

Thursday 23 January 2014  
News updated at 11:36 AM IST

Search

Weather  
Max: 27.2°C  
Min: 15.9°C



In Bangalore  
Partially cloudy



[Home](#) [News](#) [New Delhi](#) [Business](#) [Supplements](#) [Sports](#) [Entertainment](#) [Videos](#) [Opinion](#) [Archives](#) [Jobs](#)

You are here: [Home](#) » [Intense City - Bangalore](#) » 98 per cent of 5 lakh idols sold end up in lakes

## 98 per cent of 5 lakh idols sold end up in lakes

Subhash Chandra N S



**Ganesh Chaturthi, celebrated to ward off troubles, has ironically become a cause of worry for environmentalists. Reason: The mass immersion of idols of the elephant god in the City lakes is said to be worsening the already polluted water bodies, besides contaminating the ground water. Green idols made of clay and papier mache have not appealed to the people in the expected way either.**

The immersion of idols has become an issue primarily because of the paints and other material used in making them. According to environmental experts, most idols are made of plaster of Paris and are painted with several harmful paints which include toxic metals such as lead, chromium and mercury. These, when immersed in tanks and lakes, alter the water quality and affect the aquatic life. "Not just the aquatic life, even the ground water is affected," says Dr T V Ramachandra, senior scientist, Energy and Wetland Research Centre, the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

Dr Ramachandra, who along with researchers Harish Bhat, ornithologist P Manjunath, and Pramod Subba Rao conducted a study of lakes during the idol immersion season, said: "We found higher amounts of heavy metals in the water. The lead content in the paint used for idols is carcinogenic."

The study team also found that the demand for Ganesha idols was increasing every year. Here's proof: Collectively, the artisans in Pottery Town (near Fraser Town), Kumbarpete (near Majestic), Magadi Road, Yelahanka and Nagavara, make a total of six lakh idols.

While the artisans at Pottery Town make about 36,000 idols, 1.2 lakh each are made in Kumbarpete and Nagavara. Six lakh other idols are made in a smaller scale in various parts of the City.

According to the study, about 5.1 lakh idols are sold in the City every year. "Large idols, which are four feet tall and more, constitute about five per cent of the idols, and about 36,000 of them are sold. Medium-sized idols and those below two feet constitute about 80 per cent of the total idols. Ninety-eight per cent of them are immersed in lakes and wells," notes the study.

Sankey Tank and Ulsoor Lake are subjected to various kinds of pollutions such as dumping of flowers, decoration materials, pooja materials, idols made of clay and plaster of Paris. The team observed that the immersion begins with a bang on day one and gradually decreases. "On the first day of the festival, 14,080 idols were immersed, of which 6,400 were small, 5,120 medium and 2,560 large. It reduced by 50 per cent on the third day with 7,040 idols — 3,200 of them small, 2,560 medium and 1,280 large. By the end of the eleventh day, idol immersions in Sankey Tank had touched 27, 720 idols," says the study.

If this is the state of just two lakes, the collective pollution in the 50 plus lakes within the Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) limits will be mind-boggling. Though the Lake Development Authority and the BBMP have built kalyanis in some lakes, and the police and the Palike authorities stationed at some of these lakes ensure that immersion happens only in the designated areas, the emphasis should be more on eco-friendly idols to prevent water pollution.

Though Bhat claims people are showing an inclination for green Ganeshas, other environment experts have a different view. "There are very few people who go for green Ganeshas as per our survey. A large section of society still uses coloured and plaster of Paris idols. It appears they do not have much choice," says Bhargavi S Rao, an environment activist and trustee, Environment Support Group (ESG), a City-based organisation.

Bhargavi, who recently conducted a workshop to promote green Ganapathi idols, says even the decorative items used during the festival are not eco-friendly and are more a show-off than a festival importance. "We used to celebrate the festival in a more traditional manner by using mango leaves, plantain trees and flowers for decoration. But now, the trend is use plastics, thermocol and other things. It is done mostly to impress relatives and friends. People are buying too many things unnecessarily," she says.

Celebrating the festival in a traditional and eco-friendly manner is the solution, she adds.

Ramachandra agrees. He says more awareness is necessary to ensure that the festival is celebrated in an eco-friendly manner. It is time people understand that immersing idols in lakes and other water bodies is not a healthy thing for the City and its people. "The festival has a lot of sanctity. Unfortunately, after the celebrations, idols are immersed in lakes which are already fed with sewage," he notes.

The team headed by Bhat in its report says that the after effects of an immersion are a disaster. So, a clean-up operation too becomes important. Suggesting that more kalyanis be built in the City to immerse idols, Bhat said the after effects of indiscriminate immersions in lakes should be widely publicised so that people switch to green idols.