

## Tarp-lined lakes save rainwater in Bhal villages. (TNN)

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Ahmedabad: Rainwater is as precious as life itself wherever groundwater is saline. People living in the Bhal region of Gujarat have devised a unique way to conserve this life-giving water. They have taken up the arduous task of lining their lakes with tarpaulin (tarp) to ensure that rainwater does not mix with the saline groundwater.

Officials of the Coastal Salinity Prevention Cell (CSPC), Ahmedabad, said that in Dholera, you get saline water at a depth of just eight feet. Every year, ponds get filled up during rains but because of the seepage of the saline groundwater into the lakes, the water of these ponds cannot be used for drinking purposes. In fact, this water is not given even to the cattle to drink, said officials.

The CSPC, with the help of the farmers, took up a project under which the walls of a lake in Rajpur village as well as the lakebed were lined with tarpaulin. Even the lake's banks were covered with tarp. Further, sand was placed on the tarpaulin covering the lakebed and on its bank, the tarpaulin was covered with cement and bricks.

Gobar Bhima, resident of Rajpur village and member of the village water committee, said that earlier the village had a water crisis and had to depend on tankers for drinking water brought in from outside. Sometimes, the villagers had to go to places far away to get drinking water. However, the problem was solved after the village pond was lined with tarpaulin.

"We have taken a decision - and have also got the pond fenced for that purpose - that even cattle would not be allowed to drink water from the pond. One has to collect water from an outlet near the pond," said Bhima.

He further said that the pond has a capacity of nearly three crore litres of water which is enough to meet the drinking water needs of the village for the entire year.

Mansukh Solanki said there is no caste discrimination in allowing access to the lake water. Each resident is allowed to collect water according to his needs. The village also has a separate pond whose water is used for washing clothes and cleaning utensils.

Not just Rajpur village but another hamlet, Jhanki, has got a pond lined with tarpaulin. Residents of the village said that these ponds are constructed in such a way that there is no encroachment around them. Devrajbhai Bariya, a resident of Jhanki, said that villagers take care that flow of rainwater into the lake is never obstructed.

The villagers have also constructed a small well to ensure that villagers do not put their utensils directly into the tarpaulin-lined pond and thereby pollute its water.

**Source:** *Times News Network*