

Case Study: Vashrambhai Makwana – A True Torchbearer of Water Conservation



Introduction

Between 1998 and 2000, a terrible drought struck the region, leaving farmers helpless and fields barren. During this difficult time, a visionary farmer named Pemjibapa visited the village to spread awareness about water conservation and storage. He encouraged the villagers to take action by distributing five bags of cement to each farmer for building small water structures. Unfortunately, most villagers used the cement for other purposes, failing to understand the importance of water conservation at that time however Vashram bhai did something different which has made him a true torchbearer

The Beginning of Change

Inspired by Pemjibapa's message, **Vashrambhai Makwana**, a farmer from **Sompipaliya village**, decided to act. Together with his brothers, he constructed a check dam on his own initiative, without expecting any external help. For three years, the villagers laughed at them, calling it a waste of money and effort. However, when Vashrambhai's fields began to yield better agricultural production due to the stored water, the same people realized the value of his vision. His success became a source of inspiration for the entire community.

Scaling Up the Effort

When the Narmada Project reached the area in 2004, Vashrambhai took his mission further. He personally oversaw the construction of 52 check dams in Sompipaliya village, ensuring each one was completed without accepting a single rupee for his work. His leadership and dedication transformed the local landscape and made Sompipaliya a model of community-led water conservation.

Community Awareness and Collaboration

With the encouragement of Sumanbhai Rathod from the Centre for Environment Education (CEE), Vashrambhai formed a local folk drama group of 18 members. This group traveled to various villages, performing street plays about water conservation to educate and motivate local communities. The creative initiative effectively spread awareness in a way that connected deeply with rural audiences.

Later, through partnerships with the Centre for Environment Education and the Reliance foundation, Vashrambhai helped construct gabion structures in both Sompipaliya and Lalavdar villages and promoted farm bunds to control soil erosion and improve water retention.

A Lifelong Commitment

Even today, Vashrambhai continues to promote the importance of water conservation with the same selfless spirit. His journey from being ridiculed to being revered shows how one individual's determination can ignite change across entire communities.

Conclusion

Vashrambhai Makwana's story is an exemplary initiative towards community-driven water management. His vision, hard work, and unshakable commitment have not only brought prosperity to his village but have also inspired countless others to take up the cause of conserving water for a sustainable future

