

Foreword

Rapid urbanisation in many parts of the world including India has posed a serious threat to natural resources around urban areas. The demand for land in urban areas increased fast. This was met not only by expansion in the peri-urban areas but also by taking over the breathing spaces in urban localities. These included green lands, parks, water-bodies. The worst victims were the tanks and ponds in and around urban areas as the ownership was easily manoeuvrable. All this resulted in the disappearance of most of urban lakes.

The vanishing of lakes has caused loss of irrigated lands, drinking water sources as well as threatened agricultural activities, the fisher folk, greenery, and recreation activities. Even the existing lakes have become unfit as sources of drinking water due to the growth of water hyacinth and other aquatic weeds and encroachments. These have lost flood-absorbing capacity leading to the new phenomenon of 'urban floods'. The urban floods are playing havoc in the cities due to the loss of natural drainage activities and the low-lying areas, which were earlier under tank irrigation, having come under various human activities. Human beings and livestock living around these lakes are prone to severe vulnerabilities and disease vectors.

The city of Bangalore is no exception to these developments and is even worse when compared with many other cities in the country. In this backdrop, this Monograph is an innovative attempt to present characteristics of lakes, encroachment issues, rejuvenation of lakes and tank maintenance measures. The consequences of the lost lakes and the encroachments have been discussed in detail which would draw the attention of policy makers to think seriously about these problems and plan some measures to overcome them. The final chapter of the Monograph provides policy implications suggests various measures for the preservation of lakes, particularly for providing drinking water, maintenance of micro climate and ground water recharge etc.

This study comes out of Dr P Thippaiah's long-term engagement in the subject and his rich field experience collected through personal visits. Study of tanks has not only been his academic subject, but it is his passion, and this is evident in almost every sentence in the Monograph. I am sure this study will help in formulating effective policies for urban lakes in general and for Bangalore's lakes in specific.

September 2009

*R S Deshpande
Director, ISEC*