



Seva Mandir

Transforming lives through democratic and participatory development

2018 UML speech by Dr Brij Gopal

Shailendra ji : After this program now I will request respected Brij Gopal ji, Ajay sahab and Bhati sahab to come on the stage and take their seats.

Now I would like to give before the house a brief introduction of our chief guest and key note speaker Prof. Brij Gopal ji. Prof. Brij Gopal ji is a renowned wetland ecologist i.e. he is an expert on ecology of wetland. He studied in the universities in Meerut, Kanpore and Varanasi and after completing his Ph.D. he taught in Delhi, Agra and Rajasthan universities. About a decade ago he retired from the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. Ecology and water resource conservation are the fields of his interest as well as his expertise. He invested fifty years in the intensive studies and research work on these subjects through his work on rivers, lakes, ponds etc wetlands. He has deep interest in conventional methods of water resource management and their social and economic aspects, climate change, and the policies and laws pertaining to water. He has represented in various national and international committees also. He founded the Center for Inland Waters in South Asia and presently he is Chairman of the National Institute of Ecology. For formal welcome, description of the program and detailed introduction of the organization I invite the CEO of Seva Mandir Mrs. Priyanka Singh ji.

Priyanka ji : Thank you Shailendra. Colleagues, our chief guest today Mr. Brij Gopal ji, President of Seva Mandir, Vidya Bhawan, bit more than Seva Mandir, Ajay sahab, Bhati sahab, Lodha sahab's son, daughter and other family members, our all friends who came over here from different villages, I welcome you all once again. As Shailendra ji said this is 19th Ummed Mal Lodha Environment Award Function, and if we count the years of Seva Mandir's journey, I am proud to say today we have completed fifty years. Therefore, it is a day of great enthusiasm and indescribable joy for us, and Ummed Mal Lodha Environment Award Function provides us the opportunity to celebrate this. These fifty years is not merely a matter of counting the years. It has been a long journey of fifty years and I feel myself to be extremely fortunate to welcome and greet you all on behalf of Seva Mandir as a representative of this long journey. But behind me it has been a history of great struggles. In a way I am representing all those who have been part of this journey beginning with Bhai sahab, lakhs of volunteers, villagers, associates, their colleagues and I am extremely hopeful of a future of five hundred years before me which I foresee right here in this room and that is why there is shortage of seats here. You might be feeling uncomfortable but I am hopeful that somewhere you will be successful in creating space for yourself.

Most of you are aware of the activities we carried out during these fifty years in these 600-700 villages in Udaipur and Rajsamand districts. We carried out different types of work – education, health, land, water, agriculture, but perhaps fundamental objective of all our efforts was the same that how to create people's own strength, own power, own agency, and that too not the wrong kind of strength but the right kind of strength, morality based strength, the kind of

strength which may enable them to take over the responsibility of their own environment, their own people, issues pertaining to them and take initiatives in these regards. And they should be able to do so not only for their villages but also for their whole society, block, tehsil and one day for country as well. I feel we succeeded to a great extent in achieving this objective of creating moral strength and morality and being the occasion of the 50th anniversary of establishment of Seva Mandir I would take the liberty to take time to share with Prof. Brij Gopal ji and you all an experience from the past

This anecdote belongs to Jhadol. This is just an example. Again I would say that most of the people present here might be aware that this is an area full of forests. From every viewpoint forests are very important there and in fact in a way they define the life of people over there. Seva Mandir has done enormous work there. Especially under the leadership of Bhise sahab, who is present among us here, the local people resolved to protect and take care of their jungles and this has been the most remarkable success story. Of course there were troubles to overcome from time to time. Threats would come, sometimes privatization by village people or outsiders would create problems and so on. But when this trend of privatization was increasing a very good government policy was introduced which really was a very good initiative in the form of Forest Protection Act. In my opinion it was a good thing because it had scope to provide space to people's initiative and people's responsibility to protect their jungles and environment.

And I would repeat that people of this area, the area covered by Seva Mandir, proved this policy to be really good. They said under this policy they were able to take their private rights as well as community rights. In present time nobody gives up land, but in our rural area people decided not to take private rights and insisted upon taking community rights. We have been bit unfortunate that although 10 years have passed in making efforts for taking community rights but files are pending for as long as 8 years due to which they have not yet got their rights. Utmost efforts have been made but they have not got the rights. In Jhadol, if I concentrate specifically on Jhadol alone, there are 150-200 such villages who have been continuously presenting their claims and documents for community rights but in vain. In fact this exercise could be over instantly with a small piece of paper but perhaps government is bit suspicious of providing a big piece of land through a small piece of paper and perhaps that is why they have turned the need of small piece of paper into bundle of files. For ten years those files are moving endlessly from pillar to post. Such strange things have been attached to the files which have been heard of or seen neither by villagers nor by people working with us in the organization. Despite putting in wholehearted efforts we suffered a setback when we were informed that some of the villagers gave in written to the government that they didn't want that right. They wrote that it was something wrong, we don't want to have community right at all and we are fine as we are. Our jungles are doing fine too. Seva Mandir felt deeply hurt. I also had strange feeling as to whom we were talking to! As per our information we knew 150-200 villages in Jhadol were seeking community rights and from 4 villages of the same Jhadol letters were sent with the opposite intent that they don't seek community rights.

