operation, in a community driven controlled process. This alone can rid the communities of all the water ills; ensure equity in sharing and distribution of resource as also in its sustainability. A shining example is Tarun Bharat Sangh's Project of water harvesting and water security in Alwar district of Rajasthan, and constitution of Arvari Parliament setting rules and laws of water distribution and use.

The article has provided us with much food for thought, written in a lucid manner, replete with information and data useful for research workers and in an effort to rid this world

of inequity and to ensure social justice which alone can eliminate poverty. This article has much relevance in India and the developing world to day.

The editor and his coauthors have come out with a prophetic view of the world water situation sensitising the world community into actions to avert disasters. We hail the pioneering efforts of the editor for this valuable publication on water, – a must read for all.

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MNC's APPROPRIATE WATER RIGHTS

Shales rich in organic matter in Colorado, Wyoming and Utah States in USA, are known to be potential sources for oil. But available technology needs 3 to 4 litres of water for production of each litre of oil from these oil shales. Hence, the multi national oil companies (MNCs) have acquired rights to two billion cubic metres of stored water in Colorado State, and large volumes of water from the Colorado and White rivers, in addition to the rights over 100 irrigation canals as per reports appearing in the *Down to Earth*, 16th April, 2009 issue, a fortnightly magazine of the Centre for Environment and Science, New Delhi. There is demand for a relook into the economic and environmental impacts of the project. The project is likely to cause disastrous effects on this already water scarce area.

This reminds one of the episode of the Coca Cola Company's plant in the remote village of Plachimeda in Kerala, India. It over pumped groundwater for beverage production drying up the groundwater reservoir in the process. This robbed the local population of their age old indigenous or traditional rights over water resources which are in use for drinking and domestic purposes, and for food production. The sufferers are mostly poor agriculturists who cannot afford to pay even half the cost of the bottled water produced in the Plant for their use. This precipitated fierce agitation and court litigation.

The Kerala High Court delivered a landmark judgement holding the State as the Trustee of all water resources in the State, and responsible for its equity and sustainability. The UN, too, has recognized the availability of water in appropriate quantity and quality as a human right in its Rome declaration. These principles should be enshrined in our Constitution in letters and spirit. According to others, water being a precious natural resource, deserves to be treated as

World Heritage, and should not be traded. The current approach of commoditizing water in the wake of mindless globalization of economy, needs to be seriously looked into and amended. Market forces cannot be allowed to operate to the detriment of the public interest – equity and sustainability of the resource.

The reported cases are reminders of the vexed issues of water rights or ownership. The water use rights should be vested with the community along with necessary constitutional amendments. As the per capita availability of water shrinks with population explosion and may be, with dwindling water resources due to global warming and climatological changes in not so distant future, competing demands of various water use sectors will sharpen, ushering more disputes and chaos, if timely actions are not taken for water management.

The saga of the people of Kerala or Colorado are common in the developing world. These are eye-openers to the advocates of water privatization in India. This is the time to assert the sovereign rights of the people on water, and not allow it to be subjected to thoughtless policies of exploitation in the name of development at the cost of the very people, the development is meant for. There is utmost need for harmony of science and humanity for better water management. Exploitation technology should have in-built soul of the society. It is in this background that Rajendra Singh, the Water Man, has launched a country wide movement "*Jal Kumbh*" for river water conservation and for protection of this vital life sustaining natural resource from greedy exploiters. Now is the time to heed his call, – development with a human face.

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