

The Political Economy of a ‘Dying’ Lake: A Study of Claim-making through Caste and Rituals of Urban Commons at Shaikpet, Hyderabad

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BY

VIDYAPOGU PULLANNA

Registration number: 11SRPH02



**CENTRE FOR REGIONAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD
HYDERABAD – 500046
TELANGANA, INDIA**

OCTOBER – 2018



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I, **VIDYAPOGU PULLANNA**, hereby declare that the research work presented in this thesis entitled *“The Political Economy of a ‘Dying’ Lake: A Study of Claim-making through Caste and Rituals of Urban Commons at Shaikpet, Hyderabad”* has been carried out by me at Centre for Regional Studies, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad under the supervision and guidance of **Dr. Arvind S. Susarla**, is a bonafide research work which is also free from plagiarism. I hereby also declare to the best of my knowledge, that no part of this dissertation is earlier submitted, for the award of any research degree or diploma in full or partial fulfillment in any other University. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodhganga/ INFLIBNET. **A report on plagiarism statistics from the University Librarian is enclosed.**

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This is to certify that the thesis entitled ***“The Political Economy of a ‘Dying’ Lake: A Study of Claim-making through Caste and Rituals of Urban Commons at Shaikpet, Hyderabad”*** submitted by **VIDAYAPOGU PULLANNA** bearing Regd. No. **11SRPH02** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of **Doctor of Philosophy** in the **Centre for Regional Studies** is a bonafide work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance.

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Further, the student has the following publication(s) before submission of the thesis/monograph for adjudication and has produced evidence for the same in the form of acceptance letter or the reprint in the relevant area of research: (**Note:** at least one publication in referred journal is required)

1. Pullanna, Vidyapogu. “Research in Progress: Doing Ethnography in Urban Areas” *E-journal of the Indian Sociological Society*. Vol. 1 (2), (October 2017): pp. 72-87, (ISSN: 2581-5741). Chapter of dissertation where this publication appears (delete if not applicable) Chapter II

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1. Presented a paper entitled “Transforming Socio-Spatial Identities in Urban Space: Case Study of Bathukamma Festival in Shaikpet, Hyderabad” in the workshop on “Rural-Urban Entanglements in India” co-ordinated by Prof. Priti Ramamurthy (University of Washington) and Prof. Purendra Prasad (University of Hyderabad) at Department of Sociology, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad from 23rd to 24th July, 2018. (National/International)
2. Presented a paper titled “Identity in the Field: Some Reflections on Power and Ethnography” at “Young Researchers Workshop” organized by the Indian Sociological Society at Tezpur University, Assam, from 26th to 27th December, 2016. (National/International)

Further, the student has passed the following courses towards fulfillment of course work requirement for PhD / was exempted from doing coursework (recommended by Doctoral Committee) on the basis of the following courses passed during M.Phil Program and the M.Phil degree was awarded.

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Supervisor

Head of the Centre

Dean of the School

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ACRONYMS AND ABRREVIATIONS

| | | |
|---------|---|--|
| BJP | : | Bharatiya Janata Party |
| BPPM | : | Buddha Purnima Project Authority |
| CDA | : | Cyberabad Development Authority |
| CESS | : | Centre for Economic and Social Sciences |
| CHATRI | : | Campaign For Housing And Tenurial Rights |
| CIB | : | City Improvement Board |
| CPI (M) | : | Communist Party of India (Marxist) |
| CPI | : | Communist Party of India |
| CPR | : | Centre for Policy Research |
| FBH | : | Forum For Better Hyderabad |
| FTL | : | Full Tank Level |
| GHEP | : | Green Hyderabad Environment Programme |
| GHMC | : | Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation |
| HADA | : | Hyderabad Airport Development Authority |
| HMDA | : | Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority |
| HMWSSB | : | Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board |
| HUA | : | Hyderabad Urban Agglomeration |
| HUDA | : | Hyderabad Urban Development Authority |
| HUL | : | Hyderabad Urban Lab |

| | | |
|--------|---|--|
| IGML | : | Indira Gandhi Memorial Library |
| INC | : | Indian National Congress |
| JBIC | : | Japan Bank for International Cooperation |
| LPC | : | Lake Protection Committee |
| MCH | : | Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad |
| MRBP | : | Musi River Beautification Project |
| MRPS | : | Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi |
| QQSUDA | : | Quli Qutub Shahi Urban Development Authority |
| SDA | : | Special Development Areas |
| SLC | : | Save the Lakes Campaign |
| SMC | : | Save Musi Campaign |
| SOUL | : | Save Our Urban Lakes |
| STP | : | Swerage Treatment Plant |
| TDP | : | Telugu Desam Party |
| TRS | : | Telangana Rashtra Samithi |
| YSRCP | : | YSR Congress Party |

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

| TERM | DESCRIPTION |
|---------------|--|
| Association | : A group of people organized for a joint purpose |
| Basti | : A slum inhabited by poor people |
| Bathukamma | : It's a floral festival celebrated by the Hindu women of Telangana |
| Bondalagadda | : Cremation ground |
| Boodhan | : it's a land gift movement was a voluntary land reform movement in India, started by Acharya Vinoba Bhave in 1951 at Pochampally village in Telangana which is now known as Bhoodan Pochampally |
| Bund | : An embankment or causeway |
| Cheruvu | : A tank or artificial lake |
| Chitti | : It's a illegal practice of economic activity among communities which runs basically based on trust |
| City-Region | : City regions are the products of relationship among various orders of cities and their surrounding areas |
| Conservation | : It's the act of preserving, guarding or protecting actions of the population |
| Development | : The process of developing or being developed |
| Division | : It is a portion of a country or other region delineated for the purpose of administration |
| Encroachment | : A gradual advance beyond usual or acceptable limits |
| Flood | : An overflow of a large amount of water beyond its normal limits, especially over what is normally dry land |
| Globalization | : The process by which businesses or other organizations develop international influence or start operating on an international scale |
| Gutta | : A hill or hillock |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Harijan | : It is a term popularized by Indian revolutionary leader Mahatma Gandhi for referring to Dalits, traditionally considered to be Untouchable |
| Jati | : It is a group of clans, tribes, communities and sub-communities, and religions in India |
| Katta | : A bank or a shore |
| Kunta | : A pond which has a certain square measure of land, 1/40 of an acre |
| Land cover | : Is the physical material at the surface of the earth. Land covers include grass, asphalt, trees, bare ground, water, etc. Earth cover is the expression used by ecologist Frederick Edward Clements that has its closest modern equivalent being vegetation |
| Land-use | : Is the general term used for a branch of urban planning encompassing various disciplines which seek to order and regulate land use in an efficient and ethical way, thus preventing land-use conflicts |
| Mandal | : It is an area of land with a city or town that serves as its administrative centre and usually a number of villages |
| Migration | : A movement from one part of something to another |
| Mission | : An important assignment given to a person or group of people |
| Municipality | : A municipality is usually an urban administrative division having corporate status and powers of self-government or jurisdiction |
| Naala | : Water channel |
| Neo-liberalism | : Is a policy model of social studies and economics that transfers control of economic factors to the private sector from the public sector |
| Panchayat | : A village council |
| Pollution | : The presence in or introduction into the environment of a substance which has harmful or poisonous effects |
| Restoration | : Action of returning something to a former owner, place, or condition |
| Ring | : An informal function of sub-caste associations in lakes bidding process |

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Ritual | : A religious or solemn ceremony consisting of a series of actions performed according to a prescribed order |
| Saavidi | : Common public place where village panchayats takes place |
| Sarai | : It is a rest room for people who trade between one to the other during medieval period |
| Sub-caste | : A sub-caste is a sub-division of a caste |
| Tank | : A large receptacle or storage chamber, especially liquid which is water |
| Village | : a group of houses and associated buildings, larger than a hamlet and smaller than a town, situated in a rural area |
| Waste | : Unwanted or unusable material, substances, or by-products |
| Waterlogging | : Refers to the saturation of soil with water |
| Weaker Section | : The term “Weaker Section” refers to the section of the population who are socially, economically, politically and educationally backward than the other sections |
| Welfare | : Statutory procedure or social effort designed to promote the basic physical and material well-being of people in need |

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DEDICATED TO

*"My beloved Family in the
memory of their affection and
love"*

CHAPTER I

Introduction

1. Introduction

There has been renewed public attention on the precarity of water situation that the entire country faces (Kodarkar 2008), especially in and around urban and peri-urban areas. Take for instance, in 2014, the new state of Telangana that was carved out of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, initiated an ambitious program called ‘Mission Kakatiya’ to rejuvenate water bodies (lakes, ponds and tanks) in the entire state. The initiative was launched invoking the “glorious past” of Kakatiya’s who constructed tanks and brought prosperity in the entire region. The state government then ‘adopted’ lakes throughout the state in order to rejuvenate them, especially in collaboration with international and national agencies. Conservation methods under this program varied as the status of lakes were wide ranging. Nonetheless, under this program, 40,000 lakes spread throughout the state were identified for rejuvenation, and of them, 26 lakes are located in Hyderabad (Anonymous 2015b). The success of this initiative, and of similar other initiatives in the country hinges on answering- why do our water bodies, such as ponds, lakes, and wetlands, continue to degrade and decline in their numbers. This is partly, according to several scholars, because of our predominant focus on documenting and understanding changing physicality of the water (resource).

There are limited efforts to know how people living around the water body are changing their relationship with water itself and thereby altering condition of the resource. For much of India’s ‘water history’, the focus has been on large scale surface water projects to provide access focusing more on irrigation and neglecting sources within the city and in the periurban areas (Prakash 2010). Water bodies of Hyderabad were the centres of social, cultural and economic life, especially in and around the municipal limits of the city. Most habitations in this city emerged around water bodies, over a period of nearly 1000 years; beginning from the era of Kakatiya’s and extending until the last ruling dynasty of the city, the Asaf Jahis. Hyderabad’s topography resulted in the water to flow from west to east direction in all the lakes, except for a few.

Memories associated with water bodies persist and form the basis of claims by caste- and resident welfare- associations that are attached to them.

In recent years, to gain fresh perspective on resource use, urban theorists are incorporating the idea of commons by investigating various forms of collectivity. Literature that connects cities and commons has already been advanced (see for example Blomley 2008, Harvey 2012). Before addressing the theoretical anchor of urban commons, below I provide a brief contextual background on the nature of resource (water) use problem.

2. Background

A major declaration by the state government of its intention to conserve lakes was made in 2003, during an international workshop held on the subject of “Urban Lakes – Conservation and Management,” organized by Hyderabad Urban Development Authority (HUDA), Hyderabad (The Hindu 2003). At this workshop Vice-Chairperson of HUDA, Ms. Lakshmi Parthasarathy, announced “necessary funds would be raised either through institutional finance, donor agencies, sale of land, or bonds” (“Mostly Musk: Urban Lakes in India Are Dirty and Dying” n.d.). This announcement at the workshop was subsequently followed by a series of initiatives, including, the Campaign for Restoration of Lakes in 2010, Campaign for Restoration of Durgam Cheruvu in 2010, Clean Hussain Sagar Scheme in 2015, and Save Gandipet Project in 2015. The project to beautify all the lakes in Hyderabad under Mission Kakatiya in 2015 is the latest and by far the biggest initiative, both in scope and amount of money to be spent. A cursory glance of the governmental programs indicate that gradually water bodies have come to be seen predominantly as zones of recreation; and there is significant downplaying of water body functions such as source of bathing, washing, protecting trees and aquatic ecology. The role of a water body / lake can be multiple in urban and peri-urban areas.

The functions of lake(s) indicate not only social life of people associated with a lake, but also nature of geo-physicality of the lake. These two aspects of a lake are not static, and several developments have occurred over the time. Nonetheless, by accounting

social life associated with lake and physical condition of lake, together, does provide a fair idea of the status of lake over a period of time. In Table 1.1 the functions that water bodies (tanks, ponds, and lakes) provide in urban and peri-urban areas of the Hyderabad, but also in the country, are identified. The wide ranging functions that societies associate with the water body often remain latent in decisions and policies of developing lakes.

