

## Water – Waste Not, Want Not

We never really bother about falling short of water. It is always running out of taps and sprinklers, slaking the thirst of millions. The very concept of water shortage seems very alien to us. However, we need only look to some of our less fortunate neighbours – those still with developing and under-developed economies, and we shall get a glimpse of what water shortage looks like.

An average American uses nearly 80 - 100 gallons of water per day, and most of it is used, not for potable purposes, but for other activities like taking baths, flushing toilets, gardening etc. The burgeoning industrial scene also translates into the copious amounts of water usage and pollution. Meanwhile, the population of the country has more than doubled to nearly 327 million over the last century alone. With the rising impact of global warming, the water being carried by major rivers like the Colorado – which is shared by both the US and Mexico – has been reducing year-on-year. When the river runs low, it further raises questions about how the water requirements of a nation as huge as the US can be met. After all, the total freshwater content of the world accounts for no more than 1% of the total water resources of the planet.

Shortage of water in general – and potable water, in particular – is likely to impact agricultural production, raise chances of heat-waves and forest-fires and limit access to clean drinking water and water for sanitation purposes. Also, in developing nations like India, water resources are unevenly distributed. As with any scarce resource, it is not the rich that would be direly impacted; the marginalised and the poor will have a tough time gaining access to water, creating an artificial water shortage.

At the institutional level, conscious steps to limit pollution and regulatory policies may help to staunch this indiscriminate use of water. However, conservation can start at home. Simple steps such as turning off the tap when not in use, adhering to water-use restriction directives and recycling can help a household save a significant amount of water annually.

Water is a vital resource, not just for humans, but for the thousands of species that abound the earth. If we choose to be irresponsible with our usage patterns today, prospective generations and the global biodiversity stands to be threatened.

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