



Flooding at Adyar river as seen from Maraimalai Adigal Bridge during 2015 Chennai floods; (inset) a man moves to safe place from Kotturpuram in 2015 | EXPRESS/ PTI

IN THE MIDST OF A 'VERY REAL' CLIMATE CHANGE

KRUPA GE

I didn't know much about Long Tank that seems to have snaked through what is T Nagar today according to a map that has been etched in my memory ever since I first encountered it, until a few years ago.

During research for *Rivers Remember*, I stumbled upon a large sized digital map and I obsessively zoomed and zoomed into it, until I found what would have been the main road around my home. It was... inside the Long Tank.

As I write this, a submersible motor is furiously pumping water out of my building's basement parking lot. Every year, before the fears of flooding begin to creep into others around me, even as they post photos of rain-drenched leaves, crisp banana fritters and tea, set to Ilaiyaraaja's music on their Insta stories, a slow trickle of water emerging from a gap in the wall in my basement begins to gnaw away at the peace in our otherwise amiable neighbourhood.

A basement car park inside Long Tank is self sabotage, we know that now. But in the years before 2015, this trickle was just called 'seepage'. As a solution to this seepage, an engineer suggested a secondary wall. The secondary wall too has a hole these days, through which water makes its way to flood our basement.

As a mother now, I worry doubly about that double wall. What if it crashes one day from the wetness of all this



CHENNAI

Keeping Head Above Water

TNIE invites prominent citizens to pen their experiences and suggestions that can help mitigate the impact of rain

seepage? What if it hurts someone?

The trauma of the 2015 floods is not just mine. It is collective and I know this because around October to December, every year since the time I wrote a book about it, people have remembered me, the book, and the floods.

As the recent episode of heavy rain alert from mid-October shows us, the government machinery too seems to have a sense that there needs to be more communication,

better preparedness and a reliance on weather systems (even if they be unpredictable at times) from the state and people.

As we await the first major rain in the season, one hopes for preparedness in other areas as well.

The wishlist just as every year starts with important but immediately doable items like unclogging of drains, pumps in lower neighbourhoods where water doesn't naturally drain on its own because of the city's relatively flat terrain, better communication between various government departments and with public, a check on reservoir levels, flood forecasting, and, long-term plans that involve consultations with climate scientists about even things like how high should we be building in low lying areas. Climate change is very real for us here in Chennai, we are in its midst every monsoon. Any plans for our city's future must be mindful of this fact.

Every year the rains bring these thoughts, and then we move on, because beyond the days of the rain, we all have other battles. Including excessive heat our city is subject to, like the most of this year.

It's still pretty hot as I write this, unmindful of which children are playing a game of hide and seek just outside my home. One is grateful for some things that don't change.

(Krupa Ge, a Chennai-based writer, has authored *'Rivers Remember'* that speaks about the Chennai floods of 2015)