

Cities have had a very strong relationship with bodies of water. Many were built on the banks of rivers, some were at the seaside, others were adjacent to lakes and of course in many cases cities created their own lakes and reservoirs. No city could afford to disregard the collection, storage, use-pattern and disposal of water. Water-bodies served as modes of transportation or defence; they supported livelihoods and crafts; they created open spaces that served as a release from the confines of urban congestion. In many ways water was intimately connected with the very idea of being alive. Though cities were man-made artefacts, humans felt a sense of being grateful beneficiaries, and sometimes unwitting victims, of this capricious natural element. Water, in its presence as well as absence, was both a blessing and a threat! Thus water was not just a physical fact, it was a deep psychological presence.

While water is essential to life, its proximity to human habitation needs systems of maintenance and upkeep. Away from human settlements, bodies of water can find ways of self-regeneration, involving a multiplicity of organisms that constantly balance the state of the fluid medium. Human populations however, use water, create wastes, and are vulnerable to the organisms that water may support. Thus human societies need to create rules, laws, customs and regulatory mechanisms to maintain this vital resource. Symbolism, rel