6. Every Drop Counts

Long Long Ago

This is a picture of *Ghadsisar*. *Sar* means a lake. King *Ghadsi* of Jaisalmer got it made 650 years ago with the help of the people. All around the lake there are *ghats* with steps leading to the water, decorated verandahs, large halls, rooms and much more. People came here to celebrate festivals and for programmes of music and dance. Children came to study in the school on the *ghat*. The *talab* belonged to everyone and everyone took care to keep it clean.

Rainwater collected in this lake spread over many miles. It was made in such a way that when the lake was full, the extra water flowed into another lake at a lower level. When that too filled up, the extra water flowed into the next lake. This way all nine lakes filled up. This rain water could be used throughout the year. Today, *Ghadsisar* is no more in use. Many new buildings and colonies have come up in between those nine lakes. Now the water does not get collected in these lakes. Rain water just flows away and is wasted.



Pawan Gupta



Through the eyes of Al-Biruni

More than a thousand years ago, a traveller came to India. His name was Al-Biruni. The place that he came from is now called Uzbekistan. Al-Biruni carefully observed and noted down the details of all that he saw. He wrote especially about those things that he found very different from his own country. Here is a part of what he wrote about the ponds of that time.

The people here are very skilled at making ponds. My countrymen would be surprised to see them. They pile up huge rocks and join them with iron rods to build *chabutaras* (raised platforms) all around the lake. Between these, there are rows of long staircases, going up and down. The steps for going up and coming down are separate. So there is less crowding.

Today when we study history, we can learn a lot about those days from the writings of Al-Biruni. (This stamp came out in 1973, one thousand years after his birth.)





Observe and find out

- Look at the area around your school. Are there any fields, farms, pucca roads, drains, etc. Is the area sloping, rocky or flat? Think, what will happen here when it rains? Where will the rain water go – into the drains, pipes or pits? Is some water also getting soaked into the soil?



Drop-by-drop

Besides Jaisalmer, many places in Rajasthan, get very little rainfall. Here it rains for only a few days in the entire year, sometimes not even that much. The rivers here do not have

Teacher's Note : We can tell children how Al-Biruni's book is helpful to know about the past. Also discuss about other sources of history, such as old buildings, coins, paintings, etc. Help children to locate Uzbekistan in the world map.

water all round the year. And yet, most of the villages in these areas did not have a shortage of water. People knew that every drop of water was precious. Lakes and *johads* were made to collect water. Water was everyone's need. One and all came together in this work – be it a businessman or a labourer. Some water from the lakes soaked into the ground and reached the wells and *bavdis* (stepwell). The soil of the area also became wet and fertile.



Every house had a system to collect the rain water. Look at the picture on your right. How do you think the rainwater that falls on the roof will reach the underground tank? Draw the path.



Meenu

Have you ever seen a stepwell? Look at the picture. Can you imagine by looking at the picture that the steps go down several storeys deep? Instead of drawing the water up from the well, the people could go down the steps and reach the water. That is why they are called stepwells.

Teacher's Note : How does the earth soak water and how does it reach wells and stepwells? This can be discussed with children.





Long ago, people used to make long journeys with their caravans of animals and goods. People felt it was a good thing to give water to thirsty travellers. Thus, they built many beautiful stepwells.

- Have you ever faced a shortage of water in your area? If yes, then what was the reason for it?

  Talk to your grandmother or any elderly person. Find out, when they were of your age:

- From where did they get water for the house? Has there been a change now?
- What kind of water arrangements were made for travellers – for example *piau*, *mashak* (leather bag) or any other? Now what do people do about water when they travel?

Customs related to water

Even today people get water from very old lakes, *dharas*, stepwells and *naulas.* Many customs and festivals are related to water. At some places, whenever lakes get filled up with rainwater, the people gather around the lake to celebrate.



Devraj Agarwal

See the bride of Uttarakhand in this picture. After getting married she has come to the new village. She bows to the spring or the pond. In cities one can see an interesting form of this custom. The new bride worships the tap in her home. Can we even imagine life without water?

Do you have some special pots for water at your place? Look, water is being filled in this beautiful copper pot. The shining yellow pot of brass is seen in the other picture. Many stone carvings are also made near the place of drinking water. Have you ever seen any beautiful building near the place of water? Where?





Devraj Agarwal



Find out

Is there a lake, well or stepwell near your house or school? Visit it and find out more about it.

- How old is it? Who got it built?
- What kinds of buildings are around it?
- Is the water clean? Is it cleaned regularly?
- Who all use the water?
- Is there any festival celebrated at this place?
- Is there any water today, or is it dry?



Think over it!

In 1986, there was no rain in Jodhpur and the surrounding areas. People remembered the old and forgotten stepwell (*baoli*). They cleaned the stepwell and more than two hundred trucks of garbage was taken out of it. People of the area collected money. The thirsty town got water from the stepwell. After a few years it rained well and again the stepwell was forgotten.



Discuss

There are two old wells in the area where Punita lives. Her grandmother says that about fifteen - twenty years ago there was water in these wells. The wells could have dried up because:

- Water is being pumped up from under the ground, with the help of electric motors.
- The lakes in which rain water used to collect are no longer there.
- The soil around trees and parks is now covered with cement.
- Is there some other reason for this? Explain.

