

JAL SAHELIYON KI JAL YATRA

A WOMEN - LED PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT



A 300 KM-Foot March for Water Conservation
02 Feb-20 Feb 2025

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02 FEB-20 FEB 2025

Pratiksha Tripathi





DEDICATED TO

JAL SAHELIS - THE TORCHBEARERS OF CHANGE

We extend our deepest gratitude to the Jal Sahelis, the trailblazing grassroots women leaders who not only pioneered this historic 300-km foot march but also walked every step as champions of water conservation. Their unwavering determination, resilience, and commitment to safeguarding water resources have inspired entire communities. As true changemakers, they have set an extraordinary example of leadership, proving that local action driven by empowered women can create lasting environmental transformation. Their journey is a movement for water, sustainability, and a better future for all. They welcome you to hear their stories, tales of struggle, triumph, and an unyielding spirit that changed the course of their lives and their communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SUMMARY

The historic foot march of the Jal Sahelis began on February 2, 2024, from Orchha and continued till February 20, 2024.

Around 400 Jal Sahelis and members of local communities participated in this inspiring yatra, which followed a route from Orchha to Jatashankar Dham, passing through five districts- Niwari, Jhansi, Lalitpur, Tikamgarh, and Chhatarpur. Covering approximately 300 kilometers, the journey spread awareness about water crises and emphasized the importance of water conservation across various parts of Bundelkhand.

This yatra marked a significant step in recognizing and strengthening the leadership role of women in addressing water-related challenges. It showcased how women's participation can offer new dimensions to water management solutions.

The main objective of the Jal Yatra was to understand the traditional water wisdom of Bundelkhand and raise awareness about solutions to the region's growing water crisis. It also aimed to highlight before community and the administration the urgent need to restore ancient Chandel-era ponds and rejuvenate small rivers.

Throughout the journey, the Jal Sahelis engaged people in discussions on water conservation, water augmentation, reuse of water, and rainwater harvesting. They inspired communities to adopt these practices in their daily lives.

The Jal Yatra created a wave of motivation across the region. Many people resolved to take forward water conservation efforts in their own areas. In several places along the route, local communities even initiated voluntary efforts to clean and revive water sources.

जल सहलियों की जल यात्रा
02 फरवरी से 19 फरवरी 2025

क्र.	दिनांक	जिला	ब्लॉक	पथ	कार्यक्रम
1	02.Feb.25	मिर्जापुर	मिर्जापुर	कानपुर घाट	यात्रा प्रारम्भ कार्यक्रम
2	03.Feb.25	मिर्जापुर	मिर्जापुर	कागल झील	समूह कार्यक्रम
3	03.Feb.25	मिर्जापुर	मिर्जापुर	पुल्लो मठ	पुल्लो मठ भवन, माना भवन
4	03.Feb.25	मिर्जापुर	मिर्जापुर	पुल्लो झील	समूह गीत
5	03.Feb.25	झुंझार	झुंझार	पुल्लो झील	समूह गीत
6	04.Feb.25	झुंझार	झुंझार	बनारस झील	समूह गीत
7	04.Feb.25	झुंझार	झुंझार	झुंझार	समूह गीत
8	05.Feb.25	लालीतपुर	लालीतपुर	झुंझार घाट	समूह गीत
9	05.Feb.25	लालीतपुर	लालीतपुर	झुंझार घाट	समूह गीत
10	06.Feb.25	लालीतपुर	लालीतपुर	झुंझार घाट	समूह गीत
11	06.Feb.25	लालीतपुर	लालीतपुर	झुंझार घाट	समूह गीत
12	07.Feb.25	लालीतपुर	लालीतपुर	झुंझार घाट	समूह गीत
13	07.Feb.25	लालीतपुर	लालीतपुर	झुंझार घाट	समूह गीत
14	07.Feb.25	लालीतपुर	लालीतपुर	झुंझार घाट	समूह गीत
15	08.Feb.25	लालीतपुर	लालीतपुर	झुंझार घाट	समूह गीत
16	09.Feb.25	लालीतपुर	लालीतपुर	झुंझार घाट	समूह गीत
17	10.Feb.25	लालीतपुर	लालीतपुर	झुंझार घाट	समूह गीत
18	11.Feb.25	लालीतपुर	लालीतपुर	झुंझार घाट	समूह गीत
19	12.Feb.25	लालीतपुर	लालीतपुर	झुंझार घाट	समूह गीत
20	13.Feb.25	लालीतपुर	लालीतपुर	झुंझार घाट	समूह गीत
21	14.Feb.25	लालीतपुर	लालीतपुर	झुंझार घाट	समूह गीत
22	15.Feb.25	लालीतपुर	लालीतपुर	झुंझार घाट	समूह गीत
23	16.Feb.25	लालीतपुर	लालीतपुर	झुंझार घाट	समूह गीत
24	17.Feb.25	लालीतपुर	लालीतपुर	झुंझार घाट	समूह गीत
25	18.Feb.25	लालीतपुर	लालीतपुर	झुंझार घाट	समूह गीत
26	19.Feb.25	लालीतपुर	लालीतपुर	झुंझार घाट	समूह गीत



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MESSAGE



This is a story of the incredible women of Bundelkhand and their extraordinary journey that not only brought attention to India's water crisis but also influenced action at an international level. It was a 300 kilometers long foot march led by the Jal Sahelis, who, through their determination and grit, created a new awareness about water conservation in society. All eyes were on this jal yatra initiated by the Jal Sahelis. The main objective of this yatra was to raise awareness about the water crisis and propose solutions to address the challenges posed by climate change. As I share my experiences, I emphasize that values like sacrifice, honesty, and support still hold significance in society.

During the yatra, it became evident that as people began to understand the severity of the water crisis, they started seeking solutions. A crucial milestone of this yatra was the march from Orchha to Jatashankar Dham. Orchha is not only a place of religious importance but also holds immense environmental significance. Its historical and natural heritage amplified the message of water conservation, making the yatra even more impactful. The yatra gave a new direction to water crisis solutions, transforming water conservation from merely an environmental issue to a cultural and spiritual concern as well.

The soil of Bundelkhand, which has long been considered barren, can be restored to fertility with proper water management. If the right steps are taken for water conservation, Bundelkhand can regain its greenery and prosperity. This will not only benefit the environment but also improve the economic conditions of local communities.

The purpose of this initiative was not just to spread awareness but also to encourage concrete actions at both local and global levels to address the water crisis. Now that the yatra has concluded, serious consideration must be given to the next steps. It is essential to ensure that this campaign is not temporary but leads to sustainable and active measures for solving the water crisis.

