Time to embrace and nourish our rivers

Sadhguru

Water is a resource that has to be managed. This has been ignored in recent times. We have not really looked at how we can practice agriculture in a way that conserves water. In Tamil Nadu, we are still largely flood irrigating, which is the cruellest way of using water.

There are more efficient ways to practice agriculture today. If you put so much water in one place, the soil gets leached and all the bio-activity in the soil is reduced. The plant may look green, but it suffers in many ways. If we change this, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka can manage their water situation.

We need to pay more attention to the Cauvery river itself. The Cauvery is maybe 40 per cent of what it was 50 years ago. Almost all our rivers are going through this, which is a disaster waiting to unfold.

I have rafted down the Cauvery from Bhagamandala to the Krishna Raja Sagara Dam and the Brindavan Gardens in Karnataka—a distance of over 160 km. In this entire distance, it is only in the first 30 to 35 km that there is any forest vegetation.

After that, there is just agriculture. How will a river flow with this? Unless there is forest, there will be no river after sometime. Our idea of a catchment area is that of a 35-km valley. No, catchment should be all along the way.

People think because of water there are trees. No, because of trees there is water. All along the river, wherever the land belongs to the government, we must do afforestation immediately. Wherever it belongs to a local farmer, the government must move from agriculture to horticulture.

If you show the farmer the economics of this move, that by planting trees and having horticultural crops he will earn more than he can by ploughing the land, he will naturally take to it. If you ensure this on either side for a minimum of a kilometre—if we can do more than a kilometre it will be great—then in 15 years, the Cauvery will have at least 10 to 20 per cent more water flowing.

Today, all our rivers are in danger. We have to look at how to revive these rivers. Otherwise, in a few years, we won’t be drinking from bottles, we will be bathing from bottles.

Half the nation is already in a position where they don’t start their day with a bath because there is no water. The legacy we are leaving our children is such that no matter what you have, you will not be able to live well. The choice we have now is to consciously correct this or let nature do it. If nature does it, it will do it in a very cruel way.

For thousands of years, these rivers have embraced and nourished us. The time has come when we have to embrace and nourish our rivers.

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