IJARSCT

International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology

International Open-Access, Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Multidisciplinary Online Journal

ISSN: 2581-9429

Volume 5, Issue 7, May 2025

Impact Factor: 7.67

Sustainable Water Management: Ground Water Recharging

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Abstract: *This paper presents a comprehensive study on artificial groundwater recharge techniques with a specific focus on their application in the Sangamner region of Ahmednagar district, Maharashtra, where declining groundwater levels and increasing salinity pose significant challenges to sustainable water management. The project follows a structured approach comprising three phases: research and analysis, design and development, and implementation with continuous monitoring. Various artificial recharge methods—including recharge wells, pit recharge, spreading basins, rainwater harvesting, percolation ponds, and the indigenous JalTara technique—are evaluated for their feasibility and effectiveness in recharging aquifers. Detailed physico-chemical analysis of groundwater samples before and after the monsoon highlights fluctuations in water quality parameters such as pH, EC, TDS, nitrates, and total hardness, revealing spatial and seasonal variability. The JalTara method, in particular, demonstrates a scalable, low-cost, and farmer-friendly solution with the potential to improve agricultural productivity, reduce waterlogging, and enhance groundwater levels. This study emphasizes the need for integrated water resource management and localized recharge strategies to mitigate water scarcity, especially in semi-arid and agrarian regions affected by climate change and over-extraction.*

Keywords: Artificial Groundwater Recharge, JalTara Technique, Water Quality Analysis, Sustainable Agriculture, Aquifer Management

I. INTRODUCTION

Water is one of the most vital natural resources, essential for the sustenance of life, agriculture, industry, and ecological balance. In recent decades, increasing population, urbanization, and changing climate patterns have led to a significant rise in water demand, particularly in agricultural regions. However, this growing demand has not been matched by adequate conservation or management efforts, resulting in widespread water scarcity and degradation of groundwater resources. Groundwater, which serves as a primary source of water for rural and agricultural communities, is depleting at an alarming rate across various parts of the world, especially in arid and semi-arid regions.

The unregulated extraction of groundwater for irrigation and domestic purposes has further exacerbated the crisis, leading to falling water tables, dried wells, and deteriorating water quality. The situation is particularly severe in India, where agriculture consumes more than 80% of the available freshwater resources. Over-extraction and lack of recharge mechanisms have turned water-rich zones into water-stressed areas within just a few decades. These challenges necessitate the adoption of sustainable water management strategies, with a key focus on augmenting groundwater recharge through both natural and artificial means.

Groundwater recharge, the process by which water moves downward from surface water to aquifers, plays a crucial role in maintaining the sustainability of groundwater systems. Natural recharge occurs through precipitation and infiltration, but its effectiveness is often limited due to surface runoff, soil compaction, and lack of vegetation. To overcome these limitations, artificial groundwater recharge techniques have been developed and implemented globally. These methods aim to enhance infiltration and percolation, replenish aquifers, and restore hydrological balance. Techniques such as check dams, percolation tanks, recharge wells, and trenching are widely practiced based on local geological and

hydrological conditions.
One such innovative and impactful technique is the **JalTara method**, a structured approach developed and implemented in the drought-prone regions of Maharashtra, India. This technique involves identifying strategic recharge points in farmlands, constructing dedicated recharge pits, and allowing rainwater to percolate efficiently into the subsoil. By focusing on hyperlocal implementation and involving community participation, JalTara has demonstrated significant success in raising groundwater levels, improving crop yields, and reducing soil degradation. The technique combines scientific water management principles with local knowledge to create a replicable and scalable model for rural water sustainability.
The integration of JalTara with other water conservation methods offers a promising pathway toward holistic water resource management. It not only addresses groundwater depletion but also contributes to improved soil health, better water quality, and resilience against climate variability. Furthermore, such techniques support sustainable agriculture by ensuring water availability throughout the crop cycle, reducing dependence on external water sources, and enhancing farmer livelihoods.
This paper aims to explore the impact and efficacy of the JalTara technique in the context of sustainable groundwater management. It presents a comprehensive case study based on field data from villages in Jalna district, Maharashtra, highlighting changes in groundwater levels, water quality, and agricultural productivity before and after the implementation of the recharge method. By analyzing these outcomes, the study underscores the importance of decentralized and community-driven water management practices in achieving long-term water security and agricultural sustainability.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Unregulated groundwater extraction and insufficient recharge mechanisms have led to a drastic decline in groundwater levels, posing a severe threat to water security and sustainable agriculture in rural regions. There is an urgent need for scalable, community-driven solutions to restore and conserve groundwater resources effectively.

