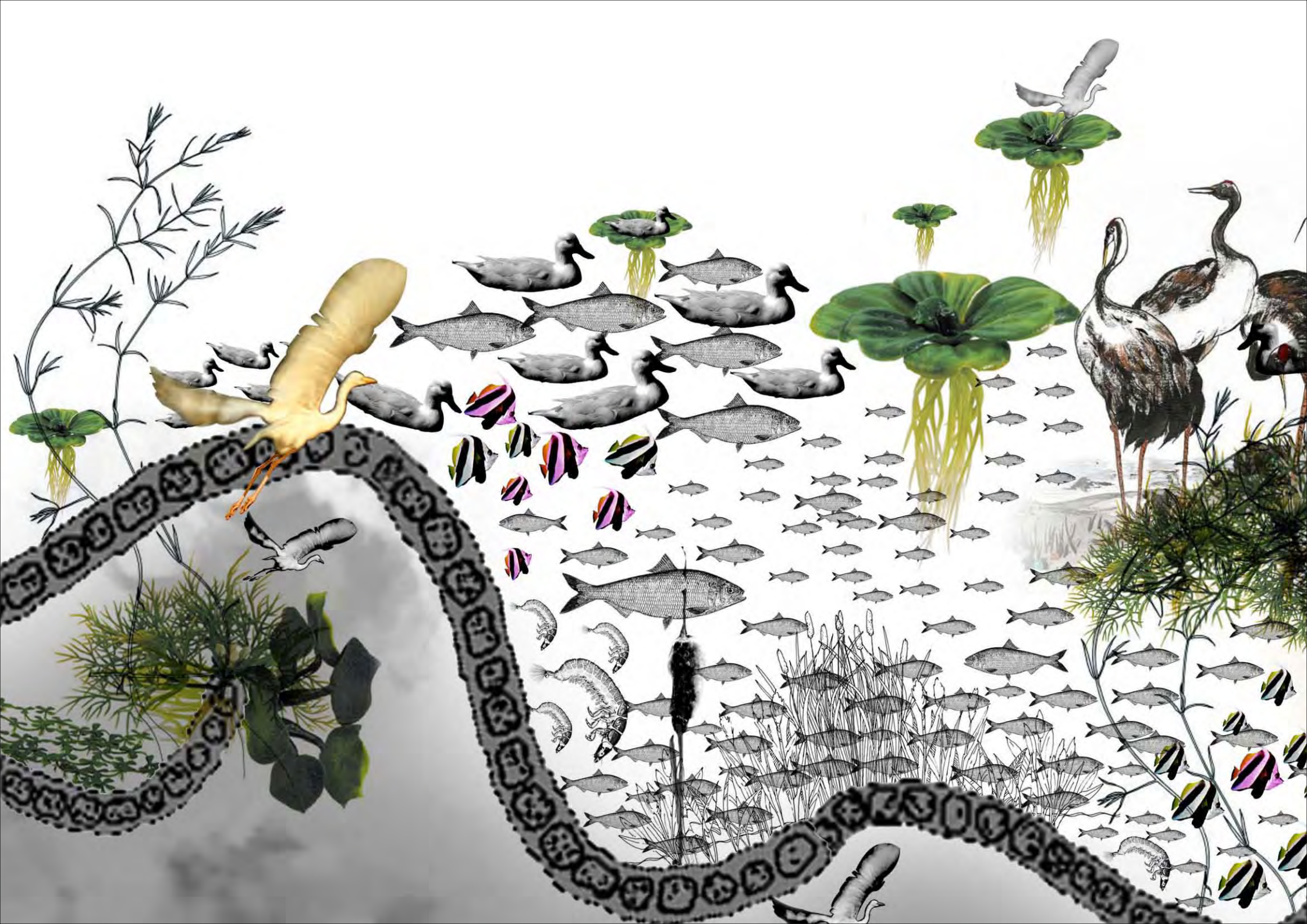




Lake Tales

Focussing The Urban Rural Margins- Jakkur lake, Bangalore
Project supported by : Public.art.ecology, '*Negotiating Routes Ecologies of the Byways II*'

Surekha



Lake Tales

'Focusing The Urban Rural Margins- Jakkur Lake, Bangalore'

Project supported by : Public.art.ecology, 'Negotiating Routes Ecologies of the Byways II' - KHOJ International Artists Association

(<http://surekha.info/negotiating-routes-jakkurlake/>)

Beginning & Journey : Motivation for the Jakkur Lake Project

An Introduction:

My project about 'Jakkur Lake' was initiated three years ago. I hail from Bengaluru (earlier called as "Bangalore"); I have seen lakes in the City vanish just like that, giving way to malls, bus stops, stations. Also, I realized that the catchments area around this Lake makes it look so green and distanced from the urbaneness of the city, though being so much within an arms length of the city. Jakkur Lake is one of the very few lakes existing towards the North-Eastern outskirts of Bangalore/Bengaluru, about fifteen kms from Bangalore city centre. It is more than two hundred years old and is a lake deeply connected with the history of Bangalore, for, it is closer to Yelahanka, the actual town from where the king Kempegowda—the founder of Bengaluru—hails from. The lake has a village (Sampigehalli) towards its Eastern part and a township (Jakkur) towards its West. Jakkur lake is one of the three prominent lakes of Bengaluru (according to Ornithologist Harish R. Bhat of IISc, Bengaluru) featuring the true character of being a lake.

Currently the lake is being 're-structured' from being a natural one into an urban development lake, due to an undertaking which is part of a larger scheme of 'City Beautification' and 'Lake Development Projects'; and in the due process, the functional purpose and the natural existence of the

Lake are both jeopardized and curtailed. What remains now is a renewed appearance and what is available/offered is only the seeming recreational aspect of the Lake. The 'recreative' element replacing the 'functional' and 'domestic' aspect of the lake is also a reflection upon the man-made alternatives offered as a choice, at the cost of the notion of farming. It indicates that the latter is of the least priority to the governance, which seems to believe in development rather than conservation.

This Lake is in a crucible shape with the central portion being deeper, so that the water can sink in and flow into the other lakes. I was witness to Jakkur Lake when it had the appearance of a natural-lake. I came to know people around the lake who, along with their ancestors, had literally lived around it, converting the water body into a natural industry of a certain kind. The lake is historic, was an abode for birds, had an intense domestic function (washing, bathing, cleaning, farming and drinking purpose) and perhaps the villages Jakkur and Sampigehalli—came into existence a century ago just because of the lake. The main source of a settlement has been re-articulated to fit into a larger framework of the historicisation of the city to which the village is an annexure, for a recreational purpose, at the cost of the actual intended purpose of offering a livelihood to a settlement.

Fishes cultivated in the lake seasonally by fishermen and the dependent farming around the lake were two main professions that came to an abrupt end owing to the government policy to detach the nomenclature of 'green belt' category attuned to this area. The decision to convert the green belt into a 'developmental urban area' and the conversion of the natural lake with a shift in the urban utilitarian purpose is noteworthy.

Currently Jakkur Lake is one of the twenty lakes adopted by the LDA (Lake Development Authority) for rejuvenation. The Lake is being resurrected in specific ways. I found that the

facilities that the Lake was made to offer: (a) for birds' migration, (b) for idol immersion, for (c) sewage filtering process, (d) the decisive fate of the catchments and the general alteration in the professional preoccupation of the people living around it. The Lake itself underwent a drastic metamorphosis due to the making of the urban 'Arkavathi Layout', all in all, which poses an interesting picture of the making of the urban, making of the modern. This particular lake opens the history of human settlement like a palimpsest.

Experiences while documenting the:

- 1) changing landscape- within the lake,
- 2) the changing lifestyles of the people who live around the Lake-- internal Diaspora /Human displacement

My documentation of this metamorphosing history of the Lake is construed through:

- (a) photographic images,
- (b) video-interviews,
- (c) archiving and mapping from facts thus obtained,
- (d) collecting oral-recording of anecdotes of the local dwellers (farmers/activists), environmentalists, ornithologists as well as the governing authorities like B.D.A/contractors regarding the lake.

(e) An interactive-blog has been initiated for this purpose (<http://surekha.info/negotiating-routes-jakkurlake/>) which aims to bring in a negotiative appropriation between the artistic preoccupation and the aesthetic application involved around and within the process of mapping the historicity of this lake.

Details of the work done:

- * Photo images and video footage of the lake when it was natural, as it were before the government intervention since 2004.
- * Map collected from archives from official and current google earth maps of the Jakkur Lake.

- * Photo images and video footage of the actual official process when the lake water was being cleared by the authority.
- * The subsequent effects and loss of the visible, the functional (dead fishes) domestic loss and the overall change in the horizon of the landscape of being a lake. It is a specific loss to the dwellers of Sampigehalli, for whom the lake was more than an annexure.
- * Preliminary interviews with the villagers, young and old; and the contractors of fishing business in relation to the Jakkur Lake.
- * A documentation of the oral myths and lived experience about the lake by the people (of various generations) of two villages, situated on either side of the lake. (Sampigehalli and Jakkur).
- * Interview with BDA Authorities (Bengaluru Development Authorities) ,Environmentalists and Ornithologist.

My project intends to decipher this lake's metamorphoses from being a natural and accessible one into becoming part of an urban-project. The lifestyle of the people around it has shifted from being a farming community to something uncertain, after the farming land around this lake were acquired for the purpose of urban and residential developments. The lake is currently a site of peculiar internal Diaspora, wherein the change in it has made the settlement and people around it undergo an ecological, professional and hence a cultural and emotional displacement, while still very much retaining the sense of belonging there, due to the presence of the lake though in a modified version.

I have seen people around the lake, living since several generations, feel alien to their immediate surrounding, feel diasporic without migrating even an inch away from the place they were born and brought up into. The urban phenomena of Bengaluru had this bearing upon the fate of Jakkur Lake over the decades. Farming and farming related communities alone existed in the villages around it (blacksmiths, farmers, and landlords) with hardly few hundred people around it, who knew

each other by names. No stranger, or any profession strange to farming (even a provision shop was in demand, since barter system still lingered large in the village of Sampigehalli) existed therein. Since 1980s brick factories, quarrying and cement-block small scale industries began to operate, either because of a lukewarm response to the tradition of farming.

When I began to document the lake, people still performed offerings and puja to the lake annually, washed their clothes and dirty linen (which never went out as a police case), hesitated to travel alone in the nights after 8pm, not because of the fear of the human but of the lake spirits, would wonder but not hunt the migratory birds that seasonally came to this lake in October and took off in March to Europe and Russia. The migratory and regional birds co-existed by neither merging with each other nor being apathetic to one another.

These are some of the traces of transformation of internal-diaspora occurring between people, their altering preoccupation, and investment going dead and turning into a mere analogy. The Jakkur Lake, the source of livelihood to people in Jakkur and Sampigehalli, is now going to be a spot for healthy walk, bird watching and an element of urban-beautification.

INTERVIEWS:

Nagarajappa, Farmer Activist (Jakkur):

Nagarajappa, a farmer-activist from Jakkur, informed about the loss of not only the livelihood of a particular farming generation, but also about a genealogical and ecological relation that people around the lake had with the latter. The earlier spiritual, functional and domestic relations of the people on either side of this Lake had been responsible for a certain scientific kind of design, layout and laying of the essential structure of Jakkur Lake in relation to the relation of people around it. Nagarajappa draws a lot of analogies of the developmental dangers around lakes as well as differentiates the process of natural metamorphosis of Lakes from an artificial

alterations of the very same.