In the end, I appealed to the public to support this movement and stand with the efforts of the Jal Sahelis. This initiative is a collective effort, and only by working together can we take firm steps toward solving the water crisis.

To expand the reach of this campaign, a portal and a social media page will be created, allowing more people to actively participate and contribute to the cause. This movement has the potential to be a significant step in addressing the water crisis, but it requires everyone's support and cooperation. This is the only way we can protect our nation from water scarcity and ensure water availability for future generations. This journey not only offers a new perspective on the water crisis but also serves as an inspiration, showing that when a society is determined, no problem is insurmountable. The Jal Sahelis' initiative teaches us that by uniting, we can protect not just our country but the entire world's environment.

I am deeply grateful for the heartfelt welcome and overwhelming support we received from the villagers during the yatra. My sincere gratitude to the district administration, the media and my dedicated team for their unwavering support throughout the yatra.

Dr. Sanjay Singh

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ओरछा से जटाशंकर धाम तक 300 कि.मी. की पदयात्रा
यात्रा ओरछा से बबीना, तालबेहद, मोहनगढ़, टीकमगढ़ एवं छतरपुर
के बड़ा मलेहरा से होते हुए जटाशंकर धाम पहुंचेगी

जल सहेलियों की जल यात्रा
के उपलक्ष्य में

कलश यात्रा

दिनांक 01 फरवरी 2025



परामर्श

कलश यात्रा

ओरछा (निवाड़ी)

A 300 KM-FOOT MARCH FOR WATER CONSERVATION AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN BUNDELKHAND

India is facing a severe water crisis, with depleting groundwater, drying rivers, and disappearing traditional ponds. Per capita water availability is rapidly declining, posing a serious environmental and socio-economic threat. Currently ranked 133rd globally, India's per capita water availability from 1,820 cubic meters in 2001, is projected to drop to 1,140 cubic meters by 2050, far below the global average of 5,500 cubic meters, threatening both livelihoods and ecosystems.

Unregulated water use, urbanization, and population growth are accelerating this crisis. Agriculture alone consumes 70% of water, yet its efficiency remains at 30-35%, significantly lower than global standards. Enhancing water-use efficiency and conservation efforts can free up resources for domestic needs, ensuring water security and societal stability. Collective action is imperative to prevent a future water catastrophe.





STATE OF WATER RESOURCES IN BUNDELKHAND

Bundelkhand, a historically and culturally rich region, lies in central India, spanning across Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. It comprises fourteen districts- seven in each state. It is positioned between the Indo-Gangetic plains in the north and the Vindhya Mountain range in the south. Despite its strategic location at the crossroads of two major states, Bundelkhand remains one of India's most underdeveloped and drought-prone regions. The region's semi-arid landscape, marked by undulating terrain, gravelly soils, and erratic rainfall, poses significant challenges to agriculture and livelihoods.

Bundelkhand is a region severely affected by water scarcity due to factors such as climate change. It has endured 13 severe droughts in the past two decades, with its rivers, ponds, and wells drying up due to erratic monsoons, excessive groundwater extraction, and deforestation. Women walking miles for water and long queues at dwindling sources reflect the region's acute scarcity. Once-flowing rivers that sustained livelihoods now stand dry, largely due to unregulated mining and over-extraction, disrupting their natural cycle. The depletion of small rivers has weakened the ecological flow of larger ones, exacerbating the crisis. Farmers, potters, and fishermen struggle as water levels drop, forcing many to migrate.

The Chandela-era ponds (built between the 9th–12th century by Chandela Kings), once the backbone of Bundelkhand's water conservation, are now deteriorating. Of over 2,000 historic ponds, only 500 remain functional, with siltation, encroachment, and population pressure reducing their water-holding capacity. Unchecked human activity has pushed Bundelkhand to the brink of a water catastrophe, demanding urgent restoration and conservation efforts.

A MOVEMENT LED BY WOMEN, FOR WATER AND BEYOND

For the people of Bundelkhand, the absence of water was not just a physical hardship, it was a barrier to their mental, social, and economic growth. It was a deep-rooted challenge that shaped the fate of an entire region.

In this land, where feudal traditions and patriarchal norms confined women behind veils, a quiet yet powerful revolution was taking shape. The women who had once been silenced by social restrictions were now stepping forward, breaking age-old shackles, and claiming their rightful space in society. For generations, Bundelkhand's women had spent their days walking miles with heavy earthen pots on their heads, searching for water. Their lives revolved around this struggle, consuming their time, their strength, and their dreams. The idea of prosperity in Bundelkhand seemed impossible without solving this crisis. Understanding this pain, Parmarth Samaj Sevi Sansthan took up the challenge to change this reality and free these women from the clutches of water scarcity. Thus, was born an extraordinary movement- the **"Jal Saheli Abhiyan"** (Water Companion Campaign).



The Jal Saheli Abhiyan was not just about water conservation; it was about women reclaiming their dignity and rights. These women, now known as Jal Sahelis, became champions of water security, tirelessly working to restore ponds, wells, and check dams, ensuring that their villages never ran dry again. They educate villagers on water conservation and promote community-government collaboration to ensure access to water. They also meet with government officials and submit petitions to ensure community participation in water management. They were no longer just water seekers; they were water protectors, community leaders, and symbols of transformation.

But their battle was not just against drought, it was against deep-seated societal norms. Many faced taunts, threats, and discouragement. They were told that women had no role outside the household, that they should not dream of leadership. Yet, with unwavering determination, they proved otherwise. These women, who once lived in the shadows, now stood tall as change-makers. They did not just find solutions for the water crisis; they ignited a movement of empowerment.





JAL SAHELIS- THE WATER WARRIORS OF BUNDELKHAND

The Jal Saheli Committee is a grassroots movement led by women and adolescent girls committed to ensuring water security and sustainable water management in their villages. As community leaders, Jal Sahelis play a pivotal role in advocating for water rights, raising awareness about government schemes, and mobilizing local participation in water conservation efforts. They actively engage in village water planning, facilitate the development of water user master plans, and address critical water-related challenges.

They play key role in:

- Developing village water plans and water user master plans
- Water Conservation through rainwater harvesting, deepening of wells, restoring traditional water bodies& small rivers, building small dams etc.
- Ensuring the availability of safe drinking water facilities.
- Liaising with panchayats, government officials and administrative bodies to secure community water rights.

