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ThemeII/ I River Diversions.

**“Water and Culture” vis-à-vis River Diversions. What roles
NGOs Like IWRS, IE , Lions Clubs International can Play.**

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Introduction:

“Water and culture? Is there any connection at all?”; I was contacted by some individuals in the recent past and raised this question. The National River Linking Project is the need of our Country and our National Culture strengthens the demand. I thought it is worth writing a small article in the National Seminar to elaborate this point and hence this brief Paper.

Recent references:

At this juncture, I may refer to recently Published book in Marathi ,” Kahani Koynechi” by Professor (English language) Ms.Usha Tambe. This deals with social field level culture and various phases of construction of Koyna Hydro Electric Project in Maharashtra State. The aspect of Human angle related to grass root Culture and the Engineering side of the Koyna Reservoir, located near Pune, has been handled effectively by in-depth study and after detailed field visits.



Koyna Hydro Electric project(Maharashtra State)

It has stressed the point that ,with the united efforts of all concerned including the engineers and civic administration; projects can be constructed effectively benefiting the society. Water is required for the citizens / farmers at economically viable and environmentally acceptable means. We must do it fast with positive and constructive approach. This is the demand of our Culture with very long historical background.

Historical background:

“Water and Culture “relation can be clearly seen even in “Ramayana” and “Mahabharata” era. The daily routine norms may differ slightly with time but the Basic Principles do not differ in thousands of year's gap! This basic Principle concerning Water Resource Management is our Culture. To make this point clear let us take the proposal of the National River Linkages. Many think that this is the aspect which has been recently taken up after the court orders. This is far from the facts. We in India has got thousands of years background of effective diversion of Rivers. The detailed study /survey has been done by the CWC for more than last thirty years and odd.



Our Culture demands "Bhagirath " efforts to complete this project.

In ancestral period, King Bhagiratha diverted River Ganges to facilitate the Water supply to the needy people. Comparatively recently in Maharashtra State the River Koyna has been diverted for Koyna Hydro Electric Project. About seven years back the “Lake Tapping” Project was successfully tackled. This was then reportedly the first of its kind in Asia. This is an example of Engineering Feat on one side and culture of the united people of the Society on the other.

Water and Culture:

Our culture also indicates that while enjoying the benefits of the Project, the sacrifice of the Project Affected people should not go unnoticed. The affected people should be the beneficiaries of the new Projects. Maharashtra is the first State having Law for Resettlement of the PAPs..More and more States should follow. This is what our Culture demands! Mega Projects, Mega Hydro projects, River Linkages Project s has been successfully completed by many Developed Countries. China has completed Three Gorges, River Diversion Mega project by carrying out Resettlement of twenty lakkhs (Two Millions) PAPs. Most of the Developed Countries have completed River diversion Projects.. I personally don't find any logical reason why in India we should not give top priority to this Project and why some NGOs oppose this Project Water Resource, about 40-50% of which is going as waste to the sea unutilized in the interest of the mankind. This too reportedly without indicating any economically viable feasible and technically feasible Nation wide Project..

It is very significant to note that hardly about 10% of the total Water Resource available is under consideration for diversion in the entire 30 –Link proposed National River Linkages Project.



**Woman praying at Pushkar Lake,
India**

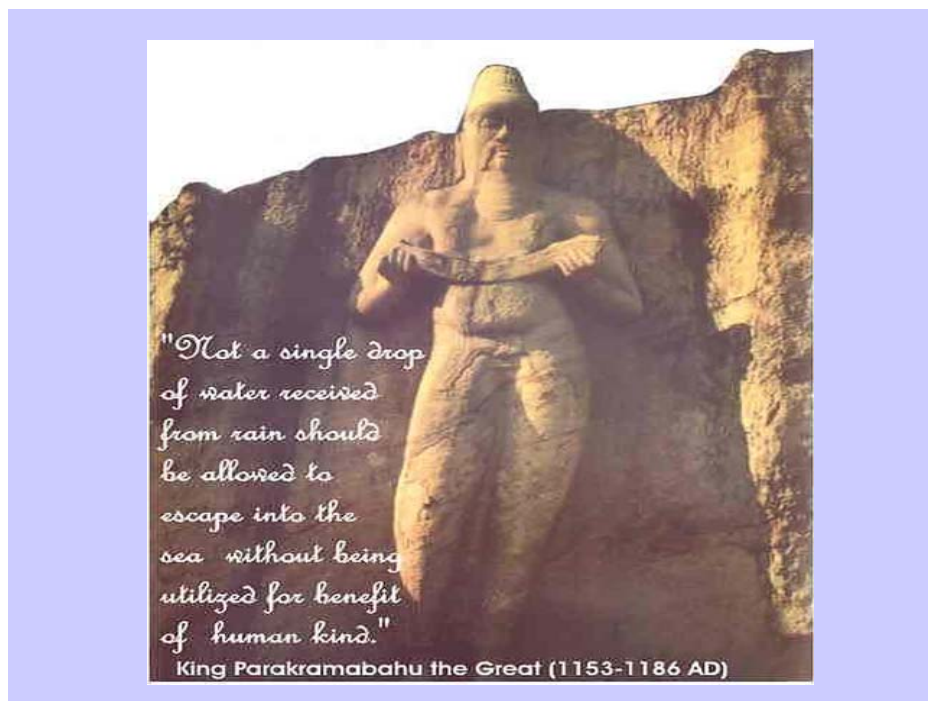
This point was made clear, not only at the State or National level but at International level in WWF –III, Kyoto Japan (2003) as a representative of Dams and Development Council of India. The points put forth were

- 1) In India we are ready with blue print for the Water Requirement of our Country by the Year 2025 and the necessary Planning for that..
- 2) We have got the Technical Expertise, engineers and adequate labour capacity to proceed as per the planning depending upon the availability of funds.

It was heartening to find that Final Resolution of the WWF-III upheld the importance of water Resources projects /Major Projects for the Developing Countries and has recommended that the NGOs, World Bank may give priority to give soft loans for such projects.

Possible Role of NGOs:

It is noticed that there is much lack of awareness about the shortage of Water Resource and judicious / efficient water management. Government alone should not be left alone to handle this aspect .The IWRS for example is giving top priority to this aspect. In Lionism (The Author is the District Cabinet Officer ,WRM, Lions Clubs International ,Dist.323D2) our main motto is "We Serve". Water Resource has accordingly been given priority. When King Paramvikramaahu the Great (1153-1186AD),SriLanka stresses the point that even a single drop of available water should not go to waste without being utilized for benefit Human kind, are we still thinking over the issue even after a gap of about thousand years?



Water Resource and Asian culture

Conclusions:

This Paper is obviously not a sort of Technical Paper. Any citizen of India, from any sector and walk of life, who has got study of the grass root level problems and gross common sense with urge of providing Water resource to the needy, will generally agree with the views expressed. These are the points based on facts and figures and not only on emotions.. This is our Culture! To be very specific “Water and Culture”!! To achieve this Goal we should jointly work together and play our duly guided Individual and /or Organizational Roles.