected population is increasing leaps and bounds.

The global water scenario is not encouraging either. Less than 3 percent of the world's water is fresh while the rest is seawater and undrinkable. Of this 3 percent over 2.5 percent is frozen and inaccessible to human population. Therefore, the

of drinking water needs, 40 percent of industrial use and 20 percent of domestic use. The remaining fresh water is made available from

- Net rainfall after accounting for evaporation : 119,000 km³
- Natural lakes : 91,000 km³
- Human made storage facilities : 5,000 km³
- Rivers : 2,120 km³

Fresh water availability is not evenly distributed over the globe. Fewer than 10 countries possess 60 percent of the world's available fresh water supply. Globally, 70 percent



Water and air, the two essential fluids on which all life depends, have become global garbage cans





with more than 100,000 people, groundwater is being used more than it can be replenished. And cities like Bangkok, Manila, Beijing, Shanghai and Mexico City have experienced groundwater depletion between 10 to 15 metres.

The world population in 2000 was estimated at 6.2 billion and an additional 3 billion is

of the fresh water is used for agriculture, 22 percent for industrial use and 8 percent for domestic use. However the scenario changes in terms of fresh water usage in high-income

estimated by 2050, mostly in developing countries that are already water stressed. The water demand is therefore bound to increase. Given the dismal status of water resources in the



More than one billion people in South Asia, Eastern Asia, South Eastern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa are still without improved drinking water sources. It has been estimated that approximately 1.8 million people die every year from diarrhoeal diseases

countries. Maximum fresh water is used for industrial use (59 percent), agriculture (30 percent) and domestic use (11 percent). However, in low and middle income countries, most of the fresh water is used for agricultural purpose (82 percent), followed by industrial use (10 percent) and domestic use (eight percent).

More than one billion people in South Asia, Eastern Asia, South Eastern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa are still without improved drinking water sources. It has been estimated that approximately 1.8 million people die every year from diarrhoeal diseases.

At the global level, water-stressed regions are fast increasing. In 60 percent of European cities

world, do we have any plausible solution to overcome the existing problem? In the given situation, initiatives at the micro level, led by enthusiastic and committed villagers like those of Piparli need to be considered as the way ahead.

Piparli – a water-stressed village seeking a local solution to their perennial water problems came in contact with JBF. The interaction of a few local social leaders with JBF convinced them of JBF's effort towards micro development through localized effort and resources.

Deciding to join forces with JBF, the leaders took it upon themselves to do all the grassroots work required to realize the *talab* project. To start with they mobilized the village community.



Water is the basis of life and the blue arteries of the earth! The environment depends on freshwater to survive

During the social mobilization process, they had to convince the village folk of the long-term benefits of the *talab* through endless village meetings and door to door campaign. Once the village community was convinced, they initiated the process by forming the *Jal Sabha* (Water Users' Association).

Through long hours of tireless talking, day after day, the village leaders managed to convince the people of the project's prudence. Not just that, they managed to raise a meritorious sum of Rs. 90,000, the mandatory 30 percent of funds required for the project to be implemented! The project was launched and the entire village came together to build the *talab*. Feeder canals were constructed and the *agor* (catchment area for the water) restored.

The triumphant village folk then waited



The world population in 2000 was estimated at 6.2 billion and an additional three billion is estimated by 2050, mostly in developing countries that are already water stressed. The water demand is therefore bound to increase

anxiously for the monsoon showers to see their efforts bear fruit. The rains graced the dry parched earth of Piparli and water collected as per the project projections!

A great sense of jubilation descended on the locals for having achieved what was until recently an unrealizable dream. A state of utopianism engulfed the water-starved people of Piparli, who celebrated the momentous victory along with their new found comrades at the JBF.

Now in its fourth consecutive year of use, the *Malher talab* of Piparli has, along with becoming

a legend in itself, helped serve as a shining example of a traditional "best practice" of water harvesting, and offers a model that is being successfully replicated across scores of villages suffering from the same problems as Piparli once did.

Piparli's effort has motivated several other village communities in the region to combat the severity and enormity of the challenges posed by the fragile and inhospitable eco-system, and has also provided the world with a local solution to combat the impending water crisis.



Water is the eye of landscape



5

A WATER REVOLUTION

Emerging trends

The contemporary peoples' movement in western Rajasthan witnessed a renaissance with the establishment of the Jal Bhagirathi Foundation (JBF) as a Trust to work with the Tarun Bharat Sangh in the field of water management



Allah has created from water every living creature: so of them is that which walks upon its belly, and of them is that which walks upon two feet, and of them is that which walks upon four

Western Rajasthan witnessed the renaissance of a contemporary peoples' movement with the establishment of the Jal Bhagirathi Foundation (JBF) as a Trust on 15th January 2002.

Interestingly, the conception of such an institution, leading to peoples' involvement in the revival and strengthening of *Gram Swaraj*— self reliant and responsive villages had originated 10 months earlier in a village 370 kilometres east of Jodhpur.