As a farmer himself, he has been one of those who have suffered because of the urban-developmental alterations in and around Jakkur Lake. He says that there is a loss of nostalgia, of inheritance, memoir and is absolutist in his opinion, since he has been subject to the very same fate that the people around it underwent, as one of their spokesperson. He brings in a logical justification for loss of the lake and the conversion of farming land into urban sites by the BDA.

Chikkabyrappa (Resident, Jakkur):

One of the oldest living person from Sampigehalli, Chikkabyrappa (in his nineties) tells about the inevitability of the Lake through small anecdotes. He informed that people would refuse to agree to marry off their daughters to villages that did not have a lake with sumptuous waters. This Lake, he informs, was capable of water round the year, to the extent of being able to support even paddy-growth, in which sufficient stagnant water round the clock is a must. Now he is apathetic to the administrative mode of handling the Lake as an urban project. The shift of the Lake from the rural to urban is a misappropriation of the notion of nation, says the politically conscious Chikkabyrappa.

Akshatha & Her mother Bhagyalakshmi (Sampigehalli residents):

Akshatha (18) is a new generation pre-university student from Sampigehalli, who feels that the way the Lake has been handled, is a concern for hygiene. She yet feels a belongingness that comes out through her emotional rendering of her observations about the Jakkur Lake. She says that commercialisation of the Lake through breeding fish and a rough handling of the whole business of commerce within the Lake leads to an unbearable ambience, often literally. Thousands of dead fishes were floating on the water due to lack of oxygen! It was an embodiment of violence upon the natural course of a lake.

Bhagyalaxmi, mother of Akshatha, was born and brought up in Jakkur, and has settled in Sampigehalli, the village in which her husband is. Thus she has literally seen the Jakkur Lake that divides the two villages. Bhagyalaxmi has thus spent her thirty-odd years around the Lake and has not only experienced it through altering space, but also through altering times. She thinks that it is a beautiful picture gone dull, and laments about it, since she finds this urban-rural debate around it too sophisticated to be solved, though not understood.

Anjanappa H, (Social Activist, Sampigehalli Resident):

H. Anjanappa (70 years) is a resident of Sampigehalli, a Civil Engineer by education and a social activist, who tries to make sense between the nostalgic memoirs of those unaware of the future fate of Jakkur Lake and the urban dimension that would be available to it. He feels that the past or the tradition might not be so very precious, when information technology is taking over the city. Unlike many, he sees a lot of futuristic prospect within the beautification of this Lake and feels that a certain education about the current position of the lake should be spread, as a part of his social activity.

H.A.Anil Kumar, (Art Historian, Resident of Sampigehalli):

Anil Kumar says that this is a Lake that has remained as it is, but the politics of the neo-capitalism about it has altered its metaphoric phase. Also, it has a dual picture about itself: (1) that of a nostalgic personal belongingness; and (2) the other factual imagery of the lake that is meant only for the gaze, whose functional access and hence the intimate access has been denied to those who believe that it was their own, just not too long ago. He feels that hundreds of narratives exist about the Lake amongst those who are connected to it be geography or through memory, but they alter and vary according to the time in which the living people spent their childhood days around the lake. In this sense Jakkur Lake, according to him, is the lake of each and every lake that is yet kept alive in and around Bengaluru.

Nagaraj, (B.D.A Contractor Authority):

Nagaraj explained in length the methodology and logistics involved in the making of this new Lake. His was the official and administrative tone controlling the Lake. The intention of developing Jakkur Lake was to avoid sewage water flowing into it, and also to avoid the encroachment around the Lake, particularly the catchments area. The project also intends to create a 'breathing zone' around the lake for the sake of the localities.

Nagaraj says that the Lake will be prepared as such to store pure water, to increase its capacity, by percolating water in the Lake and making it available for the people living around it. He informs that the overall estimated cost of restoring of Jakkur Lake is 21.5 crores. RMN infrastructure is the company that has taken the contract for fulfilling this project. Engineers and forest officials have guided the BDA, he informs. The Department of Fishery and Environmentalist Yellappa Reddy, who is the Chairperson of the BDA Forum for suggestions (BDA Salaha Samithi) has visited this Lake on a regular basis and give suggestions. BWSSB, the Governing body for water conservation is also in constant touch with this project. They assure that in the future the sewage would not be diverted into this lake, according to Nagaraj, which is a very desirable aspect as such.

Rajeev (Senior engineer, Contractor):

Contractor Rajeev spoke about the urban annexure to the lake like the construction of a Kiosk, beautifying islands within, the immersion tank so as to avoid accumulation of sand into the lake. Thus BDA is involved in transformation rather than preservation, a fate that is similar to the Silicon Valley around it. Rajeev has been monitoring the overall makeshift process of Jakkur Lake from past two years, is from the neighbouring State (Kerala) and spoke about the logistics behind this urban annexure to the Lake.

Younus (Contractor):

The contractor Younus, engaged in the de-silting process of Jakkur Lake, monitored by BDA, explained the whole process of rejuvenating the lake in the urban, development language. He says that there is an employment for about hundred families till the Lake project is over. Younus explains as to how the changed form of Jakkur Lake occurred, explained the whole process in a scientific-tone, which contained the official, administrative methodology; which indicates the other version of the urban fate of the Lake.

Thimmaraya Naika, Herbal Specialist – medicinal plants and natural forestation:

Thimmaraya Naika is a farmer by profession, a farming-educationist by preoccupation and also is his passion. Working for a social cause, in Shivanalli.

Thimmaraya Naika comes from a family of herbal pundits, and he learnt his knowledge about natural vegetation and herbs from his grandfather. Thus he is one of the last living people with a thorough knowledge about the medicinal plants and herbs. With this background he has been the main responsible person for the sensible and scientific plantation of natural forest, with varieties of herbs for medicinal purpose, bamboo grooves for the elephants and for some of the urban diseases vogue today, like say, diabetes. Form two decades he has been the caretaker of this naturally cultivated forest, wherein he has designed, dug and maintained a natural-like pond, facilitating the flow of water sources from all around.

My Specific Ecological Concerns:

Fishes : I was involved in the ecological aspects of the lake – in terms of documenting the species of birds, and the various other bionomic factors in the region. Displacement as of the people, as trends in the animals and birds movements; as well thousands and thousands of fish perished while dewatering the lake due to lack of oxygen, was my genuine

concern. The mis-understanding between the fishery department and Lake Development authority led to this tragedy. Along with the local fish, the African cat fish was bred in the lake. Cat fish breeding is prohibited in the lakes since they eat all the local fish. But the cat fish multiply in thousands. So fishermen breed them so that they could make more money. During de-watering the lake, one could see dead fish in the lake surrounded by birds. There was a fish business as well. Hope the fish came back once the lake is rejuvenated.

Birds: The lake is historic, was an abode for birds. Observing birds was perhaps the most engaging aspect that made me thoroughly document the birds in relation to this lake. This lake is a paradise for Birds. Thousands of Coots, Herons, and Cormorants are the common birds one can find in the lake. My interview with Mr. Harish Bhat, Ornithologist:

Ornithologist Harish Bhat (IISc) --- about the lake and the birds:

Harish R. Bhat, a renowned Ornithologist from IISc, Bengaluru, feels that there are two varieties of birds that visit the Jakkur Lake. Those that come from nearby places (local birds) and those come from countries like Siberia and the like. The latter arrive very seasonally; they come in flock to the city and disperse locally. But later, all of them assemble at one point and migrate back together.

Even the offspring's of the migratory birds, which have never been here to Jakkur Lake, follow the same seasonal migratory map (a kind of GPS system) to visit this lake. This is yet a mystery. Also when the birds travel to and fro to this and similar lake, they can travel non-stop for weeks together. Such and other facts about Jakkur Lake's inherent qualities are what would diminish, as and when the Lake's actual potential is reorganised in the form of an artificial lake.

Artistic Intervention:

Lake Tales June 5th – June 10th

My ongoing Project of the Jakkur Lake was opened to

the public from June 5th – June 10th at BAR1 to introduce the project to the public, I also curated a show in which five young artists, who have graduated recently from the university, showed their work in relation to the issue. Each one involved in his/her own way in addressing environmental issues in relation to the lake. Deepak.R is a skilled aquarium hobbyist, creating fish tanks with inlaid mini-landscapes (aquatic plants layout) with a sound knowledge of fishes, water-bred plants and weeds. Chaitra is trained in rehabilitation of snakes and will be working on snake and its relation to the effects of the alterations of water bodies around the issue of urbanisation. Kushal Kumar has worked on sparrows and their migratory tendencies in the background of the lake being an abode to such migration about birds. Naganagowda Patil is involved in making miniscule models of village and farming communities, keeping in mind the intricacies of the relation between the effects of globalisation on farming. Deepak D.L. Works with natural and immediate surrounding sound inculcating the possibilities of sound devices and their flexibility to create a simulation of the natural sounds.

Conclusion:

When an age old lake is administratively intervened, there appears to be a 'missing link' in terms of actual involvement and initiatives by the people themselves. As in the case of Jakkur Lake, the localites always thought that the lake was always there, they themselves were there because of the lake and felt a sense of 'belongingness' towards it, inevitably. The authorities act to rejuvenate it in the name of urbanisation is to, first of all, administer a sense of 'proprietorship' over it, lawfully. In the due process the 'belongingness' of those who lived with the lake is duly replaced by the proprietorship of the law. There is an amount of issue of humane v/s policy in the case of converting a village lake into a park-like urban lake. The spontaneous and natural 'functional quality' of the lake is converted into 'controlled functions' (pathways, kiosk, artificial islands, separate immersion pond). More than anything, the functional boundaries built around the lake deletes the function emotion inherent between the lake and its neighbouring

population.

There's the aspect of the ecology on one hand, and the big players, calling the shots for development, on the other. But, often, it's a very small number of these 'displaced people' who genuinely engage themselves in the manner of concerned work that would really uplift the aesthetics and quality of life, in a particular region. I found in the course of my project too – that by and large-- a lot of people seem to be more resigned to their circumstance, and would much rather adapt to their new situations, rather than protest, or take up a position in defence of untoward change. How does one combat such a situation is always a reasonable but valid question.

I have concentrated on widening the scope of the lake into such issues, cultural and aesthetic, yet addressing the authoritorial and economic. Authority believes that by controlling the lake, it is preserving it from pollution, increasing the storage capacity, saving the land from real estate encroachers; and also preparing it for an articulated public utility. To fulfil these requirements, walking pathways, islands for migratory birds and boat-jetty and a separate idol immersion tank (Kalyani) have been contracted. At the same, the immediate neighbouring population, around this lake are unable to articulate neither the changing professional preoccupation that they have to undergo (specific to this generation, from farming to the unknown), nor the emotional attachment that they genealogical had with this particular lake. Two years after the resurrection of the lake began, only one tenth of the water has returned. The local and the migratory birds keep up perfect time in arriving at this lake, though Ornithologist Harish Bhat has researched that 30% of the birds have already left. Hopefully, when the lake is ready once again for habitation, both for the civilization and natural beings, there will be a lot of life-water flowing within.