Taking up the challenge of understanding urban commons to understand our dilemmas to water bodies, this dissertation is addressing a host of issues, such as collectivity, power, water, government/administration, inclusion/exclusion and so on. I begin by briefly stating the problem.

3. Statement of the Problem

Stemming degradation of lakes in Hyderabad city continues to be a conundrum. We know that urban ecosystems are focal point of interactions between human societies and water bodies (Ramachandraiah and Prasad 2004), yet poor implementation of rules and regulation of lakes conservation are apparent when one observes the shrinking size and quality of the water bodies¹. T. Harish Rao, Minister of Irrigation for Telangana, stated that “lakes of Hyderabad city pose a threat to people living around, especially that are not in any use. So we have fixed full tank level (FTL) boundaries to 156 lakes out of 168 in order to bring them in some kind of use by fixing fence and built walking tracks” (Mango News 2018). Realizing this aspiration by the government may however not be easy. There are several encroachments around the lake, which have destructed water channels connected to the lake. Consequently, Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu seems to have transformed from a fresh water lake to a ‘dead’ lake. Governmental policies also seem ineffectual in preventing the encroachments. Additionally, changes in land use brought

¹ Though there are acts like APWALTA, lakes in the city were not saved or protected well from the encroachers. APWALTA also mentions that the responsibility of various institutions regarding protection of water and trees. But not much happened with regards to the objectives of the lakes’ ecosystem’s conservation by these kinds of Acts. The reasons for effectiveness of these Acts largely relied on the institutional approach and its conviction to protect lakes and trees. It indicates the poor implementation of rules and regulations of lakes protection laws and policies.

forth by private and real estate developers² also contribute to the difficulty in protecting the lakes. Despite urbanization and land use changes, small and large water bodies are serving multiple functions, including as water tanks to rich ecological resource of the city. Although a slew of measures have been implemented by the state and urban authorities to protect commons (water bodies), yet it is striking to observe degradation of water bodies, especially of Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu. To address these dilemmas of urban commons this research endeavor is narrowed down in terms of objectives and questions.

4. Research Objectives/Questions

The state has articulated their vision on cities and on improving the condition of rivers, lakes and ponds of urban areas. The Telangana Chief Minister, Mr. K. Chandrashekar Rao, proposed a comprehensive master plan to make Hyderabad a world-class and economically vibrant city at the Metropolis conference held in Hyderabad in the year 2014 (V6 News Telugu 2014a). His vision to make Hyderabad a World-class city is predominantly reliant on developing infrastructure to meet requirements till year 2050 (“Telangana CM for Making Hyderabad World Class City” 2014). The proposed activities include: improving civic amenities, an urgent strategy to tackle inundation in low-lying areas, supply of quality drinking water, slum-free city by providing double bed room houses, develop garbage dump yards in scientific way, and beautify banks of Musi river. Actualization of this vision took shape when the state government in the year 2015-16 budget allotted rupees two thousand crores (Rs. 2000 crores) to make Hyderabad a world-class metropolis. The Telangana government distributed the Rs.2000 crores as follows: for municipal body Rs. 526 crores, for water supply board Rs.1000 crores, and Rs. 416 crores for development of Metro rail. Apart from this allocation, Rs. 1600 crores were allotted for Strategic road and skyline development (“Rs.2,000 Crore Allocated to Make Hyderabad World-Class City” 2015). The world-class vision of Telangana government, in other words, largely emphasizes developing major infrastructural projects. Much of state’s vision is ambitious and is at the heart of what the city planners

² There has been a dramatic rise in the value of land due to creation of Hi-Tech city and Cyberabad corridor, which intensified changing pattern of land use around the water bodies, such as the lakes.

and policy-making communities hope to develop. Often the master plan turns out to have been derived from international and national expertise. The local context and issues are often relegated to the margins in this vision of city. Urban planning activities became a tool in the context of economic and spatial transformations as several conservation methods have been implemented to protect lakes. There is however degradation of lakes due to the release of untreated effluents from domestic and commercial establishments.

Meanwhile, slum dwellers around the lake are establishing new relationships with the lake to access resources. Similarly, communities that have ‘traditionally’ been associated with the water body strengthened their claims on their relationship with the lake by founding associations. Since occupations connected to the water body (lake) are predominant among particular social/caste groups, the resultant formation of association was socio religious (caste) associations. For example, fishers formed an association, which was dominated by a particular caste. Similarly, washer men also formed an association and the membership of the association is dominated by a particular social/caste group. Several such associations came about in this fashion. Residents living in housing around the lake also formed an association, also known as resident welfare association. These developments spotlight group-interest, specifically socio religious (caste) interests, who all are re-working their relationship with the water body.

Contrary to the assumption by urban planners, Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu, a commons, is located at the rural-urban continuum wherein claims-making is by socio religious (caste) - and citizenship-based social organizations that is shaping the lake. Further, concern for ecology through a sustained stewardship is often missing in the strategies of claims and counter-claims. A need for closer examination of efforts by urban planners, experts, state, and people that are operating through their associations is needed. Therefore, three inter-related research questions are posed in this research study, namely,

- 1) Why degradation of water bodies (ponds, lakes and tanks) continue, despite administrative efforts over decades to ‘conserve’ lakes?
- 2) How did socio religious (caste) - and residential welfare - associations, situated around the water bodies, develop their relationship with the lake?

- 3) How claims over common (lake) - resources are articulated through cultural (ritual) practices?

By addressing the above three questions the larger objective of interpreting the status if urban commons is achieved. In section below I detail on commons, which is conceptual anchor for this study.

5. Conceptualizing the research through review of literature

The central ideas about the commons have been most prominently outlined by Garrett Hardin and Elinor Ostrom. Both scholars have emphasized on the need for protecting commons, and spotlight how overuse of shared resources through appropriate governance mechanisms can be avoided. At the heart of it, both these scholars have assumed that there are ecological limits of the nature (lakes as commons in this research) and that carrying capacity will not be exceeded through paradigms of governance.

Very few research studies have however addressed explicitly the notion of urban commons (see for exceptions Lele and Sengupta 2018, Nagendra and Ostrom 2014, D'Souza and Nagendra 2011). Alam & Khan (1972) writing on Hyderabad observed that the city has been expanding due to spatial industrial economy, which is away from the core, growth centre. Accordingly, the authors called for delimiting boundary of the city based on services that comes from contiguous areas of Hyderabad (Alam and Khan 1972). Ramachandran, an urban ethnographer, emphasizes “the structural relationship (hierarchical order – one city may have more than one area of dominance) with the city-region will lead to different services of functions for different influence of areas (dominance falls within the city-region in a concentric form)” (Ramachandran, 1989). Despite these exhortations, the Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu area came under the influence of the spatial industrial economy of Hyderabad.

In fact, Kennedy (2007) showed that regional industrial policies like Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) played out in Hyderabad's peripheries with consequences for urban governance. According to Kennedy (2007) adoption of economic

reforms by the Indian state in 1991 set forth Hyderabad city on to the path of to becoming a Global City-Region. A 'Knowledge Corridor' consisting of three high-tech zones, viz. Biotechnology/Medical research, Industrial Technologies, and IT enabled services were envisioned in the vision 2020 document prepared by the State, which were established in the western, south-western, and southern borders of the city (Kennedy 2007). While the *de jure* spaces began to be carved out to mark the city territory, the implications on the dynamics of the city were not central to the vision document.

The processes of urbanization in India (see Chadchan and Shankar 2012) has brought about a new land economy where land use is converted to non-agricultural purposes, which is accompanied by migration to the city, proliferation of slums, and so on. These changes are not merely structural and driven by the political and economic forces. Rather, these changes bring about several occasions of friction and celebration, place increased demands on the use of natural resources, and social relations and social fabric itself are re-arranged. It is only therefore important that the nature of resource (commons) and their presence in urban be delved upon.

5a. Urban Commons

The term “commons” in current common parlance does not reflect its historical legacy. Wherein ‘Commons’ refers to sharing resources like consumption of energy, distribution of water, land, open source data sharing, wood, and car-sharing. In recent years, natural resource commons has fallen under the heading of “Common Pool Resources” (De Moor 2012). As Aloo (2012) argues, urban commons cannot be discussed in isolation without putting them in the context of a broader commons discourse, which is characterized by a distinction between traditional and new commons. Urban commons fall under the new commons category, and thereby bring out the dilemma between the pure public good and common pool resources when it comes to their governance. According to Elinor Ostrom, an authority on common-pool resources, “a natural or man-made resource system that is sufficiently large as to make it costly (but not impossible) to exclude potential beneficiaries from obtaining benefits from subtractable resource units”

(Ostrom 2015) may be termed as common pool resources. Contrary to Ostrom, Hardin argues that commons are fated or doomed to be degraded because of the fact that there are no owners (Hardin 1968). David Harvey, a political economy geographer, however, emphasizes the importance of context while talking of any phenomena as being a commons. Harvey emphasizes the need for deriving the idea of commons from its historical usage and suggests that if the cattle were also to be viewed as common property, then Garrett Hardin's claims would fail (Harvey 2012). Thus, the need for attending to collective, customary, claims over the lake resources and collective actions towards the lake are crucial to understand

Santos Jr. is a Professor at the Institute of Urban and Regional Planning at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, argues that “from the physical point of view, urban commons may be considered as space within a city that is for public use and collective possession, and belongs to the public authority or to society as a whole — for example, spaces for circulation, leisure and creation, contemplation, or spaces designated for preservation or conservation. In all of these cases, the right to free access and movement is guaranteed to everybody” (Santos Junior 2014). With this definition, the author draws on the idea of urban commons from Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey's conception of space which is neither absolute, nor relative nor relational in itself, but it can become one or all simultaneously depending on the circumstances and on human practice. Later, the author adds Marx's perspective by emphasizing the co-constitutive nature of time and space (Santos Junior 2014).

The literature on urban commons examines the way they are perceived and used based on the actors who manage or govern them. Narain & Vij (2016) studying the cities - Gurgaon, Hyderabad and Bangalore, suggest that urbanization, land acquisition, and real estate development due to neo-liberal reforms in India, and also land reforms since the 1950s, have led to depletion of the commons in the Indian context. Specifically they show how 13 lakes disappeared in Mir Alam basin located in Hyderabad between 2004 and 2012 (Narain and Vij 2016). Similarly, Hita Unnikrishnan, Manjunatha, & Nagendra (2016) show how the area covered by Sampangi lake in Bangalore, a fresh water body,

became a sport / multi-purpose stadium due to rapid urbanization, migration and landscape changes brought about with complex histories of governance and stewardship (Hita, Manjunatha, and Nagendra 2016). The processes of transforming commons' from a traditional commons to a private property are with the knowledge and awareness of customary rights holders. The authors show how customary right-holders still retain access and perform rituals at the location of the lake. Nonetheless, Hita Unnikrishnan & Nagendra (2015) also show how governance regimes affect lakes, and show how inequities arise in the form of lack of access or right to perform socio-cultural practices, once lakes are fenced off (Hita and Nagendra 2015). Thus, with urbanization, there is a reworking of customary rights of access to the lake, which many-a-times are articulated in terms of caste.

Future and contemporary cities are often envisioned in policies that look to in international or national expertise, at times even at the expense of neglecting attention to the local context. Unnikrishnan, Mundoli, Manjunatha, & Nagendra (2016) point out application of policy frameworks that do not pay attention to the changing relationship of communities with the commons, just as negligible attention is given to draw upon experiences of marginalized groups (Hita et al. 2016). The guidelines of developed for various schemes need to incorporate knowledge of local communities on commons, especially given that Nagendra, Unnikrishnan, & Sen (2013) have shown that heterogeneity of urban spaces goes beyond the binary representations of urban and rural and that there is high degree of fluidity of those spaces (Nagendra, Hita, and Sen 2013). The relationship between rurality and urbanity has consequences for urban commons. Parker & Johansson (2011) show that urban commons have four specific characteristics indirect value, contested resources, openness, and cross-sector collaboration (Parker and Johansson 2011).