Through continuous training and capacity-building programs, Jal Sahelis are transforming the landscape of water management in Bundelkhand. Their efforts in conserving water bodies, constructing check dams, and harvesting rainwater have not only improved local water availability but also strengthened women's leadership in decision-making processes. They serve as catalysts for change, bridging the gap between communities and government agencies to ensure equitable access to water. This decentralized, community-driven approach empowers women to take ownership of village's water security, making them active participants in local policy advocacy and village-level planning.

The Jal Saheli Model and their extraordinary efforts earned national recognition when the Prime Minister Narendra Modi honoured them in Mann Ki Baat, acknowledging their role in reshaping Bundelkhand's water future.

A JOURNEY THAT INSPIRED THE NATION

This is the story of a journey that went beyond Bundelkhand, reaching national and international platforms as a beacon of hope. The mission was clear- to raise awareness about the water crisis and present real, sustainable solutions to combat climate change.

In the heart of Bundelkhand, women living in villages have stepped forward to restore Bundelkhand's water sources. The Jal Sahelis (Women Water Warriors), a network of more than 2000 courageous & determined women, embarked on a historic 300-kilometer march for water conservation.

Integrity, sacrifice, and resilience formed the backbone of this movement. As the campaign gained momentum, communities that once remained indifferent to water conservation began to take action. The most remarkable aspect was the leadership of these women, despite personal and societal struggles, they committed themselves selflessly to the cause. Their efforts became an inspiration, proving that even in the harshest conditions, change is possible when determination meets purpose.





A HISTORIC INITIATIVE IN BUNDELKHAND

From February 2 to February 20, 2025, Jal Sahelis, draped in blue saris symbolizing their devotion to water, traversed the 5 districts (Niwari, Jhansi, Lalitpur, Tikamgarh, and Chhatarpur) of Bundelkhand. With unwavering commitment, they carried earthen pot filled with water of 7 rivers of Bundelkhand, a potent symbol of their mission to protect every drop for future generations. Their march was not just a walk for water conservation, it was a clarion call for action, a movement to awaken communities, government bodies, and the world to the urgent need for water conservation.

As the yatra moved through villages, it ignited awareness, inspired action, and mobilized communities towards water conservation. Jal Sahelis, alongside villagers, organized Jal Chaupals (Water Dialogues), and Shramdaan (Voluntary Labour) programs, ensuring that local water sources are identified for restoration.

KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE JAL YATRA:

The Yatra aimed to awaken the government, administration, and society to the urgent need for reviving Chandela-era ponds and drying small rivers. This movement sought to transform water conservation into a collective responsibility, empowering communities to take charge of their water future.

The primary objective of the Yatra was to transform water conservation into a people's movement while simultaneously enhancing water literacy.



This journey was not just about spreading awareness but also about mobilizing communities, policymakers, researchers, and the media towards a deeper understanding of water issues. The rising temperatures in Bundelkhand and their severe impact on people's lives made this campaign even more urgent. Recurring crop failures, particularly in the rabi season, have become a growing concern. Last year, wheat production declined, and this year, unusually high temperatures in February already signaling a worsening crisis. Given the visible consequences of climate change, Jal Sahelis decided to embark on this study tour to assess the situation and initiate discussions on sustainable solutions.

The Yatra Aimed At...

Transforming Water Conservation into a People's Movement

Through village dialogues, Jal Chaupals (water discussions), and workshops, the jalsahelis spread awareness about water conservation practices. These initiatives aimed to help people understand the value of water and recognize their responsibility towards its sustainable use.

Awareness on Restoration of Chandel-Era Ponds

Once the lifeline of Bundelkhand, the Chandel-era ponds has deteriorated over time. During the journey, the communities were sensitized to protect and restore the heritage of these ponds, emphasizing their cultural and ecological significance in sustaining local water security.

Rejuvenation of Small Rivers

Most small rivers in Bundelkhand have either dried up or are on the verge of drying. The yatra spearheaded efforts to sensitize the community and encourage collective efforts to restore their natural flow.

Water Conservation and Augmentation

The movement encouraged communities to adopt traditional water conservation techniques, rainwater harvesting, and water reuse, ensuring a more resilient future. The yatra highlighted and encouraged the critical role of women in water conservation.

Identification and Restoration of Traditional Water Sources

Another key objective of the journey was to identify and restore Bundelkhand's traditional water sources. Revitalizing these sources will ensure water conservation and address the region's water crisis sustainably.



A JOURNEY THAT BECAME A PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT


For over 14 years, the Jal Sahelis had been making small but significant efforts to conserve water in their villages. However, they soon realized that working in villages was not enough. The looming water crisis demanded a larger, collective movement, one that could ignite mass mobilization.

With unwavering resolve, Jal Sahelis embarked on a 300 km-long Jal Yatra, transforming their cause into a people's movement. They left behind their homes, their families, and their comforts, walked mile after mile, for a future where no one suffers from water scarcity. They carried the weight of a dying water heritage on their shoulders.

As they walked from village to village, they sensitized communities, shared their experiences in water conservation, and sparked discussions on the pressing impacts of climate change. Along the yatra in each village, Jal Sahelis held community gatherings (Jan Chaupals), where they engaged with villagers on how to restore dried-up water sources and ensure sustainable water management. These discussions were about action, how everyone can contribute to solving Bundelkhand's water crisis. At various stops along their journey, they conducted live demonstrations of soil and water testing, revealing the alarming reality of groundwater depletion.

"It is a vow to save every drop of water and restore traditional water sources. We are working to fulfil the dream of 'Har Ghar Nal Se Jal' (Water to Every Household)", says Jal Saheli Preeti. "Through this journey, we urge people to prevent water wastage".

Their message is simple yet powerful, every drop counts, and collective action today can prevent big crisis tomorrow. This journey was not just about water, it was about unity, resilience, and the power of grassroots leadership. It provided Bundelkhand with a holistic perspective on water issues, encouraging a collective vision for the future.



The women leaving behind their homes and families, walked with an earthen pot filled with water, a symbol of their cause. Some of them were mothers and daughters, walking hand in hand for a common purpose. Villagers rushed forward to honour the water pot with traditional puja, a sacred gesture acknowledging water as the essence of life. Every day, jal sahelis covered 17-18 kilometers, driven not by duty but by an unbreakable resolve to safeguard their children's future. Every village along their path welcomed them with open arms, even when darkness fell, villagers stood in lines, waiting to welcome the Jal Sahelis, their faces glowing with admiration and hope. It was a proof that this movement has touched the hearts of thousands.

Their determination transcended hunger and exhaustion, some even walked barefoot, believing this pilgrimage was a sacred commitment. The sheer devotion of these women had inspired men, village heads, and panchayat members to step forward, calling for a Jal Sathi group for men alongside the Jal Saheli movement.

