

JAL CHETNA YATRA

Background

Water is a basic right and a fundamental need for survival on this planet. But like many other villages of India, most of the villages in district Mewat have issues with availability of fresh water). The district falls under Semi Arid region having very little rains and extended hot and dry season. Agriculture is mainly rain fed as surface water is sparse and ground water is mostly saline. Further indiscriminate usage through electrical pumps and pollution of ground water sources are also damaging the groundwater sources. Availability of fresh groundwater and quality of water are two major issues in Mewat.

Institute of Rural Research and Development (IRRAD) has been working in Mewat to ease the situation successfully for the last 10 years through its Integrated Sustainable Village Development model with special focus on Water Management.

Why

The community participation in managing the available water resources is completely missing in Mewat. The local community is so resigned to the problems facing them every day that they seldom approach the government authorities for any solutions. This attitude is also a result of government apathy towards this region's water problems. The Jal Chetna Yatra was a novel attempt by IRRAD to promote water literacy and community partnership in conserving water resources in Mewat. It was based on the principle that water is a fundamental natural resource which should be managed and protected by the community. The Jal Chetna Yatra is a result of long drawn out community deliberations and demands on water management with IRRAD. It focused on understanding the water problems of villagers and analysing them first hand with community participation. The JCY was organised to commemorate the World Water Day 2010. International World Water Day grew out of the Earth Summit that was held in [Rio de Janeiro](#) June 3-14, 1992 and sponsored by the [United Nations](#) Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). The world water day provides opportunity for world to raise awareness, present solutions and demand more commitment from all stakeholders including communities and put an end to the world's water crisis. Every year a theme is designated by the UN for the World water day and this year's theme is '**Clean Water for Healthy World**'

The Yatra targeted the worst affected pockets of District Mewat. A large part of Mewat falls under the saline zone with most of the groundwater sources being saline and unfit for agricultural and human consumption.

Objectives



JCY's main objective was to revive the relationship between water and communities and realize their role in water management.

The objectives of the yare were:-

- Creating mass awareness on water issues and encouraging people for water conservation
- Raising the people's water problem with administration
- Assurance of peoples commitment for supporting any work in this direction
- Testing drinking water source of 20 villages and informing villagers about health effects of contaminants

In order to achieve these objectives the IRRAD initiated the Jal Chetna Yatra which covered nearly 1.5 lakh people in a period of three days and travelled a distance of over 462 kames covering 60 villages in five blocks of District Mewat. Three padyatara teams consisting of IRRAD team members and water activists walked the length and breadth of Mewat spreading the message of water conservation through slogans such as ***'Pani bachao Jeevan Bachao', 'Jal jivan ka anmol ratan, ise bachane ka karo jatan' 'Jal hai to kal hai,' paani nahi, to piyoge kya', 'Jal chetna Yatra aye hai, pani bachane ka pegam laye hai',..***

The three teams began their journey simultaneously from the three corners of Mewat on 19th March 2010 and continued till 21st March 2010, each day covering dozens of villages in and sensitising people through slogans, meetings and discussions. The padyatra groups culminated in a Public meeting at Nuh on 22nd March 2010 which was attended by a large gathering.

The padyatra teams conducted large public meetings everyday in pre-decided villages where demand charters of Water were raised from the community. Two drinking water sources were also tested in these villages for Biological and Chemical contamination. A signature campaign was also carried out in all the villages the yatra visited were the community pledged their support to the cause of water conservation in Mewat.

The demand charters that were developed by the community were then compiled into a series of demands and suggestions for the government. This compiled charter along with recommendation based on the analysis of the situation experienced during the JCY was presented to the Commissioner, Gurgaon division at the Public meeting in Nuh on the 22nd March 2010.



The Public meeting at Nuh was attended by more than 250 community members and was addressed by Magsaysay Award winner Mr. Rajendra Singh and the Commissioner, Gurgaon Division Mr. T K Sharma. Both of them stressed the need to take up water as a priority issue at the government and community level. The need to integrate Panchayats into water management in Mewat was also stressed upon by the speakers.

The compiled District level demands and suggestions kept by the Jal Chetna yatra were as follows:-

1. Mass recharging of fresh groundwater pockets to check advancement of salinity.
2. Survey and status report of water bodies in Mewat and their desilting to increase storage and groundwater recharge.
3. Renovation and integration of overflow mechanisms in existing and damaged RWH structures constructed by various departments/agencies.
4. Introduction and promotion of NABARD's dug well recharging scheme as Mewat still have large number of dried/abandoned dug wells.
5. Assessment and status report of existing schemes /programs on water under MOWR, MORD, MOA, MOUD etc
6. Constitute a district level water committee for assessment of water supply system focusing on availability, accessibility and quality. The committee should have representation of PRI, civil societies and public functionaries.
7. Constitution of panchayat level water user committee to manage and monitor the equitable distribution of water, source protection and its augmentation.
8. Setting up of specialised institutions to assess the condition of water resources of Mewat (qualitative and quantitative) and recommend the stabilising mechanisms.

These suggestions and demands will be followed up by IRRAD by facilitating structure and systems within the PRIs and larger community to conserve and manage water sources and also by lobbying and pressure building with the district and state authorities.