I personally feel that beyond aesthetics, if the life, flora, fauna, fish and birds can continue to live and breed in this lake, it means that it is very much alive. Lake does not belong only to people, it belongs to birds, fish, water

plants, water organisms and they are the real stakeholders of the Lake. The authorities are supposed to preserve the healthy condition of the lake. I am relieved to see around 2,000 birds on my recent visit (15th July) in the lake.

Aesthetic considerations that the developers and government authorities are paying towards the lake heed to in accordance to their various schemes and plans. I have found them to be genuinely not very interested in a sense of aesthetics. Bangalore Development Authorities speaks a language of development devoid of functionalism and endorsing of a wider circulation of the 'mere visibility' of the lake. The lake that yielded watersource ('Hydraulic Propertyship', as Romila Thapar argues, was the point of control that governance had upon the villages, since ages, in India) has been disconnected, to be a hydraulic park. The beautification of the lake by the authorities is, arguably, reminiscent of the age old tradition of the despotic specific to Asiatic cultures.

Without taking an absolutist position neither or nor, I intend to, say, consider the lake as a representational apparatus and subject, which could be an extremely sophisticated genre of contemporary landscape, availed to us, in accordance with the media and technology that we apply, while having a dialogue with it.

Surekha - July 2011



Lake Tales

'Focusing The Urban Rural Margins- Jakkur Lake, Bangalore'

Project supported by : Public.art.ecology, '*Negotiating Routes Ecologies of the Byways II*' - KHOJ International Artists Association

Project by : Surekha

Assistance: Deepak D.L

Anilkumar HA

Blog : Creative Geekz

Editing : Om The production

Artistic Intervention:

Deepak R.

Deepak D.L.

Chaitra Putran

Kushal Kumar

Naganagoudar

Space: Bar1

Resource :

Harish Bhat, Ornithologist, IISc, Bangalore

Anilkumar HA, Art Historian, Bangalore

Nagarajappa, Farmer Activist, Jakkur

Thimmaraya Naika, Shivana Halli

Yellappa Reddy, Environmentalist, Bangalore

Dr. Puttaswamy, Nagaraj, Harish : Chief,

Bangalore Development Authority, Jakkur lake

Amarnath, Chief, Lake development Authority

Rajeev, Younus --- Asst Engineers & contractors,

RMN construction (BDA)

Maps of the Lake



Village (Sampige Halli)

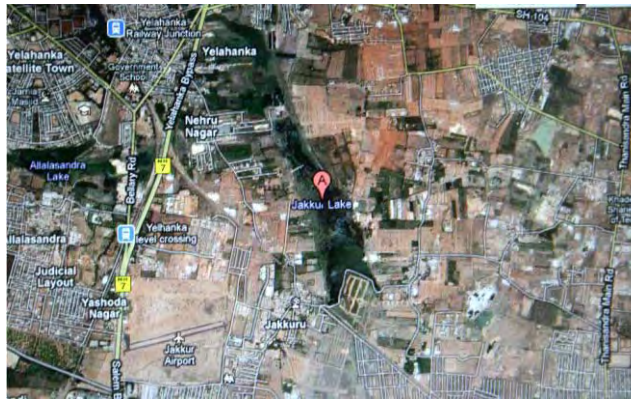
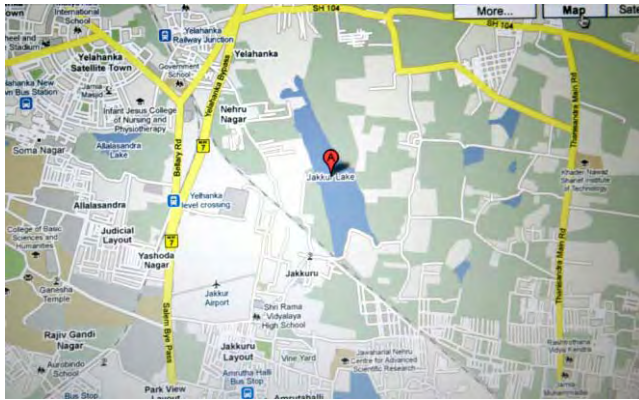
Farm Land

Lake

Village (Jakkur)

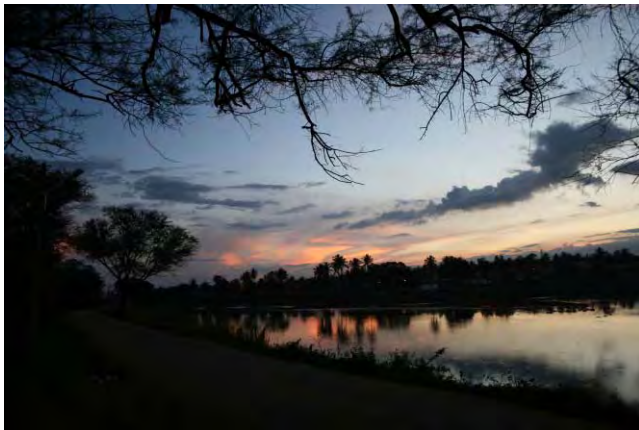
Map 19th Century

Maps: Resource - Google



Lake 2008







Thousands of fish perished during dewatering the lake



Lake in Transition

Name of Work : Restoration and Conservation of Jakkur Lake, Bangalore North

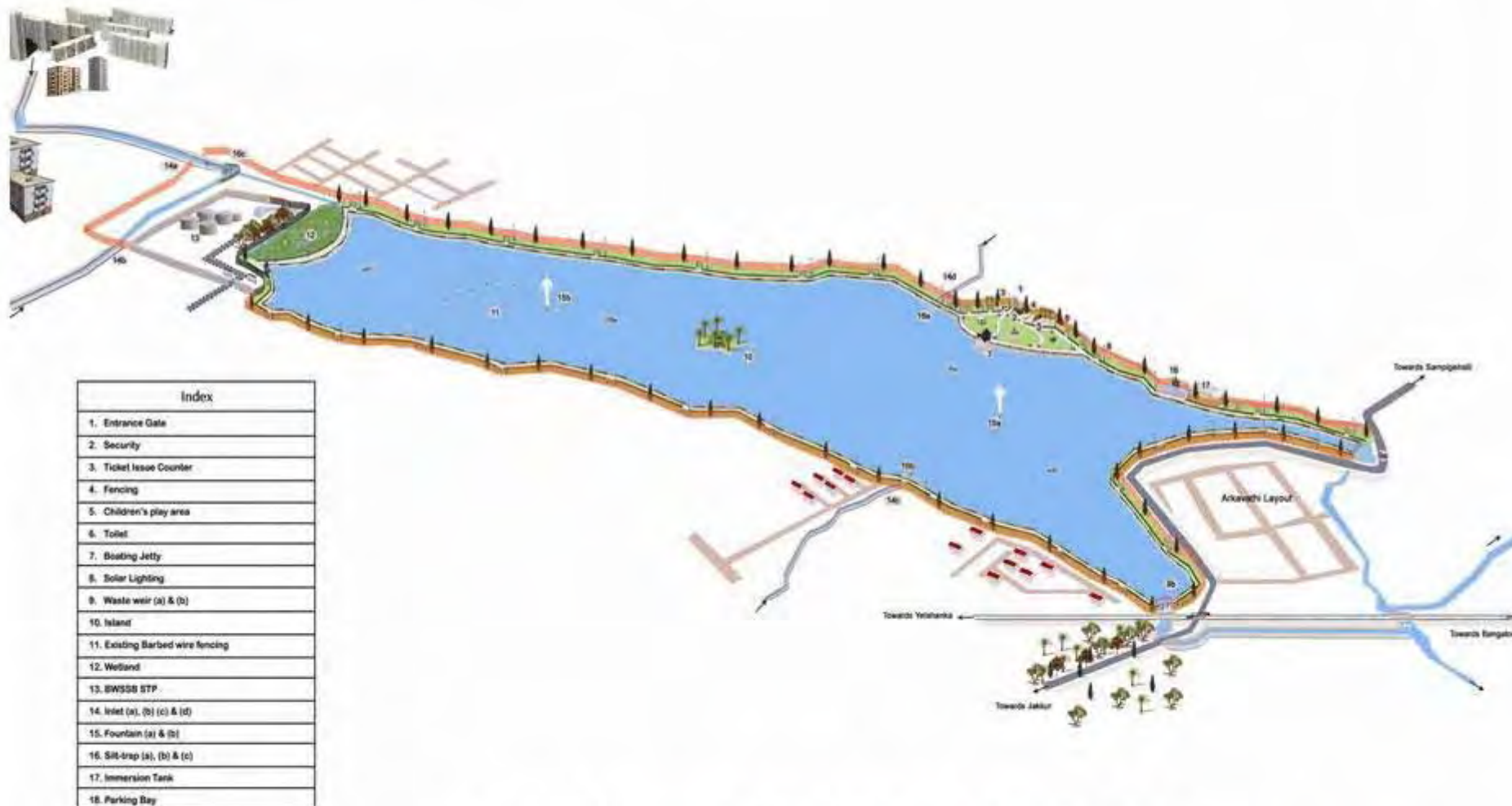
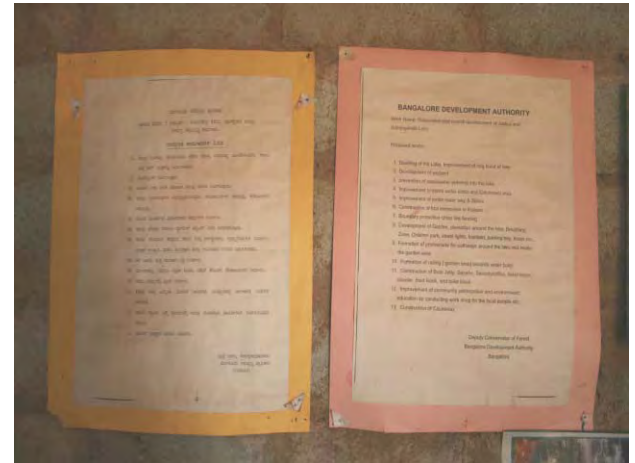


Figure B-1: Panoramic view of Jakkur Lake, Bangalore North

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BDA office and its activities at the site.
Enviromentalist Yellappa Reddy giving suggestions
regarding saplings and plantation at the lake.



Dewatering

The process of Dewatering the Lake began in 2009

Desilting



Revetment



Turfing





Wetland



Sewage Treatment Plant :

Sewage water from Yelahanka and surrounding localities is treated here and then let into the Lake.



Work In Progress





Interviews :

Local residents, farmers, contractors,
engineers & BDA officials

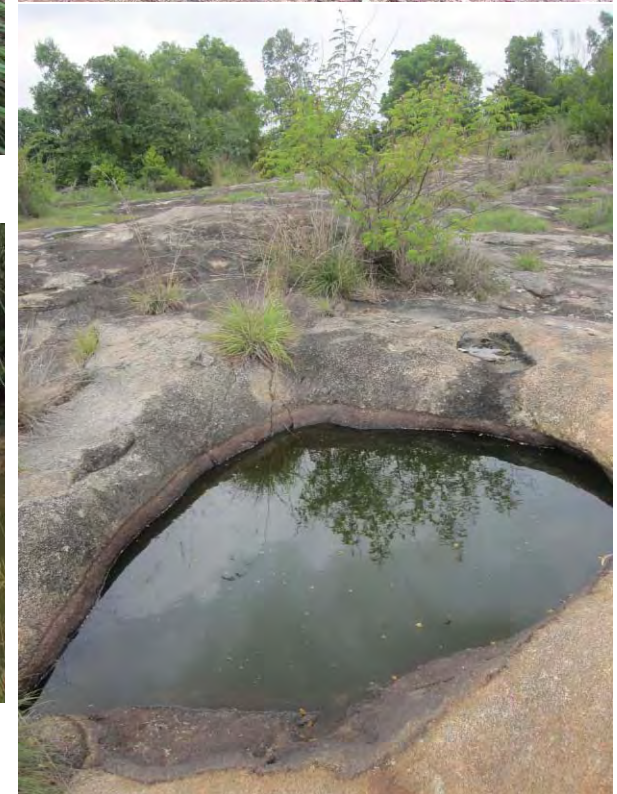






Interaction- Harish Bhat (Ornithologist, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru) speaks about migratory birds at Jakkur Lake

Interaction with
Thimmaraya Naika regarding
local Herbs, Shivana halli.

