Water Accessibility and Marginalisation of Dalits
Some Observation of Rural Gujarat

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Water situation in Gujarat

Water shortage and crisis is one of the environmental degradation in Gujarat. Except some parts of South Gujarat, rest of the Gujarat frequently experiences not only the drought, but ingress of salinity in all over the coastal area starting from Kutch to Bulsar. All villages located on coastal area of around 10 to 15 kms. are experience increasing of salinity everyday not only due to ingress of sea level, but more and more limestone are extracted from the deepest level of land, on the other hand more and more land comes under the irrigated agriculture which boosted the extraction of under ground water. It is a general belief that the water shortage of Gujarat is caused by nature, which is not true. In spite of the low and erratic rainfall, the combination of climate, physiographic and geology in different regions of the state did provide somewhat favorable conditions for water resources in most regions of the state about three decades ago (Hirway and Patel 1994 p.44). The alluvial area of North Gujarat has low rainfall, due to good topographic conditions of recharge, ideal conditions of aquifers which have rendered the region rich in ground water reservoirs. The hilly areas of east Gujarat have adverse physiographic and geological conditions that largely inhibit groundwater storage and have ideal sites for creating surface storage dam reservoirs. Kutch the arid region has favorable geological formation, which provided confined aquifers in consolidated formation of sweet water up to 200 mts of depth. The coastal area of Saurashtra was also capable of storing the rainfall run-off from the upland rocky terrain.

But in recent era, 85 percent of its underground water has already been extracted and areas like North-Gujarat and Saurashtra have been declared as Dark zones. "Despite the five decades of planning and more than decade of "Drinking water mission", there are numbers of "No-source" villages which are growing constantly. Most of the Gujarat's 18000 villages had own reliable drinking water source, when the state

was carved out from the Bombay in 1960, only 1500 villages were without adequate source of drinking water. But today 15000 villages of North Gujarat, Saurashtra and Kutch regions are facing acute drinking water shortage" (Sudarshan Iyengar 2001). Until 1960, Gujarat was heavily depending on rainwater for its agriculture. After 1970, demand of water for irrigation accelerated. In absence of perennial rivers, North-Gujarat, Kutch and Saurashtra had started to meet their water demand for irrigation from under ground water, over a period of time it leads over use of ground water. The shortage of water experiences by state is largely men-made. Rising population, growth of irrigation, industrialization and urbanization, contribute towards the over use of underground water from deep aquifers that leads in drying up of shallow acquires, creates severe imbalance in sources of drinking water in several parts of the state. Overdrawing of ground water in coastal area of Saurashtra has pushed saline water, resulting in salinity ingress in the region and deteroit the quality and quantity of water supply. North Gujarat, Kutch and other parts of Saurashtra had also depleted water resources badly which creates water mining on a large scale. South Gujarat, which is considered as a Charapunji in terms of rainfall, has also increased water logging and salinity.

The men-made water shortage and mismanagement of water resources deteriorated quality and quantity of water accessibility in different regions with different degrees of impact. Excess salinity, excess fluoride and excess nitrates, resulted in a severe shortage of drinking water. The shortage of drinking water has serious implications for the well being of poor and weaker section of the society.

Gujarat and Development

Economically Gujarat is considered as a one of the prosperous states with population of 50 million spread over on 196000 sq. km. "Although the states has only 5 per cent of the national population, it has 6.5 per cent of the national production and more than 12 per cent of the national industrial out put. The enterprising population of Gujarat has

brought the state in forefront of economic development in the country. The state has not only acquired and maintained its fourth rank in per capita Net Domestic Product, but has also made a quantum jump in the post-liberalization period by attracting almost all the highest industries investment, particularly in the large and medium industry sector and has consequently experience the highest growth in the capita. The average annual rate of growth of the state economy (at the 1980-81 prices) in the post reform period, i.e from 1990-91 to 1997-98 has been 8.65 per cent, which is among the highest in India. In terms of the growth rate of the per capita state domestic product too, the state is at the top with more than 6 per cent annual rate of increase (Indira Hirway, 2002, p.37). As per the latest information, Gujarat is going to reach on the growth rate 16 per cent, which is highest among the Asia (Divya Bhaskar, (Gujarati), 1 February, 2006, pg.1).