Village Nimmi, saw the genesis of JBF, where the *Rashtriya Jal Sammelan* (National Water Conference) was organised from 21 April to 23 April 2001 by the Centre for Science and

Environment, a New Delhi-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) and Tarun Bharat Sangh (TBS), an Alwar-based NGO, to promote and advocate for a participatory water management paradigm as a national necessity. More than 5000 villagers, academics, social activists, development professionals, media and interested citizens from all over the country had participated in the proceeding; Prithvi Raj Singh was one of them. Belonging to a village near Jaipur, he was amazed by the vibrant environment steered by the charismatic leadership of Rajendra Singh. His ability to

connect, enthuse and convince villagers to work cohesively towards managing their own resources impressed Prithvi Raj Singh the most.

During the nascent phase of their promising relationship, both Rajendra Singh and Prithvi Raj Singh had recognized each other's competencies. While Rajendra Singh was comfortable with public interaction, Prithvi Raj Singh was a specialist in planning, developing and negotiating around strategic groups. On recognizing the skills of Prithvi Raj Singh, Rajendra Singh was keen to associate with him in a formal environment. Therefore he approached Prithvi Raj Singh several times with an offer to join him in TBS. Realizing that they complemented each other so well, a partnership was formed. This was the moment when, for the first time, JBF emerged as a nascent thought and belief.



After being convinced of the need to unfold TBS's effective learnings in other parts of the state, the duo started exploring potential partners to collaborate with. But before identifying a partner, they went through the process of



Rajendra Singh and Prithvi Raj Singh complemented each other – the former was comfortable with public interaction while the latter was a specialist in planning, developing and negotiating around strategic groups

This partnership was formed at an opportune moment. It not only oriented Prithvi Raj Singh to TBS's philosophy, mandate and model of operation but also created an opportunity for both to interact more frequently. This helped them strengthen and provide a definite shape to the promising concept of widening the expanse of TBS's experiences, knowledge and commitment to other parts of Rajasthan. They intended extending the work to rural areas facing similar dilemmas and challenges over dwindling community managed practices.

prioritizing, selecting and later reconfirming the region for executing their belief. In the end, they concentrated on western Rajasthan, owing to its fragile ecosystem, extreme economic deprivation and diminishing traditional forms of natural resources management. Identification of the region helped them to narrow their search for a partner. An exhaustive exploratory exercise was adopted to identify a partner, spreading from NGOs to politicians, academic and research institutions, to media houses. Identification of an option was followed by extensive debate and



All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again



The Maharaja, with his popularity, and the astounding support and enormous faith of Marwar's masses, was the appropriate choice for a partner

analysis concerning the future partner, and its potential to steer and create opportunities for identifying, developing and strengthening future prospects in the region. Most of the options were shelved owing to their limitation to influence people not only in the Jodhpur district but also in the entire division encompassing adjoining districts. At that particular phase, both Prithvi Raj Singh and Rajendra Singh were inclined to revisit their decision to work in western Rajasthan.

While the effort to identify a potential partner in the region was still on, Prithvi Raj Singh met Raja Gopal Singh of Bhadrarajun. During the discussion, he realized that

partnering with HH Maharaja Gaj Singh of the House of Marwar would be a realistic, effectual and pragmatic option to explore.

The Maharaja, with his popularity, and the astounding support and enormous faith of Marwar's masses, was the appropriate choice. Before deciding the future course of action, he preferred to share his thoughts with Rajendra Singh. Having interacted with rural men and women, *mukhiyas* (village head men), *gajdhars* (barefoot engineers), opposing government officials, antagonised mine owners, etc. all his life, Rajendra Singh was stunned with the option of working with a Maharaja, a situation he had never visualized. Prithvi Raj Singh had not



Water, air, and cleanness are the chief articles in my pharmacy



envisaged this kind of reaction and therefore he did not compel him to agree to the strategy. The issue of replicating TBS's efforts came to a standstill. However, slowly and cautiously, both started to discuss the possibilities of working with HH Maharaja Gaj Singh. Finally, Prithvi Raj Singh was able to convince Rajendra Singh to work with the House of Marwar creating a long lasting impact in the region.

With a clear understanding between them, they approached Raja Gopal Singh to help them forge ties with HH Maharaja Gaj Singh. Gopal Singh was convinced of the water woes in



However, their belief was destined to become a reality. Shortly, Rajendra Singh was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award, recognizing his efforts in reviving and strengthening community based traditional water management systems in the villages of Alwar district, an event covered



Rajendra Singh was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award, an event covered extensively by the media

western Rajasthan and keen to help any such initiative. But he was slightly sceptical as far as a partnership between TBS and the House of Marwar was concerned, basically owing to his lack of familiarity about TBS and Rajendra Singh. He agreed to discuss the issue with HH Maharaja Gaj Singh. But for long, neither Raja Gopal Singh nor the House of Marwar responded to their proposal despite frequent reminders from Prithvi Raj Singh. Once again, the developments came to a grinding halt.

extensively by the media. Subsequently, Raja Gopal Singh learnt more about TBS and its Chairman Rajendra Singh. He approached HH Maharaja Gaj Singh with the proposal of developing a partnership for replicating TBS's efforts in the Marwar region. During the same period, Rajendra Singh received a letter of appreciation from the House of Marwar for his relentless work in water management. This was the beginning of their belief taking definite shape in the form of collaboration.



