

Energy consumption of a nation is usually considered as an index of its development. This is because almost all the developmental activities are directly or indirectly dependent upon energy. We find wide disparities in per capita energy use between the developed and the developing nations.

The first form of energy technology probably was the fire, which produced heat and the early man used it for cooking and heating purposes. Wind and hydropower have also been in use for the last 10,000 years. The invention of steam engines replaced the burning of wood by coal and coal was later replaced to a great extent by oil. In 1970's due to Iranian revolution and Arab oil embargo the prices of oil shoted up. This ultimately led to exploration and use of several alternate sources of energy.

other energies which are considered as

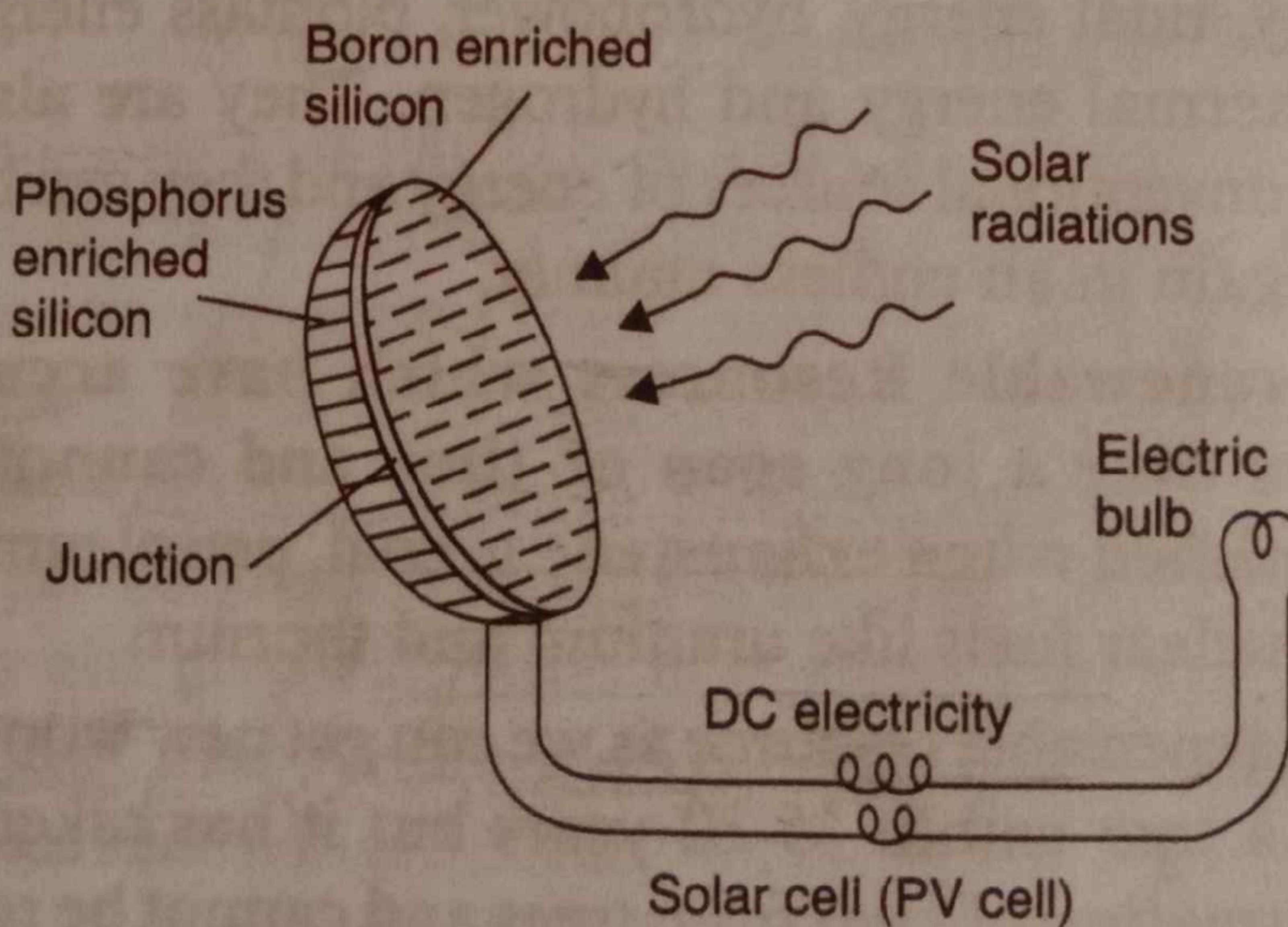
(a) Renewable Energy Resources :

1. **Solar energy:** Sun is the ultimate source of energy, directly or indirectly for all other forms of energy. The nuclear fusion reactions occurring inside the sun release enormous quantities of energy in the form of heat and light. The solar energy received by the near earth space is approximately 1.4 kilojoules/second/m² known as solar constant.

