

# Purifying water, a clear solution

Serial entrepreneur and visionary Inder Sharma has dedicated his life to impactful action and investment. His latest initiative aims to bring affordable, top quality water to vulnerable communities in the South Asian region.

Allahabad, 22/12/2007: A person is drinking water from river Ganges near garbage and waste leftovers | Photo by Abhimanyu Kumar Sharma



INTERVIEW

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CEO of Ibos Incubating One World Filter (OWF) System Country Group Distributor

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Water has been touted as the “oil of the 21st century”. Rising demand coupled with increasing scarcity is making this most basic of natural resources a precious asset that we may not have enough of in the long run. South Asia has been one of the regions in the world most impacted by the global water crisis – millions in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh lack access to clean water, while nearly half of India is suffering from the effects of poor rainfall over recent years. The 2018 Composite Water Management Index (CWMI) report projects India’s water demand to be twice its available supply by 2030, threatening water scarcity for millions of people.

Working on the ground to address this life-threatening problem in South Asia is Inder Sharma, who has dedicated his life to

impactful action. Describing himself as a “serial entrepreneur” and “die hard environmentalist”, Inder wears many hats – he is a philanthropist and the angel investor behind US-based incubator IBOS.com, and has founded over 15 companies, including Hotel.com. Having invested heavily in environmental technologies, Inder was responsible for changing 2 million incandescent bulbs in the hospitality industry to energy-efficient lamps in the 1990s.

In an exclusive interview, Inder talks about his next major water-related project in January 2020 as Country Group Distributor of the One World Filter (OWF) System. Spreading the gospel of OWF technology, Inder ambitiously aims to bring affordable and top quality water to rural communities in water-stressed South Asian countries.

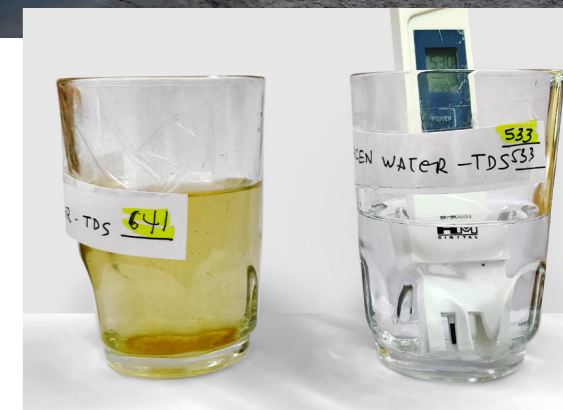
**Voices of Leaders:** Could you tell us about your role within One World Filter (OWF) and how you became involved with this inspiring movement?

**Inder Sharma:** Being a philanthropist and ardent devotee of the Sri Sathya Sai Baba movement in India, I’ve always had a quest to find a solution to India’s dire water crisis. Sai Baba undertook a huge water project in India which benefited thousands of villages. This project had a great impact on me.

A good friend asked me if I was interested in the latest OWF technology, so being a serial entrepreneur and also looking for water technology for India, I said yes. I then met Karl Leung, the Director & Chief Strategy Officer of One World Filter Corp., who was so passionate about water and wanted to share >>



Collecting sample at Gandhi Nagar, Gujarat, India. That water was treated by OWF System | Photo by Inder Sharma



Two glasses of water before and after were taken at Government office in Gandhi Nagar, Gujarat | Photo by Inder Sharma



his vision about OWF. We agreed to distribute OWF systems in India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Nepal.

**VoL:** Why is clean drinking water still such a critical, global-wide problem?

**IS:** This brings up a very important topic which has been kept away from mainstream media. There are several reasons for the global water crisis. Global warming has impacted our rain pattern which has resulted in untimely rains and, at times, no rain in multiple places, causing water scarcity. On the other hand, population surge in the world has resulted in the use of billions of litres of water, not only for drinking but also for agriculture. This has all resulted in lowest water tables in the ground.

Industrial and pesticide contamination of groundwater has put millions of lives at risk. Technological innovations played a big role in improving water quality in recent years, but at the cost of our health. Basically, there are many technologies which are widely used today, but two are quite prominent – gravity purifiers which use charcoal and carbon-activated filters and other filter systems that do not remove all microbiological contaminants. Most of these are not tested or certified.

