

AKSHAYANAGAR LAKE RESTORATION EFFORT

An initiative of the residents and patrons towards realizing a sustainable environment



Report by:

Akshayanagar Lake Development Task Force

Akshayanagar Residents and Site Owners Welfare Association

Bangalore - 68

1 Today, As We See It

"Plans to protect air and water, wilderness and wildlife are in fact plans to protect man." - Stewart Udall

Today we all live in an environment that is actually a gift passed on from our earlier generations. Imagine if it were leftovers. In such a situation, we would be trying to rise again from the Stone Age, this time from a Wastepaper Age.

Let us look at some hard facts related to Bangalore. The increase in population in the recent decade has transformed lakes into residential areas. The disappearance of Bangalore's lakes started in the 80s. While in 1961 there were 262 lakes, official statistics today mention 117 lakes, but only 33 lakes are still more or less visible on satellite imagery. Over the last decades, lakes have been rented to private constructors. The authorities themselves have built their own infrastructures on lakebeds whereas other areas have been illegally encroached upon. Previous lakes have thus been transformed into residential and commercial areas, universities, bus stands, stadium or golf course. Some lakes are now used as dump for domestic and industrial wastes or open sewage. (Courtesy: <http://www.rainwaterharvesting.org>)

So what is the use of preserving lakes? What are its benefits?

Water bodies in Bangalore are either natural lakes, man made lakes or tanks which have been built from the 16th century to meet the water requirements of the population. Bangalore lakes are also part of the local hydrologic system. It helps keeping monsoon waters for the drier periods of the year, to canalize these important flows preventing water logging, inundation and erosion, and to ensure the refilling of groundwater. They also support a rich ecosystem, with a great variety of animals and plants.

In simple words, a lake would provide us the following:

- Refilling of ground water, ensuring the bore wells do not dry up
- Recreational area for the community
- Regulation of temperature
- Support a rich ecosystem

2 About Akshayanagar Lake

Akshayanagar is a residential lay out located mid-way between Bannerghatta Road and Begur-Jigani road. The residential area has got about 800 housing plots, with approximately 300 built houses. The lake is situated inside the residential lay out.

The natural lake is formed out of rainwater storage. Initially there was only a bund on the northern side. The rainwater accumulated against the northern bund and the water spread up to the road on the southern side as there was no defined boundary. During

1997 the southern bund was built to contain the water spread and to define the boundary for the lake.



Satellite Imagery

Official Records

During the year 2000, in response to the initiatives of a very few residents, the forest department took over the control of the lake. The forest department under the initiative of Dr. A.N. Yellappa Reddy took up several improvement projects for the lake. The bund was strengthened and a walkway was built around the lake. Trees were planted around the lake. A weir was built on the northwestern end to maintain the level of water and to allow the overflow of surplus water.

An island was created in the middle of the lake out of the desilted earth. The lake became so beautiful that Teppothsava was conducted. The lake with a perimeter of 2000 metres had a clean walkway around the lake. The years 2000-2002 were the golden period in the history of the lake that had a water spread of about 4 acres.

3 Current Status of Lake

As of today, Akshayanagar Lake is in need of a major rejuvenation. If not noticed, it is poised to becoming a cesspool, and may very well become a health hazard for about 1500 residents living around it. BMP, Forest Department and Lake Development Authority are the responsible government bodies. But as of now, none of them have taken any action towards the rejuvenation efforts.

The prior efforts have also been impacted since:

- The Storage capacity got reduced over the years due to silting
- The weir was damaged and so the water level has gone down
- The capacity is also reduced. The natural rainwater channels are either blocked or diverted away from the lake due to housing construction.
- There is lot of weed and about 60% water area is covered with weeds.
- The sewerage management was poor and some sewerage flowed into the lake

- The construction workers about 100 in numbers at any time in the absence of a proper toilet for them started using the lake as a public toilet