Water is the petroleum of the 21st century

6

STRENGTHENING ALLIANCE

Building a dynamic future

Despite apprehensions about the replication of Tarun Bharat Sangh's model in a desert region, the enthusiasm of the villagers and the commitment of the three key persons, HH Maharaja Gaj Singh, Rajendra Singh and Prithvi Raj Singh, saw Jal Bhagirathi evolve into a viable alliance



Multinational companies now run water systems for 7 per cent of the world's population, and which could grow to 17 per cent by 2015

Familiarity and confidence are the two components mandatory for any partnership to grow from a nascent to a mature stage. Therefore, the initiation of direct communication between TBS and the House of Marwar provided the vital momentum to the partnership building process. However, the interaction was still placed at a preliminary stage and hence, substantial groundwork was required for creating an amicable environment as an effective starting point. Raja Gopal Singh, in consultation with Prithvi Raj Singh, arranged a meeting in August 2001 at Jaipur between HH Maharaja Gaj Singh,

Rajendra Singh and Prithvi Raj Singh.

The meeting was deemed to be of great relevance because both the groups were getting together for the first time to discuss the possibility of a future collaboration. Subsequently during the meeting, various options were explored to replicate TBS's work in western Rajasthan. The House of Marwar was keen to involve one of its existing Trusts to work along with TBS through a pilot project whereas Rajendra Singh and Prithvi Raj Singh were keen to propagate the work through peoples' institutions as pursued in Alwar. The outcome of

this meeting of divergent views was expected as individuals from distinct backgrounds, having diverse experiences and with differing aspirations had come together for the first time. Despite the difference in the proposed strategies, there was a definite consensus with regard to the relevance and dire need for replicating TBS's water works in western Rajasthan. This was a giant leap in the partnership building process. As an immediate follow up of the meeting, Rajendra Singh and Prithvi Raj Singh invited HH Maharaja Gaj Singh to Alwar, primarily to observe their work and its impact on the social, economic and governance structures in the region. Due to time constraints, the visit of HH Maharaja Gaj Singh was postponed to a later date.

In the meanwhile, Prithvi Raj Singh was anxious to move ahead and therefore proposed a



Prior to the *yatra*, the first public meeting jointly addressed by HH Maharaja Gaj Singh and Rajendra Singh was organised at Umaid Bhawan on 5 October 2001. The meeting was attended by farmers, community leaders, government officials,



Despite the difference in the proposed strategies, there was a definite consensus with regard to the relevance and dire need for replicating TBS's water works in western Rajasthan

visit to Jodhpur along with a team of development professionals, research specialists and media to assess the existing situation in the Jodhpur division, and to propose adequate measures in taking the initiative ahead. The visit was planned as a *Jal Chetna Yatra* (Public Awareness Campaign), with the purpose of sensitizing and motivating the village leaders and communities to revive the traditional form of natural resources management practices. The *yatra* was also aimed at sharing the experiences of TBS in reinforcing village-centric reforms through peoples' institutions.

development workers and interested individuals from the seven districts of Marwar. The meeting elicited diverse responses from those attending it. The farmers and local leaders were extremely enthusiastic about the endeavour, whereas a few retired technocrats were apprehensive about the possibility of replicating TBS's model in the desert region.

The meeting was followed by the *yatra*, organized from 6-8 October 2001 in Jodhpur, Jalore, Barmer and Pali districts. The involvement of eminent people from the region was the



Private water management is estimated to be a \$200 billion business, and the World Bank projects it could be worth \$1 trillion by 2021



The *Jal Chetna Yatra* (Public Awareness Campaign) was planned with the purpose of sensitizing and motivating the village leaders and communities to revive the traditional form of natural resources management practices

reason for its success. During the *yatra*, villagers had responded enthusiastically by attending the public meetings in huge numbers. They contributed immensely by sharing their own views on the existing scenario along with techniques for effectively addressing the problem.

The three days of the *Jal Chetna Yatra* had created a vibrant atmosphere. A large number of villagers pledged their support and showed their enthusiasm for taking up water harvesting. Villages like Bhadrarjun, Kolar, Guda and Chokaria had decided immediately after the meeting to revive redundant water harvesting structures. Along with the villagers, the alliance partners were also passionate and yet apprehensive at the

same time. After all, they had initiated a movement in the region. During the day they were busy addressing the villagers while the evenings and nights were being utilized for planning the future course of action. The three prominent people in the alliance – HH Maharaja Gaj Singh, Rajendra Singh and Prithvi Raj Singh - were concerned about the future and focussing on “what next”...

Throughout the *yatra*, Prithvi Raj Singh was interacting and carrying out extensive discussions with development professionals, research specialists and the media to generate ideas for taking the initiative ahead. This strategy proved to be useful. In his discussion with Sanjay Awasti



When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, the lord will answer them, and will not forsake them



from CARE India, he was advised to mould the initiative in the form of a structured unit as part of a progressive planning procedure. Seeing the relevance of a structured unit, Prithvi Raj Singh started to pursue the recommendation. By the end of the *yatra*, Prithvi Raj Singh, with the support of HH Maharaja Gaj Singh, Rajendra Singh and few local eminent persons was able to put together an informal association to take the alliance forward - it was named Jal Bhagirathi.