We visited villages and organized 2-4 meetings there. Ajay sahab also went to participate in those meetings in Jhadol and those were indeed very good and useful meetings. About 100 to

200 people came to participate in each meeting and they informed us that those were fake letters, those letters were not sent from their villages and somebody else has written those letters. Some 4-5 persons wrote those ones. But nobody knew who did so. They said let go this matter as those were fake letters and wrong deeds. But more important thing was that total 300-350 representatives from all 286 villages in Jhadol attended those two meetings. And they said that right was at one side. It would be good if we get it and leave it if we don't get it. More important thing is that we won't allow privatization of our jungles. We ourselves would save our jungles. Now we don't need title deeds. We would prepare our own document, our own rules and our own procedures and we will save these jungles of ours. Even better was that some people of those villages, e.g. 7-8 persons in Jamuna village, got private rights but they gave up it in the interest of the unity the village.

As I said this story is time consuming but I wanted to share it because I feel it is an apt gift on our 50th anniversary that extremely simple people of Jhadol block are committing that they would take care of and maintain their jungles and their environment as a common interest, as a common property without any selfishness. They are simple people like you who are sitting here. I hope, like Jhadol, it will happen in every block of Seva Mandir's domain or work area.

I feel there can be no greater movement than this collective initiative being taken by people of this small remote tribal area, especially when we are talking and concerned about global warming and climate change. There can be no greater gift than this to the whole world today. And I am really proud of sharing this story with you. You will hear more about it today. On this occasion I specially request all of you people who have come here from other blocks like Kumbhalgarh, Kotda, Kherwada, Badgaon, Girva to come forward to support people of Jhadol. There will be further program on this. Support them with all your heart and mind and spirit. There can't be anything better for us and our future.

With this I would stop here. I heartily welcome you, especially Prof. Brij Gopal ji who came here from Jaipur. On way he specially appreciated one thing about Seva Mandir that while there is competition today to capture as much area to work as possible, Seva Mandir is sticking to it's one specific area to work with devotion. He said that it is highly appreciable. Very few people appreciate this. Prof. Brij Gopal ji appreciated this, spared his time and came to grace this occasion. I specially thank and welcome you. There will be formality of vote of thanks for all of you at end but I won't miss to mention that today's celebration which we are going to enjoy here would have not been possible without Shailendra ji, Jagdish ji, Narendra ji and their entire team. It is due to them, Bhise sahab, Bhati ji that so many people have come here from villages. I am fully confident that all of you will thoroughly enjoy today. I welcome you once again. Thank you.

Narendra ji : Thank you Priyanka ji. For brief description of Umed Mal Lodha Trust now I call upon Chairman of the Trust Mr. Hemraj Bhati sahab.

Hemraj ji Bhati sahab : Chief guest of the function Mr. Brij Gopal ji, Chairman National Institute of Ecology, president of the function as well as president of Seva Mandir and anchor of Umed

Mal Lodha Trust Ajay sahab, members of Lodha family, Bhise sahab, Priyanka ji, Shailendra ji, Narendra ji and my brothers and sisters. It has been my extremely good fortune that I got the opportunity to work as a fellow-traveler, an associate to Umed Mal Lodha sahab on this journey of environment. He inspired us in many ways and I would like to briefly speak about it now.

First of all I would say he was very simple hearted and great grassroots level thinker. He was also an expert horticulturist. I feel that combination of his expertise and simple heartedness made him think about the land of Aravali which consisted of 70% of common land. But unfortunately most of this common land was either going under privatization or turning into barren land. Trees and plants were being cut down. He thought of doing something worthwhile and decided to begin something to contribute to improve the existing situation. I feel he possessed extraordinary blend of qualities of thinking, working and practicality. Such a man can definitely provide inspiration to us as to how to carry out the work or task.

He said me 3-4 things and I felt he used to behave with sense of equality and brotherhood with all without differentiating. Such personalities are very few. He was a person who retired from the post of director from Rajasthan government service and behaved as equals with simple villagers. This quality is difficult to find in people. He was one of those persons and it is because of him that we create an atmosphere of equality, practicality, brotherhood and mutual cooperation. Today we all remember him. We remind each other to remember that we are equal and we have to cooperate with each other. We are associates to each other. This is a great inspiration.

Secondly, another good inspiration that we get from him is that he insisted upon capacity enhancement also. There should be education and training on this. After such education and training when one will get the opportunity to work it will be a rare combination. He made **vanpal, van sahayak** from among those persons who had only simple education and even uneducated ones but who were interested in environment. He initiated the process of dialogue between such team and the village group (gram samooch). This is his unforgettable contribution and this dialogue of today is a link to continue that process of dialogue. We all together participate in this dialogue organized once every year. I feel glad about today. Gradually we tried to introduce an award at group level; we tried to introduce an award for **van suraksha samiti**. If I talk about last 5 years, as Priyanka ji spoke about past 50 years, then you will be surprised to know that now often there is tie between you people.

Groups are properly looking after and protecting environment in their villages. There is healthy competition between the groups. One group says we are ahead and another group says we are ahead because we have corrected particular mistakes and identified our shortcomings, openly accepted them and improved them. We too qualify for the award. Therefore there is very strict selection process for the awards. This is accomplished by the experts and field operation. We feel that gradually we should increase the number of awards and award money but we are helpless and unable to increase the award money. Usually award money is increased but our board decided not to do so but to help them getting more financial support for their endeavor. I

would say without hesitation that Seva Mandir's contribution is extraordinary which turned the awareness campaign into mission. Seva Mandir's contribution to creating awareness is extremely praiseworthy. This year also you will find increase in this number. Thank you.