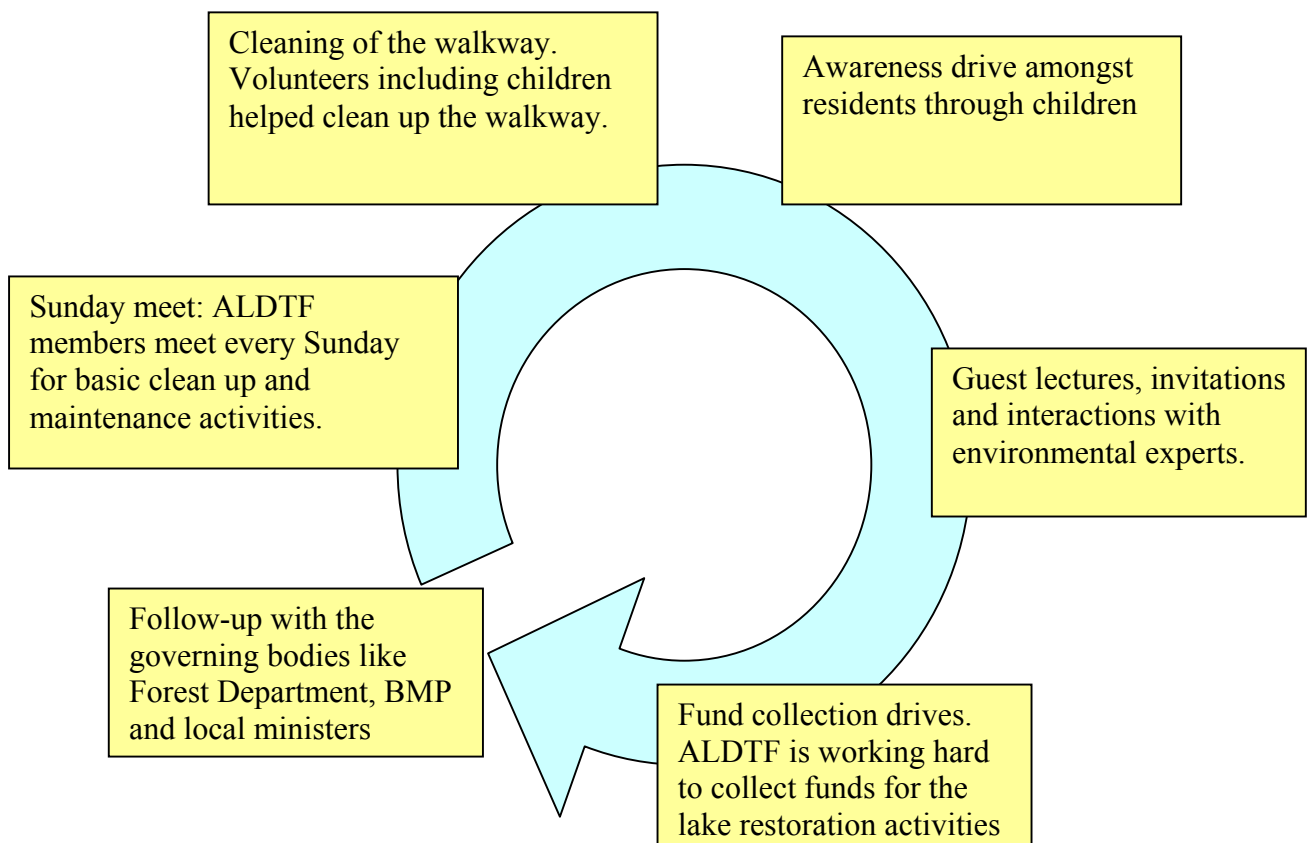
This has prompted the residents welfare association to address the issue and initiate actions. With its limited resources and financial strength, it has still undertaken this mammoth effort to restore the lake. The criticality of this restoration lies in the fact that:

- 1) The domestic water needs today are actually met by borewells in the area. There is a need to ensure that these do NOT GO DRY.
- 2) There are no other civic amenities or parks in this layout and the lake is the only lung space
- 3) Preservation of the past efforts that have gone into restoring the lake, thereby ensuring that the efforts do not go in waste.

4 Initiation Drive

“Happy are those who dream dreams and are ready to pay the price to make them come true.” - Leon J. Suenes

During the course of meetings and cultural gatherings, it was realized that there were a few residents, who understood the gravity of the situation. These residents wanted to make some contribution towards the lake restoration. A critical mass started to build and a group of dedicated individuals formed the Akshayanagar Lake Development Task Force (ALDTF). ALDTF consists of the association members and office bearers, wholly supported by the welfare association. Since its inception in March 2009, ALDTF has undertaken the following activities:



In addition to the involvement highlighted in the diagram, few notable accomplishments and information regarding the developments are:

➤ Expert Assistance:

Dr. Yellappa Reddy, noted environmentalist, is supporting ALDTF with guidance and directions.

