

Water Commercialization threat to Human Rights: A Gandhian Prospective

Providing usable water is one of the toughest challenges that most of the countries of the world are facing today. And in an era of liberalization and domination of capital centric policies commercialization of water is not a shocking step. In India recent National Water Policy draft 2012 has attracted the attention of activists, human right defenders, policy makers on the issue of commercialization of water this has become a burning issue that is being discussed at all platforms. . Water became commodity in early 1980's in Europe, United Kingdom, some places of US, as well as in Arabian countries. It is not surprising to us that distribution of ordinary drinking water- a basic human need for survival- has become a commodity, delivered by private global companies and agencies. As the ground water is declining readily, it is not surprising that a big challenge of availability of water stand in front of us. The shortage of water is so serious that one country or state will be forced to buy water from others. In this scenario the geopolitics also seems very interesting, how a state behaves to other and this may result in political conflicts.

In Europe or UK, the water is provided by the network systems by way of huge pipe channels. As if the scarcity of water is not enough, further huge quantities were lost through leakage which leads to system error imposing forcibly to society to pay those leakages? Another, socio-economic prospect of this issue is that is water pricing. Water prices will be set on the basis of expenses worked out by the water companies themselves, and include the cost of capital investments to reach international standards. As the rate of inflation changes, the prices of water will also be changed. Since 1989 to 1994 55% increment in price noted in Europe and United Kingdom. Also, in case of sudden disease attack like cholera, it will be responsibility of private companies to solve out the problem. But to provide basic health is the natural responsibility of government and thus to operate water services as well. So, there is need of such agencies who can implement those policies such as to regulate the water and sewerage industry. Its functions include ensuring that water companies deliver good services, looking after consumer interests and placing a limit on how much could be charged for water. At the same time, water agencies has to be guaranteed the economic resources they require to be able to provide good services and make investments, which could be included as extra burden on common men.

Some people can afford to pay their water bills but there is large numbers who can't afford the single water bottle. In a situation of cutting off water supplies to the citizens due to non-payment of their bills the conflict between common men and government will be increased and as a result some extreme conditions may be seen. There is huge bias between right to live and look water as commodity.

Now, **water as Global Commodity**

The system of contracting out the operation of water services to private companies began to spread quite quickly around the world. In the wake of the neo-liberal wave that swept the world in the later part of 1980's, the private sector was regarded as the most effective means of supplying people with water as it could provide the necessary capital.

In 1992, an international water conference was held in Dublin, organized by United Nations for sustainable development and various environmental issues. Four main principles were adopted:

1. Fresh water is a finite and vulnerable resources, essential to sustain life, development and the environment
2. Water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners, and policy makers at all levels.
3. Women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water
4. Water has an economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognized as an economic good.

The conference was a big breakthrough for market solution. In addition, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank had already made privatization a condition of finance for water projects. It is hardly surprising that the Dublin declaration was announced in 1992, three years after the many giant private firms in all around world. This came as only the supporting document of privatization of water and other basic needs.

The Dublin declaration postulates that if water is free, people do not regard it as valuable, and so waste it, while the shortage of water in the world is growing. Operation, maintenance and investment should therefore be covered by the payments, made by consumers and not by state subsidiaries. This means, in turn, that citizens must pay more for their water.

Water is not an infinite resource. There are some who seriously maintain that water may become as expensive as oil in the future. Who is wasting water? Without thinking about it, Europe take a daily shower thereby using 30-60 liters of water per person, while in the US the trend filled with 12,00 liters of water. It is worth reflecting that 30 liters of water is more than a poor family in a barren area like Sahara, Ethiopia, Rajasthan can manage to obtain in a day to day use for everything. Nor is it certain that such a family would have the cash to pay for something as basic as water. Today, 1.5 billion people in the world lack access to clean drinking water, while 3 billion have no sanitation facilities. Many city dwellers throughout the world lack even rudimentary toilets facilities. They have to defecate in open spaces or into waste paper or plastic bags. The population growth of the world is outpacing the provision of potable water especially in the cities. Less than half the populations in the largest cities in Africa, Asia and Lattin America have piped channel system in their homes for supply.

The world's all countries and international agencies have committed themselves to UN Millennium Development goals. At the summits held in 2000 & 2002, world leaders decided that by the year 2015 half of the people who presently lack drinking water would have access to it, and that the number of people who live in unacceptable sanitary conditions should be halved by 2015. Long before these decisions were taken, though, private companies were already engaged in providing many cities with water and sewerage- on condition that they could make a profit.

Now there is some fundamental questions arises as on one side governments show their responsibility to provide basic human rights while on the other side deem water as commodity good and promoting

heavy industries who consumes more water, hydropower projects to stop free-flow of the rivers. We agree with the fact that we need development and providing basic amenities to a rapidly increasing population is a challenging job but are we going towards sustainable development or sustainable society? This is the million dollar question in front of policy makers and solution lies into the Gandhian Rural structure to use local resources to fulfill the needs of locality.

In philosophy sovereignty of commonly available materials like Jal sovereignty, seed sovereignty, beej sovereignty leads to sustainability and self-reliance in communities. Globally vulnerable climate become biggest threat to society and its amplifies and demined the importance of environmental challenges and its cycle. Gandhi believes the locally available material should be used in controlled way for development and survival. Increasing population growth leads to extra exploitation and mismanagement of available natural resources which leads to vulnerable society. Climate change is global phenomenon but its solution lies into local management practices. We can mitigate the impacts of climate change with local management practices. We have to understand the villages and natural resources as central body and create our management practices according to existing conditions.

The only solution for this global challenge is lies in philosophy of sovereignty.

“By the community for the community”