→ Traditionally, we have been using solar energy for drying clothes and food-grains, preservation of eatables and for obtaining salt from sea-water. Now we have several techniques for harnessing solar energy. Some important solar energy harvesting devices are discussed here.

(i) **Solar heat collectors:** These can be passive or active in nature. Passive solar heat collectors are natural materials like stones, bricks etc. or material like glass which absorb heat during the day time and release it slowly at night. Active solar collectors pump a heat absorbing medium (air or water) through a small collector which is normally placed on the top of the building.

(ii) **Solar cells:** They are also known as photovoltaic cells or PV cells. Solar cells are made of thin wafers of semi conductor materials like silicon and gallium. When solar radiations fall on them, a potential difference is produced which causes flow of electrons and produces electricity. Silicon can be obtained from silica or sand, which is abundantly available and inexpensive. By using gallium arsenide, cadmium sulphide or boron, efficiency of the PV cells can be improved. The potential difference produced by a single PV cell of 4 cm² size is about 0.4-0.5 volts and produces a current of 60 milli amperes. Fig. 2.5.2 (a) shows the structure of a solar cell.



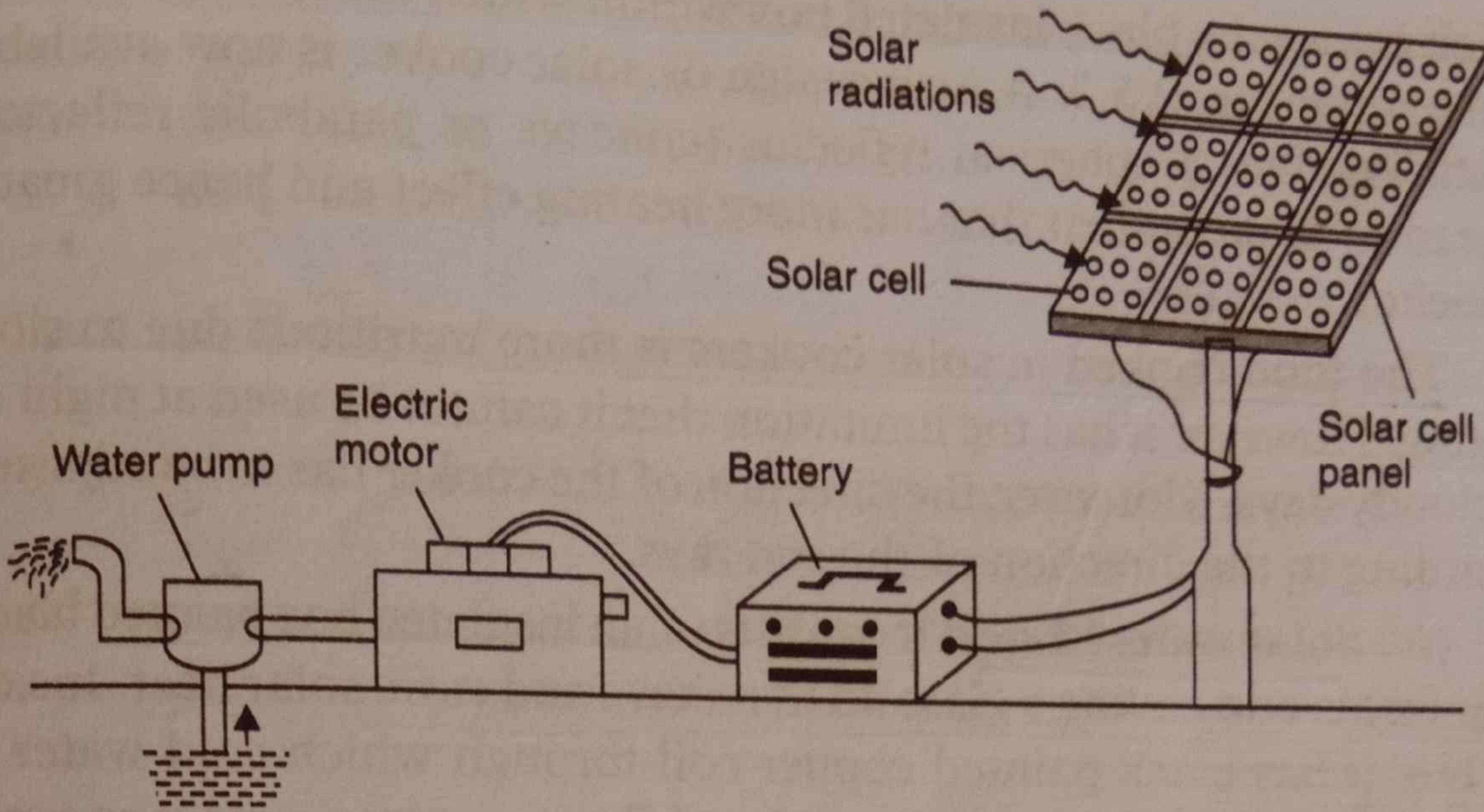


Fig. 2.5.2. (b) A solar pump run by electricity produced by solar cells.

A group of solar cells joined together in a definite pattern form a solar panel which can harness a large amount of solar energy and can produce electricity enough to run street-light, irrigation water pump etc. (Fig. 2.5.2).

Solar cells are widely used in calculators, electronic watches, street lighting, traffic signals, water pumps etc. They are also used in artificial satellites for electricity generation. Solar cells are used for running radio and television also. They are more in use in remote areas where conventional electricity supply is a problem.

(iii) Solar cooker: Solar cookers make use of solar heat by reflecting the solar radiations using a mirror directly on to a glass sheet