The critical question is, has this development treated all the groups equally? Has Gujarat been able to distribute its economic development equally to all castes and classes? Has economic growth lead into a higher human development? As shown by the studies, "the performance in the sphere of "human development", particularly on the scale of social environment and equality is poor. The state ranks fourth in human development (Indira Hirway, 1993). Though the state has experience relatively rapid economic growth, it appears to non sustainable. Capitalist economic growth has bred consumerism. During the last five decades, the middle class in Gujarat has swelled in side disproportionate to economic growth. Both in economic and social relationship, urban-rural division have blurred (Ghanshyam Shah, 2000, p.459). Rapid economic growth does not translate adequately into human development. This creates fundamental issues related to the development model adopted by the state. Serious issues of environmental degradation are also surfaced on society level.

Water and Social structure

Any scarce item influence social structure and gets distributed in accordance with power of different groups, caste, class and gender, all the three stratification systems of the society have strong relationship with water. A significant aspect of water shortage, adding more burden on poor and weaker section of the society.

As per traditional social order of Hindu society, the land rights and other commercial activities were operated by upper and middle castes, which established caste based inequality. Centuries and centuries, the practice of caste base inequality was the part of our society. After independence and rapid economic growth of Gujarat, has the state able to adequate the basic needs of drinking water to all the sections of the society without any caste base discrimination? Ours was a society of chaturvarna, how far the abolition of untouchability has been taken place in terms of water accessibility to all groups of the society? After the six decades of independence, series of steps has been taken by state and society to bring the socio-economic weaker section with mainstream of the society, are they getting equal rights in terms of water accessibility, is the basic issues of inquiry.

Studies have shown that "the visible practice of untouchability has decline certainly in public sphere, but incidence of atrocities against Dalits have not shown similar downturn and continue unabated in post-independence India in various forms-murder, grievous, hurt, arson and rape. Conflicts over material interests and political power contribute a great deal to such incidents. Land owning classes, upper and middle class and OBCs do not tolerate land allotted to Dalits under various welfare programmes of the state. Disputes over public and common land of the resources such as forest and water lead to clash between Dalits and non-Dalits" (Ghanshyam Shah, 2001, p.20).

Therefore the purpose of this paper to examines the available water sources of the village and water accessibility to the Dalits in contemporary Gujarat. As per constitutional provisions under the article

No. 15, no discrimination should be taken place on the basis of caste, race color and sex. All are equal to access the natural resources without any discrimination of caste, sex and race. While on the other side, traditionally and socially, the system of chaturvarna was in practice since centuries and centuries long back. Due to the concept of purity and pollution among Hindu, India had experienced and it was in practice and discrimination in terms of distribution of natural resources like water. Now when India has entered in global map of development has the accessibility of water for the human being is still dominated by the caste variable?

Status of Dalit in Larger Society:

Traditionally, according to the Hindu social order, they are at the bottom of the social hierarchy and considered as an Ati-shudra and Achut and are treated as a untouchables. As per historical roots, several centuries in a material base of a pre-capitalist agrarian economy, Dalit was a laborers working on the landlord's farm. They were serving the village community and in return they were used to get remuneration in kind. There role was in-built in the village social structure and controlled by the landowner dominant castes. Religious rituals reinforced their dominant position and provided sanction to the system and SCs occupy the lowest position, perpetuates and maintains inequality. Dalit were not considered to be a part of the human society, but something which is beyond that. The Dalits perform the menial and degrading jobs, and seen as untouchables which lack them from many basic services and legal protection, denied access to water, food, healthcare, housing and clothing.

After the independence, constitutional provision of Reservation for Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe to bring the weaker section in mainstream of the society was accepted by and large, though opposed by many congress leaders and even Jansangh. To participate in power structure, under the Article 330 and 322, 78 and 540 seats are served for SC in parliament and state assemblies respectively, but studies shows

that, "the elected representatives have not secure effective power to even express the problems of their communities. The leaders belonging to the ruling parties have done little to implement the laws enacted for the benefits of the poor strata of their communities. The legislators did not actively participate in the debate in the state assemblies or parliament concerning issues affecting the deprived communities" (Ghanshyam Shah, 2001, p.36).

Population of SCs in Gujarat

As per census 2001, the population of SCs in India 1665.76 lacs (16.20%) while in Gujarat it constitute 7.10% (35.92 lacs), spread over the Gujarat.