Brij Gopal ji : First of all my greetings to all of you present here. President of Seva Mandir Mr. Ajay Mehta ji, Mrs. Priyanka ji, Chairman of Umed Mal Lodha Memorial Trust Mr. Bhati ji, all members from Lodha family, my brothers and sisters who came from all rural areas of this region and other ladies and gentlemen. Friends this is the first opportunity for me to get little bit acquainted with Seva Mandir. When Mr. Mehta ji rang up and said that he wanted to see me to invite me to come here on 12th, I could not understand what was the reason for remembering me and from where did he come to know about me and get my contact details. It felt really strange to me. I did not know Mr. Mehta ji that way but I knew that he was President of Seva Mandir in Udipur. Long back I already heard about Seva Mandir, about 40-45 years back, and I very well knew about its founder Respectable Mohan Singh ji Mehta. But I could never meet him. I came to Rajasthan University in Jaipur in 1972 and I was trying to understand the university and had discussions with my colleagues. Every day it was mentioned that this university was set up during the time of Mr. Mehta ji and all that was seen there was contribution of Mr. Mehta ji.

Along with that I often received news about him from Indian Foreign Secretary Mr. Jagat Singh ji Mehta. I was connected with Udaipur even before that. As I studied water, I came to Udaipur in 1965 for the first time and I had a look of the city and around, Fatehsagar Lake, tried to see and understand Pichhola. So I knew Udaipur and then I came to know that Seva Mandir was also there in Udaipur and also Vidya Bhawan Institute which was even more famous or talked about in academia. Vidya Bhawan's work in the area of education was well known and talked about not only in Udaipur and Rajasthan but out of Rajasthan also. I am not saying anything fabricated. I actually tried to understand how the directors of Seva Mandir remembered me and during this process I recalled some of the memories of the past and realized that I know them and understand them since very long but never got any opportunity to interact face to face with them.

After that I had some connection with people in the field of agriculture, ICSR related institutes and university also. I knew that in all districts there were such institutes and there were agricultural science centers with most of the institutes. When I visited the agricultural science centers and tried to understand their functioning I came to know that Mr. Mohan Singh ji Mehta had the key role behind establishment of those centers. It was a report presented by the committee headed by him which recommended the setting up of these agricultural science centers and gradually that model was adopted all over India. Therefore, this organization, founders of this organization have given immense contribution not only to this region but to the entire nation. For that I bow down before them and I am extremely thankful to them for providing me this opportunity to come here and know and understand more about them.

Second thing is the reason why this function is being organized here today and I am invited. I feel my interest in these rural areas has constantly increased to a great extent. Since long we

have been realizing that there is need to work in the rural areas. But before you all I won't go into details of Seva Mandir's work. Whatever I had heard about Seva Mandir's work as well as Seva Mandir supported work was in fact incomplete as I came to know more about it today. It is a really good work. Empowerment of communities of the region, forest protection, watersheds development and education of people and so on, all are remarkable efforts of Seva Mandir. In the morning I was talking about all these with Priyanka ji. I told her now a days when non-government organizations begin any work people ask them where are they working? The NGOs reply we work in so and so village or so and so district. Then people react these are local organizations and there are so many local organizations but they do not do anything, they are local only. Seva Mandir is one such organization in India which has worked intensively in one area, only in some districts but the results of intensive work are appreciable and I think people should go ahead with this approach and work accordingly.

When we spread our work in small pieces in so many places and so many states, in various districts or in different areas of environment also then nobody gets its benefit. Rather it becomes like we did something, took our own advantage and moved away. This has been taking place in fact. In many areas when I happened to be in contact with villagers and had dialogue with them they used to say you have to carry out survey and prepare report, well do it. You people come, prepare reports, earn money and go away. We know we won't get any benefit. Moreover, you will prepare report and we would not even come to know what did you write in it. Still you please go ahead with it. This means the impact of most of the organizations is for a very short period of time or almost negligible. Organizations and institutional funding agencies are glad with that only. They are glad and satisfied that something is being done. But that is published only in news papers and reports without any impact.

The impact I observe here is the real impact. You are being awarded by Seva Mandir and the trust for your genuine work, for promoting healthy practices, for development of your area through genuine efforts. All village groups, **forest protection committees** and individuals truly deserve this honor and appreciation. I wish you carry on these efforts in future also. The work aiming at empowerment of communities, villagers, villages and village panchayats is of utmost importance.

Now I would try to express what I wish to share with you from my side and for which I have been invited here. But now I am puzzled and in dilemma as well. I had thought and prepared something to present before you which consisted 3-4 points. But I found all that is already being implemented here. I don't think I have anything more to add to the kind of work you have carried out through Seva Mandir and their support.

Of course one can think and act in a different way, it can have a different form. As personally I focus on water, the only thing I wish to say is that water is everything. The focal point of development should be water. Without water you can not walk on the path of development in any manner. When we ignore water and water crisis, we talk about other natural resources only like land, trees and plants, living creatures but all these talks about them is incomplete without mentioning water because water is necessarily embodied with them. We should not

ignore it. Talking about water, now look, in your entire struggle for common property, pasture, forest rights the water issue automatically comes in. Regarding encroachment, I must inform you that our apex court has very clearly decided that any kind of encroachment, however old it may be, has to be removed immediately. The governments were instructed to remove the encroachments with immediate effect and report it to the Supreme Court.