The Jal Yatra by Jal Sahelis stands as the first-of-its-kind initiative in the world led by women, dedicated to safeguarding their heritage of water. As they walked, they carried with them a message of hope- urging communities to recognize water as a priceless treasure and to join hands in preserving it for generations to come.

The Beginning: A Sacred Pledge for Water Conservation

On February 1, the yatra commenced with a Kalash (Water Pot) Yatra in Orchha, Madhya Pradesh, where over 500 Jal Sahelis, carrying sacred water vessels on their heads, marched to the revered Ram Raja Sarkar Temple. As they chanted, ***"Jal Hai to Kal Hai"*** (Water is Life), they took solemn oath before the deity to protect and conserve water. This spiritual initiation underscored the deep cultural and religious connection people hold with water and set the tone for the yatra.



Yatra kicked off from the banks of the Betwa River, hundreds of women embarked on a 300-km journey, spreading awareness about rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, and traditional water conservation methods.

Founder of Jal Saheli Movement Dr. Sanjay Singh, Water Man of India Dr. Rajendra Singh, Niwari District Magistrate Lokesh Jangid, President of Himalayan River Basin Council Dr. Indira Khurana, and Director of Water For Peoples Vishwadeep Ghosh, along with other government officials, social activists and local people flagged off the yatra with heartfelt wishes for its success, declaring, ***"Saving water is saving dignity and prosperity."*** The movement had begun. Walking through villages, Jal Sahelis received overwhelming support, petal showers, shared meals, and strong commitments. Jal Chaupals (Community Water Meetings) became hubs of discussion, where communities pledged to revive ponds, wells, and rivers.

"If the women of every village commit to saving water, no home will ever go thirsty", said Jal Saheli Meera, as she shared the remarkable success stories of how Jal Sahelis have revived once-dead water bodies through sheer determination and collective effort. **Sharada Banshkar, a national awardee, inspired villagers:** ***"If we unite, every dried river can flow again."***

In Tikamgarh, the Jal Sahelis demanded a Pond Conservation Authority to restore Bundelkhand's historic reservoirs.

Jal Saheli Maya Devi emphasized that government involvement is essential to strengthen local efforts. ***"If the government prioritizes the restoration of these ponds, we can create a robust and effective system for water governance in our villages."*** The Jal Sahelis have collectively decided to take this demand to the government, pushing for strong policies and immediate action.

Leading the march, Founder of the Jal Saheli Movement, Dr. Sanjay Singh emphasized the historical significance of the Chandel-era ponds, which once sustained agriculture and communities but are now in dire need of revival. ***"These reservoirs were the lifelines of Bundelkhand. Today, due to neglect, encroachments, and pollution, they are vanishing before our eyes. If we do not act now, we will be robbing future generations of their right to water,"*** he said.

Jal Saheli Pushpa echoed his words, stating, ***“Our journey from February 2nd to February 19th is not just a march, it is a call to save our water heritage. Every village we pass through, every person we meet, we are awakening them to the reality that without water, there is no future. The Chandel-era ponds and small rivers must be revived, and it is our collective responsibility to do so.”***

Former MLA Rakesh Giri called the movement ***“historic and unparalleled.”*** In Chhatarpur, Jal Saheli Pushpa warned of the Ganga running dry by 2050, urging action to save smaller rivers. Schools and farmers embraced water-saving measures like drip irrigation and rainwater harvesting. In the Bijawar forests, Jal Sahelis emphasized that water conservation is deeply linked to forest preservation. ***“Forests sustain water and water sustains life”, said Dr. Sanjay Singh***, urging communities to protect their natural resources. Their efforts reached Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav, who promised scientific interventions for water conservation and afforestation.

On February 20, at Jatashankar Dham, Chhatarpur, Union Minister of Rural Development, Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Shivraj Singh Chouhan honored the Jal Sahelis, washing their feet in reverence for their efforts and sacrifice. Declaring them key partners in India’s watershed development, he announced ₹20 lakh incentives for top-performing watershed committees, solidifying their role as environmental leaders.



Jal Saheli Kanchan Rawat, who carried the water pot on her head for 15 kilometres, shared her emotional experience: *“Walking with the Kalash felt like carrying the sacred waters of the Triveni Sangam. It symbolized my profound responsibility to protect water, no matter what happens to me, this Kalash must not fall.”*

The 19-day journey had turned into a mass movement, charged by the dedication of villagers, the sacrifice of women, and the curiosity of children. This Yatra was no longer just a march, it was a transformative campaign that will change the face of Bundelkhand.



EXPERIENCES FROM THE YATRA

As the journey began, people who heard about it felt compelled to contribute in their own ways. One such instance was a doctor who, understanding the health risks of foot blisters, immediately sent 200 pairs of shoes for the women walking in the yatra. His sensitivity as a medical professional drove him to act swiftly, ensuring that the women could continue their foot march without suffering.

A remarkable transformation was witnessed during the yatra. As the women walked through villages, they were not merely seen as travellers but were regarded with deep respect. People recognized that these women had embarked on a mission to address water scarcity, an issue affecting every household. Their families had given them the opportunity to raise awareness about this crisis, and this sense of purpose led communities honour them. Some even viewed the journey as a sacred pilgrimage, given its route from Orchha to Jatashankar, adding a spiritual dimension to their endeavour.

A significant experience unfolded in Lalitpur. Every two kilometres, people stood in honour of the yatra. Among them were women, influential civil society members, affluent individuals, and respected community figures, including doctors, local leaders, and legislators. They all gathered to pay their respects to the yatra.

The presence of police escorting the yatra for the women's protection had an unexpected impact. In a society where fear often restrains women, where they are frequently suppressed, and where even in their own homes they experience an atmosphere of intimidation, this visible support and security gave them a newfound confidence. The realization that their cause was so significant that even the state was ensuring their protection boosted their enthusiasm and energy, which was clearly reflected in their campaign.

Throughout the journey, people contributed in whatever ways they could. Every few kilometres, villagers would stand with deep emotions, welcoming the travellers and arranging food and water for them. The unity of all social classes was striking, both the privileged and the marginalized came together in a rare and commendable display of solidarity. The journey shattered caste divisions, a deeply ingrained societal barrier, and united people in a shared cause. It was heartening to witness caste barriers breaking down, with everyone coming together to support and honour the yatra.

One incident stood out in Rajapur village. When the village Sarpanch saw that the yatra was passing through without any food or water, he felt deeply moved. Later, when the yatriis stopped for a gathering at a school, he immediately arranged an entire e-rickshaw filled with fruits, distributing them among the women and other yatriis. This gesture showed the growing sense of responsibility and respect toward the cause.