Organisations in solidarity with the Jal Chetana Yatra

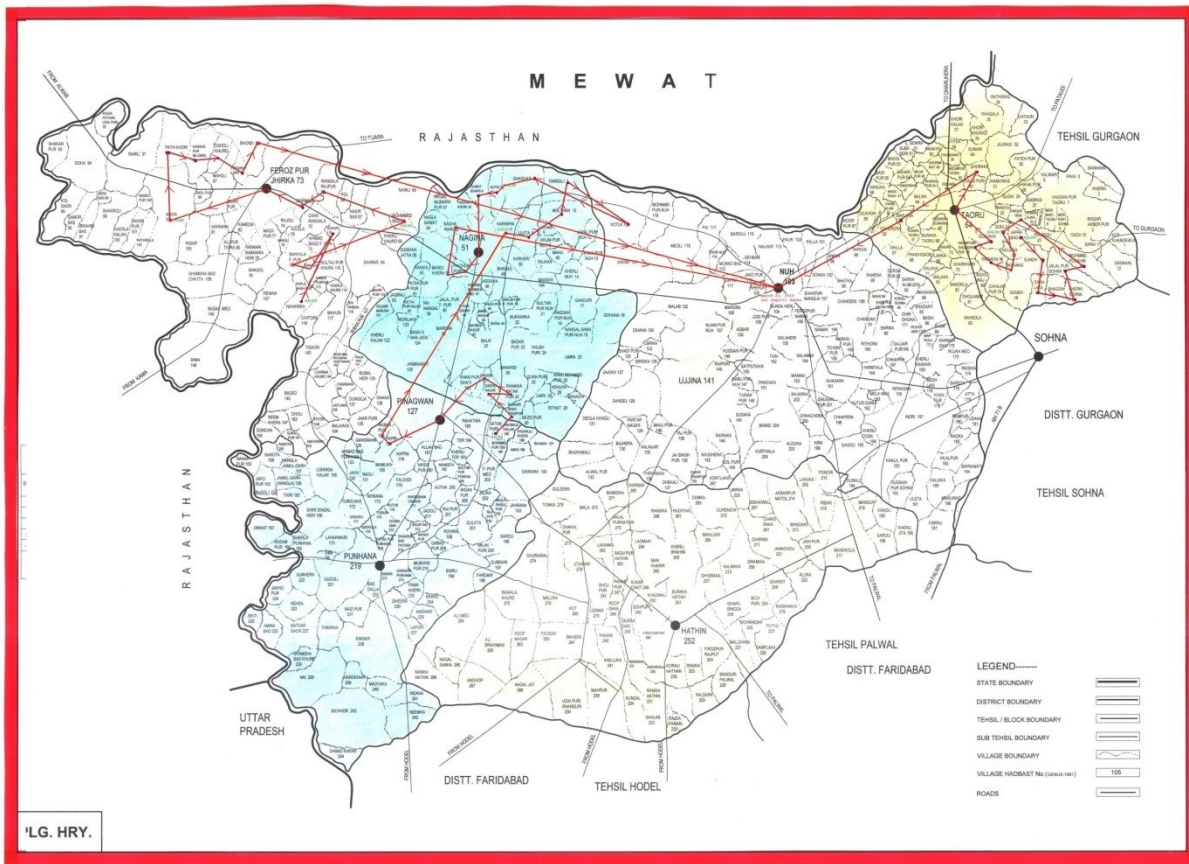
Jal Biradari (Mewat), Tarun Bharat Sangh (Alwar), RKK Trust (Mewat), SPYM (New Delhi), Govardhan Gram Vikas Pratisthan (Alwar), Edu Comp (Ferozpur Jhirka), Aravalli Education Society (Mewat), Tai Siksha Samiti (Nuh), Women Federation (Nuh), Mewat Development Authority (Nuh), Public Health Engineering Department (Nuh),

Salient Features of Jal Chetna Yatra

Name of state/country covered	Haryana, India
Name of district covered	Mewat
Number of blocks covered	5
Names of Blocks covered	Nagina, Punhana, Nuh, Ferozpur Jhirka, Taoru
Number of days of yatra travelling	3
Number of groups travelling	3
Number of villages covered	60
Names of Villages covered	Naharika, Dungari, Raniyali, Raniyala, Raniyala, Satakpuri, Sahjadpur, Naryala, Dhadholi, Dhadola, Khanpurghati, Pinagava, Papdi, Papda, Akbarpur, Padala, Ahmedbas, Rangalarajpur, Dhamala, Firozpurzhirka Agon, Patkhori, Nangal, Bilonda, Dhadholi, Sidhrawat, Bhond, Karheda, Uletha, Multhan, Kansali, Kotla, Ghaghas, Shahpur Notaki, Gumatbihari, Khori, Nagina, Badkali, Pithorpuri, Mandikhera, Santhawadi, Jafrabad, Sund, Chahalka, Bhango, Kharak, Jalalpur, Mohamedpur, Dingarhedi, Goyala, Kaliyaki, Dalabas, Parhedi, Sikarpur, Gogjaka, Taoru, Gawarka, Bhajalka, Nuh
Number of people sensitised	1.5 lakhs
Total distance travelled by yatra	462 km

Route map of Jal Chetna Yatra





SNAPSHOTS: JAL CHETNA YATRA



Beginning of Yatra with Pray



The oldest person of village flagging off the Yatra



School children shouting slogans with high enthusiasm



Women curiosity forced them to participate in yatra



Yatra members were warmly welcomed by villagers



Meetings continued till late evening



Drinking water sample collected to check quality



Everyone was busy in reading pamphlet of JCY



Villagers assembling to discuss their water problems



Participation by all age, sex & groups of villagers



Excitement in children was amazing



Even others participated with high interest



JCY converting into a mass rally/gathering



The youngest messenger of yatra carrying flag



Villagers expressed commitment in signature campaign



Even thumb impressions, who could not sign



Large turnout for meetings in the villages



Large turnout for public meeting in Nuh



Shri T K Sharma, Commissioner-Gurgaon Division addressing the large public gathering in Nuh



Shri Rajendra Singh, Magsaysay award winner addressing the large public gathering in Nuh

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