

KHAZANA BAWALI; HISTORICAL WISDOM NEEDING PROTECTION

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ABSTRACT

‘Khazana Bawali’ (Treasure Well) was constructed about four hundred and thirty years back during Nizamshahi rule in western India. Most of the cultivable land in this kingdom was arid and this was probably first public facility for irrigation. Barring negligible small portions irrigated by private wells, agriculture was dependent on insufficient and uncertain rains. Project is said to be once irrigating 1000 acres, but it is gradually on the decrease. Except in the recent past, project was managed by self disciplined beneficiaries. Now, a state department looks it after.

Irrigated land was considered to be prize possession. Transfer of ownership was rare. Dry farming and very few army services were the only vocations. They did not generate enough money for purchase of irrigated land. Now, different means have given sufficient resources for such purchases to many. Original beneficiary families could not now resist temptation of lucrative prices. Lands under this project have changed hands. Vehicular assistance has made it possible to cultivate and supervise lands from a distance. Rich peasantry as a class has become influential in political life. This fact has many-sided effects. There is a tendency to flout rules to great personal benefit. Social ethics has lost its primacy and tendency to grab all benefits has replaced it. It has become difficult to enforce discipline and regulate the use of public amenities. Problems, which are posed by the present state of this project are of general importance and are relevant in consideration of similar projects.

INTRODUCTION:

‘Khazana Bawali’ (Treasure Well) situated about six kilometers from Beed, a district place in Maharashtra, was constructed about four hundred and thirty years back during Nizamshahi rule in western India. Most of the cultivable land in this region there was arid and this was probably first public facility for irrigation. Barring negligible small

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portions irrigated by private wells, agriculture was then dependent on insufficient and uncertain monsoon. This project is a large well of 20 meters radius in which rain water oozing from nearby hills is brought through underground tunnels and then used for irrigation by taking it through masonry channels under gravity. Ventilators provided at regular distance in this channel allow fresh air helping water purification and space also allows occasional manual cleaning. Underground construction below bed of the river crossing is one of the engineering feats. Project was once irrigating 1000 acres, but it is gradually on the decrease. Record shows that about 500 acres were irrigated thirty-five years back and now it is further reduced to 165 acres. Except in the recent past, project was managed by self disciplined beneficiaries. Now a State Department looks it after.

In the gazetteer published by the government of Maharashtra in 1969, following information is found on page no 659 regarding this well.

“ Khazana Bavli : A little over four kilometres (three miles) West of Bid near the village Pali is a large well called the Khazana bavli which was constructed about 1582 A.D. by the then Jagirdar of Bid. There are three inlets, which feed the well and only one outlet. The source of water supply has not yet, been traced. It has channels built for Irrigation purposes, which irrigate over a thousand acres of land. Its water level remains the same at all times of the year. “



Photo 1: View of well from outside

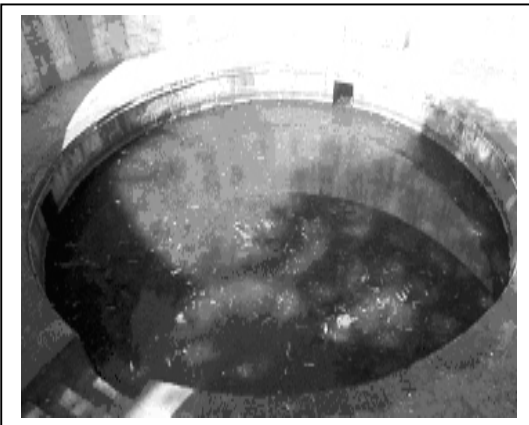


Photo 2: Inside View of Well

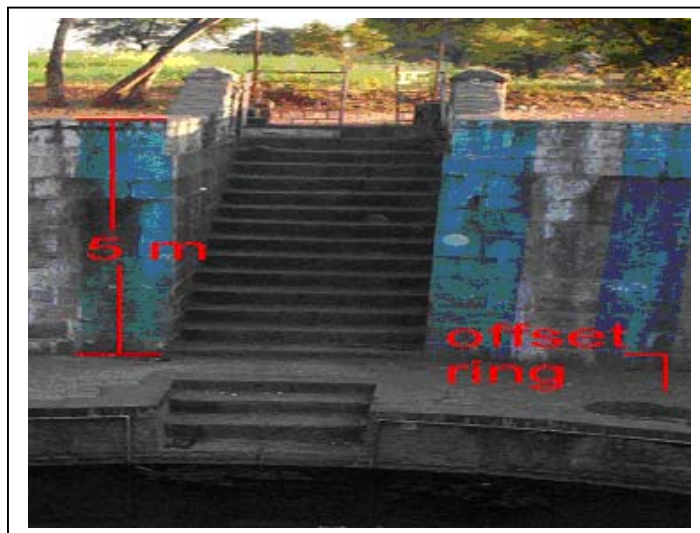


Photo 3: Main Well



Photo 4: Transformation from Underground Channel to Open Channel



Photo 5: Open Channel

Irrigated land is still considered to be a prize possession in India; it was much more so in historical past. Nobody was prepared to part its ownership. Transfer of ownership was rare. Agriculture, merely dry farming and occasional army service were then only major occupations and were not much remunerative. They did not generate enough money for purchase of irrigated land. Now the situation has changed. Different means have given sufficient resources for such purchases to many. Original beneficiary families could not resist temptation of getting lucrative price. Many lands irrigate under this project have since changed hands. Automobiles have made cultivation of agricultural lands from distance possible.

