

**ENVIRONMENT**

# Bengaluru's Dying Lakes; 90% Polluted, 98% Encroached, Only 4 In Good Condition



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Bangalore, also known as the 'Garden city' of India, was dotted with numerous lakes. Kempe Gowda, the founder of Bangalore and his successors built more than hundred lakes and tanks in the city which are now slowly fading out from the heart of the city due to rapid urbanisation and discharge of effluents in the water bodies.

The lakes were built by damming the natural valley system with constructive bunds. The local communities used them for drinking, irrigation and other daily purposes. The lakes also catered to a range of flora and fauna, helped to recharge the surrounding groundwater, prevented flooding and maintained the ecological balance of the city.

## Number of lakes left

Till 1960, there were 280 lakes in the city. The concrete jungle failed to accommodate Bangalore's lifeline as the number has decreased substantially. 'Wetlands: Treasures of Bangalore (Abused, Polluted, Encroached and Vanishing)', a study headed by IISc's Professor TV Ramachandra shows the current scenario of Bangalore's lakes.

They surveyed 105 lakes in the city and found that only four lakes are in good condition. 90% of the lakes are polluted with sewage. Of these, 25 were covered by water hyacinth – an indicator of the sewage flow – throughout the year. The lakes are also covered with solid and liquid wastes with very little water.

The study also found that the water in the lakes was not fit for consumption. Only one Mylasandra lake has water fit for consumption. Almost 98% of the lakes were encroached by land mafia. Another finding shows just 29% of the lakes were suitable for breeding fish.

They also found that the lakes in Koramangala-Challaghatta valley were more polluted than the lakes in Hebbal valley.

## Fish health hampered

The immediate effect of pollution is on the fish. Electronic Green Journal, UCLA Library conducted a study on Bangalore's lakes to understand fish mortality rate. Fish deaths were reported in Sankey, Lalbagh, Jakkur and Munnekolala lakes in 1995.

They conducted extensive research on Sankey tank and found that the sudden large-scale death of carps in Sankey tank was because of the sudden drop in dissolved oxygen in the water. The drop in oxygen was because of the inlet of sewage in the tank which led to the asphyxiation.

Before Sankey Tank, fish deaths were reported in Lalbagh too. In March and May 2016, lakhs of fish deaths were reported in Ulsoor lake. Officials said that because of the rise in temperature the deaths were a common occurrence. Ulsoor also witnesses heavy dumping of both biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste. This resulted in the reduction of dissolved oxygen in the water which killed the fish.

TV Ramachandra conducted a study on the fish deaths and determined that other than sewage, rearing of exotic African Catfish was another reason for the deaths. Although breeding of exotic fish is banned by the government, the practice goes unchecked in many lakes in the city.

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## Expert speaks

Sridhar Pabbisetty, CEO of Namma Bengaluru Foundation, shared his concerns with **The Logical Indian**. He says, "There were 837 lakes in Bangalore once upon a time. Now because of rapid urbanisation, most of them have been encroached upon. Many urban areas are getting flooded. Chennai woke up to a watery grave in 2015 and Bengaluru did not learn any lesson from that."

Bengaluru is growing and developing into a concrete jungle but at what cost? How do we ensure the development is sustainable and does not hamper the quality of life? Sridhar says, "Zero tolerance policy should be adopted by the concerned authorities to have a sustainable future for Bangalore."

Last year during the demolition drive to clear encroachments from Storm Water Drains (SWDs), the BBMP Mayor Manjunath Reddy said that both Gopalan Mall in Rajarajeshwari Nagar and Orion Mall would be demolished. Yet, they still stand tall. "Unfortunately, the government failed to fulfil their responsibility. They did not go after the high and mighty, including a colleague of their own cabinet. The officials responsible for sanctioning the land firstly should be prosecuted," Sridhar said.

Talking about Bellandur foaming every year Sridhar says, "The blatant and rampant pollution in the largest lake of Bangalore is wrong. The government allowing such rampant pollution to happen year after year is blasphemous. It doesn't take too much for the government to go after the industries. Something needs to be done soon."

## The Logical Indian take

Bengaluru is the fastest growing metropolitan city in Asia. Clean air and water is a fundamental right of every citizen, and that right is getting hampered because of unchecked development. **The Logical Indian** urges all stakeholders – citizens, corporations and the government – to stop and think of solutions. The 'Garden City' should get its name back.

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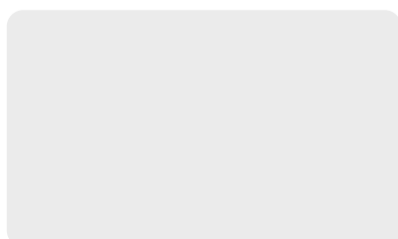
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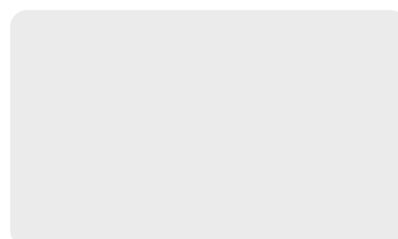
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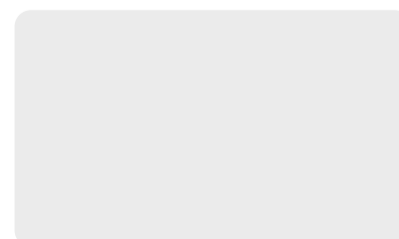
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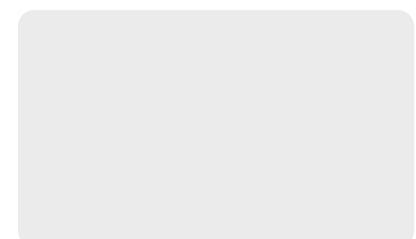
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