The encroachments were not removed nor were the reports sent. Supreme Court has lot many works to do and it can't find out on day to day basis about the status of removal of encroachments. Therefore, it doesn't seem to be something really effective. The struggles to remove encroachments, for protection of pastures, forests etc. are to be carried out by people themselves because though there are laws for all these but there is no respect and obedience to those laws. Communities and villagers have to strengthen and empower themselves and make efforts on their own.

I say this in some other context too that governments are not efficient enough and committed to anything and therefore people themselves have to do whatever is needed to be done. It will be done only when we will do it. Nothing will be done if we would wait for government to do it. **Government will neither do it by way of providing funds nor by way of any support.** People have to do it by themselves, be it claiming their rights, working for their rights, management of their natural wealth and whatever else and they have to do it collectively. You people are already fighting for your rights.

Firstly, we are here to have a dialogue in the memory of Mr. Ummed Mal ji Lodha. I respectfully pay my homage to him. About water I would like to say three things here. Water is the most important element. We should not consider water as water alone. A pond, or a lake, or a puddle is much more than water. Water is water. **It is water in this glass but if there is not water in the glass then that water will become something else.**

And secondly, what we were talking was that this management of water reservoirs should be done by the community. However, water reservoir term is used in different senses.

I say that water is most important because we talk of panch tatva (five elements). While we talk about natural resources, people often talk about pastures, trees, wildlife. All these are made up of five elements. Living beings or things are made up by combination of five elements and we consider those living beings as our wealth. Whereas the real wealth, the real resources are those five elements.

Mahabhutaan panche sarvbhuteshu bhutpratah akrot teshuhu veshnyam tanujivo na pashyatihi. These five elements are not equally found in them all. In different animals, plants and places these five elements are present in different forms and different ratio and we are unable to see this dissimilarity easily and quickly. Moreover, be it anything, living or non-living, water is the basis of all. Somebody may think probably it is not so but for that it is said in the Mahabharata, **"tatra tatra hi drishyante, dhaatvah panchbautikaay, yaraavritam vridm sarve jagat sthaavar jangamam.**

These five elements are existing in everything living and non-living. The famous verse of Rahim says, "Rahiman pani raakhiye, bin pani sab soon. Pani gaye na ubare, moti maanas choon." Everything, even a stone which is created, contains some water component at some point of time. Without water it is impossible to perform any human activity. Water is necessary to do anything. We consume water in one form or the other. One more fact about water is that it is immanent, it is present everywhere. There is ample water in this room too, though it is not visible to us. There is no lack of water in the air and in our bodies too as we all are mostly water itself. Nothing is possible without water. Water is not only important to us, rather we believe it to be a sacred thing. We believe it to be so sacred that even little sip (aachman) of water before worship or sprinkling it will purify everything. Little water will purify everything! So, water has such purifying effect. You can make use of it for other kind of purifications also, whether it is anything symbolic or otherwise.

Another important fact about water is that its distribution is not alike everywhere. Nowhere round the year will you get similar water, meaning water changes with time. Its availability differs from place to place. All over the globe distribution of water differs. Oceans contain extremely huge amount of water but it is of no use to us. Here also there is scarcity of water. I won't talk much about it. In most of the places in India it is said that there is draught. All our ministries like Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Environment and other ministries, government say that there is lack of rains in our country, everywhere there is draught, there is scarcity of water. But show me where the draught is?

I read about Udaipur also. Everywhere it was said that it is very much draught affected because there it rains only for 2-4 months and actually only 10-15 days, not 2-4 months. Rest there is no rain. Therefore it is draught there. But perhaps nobody knows the authentic definition of draught given in the books. We should know that government declares the state of draught in a particular area or region when there is below average rain in that area. Average rain is the quantity of rain expected in a particular area based on the calculation of average of rains of 100 years. If it rains at least 20% less than this average then it is considered as the state of draught. Now another difficulty occurs. There is a big difficulty between average and percentage. 20% less of what quantity of water? Suppose there is an area where there it rains 500 mm, 50 cm rains in whole year. If there is shortage of 20% then calling it draught is understandable. But where it rains 5000 mm and if there is shortage of 20% then also it is draught! Meaning, my salary is 100000 and if I receive 2000 less in any month it is a loss to me. One whose salary is only 2000 and 50 were deducted from it, he too suffered the loss. Now help me understand who became poor? Who suffered from draught?

Here it rains 500 mm, 800 mm. If it rains properly anywhere in entire Rajasthan it is..... . I got to read so. If there is any difference in figures I will correct myself. Either Kota or Udaipur, situated in south-east of Rajasthan, has proper rains. No other place had forests more than Udaipur had. When I started studying I come to know about forests of Udaipur. We had university people from Bhopal who were doing their research on forests of Udaipur. Rajasthan has desert area and there used to be lack of trees. It has very few trees. In Udaipur the figure of

rain is 500 mm. But people of Udaipur should think how much does it rain in Badmer and Jaisalmer? How do people survive there? If they can manage with 200 mm rain then why can't we do with 200 mm rain? In fact we have become habitual of 500 mm rain and therefore if it reduces to 400 mm today we will feel as if we are in very big trouble.