The most popular product today is very harmful for the human body as it removes most of the essential minerals and wastes almost 80% of water. World Health Organization (WHO) has already issued warnings against it for drinking, and recently,

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Environmental issues in India. Children playing near dirty littered with debris of the lake, watching the fish. Near the Water Palace in Jaipur India. Photo taken 23 February 2017 | Photo by diy13

the Supreme Court in India banned the sale of these purifiers. Therefore, none of the existing technologies provide a good solution for drinking water.

**VoL:** Could you tell us about how the One World Filter System provides a viable solution to this problem? – What has been the feedback you have received on the ground about this technology in the developing countries where you distribute?

**IS:** Whenever new technology is introduced, it has to be thoroughly tested first. I visited India three times to understand the existing water situation on the ground. Also, I evaluated all the current water purifying technologies. I personally travelled to 17 cities in India with the OWF System and purified water at each location and interacted with the people who appreciated what we were trying to do. Anyone who tasted the OWF system water was happy and we had very positive feedback. Everyone appreciated the taste because the OWF System does not remove essential minerals. People were very apprehensive in the beginning but once they tasted the water, they loved the technology.

**VoL:** Only 33% of India has access to traditional sanitation. How does one even begin to address the needs of such a huge population?

**IS:** It is a monumental task. When I spoke to Ms. Judy Ryan, president of OWF Foundation, I was touched by her passion to help humanity

at large and that inspired me to take on the challenge to provide 30-40 million people in India with drinking water. OWF Foundation’s mission compliments our needs in South Asia. India has many NGOs who work in the water category. As a distributor, we would work closely with NGOs who understand the needs of people. Working with NGOs at one end and working with big retail stores on the other will help us reach out to the masses.

**VoL:** What kind of challenges do you foresee with regards to distribution and implementation, especially in rural areas with poor connectivity and basic infrastructure? What role can emerging technologies such as AI, blockchain, IoT and radar technology play in the more efficient application of water filtration systems?

**IS:** In phase one, we would start distribution of OWF systems in India. India has over 500,000 villages and it does pose a serious distribution problem. Latest technologies such as AI, block chain or IoT will help with logistics to streamline the distribution and eCommerce capabilities especially dealing with vast database of customers. The next generation of OWF systems could be digitalised with GPS technology. This will help not only in monitoring water consumption in any geographic location but also with the efficient and strategic distribution of water resources.

**VoL:** Water filtration systems are only a part of the overall water consumption process – the final part – and are essentially redundant if there is no actual supply of water. How do you see the current state between water filtration system creators such as OWF and other stakeholders in the water sector including governments at local and national level and the private sector? Has

there been a further push towards tackling the problems of water security?

**IS:** Frequent droughts over the years and weather pattern changes due to global warming are causing serious water scarcity in many parts of the world. Water tables have gone too deep to extract water, and they continue to dive further. Organizations like the World Health Organization are working with global stakeholders to take the first step to conserve and harvest water. But this remains a short-lived solution as by 2050, the world will not even have potable water to filter!

Before this stage comes, organizations like One World Filter and OWF Foundation will work with all stakeholders to practice water conservation and reuse of water. Technologies will also evolve to irrigate farmlands efficiently and water filtration technologies will improve further to extract water from air as well as a further push will be made towards the desalination of ocean water. Desalination still remains our last hope irrespective of cost.

**VoL:** Looking ahead to 2020, are there any particular plans or initiatives which you are

excited about with regards to OWF?

**IS:** OWF technology offers hope to the world to address the global water crisis. OWF technology is very scalable and this offers us an opportunity to provide the healthiest water at the lowest cost. We are excited about OWF Foundation’s “Water for All initiative” which is so critical for over 2 billion people globally.

We are also very excited about the initiative taken by OWF Foundation and OWF Corporation to be part of Earth Day 50 Live concerts globally. This will help in spreading awareness about water conservation as well as the solution they have now. ●

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