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**Lake degradation in Karnataka**

A study by IISc on 40 restored lakes across Koramangala-Challaghatta, Vrishabhavathi, and Hebbal valleys revealed a staggering 53% of lakes still suffer from "very poor" water quality, with another 37% labeled as "poor." These alarming numbers expose the glaring failures of current lake rejuvenation efforts.

Beyond supplying local water needs, lakes actively contribute to rainwater harvesting and floodwater management. Regrettably, rapid urbanization along with poor waste management has led to the deterioration of water bodies, transforming them into repositories of sewage, waste, and industrial effluents. Many have surmised that the city would be unlivable in the near future without serious intervention.

Bangalore is a city which relies on lake water. In May 2024, the city faced its worst water crisis in decades, with a shortage of 500 million litres of water each day. Lake rejuvenation and water harvesting systems that revive the lakes and in turn the underground water table can be instrumental in addressing the problem.

**Primary Concerns**

* Large-scale death of fishes in lakes and reservoirs of Karnataka.
* Vanishing/declining lakes due to infrastructure development. (Sunkalpalya Lake)
* Presence of microplastics in lake and river systems (L. Manipal)
* Algal blooms due to agricultural runoffs.
* Dumping of sewage in lakes that pollutes the lake. About 60% of sewage in Bangalore still flows into lakes through storm drains.
* Bad design (soup bowl design) used for lake rejuvenation which does not fulfill the purpose of ecological restoration.

**Proposed solutions**

* Constitute a team of conservationists, engineers and biologists to monitor the lake and plan issue-specific rejuvenation processes. This would involve identifying the reasons behind lake degradation. Civil societies and local communities should be actively engaged.
* Proper systems for sewage treatments should be there. This could mean sewage treatment plants in urban areas that can handle the generated volume.
* Septic tank construction in every home in the rural areas.
* Loss of interconnectivity between lakes have contributed to increased instances of floods. Dredging of canals should be carried out urgently to reconnect them.
* Industrial effluents should be kept in check by conducting regular inspections.
* Majority of the restored lakes have become polluted which indicates improper decontamination and poor maintenance. Hence, post-rejuvenation monitoring should be conducted.
* Fountains and aerators can be installed to increase the dissolved oxygen level thereby helping aquatic organisms to survive.
* Separation of sewage drains and storm drains should be there and regularly monitored.
* Most of south India’s lakes are a network of reservoirs and canals where water moves from higher to lower elevations, and ultimately into the Bay of Bengal. When restoring a lake, it’s imperative to be mindful of other connected lakes and the rajakaluves (canals).
* The N K Patil committee report on the status of Bengaluru’s lakes in 2012 emphasized that a gently sloping depth profile must be followed when restoring a lake. It noted that the lake must have a ‘wet mud’ zone that is farthest from the bund, a shallow water zone in the middle, and a deep water zone adjacent to the bund. The gentle slope creates a climate for shallow water birds.

**Why lakes are important**

* Lakes support communities for various water needs ranging from irrigation to household needs.
* Fisheries is an important economic activity in the state.
* They help in ground water recharge.
* They foster biodiversity by providing an ecosystem for many plants, birds and wild animals.
* They contribute to rainwater harvesting and flood water management.

**About us**

Make Parliament Great Again (#MPGA) is a citizen’s initiative that aims to raise public issues with representatives & decision makers from across the political spectrum with the objective of reclaiming the Parliament as the House of the People.

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