In Badamalhera block, the yatriis met Arjun Ghosh, a retired government official. After retirement, he had taken a personal pledge to reforest an entire hill. Despite his dedication, he struggled to gain support in his mission. When he saw a massive group marching for nature, he was overwhelmed with emotion, realizing he was not alone in his mission. He wept with both joy and relief, finding strength in the movement.



Even elderly men walked alongside the yatra. Having witnessed severe water crises in their lifetimes, their physical strength was limited, yet their determination for water conservation was so strong that they declared, ***"If our women can walk, so can we."*** This highlighted the true beauty of the yatra- men wholeheartedly supporting a women-led movement and acknowledging their leadership with respect.

As the yatra moved from Lalitpur to Tikamgarh, the sound of songs and slogans filled the air. At one point, a woman came running toward the group and asked, ***"Why are you all shouting in thirst? Come to my well and drink as much as you want to!"*** This moment revealed how deeply people connected with the yatra. Even those who were illiterate or elderly understood that these women were walking for water. Villagers stood at their doorsteps, watching, discussing, and trying to grasp the significance of this movement. Conversations spread throughout the villages- ***"This is a group of sisters marching to save water."*** Entire communities gathered to witness the yatra, showing how powerfully it resonated with the people.

The yatra was a revolution, breaking social barriers, awakening collective consciousness, and igniting a shared sense of purpose.



STORIES OF DETERMINATION

Rekha's Journey of Change- Homemaker to Water Champion

Rekha, a resident of Simrawari village in Jhansi district, was once a homemaker managing her household and running a small grocery store. Her life revolved around caring for her family, but the water crisis in her village changed everything. Determined to make a difference, she became a Jal Saheli and embarked on a journey that would not only transform her own life but also inspire her family and community.

At the start of her Jal Yatra, Rekha faced resistance from her husband, who was reluctant to let her participate. He feared that without her, the household and their shop would suffer. Adding to the challenge, their daughter was preparing for her high school board exams, making it a crucial time for the family. But Rekha saw the bigger picture. She firmly told her husband, ***"Water is our greatest treasure. If we do not act now, our children's future will be bleak. I want to bring change."*** Rekha explained that solving the water crisis was not just her responsibility but a collective duty of the entire community. Eventually, her husband recognized her determination and supported her decision to join the Jal Yatra. While she was excited to take this step, she remained concerned about her daughter's studies. Encouraging her, she said, ***"Your education and future are the most important, and I know you will succeed. This journey will benefit both our family and our village."***

Each day of the Jal Yatra brought new challenges. Rekha travelled from village to village, spreading awareness about water conservation. She educated people on rainwater harvesting, water recycling, and sustainable usage. Her words carried the weight of truth and passion, touching hearts and inspiring action. Through her relentless efforts, she transformed from an ordinary homemaker into a beacon of change. During the 19-day journey, Rekha's family stepped up. Her husband took charge of the shop, and her daughter remained dedicated to her studies. Their unwavering support strengthened Rekha's resolve. She realized that when a family stands together, no struggle is too great.

Rekha's story is a testament to courage, determination, and the power of collective action. From a homemaker to a Jal Saheli, she has shown that one woman's commitment can ignite change for an entire community.



Sahariya Women Break Barriers and Step Forward for Water Conservation

In the villages of Daulata and Hasarkala, four remarkable women from the Sahariya community-Draupadi, Bena, Ramdevi, and Maya, embarked on an extraordinary journey. Stepping beyond the confines of their homes for the first time, they joined the Jal Saheli Jal Yatra, taking their first bold step toward change. Their story is one of resilience, courage, and breaking societal norms to safeguard water and empower their community.

The Sahariya community has long been bound by rigid traditions and social restrictions, limiting women's mobility and voices. But these four women defied caste-based discrimination and deep-rooted conservatism, realizing that their fight was not just for themselves but for the rights and dignity of all women in their community.

During the 19-day journey, their transformation was profound. Initially hesitant and distant from one another, they gradually discovered the power of unity. They realized that by standing together, they could inspire countless others to challenge outdated norms and reclaim their agency. For these women, the journey was more than a physical one, it was a mental and cultural awakening. No longer confined to the roles of wife, mother, daughter, or daughter-in-law, they embraced a new identity: Jal Sahelis, dedicated to spreading awareness about water conservation. With every step, they educated communities on the importance of water, rainwater harvesting, and sustainable practices.

This journey shattered the invisible walls that had confined them for generations. It gave them a voice, one they had never imagined using so freely. What was once a life restricted to household duties became an open space where they could relive childhood joys, reclaim lost dreams, and, most importantly, experience true freedom.

The Jal Saheli Jal Yatra was a revolution within these women. It gave them a platform to stand tall, speak out, and shape a better future for themselves and their community. Their journey proves that real change begins when women break barriers, challenge norms, and take control of their own destinies.

A Legacy of Change- Ladkunwar Ahirwar and Her Daughter-in-Law Neha's Jal Saheli Journey

In the village of Vanguwan, located in Talbehat block of Lalitpur district, Ladkunwar Ahirwar set an inspiring example of leadership and family unity. As a Jal Saheli, she took on the responsibility of bringing change to her community and she did not walk this path alone. She encouraged her daughter-in-law, Neha, to join her in the Jal Saheli Jal Yatra, proving that when generations unite for a cause, transformation becomes even more powerful.

Ladkunwar believed that real change begins at home. By involving Neha, she ensured that the wisdom of one generation and the energy of the next worked together to spread awareness about water conservation. Their journey was about creating a shared vision for a sustainable future. They stood side by side, raising awareness about water conservation, inspiring women in their village, and proving that change is possible when women lead.

By the end of the journey, both Ladkunwar and Neha returned home with a sense of pride and accomplishment. They had not only fulfilled their duties as Jal Sahelis but had also deepened their bond as a family. Their story is a testament to the power of women's leadership across generations showing that when families come together for a cause, they build a stronger, more connected society.



FINDINGS FROM THE 300 KM JOURNEY ACROSS FIVE DISTRICTS

1. Agricultural & Environmental Distress

As the Yatra progressed through five districts, covering 300 kilometers, it became clear that water scarcity was devastating agricultural productivity. Traditional crop diversity was shrinking, as the expansion of wheat cultivation had led to a decline in pulses and oilseeds, resulting in an imbalance in farming patterns. The Jal Sahelis have uncovered troubling changes in Bundelkhand's ecosystem. Jal Sahelis noted that during the yatra, mango trees across the region lacked blossoms, a direct result of unseasonal heatwaves following winter. This phenomenon suggests that climate change is disrupting natural cycles, leading to reduced fruit production and loss of traditional native mango varieties.

