



WATER CONSERVATION: NEED OF THE HOUR

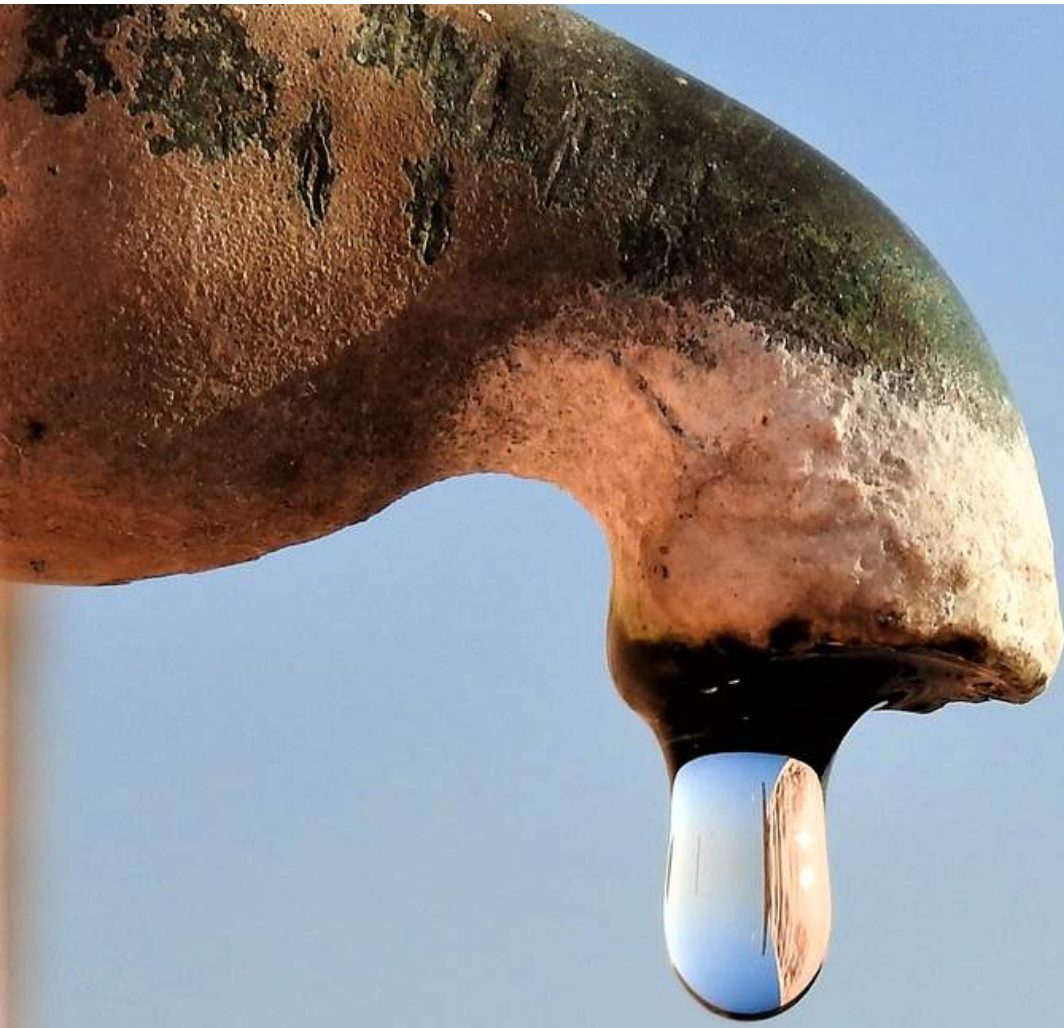
CASE STUDY/INSIGHT

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Water is a natural resource on which every living organism depends for survival. Human beings can even survive without food for several days but it is not possible without water. Production of food that we eat, clothes that we wear, vehicles we drive, energy we depend on and almost all activities on earth requires water. Rivers, lakes, aquifers, wetlands and streams are natural sources of fresh water. These freshwater habitats are home to more than 10% of all known animals and about 50% of all known fish species. Every living organism on earth depends on water for survival. However water is a finite resource and conservation of water is essential for the world to survive.

The demand for water has been steadily rising with increase in population and development. However the quantity and quality of water resources have been declining due to various anthropogenic activities. On one hand water resources are depleting with over-exploitation of natural water resources. When water is extracted continuously in excessive quantities at a rate more than the natural recharging capacity of aquifers, water balance is disturbed and leads to decline in water resources. On the other hand, pollution and degradation of water resources have become a big issue. Discharge of industrial effluents, mixing of sewage, littering, dumping of wastes, runoff of hazardous chemicals are some common causes of water pollution. Such activities make water unfit for consumption and survival of water animals and plants. Climate change due to greenhouse gas, is an important factor which affects hydrological cycle and results in irregular rainfall pattern.

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It is high time that we start taking actions for water conservation. Water conservation should start from every individual at their homes. Simple steps like closing taps properly, avoiding brushing with open taps, avoiding long showers, rainwater harvesting, repairing of leaking taps and tanks immediately, using RO reject water for flushing, using wastewater of washing vegetables for gardening, growing trees would help in conserving water. Only treated industrial wastewater which is in accordance with the standards/norms should be discharged into water bodies. Common people should avoid littering and washing clothes with detergents in water resources. Dumping of wastes in water bodies should be strictly prohibited and heavily fined. To control runoff from agricultural lands, prevention methods such as buffer strips can be used. Proper drainage systems should be established to avoid mixing of sewage in water bodies.

Planting more trees and increasing vegetation cover reduces surface runoff, increases groundwater permeability and retains groundwater. Companies and corporates can recycle water by installing Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) for treating the sewage water generated in the company and reuse it for flushing purposes and landscaping purposes. This will reduce the quantity of freshwater withdrawal from natural resources. Corporates can do many water conservation practices such as groundwater recharge, groundwater injection through CSR. More awareness and water conservation practices can be spread by NGOs and communities. 3R's – Reduce, Reuse and Recycling of water can be practiced to conserve water. Let us understand the importance of water and conserve it for the benefit of us and for the future generation.