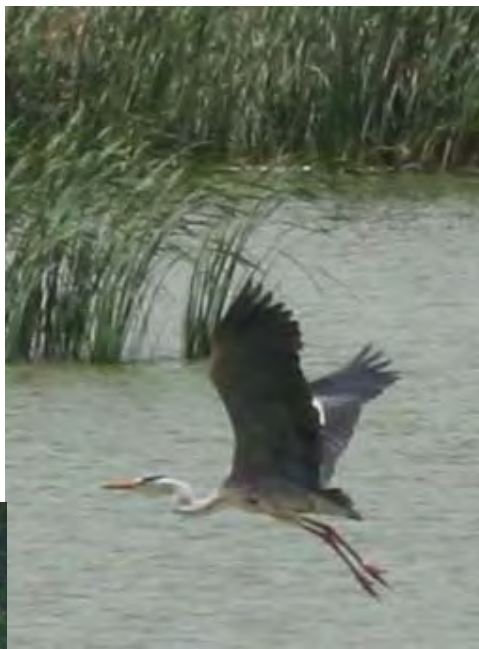


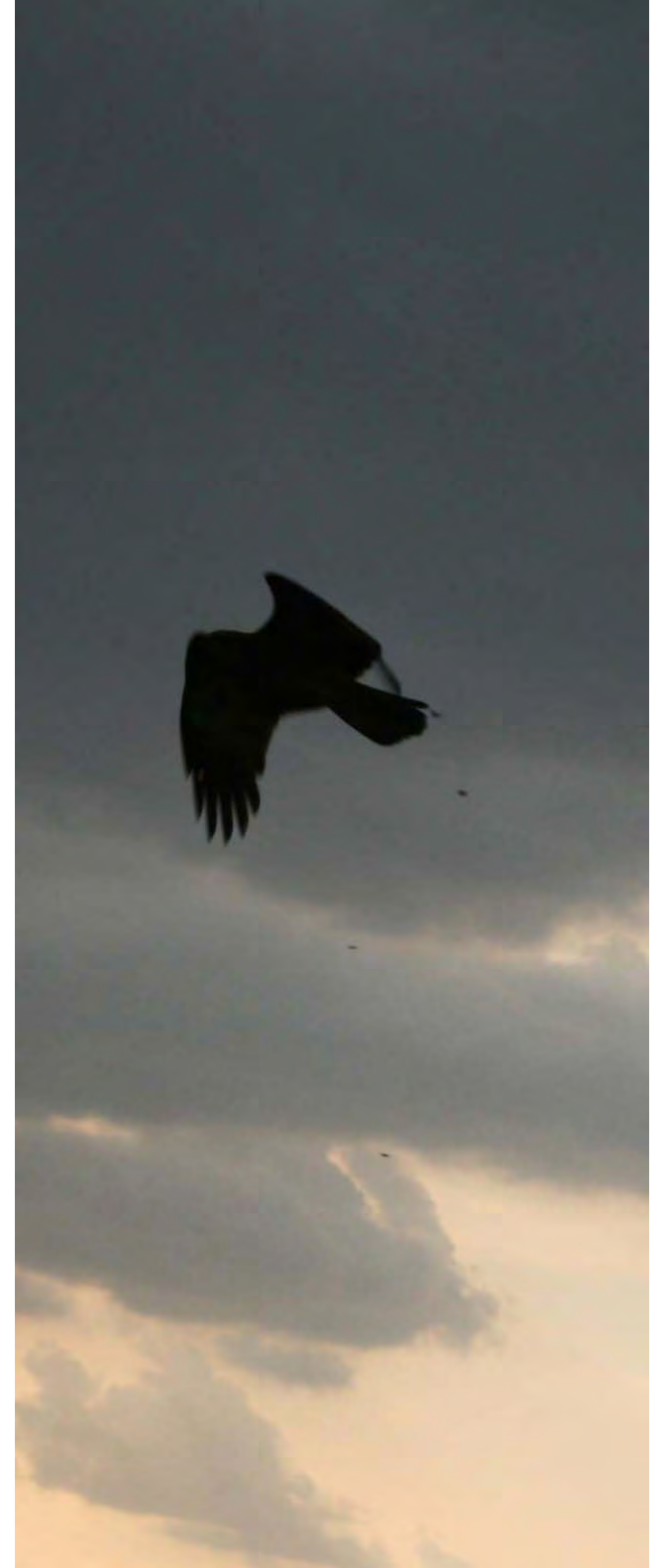
Life, Flora and Fauna around the Lake





Birds in the Lake





Around the Lake

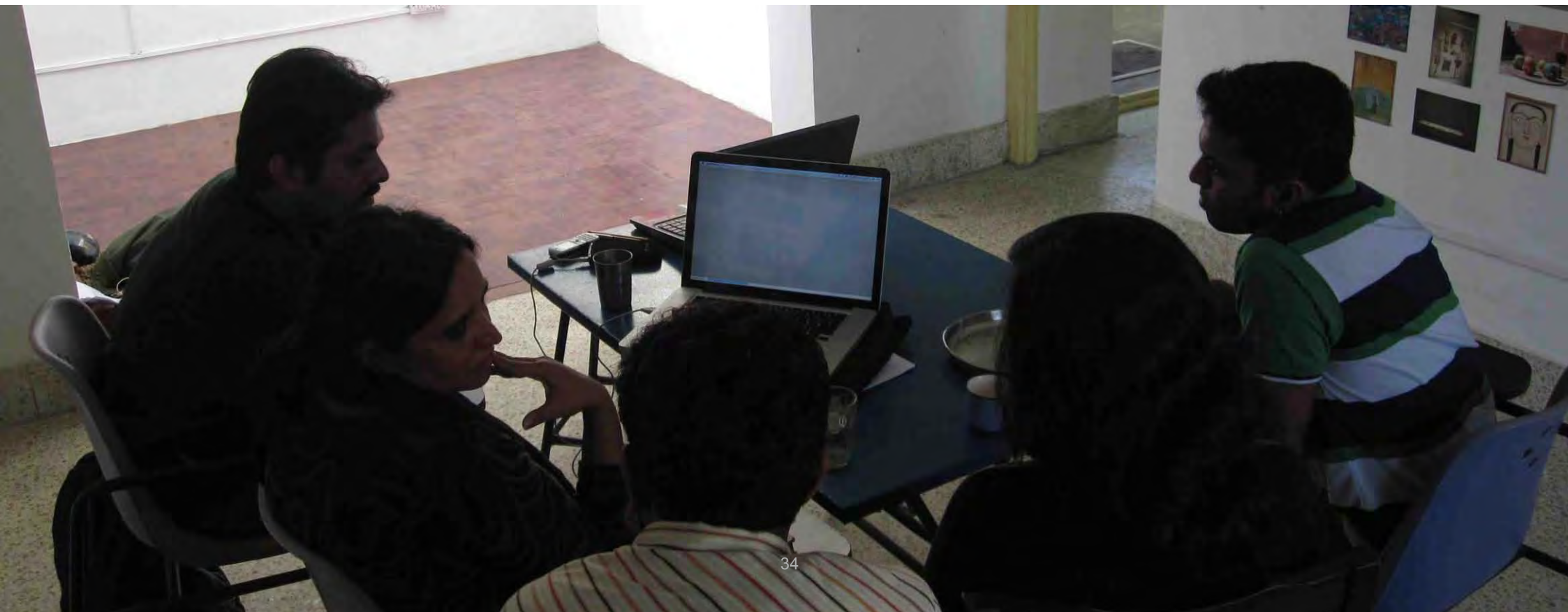




Artistic Intervention



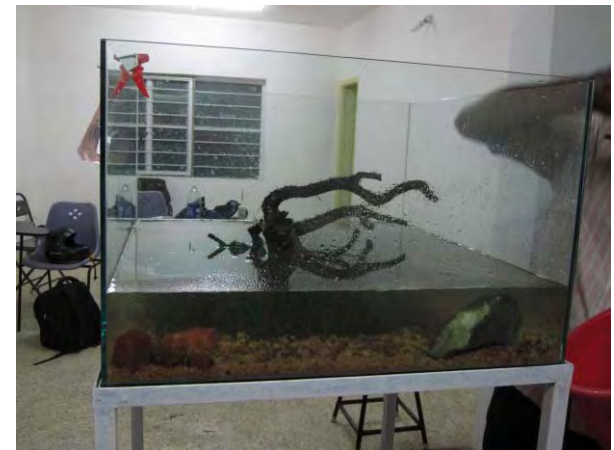
Meeting at BAR1



Intervention at Jakkur Lake



Work in progress :
Installing the show
Lake Tales



Lake Tales

'Negotiating Routes Ecologies of the Byways II' - focussing the urban rural margins- Jakkur lake, Bangalore'

Date : 5th - 15th June 2011

Time: 2pm – 7 pm

Venue: Bar1, 69/3, 3rd floor, Mission Road, Next to Gokaldas building, Bangalore-560027

<http://surekha.info/negotiating-routes-jakkurlake/>



Lake Tales

Focusing the urban rural margins - Jakkur lake

Project & Curation:

Surekha

Interventions:

Deepak D.L. Chaitra Puthran Deepak R
Kushal Kumar Naganagouda Patil

5th - 15th June 2011, 2pm – 7pm

Bar1, 69/3, 3rd floor, Mission Road, Next to Gokaldas building, Bangalore-560027

<http://surekha.info/negotiating-routes-jakkurlake/>

Negotiating Routes – Ecologies of the Byways-II - KHOJ

From the past three years, Surekha has been documenting a two hundred years old lake of Bengaluru—the *Jakkur lake*. Located to the North-East of the city, the lake has Yelahanka—the hometown of Kempegowda who built the city of Bengaluru—to its northern side. Situated about 15 kilometers away from the city center, with Sampigehalli village to its East and Jakkur town to its West.

Surekha's lake project intends to decipher this lake's metamorphoses from being a natural and accessible one into becoming part of an urban-project. The lifestyle of the people around it has shifted from being a farming community to something uncertain, after the farming land around this lake were acquired for the purpose of urban and residential developments. The lake is currently a site of peculiar *internal Diaspora*, wherein the change in it has made the settlement and people around it undergo an *ecological, professional and hence a cultural and emotional displacement*, while still very much retaining the sense of belonging there, due to the presence of the lake though in a modified version.

At the same time, the Bangalore Development Authorities speaks a language of *development* of the lake, preserving it from pollution, increasing the storage capacity, saving the land from real estate encroachers; and also preparing it for an articulated public utility. To fulfill these requirements, walking pathways, islands for migratory birds and boat-jetty and a separate idol immersion tank (*Kalyani*) have been constructed.