The Kushwaha community, known for vegetable farming, is struggling due to poor harvests and increased costs. Meanwhile, the Raikwar community, dependent on fishing and singhara (water chestnut) cultivation, is witnessing shrinking water bodies, forcing them to reconsider their future. Excessive water usage for wheat irrigation has strained wells and ponds, intensifying the crisis.

2. Rapid Deforestation

Bundelkhand, once home to dense forests, is rapidly losing its tree cover, transforming into a rocky, arid landscape. Jal Sahelis observed a stark contrast between Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh-farmlands in MP still have trees, while in UP, deforestation is more rampant. Villagers are now advocating for planting broad-leaved trees along pond banks to restore lost green cover.

3. Traditional Water Structures at Risk

The most striking observation was the deterioration of traditional water conservation systems like Chandeli-Bundeli ponds, havelis, and stepwells (bawlis). Villagers expressed deep concern and demanded urgent restoration efforts.



4. Soil Degradation

Soil degradation is a major challenge leading to the expansion of ravines and barren lands.

5. Challenges in Sanitation & Water Management and Dependency on Government Schemes

Despite the success of the Swachh Bharat Mission, open defecation persists along roadsides, contributing to unsanitary conditions. Children, however, are showing a keen interest in learning about water conservation, indicating a positive shift in awareness.

One of the most concerning issues is the encroachment on traditional ponds. Elderly villagers shared memories of a time when these ponds were brimming with water, serving as vital community resources. Now, many of them are drying up or polluted, threatening the livelihoods of fisherfolk and vegetable farmers.

While the Jal Jeevan Mission has ensured piped water supply in many villages, many households remain deprived of piped water supply and residents remain worried about the long-term sustainability of the initiative. They fear that if the system fails, they will have no backup water sources. This concern has renewed interest in reviving wells and ponds, as communities realize the need to diversify their water sources instead of relying solely on government schemes.

6. The Disappearing Wells of Bundelkhand

The journey has also shed light on the dire state of traditional wells, once lifelines of Bundelkhand. Most are either dried up, filled with garbage, or in complete disrepair. The culture of using wells is vanishing, yet villagers express a strong desire to revive them. They hope that local governments and panchayats will step in to restore these wells.

7. The Shrinking Rivers and Water Crisis

One of the alarming revelations of the journey is that rivers are flowing at dangerously low levels. Smaller rivers, though still carrying water, are seeing declining water levels due to over-extraction for irrigation. Continuous pumping through diesel and electric motors is depleting groundwater reserves, and the dominance of water-intensive wheat cultivation is exacerbating the crisis.

8. Migration Due to Water Scarcity

Another alarming discovery during the Yatra was that some families had permanently migrated due to chronic water shortages and the absence of livelihood opportunities, highlighting how deep-rooted and urgent the crisis has become.

Through this Yatra, a critical realization emerged that government schemes alone cannot resolve Bundelkhand's water crisis. The survival of this region depends on active community participation, and the people themselves must take responsibility for water conservation. The villagers welcomed the Yatra participants with generosity, offering food and gifts as a sign of support, and many pledged to take action at their individual level to save water. These small yet significant commitments have already started yielding results, as efforts to conserve water continue even after the Yatra.





A MOVEMENT WELCOMED BY THE PEOPLE

Jal Yatra was a symbol of unity, resilience, social harmony and empowerment of women to take charge of their communities. Women from different castes and communities walked together not as individuals but as one collective force- “Jal Saheli”.

As the Jal Sahelis marched from village to village, thousands of villagers welcomed them with great enthusiasm, warmth, and deep reverence expressing deep support for their mission. Villagers honoured their journey by worshipping the sacred kalash of water. Each morning, the Yatra began with an aarti and prayers, invoking blessings for their mission. Along their journey, the Jal Sahelis would stop to offer prayers at village rivers and ponds, as well as those they encountered along the way, honouring these water bodies with the reverence they deserved.

Every evening, when the Yatra paused for rest, the Jal Sahelis gathered for discussions-deliberating on pressing water issues, sharing experiences, and meticulously documenting details of the rivers and ponds they encountered. During the nights, they planned the next steps of their journey, ensuring that every stride they took was purposeful, every action meaningful, and every effort a step toward a water-secure future.

The dedication of these women, who had left behind their homes and families to undertake this journey, inspired communities to rejuvenate their rivers and ponds. As the journey progressed, more women joined the movement, strengthening the network of Jal Sahelis across villages. These women were not just raising awareness but actively advocating for policy changes and practical interventions.

Local governance bodies, including Panchayats and district officials, responded positively to the movement and thousands of villagers were offering support, while children were actively engaging in water literacy sessions, increasing their awareness of water conservation and climate change.

The movement had sparked discussions on reviving indigenous tree plantations along water bodies. These ecological interventions aim to restore natural water cycles. The yatra highlighted the importance of restoring and protecting traditional water bodies, promoting water-efficient agricultural practices and enhancing environmental education in schools.

EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION

Perhaps the most heartening impact of the Jal Yatra is on children. With thousands of students engaged in discussions, they were actively questioning climate change and its effects. At a children's assembly, young minds enthusiastically participated in a water dialogue, learning how they can contribute to solving the water crisis. These interactions have been transformative, instilling a sense of responsibility in the next generation. Each day, at least two schools hosted awareness sessions, where children not only learned but also shared their own ideas on addressing climate change. These engagements are shaping young minds and fostering a generation of water-conscious citizens.






A BROADER IMPACT AND THE ROAD AHEAD

This movement, led by women, captured national and international attention. Environmentalists, policymakers, and villagers alike began to take notice. The message was clear- when women take charge, change is inevitable.

One of the most significant achievements of the Yatra has been the increased sensitivity among policymakers, researchers, academia and media representatives. As a result of these efforts, the government has begun to prioritize Bundelkhand in its planning, acknowledging the severity of the crisis and the need for immediate action. The Yatra was not just a symbolic journey, it was a call to action, an effort to unite stakeholders across sectors in finding tangible solutions. The Jal Sahelis have shown that change begins at the grassroots level, and with collective commitment, Bundelkhand can be revitalized.