The initial euphoria of the *yatra* and its enormous response subsided and people were ready to get on with the work. However, despite the presence of committed local leaders and enthusiastic alliance partners, the initiative did not gather sufficient momentum as expected. The reasons for the slow pace were attributed to an indistinctness existing at two levels.



meantime, the interest generated during the *yatra* had to be attended to, resources had to be made available for the proposed works and subsequently sustained as well. This was a challenging moment for Jal Bhagirathi. To meet the situation, TBS sourced the required funds through the support of a prominent national level



During the *yatra* villagers had responded enthusiastically by attending the public meetings in huge numbers. They contributed immensely by sharing their own views on the existing scenario along with techniques for effectively addressing the problem

The ambiguity prevalent amongst village leaders regarding their role and responsibility, limited understanding of the NGO and social development sector and its way of functioning, and the absence of leadership at the village level to take the work forward became the fundamental impediments. On the other hand, the approaches of the three prominent people in Jal Bhagirathi were also disparate; this added to the existing state of improbability. In the

NGO and thus the work was initiated. This experience was extremely valuable for the growth of Jal Bhagirathi. The three protagonists learnt from the crisis and made a conscious decision to divert their time equally for creating mass awareness and generating funds for the sustenance of the association. This paved the way towards another crucial phase in the evolution of Jal Bhagirathi.



Water, gentlemen, is the one substance from which the earth can conceal nothing. It sucks out its innermost secrets and brings them to our lips

7

A NEW BEGINNING

Marching towards progress

Representatives of donor agencies were acquainted with the Jal Bhagirathi mandate and the Jal Bhagirathi Foundation was established. The Tarun Bharat Sangh model was modified to meet region-specific requirements



Clean water is not an expenditure of Federal funds; clean water is an investment in the future of our country

Learning from past experiences and utilizing them for future growth is the hallmark of a conscientious endeavour, which the architects of Jal Bhagirathi diligently pursued. Their commitment and fervor to proactively address the problems prevalent in the region encouraged them to relentlessly explore opportunities for enhancing the effectiveness of the alliance. Therefore, after the initial glitches, the alliance restructured its strategies for proficiently managing the programme and generating resources for its sustenance. The initiation of a

new beginning for the alliance transpired at Pushkar in Ajmer district of Rajasthan.

As a part of the newly formulated strategy, the alliance, for the first time on 24-25 November, 2001, formally interacted with the representatives of donor agencies. The purpose of the two-day meeting was to share the sequential evolution of the alliance, its area of focus and long-term plan, and requirements for replicating TBS's work and initiating a peoples' movement in western Rajasthan. The two-day long deliberations and extensive interaction on streamlining and

strengthening the future of Jal Bhagirathi produced a positive impact. The representatives were fascinated by the endeavour and interested in upholding Jal Bhagirathi’s intention to intensify its work. The two-day meeting ended with a consensus that for Jal Bhagirathi to upscale and sustain its activities, a formal identity was crucial. This recommendation was the preliminary endorsement of the view existing amongst the alliance partners.

While the discussion in Pushkar regarding the creation of an organization was underway, Jal Bhagirathi was once again confronted with a challenging situation.

After having strategized and initiated the work set out for the alliance, Prithvi Raj Singh wanted to withdraw from the group. However, both HH Maharaja Gaj Singh and Rajendra Singh were



alliance – HH Maharani Hemlata Rajye of the House of Marwar. She expressed her cooperation through an emotionally charged speech. While sharing her views with the participants, she constantly highlighted the harsh realities of



The Pushkar meeting witnessed the emergence of a new support member for the alliance – HH Hemlata Rajye of the House of Marwar. She expressed her cooperation through an emotionally charged speech

keen that he continue his association. There were a series of discussion and persuasion sessions steered by HH Maharaja Gaj Singh. Ultimately, Prithvi Raj Singh was convinced to continue his involvement with Jal Bhagirathi. Since the very beginning, apart from providing creditability to the alliance, HH Maharaja Gaj Singh was the bonding agent within the organization. His participation facilitated a strong foundation for the alliance.

The Pushkar meeting witnessed the emergence of a new support member for the

Marwar and the desperate need to ameliorate the existing situation.

After the Pushkar conference, the alliance started to work towards formalizing the association. Just before completing the formalities of establishing an organization, the alliance planned a *Jal Samvad* (Water Dialogue) on 11 January, 2002 with community leaders in order to gauge their response. All the participants pledged their cooperation and encouraged the alliance to pursue the formalization process.

Finally, on 15 January, 2002, the execution of



Water, taken in moderation, cannot hurt anybody



Finally, on 15 January 2002, the execution of the Trust deed was accomplished, and the alliance was formally established as Jal Bhagirathi Foundation (JBF)

the Trust deed was accomplished, and the alliance was formally established as the Jal Bhagirathi Foundation (JBF) and settled as a Trust by HH Rajmata Krishna Kumariji with the appointment of Rajendra Singh and Prithvi Raj Singh from TBS, and HH Maharaja Gaj Singh and HH Maharani Hemlata Rajye from the House of Marwar as Trustees. The primary focus of the newly formed organization was to create an environment favorable for promoting prudent and sustainable ecological management through reviving the traditional conservation practice of *Agor* (water catchment), *Gauchar* (pastureland) and *Oran* (sacred groves).