Placing the idea of urban commons at the centre of this thesis I argue that there is remarkable coinciding of rurality and urbanity influencing the landscape of urban commons. For example, socio religious (caste) associations not only claim access as a *jati* or their traditional occupation on lake, but also in terms of citizenship to get different

services to the village like roads, buildings, drainage lines, water supply. On the other hand, residential welfare associations in slums, who are expected to make claims based in the idiom of citizenship are making claims as caste groups, since the slum committees are run by particular caste communities. These observations can also be illustrated with the example of new ritual practices on lakes; such as the celebration of Bathukamma by slum-dwellers at Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu, something that has not been observed and theorized by scholars of both urban and commons before.

Before discussing details of how I arrived at this interpretation, I detail the site selected for field work in this research study.

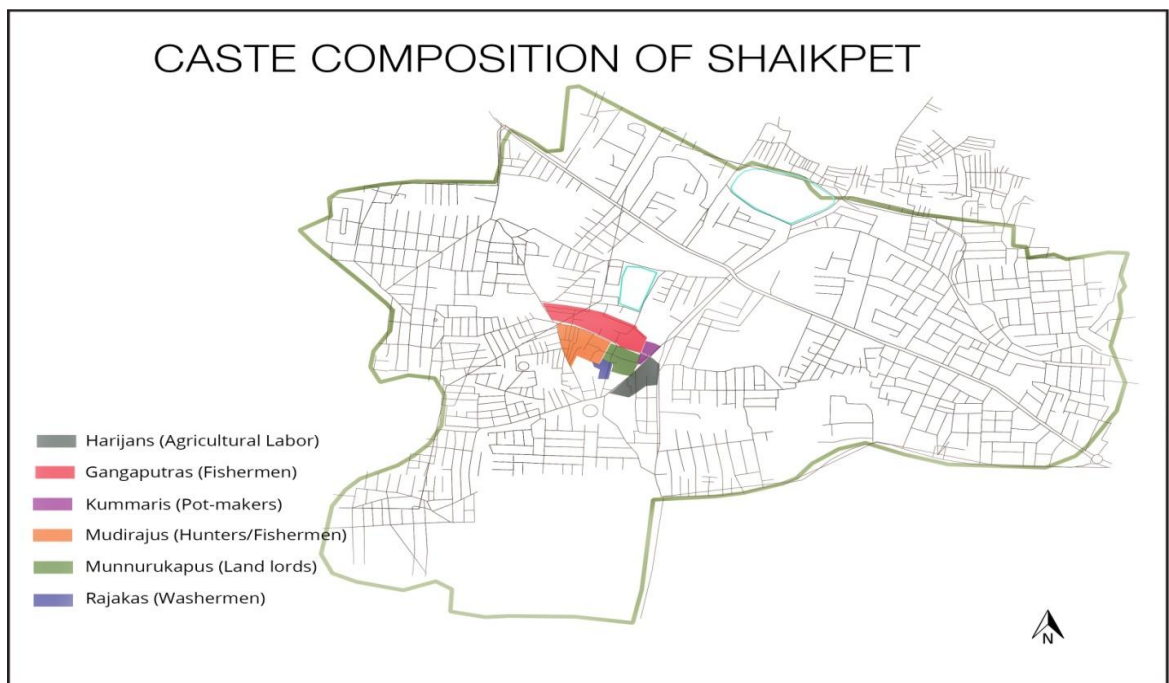
6. About the Field Site

Shaikpet village is located at the periphery of the administrative boundary of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) and is a rural-agrarian based economy, which has been influenced and impacted by the creation of new urban governing authorities. Influences of new urban governing authorities on the land were mainly through urban planning and the creation of special zones, which have resulted in a boom in real estate development in the area. These changes largely emerged in the 1990s, which is the period marked for the advent of neo-liberal policies that have been enthusiastically adopted and implemented by the State Government of Andhra Pradesh and city government of Hyderabad. This enabled them to access and engages foreign governments, multinational corporations, and other external agencies directly. In what follows, I look at the Shaikpet village successively from the standpoint of the city region, urban commons and bioregions.

Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu is an urban watershed which has well connected natural streams that flow from north to the south of Hyderabad city and merge with the river Musi. These mainly consist of natural streams, hills, ridges, pastures and agricultural fields. The characteristics of Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu urban watershed are distinct from others because of the topographic features. As part of the Deccan Plateau, it has a particular regional identity and significance tied to people's activities. Shaikpet, an area

that was rural, is on the periphery of the city, but underwent intense change in the last two decades, we can see the dynamic co-existence of the *varna* system, secular system, plural cultural system (diverse society), and mix of varna and plural cultural caste system in accordance with the economic benefits and urban opportunism. It shows that these are all changes pointing out towards their existential question but along with those activities we could also see that the caste system is deeply entrenched.

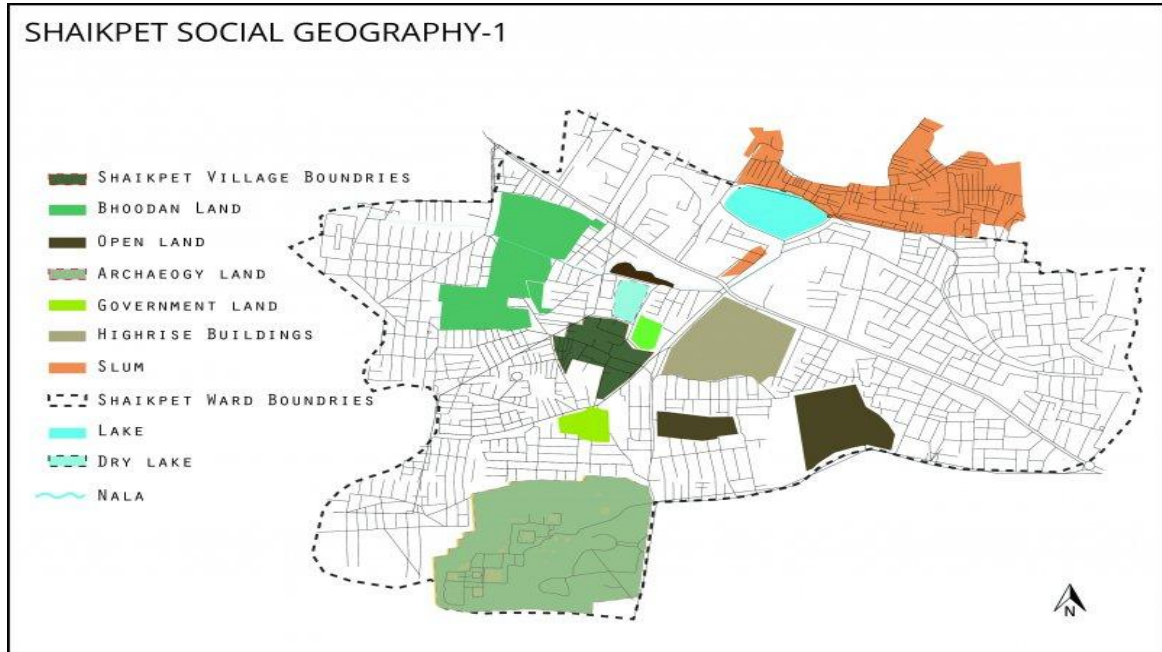
Map: 1.1: Caste Composition of Shaikpet



Map 1.1 shows³ the spatial distribution of social groups in the Shaikpet village area. These distinct neighborhoods, although located adjacent to each other, were developed as new residential colonies.

³ Technical support for making maps has provided by Akash Kumar Burman, TGS Aishwarya, and Neha Vaddadi

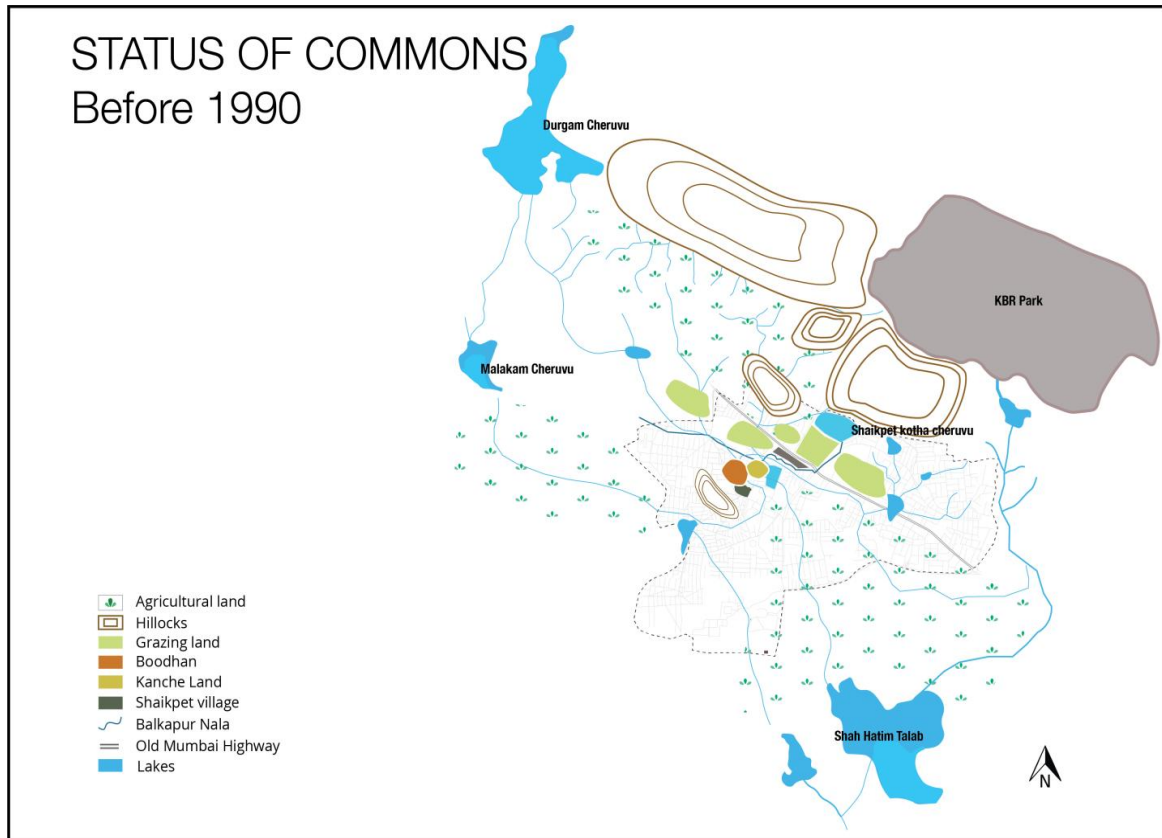
Map 1.2: Social Geography of Shaikpet



Map 1.2 shows land ‘ownership’ of the neighborhoods within Shaikpet ward boundary wherein mixed population are located.