Through dialogues with farmers, youth, and various stakeholders, the Jal Yatra spread awareness on a massive scale. This journey was not just about water conservation, it is about reviving a cultural connection to water, fostering collective responsibility, and empowering communities to take charge of their water future. As the Jal Sahelis marched forward, they carried with them the collective dreams of thousands- dream of a future where Bundelkhand's ponds and rivers thrive and where every village has access to clean water. Jal Sahelis not only spread awareness but also identified and trained new water warriors in each village, ensuring that their mission continues long after the march ends. They documented local water bodies, understood their histories and inspired communities to restore them.

The impact of the Jal Yatra was profound. The government became more sensitive towards policy reviews, recognizing the urgent need for water conservation. Responding to this momentum, the Madhya Pradesh government organized a state-level workshop in Orchha, Niwari district, focusing on the restoration of Bundelkhand's historic Chandel and Bundeli ponds. This initiative led to the formulation of policies on how these water bodies could be revived, ensuring their long-term sustainability.




The Jal Yatra, a mass movement, garnered unprecedented media attention. National and local newspapers extensively covered the journey, amplifying its message across the country. Leading newspapers such as Amar Ujala, Dainik Jagran, Dainik Bhaskar, Hindustan, Patrika, and Hari Bhoomi prominently featured the efforts of the Jal Sahelis, highlighting the urgency of water conservation. Additionally, over 50 regional newspapers, including Samay Jagat, Darshan Post, and Aaj, played a crucial role in bringing this grassroots movement to the forefront.

Television channels and radio stations also broadcasted the journey, ensuring its reach extended beyond print media. Channels like Bundeli Bouchhar and Bundeli Chugli provided detailed coverage, documenting the Jal Sahelis' struggles, their solutions, and the impact of their relentless efforts.

Social media further amplified their cause, as individuals, journalists, and social activists actively shared updates, videos, and testimonials on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. This digital wave not only increased public engagement but also positioned water conservation as a critical issue at both national and international levels.

The widespread attention and growing awareness led to a significant policy shift. As a direct outcome, on February 4th, a pivotal workshop was organized in Orchha, dedicated to the revival of Chandel-era ponds and small rivers in Bundelkhand. The discussions resulted in a concrete action plan under MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) to rejuvenate these water bodies.

The workshop focused on leveraging government schemes to restore small water sources while ensuring active community participation. Key strategies included cleaning and reconstructing traditional ponds, reviving local water bodies, and integrating indigenous water management practices. This marked a crucial step towards sustainable water conservation, reinforcing the power of collective action in shaping policies and preserving natural resources.



During the journey, the enthusiasm and dedication of the Jal Sahelis toward water conservation led to the selection of 400 new Jal Sahelis. These women voluntarily joined the Jal Saheli organization, inspired by the collective spirit and determination displayed at every stop of the journey. Their commitment not only motivated local communities but also spread awareness about water conservation. Many of the newly selected Jal Sahelis actively participated alongside existing members in water management efforts, pond rejuvenation, and awareness campaigns, further strengthening the movement for sustainable water conservation.

The Jal Saheliyon Ki Jal Yatra was a movement that:

- Engaged over 6,00,000 people across five districts
- Revived critical discussions on traditional water conservation techniques
- Mobilized grassroots efforts for pond and river restoration
- Secured government support for structured conservation policies
- Inspired thousands of women to join the Jal Saheli network

Action Plan for the Revival of Ponds

The Jal Sahelis are continuing to lead local movements in their villages, working to make their communities water-secure, mitigate the effects of climate change, promote afforestation, and enhance water literacy. They are also advocating for climate-resilient crops that require less water, strengthening livelihoods through sustainable means, and improving sanitation and hygiene practices. Their efforts are not just about conservation but about ensuring long-term resilience against climate change.

During their journey, the Jal Sahelis observed that the ponds and rivers of Bundelkhand are facing encroachment and pollution due to lack of maintenance. They proposed a structured plan to revive these water bodies, including afforestation along their banks and concrete measures to prevent wastewater contamination. Discussions were held with local communities, and the following ponds of 5 districts were identified for restoration:



Niwari District

1. Ladpura Gram Panchayat – A 70-acre Chandel-era pond, irrigating 50 acres, suffers from seepage, causing water loss in summer. Restoration requires deepening and seepage repair.
2. Pathari Village – A 100-acre Chandel-era pond, which holds water for only 4-5 months due to seepage. Restoration needs pinch sealing to prevent water loss.
3. Rajpura Gram Panchayat (Amrit Sarovar Pond) – Lacks sufficient water retention. Deepening will help store more water.
4. Chakarpur Gram Panchayat – A 10-acre ancient pond heavily silted over time. Desilting is necessary.
5. Ladwari Gram Panchayat – A 50-acre Chandel-era pond with excessive siltation, reducing water storage. Requires desilting.
6. Makara Gram Panchayat (Neemkhera Village) – A Chandel-era pond drying up within six months due to seepage and siltation. Needs seepage repair and desilting.
7. Binwara Gram Panchayat – A 15-acre Chandel-era pond that dries up in summer. Deepening is required.
8. Janoli Gram Panchayat – A 50-acre pond supporting irrigation for 25 acres but dries up in summer. Needs deepening.

Jhansi District

1. Manpur Gram Panchayat – A 70-acre Chandel-era pond, irrigating 400 acres. Requires repair of ghats.
2. Thakurpura Gram Panchayat – A 100-acre pond, supporting irrigation for over 200 acres, is choked with water hyacinth and silt. Needs cleaning and desilting.
3. Babina Big Pond – A 10-acre pond near Babina city, contaminated by wastewater. Needs cleaning.
4. Simiriya Gram Panchayat – An old pond drying up in summer due to seepage. Requires seepage repair and desilting.
5. Babina Amrit Sarovar – A 3-acre pond needing water channel cleaning and seepage repair.



Lalitpur District


1. Kadesara Kalan Gram Panchayat – A 15-acre Chandel-era pond suffering from heavy siltation. Needs desilting.
2. Khandi Gram Panchayat (Udua Pond) – A 35-acre historic pond with significant siltation. Requires desilting.
3. Purakalan Gram Panchayat – A 40-acre pond retaining water year-round but affected by siltation. Needs deepening.
4. Talbehat City – A 200-acre Chandel-era pond polluted by city drains. Requires cleaning.
5. ChurawaniMajraAiواني Gram Panchayat – A Chandel-era pond connected to the canal system but affected by siltation. Needs desilting.
6. Bhuchera Gram Panchayat – A 5-acre pond suffering from seepage. Needs seepage repair.
7. Budawani Gram Panchayat – A 12-acre pond with reduced water storage due to siltation. Needs desilting.