The reaffirmed support of community leaders and rural masses indicated their need and their

interest in such an endeavour. To sustain and further enhance the high interest levels, JBF directed its efforts towards generating resources for the initiative. In February 2002, a Conference on community participation in resource development was organized at Nagaur for the donor agencies. The main purpose of the conference was to explore prospective partners in generating funding resources to support the JBF programmes. The conference became a defining moment in JBF's growth.

During the same period, JBF was confronted with an issue of immediate concern. They had to develop an accountable and responsive organizational structure. The structure was to be developed in accordance with the different tasks



Water might rise on your property, but it just passes through. You can use it, and abuse it, but it is not yours to own

involved in its management. The organizational design had HH Maharaja Gaj Singh as the Managing Trustee and Rajendra Singh as the advisor for field operations. To execute and monitor the programmes, Rao Raja Mahendra Singh was appointed the General Secretary. He had to operate under the supervision of Rajendra Singh. As resource generation and management was a critical task, Prithvi Raj Singh was appointed the Trustee Treasurer.



With an organizational structure in place, JBF launched its activities in the region. As per the mandate, the projects were designed to revive

House of Marwar restrained exact replication of the model. Secondly, JBF lacked a central leadership as compared to TBS, which was a personality driven initiative. Also, the ambiguity existing regarding the concept and the



Trustees decided to develop a region-specific strategy attaching importance to the uniqueness of the region. However, they all agreed to persist with the core values of the TBS model

traditional water management practices in the selected villages.

On the project implementation front, the pace of replicating the TBS model was not proportionate to the existing expectations. It continued to lack dynamism. This had become a constant source of worry for the Trustees. On assessing the situation, two major components emerged as the causal factors. Firstly, the difference in the social, cultural and economic profile of villages in western Rajasthan and Alwar, and the expectations of the people from the

functioning of volunteers along with the expectations impeded the volunteers from working to their optimum potential. After having identified the stumbling blocks, the Trustees decided to develop a region-specific strategy, attaching importance to the uniqueness of the region. However, they all agreed to persist with the core values of the TBS model.

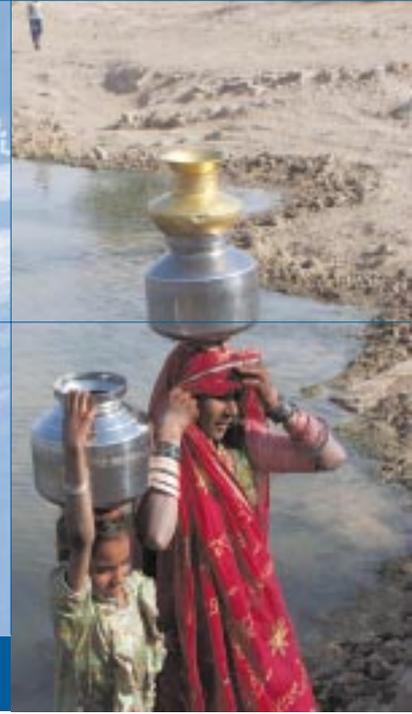
With the dawn of this new realization, JBF was all set to tread new paths to institutionalize decentralized social and natural resource governance in the region.



When water turns to ice does it remember one time it was water? When ice turns back into water does it remember it was ice



CHALLENGING MOMENTS



Scaling new heights

Over time, Jal Bhagirathi is evolving to suit the local environment. However, despite restructuring of the organization, its mandate, commitment and vision for meeting expectations and achieving desired results remains unchanged



The world health agency associates 3.4 million deaths each year with inadequate water and sanitation. Diseases such as malaria, cholera, dysentery, schistosomiasis, infectious hepatitis and diarrhoea are the killers

The commitment and determination of the HH Maharaja Gaj Singh did not allow testing moments to dampen the enthusiasm of the alliance. He believed in the mandate of JBF and was optimistic that after restructuring the organization, expectations would be met and the desired results achieved.

The process of change was initiated through exhaustive deliberations between the Trustees, steered by HH Maharaja Gaj Singh, to arrive at a consensus with regard to the future of the organization. Having seen the sustained efforts and impact of TBS in Alwar, they realized the

importance of adopting a similar strategy with relevant alterations to suit the local environment. They also felt the need to create and define the expectations and responsibilities of a central leadership within the organization. There were personalities who were looking at specific tasks based on their experiences. At times this became an impediment in the growth of the organization. After having observed the consequences, the Trustees were keen to appoint a new Managing Trustee with redefined responsibilities and enhanced working autonomy. The Trustees unanimously appointed Prithvi Raj Singh as the

new Managing Trustee and Chief Functionary of JBF on 20 December 2002.

The Managing Trustee, as the Chief Executive of the organization, was accountable only to the executive body of the Foundation – its Board of Trustees. The position was well defined and it was strengthened by granting complete discretion in the organization’s management, upscaling activities and generating resources. After taking over the responsibility of Managing Trustee, Prithvi Raj Singh’s immediate concern was restructuring of the Foundation’s functioning. Some firm decisions were taken with the view of upholding the merit and enhancing the efficiency of the Foundation.