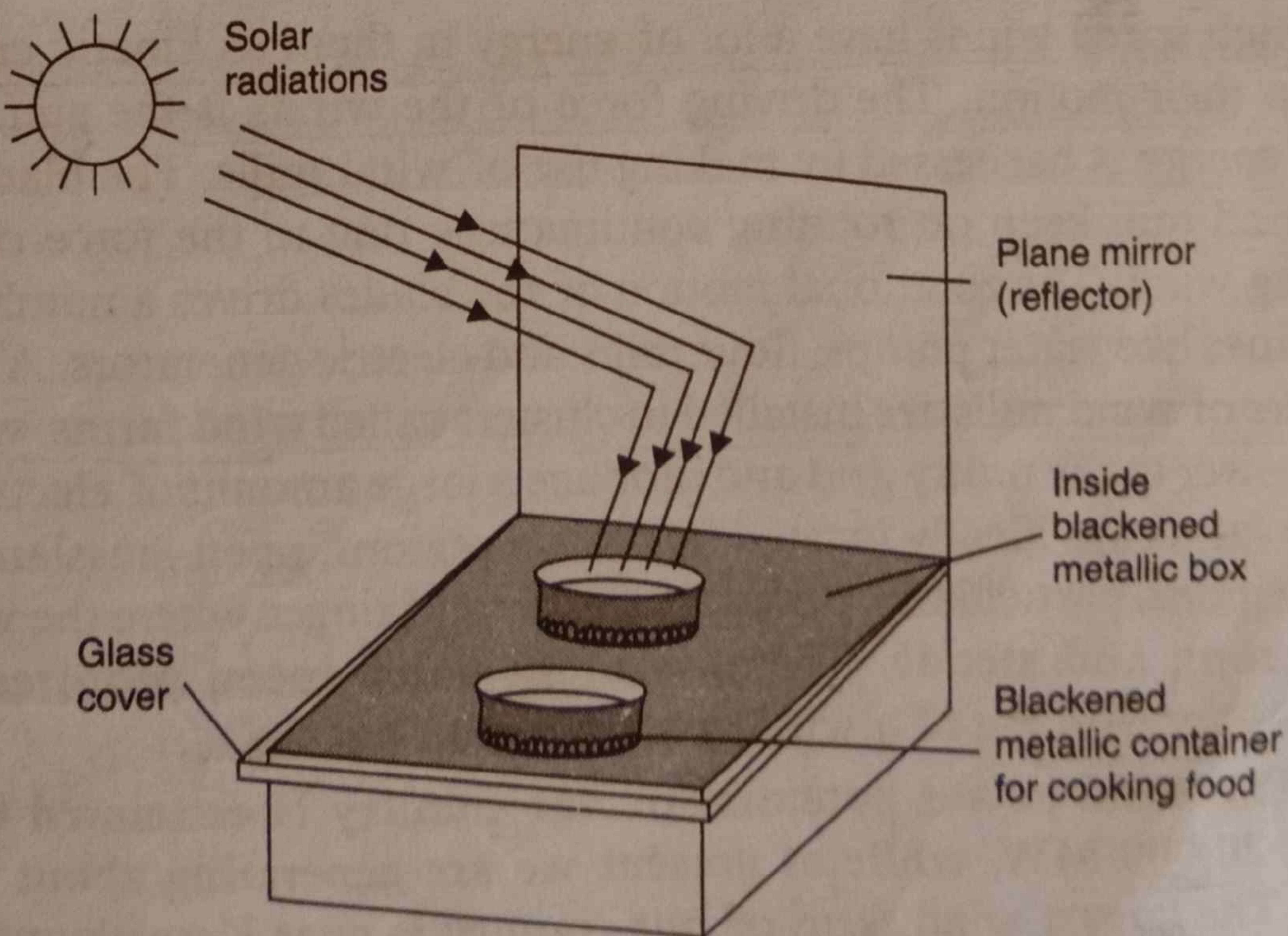


Fig. 2.5.3. Simple box-type solar cooker.

which covers the black insulated box within which the raw food is kept as shown in Fig. 2.5.3. A new design of solar cooker is now available which involves a spherical reflector (concave or parabolic reflector) instead of plane mirror that has more heating effect and hence greater efficiency.

The food cooked in solar cookers is more nutritious due to slow heating. However it has the limitation that it cannot be used at night or on cloudy days. Moreover, the direction of the cooker has to be adjusted according to the direction of the sun rays.

(iv) **Solar water heater:** It consists of an insulated box painted black from inside and having a glass lid to receive and store solar heat. Inside the box it has black painted copper coil through which cold water is made to flow in, which gets heated and flows out into a storage tank. The hot water from the storage tank fitted on roof top is then supplied through pipes into buildings like hotels and hospitals.

(v) **Solar furnace:** Here thousands of small plane mirrors are arranged in concave reflectors, all of which collect the solar heat and produce as high a temperature as 3000°C .

(vi) **Solar power plant:** Solar energy is harnessed on a large scale by using concave reflectors which cause boiling of water to produce steam. The steam turbine drives a generator to produce electricity. A solar power plant (50 K Watt capacity) has been installed at Gurgaon, Haryana.

2. ■ WIND ENERGY