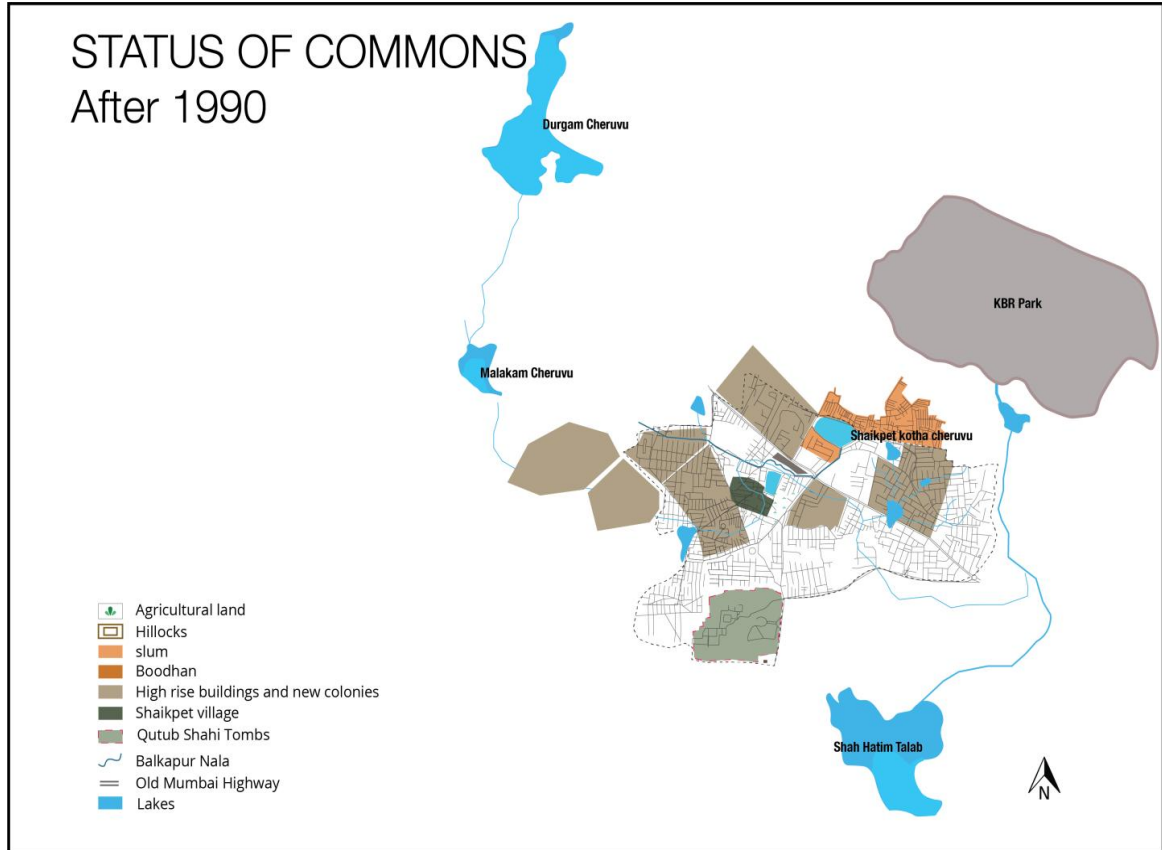
Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu was part of city boundary but the area had not developed like the core city area, especially before 1990s since it had a hilly and rocky terrain which was not meant for any developmental activity as it was defined in the urban planning policies. So principally it is in urban area but its nature is that of rural.

Map 1.3: Status of Commons before 1990



Map 1.3 shows the status of commons of the Shaikpet watershed area. This map was prepared, by me, based on accounts of respondent's in Shaikpet village, including new migrants to the village. The commons in Shaikpet watershed area were described by the villagers comprised as agricultural lands, fallow land, grazing land, rocks and hillocks, natural streams and lakes. When this watershed area came under the urban planning policy, it then became an impervious area due to various infrastructural and development activities. This imperviousness increases runoff water and leads to floods and scarcity of water.

Map 1.4: Status of Commons after 1990



Map 1.4 shows the changed geography of the Shaikpet watershed, especially after the year 1990 due to developments by urban planning. The forms of developmental activities include roads, buildings, new drainage and sewerage lines, fence around the lake, new housing complexes. Much of the agriculture land use was converted to newer forms of land use.

Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu of Hyderabad has a unique lake ecosystem called *chain of lakes* in the Telangana region. Historically, the city of Hyderabad is also renowned for its lakes system and called as *city of lakes*. It is also evident in the history that much of the habitations were formed along these streams and the streams were considered as lifelines for the existence of all living and non-living entities in the region. The lakes system has its historical significance in the region during different periods of time and there were also enormous efforts to preserve the water and use it for everyone's well

being in the history, especially during Kakatiya, Qutub Shahi and Asaf Jahi's rule. There were also efforts to preserve and use water effectively through construction of lakes or tanks where some of the technical interventions were introduced in the region. Examples are:

- Construction of tanks was taken up in a big way during Kakatiya period to expand the agricultural area and prosperity of the dynasty.
- Persian wheel was introduced to lift up the water from the wells to the royal palace in the Golconda Kingdom.
- A water channel was constructed from Durgam Cheruvu to Golconda Fort through Qutub Shahi tombs where the water flows on gravity.
- Two major reservoirs (Osman Sagar and Himayat Sagar) were constructed to prevent the floods on River Musi.

All events in history indicate the prominence of lake system in the region. Apart from these efforts, lakes system was also aided by the people's everyday activities which ensured the health and sustenance of lakes. Their activities on lake and its water were mostly professional in nature such as fishing, washing, agriculture and allied activities, people's ritual practices such as the practice of Katta Maisamma and Eramma in relation to lake, exorcism, social and religious activities which are associated with the caste structure in the village. All these activities on lake have importance of specific location. These specific places have significance on people's activities in the local context and carry a same or similar meaning across the region. That is where the lakes and lakes ecosystem have a peculiar characteristic with particular history in the region. This includes: Water streams flow from west to east and south-east by connecting other lakes; location of Katta Maisamma is always at the outlet sluice; lake is a source for different traditional occupations; formation of agricultural fields along the lakes links commanding areas; practice of exorcism at a tree in the lake area; cremation ground at south-west side of the lake; and most of the landscape is a hilly and rocky area.

Given these characteristics and functions of the lakes and that they are not static conditions it is only pertinent that the history of the relationship between lake and the people at Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu be accounted for in the theorization. Changes at the Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu provide an opportunity to understand how functionality of the lake has been altered and the consequences therein.

In concluding this chapter, I note that the dynamics of nature-society relationships is linked to political-economic forces as well as to measures instituted by society. Much of the understanding on societal responses is captured by analyzing initiatives placed by caste- and resident welfare- associations, which are found to be solidifying and maintaining their dominance with respect to other communities. Societal responses, in other words, are asserting on social relationships even at the expense of deterioration of the natural resource / water body. This finding on the predominance of social relations (that is, consolidating identity relations) is prioritized over relationships societies hold with the water body (that is, consolidating resource relation), which is to be accounted and considered in theorizing why there is decline and degradation of water bodies located in urban and peri-urban areas. More broadly, the finding in contrast to assertions in the literature that urbanization morphs caste-relations into class-based relations; and those societies' will highly prize their relationship to natural resources, especially when the resource is a source of livelihood, does not bear out in the case of urban and peri-urban Hyderabad. To arrive at the argument put forth in this dissertation I detail several aspects of the thesis in chapters below.

7. Organization of the Thesis

Chapter II describes the methodology for the study and equally importantly some of the challenges that I faced as an ethnographic researcher in the field. This chapter offers a critique of standard ethnographic practice by reflecting on my position vis-à-vis the field and the significance of the methods that succeed and fail to gather data from the field. In addition to this critique, this chapter describes how the gathered data has been analyzed and interpreted with regards to the research problem. This chapter also addresses how important it is to connect each and every theme in order to understand the processes of

problems of lakes. Finally, the chapter suggests the implications of this kind of study at the methodological level and what ethnographic researchers should be equipped with to do ethnographic research.

Chapter III explains the role of urban planning in shaping the geography of the lake. This is by describing methods implemented to conserve or rejuvenate the lakes, and how efforts of responsible authorities to save or protect lakes have failed, and ironically, led to more degradation. It unpacks how the policy perspectives on lakes conservation or rejuvenation are informed by local and global discourses. More importantly, the chapter addresses the socio-spatial distribution of the problems of lakes by highlighting the temporal dimensions.

Chapter IV describes the role of socio-religious (caste) associations and residential welfare associations in shaping the geography of the lake. Initially, this chapter explains the reasons for the emergence of caste-based associations, its functions on lake and its water. By explaining this, it brings to light the various factors for establishment of these associations. These consist of change in traditional occupation, new land development, urbanization, globalization, and political changes brought about by the formation of Telangana. Then it draws on changes in the lake area and its water due to the above mentioned developments. Each development suggests a different way to tell the story of changes in the lake but these are all not isolated in themselves but have strong inter-linkage for each and every development on lake. It also explains the relationship of sub-caste associations and residential welfare associations with the lake and its water. I focus on their everyday activities and how it affects the lake and its water. These can be analyzed by connecting the socio-spatial relationships between the lake and different caste groups and communities. The chapter also emphasizes the temporal aspects of their activities in relation to the lake which have had cumulative effects on the lake. This chapter concludes by explaining how socio-spatial relationships and temporal developments played out on lake due to change in lake water.

Chapter V describes the role and history of temples with regards to lakes and their significance in terms of ritual practices in shaping the geography of the lake. Initially, the chapter describes the characteristics of lakes in the region by explaining the significance of temples, their history and related ritual practices with historical explanations. It also explains the perception of different actors by describing ritual practices on lakes influenced by or related to various internal and external factors. It tries to understand the importance of spirituality (place or space-specific) in order to understand the lake's ecosystem and how it functions by explaining changes in ritual practices and construction of temples in the lake area. This chapter concludes by explaining how changing socio-cultural, politico-economic configurations are tied to changes in the lake and its water not only in terms of geo-physicality of the lake but also social interpersonal relationships, political activism, economic status, cultural values and environmental degradation.

In concluding the Chapter I argue that places like Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu, which were transformed from peri-urban to urban core is a paradigmatic case of changes that accompany when watershed is disturbed. Based on the end results, it throws light on how urban planning is done on urban watershed areas and recommends how it should be done. I summarize all the field outcomes with theoretical explanations in order to answer the research question. I reflect on the conclusions of each chapter to understand how problems related to the lake need to be identified, conceptualized, theorized, understood, and acted upon in relation to the field outcomes. A broader conceptualization on urban commons is employed to understand the local problems, which provides framework for the dynamics of problems in a given place-specific social system. It emphasizes people's perspectives and behavior regarding the problems of lake which is not static but changes in sync with changing political economy. Thus, it will bring the entire picture of various processes for the problems of lakes from global policy perspectives to urban commons in providing a critical understanding of political economy. There are no easy answers but these problems can be brought to the fore and explored further to solve or reduce or mitigate the severity of resource degradation in peri-urban areas.

Table 1.1: Role of Water Bodies in Urban and Peri-Urban Areas

| Environmental Components | Occupations / Activities | Description |
|---|--------------------------|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;">Water Resource</p> <p>(Water as a resource used by the people for different requirements and purposes in a given social structure which is classified based on Jati or caste system which is associated with the traditional occupations. All these caste communities have been exercising their customary rights on the lake and its water.)</p> | Farming | <p>Agricultural farming is one of the prominent occupations associated with the lakes water in the region since its topography was undulating in nature.</p> <p>Agricultural packets created amidst the well connectivity of the lakes ecosystem called ‘chain lakes system’ unique to Hyderabad, Telangana and Deccan region.</p> <p>Agricultural farming historically led by the upper caste communities in this region since they have large landholdings. For instance, Velama, Reddy, and Kapu caste communities.</p> <p>Agricultural activity involved people not only from upper caste’s but people from lower caste communities as agricultural labor. These are usually marginalized caste communities such as Mala, Madiga and other sub-caste communities of Other Backward Castes.</p> |
| | Washing | Washing is been practiced by washermen community. Their main activity is to wash clothes of each and every caste community in the village. |
| | Pot-making | Lakes in the region also contained the activity of pot-making by Kummari’s (pot-makers). They also have right to get the soil from the lake area to make pots. |
| | Fishing | <p>Fishing is one of the major activities on lakes since the region mostly covered by the lakes with its unique system. Fishing activity on lakes historically led by two communities such as Gangaputra and Mudiraju caste communities.</p> <p>Though there are over lapses on their identity as fishermen they continue to exercise their claims</p> |