With a central leadership in the organization, efforts to facilitate an overall development of JBF were initiated. The most crucial aspect requiring



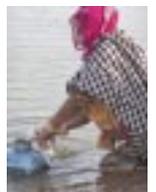
people component comprised *Jal Karmis*, *Jal Sabhas* (water users’ association in the villages), *Jal Samities* (water development group at the block level) and *Jal Parishad* (water forum of



With a central leadership in the organization, efforts to facilitate an overall development of JBF were initiated. The most crucial aspect requiring immediate attention was the organizational structure and the processes for executing the projects

immediate attention was the organizational structure and the processes for executing the projects. Since the inception of JBF, developing a responsive and structured organization with well laid out procedures was a priority. Therefore, with a mandate from the Board, Prithvi Raj Singh reworked the organizational structure, rules, procedures and policy for the functioning of the Trust and presented it before the Trustees on 26 March 2003. He had proposed an organizational structure having three main components – the people, the programme and the executive. The

stakeholders at the Jodhpur division level). The programme component included the programme staff responsible for providing professional and technical support towards facilitating, designing, planning, training, mobilizing and monitoring the projects along with village-level institutions. The Programme Management group comprising of JBF members and eminent leaders from the villages, was constituted to take executive decisions for approving work-plans and project grants. The Trustees also accepted the proposed rules and procedures and it became the formative



We must begin thinking like a river if we are to leave a legacy of beauty and life for future generations



contact drives, training camps and mass mobilization campaigns were organized. Frequent interactions with people not only helped the organization but also the villagers as they came to know more of JBF, its mandate and proposed activities. The role of the Trustees, especially HH Maharani Hemlata Rajye, was crucial in motivating people,

Management Manual that finally evolved into the Management Systems Manual. The document detailed out the functioning of each and every activity undertaken while implementing a village project. This guideline made the functioning of

generating awareness, and instilling a sense of ownership of the proposed water works amongst the stakeholders. Her repeated intensive interactions with the villagers, especially women groups resulted in constructive outcomes. Her



After December 2003, there was a phenomenal increase in the number of projects being administered by JBF. Interestingly, all of them were of diverse nature but with the same intention of strengthening the decentralization processes of ecological management

JBF extremely transparent and easy to monitor. Alongside, there was also an attempt to prioritise selection of the project villages; finding itself in the most severely water distressed region of the country, the Foundation focused its activities exclusively on drinking water for the desert communities.

After December 2003, there was a phenomenal increase in the number of projects being administered by JBF. Interestingly, all of them were of diverse nature but with the same intention of strengthening the decentralization processes of ecological management. To derive maximum benefit from the projects, JBF intensified its mass mobilization efforts. A series of *Jal Chetna Yatras, Jal Chetna Shivirs*, village

emotional linkage with JBF's water venture, made it possible for her to relate easily to the stakeholders so that women were able to articulate their water woes, introspect ways of addressing their problems and later wholeheartedly contribute to the local water initiative. Women being the primary beneficiary and the custodian of natural resources, their involvement in the water works instilled equity and sustenance to the local intervention. It has also led to the dawn of a formidable force at the village level.

The social mobilization strategy was instrumental in transforming the mindset of the people and their expectations from JBF. Earlier, the village communities considered JBF to be the



With true friends, even water drunk together is sweet enough



initiative of the Maharaja of Jodhpur and therefore, issues like contribution, peoples' participation and village communities, etc. were not taken seriously. But the situation was changing, and changing fast for the better.

undertake the additional responsibility of policy making and advocacy of water-related issues. The objective was to share the experiential learnings of JBF and other community based organizations with a larger audience. In order to facilitate the



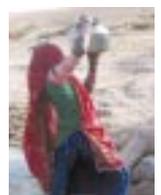
The Trustees wanted JBF to undertake the additional responsibility of policy making and advocacy of water-related issues. The objective was to share the experiential learnings of JBF and other community based organizations with a larger audience

The presence of HH Maharani Hemlata Rajye on the Board accompanied by her emotional bonding with the thematic issue was an asset. With her ability to relate to the rural masses easily, she became a source of practical and do-able suggestions for enhancing the effectiveness of the water initiative. On the other hand, her ceaseless commitment and enthusiasm towards JBF's work inspired the other Board members.

While the operations of the Foundation were being streamlined, the Trustees wanted JBF to

initiative, the Trustees conceived the thought of *Jal Ashram* – a focal point to congregate and showcase rural water issues, and advocate pro-poor policies at the local, state and national levels. Indeed an appropriate and much required addition to the existing responsibility of the Foundation.

Even today, JBF is persistently making efforts to enhance its functioning, optimize the benefits accruing from the projects being implemented and derive learning for future growth by adapting to the evolving scenario. JBF is an evolving organization – what is constant is its mandate, commitment, and vision.



To have a deep blue lake. where no lake was before. Seems to bring man a little closer to god



9

A HELPING HAND

Fostering institutional growth

JBF has always emphasised building capacities of stakeholders and empowering them with contextual information on the social, economic and ecological development scenario. The effective collaboration with TAF, though invisible to many, provided a constructive opportunity for JBF to mature from an infant to an adolescent



325 gallons of water consumed per person per day in Las Vegas, possibly more than any other city in the world

In April 2001, JBF was a mere thought. Later it emerged as a belief. In subsequent years it matured. And today, JBF is a fully evolved institution with a commitment to working in 400 villages over a period of five years. The organizational development could not have been possible without timely support from various helping hands.