"Under the Schedule Caste category, thirty groups are covered. Among them 85 percent of the people are fall in castes like Mayavanshi, Bhangi, Chamar, Meghval, Garoda and Vankar, generally called untouchables. As per Urban-Rural settlement, 60.6 percent of the Dalits are living in rural area and probably occupied in agriculture labors category, while 39.3 percent are living in Urban, and occupied in unskilled and unorganized labor work (Arjun Patel, 2005). Some of them have land, but most of them are small and marginal farmers. "In Urban area most of them are living in slums and dirty places" (Biswaroop Das, 2004).

Women and Water

A significant aspect of water scarcity is that the burden of bringing water from distant sources has fallen on women, irrespective of their age. Women in several rural and even in urban households have to face hardships in lack of easy access of drinking water and other domestic purposes. Women, as the water carriers and end-users are directly connected with water. Women and young girls often spent five to six hours a day for water fetching from distance place not only they themselves pushed and rushed in crowd for water collection from water tanker, which is a often phenomena of their everyday life. Interestingly,

when the distance is even greater, animal power or auto vehicles are put to use for transporting water, particularly when men manage water collection, but when the distance is covered by foot then it is carried out by women only. All over the world, irrespective of their socio-economic level, daily water collection and consumption is managed by women as a part of the daily routine. However, when water distribution and management becomes decentralized and/or privatized, then the gender role gets reversed, it becomes a male dominated area, where males are the managers and women as workers. “Being water providers, women suffer the impact of depleting water resources most severely. These costs are (1) more time in water collection, (2) less water for drinking and other purposes, (3) loss of income from water intensive activities, (4) poor quality of water for domestic use which increase incidents of diseases, (5) loss of educational opportunities. Such hardship adversely affects her time, energy, mental, hygiene, status and her development.” (Cecila Tortajuda, 2000) Therefore it is necessary to understand the close association between women and natural resources is more valid and primary in rural context.

But does it hold true for all categories of women? It is necessary to look more critically at different categories of women. “The diversity among women: rural and urban, upper and lower caste and class, educated and illiterate, women of developed countries and underdeveloped countries, differ from one another so much so that, a general categorization is difficult. Of course, there are some common problems and characteristics that all women might share, but at the same time, there are some differences in priorities and role of women across time, space and classes.

The accessibility of water and hardships of water collection also get connected with caste higharchy within the women group, much diversity are established, particularly in India women group is not homogeneous. The position of Dalit women and position of upper caste women is not same. The position of Dalit and other weaker section group is more lower which increase their hardships. Control of upper castes on natural

resources and power, made position of dalit women weaker. Therefore the purpose of this paper is to examine the position of Dalit's particularly women's position and water accessibility in rural Gujarat.

Issues

1. How does the condition of water resources affect Dalit life in terms of accessibility of water? Are they getting water as their right?
2. What is the role of civil society in water management to access the water to the Dalit?
3. How Dalit themselves co-opt with their condition in a large society of upper castes?

Methdology

Eight villages from constant drought prone and water scarce area of Gujarat are selected as cases. Two villages from each district of Ahmedabad (Bhal area) Amreli, Bhavnagar and Rajkot are selected for indepth inquiry. Along with secondary data, primary data are also, gathered by (1) household interview schedule, (2) participant observation and (3) focused group discussion. Care has been taken to include all castes proportionately for household interview schedule.

Social composition and water Sources of the Village

Caste, number of households, population and source of drinking water is presented in Table No. 3, 4 and 5. As per data, in all eight villages, the population of SCs varies in range from 6.5 percent to 43.8 percent. Prahladgadh of Bhavnagar district have only 6.5 percent of SCs population, while Virnagar of Rajkot district have highest numbers of (43.8 percent) SCs.

Otaria

As per Table No. 3, in normal condition public well, four ponds and public sump* were the main sources of water in Otaria. During monsoon all four ponds were filled up people's participation under the leadership of major land holders and elder people, which is interrupted after the responsibility of water supply taken by Gujarat Water Supply and Sewage Board (GWSSB). Out of 215 households of Otaria, 80 households of Rajput, Koli and Leuva Patel owned underground water storage tank which was allotted and subsidise by Integrated Rural Development Project (IRDP). During monsoon it was generally filled-up by rainwater, which is enough to meet the drinking and cooking for the family of six for through out the year, as experience shared by the respondents, but during drought, public sump was the only source of water supplied up by GWSSB. Otaria is one of the major wheat producers (non-irrigated wheat) popularly known as "Bhalia Wheat", brings prosperity for some people. Though the failure of crops during drought, the major landholders of Rajput, Patels and some Kolis were able to maintain their financial position which helps them to fulfill their water needs by purchasing water from outside village Dholera. They managed to purchase the water for drinking and domestic consumption. Obviously, the paid charge of drinking water was higher than domestic water consumption charges. The quality of water was also reflected in paid price. Relatively the quality of drinking water interms of TDS was better than other domestic consumption water. Public sump was the main source of water for other marginal farmers, landless laborers, and schedule caste (29.7 percent) and other people. Though the quality and color of the water was totally unfit for drinking, even then it was the only source of water for drinking and other domestic consumption. Due to higher purchasing power of Rajpur, Patels and Kolis, they were in position to access more safe water while for rest of the groups, have to depend on public sump only, which is also a conflict centre between marginal group and other middle level group to get maximum water within minimum time.

