

'Why don't we have a water budget, where we plan how to use monsoon water?'

Solapur-based geologist **Prof Shrinivas Vadagbalkar**, one of the water warriors of Maharashtra, who was felicitated at the 14th Kirloskar Vasundhara International Film Festival (KVIFF) with the 'Green Teacher' award, tells **Prajakta Joshi** that the Earth is bound to change and we have to ensure that we are not responsible for the hastening of this change.



tra, only one to four per cent of the rainwater gets absorbed. That is why our ancestors had created water storages like lakes, ponds and water tanks. Why do all the temples have lakes or ponds next to them? Why did Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj build water tanks on all his forts? It was to enable storage and conservation of water.

We must plan water conservation according to the region and terrain. The water conservation strategy that worked in Northern Maharashtra may not work in Konkan. What was effective in Konkan, might be useless in Western Maharashtra. The policymakers also need to remember all of this before designing projects for the State.

we get in two-three months of monsoon?

Another problem is the dependency on groundwater. I see that people feel that in order to conserve water, it must only be absorbed in the ground. But there is a particular capacity, over which, groundwater cannot percolate. In the rocky terrain of Maharashtra,

You have had a major contribution to the Ramnadi Restoration Mission (RRM) in Pune. River cleaning and conservation is on everybody's mind. Do you think it will make a difference in the long run?

River conservation projects will only make an impact if we make people jalsakshar (water literate). I can clean the river today, but what is the guarantee that it will remain that way tomorrow? We have to take the responsibility to see to it that the river remains clean throughout. There are laws to prevent sewage water from going to the river directly, but what's missing is the effective implementation. Again, for that, people must be made aware and taught to take

care of their rivers.

I have observed that authorities, as well as organisations, focus on digging us the river basin to increase water content in the rivers. However, the water source for the rivers is the streams in the hilly areas. If we want the rivers to be alive, we need to ensure that the source is conserved, not just the river basin.

Climate change and global warming are one of the major environmental concerns on the international front today. What can we, as individuals, do to help conserve nature?

Climate change is inevitable. It has been happening since ages, and it will continue to do so. We

cannot stop it. We have had six ice ages until now, and each of those were followed by a period of high temperature. However, what we can do is accept the environment as it is, and see to it that we are not hastening the process of global warming. For that, we need to take responsibility and inculcate behavioural change.

First and foremost, we need to stop thinking that our actions will help the earth. Earth has sustained through changes and evolution since forever, it's the life form that keeps changing. So the behavioural changes that we try are only to ensure that our next generation lives the way we did. Earth does not need us. We need the Earth.

Water has been one of the most concerning issues for Maharashtra. In the last year itself, while the summers witnessed acute scarcity of water resulting in drought in one part of the State during summer, monsoon and excess rainfall brought floods to others. Where do we fall short in our water conservation

and management?

India is one of the most prosperous countries in terms of its water resources. However, we have failed at managing the water so that we can use it throughout the year. Why don't we have a water budget, like the financial budget, where we plan how to use the water that