Surekha's artistic documentation of this metamorphosing history of the lake is construed (a) through photographic images, (b) video-interviews (c) archiving and mapping from facts thus obtained, (d) collecting oral-recording of anecdotes of the local dwellers (farmers/activists), environmentalists, ornithologists as well as the governing authorities like B.D.A./contractors regarding the lake. An interactive-blog has been initiated for this purpose (<http://surekha.info/negotiating-routes-jakkurlake/>) which aims to *bring in a negotiate appropriation between the artistic preoccupation and the aesthetic application involved around and within the process of mapping the historicity of this lake*.

Surekha will be showing an on-going Project of the Jakkur Lake, upto date. Alongside, to introduce the project to the public, she is curating a show in which five young artists, who have graduated recently from the university, will be showing their work in relation to this theme. Each one has been involved in his/her own way in addressing environmental issues in relation to the lake. Deepak.R is a skilled aquarium hobbyist, creating fish tanks with inlaid mini-landscapes (aquatic plants layout) with a sound knowledge of fishes, water-bred plants and weeds. Chaitra is trained in rehabilitation of snakes and will be working on snake and its relation to the effects of the alterations of waterbodies around the issue of urbanisation. Kushal Kumar has worked on sparrows and their migratory tendencies in the background of the lake being an abode to such migration about birds. Naganagowda Patil is involved in making miniscule models of village and farming communities, keeping in mind the intricacies of the relation between the effects of globalisation on farming. Deepak D.L. Works with natural and immediate surrounding sound inculcating the possibilities of sound devices and their flexibility to create a simulation of the natural sounds //

Project supported by: 'Negotiating Routes Ecologies of the Byways II' -KHOJ

-Surekha



Interaction with the Local Community





Public Intervention

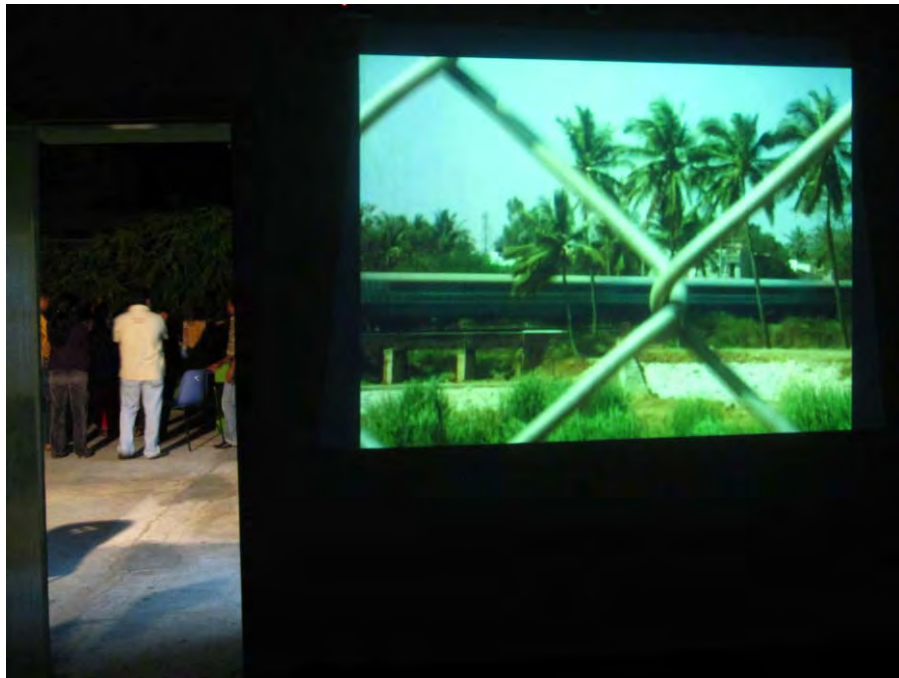


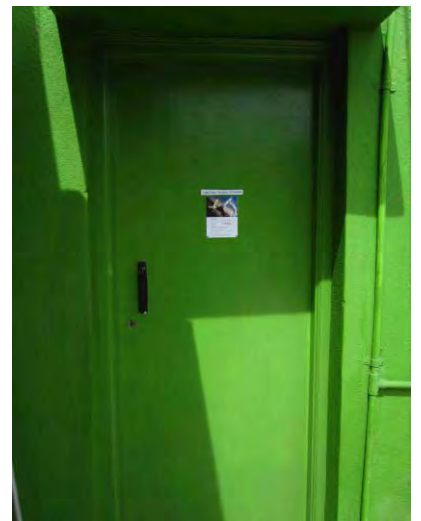


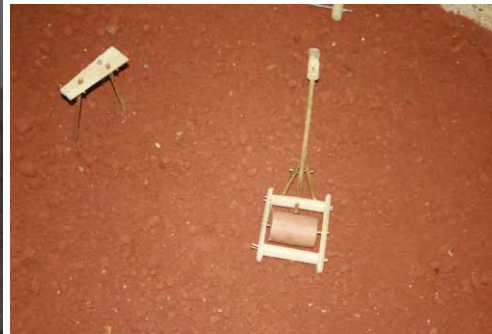
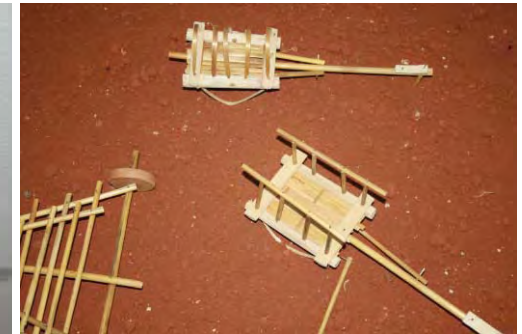
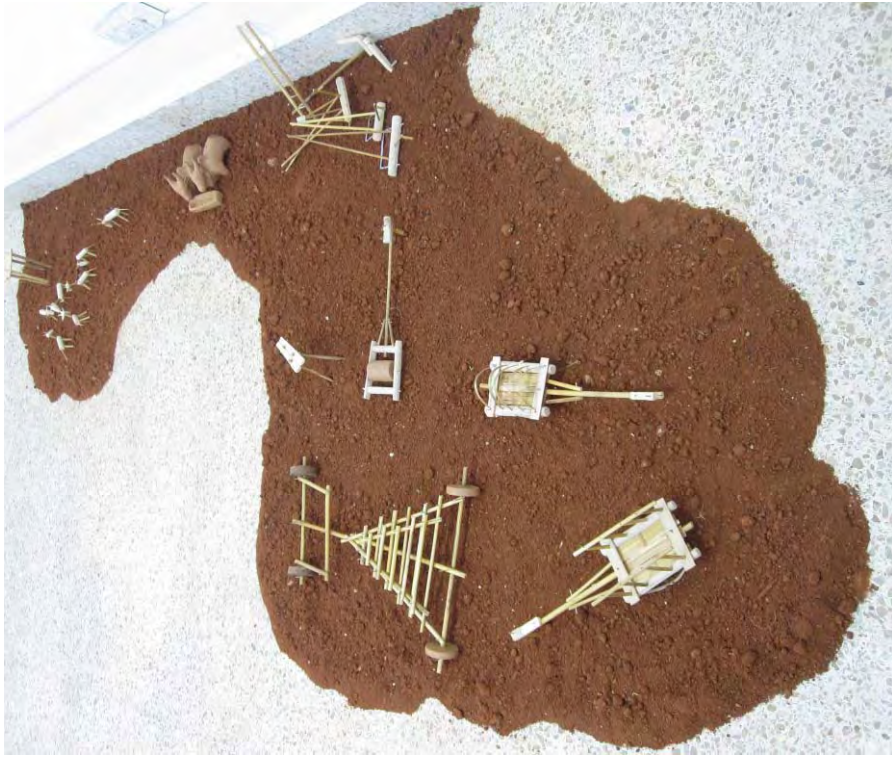
Bengaluru Development Authorities' interaction during the event.



Interaction with Farmers Association – From Doddaballapura Lake

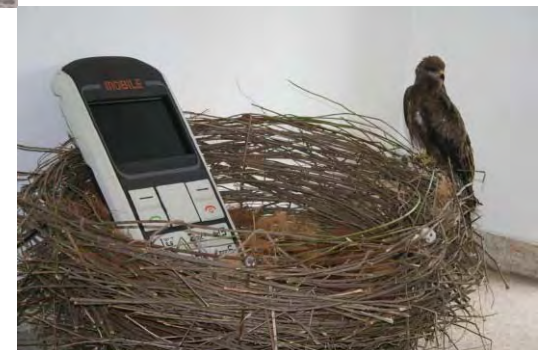
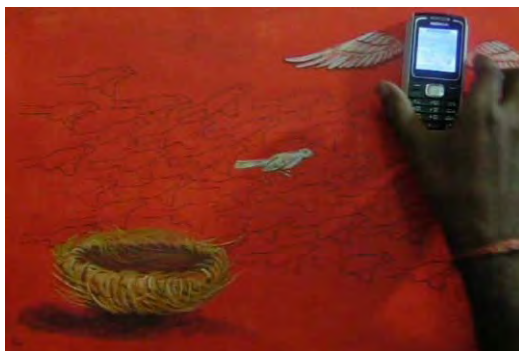








Kushal Kumar : video installation
“ Missed Links”

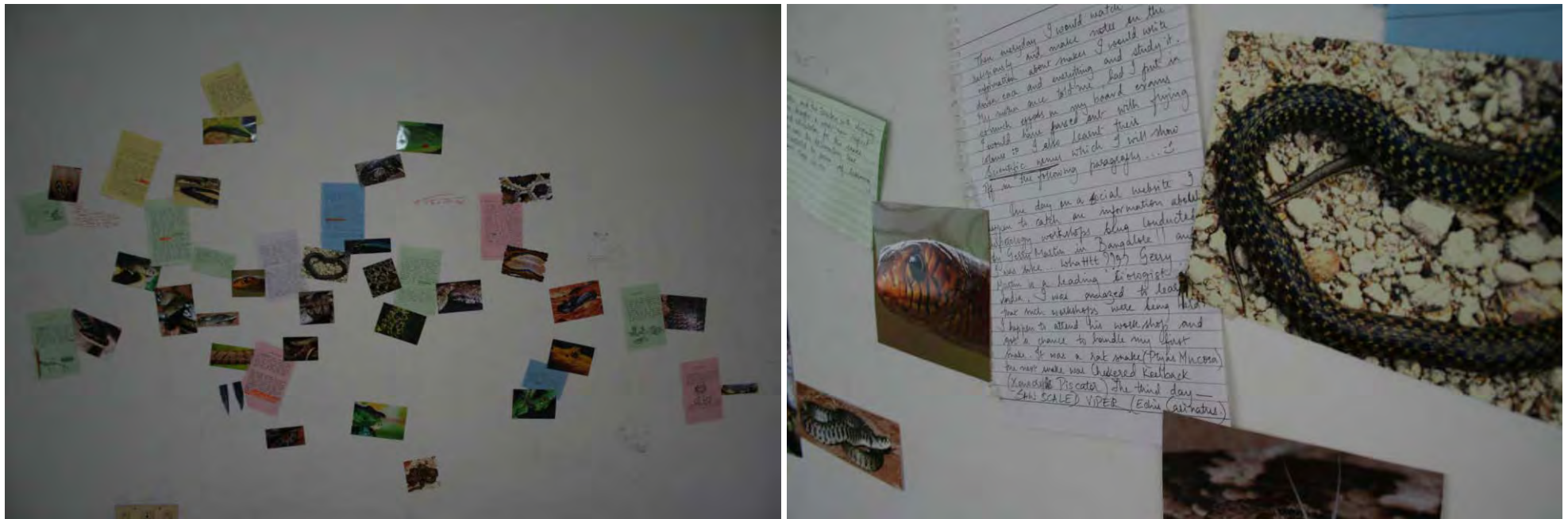


Deepak R – (Aquarium Hobbyist)