* In Local dialect the small reservoir of water is called as a sump.

Table 3 – Caste Composition

No.	Particulars	Ahmedabad District				Amreli District				Bhavnagar District				Rajkot District				Total
	Taluka	Dhandhuka		Barvada		Amreli		Lathi		Gadhada		Vallabhipur		Jasdan		Jasdan		
	Village	Otaria		Sangasar		Babapur		Dudhalabai		Prahladgadh		Kanpar		Virnagar		Chitalia		
	Caste	No. of HHs	%	No. of HHs	%	No. of HHs	%	No. of HHs	%	No. of HHs	%	No. of HHs	%	No. of HHs	%	No. of HHs	%	
1	Koli	40	18.6	70	41.1	7	2.2	8	8.8	12	11.2	130	33.7	15	5.2	80	59.2	362
2	Leuva Patidar	60	27.9	45	26.4	260	81.7	20	22.2	45	42.0	25	6.4	80	28.1	--	--	535
3	Rajput/Darbar	30	13.9	5	2.9	5	1.5	25	27.7	22	20.5	107	27.7	30	10.5	12	8.8	236
4	Brahamin	4	1.8	--	0.0	7	2.2	5	5.5	1	1.0	5	1.2	10	3.5	3	2.2	035
5	Bharwad	8	3.7	14	8.2	10	3.1	--	0.0	--	0.0	40	10.3	25	8.7	20	14.8	117
6	Vaghri	5	2.32	5	2.9	--	0.0	7	7.7	19	17.7	7	1.8	--	--	--	--	043
7	Artisan Cates	4	1.8	2	1.1	--	0.0	--	0.0	--	0.0	21	5.4	--	--	--	--	027
8	SC'S	64	29.7	29	17.	29	9.1	25	27.7	7	6.5	50	12.9	125	43.8	20	14.8	349
9	Muslim	--	0.0	--	0.0	--	0.0	--	0.0	1	1.0	--	0.0	--	--	--	--	001
	Total	215		170		318		90		107		385		285		135		1705

Source: Village Record.
* Information not Available M- Male; F-Female
Source: Village Record.

Table 4 – Population

No.	Particulars	Ahmedabad District				Amreli District				Bhavnagar District				Rajkot District				Total
	Taluka	Dhandhuka		Barvada		Amreli		Lathi		Gadhada		Vallabhipur		Jasdan		Jasdan		
	Village	Otaria		Sangasar		Babapur		Dudhalabai		Prahladgadh		Kanpar		Virnagar		Chitalia		
	Caste	No. of Persons		No. of Persons		No. of Persons		No. of Persons		No. of Persons		No. of Persons		No. of Persons		No. of Persons		
1	Scheduled caste		%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%	
	M	125	10.4	--	*	150	11.7	137	53.7	40	10.5	400	17.3	117	3.8	38	6.5	10079.84
	F	75	7.5	--	*	156	9.9	113	46.1	25	11.3	300	21.4	113	4.7	32	5.4	08149.70
2	Schedule Tribe																	
	M	450	37.5	75	6.2	--	--	--	--	175	46.0	1000	43.4	--	--	--	--	170016.61
	F	300	30	75	7.5	--	--	--	--	100	45.4	400	28.5	--	--	--	--	087510.43
3	SEBC																	
	M	450	37.5	--	*	108	8.4	118	46.2	165	43.4	900	39.1	168	5.5	544	93.4	245323.97
	F	300	30	--	*	110	7.0	132	53.8	95	43.1	700	50.0	157	6.6	556	94.5	205024.43
4	Other																	
	M	175	14.5	1125	93.7	1019	79.7	--	--	--	--	--	--	2752	90.6	--	--	507149.56
	F	325	32.5	925	92.5	1295	82.9	--	--	--	--	--	--	2105	88.6	--	--	465055.42
	Total M	1200	54.5	1200	54.5	1277	44.9	255	51.0	380	63.3	2300	62.1	3037	56.1	582	49.7	1023154.94
	F	1000	45.4	1000	45.4	1561	55.0	245	49.0	220	36.6	1400	37.8	2375	43.8	588	50.2	838945.05
	Total	2200	11.8	2200	11.8	2838	15.2	500	2.6	600	3.2	3700	19.8	5412	43.2	1170	6.2	18620

* Information not Available M- Male; F-Female
Source: Village Record.

