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Public perceptions on Bhagawan Satya Sai water projects

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Abstract

Water is essential for all organisms on this earth. The Vedas hail the element water as the very basis of existence. The evolutionary tree has at its roots, life forms that originated out of water. Thus, water is a gift of God to this world. Water covers three-fourths of the surface of earth. But surprisingly, in spite of such an abundance of this gift of God, in our present times, pure drinking water has become a scarce commodity. Rampant pollution by industries has contaminated our rivers and groundwater. An ever-burgeoning human population is depleting even the available water resources by being wasteful in its use. Man is today staring in the face of a water crisis that perils his very existence. The need of the hour is a system of water management that optimizes the utilization and allocation of the available water resources so that adequate water is available to all. To mitigate the problem of drinking water in rain-fed areas of Andhra Pradesh and neighbouring states, Bhagawan Sathya Sai Baba initiated water projects in 1990s and still continuing in all places, where it started. In this paper the author collected the opinion of rural mass on the important aspects of Sathya Sai water projects in Ananthapuramu district of Andhra Pradesh.

Keywords: Water sources, frequency of supply, project, supply

Introduction

Water is needed for all aspects of life. Since most of our body is made up of water, we necessarily have to drink water several times a day. Further, water is needed for producing food. Without water, we simply would not have any food to eat. Since life depends on water, it is no surprise that almost all the early human settlements were on the banks of or adjacent to good sources of waters, especially big rivers. Thus, we have examples of the Indus valley civilization located adjacent to the famous River Indus, the Sumerian civilization that flourished adjacent to the River Euphrates, and the Egyptian civilization that flourished on the banks of the River Nile. Even today, the great Mississippi River in America plays a vital role in the economy of the many States through which it passes.

A long time ago, water usage by mankind was restricted to drinking, agriculture and domestic needs (such as bathing, washing clothes etc). Today, that has changed enormously. Water is presently needed for more than just drinking and domestic usage. Every person consumes, although may be indirectly, water for agriculture and for the material products that he wants industry to provide him. Added to that, there are three important complicating factors. 1) The population of the world is constantly increasing, at an alarming rate in fact. This means that even if the per capita demand is frozen at today's level, more and more water would be required in the future simply because of the increase in the number of humans living on earth. 2) In addition to the above, industry is demanding more and more water because of the enormous growth in consumerism. People are simply buying more and more products, all of which use up a lot of water in the manufacturing stage. 3) Further, existing water sources are being polluted, making them useless; which makes the fresh water resource available actually less than what it was before. In short, we have a situation where we have less and are actually trying to consume more.

Sri Satya Sai Water Projects

The district of Ananthapuramu is one of the most arid and backward districts in Andhra Pradesh. The three major rivers Pennar, Hagari and Chitravathi that flow in the district are non-perennial and remain dry during the summer months. Tanks and rivers run dry for most of the year and groundwater too is scarce.

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Even the groundwater that is available is brackish and high in fluoride content. The excessive fluoride in the water was causing fluorosis leading to widespread skeletal and dental deformations. Thus, the people of Ananthapuramu have for long been suffering due to lack of water even for drinking. The villagers had to trudge long distances in the harsh unforgiving heat to fetch water for their daily consumption. Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, by His colossal water projects supplying water to several villages not only in Ananthapuramu district but also several districts in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu. In His own words, "river water flows into the sea and is thus wasted. If this water can be harnessed so as to be available to even to water scarce regions....." Under His Divine guidance, the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust has executed a number of projects that have brought this elixir of life in to the parched throats of millions in Andhra Pradesh in Ananthapuramu district in 1995, Medak and Mahabubnagar in 2001 and in the metropolitan city of Chennai in 2004. A project to ameliorate the situation of water scarcity in upland areas of West and East Godavari districts of Andhra Pradesh was completed and handed over to the Government in the year 2007.

Number of Sources

In villages people fetch water from different sources for different purposes. In some villages there are other sources for drinking water, apart from Satya Sai Water Projects.

Table 2: Major Sources of Drinking Water for Sample Households

S. No	Major Sources of Drinking Water	No. of Respondents	Frequency
1	Bore well/ hand pump	12	13.33
2	Public tap	54	60.00
3	Open well	1	1.11
4	Household water supply (piped)	21	23.33
5	Other	2	2.22
Total		90	100.00

Source: Field Data

It can be found from table 2 that nearly 60 percent of sample respondents declared that they fetch drinking water from the public tap provided by Bhagawan Sathya Sai Water Project. For 23.33 percent of sample household there is a individual tap connection provided under Sathya Sai Water Project. For the 13.33 percent of sample respondents bore well/ hand pump is the major source of drinking water. It is learnt during field survey that these households were away from the Sathya Sai water source; as such they are depending on bore well/hand pump. Around 2.22 percent fetching from other sources like rivulets, streams of nearby. Only one

Table 3: Distance of Satya Sai Water Source to Sample Households

S. No	Distance	No. of Respondents	Frequency
1	< 100 Meters	32	35.56
2	101 to 300 Meters	24	26.67
3	301 to 500 Meters	18	20.00
4	501 Metres and above	16	17.78
Total		90	100.00

Source: Field Data

As per table 3 for 35.66 percent of sample households Sathya Sai water source is less than 100 meters. Around 26.67 percent of sample respondents declared that the Sathya Sai water source is 101 to 300 metres away from their households. The distance of Sathya Sai water source

Most of these new sources were developed in recent times. Table 1 gives the details of sample respondents report on number of sources of drinking water.