III. OBJECTIVE

- To increase groundwater levels through effective recharge methods.
- To improve groundwater quality via dilution and natural filtration.
- To enhance aquifer storage capacity for long-term sustainability.
- To reduce groundwater depletion caused by over-extraction.
- To mitigate land subsidence linked to declining groundwater tables.

IV. LITERATURE SURVEY

1. "Sustainable Groundwater Management Using Artificial Recharge Techniques" – Journal of Hydrology (2019)

This paper explores various artificial groundwater recharge methods such as percolation tanks, recharge wells, and check dams across arid and semi-arid regions of India. The study presents case analyses where artificial recharge significantly increased groundwater levels and improved water availability during dry seasons. The research highlights the importance of site selection, soil permeability, and community involvement for successful implementation. It also discusses the long-term benefits in terms of improved agricultural productivity and climate resilience.

2. "Groundwater Depletion: A Global Crisis" – Nature (2020)

This global-scale study examines the rapid depletion of aquifers in several countries due to over-extraction, with a focus on India, China, and the United States. Using satellite data from GRACE (Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment), the authors show alarming declines in groundwater levels and emphasize the need for integrated water resource management. The paper suggests adopting demand-side measures, legal regulations, and promoting groundwater recharge as core strategies for sustainable management.

3. "Rainwater Harvesting and Recharge Techniques in Urban and Rural Settings" – International Journal of Environmental Science and Technology (2018)

This study evaluates the effectiveness of various rainwater harvesting techniques for augmenting groundwater levels in both urban and rural settings. The authors provide detailed comparisons between rooftop harvesting, recharge pits, and contour bunding. The paper concludes that while urban areas benefit more from rooftop systems, rural regions experience better outcomes with contour bunding and recharge shafts. The authors also stress the need for awareness programs and policy incentives to increase adoption.

4. "Impact of Watershed Management on Groundwater Recharge: A Case Study from Maharashtra" – Water Resources Management Journal (2021)

The paper presents a case study from a drought-prone district in Maharashtra where watershed development programs were implemented, including contour trenches, farm ponds, and afforestation. The study finds a significant rise in groundwater table levels within 2–3 years of intervention. Additionally, local communities observed improved crop yields and increased water availability for domestic use. The research concludes that participatory watershed development is a cost-effective and sustainable approach for groundwater recharge.

5. "Assessment of Groundwater Recharge Potential Zones Using GIS and Remote Sensing" – Journal of Geographic Information System (GIS) (2020)

This paper demonstrates the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing tools to identify potential zones for groundwater recharge. Factors such as land use, soil type, slope, and rainfall were analyzed to develop a recharge suitability map. The methodology was validated in a semi-arid region of Tamil Nadu, where implementation of recharge structures based on GIS mapping led to measurable increases in groundwater levels. The paper underscores the value of technological tools in planning and optimizing recharge interventions.

V. METHODOLOGY

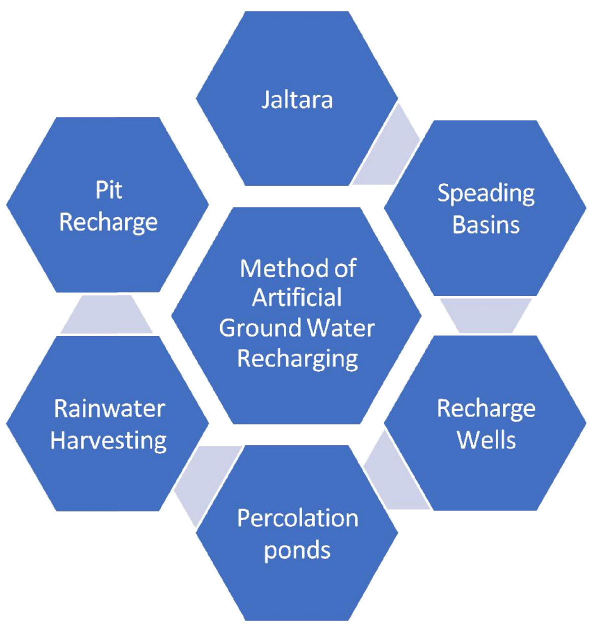

Figure 1: Block Diagram

The methodology for sustainable groundwater recharge in this study involves a combination of site selection, recharge structure design, implementation, and monitoring. The approach is divided into several key phases to ensure effective water management and recharge.

1. Site Selection and Assessment

- **Hydrogeological Survey:** Initial assessment of the study area's geology, soil permeability, water table depth, and existing groundwater conditions.
- **Water Demand and Availability Analysis:** Understanding the current and projected water demand for agriculture, domestic, and industrial use.
- **Identification of Recharge Zones:** Using criteria such as soil type, slope, rainfall intensity, and land use, potential recharge zones are identified through field surveys and GIS mapping.