| Environmental Components | Occupations / Activities | Description |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| | | to do fishing on lakes based on the number. |
| | Grazing | Grazing of livestock is one more activity that associated with the lakes in this region. Much of this activity led by OBC communities and in some cases even lower caste communities also participated. |
| | Drinking | Lakes are also major sources for drinking purposes. Along with the agricultural activity, lakes also heavily contributed to the existence of large number of fauna species. |
| | Rainwater harvesting | Rain water effectively used for with the available local knowledge systems of people. Apart from the natural setting of lakes, people also caused for lakes existence with the continuous activities as to remove sediment, main bund and wires of the lakes. Through these systems in place people used rain water in effective manner and also many of the lakes in the region are percolation tanks with its well connectivity. |
| Social | Community gatherings | Lake areas are most happening places with people's continuous activities. These activities contained not only profession-based but also social gatherings such as festive times (in order to convey their gratitude to god or goddesses based on their belief and for relief or leisure (swimming and to enjoy the view as pleasure activity). |
| | Last rite gatherings | Lake areas also happening places for caste customs which have to do after death of a person. Dead persons used to buried or cremated near lake areas and after the activity people take bath in lake and go home. In the later part of the activity they also offer food to the crow in |

| Environmental Components | Occupations / Activities | Description |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| | | believing if the crow eats it they the person's soul rests in heaven. This particular activity still prevalent in many parts of the region since it is associated with the not only the traditional custom but also individual belief. |
| | Exorcism | Exorcism is also one of the prevalent activities at lake areas. One of the significant features of the lakes characteristics of this region is that Banyan tree presence at the lake. Every person whomever posses ghost used to take to the tree at the lake and cured with some tantric practice. |
| Cultural | Temples | Lake places in this region have strong connection of temples which are mostly local goddesses. These majorly consists of Katta Maisamma, Dargah, Masjid, or other mainstream gods temples. Presence of temples also tells the history of social groups that live at the lake. |
| Cultural | Ritual practices | Lakes in this region have rich cultural history which is basically related with peoples' livelihoods and their well-being. The practice of Katta Maisamma and Bathukamma are prevalent in the region. Recently, these two practices also recognized as people's culture by the state. |
| | Immersion of idols | Lakes also used for immerse god's idols at different occasions such as during Bonalu, Bathukamma, Dussera, and Muharram. |
| | Holy ponds | Some of the ponds in the region also known as holy ponds which have historically maintained its scarcity. |

| Environmental Components | Occupations / Activities | Description |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| | Royal ponds | It is also evident that still some of the ponds are maintaining as royal ponds which have used for royal purposes earlier since the region ruled and constructed many artificial lakes and tanks across the region. |
| Economic | Fishing | <p>This region known for lake-based economy since most of the areas covered with lakes.</p> <p>Fishing has been considering one of the major economic activity and also contained large population who does fishing activity in the region.</p> |
| | Crop Harvesting | <p>Crop harvesting usually done by the agricultural labor who are marginalized communities.</p> <p>Historically these communities are dependent community on the landlords in the region.</p> |
| | Pot-making | Pot-maker's are also part of the lake-based economy who have traditional right to make and sell pots. |
| Environment | Biodiversity | <p>Environment of lake places usually contained with hills, rocks, shrubs and trees along with animal species.</p> <p>The banks of the lakes have rich history of biodiversity which are treasure for diverse flora and fauna.</p> <p>Existence of lakes also tells us that the balancing act of biotic and abiotic life at the lake areas.</p> |
| | Encroachments | <p>Lake areas are the prime victims of encroachments. These are heavily done by new migrants through political intervention and support.</p> <p>Encroaching lake areas also raising questions and</p> |

| Environmental Components | Occupations / Activities | Description |
|--|----------------------------------|--|
| <p>Happening places</p> <p>(lakes areas are most happening places in urban areas by given its nature of development)</p> | | translating their actions as their right to the city |
| | Hazardous situations | <p>Most of the urban areas are vulnerable and hazardous for any living being based on the way illegal occupations occurred and polluted lakes.</p> <p>Polluted lakes are now remitting its actions towards what people have done to them which is more harmful than any other condition.</p> |
| | Destruction of natural resources | <p>Illegal occupations on lake areas caused for destruction in the quality and quantity of the resource.</p> <p>This is ultimately turning out as scarce in the resource.</p> |
| | Problem areas | <p>Destruction of natural resources caused for unprecedented problems in urban areas which seems irreversible based on the magnitude of the problems.</p> <p>Now every city space as a reference point for uneven development, floods, encroachments, pollution and scarcity of water.</p> |

Source: Adopted from Ray 2015

CHAPTER II

Methods and Methodology: Understanding Role of Researcher's Identity and Reflections on Urban Ethnography

2.1 The Beginnings: Rational for Selecting the Qualitative Paradigm

In previous chapter I identified specific focus for the research study, which led to the next decision selecting qualitative paradigm for the study⁴. Hence, it is possible that multiple realities may exist simultaneously for a situation. Efforts were therefore to report faithfully the realities expressed to me and to rely on voices and interpretations of respondents.

Further, as a researcher I interacted with those that are part of the study. There was minimal distance between us (researcher and respondents), which is to say that the value(s) of the researcher were not kept neither neutral nor the research study is free laden. Hence the thesis is also an account in first person, personal, and based on definitions that evolved / emerged during the study.

From these positions on reality and the relationships I held with those that were researched, the methodology that flowed from this is inductive, logic and many of the categories emerged from the respondents, rather than being identified apriori by me. Consequently, I was assured that the emerging categories were bound by the context as well.

My worldview, that is to say I feel comfortable closely interacting with respondents dovetails with my background training and experiences, which was mostly with library and archival experiences and reference to enter the field site with open mind.

⁴ On the ontological issue, the assumption that is rejected reality exists independent of researcher. In this study it is assumed that reality is only constructed by the respondents of the study.

Much of the literature on water bodies (lakes, ponds, water tanks) of India were from a technical and qualitative perspective. As a result, both, nature of problems and solutions lie predominantly in techno-economic-legal perceptions. Not many studies revealed the institutional / societal roles in the protection and degradation of water bodies. Several variables for the research problem are therefore unknown. Consequently, this research is designed to be open and I was willing to take risks that may emerge with ambiguous steps and procedures. Accordingly, I was prepared involvement at the field site for an extended period of time.

Having identified design of the research study, I proceeded to identify Ethnography as appropriate as for gathering requisite data. Ethnographies, that is to say I interacted with 'intact cultural group in their natural settings' for a prolonged period of time. The task was not simply to observe, but to adjust to the lived realities encountered in the field settings.

Very few of my respondents were aware of the meaning of research and role of a researcher. Various, I was perceived by them as a government agent, journalist, as one who lived in the peripheral village of the urban area, and one among their community. In other words, attributing these different identities to me had direct implications on efforts to gather the data. The caste, regional, class, gender and linguistic identities of me also shaped the way people responded to me. Each of these identities was entangled in complex webs of power, some of which were sustained by the persistence of the *varna* system and others by the promise of modern citizenship. Each identity that I could foreground wittingly or unwittingly was capable of opening and shutting off interactions.

At the urban field site I realized within the first few days that the kind of questions I could ask was shaped by who I thought I was and who my respondent thought I was. If the knowledge that I could potentially generate in the urban context was determined by these identities, then it was apparent that my findings cannot be generalized, especially beyond the Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu. Even as I began to examine at scientific, objective, research on water bodies, where identities are not to have any influence on the results I realized that identities do play a role in giving access to

information. In other words, the separation between the task of posing questions and efforts at data gathering that allows for spotlighting processes, historical as well contextual contributions, to the study of the problem is on artificial one. In short, I realized relying on a blueprint for research was impossible. The only way I could possibly think about this research was to think of data gathering as a continuous process, which is accounting for spatial learning and using the responses for additional data. In the village where I grew up, caste was not something anybody talked about. It was implicitly understood. Everybody knew his or her place in the social order. However, in the urban context, none of the codes that I learnt in the village quite worked the same way. For example, when I first moved to Hyderabad, it took me months to realize that my difficulty in finding rental housing was not simply due to scarcity of housing but because of the uncertain caste identity indicated by my name. In the University campus, I was locked into a social organization where my caste identity was part of that broad category called reservation students and then a part of several other sub-groupings due to formal and informal social life. Research was a slow, inch by inch, progress. I visualized my work as a step-by-step construction of reality by peeling off multiple layers built over decades by individuals, social groups, and perhaps by nature itself.

2.2. Uncovering Layers of the Place

The first of tasks was to identify operating the lake and village governance structures. There is no single dedicated urban authority responsible for the overall development of urban areas. Most urban problems remain due to unresolved issues, such as poor coordination, lack of transparency and public accountability. For instance, protection of lakes from encroachments and contamination is the joint responsibility of multiple institutions – the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA), Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply & Sewerage Board (HMWSSB), and also the Lake Protection Committee (LPC). Similarly, development of city through new land use development is to be undertaken by Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA), Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), Telangana State Industrial Infrastructure Corporation

Limited (TSIIC), and Special Development Authorities such as Cyberabad Development Authority (CDA), Buddha Poornima Project Authority (BPPA), and Hyderabad Airport Development Authority (HADA).

Further activities of many of the state authorities' are associated and, at times, dominated by private agencies with significantly large role than public agencies. The development of the Hi-Tech city area for example has been carried out by a number of private developers. Like-wise, the Hyderabad Airport Development Authority (HADA) has been 'dominated' by GMR, a private corporation. Furthermore, there is negligible recognition and acknowledgement that ownership and control of urban resources is not only with parastatals, state-organizations and departments, but also with many local formal agencies that are in the form of caste-based associations and residential welfare associations.

But the reality in Shaikpet was shaped not just by the structures of governance but also by the everyday forms of power, especially the village's have long history of caste based organizations. The way they respond to outsiders really depends on how they see themselves with the outsider and is also based on the story that is narrated by the researcher about the purpose of speaking with them.

An understanding of the web of organizations that control urban areas assists only partly in gaining a perspective on the field site. The dynamics and changing conditions at the field site also contribute to enrich the researcher's perspective of the field site. For instance, there's a narrative of Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu and it turning from a fresh water body to a dead lake as described by Narasamma (2012) who is a vendor from adjacent Nalgonda district. In her words there are changes that have come about as a result of changes in land use. She notes:

"I have been in this place for 23 years and came here to make a living. Earlier I worked in an agricultural field on the north-west side of the lake where water used to come from the lake located above on the hills. Later, development of Film Nagar area took place and then the area down the hills was filled up with all these houses around. There were not many houses when we came here. It was a totally

abandoned area where people used to be afraid to even walk on the road that connects to the Shaikpet nala junction. There were people who used to come here and do fishing in the Shaikpet village. They used to catch fish and sell them in markets. Agricultural fields down the lake also belong to Shaikpet villager's and we worked as labor. We lost our livelihoods when the fish died in the lake due to waste and pollution that was let into the lake from Ramanaidu studio and Apollo hospital. Suddenly one day we found thousands of fish were floating on lake water. There were also big fishes among them. It's a big hit on the livelihoods of fishermen. Washermen also used to wash clothes in this lake. Every time someone or the other at the lake is doing something with lake water. Even now fishermen from Shaikpet come and do fishing and washermen had dug a bore well and are doing the washing. Water from the lake was also used for drinking and other purposes" (Narasamma 2012).

My respondent Narasamma also noted how migrants to Shaikpet developed an entirely new kind of relationship with lake and accordingly effected changes in and around the lake. She noted:

"As a result of pollution in lake water, all the agricultural fields in the lower areas dried up and later they sold them off. Now we see all the big buildings around in the place of agriculture. So we also lost our livelihood as laboring in agricultural fields was the only work we know. But after that, we were forced to do other works which we do not know. I came here with my children and cannot ask them to do menial jobs to survive which they never did but we are doing. Now I set up this bandi (vendor cart) to survive. Tomorrow we really don't know. Surprising thing is that Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu vanished in front of our eyes" (Narasamma 2012).

I also found many ritual practices that are performed at the shrines surrounding the lake: Katta Maisamma, Eeramma, and Anjaneya Swami temple. The cultural and ritual practices in urban areas are playing a significant role in the lives of people living in the village. For example, in Shaikpet, land around Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu was 'owned' by different caste communities, which were based on caste occupations when it was a village. But once water quality and quantum of the lake began to degrade, there was change in that ownership, the control, and benefits derived by the communities began to wane. For example, washermen community could no longer derive benefits from the lake due to decline in water quality. This altered condition, in turn, created opportunities for private entities (such as gated housing community, private businesses) to gain control,

encroach, and access over land and lake resources. The fallout of this outcome was contestations and conflict among various stakeholders, and several responses emerged.