This is the state of affairs. I have reason behind saying so. Now a days I am saying only one thing and I say it everywhere. One month ago I said the same thing to Anna Hazare ji also. I stated that it is wrong reporting that this is a state of draught, that it is draught affected area. There was a conference on water in Bundelkhand. Rajendra Singh ji was also present there. It was said that it was draught there. I said Bundelkhand used to have 1200 mm rain, and even if there is shortage it would be 1000 mm. During last two years it was draught while rain was 800-900 mm. I said Jaipur had only 300 mm. Then who is draught affected? Not Bundelkhand but Jaipur is actually draught affected. Therefore this problem of draught is a mere word or term only and so is true about what is called the less rain. The real issue to be addressed is only one and that issue is how to manage our water. We have to learn that we have no choice but to use judiciously whatever amount of water we get from rain. Government has started to transfer water from one place to another. It was introduced long ago but now more attention is being paid to this. Water is being transferred from where it is in ample to where there is scarcity of it. For example, there is ample water in river Narmada in Madhya Pradesh. It is being transferred across Gujarat upto Okha, in the desert. Now some water of Narmada is being transferred to Rajasthan also.

So, there is much enthusiasm about tranfering water from one place to another. Our governments wish to connect rivers with each other like pipelines and this will ensure equal water for all. Nobody knows when this will be completed and water will be available equally to all but of course planning for water goes on. I insist upon proper management of whatever rain water we get. You don't need water more than that. We can manage with 300-400 mm rain also.

Now I will try to explain how the rivers will be connected and I want to add to it that since long water resources are being connected. Such efforts are going on from centuries and even thousands of years. In many places I have seen ponds as old as 1200 years. In the past kings and emperors used to mainly build ponds. There are cities which have large number of ponds there, even 100 to 200 ponds in each city. I visited Raipur in Chhattisgarh. When that city was built 150 ponds were also built there, but they are no more there now. In the same state there is Ratanpur city near Bilaspur. The king built 150 ponds there about 12 centuries ago in the nineth-tenth centuries. In Delhi even today we find 125 ponds. Sufficient ponds were being made wherever the scarcity of water was felt, like in Bangaluru and Hyderabad. Building ponds was considered as pious duty of the king. Public also used to get involved in building ponds. Ponds were treated as very important. Bawdis also were were constructed here. Bawdis had stairs to climb down to fetch the water from deep. Actually bawdis were constructed so as to prevent land slide to ensure continuous availability of water and to avoid the need of reapedtly digging wells.

Then, gradually other activities would start around these places like bawdis, wells, ponds etc.. Wells were used to fetch water. Many small ponds were built for different purposes. Unlike today one single pond was not used for all kinds of work. There used to be activitywise separate ponds like separate ponds for drinking water, bathing and washing, irrigation and so on. Plantation was done around them or temples would be constructed around. Necessarily water would be used for rituals in temples and attention would be paid to maintain cleanliness in the surrounding due to presence of temples. So, temples were useful in maintaining the quality of water. It can be useful even now to have temples around ponds but unfortunately now attention is not being paid to maintain cleanliness in and around temples as before. In old times under the control of kings the communities were entrusted with responsibility of management of ponds. It was effective way of management. Now it is not so. We see different scenario today. When any kind of water reservoir, like pond or big tank or anything is built, it will be used for everything. It will be used for irrigation, drinking water, bathing and washing, fishing and it will serve as port also. There will be boating. Cages will be put there; it will be used for fisheries. One pond will be used for as much benefits and activities as possible. In that case the pond has no specific importance.

This is a big problem and water has become a matter of dispute. There is no issue without concern or discussion over water. People from every field think how to get control over water and insist upon action according to their logic and thinking. This tendency is very much there. Science is playing its own role. Too much of tug of war is apparent now. As I said, water is a matter of dispute now and people have made it the biggest property for selling. The Chhattisgarh government once sold out a river even to an industry. Hence, the river then belonged to that industry for their use in whatever manner they wished to use it! Afterwards the river was got freed from the possession of that industry.

Anyway, let's talk further. Regarding benefits it should be clearly understood that one pond can not provide all the benefits. Firstly, it is not advisable to build one water body, one pond, one reservoir and accomplish all tasks with the help of it. Secondly, we are aware of direct benefits such as drawing water for drinking, irrigation, bathing and washing etc. but there are certain indirect benefits too towards which we don't pay any attention nor do we discuss about them. One of these indirect benefits is that if there will be water in the pond then there will be possibility of ground water recharge. From some ponds there will be more ground water recharge and if the pond has hard or rocky base then there will be comparatively less recharge. How the water will go underground? If water will not stay overground then it will not go underground also. We are digging or drilling deeper and deeper to draw underground water but not allowing it stay overground.

Hence, it is necessary to have water overground. It affects climate of a place. If you have a pond in your village you will experience less cold in winter and less heat in summer. The air coming through that pond will feel better. You will feel bit cooler near the pond. Even a small pond can make you feel this impact over the climate. More ponds will have greater impact over the climate. So is true about the whole country, if we will have more water all over then the climate of the whole country will be different too. These days we are talking about climate change.