The high speed winds have a lot of energy in them as kinetic energy due to their motion. The driving force of the winds is the sun. The wind energy is harnessed by making use of wind mills. The blades of the wind mill keep on rotating continuously due to the force of the striking wind. The rotational motion of the blades drives a number of machines like water pumps, flour mills and electric generators. A large number of wind mills are installed in clusters called wind farms, which feed power to the utility grid and produce a large amount of electricity. These farms are ideally located in coastal regions, open grasslands or hilly regions, particularly mountain passes and ridges where the winds are strong and steady. The minimum wind speed required for satisfactory working of a wind generator is 15 km/hr.

The wind power potential of our country is estimated to be about 20,000 MW, while at present we are generating about 1020 MW. The largest wind farm of our country is near Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu generating 380 MW electricity.

Wind energy is very useful as it does not cause any air pollution. After the initial installation cost, the wind energy is very cheap. It is believed that by the middle of the century wind power would supply more than 10% of world's electricity.

3. ■ HYDROPOWER

The water flowing in a river is collected by constructing a big dam where the water is stored and allowed to fall from a height. The blades of the turbine located at the bottom of the dam move with the fast moving water which in turn rotate the generator and produces electricity. We can also construct mini or micro hydel power plants on the rivers in hilly regions for harnessing the hydro energy on a small scale, but the minimum height of the water falls should be 10 metres. **The hydropower potential of India is estimated to be about 4×10^{11} KW-hours.** Till now we have utilized only a little more than 11% of this potential.