To gain or reclaim access and control on land, lake and its water, caste-based associations have been established in Shaikpet. Similarly, residential welfare associations sprouted up claiming to represent weaker sections and claiming the land around the lake in the name of the poor and also to provide welfare to residents who are staying in slum settlements around Shaikpet. Finally, there were claims and counter-claims made through ritual practices in temples that were built by non-locals. As a result, these practices have developed as a mix of new and old rituals which have implications for control and ownership on land, lake and water resources.

The Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu was the centre of an economy, which has gradually withered away with the rise of alternative livelihood patterns. But power structures of the earlier socio-economic regimes continue to remain in place, and operate in new modes to assert their power on the communities that are appropriate for present times.

There is a distribution of responsibilities across multiple organizations, but with weak coordination among them. An umbrella authority governing the distributed responsibilities is also absent. None of the organizations are transparent in their functioning *nor* publicly accountable. A few private organizations are also engaged in the implementation of projects in the urban area. My observations and field experiences resonate with findings from other cities of India. According to Gavin Shatkin (2014) who is a Professor at the School of Public Policy & Urban Affairs, Northeastern University, “in contrast to many countries, in India, authority over urban development is dispersed, notably the state governments which are accountable to a largely rural electorate” (Shatkin 2014). Extending this argument further, Shatkin et. Al. (2015) initialize through their research study note that “find that control of urban land is not exercised through municipal institutions, and instead ownership and control of urban land are with numerous organizations in the metro region, such as parastatals, state-owned companies,

and departments. Similarly, the use and staging of development is also influenced heavily by private interests and local institutions, not to mention Court interventions.

Efforts to bring urban land under a common city-based regime have been very fragmented (Sivaramakrishnan 2014). However, evidence is weak on other layers uncovered at Shaikpet village. There is a history of caste-organizations in the villages which have morphed themselves so as to claim and control access to the lake. However, with degradation of lake by sources that are outside of the purview of village and caste associations, there have been shifts in land use pattern (agriculture to real estate), and mode of pursuing occupation, that is, washer men rely on bore well water rather than water from the lake. Fishermen, similarly to agricultural labor, migrated to new occupations, such as maid servants. One another layer uncovered through this study is that the caste organizations and other identity based organizations proliferated to stake claims and control access to the lake. These evidences need further in depth investigation at field site.

2.3. Reflections on Urban Ethnography

Ethnographic methods employed in this research study consist of participant observation, field notes, and interviewing. With the use of these methods, gathered information on people's relation to lake, especially their association, meanings and ritual practices related to lake.

I chiefly found that there is a distinction between rural and urban ethnography. The rural is assumed to be indigenous, homogenous, coherent, intelligible, and traditional whereas the urban is expected to be heterogeneous, disorderly, unintelligible and modern (Duneier, Kasinitz, and Murphy 2014). Ethnography allowed me to do the following:

- to understand people's attitude towards lake and its water through their cultural and ritual practices,
- to understand health and extinction of the lake through people's everyday activities,

- to trace developments on lake that caused a change in the geography of lake through the activities and actions (formal and informal) of urban planning and development, and
- to understand the implications of the increasing prominence and state sponsorship of Bathukamma festival for conservation of lake ecosystem.

Additionally, my experience in the urban space as an ethnographer highlights that there is insufficient attention in the academic literature on ethnographic practice, which does not pay adequate attention to the nuances of power in the relationship between researcher and the researched.

Some of the earliest themes of urban studies focused on migration. “Urbanization and industrialization shaped the social context, and the major social contributions of the Chicago School revealed those dynamic processes as they played out in everyday urban life. For instance, *The Philadelphia Negro*, the first systematic study of urban black community (from immigrant colonies) came out by studying them through class and cultural variables” (Anderson 2009). The research studies showed the necessity of understanding everyday lives of people by applying ethnography to those who are deeply affected by forces like urbanization, industrialization or globalization. The identified factors it was further noted indicate the implications of changes among various sections of the communities like daily workers, hotel clerks, taxi drivers, youth gangs, and local politicians. The article “Urban Ethnography: Approaches, Perspectives and Challenges” by Venegas and Adrian (2010) explains how even in rural areas and suburban areas one can see the overlaying of imperialism, colonization, or misrepresentation of voice, but these are much more intense in the dynamic power structures in urban environs (Venegas & Huerta, 2010). William Julius Wilson and Anmol Chaddha (2009) argue that “the goal of ethnographic research is not to fit reality to sociological theory but to understand the subject from different theoretical questions without any overt commitment to macro-level explanations” (Wilson and Chaddha 2009). This argument is a critique of position held on causality, which David Harvey, a well known geographer, and other structuralists have long held.

“Urban ethnography lights up ‘structure’ and is always interacting with it based on different social contexts that are shaped by various forces in a given time. As structure changes, ethnographers need to be aware of those shifts in order to ‘see’ more clearly what is before them and to speak in relevant voice” (Duneier, Kasinitz, and Murphy 2014). These works emphasize positionality of researcher and situational realities alongside theoretical explanations.

Doreen Massey, a geographer, draws one’s attention to the fact that the researcher is part of the power geometry of places and thus, the specificity of the place and the context matters to the outcomes of the research. In the chapter titled “Power-geometry and a progressive sense of place” in the book titled ‘*Mapping the Future: Local Cultures, Global Change*’ the author gives the “sense of place by explaining time-space compression based on flows and interconnections”. She goes on to state “sense of a place can be linking place to places beyond, since they are social constructs. So it would be precisely about the relationship between place and space” (Massey 1993).

I begin with the above reflections because the study I had proposed to carry out involves a dalit male PhD researcher from a rural background working in a complex urban setting. Conventional/traditional notions of urban space came from a general understanding of how urban spaces are characterized in terms of geographical settings, in sociological studies that highlight diverse communities by way of cultures, languages, castes and so on. A cosmopolitan nature of the urban space is commonly perceived; in addition to being inclusive, and a space of freedom, especially for people living in villages and subordinated by persons of higher castes. This understanding of urban space is based on observing the way people live, come for various events, sit, eat, and act. Along with these imaginations, the urban space is also perceived as a class-based society wherein the rich and poor live in separate geographical areas and are 'zoned' in terms of social, economic, and cultural preferences. For instance, people live in enclosed housing, such as gated communities like Senor Valley, Film Nagar, Doctors Colony and Lakshmi Nagar Colony that are located adjacent to slums of Shaikpet village, as a juxtaposition of opulence and poverty in urban space and were reinforced throughout my upbringing in

rural areas wherein such meanings is given by family, friends, and through watching movies. Reflections on conventional ethnographic research have more often than not, based on the experience of researchers who had the privilege to walk into the worlds of social groups without much friction. For instance, a white male anthropologist studying the aboriginal tribes in a forest in colonized Africa may encounter some difficulties initially, but has no doubts about his entitlement to study the tribes. Compare this with the implausible scenario of a woman of color wishing to study a white male subculture. Such a study is more difficult to conceive because of the obvious power asymmetries. It is to this asymmetry I describe in the next section.

2.4. Obtaining Traction at the field site

Building upon previous experiences in rural settings, I began research in urban space. My understanding of the urban space was that urban spaces are easy to move around, get people to talk, and obtain information that one needs. I presumed that urban areas are unlike rural areas where you have to follow certain norms to enter into the village. For instance, a researcher has to meet the head of the village first and intimate about the purpose of the visit and only then the researcher can meet others in the village. This is the traditional understanding in rural areas. This practice also indicates power that the head of villages wields, and is important for a researcher to understand and take into accounting the socio-cultural practices and structural relationships of each and every activity of the village. In my view, at time, urban spaces are diverse, cosmopolitan, and liberal. With this understanding, I started field research around the lake and developed rough questions to ascertain how lakes get polluted and what people think of the lake. Soon thereafter I realized that gaining entry into the field area will be difficult unless I become familiar with local languages and dialects. This seemed crucial to build my credibility with respondents, as well as to secure confidence for gathering data. Another option was to seek the assistance of an interpreter for field work, but this was ruled out for want of time and money. Later I met residents that spoke Telugu who also directed me to additional potential respondents, mainly new migrants and living near the lake.

Meanwhile, I improved my Hindi language proficiency mainly by listening and watching Hindi TV programs.

Other than interviewing, I conducted carried out participant observation, which involved immersing oneself into a community to gain a deep knowledge about the intricacies and inner workings that could not be obtained from literature, or in a type of method where information is learned second-hand. This way I gained insights into people's lives and customs that they would not be able to tell, if you just asked. I observed closely the changes on the lake and also on people's attitude, which yielded insights into the people's regular activities with particular meanings. I took extensive notes on my experiences, which further helped me understand people's culture without imposing my own social reality on that culture.

Initially, I interacted and interviewed “new” or recent migrants, between the years 1990 – 2015, who migrated from the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and districts of Telangana. They all knew Telugu language when they arrived in the city about twenty years ago and settled around the lake. The socio-economic profile of the migrants is diverse, and many did not have any direct relation with the lake. From the interviews of slum dwellers, I came to know that only one village is associated with the lake, and they are the one who owned the lake by exercising their customary rights. This information surprised and forced me to introspect my assumptions about resident's association living around lake and people who owned the lake in real terms.

Outcomes from the semi-structured interviews and participant observation in the field led me to revise my assumptions and strategies of data gathering in order to know what has really happened to the lake. From then I have framed questions in a way to know the real reasons for the present condition of the lake. I met Mr. Maheep Singh Thapar, an urban planner, who was part of the team that prepared the revised Master Plan of Hyderabad, 2010, which led the decision that to gain a comprehensive perspective on the lake I will approved both migrants and those who ‘own’ the lake. This decision led to begin with an understanding on the history of the village.

2.4.a. Developing a historical context of the field site

I felt that it is interesting to hear about Shaikpet village and its history with the lake in the core city area. I was curious to go and meet the villagers and know about the history of the lake. So when I entered, it seemed that I needed to understand at least two histories and connect the same. In Shaikpet, I surprisingly found buildings with signage of caste-based associations. For instance, Gangaputra Sangham, Mudiraju Sangham, Harijan Sangham, Gangaputra Bheeshma Bhavan, and Indira Community Hall. Additionally, I found historical monuments which assisted me in connecting art and architecture of Medieval India that covered the entire period of Qutb Shahi and Asaf Jahis. The history of Shaikpet village, which is located close to the outside wall of Golconda fort and is next to the Qutub Shahi tombs, came to the foreground. Slowly, I built the historical context for the field site, but also began connecting the 'village' in the urban space.

In addressing the process by which I gained a foothold at the field site also affords an opportunity to visit assumptions that undergrid ethnography.

2.5. Principles underlying Ethnography

Classic works on ethnography described the ethnographic process from how to access the respondents all the way to how to conduct interviews. But there is very little in these texts that prepared me for my field work. For instance, I found identity of the researcher in the field is multiple identities can be attributed to a researcher by the respondents leading to different outcomes on the same subject.

The respondent's perception of my identity in each interview proved to be important to interpret the description provided. My respondents seemed to have judged my identity before responding to me. Further, location of the field site whether it is rural, peri-urban, or urban, also indicates variation in responses.

2.5.a. Embodiment

To get an embedded sense of the people in the field one needs a bodily competence with the participants to relate to them, observe and experience their worlds. This means that before you embedding into the field, I had to develop some of the ‘necessary things’ to merge into the field, which varies from one researcher to the other and are also contingent on nature of the field. Not only my personal identity but also many things in relation to people’s behavior, field setting, and time of the interaction also became crucial to the efforts at data gathering. This element of ethnography is discussed in *Being Ethnographic: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Ethnography* by Raymond Madden, which suggests “that the ethnographer’s body is part of the ethnographic toolkit...the favored way of making the most of oneself as a tool of ethnography is to do as others do, to have the same or similar subjective bodily experience of being in a particular ethnographic place and time with the same potentiality and limitations” (Madden 2010). However, there are no universal applicable ways of embodiment. For instance, eye contact can be favorable for building trust in some cases, but can be threatening to the respondent in others.

