

# Putting rainwater to good use

**Bidar district leads the way in recharging groundwater**

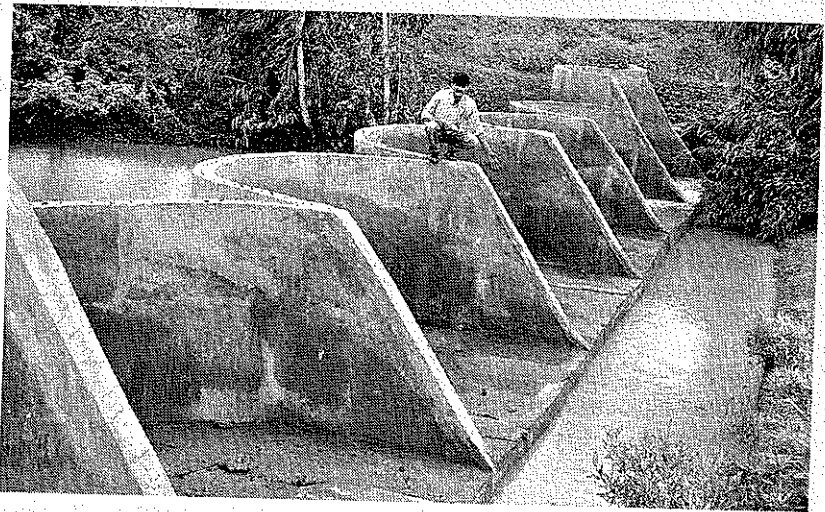
Rishikesh Bahadur Desai

**BIDAR:** Bidar now has nearly 10,000 groundwater recharge structures thanks to efforts by the Government and some non-governmental organisations NGOs over the past few years. Farmers, who have seen the benefits, have dug ponds in their fields to harvest rainwater

"Bidar has 622 villages and nearly 300 hamlets. At an average of ten such structures in each village, we are probably the most aquifer-friendly district," says G.C. Prakash, deputy programme manager, water and sanitation, Bidar Zilla Panchayat.

The zilla panchayat was the first to introduce the innovative multi-arch buttressed type of check-dams three years ago. These prefabricated structures cost just one-twelfth the amount needed to build traditional check dams. They last ten times longer than stone and mortar check-dams. Over 800 such check-dams have already been completed across the district.

The check-dams were designed by a zilla panchayat task force comprising the officials Manoj Kumar, Naveen Raj Singh and N.S. Patil and the Guru Nanak Dev



**INNOVATIVE METHOD:** A multi-arch check-dam in Bidar taluk

Engineering College, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Orissa have tried to replicate the check-dams.

The geology division of the zilla panchayat has converted over 625 defunct borewells into pipes that suck rainwater deep into the earth. This is the most efficient way of recharging deep aquifers, says senior geologist P.M. Khan. Water-deficient places like Seva Lal Tanda in Bhalki taluk have become sugarcane-growing areas after the recharge shafts were put in place.

The Forest Department has also built around 500 farm ponds and check-dams

in forest and fringe areas. The NGOs Prawardha, Outreach, Orbit and the North Karnataka Rural Development Society have also taken up watershed development with community participation. This has created awareness among the people about the need to conserve water and harvest rainwater.

Watershed development will not only improve the village economy but also change the social, political and cultural facets in the countryside, says B. Basavaraju, programme officer, Prawardha.

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