

From the editor's Desk

Every year, just before the onset of the summers, the cola companies hold a ritual meeting. Here, spin doctors and plant head's chalk out the common response to media queries that are expected to arise out of public complaints about the falling water levels in the vicinity of their respective plants. It is an annual feature and the press releases and the typical responses- ranging from water maps to departmental permission to draw water are all staked in the arsenal of the PR professionals, who naturally do an excellent job in diffusing any situation that ultimately arises. Foresight of the Managers? Ability to identify potential threats? Quality of management? No. Those are not the I am hinting at. The very fact that the exercise has to take place, points at the pressures that Industry creates on resources. And if mere cola companies with limited size can cause such outcries, what happens, or will happen when the giants, the steel makers move in with their massive, almost unending requirements of water?

At the cost of sounding like an alarmist, let me point out the unpleasant fact. The world is fast running out of clean air, potable water, agricultural produce and a variety of commodities. While some of it can be reversed, agricultural growth can be scaled up, for example, the maths involved are visibly mind boggling. To feed a global population of 8billion (which we will be the size of our family by 2025) we will need to grow four tons per hectare as against only three tons currently. Not impossible, but surely an uphill task to put things mildly.

However, the most critical will be our ability to manage and conserve the Earth's water. While the 20th century witnessed the tripling of the world's population, the consumption of water increased more than six-fold in the same period. Americans, for example use more than four hundred liters of water each day to drink, clean and cool themselves (that's about 1500 bottles of your average cold drink!) People in the poorer countries make do with about forty liters per day, but with development, their consumption too is bound to rise, creating further pressures on the available water resources.

Violent clashes over water have already broken out in the Middle East and Africa and back home, the sharing of Kaveri's water has been a flash point in state level politics for years at an end. Not to mention the wounds created by Narmada, which are still fresh. Consider this, in the past, populations moved in search of water .Moving on when one source dried up. What will be the impact if populations are forced to migrate in such a fashion, especially in the densely populated areas, like scarce resource, quench the thirst of the million ton steel plants that are being planned?

When man and machine will be pitted against each other for the inevitable fight over water, who will get the preference? What will be the outcome of this epic struggle?

Read on. We do not have the answers, join us as we set out on the quest to seek.

Happy Reading

The Editor