Table 1: Sample Respondents on the Sources of Drinking Water in their Respective Villages

S. No	Number of Sources	No. of Respondents	Frequency
1	Only One	78	86.67
2	Two	9	10.00
3	Three	2	2.22
4	Four & above	1	1.11
Total		90	100.00

Source: Field Data

According to table 1 around 86.67 percent of respondent public reported that they have only one source for drinking water in their village. They declared that Bhagawan Sathya Sai water Project is the only source for them to fetch water for drinking. There are 2 sources of drinking water as per the reports of 10.67 percent of sample respondent public. Three different sources were reported by 2.22 percent of sample respondents. The remaining 1.11 percent declared that they have more than 3 sources for fetching drinking water.

Major Sources of Drinking Water

The major sources of drinking water for sample households are presented in table 2.

respondent declared that he is fetching water from open well.

Distance of Sathya Sai Water Source

Under the Sathya Sai Water Project, public taps were fixed in all important areas in the village. But due to expansion of villages, the water source for certain households may be far from the source. Table 3 gives the details of distance of Sathya Sai water source to the sample households in the study area.

for 20 percent of households in the study area varies between 301 to 500 meters. With regard to 17.78 percent of sample households the distance of Sathya Sai water source is more than half kilometer.

Water Supply Frequency

The water supply frequency to a particular village or area depends on the following factors.

1. The availability of water in the major source of water.
2. The season in a year.
3. The location of area, for which water is to be supplied.
4. The distance of water source

Table 4 gives the particulars of frequency of supply of water under Sathya Sai water projects in the study area.

Table 4: Frequency of Supply of Sathya Sai Drinking Water

S. No	Supply Frequency	No. of Respondents	Frequency
1	24 hour supply	48	53.33
2	More than once a day	27	30.00
3	Once a day	9	10.00
4	Once in two days	3	3.33
5	Once in three days	2	2.22
6	No Response	1	1.11
Total		90	100.00

Source: Field Data

Table 4 reveals that drinking water under Sathya Sai Water Project is supplied to the villagers round the clock as per the reports of 53.33 percent of sample. According to 30 percent of sample respondents reports Sathya Sai water is supplied more than once in a day i.e. twice or thrice in a day. About 10 percent of sample declared that Sathya Sai water in their villages is supplied once in a day. According to 3.33 percent of sample respondents Sathya Sai water is supplied to their localities on every alternative day. For 2.22 percent of sample households Sathya Sai water is supplied once in three days. The remaining 1.11 percent denied responding.

Water Quality

In addition to wastage, the quality of the water available is constantly being degraded in many places due to a variety of reasons. Once ground water becomes polluted, it is very difficult to clean it up. The pollutants would remain in the water and would come up along with the ground water when it is pumped up for drinking purposes. Table 5 presents the views of sample respondents on the quality of water supplied under Sathya Sai water project.

Table 5: Sample Respondents Views on the Quality of Sathya Sai Water

S. No	Ratings	No. of Respondents	Frequency
1	Very Good	24	26.67
2	Good	39	43.33
3	Average	22	24.44
4	Poor	2	2.22
5	Very Poor	1	1.11
6	Can't Say	2	2.22
Total		90	100.00

Source: Field Data

Table 5 shows that more than 90 percent of sample respondents rated the quality of drinking water supplied under Sathya Sai Water Project. To be precise 43.33 percent rated the water quality supplied under Sathya Sai Water Project is good. Ty of water is very good as per the responses of 26.67 percent of sample respondents. Average rating to the water supplied under Sathya Sai Water Project was assigned by 24.44 percent of sample. Only 2.22 percent and 1.22 percent of sample rated the water quality supplied

under Sathya Sai Water Project as poor and very poor respectively. The remaining 2.22 percent not assigned any rating to the quality of water supplied under Sathya Sai Water Project.

Conclusion

Every Sathya Sai drinking water project has its unique features. Of these, the Ananthapuramu project, the first one to be executed, is by far the most complex. The system of education has awakened the life of several towards the service to fellow human beings. The study shows that more than three-fourth of learners at Sathya Sai educational institutions inculcated several good qualities in their course of their studies.

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