The story today

Let us see the different ways in which people manage water today.

See page 57 and discuss.

Do you get water in your house by any of these ways? Put a tick (✓) on that. If you get water by some other way, write in your notebook.

Teacher's Note : Discuss the unequal distribution of water with children. It is important to know how people get water from different sources and the problems they face. Though it is challenging, yet it is important to discuss issues of caste and class related to water, especially from the chilldren's perspective.



This is how we get water



A Jal Board water tanker comes to our colony twice a day. We have to stand in a long queue to get water from the tanker. People at times have fights over water.



We fill water from the well. The nearby well dried up a year ago. Now we have to walk far to reach the other well. We are not allowed to take water from some of the wells because of our caste.



We get water at home for half an hour. We fill this in the tank to use all day. Sometime it is dirty.



We get water from our taps, all day long.



There is a handpump nearby, but the water that we get from it is salty. We have to buy water for drinking.



We have put a pump directly in the Jal Board pipeline. Now we don't have any problem!



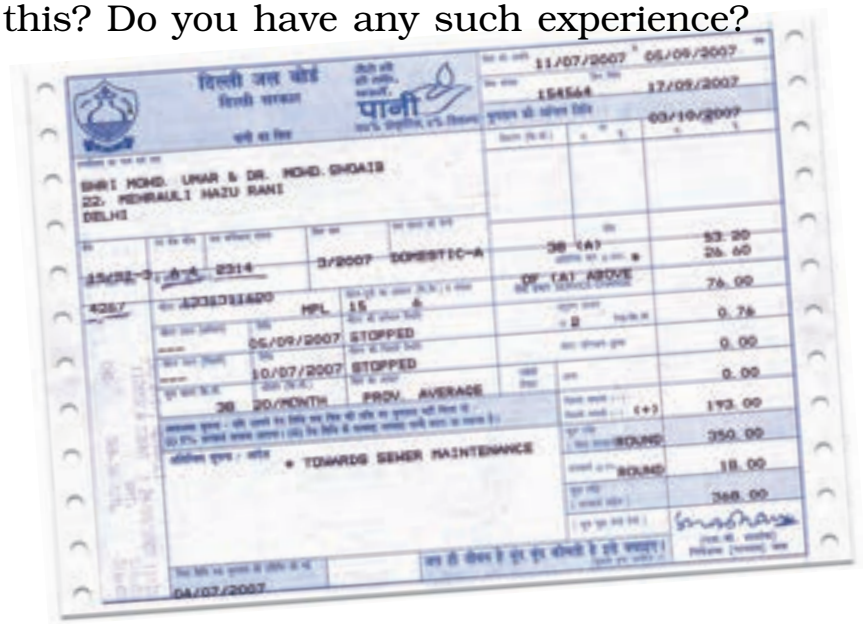
We have put a motor to pump up the water from the borewell. But there is no electricity, so what do we do!



We get water from the canal itself.

Discuss

- Everyone has the right to live. Yet, is everybody getting enough water to live or even water to drink? Why is it that some people have to buy drinking water? Should it be like this? Water on this earth is for one and all. Some people draw out water from the ground by deep bore wells. How far is it correct? Have you ever seen this? Why do some people put a pump directly in the Jal Board pipe line? What problems would other people face due to this? Do you have any such experience?


दिल्ली जल बोर्ड
दिल्ली सरकार
पानी
SHRI MOHD. UMAR & DR. MOHD. SHOAIB
22, MEHRAULI HAZU RANI
DELHI
11/07/2007
05/09/2007
154564
17/09/2007
03/10/2007
DOMESTIC-A
OF (A) ABOVE
MPL
05/09/2007 STOPPED
10/07/2007 STOPPED
20/MONTH PROV. AVERAGE
TOWARDS SEWER MAINTENANCE
ROUND
ROUND
04/07/2007

Look at this bill and tell

- From which office has this bill come?
- Do you get a water bill at home? Find out from where it is sent?
- Why do you think Dilli Sarkar (Government of Delhi) is written under Delhi Jal Board?
- In whose name is the bill? How much money do they have to pay for each month?
- Do you have to pay for water? How much? Is the rate of water different in different colonies? Ask your elders.

It can be done

There are some groups that work hard to bring water to the people of different areas. They ask the elders about the water arrangement in their times. They rebuild the old lakes and *johads*, and also build new ones. Let us see how the group called Tarun Bharat Sangh helped Darki Mai.



This is Darki Mai. She lives in a village in the Alwar district of Rajasthan. The women of the village used to spend the entire day looking after their home and animals. Sometimes, it took them all night to pull water from the well for the animals. In the summer, when the wells dried up, they had to leave the village. Darki Mai heard about this group and asked for help. Together, the people from the group and the village decided to make a lake. The problem of food and water for animals is now less. People get more milk. They have started earning more.

From the book – *Char Gaon ki Katha*

- Have you ever read this kind of news in any newspaper? How did people solve their problem of water? Did they repair and reuse any old lake or stepwell?



What we have learnt

Make a poster : Do you remember the slogan –
"Water on earth is for one and all." Think of some other such slogans. Draw pictures and make a nice poster.

Bring a water bill, look at it and tell –

- This bill is from_____date to_____date.
- How much money is to be paid for this bill?
- What else can you see in the bill, like the money spent on repair, maintenance etc.?