

NOTE ON SAND BORES

1. I was quite disturbed reading the article “Sand Bores” written by Renuka Manjunath and posted somewhere in the India Water Portal site, since some of the statements made there were not only incorrect but also misleading. There is already a lack of awareness among people about various aspects of groundwater and this article will only confuse them further.
2. Statements like “In earlier times man looked skyward when faced with drought. Now he looks downward. Today groundwater is regarded as the answer” have been made in the article.

Such a statement comes from a lack of awareness that groundwater is nothing but rainwater percolated into the soil in the last few months, years and decades. Both are essentially the same. Man will have to look both skyward and downward to sustain his precious groundwater source. Unless we get enough rain and unless we arrange for recharge of that rainwater into the soil, we will run out of groundwater. It would either get exhausted or become saline.

3. Statements like “Sand bores are a low-cost and a viable alternative to bore wells”, “a sand bore does not have the negative impact of bore wells as it does not allow over use or encroachment of water” have also been made.

Sand bores are nothing but bore wells tapping the shallow aquifer with the soil being sandy in nature and definitely not an alternative to bore wells. The soil below us could be sandy, silty, clayey or rocky or a mixture of these. The soil up to rocky strata is quite often referred to as alluvium. The author has only mentioned river banks while talking of sandy soil. Such sandy soil is also found within one kilometer from the coast line in places where the beaches are sandy.

One good example is Chennai city, where the southern coastal aquifer is sandy in nature and had the best groundwater in the city and where such shallow bore wells replaced open wells a couple decades back. Over the years these shallow bore wells (sand bores) were responsible for over use and encroachment. This gave way for saline intrusion and the residents found it very difficult to live with such brackish water. The instrument used to dig such shallow bore wells is also known hand augers and the one shown in the article is mostly used in clayey and silty soils. The ones used in sandy soil are different and would resemble a screw.

The author is probably under the impression that only those which draw water from a deeper aquifer should be called bore wells and the others sand bores. According to me, such different definitions for bore wells will add more confusion to the already confused set of urban and rural people.

By
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