WATER CONSERVATION

Water Conservation is an integral part of Indian identity and cultural history. In India, water conservation in the form of rainwater harvesting is an ancient tradition which has become more relevant in present day scenario. From as far as 4500 BC till 21st century, the purpose behind interventions in the form of simplest of earthwork structures to scientifically evolved water harvesting/ artificial recharge structures has remained the same– how to save water for later optimal use.

The availability of water resources on earth are limited and unevenly distributed. The issue of water conservation is not just about "saving" water—it is about having enough clean water at any given time and place to meet our needs. The conservation of our water resources depends on our wise use of these resources. This issue, again, needs to be understood both in the context of the developed as well as developing countries. The quantity of water to be compensated does not only refer to the region that has witnessed large scale extraction, but also to the types of users and the country's capacity to invest in technologies to adapt to water shortages.

Several efforts have been made in India and other parts of world wherever water shortage has become an important issue. Various government departments have undertaken construction of water harvesting structures which has not only helped in storing water on surface but also enhanced recharge to ground water. The challenge can be effectively met by taking up programmes of artificial recharge to ground water in a big way throughout the country. The Ministry of Water Resources, Government of India has taken various initiatives for promoting Artificial Recharge and Rain water harvesting including preparation of a conceptual Master Plan for Artificial Recharge to Ground Water in India brining out scope for construction of 1.11 cr artificial recharge structures in around 9.5 lakhs sq.km recharge area with an estimated cost of Rs. 79,000 Cr. Large number of demonstrative projects have been successfully executed across India with construction of check dams, underground *Bandharas*, cement plugs etc. Government of India has also Implemented the Scheme "Artificial recharge to ground water through dug wells" in seven States for construction of recharge facility on irrigation dug wells owned by the farmers utilising excess spare water which otherwise would have gone waste.

Water conservation depends on our wise use of these resources. Such wise use, without a doubt, begins at home and in our community. Although rainwater harvesting continues to be practised globally, and there is renewed interest in its revival, the system nonetheless has fallen to disrepair. Whatever the case, climate policy and water policy would require to be streamlined to promote rainwater harvesting in the water-stressed regions of the world. We believe that neither the water policy nor the climate policy discussions seem to notice the worth of rainwater harvesting as an adaptation to climate change, especially in urban areas where water resources are fast depleting due to rapid increase in population and unrestricted use of water. This subtheme will attempt to highlight works undertaken by various stakeholders and make an effort to take the success stories to the masses and deliberations shall lead to formulate a road map to popularise the concept of water conservation and make it a peoples program.