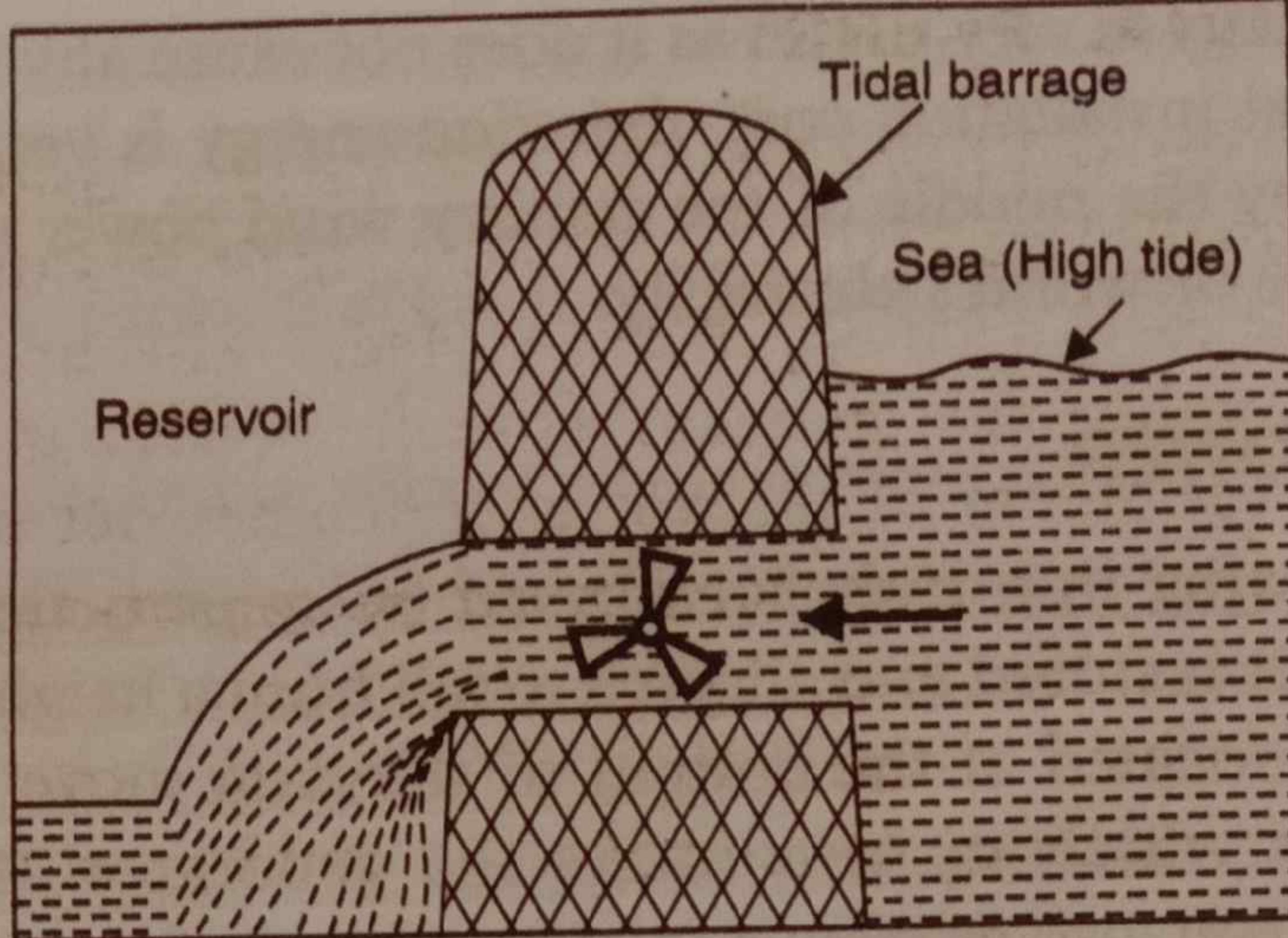
Out of the total hydropower potential of our country,

Hydropower does not cause any pollution, it is renewable and normally the hydro power projects are multi-purpose projects helping in controlling floods, used for irrigation, navigation etc. However, big dams are often associated with a number of environmental impacts which have already been discussed in the previous section.