The process of project development and execution got the necessary momentum only after being supported by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). Their assistance through TBS in the initial period had not only provided the opportunity to develop a

thorough understanding of the region through programme execution but also helped them forge healthy ties with TBS for other experiential learnings.

During the same period, Nimmi village – the genesis of JBF - once again become instrumental in the progress of the Foundation. Because of the impressive work done there, Nimmi had elicited tremendous response from the development sector. It also inspired Dr. Hafiz Pasha, Assistant Secretary General of the UN to learn about the initiative. During his visit to the village, both Rajendra Singh and Prithvi Raj Singh, apart from narrating the local intervention, also briefed him

about a similar water initiative in Western Rajasthan based on the learnings and experiences of TBS, soliciting his support for upscaling their work. They invited Dr. Pasha to attend the donor Conference being organized by JBF at Nagaur. However due to prior commitments, he requested Dr. Brenda Mc Sweeney Former UNDP Resident Representative in India to attend the Conference.

For JBF, July 2002 will always be cherished and remembered as a month with significant milestones. The process of building partnerships was initiated during the donor’s conference at Nagaur. The conference was chaired by Dr. Brenda Mc Sweeney, and well attended by representatives from various donor agencies.

The conference provided an opportune moment for JBF, UNDP and the Italian



the *Agor* (catchment area), *Gauchar* (community pastureland) and *Oran* (sacred groves) matrix. The programme was to assist JBF in upscaling its initiatives in the water-stressed districts of Jodhpur division. The joint programme has provided the Foundation a platform to work in



The joint programme has provided the Foundation a platform to work in 400 villages over a period of five years with a clear mandate of reviving water and other natural resources in the region

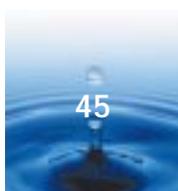
Development Cooperation to explore prospects for developing a tripartite programme for western Rajasthan. The effort was spearheaded by Dr. Neera Burra, Assistant UNDP Resident Representative in India, also referred to as the architect of the programme and the impetus to it was provided by Dr. Rosario Centola Former Director of Italian Development Corporation (IDC) and Anu Dhindaw of IDC. The proposed programme was envisaged as a natural resource intervention for vulnerability reduction among the primary stakeholders through the revival of

400 villages over a period of five years with a clear mandate of reviving water and other natural resources in the region. The support from UNDP and the Italian Development Cooperation helped JBF to get established as an institution.

With the augmentation of the water programme, the foundation of the tripartite partnership in the Board was further strengthened. All the partners continue to complement each others’ views with an effective long-term strategy and subsequent action plans. For instance, the Trustees have conceived the *Jal*



Water is the most precious, limited natural resource we have in this country...But because water belongs to no one - people use it as their private sewers





The effort was spearheaded by Dr. Neera Burra, UNDP representative and also referred to as the architect of the program and the impetus to it was provided by Dr. Rosario Centola and Anu Dhindaw of Italian Development Cooperation



If our access to our water is taken away, our hope for the future is taken too

Ashram - a focal point to congregate and showcase rural water issues, and advocate for pro-poor policies with a larger audience. In order to facilitate advocacy for legal and policy reforms, Dr. Maxine Olson, UNDP Resident Representative in India, provided the necessary encouragement and momentum to JBF to create networks for State, National and Global partnerships. This support enabled JBF to reach out beyond the boundaries of its project area to bring sustainability and diversity to JBF's work and take its advocacy initiative to a wider canvas.

The Nagaur conference cultivated a second collaboration this time with the US-Asia Environmental Partnership (USAEP). The conference was attended by its Regional Director

K Balakrishnan. He was impressed by the vision and work plan that the Foundation was preparing to undertake and promised to facilitate support for the fledgling organization. He proposed the name of JBF to The Asia Foundation (TAF), and arranged for a meeting between Chris Plante from TAF, Capt. Von Millard and Prithvi Raj Singh from JBF in April 2002 at which the JBF-TAF and USAEP partnership was forged, and they agreed to support JBF in the critical areas of creating an organization and leveraging support from other donor agencies.

TAF-USAEP became the first institutional donors and were instrumental in providing much needed funds not only for community mobilization but also for initiating village level institutions,



creating public awareness, documentation of the JBF processes and creating an organizational infrastructure. The assistance and encouragement from TAF might have been invisible to many but it was one of the most effective collaborations. It created a constructive opportunity for JBF to evolve.

structures in the villages where the dispensing centres were located.

JBF received support for constructing school tankas from a Singapore based civil society institution – Water for all Club. This initiative was spearheaded by Dr. Anantha Nageswaran and Ramya Nageswaran, a husband wife duo, who



TAF-USAEP became the first institutional donors and were instrumental in providing much needed funds not only for community mobilization but also for initiating village level institutions

The initial growth of JBF was supported by concerned individuals and enthusiastic institutions. In 2003, the region confronted one of the worst droughts in recent times conspicuous by extreme paucity of drinking water and fodder. During this period, Amla Ruia, a socially receptive individual from Mumbai extended financial assistance to JBF for making fodder available in the villages of Ahore block through four dispensing centres – Norva, Bhadrajun, Pachpadriya and Bala. The money collected by selling fodder (on a no profit no loss basis) was later utilized for constructing water-harvesting

mobilized non-resident Indians in Singapore to make financial contribution in a common fund, that was later utilized for water projects in the Marwar region of Rajasthan. JBF continues to get support from the Water for All Club.

