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World Water Day and significance of celebrating "Namami Devi Narmade" - Seva Yatra

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World Water Day is celebrated worldwide on March 22 and this couldn't have come at a better time since we, the people of Madhya Pradesh, have embarked on Narmada Seva Yatra, the largest river conservation campaign in the world. In 1993, the United Nations General Assembly declared the day as 'World Day for Water' to increase awareness among people about the importance of water conservation.

A lot of importance has been given to water in Indian culture and the world needs to learn from us. In Hindu tradition, we believe our entire life is based on water; from birth to death, we also use water for all our ceremonies.

"Gange cha Yamune chaiva

Godavari Saraswati,

Narmade Sindho Kaveri, Jalesmin Sannidhim Kuru." - Ahnika Sutravai, Verse 106

Water is our lifeline and a key for our survival. Most of the civilizations have developed and flourished on the banks of mighty rivers. The Rig Veda has the famous Nadi Sukta (River Hymn RV 10-75). The seers regarded rivers as life bestowing, life nurturing and life protecting Divine Mothers.

Madhya Pradesh is lucky to have been blessed by five river basins with more than 3900 kms of rivers flowing in the state. However, our responsibility lies in making this blessing remain with us forever. As I write to you on the World Water Day, you know my friends that water is increasingly becoming

a very scarce resource. In India, the per capita availability of water has decreased sharply from 3000 cubic meters to 1123 cubic meters, compared to global average of 6000 cubic meters, which is worrisome. Apart from increase in population, the sheer wastage by people with

access to water is one of the major reasons for the same. We know the demand for

water is going to go up in the years to come. To meet the growing demand, we need to use our water resources judiciously. Hence the importance of water conservation has gained significance.

Fully aware of the importance of preserving our rivers for future generations, my government embarked upon 'Nar-

mada Seva Yatra' on December 11, 2016.

It is not unknown that Narmada River is the lifeline of Madhya Pradesh. It is the fifth largest river of Indian subcontinent and one of the seven holy rivers of India. The objective of the yatra is to increase awareness about conservation of the largest river in the state.

Today, I feel overwhelmed that the yatra has become a grand public movement. People are coming forward to take pledge about protecting and nurturing Ma Narmada and her ecosystem. The Yatra has touched hearts of millions across the globe. People from all walks of life, irrespective of their caste, colour, class and creed are wholeheartedly participating in the campaign.

People have taken pledge of

planting trees and protecting them, protecting the banks of Narmada from encroachments, avoiding water pollution and keeping the river clean. We are planning to plant 10 million trees on July 2 along Narmada's coast. We are also constructing 'kunds' on the banks of Narmada, which can be used to immerse idols and dispose worship goods. Similarly, mukti dhams (cremation ground) are being constructed on the river banks to check pollution.

Historically, people who drown corpses of their relatives into the river have pledged not to repeat it, and individuals involved in open defecation alongside the river are now using toilets. A massive transformation is taking place on the banks of Narmada and the world is taking notice of the same.

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