Table 5 – Available Sources of Drinking Water
(1) During Drought
(2) Normal condition)

No.	Particulars	Ahmedabad District				Amreli District				Bhavnagar District				Rajkot District			
	Taluka	Dhandhuka		Barvada		Amreli		Lathi		Gadhada		Vallabhipur		Jasdan		Jasdan	
	Villages	Otaria		Sangasar		Babapur		Dudhalabai		Prahladgadh		Kanpar		Virnagar		Chitalia	
A	Source	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
1	Water Tank	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	√	-	√	-	-
2	Well (Public)	-	√	-	-	-	√	-	-	-	√	-	√	-	√	-	√
3	Well (Private)	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	-	√	-	√
4	Hand pump – (Own)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	√
5	Hand pump – (Public)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	Pond	-	√	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	√
7	Reservoir(sump)	√	√	√	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	Tanker	-	-	-	-	√	-	√	-	-	-	√	-	√	-	√	-
9	River	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	-	-	√	-	√	-	-	-	-
10	Water Tap	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	-	√	-	-
B	Source of Irrigation	Pond		--		Bore Pump		--		Bore Pump		Bore Pump		Bore Pump		Bore Pump	

At the time of Fieldwork √ - Available
1
Before Drought (in Normal Condition) - - Not Available
2
Source: Village Record and field observation.

Sangasar

Sangasar is a village of Koli, Leuva Patel, Rajput, Bharwad and SCs (17 percent). In normal condition, the village pond was filled-up by people themselves for drinking and domestic consumption; by and large the available quantity of water was sufficient to meet the requirement of whole year, which is highly depend on amount of rainfall, but in drought situation water supply was managed by GWSSB, due to remote area the supply of tanker was totally irregular and insufficient to fulfill the minimum requirement of three-four buckets of drinking water for the family of four or five. Here also the major landholders belongs to Leuva Patel, Koli and Rajput managed to purchase the drinking water from outside the village, while water for domestic consumption was carried out by women from surrounding villages, such condition often lead to disputes between villages. Allegation of water stealing is a permanent charge on people of Sangasar which openly revealed during the combine meeting of Otaria and Sangasar which was converted in open fight among women of both villages. Among these groups, access of water to SCs was worsening due to their caste identity. After taking hardships of wandering around the surrounding villages, at least the elite group like Rajput, Koli and Patels were managing to get two or three pots of water per day while SCs have to live on mercy of upper caste to get at least one pot of water.

Babapur and Dudhalabai

Babapur is a village of Leuva Patel and SCs constitute only 9 percent of the population. In normal condition, well and non-perennial river were the main sources of water, while in Dudhalabai, (mix proportion of caste, though Rajput and SCs have same percentage of population, the ownership of own hand pump is associate with Rajput and not with SCs), hand pump was the main source while during drought water tanker was the only source of water for drinking and domestic consumption in both villages. At the time of water tanker arrival, in both

villages, people, were used to gather at the water collection center and cramming fighting, pushing to each other for getting as much water as they can in less time was the common phenomena of everyday life. During the course of water collection, hitting and injured to each other was so common that the physical fighting have become a part of the daily routine across the settlement. Instead of standing in queue, everybody was looking hurried to get more water in less time. Everyday it was a scene of war playing by people themselves. Interestingly, the people whom are preferred to keep distance from SCs, are openly pushing to get them aside and attempted to get maximum water, though it was touched by SCs. During the hardships the concept of purity and pollution is easily give up by upper castes, which was in practice during the normal condition.

Prahaladgadh and Kanpar

Prahaladgadh and Kanpar are selected from Bhavnagar district. Prahladgadh constitute lowest (6.5 percent) percentage of the SCs population among the cluster of eight villages of this study. It is a village of Leuva Patel. In normal situation, hand pumps, wells and non-perennial river are the sources of water, while only one private well owned by Rajput was the source of water during drought.