Climate is changing, global warming is increasing, rain pattern is changing et.. Actually all this depends on water. It is raining more somewhere and less somewhere, it rains for few days and then it doesn't, it doesn't rain adequately, sometimes it rains more or less than normal. Water is a very important part of climate. Where there is water other creatures are also found there. We all see fish and bird but we can't promptly understand about other creatures that there are other creatures too who depend on water and in fact they are useful for us. We can't see and realize this. If there is no water and as a result those creatures also disappear then we would come to realize what their role was and what their usefulness was.

Socio-cultural activities, some of our religious activities and there are some processes which are connected with our lives. It is very important to go to the water body on the occasion of wedding or festival. For recreation people go for swimming in a pond. It is an activity for them. Boating is possible if there is large pond. When there is water, a pond in any area, it creates a soulsoothing scene and environment due to the growing greenery there. A dry place has no attraction.

This particular pond is built only for fisheries. This particular pond (johad), like one we have in Alwar, is for irrigation purpose only, it is not for fisheries. When our Rajendra Singh ji built these ponds, the fisheries department immediately claimed that it was all their water, it was property of the State and they would use it for fisheries. Then there was very laborious and long conflict to establish that those ponds were not for fisheries. Villagers worked hard and built those ponds but fisheries department started claiming them to be government property! Finally, department was driven away from there.

Cultivation is possible even with some ponds with lesser water, such as growing **singhda, kamal, kamal kakdi, lotus flower**, and also other items which are possible to grow there. Some of these can be useful for human beings, some can be useful as fodder, and some may have medicinal quality and can be produced only in water. So, those can be grown there in such ponds.

I was talking about common property. The issue of ponds I was talking about was brought before the Supreme Court. Supreme Court said that all the old ponds in villages, large and small both, are common property and there should be no **possession** of any kind over them. If there were any **possessions they should be removed**. But it was not implemented. Now I would like to draw your attention to an issue which is subjudiced these days. It is about small ponds. Now the size of the ponds is not mentioned in the order of the Supreme Court as to what should be the size of the pond for removing **possession** therefrom. But it is an order of the Supreme Court. Recently, the Supreme Court has given decision in one more case and ordered the government to mark, notify and announce all the water bodies, now called the wetlands. Accordingly the government has to state where these water bodies are and their sizes. There should be no possession and encroachment over them and no activity like spreading uncleanliness, causing pollution, or drawing resources, excessive fishing etc. should be carried out there.

Our another court is National Green Tribunal (NGT). It took the stand in many of its decisions that it can not do anything to remove encroachment from wetlands unless our governments do

not announce and notify the wetlands in the Gazette. Now I can't understand whether or not we should consider the small ponds as wetlands. Because according to the Supreme Court it is to be marked as wetland if its size is more than 2 hectares. Many people are going to the court and they are told that it is wetlands, they are water bodies. At one hand there is Supreme Court's judgment and at the other NGT is saying that these are not wetlands because they are not notified and therefore it can not do anything about removing encroachments. So, one should be careful in this regard. If you have a pond of 2-3 hectares and you start calling it wetland but it is not notified, then in case of encroachment on it you may find yourself in hopeless situation. They will say it is not notified, government is not notifying it. Government should notify all ponds, they should be enlisted, they should be declared common property and their boundaries should be marked.

Panchayats have an important role to play in this regard. Village panchayats are required to prepare record of ponds including their locations, sizes, peripheries and other relevant details as well as surrounding areas upto certain extent so as to prevent encroachment. Now I would add little more to the management aspect. The most important fact about water is that it is mirror or reflection of our culture. It is a mirror of different kind. It is a mirror because through study of water alone we can tell you about your activities around the ponds. Through the study of water we can tell you about the activities in the water catchment area, in watersheds etc. as the activities taking place in and around the water bodies do leave their impact on water. Through such study we can tell you about soil erosion, etables, organic matter, living organism etc. as they all go in the water and study of water reflect it. Through the study of soil of very old water bodies it can be revealed what kind of place it was 5000 or 10000 years ago, what kind of surrounding it had. It is possible to know everyting because whatever enters the water gets settled there forever. Through the study of the fossils we get there, it can be revealed what were the conditions prevailing there centuries before.

This surrounding area known as catchment or watershed is very important and therefore its management is even more important. I specially took this from Google for you. These are two lakes of Uaipur. I can't find any open area around them, not even little open area. Whole surrounding has been urbanized.

It is so much urbanized that now all waste, garbage, drainage water and other such things go into these lakes. Naturally lakes and water there will be affected by it. This is one of the experiences. These are water bodies situated downhill. The erosion obviously comes down from the hills. Moreover, washing trucks and other vehicles at the banks of lakes and so many other objectionable activities take place there. Definitely water quality will deteriorate there. Here arises the question of management of water. Do not be under the false impression that management of water is automatically taking place as we are getting water for use from there. I am talking about management, not about using water. The management of water is not being done in the right manner. You can witness the result right there. **Water orchid/cress** is spreading there freely. It can't be removed once it gets in. It has no utility. It dried up many water bodies as it soaks up the water. It is so dangerous that it is called sea soaker too. As a result **bog** would develop there, there would be mud. Fishes won't survive. We won't find

water for drinking and other purposes. Now some people don't even get clean water for washing. If you maintain cleanliness in your surrounding you will be able to grow good useful plants, including Lotus, around. It would look beautiful.