2.5.b. Reflexivity

In literature it has long been documented that the ethnographer’s influence on the research process has been considered as part of the ethnographic methodology. That is to say how the findings of the researcher are connected to researcher’s politics and positionality. Therefore the need and Importance of reflexivity, which has something to do not only with researcher’s politics but also on positions of the researcher, particularly disciplinary approaches and theoretical perspectives. Madden (2010) also mentions that there are four forms of reflexivity and he reflects on the politics of location simultaneously where the social historical identity influences the creation of the text. The book *Café Culture in Pune: Being Young and Middle Class in Urban India* by Teresa Platz Robinson explains how her living with an Indian family helped to access young

people in cafés to understand the middle class culture and gender aspects of the place and space (Robinson 2014).

Reflexivity has been used for different purposes. In the book titled *Ethnography*, the author pointed that “reflexivity has been seen as a problem where the knowledge is partial, threatening the legitimation of the data, and their representation. It is also a solution where it is making explicit the partial nature of the data and the contingencies into which any representation must be located, the legitimation and representation of the data can be improved” (Brewer 2000).

Given this reality, I thought to understanding the context of the problem is significant to interpret responses. General assumptions of urban cannot be applied, given the diverse social systems present in the urban setting. This research study suggests how ground realities are important to understand the problem. But most often, generalized patterns that were developed by the scholarship submerge the ground realities and thereby largely undermine dynamics of the problem.

These reflections are also relevant for understanding gender in social science research through ethnography. One such argument is found in the title ‘*Thinking Gender, Doing Gender: Feminist Scholarship and Practice Today*’ where the author invokes Sandra Harding’s calls for feminist ambivalence in representation of women and their position, what she calls “robust ambivalence” (Chakravarti 2016). Uma Chakravarti (2016) argues for “strong objectivity” with self-reflexivity of the observed. For this, the location is really important in order to understand women’s voices. This can be seen in women’s activities at the lake and ritual practices whose role is phenomenal but the recognition of that is always determined by the patriarchal structure. It is the background of reviewing literature on ethnography and experiences in the field, I proceed to describe the methods applied in this research study.

2.6. The methodological tool kit

In this section I elaborate on the various methods I used to gather data for this study. I describe the merits and demerits of the methods and highlight how a combination of various methods allowed me to triangulate different perspectives and challenge common assumptions about urban space.

2.6.a. Interviews

I used unstructured interviews in order to get the gist of people's cultures related to lake and its water. I did not follow a set sequence in asking questions since I wanted to get their understandings, their practices, their beliefs and their way of life in relation to the lake. I did frame questions in order to get the answers on people's everyday practices on lakes to understand why the lake water is contaminated or dead.

Hence, I selected unstructured interviews with open-ended questionnaire which allows people to share what they believe, what they think and what they have been going through. These questions were put across to the key informants who were selected for the study. Sometimes the questions also allowed deeper interrogation of what they have been facing over time which also gives historical depth to the problem. For instance, interviews revealed how a sense of belonging with the place allows some communities such as fishermen and washermen to stake their claims as "sons of the soil". But in the case of new migrants, it has been defined with their constant activities in the place through some or the other power structures. So their legitimacy over the land and the lake is through some political parties' support and intervention. However, I realized how my personal identity was also allowing me or disallowing me to access interviewees. For instance, Madan Rao, a retired electricity employee stopped me in between while I was asking him a question regarding to festivals related to their culture, lake and its water. He got offended and told me that I am from Andhra region and I will never understand their culture, moreover he went on to say that my people (Andhra) are the ones who destroyed and suppressed their culture and how I will never understand their culture even if he tells me everything in detail (M. Rao 2014).

2.6.b. Participant Observation

Participant observation allowed me to get a deeper sense and meaning of people's everyday activities on lake. By being a participant observer, I was able to immerse myself into the community on only some aspects but not everything that I assumed through my questions. Firstly, historical account of the place drew members from Gangaputra Sangham who shared much information about the history of the place but not sufficiently about the Gangaputra Sangham itself. Secondly, the belief system that is related to the ritual practices on the lake where people from Rajaka Sangham and Gangaputra Sangham explained the significance of the temples at the lake and ritual practices, but did not elaborate much on changes in their practices. Thirdly, on citizenship rights, there was a distinction between the slum dwellers and the older residents of the area as slum dwellers supposedly had no relationship with the lake.

These gaps were later pursued by me through individual interviews and group discussions. Also, I had drawn patterns on different aspects of the problems related to the lake based on observations which were assessed by the developments that have occurred on and around the lake. Technical tools (Field Papers, Photos, Video and Audio recording, Digital mapping) were used for documentation of each development in the lake area and for further analysis with observation during different points of time. For instance, contamination of lake water, slums around lake, status of lake (before and after it got contaminated), people's activities on the lake and floods at low lying areas of lake.

2.6.c. Socio-spatial mapping

Socio-spatial relationship of various actors in relation to Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu can explain how each actor's activities have affected the lake and other actors. These relationships are drawn based not only on the geo-physicality of the lake, but also social inter-personal relationships of various social groups in relationship to the lake; including caste groups, new migrants, institutions, and civil society groups, and cultural values through ritual practices. Degradation of Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu is not an overnight occurrence and it is the culmination of many actors' constant movements, access, and

power plays. Each actor has maintained their equations with the lake in some or the other form in order to get their share from available lake resources. These have happened on lake both vertically and horizontally. Vertically, the lake experienced people's power relationships especially state administration, caste groups and residential welfare associations which have not only changed and impacted lake's geo-physicality by destroying gradients, natural streams, flows, and volume but also changed people's social relationships. Horizontally, people's activities not only affected lake's surface water, but also resulted in changing its geo-physicality and in below the surface of lake where scarcity of water mounted in the area by not letting the water into ground, putting up bore wells, dumping waste, and altering the water flows.

These all changes on lake can be understood by visualizing them as boundaries and layers since each development is spatially distributed and has effects across time periods. Spatially, the lake area shows how the rural and urban move in and out at different points of time based on their activity. Temporally, overlaying the histories of each activity enriches its description and effects on lake and its environs. These two approaches give us comprehensive understanding on how lake degradation happened by whom and how.

So the maps and tables in the thesis chapters contain many details of people's socio-spatial relationships in relation to the lake. Each map and table also gives the sense of lake's ecosystem in the region by mapping the lake area in relation to geography of the place. The maps also show demographic location of caste communities and slums in order to understand locational histories of them in relation to the lake.

2.6.d. Recursive writing

Ethnographic research varies from one to the other, based on the approach one chooses. The formal structure mentions that it should be – Reading → doing → writing. But it is not the same with every research project. Previous experience and pilot studies helped to prepare and minimize the surprises for me in the field. Respondents do not have a single identity—a caste member can also be a head of the community and they may or

may not know the culture. However, books on Ethnography only highlight the need for exploring “every day practices.” In my study the “Every day” was found to be insufficient. The field is innovative, creative, and more rhythmic. I realized from my field experiences and hence arguing that there is “Politics of doing ethnography.” Ethnography as mentioned in the literature and practiced is not congruent and in concluding this chapter I reflect on the challenges I faced with politics of ethnography.

2.7. Concluding reflections

I approached and carried out field work by being situated as a researcher with neatly framed questions in order to get the information primarily from the communities that have an association with the lake and people who don't. I argue that the identity of the researcher in the field is not as clear as it is mentioned in the ethnographic methodology literature. The researcher takes on multiple identities, some of them due to perceptions by the researched which can lead to different outcomes and insights on the same subject, and also some taken on by the researcher him/herself to negotiate the politics of the field. The vantage point (the way researched perceived the researcher) of each interview is really important in order to understand how that entire description can be evaluated based on the perception of the researched on the identity of the researcher. These identities vary from one to the other respondents and it is also based on the location of the field area whether it is rural, peri-urban or urban.

The texts of ethnography have described the role of researcher in the field and given all the instructions at each and every level of the field work right from gaining access to the respondents to interviewing them. But the texts have not given anything specific to the role of the researched and how researched has to be with the researcher. Why is the researched part important here for the outcome of field research? The role of the researched is as crucial as the researcher since both are involved in the process of uncovering a ground reality of the research problem. Almost all of my respondents were not aware of what research is and who/what a researcher is. So my identity as a researcher had gone for the toss and I was perceived by them as a government agent,

journalist, as one who lived in peripheral village of the urban area, and one among their community. These different identities have led to different results with regards to gathering the information. The field outcomes from the respondents are the results of my approach as a researcher in the field. These were largely based on how they perceived me in the field. Reasons for this are based on the power structures and how they operate at caste level, class level, language, and region. These power structures always offer opportunities in terms of certain kinds of patronage. If you do not have them then it is difficult to get the information from them. In this given context, these methods are not adequate for gathering information about people's culture and their everyday practices on land and its water. It is because of the very presence of caste in every village activity in some or the other form though it is transformed from rural to urban.

These power structures are so strong in Shaikpet village because the place has a historical lineage of caste and its impact on all the activities that take place every time. The forms of caste changed in accordance with the times due to change in the livelihood pattern and with new alternative livelihoods. These forms of caste have been used for different purposes by the communities that have historically been given some patronage in all the activities of Shaikpet village. The dominant dynamic in this attitude is the economic factor that has influenced the status of people in the urbanized sphere but at the same time some of the practices lag behind the old caste system in the village though there is a change in the economic status. So on one hand, it shows that there is no caste because it is in a core urbanized place and on the other hand there is appropriation of caste in the name of equality, empowerment, and development. This appropriation of caste further leads to changes not only at the cultural level but also social, economic, and political level. The way they respond to outsiders really depends on how they see themselves with that outsider and based on the story that is narrated by the researcher about the purpose of speaking with them.

So the field was shaped based on my personal identity. The field has its own way of responding to outsiders due to the developments in the village over a period of time due to urbanization processes. These developments ranged from changes in interpersonal

relationships over lake-based economic activities which further divided the village on the basis of caste, individual, group, insider, and outsider. These all led to the division in the society based on not only caste but also class. So there is overlapping on the understanding of caste and class in the urban sphere. The changes in lifestyle have not resulted in the change of social relations and cultural practices. Changes in lifestyle are due to urbanization processes but the change in the social relations has implications with not only the processes of urbanization but also economic-centric life pattern since money circulations were happening through different sources. Earlier, money circulations used to happen through lake-based economy. Now the money circulations have changed due to alternative livelihood patterns. But some of the power structures have been held on to and bring the older form of life system which is dominant and controlling in nature. Approaches and strategies of the power structures in the village have been operating in a new mode to assert their power on the communities which are appropriate for present times such as equality, inclusion, and development. This power play is not happening constantly but it appears whenever there are activities that are aimed at community development, works that involve money, and where activities allow space for political activism. It is difficult to capture these developments since these are not unique or time-bound. These are changing in accordance with the other developments that are happening in the village in relation to the lake. These are largely confined to the activities that are economic in nature. For these kinds of changes, the available methods are not adequate to understand people's cultures and their everyday practices in relation to the lake since the nature of the methods has changed due to power structures in the field. It is also difficult to explain since changes are not so situational and contextual but accidental.