Kanpar is inhabited by Koli, Leuva Patel, Rajput, Bharwad, Vaghri and SC (12.9 percent). In normal situation, private and public wells, water tank and non-perennial river are the sources of water, while during drought, out of hundred only three or four wells had some level of water, out of four only one well had sweet water. Non-perennial river was also dried and frequency of water tankers was also reduced. 90 percent of the population was depending on water tankers for drinking and domestic consumption. Few Rajput and Leuva Patels had own well at their farms, while remaining of the households have to run behind the water tankers only.

Virnagar and Chitliya

Virnagar is a village of SCs, constitute 43.8 percent of the population, local water works operated by grampanchayat was the main source of water in normal situation. Along with water works, public and private wells and non-perennial river are other sources of water for drinking and other domestic consumption. During drought all water sources were dried and water supply was managed by GWSSB tankers, which was not sufficient to fulfill minimum water requirements of the entire village. This has led to a fierce agitation by women against the GWSSB as a result of which the supply was rounded 20 tankers per day as against 10. Chitliya is also a village of Koli and Bharwad SCs constitute 14.8 percent of the population. Situation of Chitliya is worst in terms of water sources. Normal days, private wells and non-perennial river are the main sources. But the hardship of water collection is so acute that people can not differentiate between hardship and relaxation. During drought year, all wells were dried and water tanker was the only source of water. In both villages, quarrel and conflicts between different socio-economic groups, including that of physical fighting had become a part of their daily lives. In both villages, demand for a separate water source was often raised by SC and non SC groups. Both have strong prejudices against each other on the issue of water resources. In normal situation also, conflict between SCs and non-SCs for the water is common.

Caste, Water and Status

Any scarce resource mediated by the social structure and gets anticipated in accordance with power relations pertaining to caste, class and gender. Obviously, availability and distribution of water too has a strong relationship with the social structure. In all eight villages, there is no separate or special provision of water collection and distribution center made on the basis of caste. All water resources are common and open to

all without any caste discrimination, even than caste order creates hierarchy on the issue of water collection, distribution and accessibility.

As per local hierarchy, ownership of private well, purchased water, water tap and water tank are found in descending order of status. The households, owing well are at the top in the status pyramid. Naturally, households of this group enjoying more comfort compare to the rest. In all eight villages, households with more productive units like land, have their own source of water, like well or underground water storage tank. They tend to get relatively safe and sweet water for drinking and other domestic consumption. This increases their status among other lower socio-economic groups. Women of this group have need not to go outside for water collection. Close relatives of upper class/caste like Rajput, Patel and Koli are also enjoying little comfort by asking for water with less hesitation, while it is not available to SCs group.

Purchasing water from outside the village, probably from well owners and those supplying water by tanker, is also a luxury of some families in each village. Most among them have some regular as well as and extra income and saving for survival, particularly owing large land holding in Rajput, Patel and Koli. Some families in each village managed their water needs by spending money. Fetching water from pubic source is often considered as a lower activity by upper caste families. They refrain from lowering their status by sending women outside home for collection of water. In order to maintain their social status, even when they have no source of water of their own, they preferred to purchase water from outside the village. Incidence of such occasion however remains with few families across the villages of entire study region.

Even than in each village, large numbers of households are fall in the lowest category of the status pyramid with an average of 80 percent of the households depends on public water tanks and/or tankers for drinking water and other domestic water consumption. Though fall in same category, the accessibility of water within the caste structure,

creates discrimination and inequality among SCs and non-SCs. While collecting the water, yet the women of SCs are hesitate to stand in queue as per their right and waiting for the mercy of kind hearted women of upper castes to collect the water, which is not only taking more physical time and energy, but creates a marginalization and inhuman approach.

Water and Status of Dalit

Data of all eight villages indicates extra hardship and humiliation of the women specific to the scheduled caste. In all eight villages, during focus group meetings, the SCs women demanded separate water spot or sumps for them to avoid quarrels with other non-SC women something that was always occurred at the time and locations of water collection. In Kanpar at the time of water tank allotment, separate tap was allocated to the SCs. This has been functioning for some years, when it was noticed the advantage of SCs women to get more water with less time due to their small numbers, compare to other non-SCs, slowly the upper caste group has started to collect water from the tap which was allotted for SCs. Subsequently they began to push them openly and appropriate away the separate tap was allotted to the SCs and hardly remembers the rituals of purity. Now it has turned into a general tap and women of the SCs have to stand aside. Instead of getting water from tank as their right, now they are obliged by upper caste women to collect water from tanker. Moreover, when water tankers failed to arrive, or at times when water supply was less, women from upper caste comes to ask for water from other women being to non-SC groups, having some water in their farm well while lower caste women could not even dare to do so. Again, women of SCs remain lower at the bottom of the social hierarchy among other women. More or less, the trend remains similar in all villages. Otaria and Babapur have been some what different for the presence of Gandhian Nai Taleem institutions working since long has weakened the caste hierarchy and SCs women did not face much discrimination. But