This is a scene of Pushkar. There are many temples around the **ghaats (ferry)**. People bathe there. All impurities go into the water bodies. Recently government spent huge amount, deepened them and refilled them with water. But again situation is the same. Water can not remain useful for us for long when impurities, soil, fertilizers etc. all things are flowing into the water bodies from all around. This is not proper management of water. I got an example from Jodhpur. Maybe you too are doing the same way. There was a pond there. We were passing by. Some students were also accompanying us. We stopped to observe the pond and take samples from there. But villagers stopped us and asked us to read the notice displayed there. It was a notice on a stone on the road side. They stopped us, read out the notice to us and informed us that from there the water is rationed to villagers only for drinking. It was not allowed to be used for any other purpose. Even their live stocks were not allowed to go there to drink water. Villagers don't allow anyone to touch that water. There was one tractor licensed to go there, draw water and supply it to all households. It is an example of a place where there is scarcity of rain and there is no alternative but from single pond they are effectively managing water for the whole village.

So, community level management can be really effective. Villagers can collectively make decisions and enforce them. In this example they informed us, and it is also written there, that anyone would try to encroach or spoil the water they will impose a penalty (fine) of Rs. 500.00 on him. They have actually recovered the fine. This is how they manage their water. However, there was no greenery (trees) developed around and it was not far from the road. But they confidently said that water was used for drinking purpose only, as it was free from animal excreta too. This is an issue of management. What does the term common mean? It means that all sections of society should have equal right, opportunity to use it and society itself should control it, and society itself should take decisions about it. Then it can be called social or community management. Otherwise governments make it a commodity, a valued commodity to sell according to market trends, affected by the law of demand and supply and so on.

These are the factors there together with lack of efficiency. Efficiency means how to fulfill maximum need with minimum of water. But now everything is decided by the market forces. Market decides the price as well as the kind of purpose for which it will be used. The problem arises because we want to use one water body for different purposes. An example of efficiency is drip irrigation. I heard drip irrigation or sprinkler is introduced here also. If you collect rain water, even in small pond, and use it by way of sprinkling only then we can even do with less rain and less water. As per my calculation a pond of one hectare, only 400 or 500 square meters sized pond can collect as much water which can fulfill your need of water for irrigation, plants, earning etc.. The problem of evaporation of water will be reduced and possibility of ground water recharge will increase if you build a 4 meters deep pond. The old watershed system of check dams and annicuts causes more water evaporation.

Hence, you will be benefitted both ways, the increased ground water as well as less evaporation of water. If we add solar motor pump to it, you will be benefitted with its portability too. It can be easily carried from one place to another. Recently some farmers in Bana have taken this initiative. They arranged one pump and carry it from one farmland to another to irrigate it. They just need to attach pipe to the pump wherever it goes. Thus, it is not necessary to have individual pumps in the village. It is possible to irrigate from a small pond. Moreover, we should not depend on single crop. Still our notion about agriculture is restricted to single crop at a time, only one crop in the whole field be it millet, mustard, wheat or anything else. We may have more benefits if we connect it with trees, shrub, and other plants. Saving jungles is especially very important but together with it we can grow those trees also which provide more benefits to us. We don't need additional land for this as we can grow trees on the **linhay** and bants of the field and grow crops inbetween. You can earn money through this on very dry land too. There are many kinds of trees which can grow on bants and provide fodder, some material for compost and you can also get wood for your use.

It would probably require 2 to 4 years to grow these trees but after that they will become independent. How many more trees can you have depends on you. What trees are possible to have there depends on the quality of land there. These trees would initially require water to set in, so they can be irrigated drop by drop. Later on they would stay there on their own. You are not required to provide much water for that. You will continue getting something from trees even when no crop will be there. You can get food and other things. But for this you have to adopt the technique of agro-forestry i.e. combination of agricultural and trees. Moreover, you should not have 1 or 2 types of trees but 10, 15, 20 types of trees together at one place at little distance. Some of them may be seasonal while others may be perennial. Such combination can give you a kind of security. In case of less or no rain one crop would fail. Don't cultivate on the whole of your land. Cultivate on half of it and grow some other plants on some part of it. Irrigate it with little water of your own as every farmer can build a small pond on his own land, his own farm and collect rain water in it. One who does so can earn profit very quickly. Community ponds are indeed very important in themselves. The ponds build in farms have their own importance too and they are capable of increasing your income.

Recently one more agro-forestry policy has been introduced. Previously you were not supposed to get permission to cut down trees you grew in the fields. But now every state has prepared list incorporating 30-40 trees which can be grown in the fields and it is permitted to cut down those trees whenever you need. Therefore, growing trees can be even more beneficial to you.

Lastly, when we are talking about management of water, I wish to share that a new concept of integrated management is emerging. These days it is much talked about in government sector and also otherwise but not so at rural level so far. According to it there should be coordination between the underground water we draw to use and the water we collect overground. Those who have pond are drawing underground water also and taking more water and those who don't have pond are also drawing underground water. Now the question is that when water will not go underground how long will you be able to draw it and how much energy will you put into it? It is a difficult thing to do. Apart from that we have to pay attention to the water which

holds in the soil. It is necessary to make efforts towards holding it for as long as possible in the soil. If we fail to hold the moistness of the soil, if the moistness of the soil disappears soon after the rains are over and it dries up then it will harm you. To prevent this, it should be covered, provided shadow of more plants and trees. Holding the moistness in the soil for longer time will benefit you.