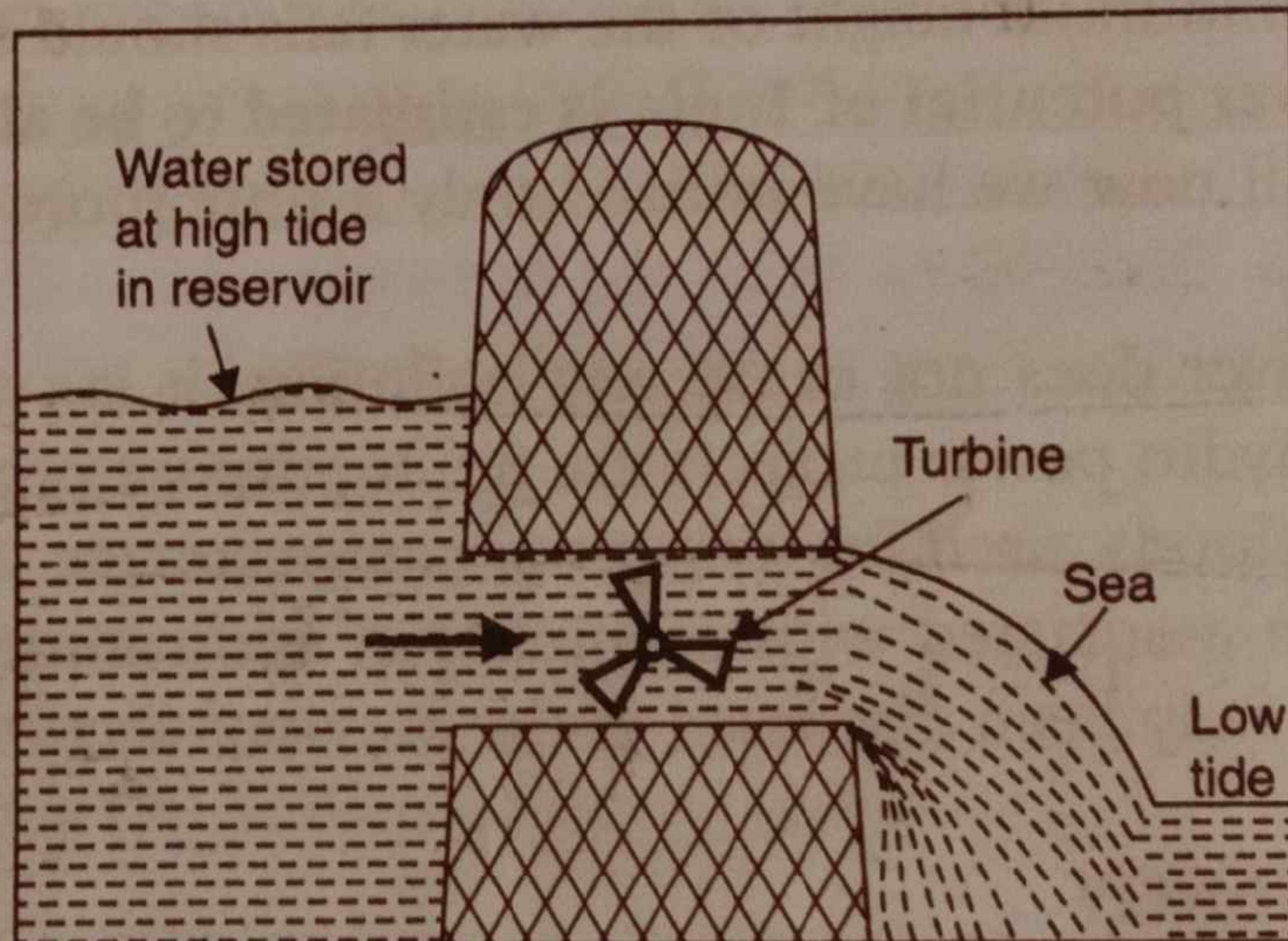
4. ■ TIDAL ENERGY

Ocean tides produced by gravitational forces of sun and moon contain enormous amounts of energy. The 'high tide' and 'low tide' refer to the rise and fall of water in the oceans. A difference of several meters is required between the height of high and low tide to spin the turbines. The tidal energy can be harnessed by constructing a tidal barrage. During high tide, the sea-water flows into the reservoir of the barrage and turns the turbine, which in turn produces electricity by rotating the generators. During low tide, when the sea-level is low, the sea water stored in the barrage reservoir flows out into the sea and again turns the turbines. (Fig. 2.5.4)

There are only a few sites in the world where tidal energy can be suitably harnessed. The bay of Fundy Canada having 17-18 m high tides has a potential of 5,000 MW of power generation. The tidal mill at La Rance, France is one of the first modern tidal power mill. In India Gulf of Cambay, Gulf of Kutch and the Sunder bans deltas are the tidal power sites.



(a)



(b)

Fig. 2.5.4. Water flows into the reservoir to turn the turbine at high tide (a), and flows out from the reservoir to the sea, again turning the turbine at low tide (b).