subtle community and humiliation and hence the upper caste people did not dare to avoid the SC people and allow them for water collection. Even then the SCs of both villages want separate water provision for their community due to latent humiliations of upper castes while collecting water. Virnagar and Chitliya also face group rivalries between upper castes and SCs on the issue of water collection. In both villages, differences among caste group surfaced openly, during focused group meetings women of the upper caste walked out, while women of the SC group started shouting on the issue of water collection from tankers. The upper caste women preferred to call a separate meeting to express their opinion. According to them it was too difficult to express what they want to say in the presence of SC women due to their aggressiveness. It was a clear cut difference between the groups; each one charged the aggressiveness and domination of other group on the issue of water collection. In Chitliya, during focused group meeting the SC women walked out and force to have a separate meeting with them to narrate their hardship and problems of water collection. Both the communities were in favor of separate water collection points, which lead to infer that stratification along caste line plays crucial role. It also implies that the people belongs to lower caste, sounds have lower social status on an issue of natural resource like water. Powerful groups hold more control, while weaker group of SCs remain weaker even while the issue relates to distribution of natural resources.

Water accessibility and Practice of Untouchability

The pertinent point that emerges here is that, in all eight villages, though SCs population proporsnately different, the strong demand of separate water provision is come out unanimously. The critical question is, why this group of people are desire to have a separate provision, though the state made a provision by constitution, the right of equality to all, in terms of availability of all types of opportunities. The inquiry of all

eight villages, justified the fare demand of separate water provision is come out as a result of the concept of purity and pollution of non-SCs. Moreover it is also a fact that the concept of purity and pollution not practicing strongly, the mindset of upper caste is not ready to accept the rights of SCs. Though the untohchability abolished legally, yet on issue of water, by and large, the discrimination for the water to Dalit is in practice by non SCs. Oteria have 29.7 percent of SCs population, and in normal days, four ponds are the source of drinking water. As narrated by SCs group of people, it is in practice not to take water from same place where other non SCs are taking water from the pond. During drought, all ponds were dried up and water supply was managed by GWSSB. While collecting water from the sump hidden humiliation always takes place, though the Gandhian institution like Nai Talim is working on total abolition of untouchability. More or less, in all rest of the villages, SCs have admitted the constant humiliation for water touch and many of them avoid to collect the water in presence of non SCs due to fear of humiliation and they preferred to go in group to avoid the quarrel, conflict and humiliation with non SCs. The same event read by non-SCs differently. According to them they are coming in group to show their strength, and some of them gave a threat of violation of atrocity. While some SCs have preferred to keep distance and make a mark when water source is common. The argument behind the deliberate compromise, "We have to work on their farm, than why should we invite any disputes with them." For water collection many times they have to wait for the non-SCs women to pour the water into their pots. The roots of separate demand of water provision are lying in traditional social order even after the six decades of independence though ranking first in field of investment, rural Gujarat practicing hidden untouchability with SCs group.

Role of civil society

What is the role of civil society to access the water as their right to SCs? Has any steps had been taken by village community? During the inquiry the institutions like village panchayat head and other elected members are also interviewed to discuss the issue of conflicts and quarrels which frequently taken place between SCs and non SCs. At the end of the inquiry all representatives' members and village head concluded with only one opinion, "It is their personal matter and personal prejudices and personal quarrels and conflicts" which made themselves safe from the disputes and take away from responsibility. None of them took it as a serious issue of social justice. Elected members of the Dalits have do not say in village affairs. Even the special power and provisions accorded to elected SC members to protect the interest of their community are not effective. In Gujarat, the state government created Social justice Committees at all levels of Panchayatiraj to protect the interest of the deprived communities. The committee has a statutory power to inquire into cases involving injustice and discrimination against SC and ST. Evaluation of the working of the committee shows that they have not made much difference in the condition of Dalits in the state (Ghanshyam Shah, 1977), and atrocities against Dalits continued. The members of this committee occupy the office but not take the necessary political power to improve their discrimination and marginalisation of SC and ST. In all eight villages none of the village head took any initiate to minimise the marginalisation of SCs. Interestingly, in Chitliya, the position of Sarpanch is holding by SC woman, when she contacted, she was also wandering for water with two pair of vessels and asked the author to contact her husband rather than she. After some attempts, she expresses her opinion for water provision. She doesn't know to whom and how to meet higher authority to apply for the water provision. She herself practices untouchability with non-SCs while going for water collection. She admitted, the SCs are getting less amount of water compare to non-