“Recreating the Pond”
Installation and
Photographs



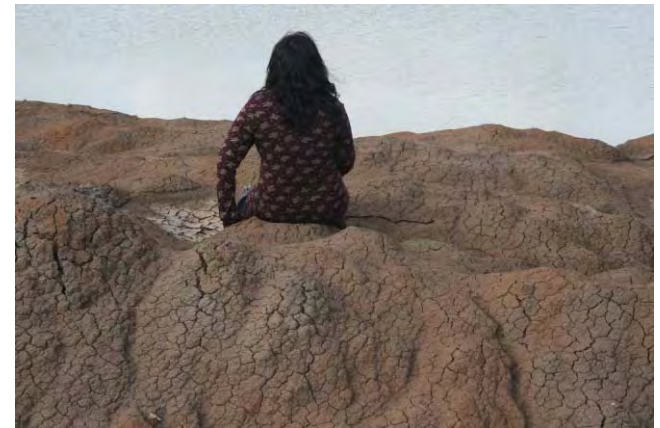


Chaitra Putran : Photographs, Sketches, Text- “ Diary about Snakes”



Deepak D L- Sound Installation



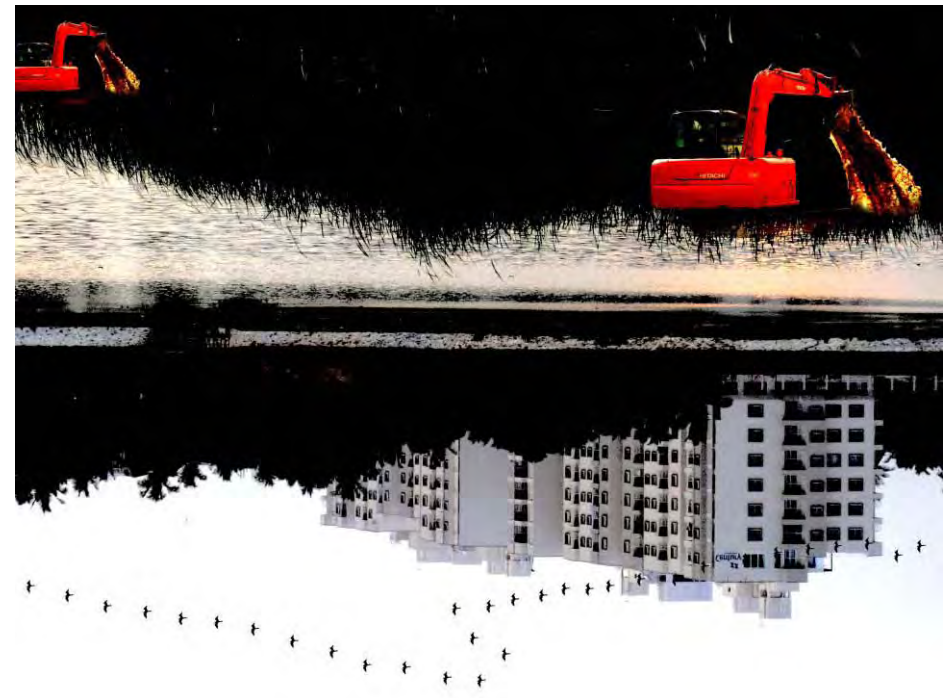


Surekha
Photographs: "Whispering Silence"



Interactive Room: Interviews and Web and Blog interaction.

Photographs





About Birds



Surekha

Video screening "Lake Tales"- 25 minutes

ART & CULTURE

In Pictures: The fascinating history of Jakkur Lake

By Lavanya Srinivasan | Published: June 09 2011

(<http://www.mybangalore.com/article/0611/in-pictures-the-fascinating-history-of-jakkur-lake.html>)

City based artist documents the metamorphosing history of the Jakkur lake through photographic images, video-interviews, archiving and mapping from facts obtained from locals and collecting oral-recording of anecdotes of the local dwellers.

Jakkur Lake is one of the very few lakes existing towards the North-Eastern outskirts of Bangalore, about 15 kms from Bangalore city center. It is more than two hundred years old and is a lake densely connected with the history of Bangalore, for, it is closer to Yelahanka, the actual place from where the king Kempegowda—the founder of Bangalore—hails from. Lake Tales, a visual art exhibition about Jakkur Lake by City based artist Surekha documents, the rebirth of the lake through photographs, videos and interviews over the last three years.

“From the past three years, I have been documenting the rebirth of Jakkur Lake. My project intends to decipher this lake's metamorphoses from being a natural and accessible one into becoming part of an urban-project. The lifestyle of the people around it has shifted from being a farming community to something uncertain, after the farming land around this lake was acquired for the purpose of urban and residential developments.” explains Surekha.

The lake is currently a site of peculiar internal Diaspora, wherein the change in it has made the settlement and people around it undergo an ecological, professional and hence a cultural and emotional displacement, while still very much retaining the sense of belonging there, due to the presence of the lake though in a modified version. “The Bangalore





The lake is historic, and was once an abode for birds. Talking about what inspired her to take on this project, Surekha says, “At one point of time observing birds was perhaps the most engaging aspect that made me thoroughly document the birds in relation to this lake. This lake is a paradise for Birds. I have documented the routine of the birds and their activities around the lake. Thousands of Coots, Herons, and Cormorants are the common birds you can find in the lake. The most heartening aspect of the lake yet is the migratory birds that seasonally come to this lake in October and take off in April to European countries. The migratory and regional birds co-exist here. Some of the birds travel upto 8,000 kms at one stretch to arrive at Jakkur Lake.”

Surekha's blog aims to bring in a negotiate appropriation between the artistic preoccupation and the aesthetic application involved around and within the process of mapping the historicity of this lake. “This blog brings in others of similar concern from within and beyond art community. Some of the interviews and reactions already put up is testimony to this. It is an attempt to re-discover my own surrounding in a sensible way, beyond beautification and consumerism. The project has already enabled me to tread paths which I had never intended to or could not do till now, by meeting people with ground reality, and speaking about issues with those who really matter. The blog is cross-connected to those who see less artificiality in the objects and nature which we consume on regular basis. My presentation is only a small interlude in this really long project.” she confides.

Apart from this Surekha will be curating a show in which five young artists, who have graduated recently from the university, will be showing their work in relation to this theme. Each one has been involved in his/her own way in addressing environmental issues in relation to the lake.



Bar 1 – Jakkur `Lake Tales`

Posted on June 16, 2011 by bangaloregirl

(<https://aturquoisecloud.wordpress.com/2011/06/16/bar-1-lake-tales/>)

I am standing in the heart of the crowded city and I can hear bird call. If I am very quiet, I can also hear the wind blow. The wind is something I don't get to hear often. It's beautiful. Soothing. Near me is a lily pond with rainbow coloured fish darting busily to and fro. The water is crystal clear and I can see right down to the bed with aquatic plants, stones, pebbles and sculptural driftwood creating a dreamy waterscape that could be the perfect home for a mermaid. I wouldn't mind living here myself actually. Which one of us wouldn't want to live near a lake? But I am not near a lake. I am at Bar 1, an artist residency -studio space on Mission Road, watching an interactive documentation of the historical Jakkur Lake – `Lake Tales`.

The question of lakes, habitats, livelihoods and survival is one that artist Surekha has been addressing for over three years in her project `Focusing on the Urban Rural Margins – Jakkur Lake` which explores urbanisation, the effect it has on waterbodies (Jakkur Lake in particular) and the intricate relationship that lakes have with human beings and all connected to it. This documentation is relevant because lakes, like cities have a history, an ecosystem, local and migrant populations and ways of being.

The work is spread all around Bar 1, and the soundscape I was listening to is installed in a bathroom where I can also see a video of lake ecosystems on a TV. The dreamy waterscape is set in a bathtub. The irony of squeezing the free expanse of nature into these restricted spaces is not lost on me. The entire work is interactive, with a special room being set aside for screening Surekha's film on the lake, as well as a series of mini-laptops arranged skilfully in a niche with headphones so you can watch more lake footage.

Jakkur Lake has special significance for Surekha not only because it is near Yelahanka, where Vijayanagar Chieftain (Palegar) Kempegowda I (1531-1569) established his Yelahanka dynasty with each successor contributing in his own way to the planning and beautification of Bangalore, but also because it is the birthplace of her husband, Anil Kumar a senior faculty member at Chitrakala Parishath. Together, they are deeply concerned about the lake and its



A watercolour in the making. Image courtesy : Surekha



There's a lake in my bathroom !

This documentation includes the farmers who lost their land around the lake to development and faced an uncertain future, those who fish in the lake for their livelihood, the birds (both local and migratory such as egrets, herons, cranes and cormorants), fish (who were dying due to sewage pollution from the neighbouring apartment buildings) and residents of the area. Her record of the metamorphosis of the lake's history is done through photographic images, video-interviews, recordings of oral anecdotes from local dwellers, archiving and mapping facts obtained from the area as well as from environmentalists and ecologists.

Alongside her documentation, she also curated the work of emerging young artists who presented their interpretation of the ecological issues faced by the lake. Deepak R, who is a skilled aquarium hobbyist re-created the mini waterscapes at Bar 1 and Chaitra, who is trained in the rehabilitation of snakes, worked on snakes and their relationship with the alterations that these waterbodies are currently going through due to unplanned urbanisation. The ambient lake soundscapes by Deepak DL (who explored the concept of sound devices and their ability to simulate natural sounds in a built environment) worked their magic as I was transported into another world while the Frog Jumpers (an aquatic plant) suddenly lunged to the surface in Deepak R's beautiful aquariums.

But most of all, I thought Naganagowda Patil's mini-models of traditional farming equipment were a touching tribute to the farming communities whose indigeneous practises and very livelihood is slowly being rendered obsolete in the face of rampant globalisation.

As I stood watching Kushal Kumar's evocative film on the disappearance of our chirpy little Bangalore sparrows due to mobile telephony, set in his artistic comment, (a large 5' dia twig nest in which sat a gigantic mobile phone running footage of migratory birds whose nesting and migration patterns are closely connected to the lake) miraculously, it began to rain.

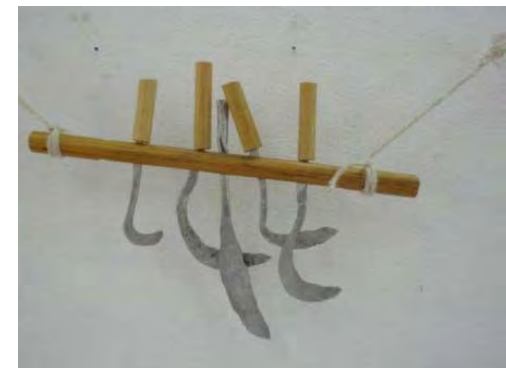
Over steaming hot cups of lemon scented black tea and mini-macaroons set against ambient sounds of bird calls and falling raindrops, Surekha confessed that she was nervous when the LDA (Lake Devpt. Authority) and BDA (Bangalore Devpt. Authority) officials came to Bar 1`." I wondered what they would say about my footage of all the fish lying dead due to pollution on the lake bank" she said. " But they applauded me for this effort, asked for copies so they could screen it at other locations, and said, "this is a fact, why hide it ? ".