Tikamgarh District

1. Gor Village – A 50-acre pond affected by siltation. Needs desilting.
2. Padwar Village – A Chandel-era pond requiring cleaning due to surrounding waste.
3. Alampura Village (Paragadh Pond) – A 6-acre pond polluted by wastewater. Needs cleaning.
4. Tikamgarh City (Mahendra Sagar Pond) – A 24-acre pond surrounded by waste. Needs cleaning.
5. Gwaira Gram Panchayat – A 10-acre pond drying up in summer. Needs desilting and deepening.
6. Patha Gram Panchayat (Bada Pond) – A 9-acre pond drying up in summer. Needs deepening.
7. Keshavgarh Gram Panchayat – A 20-acre Chandel-era pond with year-round water but requiring inlet cleaning.
8. Hatheri Gram Panchayat (Kherka Pond) – A 13-acre pond suffering from seepage, affecting irrigation of 60 acres. Needs deepening.
9. Mohangarh Town (Mansarovar Pond) – A 200-acre pond suffering from structural damage. Needs repair.

Chhatarpur District

1. Ramtauria (Bada Malhera Block) – An 80-acre Chandel-era pond affected by siltation and encroachment. Needs desilting and encroachment removal.
2. Badoura Gram Panchayat – A 20-acre historic pond under encroachment. Needs cleaning and encroachment removal.
3. Sewar Gram Panchayat – A 10-acre Chandel-era pond suffering from seepage. Needs repair.
4. Bamnora Gram Panchayat – A 70-acre pond requiring deepening.
5. Dalipur Gram Panchayat – A 90-acre pond affected by siltation. Needs deepening.
6. Paniya Gram Panchayat – A 50-acre Chandel-era pond requiring wall construction.
7. Ghuwara Town (100-acre Pond) – A Chandel-era pond filled with silt. Needs deepening.
8. Ghuwara Town (Jaya Pond, 90 acres) – Requires cleaning.
9. Ghuwara Town (Makhwa Pond, 20 acres) – Needs cleaning.
10. Ghuwara Town (Bandha Pond, 100 acres) – Under encroachment. Needs deepening and encroachment removal.
11. Bhohra Gram Panchayat (Kheri Dam Pond, 20 acres) – Filled with silt. Needs deepening.
12. Devpur Gram Panchayat – A 10-acre historic pond with a broken embankment. Needs repair.
13. Devpur (New Pond, 50 acres) – Under encroachment. Needs deepening and encroachment removal.
14. Panwari Gram Panchayat (100-acre Pond) – A forest pond under encroachment, heavily silted. Needs deepening.
15. Bhelda Gram Panchayat – A historic pond requiring cleaning and deepening.
16. Vishwas Gram Panchayat (Sujan Singh Baba Pond, 10 acres) – Polluted and requiring cleaning.
17. Simiriya Gram Panchayat (Bada Pond, 20 acres) – Under encroachment. Needs deepening.

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18. Safan Patti Gram Panchayat (Baram Sagar, 200 acres) – A Chandel-era pond requiring repair and deepening.
 19. Bhagwa Gram Panchayat (Siddh Sagar, 40 acres) – Needs cleaning and deepening.
 20. Manikheda Gram Panchayat (New Pond, 150 acres) – Needs desilting and repairs.
 21. Phutwari Gram Panchayat (Patwari Pond, 50 acres) – Requires encroachment removal and deepening.
 22. Barethi Gram Panchayat (Narsingh Baba Pond, 10 acres) – Needs deepening.



The Jal Sahelis have ignited a movement, proving that grassroots action can lead to lasting change. Their journey is a testament to the power of women-led initiatives and a beacon of hope for a water-secure future. The Jal Saheli movement is driven by the belief that water is life and protecting it is the greatest responsibility of our time. The Jal Sahelis marched with a single vision: To ensure that the next generation breathes clean air and drinks pure water. The women of Bundelkhand have shown the world that when communities unite, rivers flow, ponds fill, and the future is secured.

In every village touched by the Jal Yatra, follow-up actions will now be taken. Efforts to restore and recharge the depleting groundwater will be intensified, with Jal Sahelis leading the way. Drawing from their deep knowledge of water conservation, Jal Sahelis will spearhead efforts to secure their communities' water future, turning knowledge into resilience and action into lasting change.



VOICES OF THE JAL SAHELIS

"We are Jal Sahelis, and our work is not just about saving water but also about making people understand that conserving water is our responsibility and our identity." – Jal Saheli, Manju



"Water is the lifeline of our existence, and protecting it is our duty. After becoming a Jal Saheli, I realized that we must value every drop, only then can we ensure a safe future for the coming generations." – Jal Saheli, Seema

"As Jal Sahelis, we also spread the message that every individual should respect water and take steps to conserve it." – Jal Saheli, Deepa Majoomdar



"Our journey is not just about water conservation but also about our responsibility toward the environment and society. As a Jal Saheli, I feel proud to contribute to this cause." – Jal Saheli, Srikunwar

"Like the reservoirs built during the Chandel era, we must remember our history to protect our water. If we fail to preserve our water heritage, we cannot secure our future." – Jal Saheli, Rekha



"In this journey, time holds no meaning. We move forward solely driven by our responsibility to save water." – Jal Saheli, Rajni

"Our journey is not just a movement, it is a mission to make every village and every home understand the importance of water. If there is no water, where will we go?" – Jal Saheli, Pushpa



Jal Saheli radha expressed, "Time ceases to exist in this journey. We march forward, driven only by our commitment to saving water."

Jal Saheli Laxmi Kushwaha called for a structured approach: "We must safeguard our natural heritage in an organized manner. The government should form an authority to conduct a detailed survey of all Chandela-Bundela reservoirs, digitally record their status, and create a Pond Data Management System. We, the Jal Sahelis, are ready to support this effort in every possible way."



Jal Saheli Sandhya reflected, "This historic Yatra has awakened thousands in Bundelkhand to safeguard their traditional water heritage, their rivers and ponds. In every village we've passed, 8-10 women have come forward to become Jal Sahelis themselves."





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ABOUT PARMARTH

Parmarth Samaj Sevi Sansthan is a not-for-profit civil society organization dedicated to empowering the most vulnerable and marginalized communities. Since 1996, it has been working at the grassroots level in the drought-prone and water-stressed Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, striving to bring meaningful, lasting change and improve the quality of life for those in greatest need.

Parmarth collaborates with a diverse range of stakeholders including government bodies, institutions, corporate partners, local communities, and individuals to deliver timely and effective interventions in areas such as water conservation, environmental protection, rural development, sustainable agriculture, river rejuvenation, sanitation and waste management, women's empowerment, education, and skill development.

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