SCs. Kanpar village has different experience, the separate provision for SCs was snatched away forcefully by upper castes. In all eight villages, whether SCs are in majority or in minority, none of the village leader, head, elected member and any social activist took any steps to manage water distribution to all groups without any cast base humiliation.

Summary and Conclusion

Late Prof. I.P. Desai conducted a study in 1971 on, "Water facilities for the Untouchables in Rural Gujarat," with object of in what matters the untouchability is in practice which covered 64 villages of rural Gujarat, and found in 44 villages, no weakening of belief in pollution or in untouchability for common source of supply of water" (I.P. Desai, 1973). Again same study with same objective and area restudied by Prof. Ghanshyam Shah in 1997 and found, "after intervening of twenty five years, two villages were added to this list in practice of untouchability and water accessibility to SCs. (Ghanshyam Shah, 2000). Again with some what different objective and in different area, (but with relevant theme) the recent study also justifies the practice of untouchability and lack of water accessibility to Dalits. In another way all eight villages of this study are included in previous list of villages' studies done by Profs I.P. Desai and Ghanshyam Shah on the issue of untouchability and water accessibility to SC.

The only difference between two studies, the separate provision of drinking water was a symbol of untouchability shown by Profs. I.P.Desai and G.Shah, while in recent study though the separate provision of drinking water was allotted for the dalit to access drinking water, eventually became common to all caste, even than the practice of untouchability is not weaken in rural part of the Gujarat. Moreover it creates more hardships and humiliation for Dalit women, and again the demand of separate water provision is surfaced which shown failure of the

state. Social higharchy based mindset still dominating on constitutional provision of equality.

In all eight villages it has been found that the degradation of natural resources, like water, due to unsustainable development model of state and mismanagement of water sources, leads disempowerment of SCs particularly women, in drinking and domestic water sector. It has, at regular intervals, been announced by the state, that drinking water should be accessible to all sections of the society and would be the priority area for planning. Despite this, ensuring access to safe drinking water to all has not been realized. It is found that the depletion of water resources has added much burden on SCs and forced to bring water from distant and different places, putting in too much of their time and energy. More time for fetching water, means less time for income generating activities. To spend more energy to fetch water means less time for relaxation and other self-development oriented activities. All these components lead to SCs in marginal position and lead away from their own empowerment. It is a evident that the roots of the system are encompass the social structure of the society, with respect to each other social variables, the deprived castes are far behind than other upper castes of Indian society.

Example of Gujarat may not be enough to understand the water crisis but it provides indications to the future scenario. Thoughtless planning and policies creates water scarcity that ultimately affects on weaker section of the society and made them more marginalized. However it would be not fare to say that nothing has changed in last sixty years and the condition of Dalits has remained same as it was before independence. At the same it is also true that, the socio-economic condition of the Dalits is improved and they do revolt occasionally. Many of them assert their rights and Dalits are also become more conscious of their rights but all of them do not confront the dominant castes and classes because they are in a minority and fear that may not succeed. It

is evident that, many protest movements and revolt are emerged in favor of reservation in education and job, but not a single protest movement takes place from dalit group to safeguard the water accessibility as their right. It is also true that, the fear of atrocity used by dalits against upper caste, only on individual bases, which creates only hatrates against the SCs and not accepted as their right. Except Virnagar, in all of the seven villages of this study had face discrimination and humiliation for water which reflected in their demands, while as observed the SC group of Virnagar acquire aggressiveness and conscious about their rights and started to dominate on other castes rather than to go marginalised and raise their voice against the traditional feudal social set-up and challenge the hierarchy based inequality on the issue of pollution and purity. It is true that, to the some extent, untouchability has been reduced considerably in some public sphere, which are directly manage by the state laws, but not as a thoughtful way of other upper castes. Definitely it reduces, but complete disappearance in terms of water accessibility is not taken place and kept Dalit in marginal position.

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