Chaitra records her thoughts and experiences with snakes



The Installations that are aquariums, or the other way around ?



Mini models of traditional farming equipment

She also told me about the injured Kite that flew in to Bar 1 the previous day and got confused, so they put him in the massive twig nest installation till he regained equilibrium and flew away ! Talk about collaborations with the greatest artist of all – nature.

Today, as Bangalore battles issues like lake privatisation, pollution and encroachment, with waterbodies vanishing all around the city as we speak, this visual story, told lovingly and painstakingly at Bar 1 is a vivid reminder that our trees and waterbodies, seeds, birds and other species are as important as our architectural and cultural heritage. They are our natural heritage and our lifelines. I am sure the lake, garden and tank building forefather's of our city would agree.

* `Lake Tales' (June 5th – 15th 2011) is supported by Khoj (Negotiating Routes, Ecologies of the Byways. To follow the project, [click here](#). Bar 1 is also available for artists to work and display.

Deepak R will be more than happy to create beautiful aquariums for you on order.



The lake has tales to tell

by Velayanikal, Malavika

(http://findarticles.com/p/news-articles/dna-daily-news-analysis-mumbai/mi_8111/is_20110611/lake-tales/ai_n57663231/)

Much has been said about Bangalore's lakes. Environmentalists, activists, armchair enthusiasts, almost everyone has a take on the vanishing lakes of the city. But when an artist looks at a lake that she's known for 15 years, takes in the transformation that has come over it in the last three years, and presents it to others, the 200-year-old lake finds a fresh voice. That is Surekha's Lake Tales.

It was her marriage to art historian Anil Kumar that introduced Surekha to the Jakkur Lake - a lush waterbody that sustained a wide ecosystem around it. An unusual harmony reigned here despite it being in the outskirts of bustling Bangalore city. Villagers used the water for farming, and other household uses;

fishermen gleefully made enough catches to feed their families, sharing the fish in the lake with kingfishers; children dived in along with the pond herons; migratory birds flocked during October to March. This picture, though, didn't last.

"The lake is close to Yelahanka, which was rapidly developing. The sewage from factories was conveniently directed to the Jakkur Lake. Fish began to die. Real estate encroachment also came upon the area surrounding the lake. The villagers soon lost their farming rights as the authorities acquired their land," Surekha recalls.

When the Bangalore Development Authority took up Jakkur Lake under its purview, the aim was to "save the lake" from encroachers and polluters, and increase its water storage capacity. Their plan of action began with "dewatering, desilting, constructing a bund, and then filling up the lake again with rain water and treated water from the sewage treatment plant. Fish paid the first price. Tonnes of dead fish floated, almost covering the lake surface as the oxygen levels went down.

Birds deserted the lake next. Migratory birds, who found their way here crossing oceans and seas, had to fly again hunting for new winter destinations. "The lake was fenced to keep off encroachers, and that kept out villagers too; they could no longer draw water," Surekha says. "The lake was being 're-structured' from being a natural one to an artificial lake, an undertaking which is part of a larger scheme of 'city beautification' and 'Lake Development Projects'. In the process, the functional purpose and the natural existence of the lake were both jeopardised and curtailed. The new look has a boat jetty that gives the lake a recreational aspect. The 'recreative' element replaced the 'functional' and 'domestic' aspect of the lake," she adds.

Surekha began to document this metamorphosis in 2008. As an artist, she began with the visuals - videos and photographs. Accounts of the villagers, who were anguished by the "cultural and emotional displacement" that came upon them with an alienation from the lake, found place in Surekha's documentation as oral histories. Environmentalists, ornithologists, BDA authorities, contractors, and fishermen shared tales and facts with her. All of it comprises her Lake Tales - "it's a lifetime project for me," she says.

"Much more changes are to come. Authorities have already built a kalyani - a separate tank for idol immersion during festivals. Birds will come back when the

lake gets full. Some are already back. And visitors from the city will start coming in large numbers."

Her ongoing exhibition at BAR1 also showcases works of five young artists, who have been addressing environmental issues related to the lake. Deepak R has been building aquariums with elaborate inlaid mini-landscapes. He has won international prizes for his work. Chaithra Puthran, who feared snakes, decided to take her fear head-on and trained in rehabilitating snakes. Her notes to herself on snakes, anecdotes, myths, sketches, photographs are on display. Kushal Kumar's exhibited work is about how mobile towers have been killing sparrows and small birds. Deepak DL's sound installation recreates the lake in a pleasurable realm. Naganagowda Patil has built a farming village! There are miniature models of cows ploughing the field, farmers tilling the soil, and even all kinds of farming tools. An astounding attention to detail is evident in his work, and together, all of it makes a multi-dimensional contemporary history of the lake and its surroundings.

Catch the exhibition at BAR1, No 69/3, Third floor, Mission Road, next to Chennama Memorial School, Bangalore. You can also watch the videos at <http://surekha.info/negotiating-routes-jakkurlake/>



Art review * Marta Jakimowicz

"Lake Tales", Surekha's video about the suburban Jakkur lake gave the title to the exhibition subtitled "Negotiating Routes Ecologies of the Byways II" (Bart1, June 2 to 15) curated by her with five young artists who have been helping her in the documentation of the changes occurring around the once lush but endangered and despoiled area which is now being revived by the authorities which brings a benign as well as uncomfortable symbiosis between the city and nature.

Nature in the city – uneasily

One should appreciate the authenticity of the concern here and the compulsion to engage directly with actual issues, especially when regarding rural life.

Hence, one understands the role of documenting those as the foundation of the work. Indeed, the sheer weight of the organic and human condition would perhaps ask for that, even for an activist-like approach.

Nevertheless, whatever means be used in an art work, those have to create a heightened experience-cum-sensation of things that would reach beyond data, and at this point problems arose.

The ideas behind the show and the specific pieces may have been wonderful including the wish to centre all the contributions round the video reflecting the raw status of the site, but they often remained at the literal plane or without sufficiently binding information and evocativeness. Perhaps one should wait for the comparatively new approach to evolve.

Whereas Surekha's single print with her back seen atop a sorely fresh earth rampart with residues of greenery above was very expressive in a subdued manner, the main video did not quite connect-transpose the separate passages of fine, fairly classical, atmospheric scenery, also dead fish and the maybe deliberately pedestrian documentary images of fences and interviews with officials protecting the lake in ways that clash with traditional ones and with villagers who have lost their farmlands and familiar access to nature.

While an ornithologist there spoke about the departure of migratory birds from the altered environment and about local ones gradually adjusting to it, Kushal Kumar's installation with a video in an oversize nest housing a cell-phone rather gracefully dealt with Bangalore's sparrows scared away by radiation yet returning to an uneasy coexistence with urbanity. That discomfort partly overcome by vitality underscored the other efforts.

If Naganagowda Patil's miniaturised rustic implements and animals referred effectively but too pleasantly to the irrelevance of old village routines, the joint installation trying to metamorphose the bathroom into an artificial landscape did not convince, as did not the naïve drawings and notes on snakes by Chaitra Puthran and the sophisticated aquarium of Deepak R which was just that despite the fancy floating plants, etc.

Whilst there was a gap between the significance-bearing motifs and the lack of expressiveness there, one was truly taken by the sound work of Deepak D L. Emerging from under a heap of rubbish, it layered and transformed real sounds of construction from the lake area and natural ones, like the wind, over the traffic noises from the street, to conjure a rough-sensitive rhythm in which one could intuit the shaping in the coexistence of the organic and urban.

(worlds.<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/171846/art-review.html>)

Bangalore mirror

The fall and rise of a lake

An artist collaborates with a snake rescuer, a farmer-artiste, a new media artiste, a man who loves aquariums and a 'sparrow man' to document the transformation of Jakkur lake with an exhibition, Lake Tales, that opens today

Jayanthi Madhukar

Posted On Saturday, June 04, 2011 at 07:57:11 PM



From left: Deepak R, Kushal Kumar, Deepak D L, Surekha, Chaitra Puthran and Naganagouda Patil

With more than 200 years of history shaping the life of an entire community and eco-system, Jakkur Lake has been dubbed as a 'birds' paradise'. In fact, it can be called the North Star of Bangalore.

Located about 15 km from the city's centre, it is closer to Yelahanka with a township, Jakkur, to its west and a village, Sampigehalli, to its east. Currently undergoing a transformation and restructuring from a natural lake to an artificial one, the water body is in the throes of a larger scheme of things called 'City Beautification' and 'Lake Development Project', conducted by Bengaluru Development Authority (BDA) as part of the urban development project of Bruhat Bengaluru.

Surekha, an artist, decided to record the happenings in and around the lake through photographs and videos after she heard of the Lake Development Authority (LDA) project. "I have pictures of the lake dating back more than 15 years (her husband is from Jakkur). But in 2009, when I heard of the project, I started interviewing the locals, BDA officials, contractors and, apart from taking pictures, shot extensive video footage of the lake," says Surekha.

'Jakkur-Lake' Project

Surekha's artistic documentation of the history of the lake is construed through photographic images, video interviews and archives, collecting oral recordings of anecdotes by local dwellers (farmers/activists), environmentalists, ornithologists as well as BDA contractors. Surekha's fervent hope is that the lake regains its healthy environment along with its flora and fauna.

She says, "This project has been a fantastic learning process for me. In the beginning, I didn't know much about it, but today I am deeply involved with its progress. Contractors or BDA officials call me when there is something interesting taking place. They alerted me when they had drained the water. I have walked on the lake bed. The feelings are too deep to express. I have seen the authorities taking painstaking steps to develop the lake properly by taking inputs from environmentalists and wildlife experts. I have seen dead fish recovered from the lake. I have seen birds going to other lakes nearby because this one was not ready. I now know how lakes are formed and how there is a chain formation of other lakes nearby. This project is not a commitment for a year or two, but for a lifetime. The lake and its impact on the community are too intense to be taken lightly. In fact, without a water body or a lake, there is no life in the vicinity."

Surekha tied up with five young artistes who were not the 'typical artistes but had an ecological connection'. The artists — a snake rescuer, a farmer-artiste, a new media artiste, an aquarium hobbyist and a 'sparrow man' — have given an interesting perspective to an urban bane.

SNAKE RESCUER

Chaitra Puthran was once afraid of snakes, but is now called to rescue snakes. In fact, her complaint is that there are fewer calls now than before. "I just hope that people rescue snakes rather than kill them. Except cobras, there is no mercy shown to any other snakes, however harmless they are," she says. The first snake that she rescued was a rat snake. Since then, she has done intense research on snakes. "Without knowledge of snakes you can't handle a snake," she says. "My contribution to the

project will be to present the factors causing changes in the snake's population with respect to the changing face of the lake. There will be a handwritten diary, drawings, illustrations and pictures of snakes. I will be glad to answer any queries about snakes during the course of the exhibition."