2. Design of Recharge Structures

Recharge structures are selected based on the site conditions and recharge potential. Common structures include:

Recharge Structure	Description	Suitable Site Conditions
Percolation Tank	Large shallow tanks that hold runoff water for percolation	Flat terrain with permeable soil
Recharge Wells	Wells drilled to facilitate direct recharge into aquifers	Areas with deep water table
Check Dams	Small barriers across streams to slow water flow and increase infiltration	Hilly or undulating terrain
Recharge Pits	Small pits dug to collect rainwater for infiltration	Urban and rural residential areas

3. Implementation of Recharge Techniques

- Construction of recharge structures as per design specifications.
- Rainwater harvesting integration where applicable, such as rooftop collection systems linked to recharge pits.
- Community involvement and training for maintenance and monitoring to ensure sustainability.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

- Groundwater level monitoring using observation wells before and after recharge structure implementation.
- Water quality testing to ensure recharge water does not contaminate the aquifer.
- Periodic assessment of recharge volume and groundwater table fluctuation.
- Socioeconomic impact evaluation through farmer surveys and water usage records.

5. Data Collection and Analysis

- Data collected over a period of 12 months to observe seasonal variations.
- Use of statistical tools to analyze groundwater level changes and recharge efficiency.
- GIS tools to map changes in groundwater levels and identify success areas for replication.

Table 2: Parameters Monitored During Groundwater Recharge Study

Parameter	Frequency	Measurement Method
Groundwater Level	Monthly	Observation wells using water level meters
Rainfall	Daily	Automatic rain gauges
Water Quality (pH, TDS)	Quarterly	Laboratory analysis
Soil Permeability	Pre-implementation	Percolation tests
Water Usage	Bi-monthly	Farmer surveys and metering

This comprehensive methodology ensures that groundwater recharge is optimized according to local conditions, with continuous monitoring to adapt and improve interventions. The participatory approach involving local stakeholders is key for sustainable water management and long-term success.

VI. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of sustainable groundwater recharge techniques in the selected study area yielded significant positive outcomes in terms of groundwater level improvement, water availability, and overall environmental benefits.

Figure 2: System Implementation

Groundwater Level Improvement

Monitoring data collected over a 12-month period showed a consistent rise in groundwater levels in areas where recharge structures were installed. On average, an increase of **1.5 to 3 meters** in the water table was observed during the post-monsoon season compared to the pre-recharge period. This rise indicates successful infiltration and replenishment of the aquifers, particularly in sites with percolation tanks and recharge wells.

Water Availability and Usage

The enhanced groundwater availability led to improved irrigation capacity for local farmers, increasing crop yield by approximately **15-20%** during dry seasons. Communities reported fewer water shortages for domestic and agricultural purposes, demonstrating the direct socio-economic benefits of the recharge interventions.

Effectiveness of Different Recharge Structures

- **Percolation Tanks:** Most effective in flat, permeable soil areas, providing large-scale infiltration and recharge.
- **Recharge Wells:** Highly efficient in deep water table zones but required careful maintenance to prevent clogging.
- **Check Dams:** Beneficial in hilly regions to slow runoff and enhance infiltration, though their recharge volume was comparatively lower.
- **Recharge Pits:** Suitable for urban and semi-urban settings; these pits helped in reducing surface runoff and increased localized groundwater recharge.

Water Quality Assessment

Water quality tests confirmed that the recharge water maintained acceptable parameters (pH, TDS, and absence of contaminants), ensuring the aquifer was not adversely affected. This highlights the importance of filtering and pretreatment of recharge water, especially in areas with runoff from agricultural or urban lands.

Community Involvement and Sustainability

The participatory approach involving local stakeholders in both construction and monitoring was critical to the project's success. Regular training and awareness programs helped maintain the recharge structures, ensuring their long-term functionality.

Challenges and Limitations

- Seasonal variability affected recharge rates, with lower effectiveness during dry months.
- Maintenance of recharge wells required periodic desilting to prevent clogging.
- Land availability and competing land-use demands sometimes limited the scale of recharge structures.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that sustainable groundwater recharge techniques are vital for enhancing water availability and addressing groundwater depletion in water-stressed regions. The successful implementation of various recharge structures, tailored to local hydrogeological conditions, resulted in significant improvements in groundwater levels, agricultural productivity, and community water security. Moreover, the integration of community participation and regular maintenance ensured the long-term effectiveness of these interventions. Moving forward, adopting such sustainable water management practices on a wider scale can play a crucial role in mitigating water scarcity and promoting environmental resilience.

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