Rich peasantry as a class has become influential in Indian for political life. Assurance of political support has made at least some of them bold enough to disrespect and ignore rules for personal benefit. Ethic has lost its primacy in social values and tendency to grab all benefits has replaced it. It has become difficult to enforce discipline and regulate the use of public amenities, Secondly; even leaders coming from peasant class are not wedded to interest of small farmers. They have their own preferences. Protection of farmers' interest and facilities available to them is not always a priority with them.

This project is just in the vicinity of Beed town. Process of unregulated urbanization has swallowed thousands of villages near the cities in India and Beed is no exception, which has also swelled in all directions. Once Khazana Bawali was also providing some water for this town besides irrigation. Now that has stopped. Portion of these water channels, siphons and other regulatory mechanics has already been destroyed and rich, fertile irrigated land is put to residential use. About 225 Acres from the beneficiary zone has already been used to build houses. If this continues unabated, result would be that the whole project would be redundant. Maharashtra State has only 16% cultivable land irrigated. Irrigation facility constructed from public money should not be allowed to be rendered useless. It would be criminal waste.

Fate of this project, once a pride for the region, today hangs in uncertainty. If immediate steps are not taken to serve its usefulness, it is likely to remain as a Historical monument witnessing wisdom of the past and callousness of the present. Questions that are posed by this State are of general importance and they are relevant in respect of may other projects. When would we appreciate fully the value and importance of such

facility? When wisdom would dawn on and we would stop mad run for urbanization at the cost of our forests and rich fertile lands.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS:

If we are to save Khajana Bawali and similar irrigation projects existing in the vicinity of cities and towns, we will have to take some legislative and administrative steps urgently. Some of them are listed below:

A) Legislative Measures:

- Looking to the smaller extent of irrigated land, transfer of irrigated land, particularly owned by small holders should be prohibited.
- Conversion of irrigated agricultural land for any non-agricultural purpose should be prohibited, except for exceptional public purpose.
- Historical irrigation facilities which witness traditional wisdom like dams, reservoirs, wells, channels and controlling towers etc. should be included in and treated as historical monuments and should get protection from legislation protecting them.

B) Administrative Measures

- Equitable distribution of water between entitled beneficiaries should be strictly enforced as per rules and supervised by independent machinery.
- Breach of rule and use of unauthorized water by force should be met with penalty debarring such person from use of water from that project.
- Parts of the channel and mechanism of this project is damaged. There is urgent need to restore them by repairs.

Table showing Year wise Area Irrigated on the Khazana well

| Year | Kharif Season | Rabi season | Hot Weather | Total Area Irrigated |
|--|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1971-72 | 22.31 | 167.90 | 13.07 | 203.28 |
| 1972-73 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| 1973-74 | 13.18 | 91.37 | 10.67 | 115.22 |
| 1974-75 | 33.46 | 153.07 | 29.63 | 216.60 |
| 1975-76 | 45.99 | 175.07 | 34.03 | 255.08 |
| 1976-77 | 82.66 | 135.38 | 14.96 | 233.00 |
| 1977-78 | 54.83 | 139.03 | 38.18 | 232.04 |
| 1978-79 | 65.17 | 133.30 | 27.06 | 255.53 |
| 1979-80 | 22.00 | 134.91 | 37.47 | 194.38 |
| 1980-81 | 59.32 | 137.90 | 51.79 | 249.01 |
| 1981-82 | 05.68 | 91.92 | 00.20 | 97.80 |
| 1982-83 | 00.20 | 35.04 | 03.20 | 38.44 |
| 1983-84 | -- | 76.41 | 12.96 | 89.37 |
| 1984-85 | 04.72 | 71.79 | 03.20 | 79.71 |
| 1985-86 | 08.96 | 51.80 | -- | 60.76 |
| 1986-87 | 13.98 | 40.41 | -- | 54.39 |
| 1987-88 | -- | 36.99 | -- | 36.99 |
| 1988-89 | -- | 30.48 | -- | 30.48 |
| 1989-90 | -- | 62.98 | -- | 62.98 |
| 1990-91 | -- | 67.39 | -- | 67.39 |
| 1991-92 | -- | 61.88 | -- | 61.88 |
| 1992-93 | -- | 32.64 | -- | 32.64 |
| 1993-94 | -- | 61.13 | -- | 61.13 |
| 1994-95 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| 1995-96 | -- | 35.61 | -- | 35.61 |
| 1996-97 | -- | 58.18 | -- | 58.18 |
| 1997-98 | -- | 60.00 | -- | 60.00 |
| 1998-99 | -- | 104.00 | -- | 104.00 |
| Source : Bid Irrigation Circle, Bid, Government of Maharashtra, India. | | | | |