

# Sustainable Water Use: Story of ‘Simon Oraon Minz’ – ‘Waterman of Jharkhand.’

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## Abstract

*Sustainable living requires health and dignity. And health and dignity need both water and development. Working on a topic about water asks what sustainable water use is. By sustainable use of water, we mean the ideas and the efforts taken over by water management throughout the years to protect our current and future generations by saving water and its resources. Simon Oraon Minz, also known as the “Waterman of Jharkhand,” is an environmentalist who has enormously impacted Jharkhand. His actions to combat drought through sustainable water development have been seminal. Not only had that, but his endeavors toward afforestation also had a massive impact on his state. Keeping this objective in mind, this article tries to present the interview report that scheduled with the “Waterman of Jharkhand,” and provide a few valuable inputs in water management as an original contribution to the body of knowledge in the field of water sustainability and water resource economics.*

**Keywords:** Water Scarcity, Water Sustainability, Waterman of Jharkhand.

## 1. Introduction

Sustainable living requires health and dignity. And health and dignity need both water and development. Working on a topic about water asks what sustainable water use is. By sustainable use of water, we mean the ideas and the efforts taken over by water management throughout the years to protect our current and future generations by saving water and its resources. We have done enough destruction of forests and lands; now time to save water, as it is under severe threat.

Simon Oraon Minz, also known as the “Waterman of Jharkhand,” is an environmentalist who has enormously impacted Jharkhand. His actions to combat drought

through sustainable water development have been seminal. Not only had that, but his endeavors toward afforestation also had a massive impact on his state. Simon Oraon Minz, known as Simon Baba, was born in Khaki Toli village of Bero block.

With the help of his fellow villagers, he has built five irrigation reservoirs and several ponds and helped his area become a hub of agricultural activity. In 1964, his village honored him by bestowing upon him the title of Parha Raja, which is equivalent to being the chief of the tribe, and in 2016 he was awarded the ‘Padma Shri.’ The initial efforts were to make five reservoirs based on five geographically significant places. In the first two years, he did not get the result according to people’s expectations. However, the outcome started coming in from the third year. Afterward, several ponds and wells were made.

## **2. A Continuous Suffering**

He had seen people suffer for drinking water. Mothers and their children in that location used to walk considerable distances, even for a bucket of water, so their families could have enough food to survive. Water was available only during the monsoon, and whatever would be available, everyone ran to collect it. Moreover, in mountainous areas, individuals need at least two days of proper watering to do farming. During that time, people would collect water from streams and drains. And till the rains came, they could not plow the land. There would be no water for six months, and the only water they could use was from underground.

Nevertheless, they would have enough water to take to the fields once the rains came. It would be a tiresome task, but that had to do with it. When the rains would come, there could be floods that would sweep away the crops. People would walk around two kilometers searching for water, making small indentations to direct the water.

## **3. Early Success:**

All these forced this man to develop the efforts that made him the ‘Waterman of Jharkhand.’ He started making dams by himself only. His inspiration and the idea of building reservoirs in 1961, benefitting currently, will do that for future generations. The first dam he built was 45 feet wide and 7 feet deep. It was started in 1961 and lasted till the year 1970.

After that, the numbers started increasing. He organized all the people of his village and made them understand the importance of water in human life. He held meetings weekly to discuss the usefulness of water in our lives and how to use this water which has come from rain and is going towards the sea. On Sundays, they discussed how to make a dam so that rainwater could be stopped, gathered in one place, and supplied to the field wherever needed. Initially, the villagers wanted to avoid making this possible because they were not ready to work free of cost. Therefore, Simon Oraon Minz started giving sums so that they could help him make a dam.

The first dam was built being built-in 1961. It is still useful for people in the area. Water is being supplied to every area of the field through that dam. Next, they dug wells to gather rainwater so that we could use it in need of water in summer. These wells are linked with a dam so that dam water goes to the wells and gathers. People from different areas of the dam use this well's water. According to their need from January to December, whatever crops they grow in the field. The water supply increased because of the dam itself. Water irrigated in the field indirectly comes to the dam through underground water due to its depth. He made the second dam of 5,000 feet and, on the other side, another of 3,500 feet. The outcome started to come in. The fields became prospered. Two crops now grow where one used to, and three grow where there was none.

#### **4. Methodological Evaluation of Water Sustainability**

According to Simon Oraon Minz, something is only possible for a farmer with water. Water is life for a farmer. Water is needed for all because cattle and crops are interdependent, because they work like a food chain to teach others. So wells are very important because it provides water for life as God provides air to live on. When the government built dams, so many houses got flooded. Simon Oraon Minz has built multiple dams; however, floods haven't taken place. This is because the dams are small. They do not stop water to the extent that it would form a reservoir and flood the neighboring areas. Good-quality canals have been made from both sides of the dams. It helps the water to come out from the dam as it overflows in the rainy season. Water itself comes out from the dam as soon as it overflows to the dam. Moreover, the excess water went to the fields through small canals attached to the big ones. In this way, many villages save themselves from this kind of misfortune. According to Simon Minz, dams should be small and have provided water to farms on top of mountains. There is a proper way in which farming is done.

Furthermore, he suggested that the government should see people who have done this work before and follow their examples. You need to know the best way to supply water to a particular place in the best possible manner. Inspecting the area and having good knowledge about the land is very important. Without proper study about the area, it is impossible to supply water. Simon Oraon Minz visited areas many times from morning to evening to study the land where the water could be supplied.

## **5. Sustainable Thinking against the Construction of Tube Wells**

Earlier, the wells would be 40-50 feet deep having full of water. However, the recent construction of unlimited tube wells/bore wells creates many issues that evolved with well water. A maximum of them became dry, and their water level decreased significantly for those who survived. He thought the construction of excess tube wells/bore wells would be the reason for lowering down the adjacent water level. He had warned them about this. Simon Oraon Minz protested against the construction of tube wells/bore wells as the water levels of the land went down. Tube wells/bore wells are dug deeper than ordinary wells, hand pumps, and ponds. So the water in the area of tube wells/bore wells dries faster. Therefore, he was against the tube wells/bore wells. He elucidates that the government also does not think about future generations and sustainability. Thinking only about the present can hamper the future generation. Water should be used sustainably in the present and future.

## **6. Conclusions**

Simon Oraon Minz is undoubtedly a man of great passion, even at 85, who loves his community with all his heart. His message of having love within our hearts is of great importance in this day and age. He also highlights the importance of sustainable and grassroots development. While he is disillusioned with the government, he sees excellent potential within people when they come together for the good of the community. Simon Minz's story inspires the creation of sustainable and environmentally friendly projects and showcases the importance of community, camaraderie, and love for our fellow human beings.

## **7. Note**

Despite being an interview report scheduled with the "Waterman of Jharkhand," that presented in a pragmatic manner; the author tries to provide valuable inputs in water

management that makes an original contribution to the body of knowledge in the field of water sustainability and water resource economics.

Moreover, the problem-solutions that stated through this report to address the issue of water scarcity seem to be at the micro level and depend heavily on individual initiative. The author believes that this is the limitation of this article. However, since the issue is nationwide, it is also necessary to think of initiatives at the meso and macro levels, that is, at the state and national levels. Of course, this requires much more political will. I hope that research in this area can contribute to raising awareness on water governance, which in turn can lead to the development of political will.

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