

Jal-Jeevan-Haryali Abhiyan – a Remarkable Commitment

Jal-Jeevan-Haryali Abhiyan in Bihar, which is aimed at holistic development and institutional management of water resources infrastructure with greater public participation, is receiving appreciation from all quarters for its remarkable commitment towards the cause of water conservation. The work is being done on war footing even in lockdown, as is evident from the fact that between 20th April 2020 and 5th June 2020, about 1532 planned works were started and 56 were completed. The state government conducted more than 1343 inspections in addition to 1556 pre-level surveys of previous schemes which were also uploaded on the website. A total of Rs. 104 crore has been spent so far.

Jal-Jeevan-Hariyali Abhiyan envisages to effectively counter the challenges of water scarcity being faced by the State by constructing/reviving 1116 ponds, 59 weir/check dams and 592 ahars/pynes spanning 534 blocks in all 38 districts of Bihar. The total irrigation potential creation from this campaign is expected to be 1, 47, 254 hectares. Most importantly, the Abhiyan has led to creation of 2, 95, 665 working man days under MGNREGA so far. Multi-dimensional in approach, the Abhiyan looks to minimize the ill effects of climate change, protect environment, recharge groundwater and carry out plantation on mass scale. Under the Jal-Jeevan-Hariyali Abhiyan, ponds/talabs in rural areas with surface area up to 1 acre are being renovated by Panchayati Raj Department under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme (MGNREGA) whereas Minor Water Resources Department (MWRD) has been tasked to revive ponds/talabs more than 1 acre in size.

Some of the traditional water bodies being revived and restored are as under:

Ahars/Pynes: These are natural floodwater harvesting systems indigenous to South Bihar and used for irrigation since antiquity. While Ahars are natural flood water storage areas embanked on three sides with fourth left open for surface runoff to fill the body naturally, Pynes are diversion channels that distribute the river waters to fields and impound water in the Ahars for storage purposes.

Ponds/Talabs/Tanks/Pokhars: These are rain/flood water areas embanked on all four sides with inlet structures on the side of the natural surface run-offs and outlet towards the farms.

Weirs/Check Dams: Weirs (gates/crests) are used to control the high discharge flow rates of rivers by managing the volume of water flowing downstream whereas check dams are small, sometimes temporary, waterway to counteract erosion by reducing water flow velocity. They date back to second century A.D.

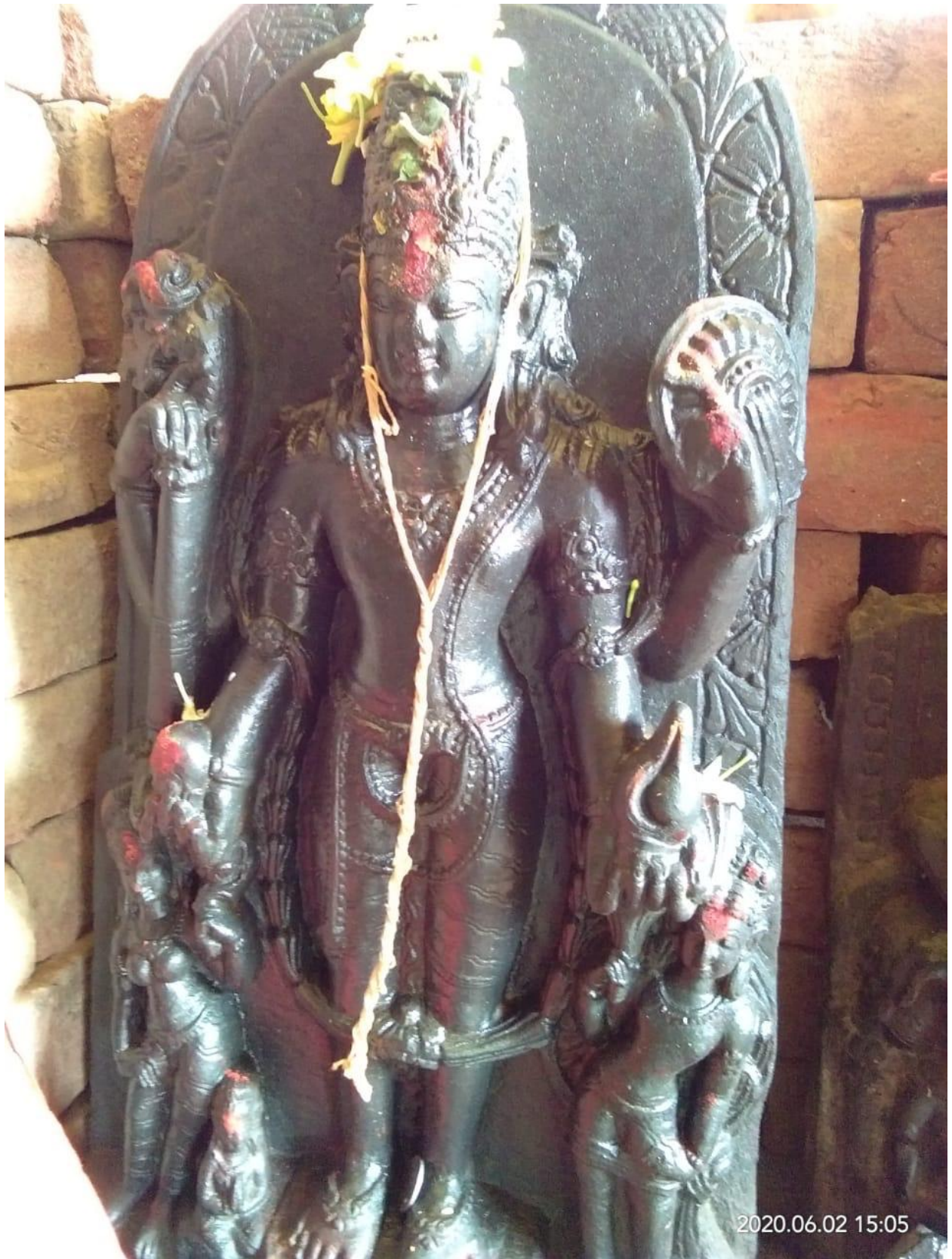
Water Wells: These structures are created under ground by digging or drilling to access groundwater in underground aquifers. The water wells are common source of small scale irrigation, drinking water and bathing in rural areas.

BOX

In extraordinary developments during the excavation work of Jal-Jeevan-Haryali Abhiyan in Bihar, 3 ancient statues of Lord Vishnu and Vajra Tara were recovered from Sheikhpura and Araria districts in Bihar. While two statues are said to be of Lord Vishnu, one is believed to be

Vajra Tara (Son God). One of the Vishnu idols is 3 feet tall and reportedly dates back to Pala Empire. In addition, a *shivling* was also recovered during excavation work in Gaya district. These recoveries are being seen as good omen by the local people. The statues were found during the revival/construction of ahars, pynes, tanks and ponds in all districts of Bihar, as part of Jal Jeevan Haryali Abhiyan.





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