Dr. Lingaraju, Research Head, Global Academy of Technology is supporting the groundwater issues in the basin of Arkavathi. A Proposal for the urban watershed management to rejuvenate tanks and alleviate ground water pollution has been submitted to ALDTF. Since the lake forms an individual catchment in the outer peripheral drainage divide between Arkavathi and South Pennar basin, it is a strong candidate for his rejuvenation effort. It could set as a role-model type example for other community development efforts.

Dr. Nandini, Department of Environmental Sciences in Bangalore University, is also providing technical guidance and analysis on water sample, weed and air collected from the area.

➤ Cleaning Activities: The Sunday drive is going on with a lot of enthusiasm. Residents along with their children actively spend an hour in the morning each Sunday at 7:30 AM, cleaning up the walkway and surrounding areas. This has resulted in a clean walkway.

➤ Fund Raising Drive: ALDTF members are actively pursuing their contacts and connections to generate funds to be used for the lake. A benefit concert from noted Vidwan Shri R.K. Padmanabha for the lake fund contribution is also organized at Vadiraja Kalabhavan on August 30th 2009.

➤ Follow-up with Authorities: ALDTF is providing a representation on behalf of the residents with the authorities for constant follow-up on progress. BMP has agreed to start repair work on the weir.

➤ Exemplary Members: Few residents have contributed generously. Amounts ranging from Rs 1,000 to Rs 25,000 (Mr. Karibasappa) have been raised by individuals to contribute towards the fund. As of today, we have collected an amount of Rs 1,15,000, and have spent about 1,00,000 towards the developmental activities.

5 Next Steps – Our Planned Approach

Where do we go from here?

Initially, we embarked on this project to clean and beautify the lake. During the course, ALDTF got informed more and more about lake rejuvenation in a holistic sense. That is, to ensure the lake not only is clean, but sustains the test of time. Hence our plans and efforts keep in focus both aspects of restoration – namely rejuvenation as well as sustenance.

In this regard, we would like to approach it in the following ways:

Holistic Sustenance Plan

- Prepare the master plan with Dr. Lingaraju and study the report(s) from Dr. Nandini regarding the quality of air, water and so on. Later work with these experts under the guidance of Dr. Yellappa Reddy, after figuring out a complete action plan.

- Work with Central Ground Water Board and Forest Department to construct recharge wells in and around lake bund for better utilization of rainwater.

Rejuvenation Plan

- Work with BBMP for repairing the waste weir (lake exit point)
- Develop park and children play area on the lake bund
- Protect the entire lake through fencing
- Work with forest department on plantation (Eg. Saptaswara concept).
- Develop the island and make a bridge to island.
- Clean the weeds for celebrating cultural events like Teppotsava.
- Make a walking/jogging track on the lake bund and provide shelter/seats.

6 How Can You Contribute

“Problems cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them. ” -
Albert Einstein

The success of such an endeavor is dependent on the participation of people in large scale. ALDTF requests residents, patrons, NGO agencies, organizations and volunteers to help in the execution of these tasks. Contribution can come in various forms and need not be limited to the discussion items here. To get started on the areas, some of them would include:

- ❖ Start using the lake for regular walks. This would promote the cause.
- ❖ Be vigilant and treat it as a part of your community. Help in keeping it clean.
- ❖ Assist ALDTF in lake cleaning activities (regular Sunday efforts)
- ❖ Bring contacts/connections of institutions/experts/organizations to the association's notice.
- ❖ Make financial contribution towards the lake fund. The association has a separate bank account for ALDTF. Please find the details below:

Beneficiary account: 64043524597
Beneficiary name: AKSHAYANAGAR LAKE DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE
Bank: STATE BANK OF MYSORE
Branch: HULIMAVU
IFSC-SBMY0040660
Location: BANGALORE

Please join us. Let us make this happen. This is a wonderful opportunity for us to give something back to the society and our later generations.