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Water is a precious, scarce but fortunately a renewable resource. It is quite indispensable for humans and other living beings on the earth. Tanks have been in existence for several centuries and are found predominantly in the South Indian states, serving the water needs of communities. But after independence, the unique indigenous tank system is being continuously neglected due to various reasons. Noticeably several small scale water bodies have become extinct.

Few reasons for deterioration or loss of capacity are: silting, encroachments, rapid urbanization, industrialization and breakdown of local institutions in the urban fringes. Taking into consideration the deteriorating status of the tanks, the Government of Tamil Nadu has taken legal measures to protect the water bodies. A historic Act, namely the Tamil Nadu Protection of Tanks and Eviction of Encroachment Act, 2007, has been enacted. But the field implementation is facing a lot of hurdles and has not yet yielded the desired results. The study has brought out the inadequacies in the existing policies.

This study attempts to reveal the status of encroachment in the Pallavaram Tank situated in South Chennai, where some steps have been taken by the Water Resource Organisation towards eviction: but could not succeed to meet expectations. On this note, certain aspects such as the temporal degradation of waterbodies in the Pallavaram tank watershed was studied. The changes in land use pattern in the delineated watershed were found using remote sensing and GIS software.

Qualitative survey like semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain officials' views on conservation of tanks. A questionnaire survey was conducted to obtain the encroachers' perspective of the Pallavaram tank towards eviction. The 'command and control approach' dictated in the said act poses difficulties to officials during implementation, since a large number of cases have been filed by the people who are facing the threat. The Thirupunanthal Lake which is a peri-urban water body has been a success story, as fruitful initiatives have been taken by the local people to maintain the Lake. Thus, the participatory approach could be a feasible solution for the protection of the tanks.

In this study, focus group discussions were also conducted among the Association people in the Pammal, who worked for the renovation and maintenance of the lake for its sustenance. This study has brought out that the eviction of encroachments leads to social problems and hence the encroachers could be treated as managers' in order to maintain at least the existing portion of the water body. This warrants re-survey to be conducted to redefine the tank boundaries. Desilting could be done to restore its original capacity such that, tank could be used as a recharge structure.