Secondly, in the hilly region, in the catchment area water comes down from the upper area. Suppose all water is somehow held in the upper area and not allowed to flow down then the downhill area people would say there is no water. Therefore there should be proper balance between holding of water uphill and downhill. This balance should be at larger catchment area level, not at single village level only. Many villages should jointly work in this direction. It should not be acceptable that somebody held all the water uphill and water was not at all allowed to flow downhill because this will create a very difficult situation for the people living downhill.

Similarly, there can be ground water crisis also, because water has been held uphill and not allowed to flow downhill. There will be lack of ground water too. Thirdly, do use the waste water also, if you have it, from wherever it comes. Do not allow it to flow away or spread away uselessly. Divert it towards your fields and trees. It should be made use of. We wash our hands with water; it drops down to the soil and dries up. But it would be better if it hydrates a plant. Therefore it should be used in a meaningful manner. Collect it somewhere and divert it towards your farms, trees and plants. Doing these things we can do better management of water. These are some of the main points regarding management of water.

Thank you.

Anchor : For presidential speech now I call upon Mr. Ajay Mehta sahab.

Ajay sahab : Brij Gopal ji has enlightened you with many good and meaningful thoughts. It would not be possible for me to do so. Respected Brij Gopal ji, Bhati ji, and you all have come here, people from villages and abroad are also present here. My greetings to you all present here.

As Priyanka ji said today, this is a memorable occasion for us. We are completing fifty years today. Much has been done during these fifty years, many people have contributed to it in many ways and especially our Lodha sahab has been one of them in whose memory we organize this award function. Satish ji, Babli ji are from Lodha family and every year they come and boost up our morale. As Priyanka ji said about people from villages, Bhai sahab had a very deep philosophy for them. In an address two months before his death he emphasized mainly on three things. Firstly, he said ours should be a democratic society. In each and every village people should meet, think, discuss and decide about their own governance, conservation of natural resources of the village. How should they fulfill the needs of each other? At the same time they should pay attention to the laws, rules and regulations there.

Secondly, he emphasized on forming of a society based on morality. If anything is stolen by anybody or anything is found by anyone anywhere, he himself should come forward to return it, not that he keeps it with himself.

Thirdly, he emphasized much on the role of all of us as citizens and living in the society. He said it is our responsibility to pay attention to the public interest. As Brij Gopal ji said that there is much need of taking care of the common properties, and water is the most important of all. Today I realize that you people, who live in villages, have set an example for us through your excellent work on these three issues. You really have worked so well on these three issues. The campaign which is going on in Jhadol, where people are saying that they will give up their private property but conserve the common forests irrespective of getting or not their right. This work of yours is comparable to Gandhiji's non-cooperation movement he carried out in Africa as well as in our country during the freedom struggle in which he insisted upon non-cooperation against the oppression. We will not cooperate with the wrong doing. We witness the same thing in Jhadol today. You are saying that you won't accept the private right even if it is granted and you will collectively conserve the forest even if the common right is not granted. This is something very important.

Perhaps many people are of the opinion that Gandhi ji has not much relevance in the present context, he is not relevant today. But it is clearly apparent that Gandhiji's thoughts firmly hold the ground even today. People like you are worthy of walking on the path shown by him. On this 50th anniversary I wish to say that you people have started a new era. Men, women and groups all are intensively involved in it. There are awards for both individual efforts and collective efforts and there are other awards also. Together these are providing us strength. I do hope that the movement you have initiated, for which preparations were going on since long, will be a remarkable success and model to follow all over. For last 30-40 years you are working on it. It is very big thing.

Seva Mandir will always try to help you in every possible manner and I take the opportunity to congratulate and thank my colleagues for doing so up till now.

Ummed Mal ji worked in Seva Mandir from 1985 to 1989. He set up natural resource unit. Then Bhise sahab came in. He did fabulous work. Shailendra and Narendra ji followed him. During past many years under the guidance of Priyanka ji we carefully nurtured the seed which was sowed 30-40 years ago. As I said, what our country needs most today are the right democratic values, right democratic work or efforts, dialogue in a proper manner like you people have it, commitment like you people to find the way out without violence. You unreservedly face the oppressors. This is the real democratic system.

Today I wish to take the opportunity to congratulate you all. I wish to congratulate my colleagues. As Priyanka ji said, the work which is going on in villages is the biggest gift for Seva Mandir and I hope we will continue working with the same spirit in the years to come. I hope you will carry on this movement which is fully in accordance with Gandhiji's thinking. This is a movement of morality, non-cooperation, opposition to oppression, common property and

common interest. I hope you will keep going this movement and I am fully confident that side by side Seva Mandir will keep walking with you. Thanks and congratulations to you all.

Satish ji Lodha : Respected Dr. Brij Gopal ji. When I was studying M. Sc. you were our lecturer in the same department. I thank you very much for joining us at this function. We feel obliged. Secondly, four months back I had been to Vietnam. There is a Buddhist temple at bank of a very large river. My guide asked me to salute a tree there. I could not understand anything. When I observed carefully I found a line written there that it was planted by the President of India Dr. Rajendra Prasad in 1959. That tree has grown up almost to the size of this meeting hall. That tree became a place of worship for them. There are two types of people in the society. Firstly, those people who accumulate wealth for their future generations. Secondly, you people who are conserving natural resources for your future generations, which is more praiseworthy indeed. We acclaim you all for this. Thank you.