NEW MEDIA ARTISTE

Deepak D L has worked on natural sounds in and around the lake. A keen interest in the environment led to him pairing up with Surekha for the project. He says, "I have collected sound footage from in and around the lake and manipulated it to make a new sound. I have archived the project in sound and made an audio library in a digital format of all sounds related to the project."

AQUARIUM JUNKIE

In addition to the environment and birds, Deepak R is passionate about fishes and aquariums. A childhood passion for creating ecosystems for fish has led him to create micro-ecosystems with aquatic plants. The largest tank he has created measures 7' X 4' X 2'. According to him, after the lake is filled, the ecosystem will get better than before as 'plenty of work and thought has gone into it'. "I am going to talk to the local authorities and research the types of local fish that can be released into the lake," he says. He wishes that people won't release species like the Jalebi fish, Catfish or the American Turtle Red Ear Slider into lakes as these upset the local ecosystem because they breed fast and consume a lot of food.

"I became involved with the project after Surekha told me about the dead fish during the dewatering process. My role is to recreate an ecosystem similar, but not identical to Jakkur lake's. The tank that I have come up with, which is about 2' X 2' X 15", has an island as well."

LOVE FOR SPARROWS

Kushal Kumar has been working on the migratory tendencies of sparrows keeping the background of the lake in mind. He finds sparrows in his native Doddaballapur but very few in Bangalore, which has more wireless towers and pollution. "Along with these two factors, global warming has caused sparrows to migrate elsewhere. From about a hundred birds four years ago, the population has halved," he says. For the lake project, he will display a gigantic 3' X 4' nest with a huge mobile phone that will have a monitor to play a seven-minute video on sparrows. "I have used the mobile phone as a symbol to show its impact on the birds," he says.

FARMER-CUM-ARTISTE

Naganagouda Patil is not from Jakkur, which is why his land is intact. "I have seen the land around the lake. It is very fertile and good for cultivation," he says. "In my

childhood, I used a soft thermocol-like material sourced from the maize stem to make farm equipment similar to what my father and uncles used. We used to play with them. Today, traditional hand-made equipment are vanishing just like the land around the lake. For this project, I have created farm equipment that are slowly becoming obsolete using the same material that I used as a child."

The Lake – Past, Present and Future

PAST: Until recently, the lake was surrounded by a lush green belt. The livelihood of the villagers and the farming community were dependent on the lake. "A 90-year-old farmer told me how, in the olden days, a girl's family would give their daughter in marriage to a boy only if his village had a lake," says Surekha. Birds flocked to the lake. From October to April, migratory birds came from Australia and European countries. A thriving ecosystem made Jakkur lake a paradise for both birds and its watchers. The community around the lake used the water for domestic purposes and farming.

PRESENT: The announcement of the Akavathy Layout changed the lives of an entire community with sites being formed at the edge of the lake. Farmers protested at the poor compensation and took the government to court. With their farmland now under dispute and no other means of support, farmers have now become potters and bricklayers. The natural access to the lake has been fenced. This is to keep encroachers at bay, but is a hindrance to the local community too. During the dewatering process, the entire lake looked like a battlefield with trucks and other vehicles marking the lake from within. The desilting process was monitored by the BDA. Nagarajappa, a farmer-activist from Jakkur, rued the loss of livelihood for a generation of farmers. BDA is engaged in transformation rather than preservation. A sewage treatment plant has been built to treat water coming from Yelahanka before it is released into the lake. Wetlands have been created.

FUTURE: It is a wait-and-watch process. Three years after the resurrection of the lake began, only one-tenth of the water has returned. The local and migratory birds are punctual in their arrival though ornithologist Harish R Bhat says that 30 per cent of the birds have left. But, Deepak R says, "I am sure that in about three years, we will see a better ecosystem with plenty of fish and birds in the area."

EXHIBITION

Lake Tales: Focusing the urban rural margins - Jakkur lake

Dates: June 5-15

Venue: Bar1, 69/3, Mission Road

(<http://www.bangaloremirror.com/index.aspx?page=article§id=81&contentid=2011060420110604195719577c23b31ab>)

Time out Bangalore

Lake Tales: Negotiating Routes

The artist Surekha's new show is based on her three-year-long project, documenting the changes at Jakkur Lake, with the rise of residential localities such as Arkavathy Layout in the area. The show also includes a segment curated by her, of works by five upcoming artists – herpetologist Chaitra, soundscape artist Deepak DL, aquarium hobbyist Deepak R, ornithologist Kushal Kumar, and modeller Naganagowda Patil – based on environmental issues related to the lake. Surekha spoke about a phenomenon that she identifies as that of an “internal diaspora” in an interview with **Jaideep Sen**.

What provoked you to embark on this project?

Jakkur Lake has a dramatic countryside feel to it, despite being close to the heart of the city – something I've noticed for many years, while taking this route. That apart, a specific personality to an “urban-rural divide” evolves through what happens to lakes such as this one. The occupations of people who are, or were, connected to the lake, are now being altered. In some way, the story opens up like a palimpsest on human settlement.

This is one of 20 lakes adopted by the Lake Development Authority [a wing of the Bangalore Development Authority] to be “resurrected” in certain ways. Over the last three years, I have documented the transformation of the lake, the villages, and the people who reside on either side of it – in Jakkur and Sampigehalli. The project documents the lake's own subaltern history in relation to the city of Bangalore, which today amounts to a loss of a rural myth.

How drastic were the changes that you found?

I found the lake's soul undergoing a drastic change, with the making of the [residential area] Arkavathy Layout – in terms of migratory changes of birds, an new idol immersion facility, a sewage filtering process, as well as alterations in the professions of the people around it. All of this poses an interesting picture of the making of an urbanised region.

When I began the documentation three years ago, people still prayed at and made offerings to the lake, while also washing their clothes and vehicles, and dumping waste, and sewage in it. The apartments around it added to the problems. The most disheartening incident was during a dewatering process, where thousands of dead fishes lay floating on the water. Birds such as coots, cormorants and herons are common, and I have documented their routines and activities here as well. The seasonal fishing in the lake, and the dependant farming around it, have come to a halt, with the government changing the area's “green belt” category to that of “urban development”, and converting the natural lake into an artificial one.

How have things changed for the farming community?

The lifestyles of the people have shifted from that of a farming community to something uncertain, after the land around the lake was acquired for development. The lake is now a site of a peculiar phenomenon of “internal Diaspora”, where the people are undergoing a sense of cultural and emotional displacement, while still very much belonging here.

Visit Surekha's blog at www.surekha.info.



(http://www.timeoutbangalore.com/art/arts_features_details.asp?code=261)

The death and rebirth of Jakkur lake Bangalore, June 6, DHNS:
A City artist has documented the death and struggling rebirth of the 200-year-old Jakkur lake, through photographs, videos, video-interviews, archiving and exhibition.



The video showcases the gradual demise of the 160-acre lake in northeast Bangalore due to the onslaught of human greed and poor planning by civic agencies.

The video installation-cum-exhibition titled 'Focusing the urban rural margins - Jakkur Lake', being held at Barl, 69/3, Mission Road, is on till June 15. It can also be viewed online at <http://surekha.info/negotiating-routes-jakkurlake>.

Surekha, an acclaimed artist and resident of Sanjay Nagar, has been visiting the lake area for the past 10 years as her husband Anil Kumar is a native of Jakkur.

Effluents

She has seen the lake brimming with aquatic life, and over a period, losing its sheen, thanks to the effluent discharge, illegal sand mining, and dumping of debris among other things.

When the Lake Development Authority and the Bangalore Development Authority decided to revive the lake, Surekha decided to videograph it to record the visual transformation.

The documentation done from 2008 till now shows the lake bunds being encroached upon, the fish perishing due to depletion of oxygen, and the birds slowly disappearing. It also shows how the lake is being saved.

The BDA, through a contractor, has got the lake dewatered, desilted, fenced, created three artificial islands, walk path, food courts and a few other facilities.

But, there is no free access to people, even to the nearby villagers, unlike earlier. In the last few months, migratory birds have begun revisiting the lake, which has been spruced up in the last one year at a cost of Rs 21 crore.

The consolation is the water body has been saved and a sewage treatment plant installed to let only treated water into the lake, said Surekha.

The exhibition also displays the works of five young artists who have adopted different modes to show their concern for nature.

Kushal Kumar, a native of Doddaballapur, has displayed a life-size cardboard cellphone with a computer screen to show how mobile phone towers have contributed to the dwindling number of sparrows.

Naganagouda Patil has displayed a handmade toy farm equipment to show how farmers have lost land around the lake. The present lake is more of ornamental value, while the original was a multipurpose one.

20,000 birds

Harish Bhat, an ornithologist, said from the year 2000 onwards, he and some of his friends had been keenly studying 14 lakes, including Jakkur, in north Bangalore.

He said at least 20,000 birds used to throng Jakkur lake some years ago. But the number has come down drastically now. A lake should not be just a water storage point, but it should be in the shape of a saucer to maintain a good eco-system.

"The periphery of the lake has been encroached upon. Lakes are interconnected. Hence, even if a lake is saved and its catchment area is not devoid of encroachments or pollution, then it will be just a water body," he said.

(<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/167000/death-rebirth-jakkur-lake.html>)



Special Correspondent

Lifeblood:'Lake Tales' is an interactive exhibit that looks at the entire lake as an art piece.

BANGALORE: As if to mark World Environment Day tangentially, Lake Tales, a visual art exhibition about Jakkur lake began at BAR1 (Bangalore Art Residency One) on Mission Road here on Sunday.

With an audience including those from outside the visual arts field, the response to the show indicated a genuine concern about urbanisation and the loss of a deeper connectivity with lakes in and around the city.

The project by artist Surekha looks at the entire lake as an art piece and involves the documentation of photographs, videos and interviews over three years. It interrogates how the agrarian lifestyle of the people living around the lake has come to an abrupt end.

At the same time, the show does not fall into the easy premise of holding the Bangalore Development Authority or Lake Development Authority the reason for this.

Lake Tales is an ongoing interactive project. It is also available on <http://surekha.info/negotiating-routes-jakkurlake>

Fresh concerns

Surekha has also curated this show by including four young artists whose artistic concerns have been close to hers.

Chaitra Puthran is preoccupied with the behavioural pattern of snakes in relation to waterbodies. Her works speak about the prejudice against them.

Deepak D.L has recreated the sound at a lake all through a day and night. Hidden beneath an installation of debris, the sound evokes a certain non-existent visual.

Kushal Kumar's video and sculpture indicate how sparrows have left the city, just as birds are no longer seen at Jakkur lake.

Naganagouda Patil has produced miniature models of farming tools and utensils, on display as in a museum, analogous to the fate of the professions of people near the lake.

Deepak R. has produced a miniature forest in what seems to be a simple aquarium, and converted a bath tub in the studio to an aquarium. This is a comment on aquatic life in the artificially maintained Jakkur lake.

Beyond the gallery

This show is seen as an "improvisation in the language of art". An interactive project, it invites a response beyond the boundaries of the known gallery system.

The show is supported by KHOJ, New Delhi and is on till June 15, between 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. everyday, at BAR1, next to Gokaldas building on Mission Road.

(<http://www.hinduonnet.com/2011/06/06/stories/2011060659860200.htm>)





Lake Tales
'Focusing The Urban Rural Margins- Jakkur Lake, Bangalore'

Project supported by : Public.art.ecology, '*Negotiating Routes Ecologies of the Byways II*' - KHOJ International Artists Association