

Rejuvenated lakes continue to stink years after restoration

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Rapid and incessant urbanisation has been a disaster for the lakes of Bengaluru. While Bengalureans rejoiced when BBMP went on a lake rejuvenation drive earlier, a recent study by IISc shows that only six lakes have good water quality.

In fact, some of the lakes have even shrunk to the size of a puddle. "The water is less. At this time of year, there is supposed to be water but there is a lot less now. No one comes in here to do anything about it," says Chandran (name changed), a grass cutter at Kogilu lake.

Kogilu lake is one of the 24 listed under those with poor water quality by the IISc report, first published in *DH*. These lakes were restored by the BBMP. Bitter stench and toxic gases arise in the cases of those lakes that do have a considerable amount of water.

There is a stream of drainage that runs parallel to the road from where one enters Kogilu lake. But it is unclear if there is any path that connects the lake with this stream. "I am not sure if this stream drains into the lake," says Raghu (name changed), a regular jogger at the lake.

However, he notes that there is no attempt from any authorities to maintain the water body which is now largely covered by algae. "Nobody ever comes here to clean or maintain this lake. It is so polluted. I'm sure they receive funds to maintain but nothing happens here. There isn't any as far as I've seen."

Residents of Thirumenahalli are not very happy about their neighbourhood lake too. While a residents complained about the size of the water body, he also notes that there is strict regulation against any kind of waste disposal in the lake.

"There is no water in the lake, so there's

no question of clean water. The last time I saw water in the lake was months ago. But no one discards waste or garbage there. There's a guard who would prevent anyone from doing that," says a resident of Amigo apartment near Thirumenahalli lake.

"Earlier, another apartment's sewage pipes used to be directed into the lake, but the police soon got them to stop the drains. Now there are no other external sources that drain into the lake," says another

resident.

However, this has not made things better for him or his neighbours as there is now a body of drainage water that has formed another "lake" near his apartment. The apartment stands between Thirumenahalli lake that has more area covered with grass than water and a water body that is black in colour.

The inefficiency of civic authorities in the maintenance of the city's precious

water bodies is a concern that many in the city share. Soumya Bhuptani, a resident of Uttarahalli, recalls her school days.

"Many migratory birds used to come near this lake when I was in 9th grade which was I guess in 2012. Now they don't, due to the pollution. Because aquatic life itself is affected at that level that birds cannot feed on the fishes in the lake," she says.

Taking a stroll on the walking path around the lake, she says, is a "difficult

task because the water stinks like gutter." Yet, children in the underprivileged neighbourhood bathe, people wash clothes and utensils in the slimy lake that is covered in a green sheet. There are even those who consume fish bred in the polluted lake, leading to deaths in the past, she recalls.

A disappointed Soumya notes that the BBMP does not do anything about it. "There's no cleaning done. This lake used to be under an NGO (United Way Ben-

galuru) earlier, and until then good. The NGO gave up, they didn't do anything and BBMP isn't maintaining it anymore. It's polluted water."

Uttarahalli Lake was rejuvenated in 2012 with the combined effort of BBMP, BBWSRIL, and United Way Bengaluru. Fish and fauna thrived for some time but the newly rejuvenated lake is now on a list of lakes with very poor wa-



Thirumenahalli lake



Putterahalli lake