In June 2003 the school tanka project got the required boost with the support extended by United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). The school tanka project was conceptualized and formulated with the assistance of Dr. Satish Kumar, N. S. Murty and Hemant Joshi representatives of Rajasthan’s state office. In June 2004, the school tanka project further received



You don't miss your water until your well runs dry



support from Wells for India (WFI). The founder member of the WFI, Dr. Nicholas Grey is committed to proactively address the drinking water requirements of school children in the Marwar region. In April 2005 the second phase of the UNICEF supported school tanka project was

adopt innovative approaches and practices in managing the organization and pursuing their mandate.

While UNDP and the Italian Development Cooperation have helped JBF to mature as an organization, SIDA, TAF, committed individuals



While UNDP and the Italian Development Cooperation have helped JBF to mature as an organization, SIDA, TAF, committed individuals and other institutions have been instrumental in supporting it during the initial period

resumed. Presently it is being steered by Deepak Roy, Project Officer, UNICEF.

JBF's ceaseless commitment towards the people of Marwar has attracted support from diverse areas. The Prince of Wales India Initiative along with International Business Leader Forum (IBLF) in 2004 had extended their support by raising funds resources for local intervention in the Marwar region.

The phenomenal growth of JBF has been widely appreciated. For instance, UNDP in their initial project proposal had mentioned TBS as the hand-holding agency for JBF while in 2004 the document was revised and considered JBF an organization having the potential to effectively manage its own operations. TAF's support also strengthened the future of JBF by helping it

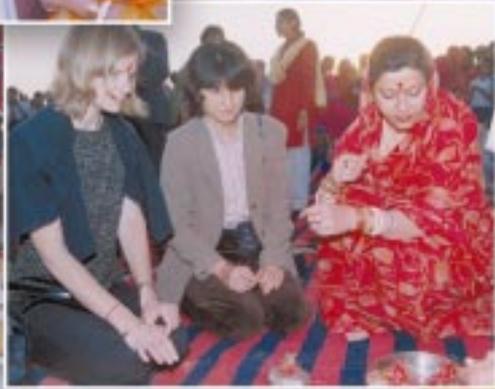
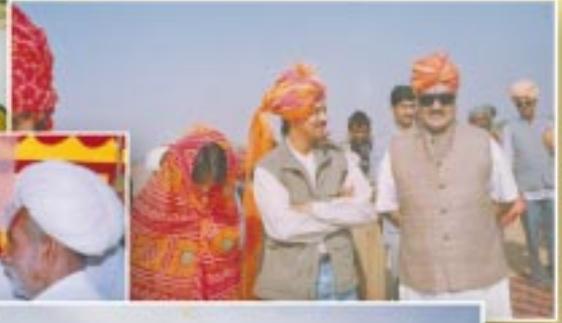
and other institutions have been instrumental in supporting it during the initial period.

Three year later, in 2005, primarily due to the confidence shown by Owe Anderson and Ramesh Mukalla of SIDA in JBF, discussions are on to forge another partnership by providing technical support to TBS for advocacy in the context of *Jal Biradari* (Water Community), an existing national network of water volunteers managed by TBS. The current support is in recognition of the effective advocacy work undertaken by JBF.

Indeed all the collaborations came not only at the right moment but endowed JBF with opportunities and autonomy to pursue their mandate of initiating change through peoples' movement.



A river sings a holy song the mysterious truth that we are a river, and if we are ignorant of this natural law, we are lost



ABOUT

JAL BHAGIRATHI FOUNDATION

*J*al Bhagirathi Foundation (JBF) was instituted as a Trust on January 15, 2002. The organization has taken up the responsibility of creating an environment of Gram Swaraj – a dynamic, self-reliant and responsive village community, positioning its work and learning at the national level for further replication thus contributing towards the ongoing debate on pro-poor policies and the creation of village republics.

The strategy of the Foundation involves ecological restoration, economic revival, strengthening democratic governance through village-level institutions, developing a cadre of local volunteers, networking with government agencies, research organizations and non-governmental organizations to facilitate policy reforms.

The organizational structure is a unique integration of a village-level volunteers' pool and a professional resource base, both complementing each other's effort. Presently, the village-level volunteers are being assisted by the professional and technical workforce to effectively adopt the right-based approach by sensitizing and mobilizing communities, and by planning, implementing and monitoring development interventions for strengthening democratic decentralization in the region.

JBF is proactively functioning in Jodhpur, Barmer and Pali districts.

The Foundation has a Board of Trustees comprising four members: HH Maharaja Gaj Singh is the Chairman, Shri Rajendra Singh is the Vice Chairman, Shri Prithvi Raj Singh is the Managing Trustee and HH Maharani Hemlata Rajye is a Trustee.