



# Water: Vital for Subsistence



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## Opinion

The earth seems to be quite distinct among the other known celestial bodies as it has one important component that is water which covers three-fourths of its surface. This water is absolutely essential for the survival of all the life on this planet. However, the truth is that it not given due credibility that it is worthy of unfortunately, while there is a lot of water on the earth, relatively little is actually available for drinking and other human uses. Of all the water on the earth, 97% of the water on earth is in the oceans therefore not readily available for daily human needs, the 3% of the water on earth is freshwater and out of that about 2.4% of the water is permanently frozen in glaciers and at the polar ice caps, about 1/2 of the remaining 0.6% is groundwater and only about 1/100 of 0.6% of the water on earth is in the rivers and lakes that is readily accessible and generally used. A well recognized fact is that a person can live about a month without food, but can live only about one week without water.

In the age when man has forgotten his origins and is blind even to his most essential needs for survival, water along with other resources has become the victim of his indifference. The importance of water in our everyday lives cannot be overlooked. Although it is ever-present, it is also ever-changing. Providing water in the desired quantity and quality and at the right time and place has been a constant endeavor of all civilizations since time immemorial. In the words of Mikhail Gorbachev, the President of Green Cross International, "Water, like religion and ideology, has the power to move millions of people. Since the very birth of human civilization, people have moved to settle close to it. People move when there is too little of it. People move when there is too much of it. People journey down it. People write, sing and dance about it. People fight over it. And all people, everywhere and every day, need it".

It is well documented that the worship of water occupied a prominent place in all the religions and early civilizations; water was regarded as a purifying, rejuvenating, as well as a soothsaying element, and was accordingly conceived of as inhabited by various

beings. Water in Hinduism has a special place because it is believed to have spiritually cleansing powers. If we look into the past, our ancient history, religious texts and epics give a good insight into the water storage and conservation systems that prevailed in those days. The Indus Valley Civilization, that flourished along the banks of the river Indus and other parts of western and northern India about 5,000 years ago, had one of the most sophisticated urban water supply and sewage systems in the world. The fact that the people were well acquainted with hygiene can be seen from the covered drains running beneath the streets of the ruins at both Mohenjodaro and Harappa. The ancient forts in our state even had their own water harvesting and storage system in the form of rock-cut cisterns, ponds, tanks and wells that are still in use today.

There is one thing that we have to be aware of that is every one of us can lend a hand and save the world to be deprived of this wonderful reserve. It is to be realized that every person can make a difference, just like every drop in the ocean makes a difference. In the words of Mother Teresa, "We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean, but the ocean would be less because of that missing drop." We all need to honor, comprehend and respect water as our most precious resource so that we might just be able to pacify the global water crisis, if not completely eradicate it. It is high time that we draw on concepts and methods dating back to the earliest days of humankind and save for our coming generations a secure future. The need of the hour is sustainable water management, especially in the context of meeting the demands of an increasing population.

I think we must initiate drawing up a compendium of traditional and modern approaches to protecting, rehabilitating and harvesting freshwater sources other than surface and groundwater reserves that are commonly considered the only reserves of freshwater available to the modern world. They include techniques for obtaining freshwater from saline water, wastewater and even fog, and draw on concepts and methods dating back to the earliest days of humankind and save for our coming generations a secure future.