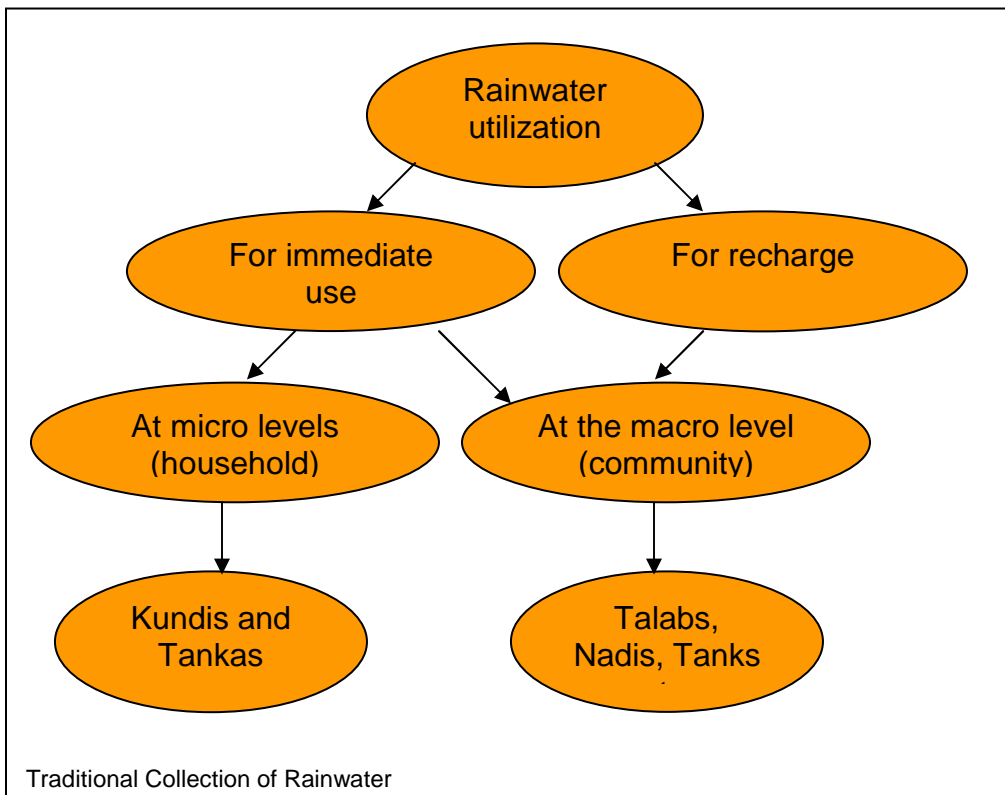


TRADITIONAL RAINWATER HARVESTING (RWH) IN INDIA

Traditionally Indians worshipped both water and rain as “Jala” and “Varuna”. Even rivers were worshipped. **Till 3000 B.C.**, RWH happened without human effort as rain got collected in rivers and natural depressions. Civilizations flourished on river banks all over the world Indus valley civilization in India.

From 3000 B.C. to 1800 A.D., RWH happened with human effort. Indians harvested rainwater using different methods. These methods depended on local conditions.



Different parts of India used different structures for harvesting rain (See Box 1 for a list of RWH systems). Some examples are:

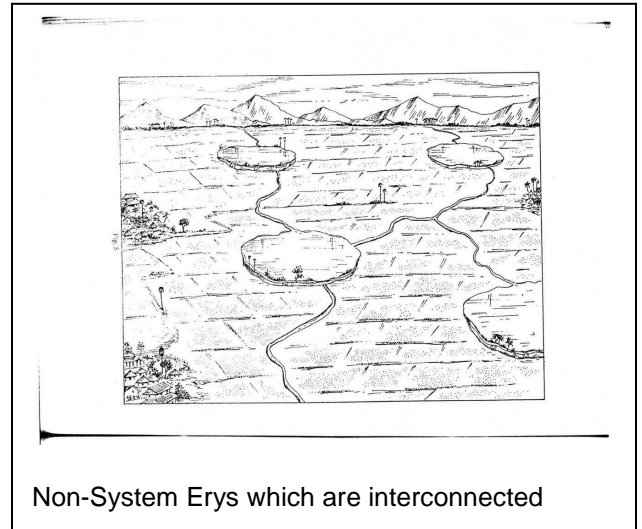
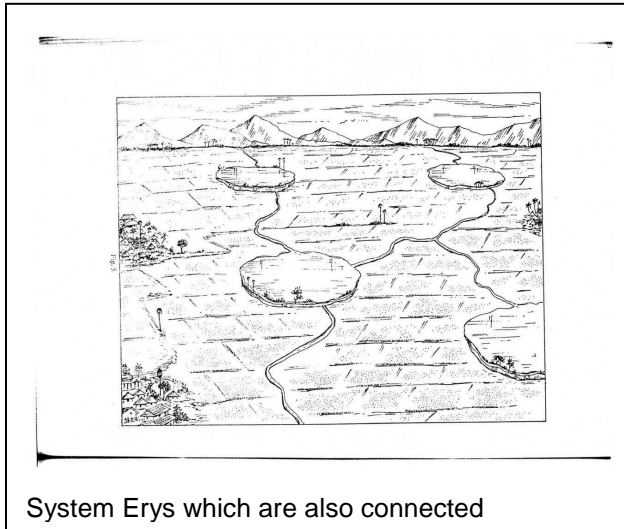
Gujarat – Jhalaras and Baoris for collection and use; Kuis for recharge.

Rajasthan – Tankas and Kundis for collection and use at the micro level and Talabs, Nadis, Tanks at the macro level; johads for recharge at the macro level.

Bihar – Ahars [tanks] into which river water is diverted through Pynes [channels].

Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu – Ery system which is a chain of tanks. There are two kinds of Erys:

1. System Erys which are river and rain fed.
2. Non-system Erys which are only rain fed.



Since 1800 A.D. traditional systems of RWH have begun to deteriorate. Some reasons are:

1. Lack of understanding of these systems by the British during their rule till 1947
2. British wanted to be the provider of water and took over the management and ownership of water bodies.
3. This attitude continued by our Indian rulers even after independence – 1947.
4. Increase in urbanization leading to destruction of water bodies.
5. Lack of awareness and apathetic attitude of urbanites.

All the above mentioned traditional RWH systems are explained in detail in *Dying Wisdom* edited by Anil Agarwal and brought out by Centre for Science and Environment, India.

Keywords: rain, water, harvesting, traditional systems,

Table 1: List of traditional rainwater harvesting structures in different parts of India

Name Of State	Tank	Lake	Pond	Well and step well	Embankments	Collection and use
Andhra Pradesh	Cheruvu	Guntas, Dona		Bavi	Kolwas, Oddu	Dona [in rocks]
Assam		Jampoi	Dongs			
Bihar	Ahar, Pynes					
Delhi		Dighis		Baolis	Lat	
Gujarat				Vavdis, Virdas		Tankas
Himachal Pradesh					Kuhl	Khatri
Karnataka	Kere	Kalyani [Temple]	Katte, Kunte	Bhavi	Katay	
Kerala				Surangam, Mala	Korambu	
Madhya Pradesh		Talab		Baolis	Pat, Kata, Munda, Bundhan	
Maharashtra	Kohli				Bhandaras, Phad	
Nagaland					Zabo	
Orissa	Kata		Bandha		Munda	
Rajasthan	Johad, Talab	Chandela, Bundela	Rapat, Nadi,	Bavdis, Beris, Kuis, vavdis	Naadal, Khadin	Kundis, Tankas
Sikkim	Kholas		Khup	Kohar		
Tamil Nadu	Eri, Kanmai, Thangal	Kulam [Temple]	Oorani	Kinaru, Keni	Anicut	Large vessels
Uttar Pradesh	Ahar, Pynes	Lat	Nullah			
West Bengal					Dungs, Jampos	