The aforementioned narratives underscore the need for revisiting our understanding of ethnographic work, especially about how ethnography is conducted in urban settings. Ethnography has long been viewed as assisting in the study of people and its culture. Ethnographic studies are designed to explore cultural phenomena where the researcher observes society from the point of view of the subject of the study. In my case, the selection of ethnographic methodology allows for exploration of assumptions that undergird the processes that degrade or destroy lakes. I employed semi-structured

interviews and participant observation methods to gather data. Consequently, I obtained insights into people's lives and customs that one may not share orally or wouldn't be able to articulate if asked. Fetterman (2010) says, "I lived within certain context, maintained relationships with people, participated in community activities, and took elaborate notes on the experience. The best way to ask right questions beyond the literature survey and a research proposal is to go into the field and find out what people do on a day-to-day basis." During discussions, body language, gestures, expressions also gave me clues on their stance and thinking. There are overlaps in the way ethnographic methods were used and gave meanings to pursue ethnographic research. "The ethnographer's hike through the social and cultural wilderness begins with fieldwork" (Fetterman, 2010b). Overall, the following key points emerged by focusing on 'doing ethnography', especially in urban settings. These include:

- a) The value of de-linking methods of data gathering and methodology from research question(s) allows developing an ethnographic perspective that combines various methods and strategies. However, this is not always possible.
- b) Doing ethnography demands that the relationship between ethnographer and the field settings is open, flexible, and adept to the changing circumstances. Further, reflexivity on the part of the ethnographer is crucial to recognize not only the embodied nature of the individual, but also to guide the entire endeavor of field data gathering.
- c) By placing emphasis on *doing ethnography*, there is a recognition that one can go to the field setting for gathering data, initially, and later consult literature to advance efforts of data gathering. This observation is in contrast to suggestions in most textbooks urging ethnographers to familiarize themselves with literature & theories prior to gathering data.
- d) The positionality of ethnographer seemed crucial to gain a foothold in the field settings, although very few books suggest the specifics of how one may navigate the field-settings, especially when dynamics of caste, class, and gender are at play in abundance

In conclusion the selection of qualitative paradigm of research and along with ethnographies and case study method characterize methodology adopted in this research study. However, several adoptions and innovations in the field study had to be undertaken in order to complete the task of data gathering. For example, much of the literature on ethnography hardly ever discussed the nature of ‘fault lines’ one may encounter, especially in urban settings. A necessary improvisation was in order therefore.

Overall, a consistent and robust connections of nature of reality, how I knew what I know (i.e. epistemological), the role of (ontological) values (axiological & assumption), and the overall research study process are tightly connected in this framework of research endeavor.

CHAPTER III

Impact of Urban Planning on Water Bodies

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explain role played by urban planning in shaping the geo-physicality of the lake by putting forth two key arguments:

1. Urban areas have become centers for lakes problems because developmental activities divorced from watersheds that were embedded in city landscapes. Urban planning and real estate ignore the features of the watershed, beyond the Full-Tank-Level of the lake, and miss out on wider hydrological and ecological connections. Further, urban planning and real estate disturb local practices of lake management by compelling changes in them in order to respond to changing physicality and economy of the lake area. For example, occurrence of floods in many of city spaces including Hyderabad in India have been increasing in magnitude year by year, especially after 2000 (Anonymous 2018d).
2. The intent of the policy perspectives towards lakes conservation in Hyderabad city are chiefly centered around making lakes into revenue generating tourist spots. This policy orientation explains the kinds of interventions of the state over lakes eco-system and its conservation.

This chapter traces the shifting jurisdictional boundaries of governmental bodies like the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation and the Hyderabad Urban Development Authority (now the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority). I describe how shifts in these boundaries have impact the ecology and social worlds of Shaikpet village. Further, I uncover the various layers of ecological and socio-cultural history in Shaikpet that are partially destroyed by the shifting boundaries, but also provide a friction to those movements.

3.2 Context of urban planning

Conventionally, urban planning is a state activity to control and direct or regulate development processes. However, urban planning bodies are also involved in development activities. Also, to the extent that planning facilitates or constrains investments, either by the state or by private actors, urban planning may be said to be regulating investments towards equity, efficiency, sustainability and modernity. While this is true in theory, in reality, urban planning is unequal, unregulated, inefficient, and unsustainable. The consequence of this is that uneven urban development which further resulted in problems of urban areas. This chapter is an analysis of the role of key administrative authorities which have played a role at the planning, decision-making, and implementation stage. In Hyderabad, HUDA and its later incarnation HMDA have been providing the plans, which are then implemented by the MCH and its later incarnation GHMC. Other than these, there are a number of other state and non-state actors who have played a role in shaping the Shaikpet area. The case of Shaikpet highlights how the actors pursued their own interests by undermining what has really happened to the lake and its environs. This can be seen through Shaikpet villager's claims on lake before and after change in the lake water. In the urban planning this can be observed before and after 1990 which marked tremendous changes with rapid urbanization processes in the city space. For instance, Rajaka (Washermen) had put up a bore well inside the lake and continuing their profession after change in lake water polluted but before 1990, they used to wash clothes with the flowing water from lake to lake. Claims have been made on lake resources by establishing caste-based associations by the villagers. This study reveals each actor's approach to the lake and its environs, which I argue is shaped by their interests in terms of caste-based claims.

Urban planning provides instruments to implementing agencies for ensuring livable conditions. These instruments include building level as well as area level rules to ensure that proper width of roads, effectiveness of drainage infrastructure, availability of adequate leisure/recreational spaces, commercial centers and spaces for specialized sectors are made available. Planning has historically also been seen as an instrument of

power for the ruling elites. For example, Mohammed Safiullah, historian and heritage activist point out that on the instance of Mohammed Quli Qutb Shah, Mir Momin designed a plan for constructing the monumental Charminar as a centre piece on the Indo-Islamic style incorporating certain Persian elements. “He modelled the city on Isfahan and called it his labour of love ‘Isfahan-I-Nou’. Originally spread over 3 sq miles on a triangular flat ground on the south of River Musi, the infrastructure was planned for five lakh people, but has stood the test of time and vagaries of nature. His contribution to the city is immeasurable” (Anonymous 2016a). City planners provide visions that reflect the values and norms of the elite. These values are visible symbolically in architectural styles and also in the allocation of land and other resources. In democratic societies, city planners are often blamed for the problems of the city. Jayaram (2015) mentioned that “the 2015 disaster was not just avoidable; it was a direct consequence of decisions pushed for by vested interests and conceded by town planners, bureaucrats and politicians in the face of wiser counsel” (Jayaraman 2015). But, city planners are actually only one of many actors in cities. Proactive interventions from planners can improve conditions of life in cities.

3.3 Role of urban planning in conserving lakes

There have also been many lake conservation efforts made in order to protect the lakes from pollution, encroachments and degradation such as Campaign for Conservation and Restoration of Lakes in 2010 by HMDA, Green Hyderabad Environment Program in 2002-2006, Hussain Sagar Lake and Catchment Area Improvement Project in 2006-2016, Telangana ku Harithaharam in 2016 and Mission Kakatiya in 2015. Table 2 shows Activities of Urban Municipal Administrative Authorities in Relation to Lakes which will also gives sense of policy perspectives. State policy perspectives regarding conservation of lakes denote how the state has perceived the problems of lakes and lakes ecosystem in the city and their meanings towards conserving them. “Mission Kakatiya program initially meant for revival of lakes in the entire Telangana but not mention of lakes in Hyderabad. But later, 26 lakes have selected under the program to rejuvenate them by beautification by the state government (“Special Drive for Save Lakes & Ponds in

Hyderabad | Ministers KTR & Harish rao in Review” 2017). This approach of lake conservation led to change in the geography of the lake. A walkway was built for people to use, and trees and plants were planted along the lane. Beautification of the lake also included other developments like putting up cement benches, lighting, fountain and park inside the lake. These works are in progress at the lake and the lake is still alive due to the drainage that comes from Film Nagar and Balkapur Nala channels. The “state government adopted 26 lakes under Mission Kakatiya program in Hyderabad city, Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu is one among them and it has been treating them as tools to gain revenue by making them as tourist spaces” . After this, “Irrigation department identified 169 lakes for restoration or beautification and sanctioned 100 crore for restoration of 64 lakes” (Anonymous 2014a).

Despite the state administrative efforts for lake conservation in Hyderabad, lakes status and situation has not seen any improvement but shows increase in degradation, encroachments, pollution of lakes. Reasons that were mentioned are as follows: lack of coordination between different responsible authorities, initiatives taken only if there is money by external donors, commitments confined to only lake as a unit but not considering the lake’s ecosystem as a unit and perception of lakes conservation varied from one actor to the other. In this, the state is most dominant in determining the policy perspectives and its meanings regarding implementation of such initiatives. State’s vision of cities is often carried by the way rulers perceive how the city should be.

Professor Janaki Nair pointed out that “The state’s vision and political leaders direct connections with other cities have implications on the geographies of those cities. For instance, Hyderabad and Bangalore cities have aspired to become Singapore during 1990s where the state governments have been involved in the very development of cities. It also highlights their futuristic vision of the city in order to make them as worldly competitive cities” (Nair 2005).

3.4 Influence and impact on Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu

“During the period from 1997-2002, the Andhra Pradesh Housing Corporation constructed nearly 45,000 houses for the poor in Ranga Reddy and Hyderabad districts” (Hyderabad Urban Development Authority 2003). This demand also resulted in spread of slums in the city at places where they weren’t supposed to be such as common lands, lake areas or river beds and other prohibited areas. But with the unprecedented population influx, local political leader’s interests worked for settling them along water channels, lake beds, buffer zones of lakes and river beds. These settlements have emerged by way of squatting, occupying and encroaching of various kinds of government land.

For this, the urban influx consists of migration not only from outside the city but also from within the city. Squatting, occupying and encroaching on common lands like lake and river beds heavily drawn population based on political and kin relationships. So, it is also equally important to see the simultaneous developments along with the processes of urbanization. It suggests that there is more than one factor that has been caused for change in the geophysicality of the lake. These factors needs to be considered in regards to change that not affected the communities but the entire eco-system of the lake. Developments on lake area are not only consists of urban planning and municipal administration but also new migrants in the area whose interests realized through the local political leaders support and encouragement. Here the question arises as to how illegal occupants are not removed from the lake areas, who allowed them, why municipal administration said no to their encroachment on the lake, how does the mediation happened in between whom, why there is no connection or interactions in between the urban planning authority and different residential and caste associations. Most time motives of local political leaders for not resisting encroachments are unknown.

The Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu lake area, which has spread over between the present Film Nagar and Shaikpet village area is a classic example of squatting, encroaching on lake bed and occupying of the common land. This is highlighted by the recent land regularization scheme, via G.O. 58 and 59, by the state government of

Telangana. G.O. 58 is “for assignment of unobjectionable Government land and surplus land under Urban Land ceiling to an extent of 125 square yards, which are in the possession of poor people for free of cost” (Government of Telangana 2014).

G.O. 59 was issued for “to alienate and regularize possession of unobjectionable Government land and surplus land under Urban Land Ceiling in respect of the possessions held by people, on payment basis for possessions held for both residential and non residential purposes” (Government of Telangana 2014). Shaikpet mandal had the highest number of applicants under G.O. 58, more than 10,000 households (Rohit 2015), which tells that much of government land was encroached. It was estimated that “at least 25 to 50 acres of government land in parcels of 125 square yards or more lie encroached in the mandal” (Rohit 2015). “The revenue department claimed that about 150 acres of government land was recovered in GHMC limits under this scheme”. It means that the recovered land is a government land which has been encroached by people. The government land can consists of lands that are usable, follow land, unusable (Kanche or Poramboku or Lawani patta) lands (Anonymous 2017d). By regularizing land that was encroached in various parts of GHMC, the revenue department showed the money they earned through sanctioning of pattas to those lands. On the ground, many people who applied for regularization of land have not yet received pattas for the land they occupied.

“Hanumantu B, resident of Mahatma Gandhi Nagar slum claimed under G.O. 58 to regularize his piece of land. He also paid some money to the local political leaders in order to apply for patta since selection of people in the slum also largely determined by the local political parties’ intervention and influence. It is the condition in all the 18 slums here. Any kind of development in the slums has the intervention of local political parties since they have a say and handle on what to be done and what not. Hanumantu said that we were promised to get the pattas but it is almost two months for now but we didn’t get yet. The municipal officers said that we have issued 1200 pattas in that 600 are still under process and applicants from your slum will get soon. Only some people got patta papers in the 18 slums of Shaikpet but we didn’t receive yet” (Hanumantu 2013).

Other services like water supply, electricity supply, roads and pension schemes in the slums of Shaikpet were being given with the support of local political leaders who have been monitoring every development in the area. Each and every development in the

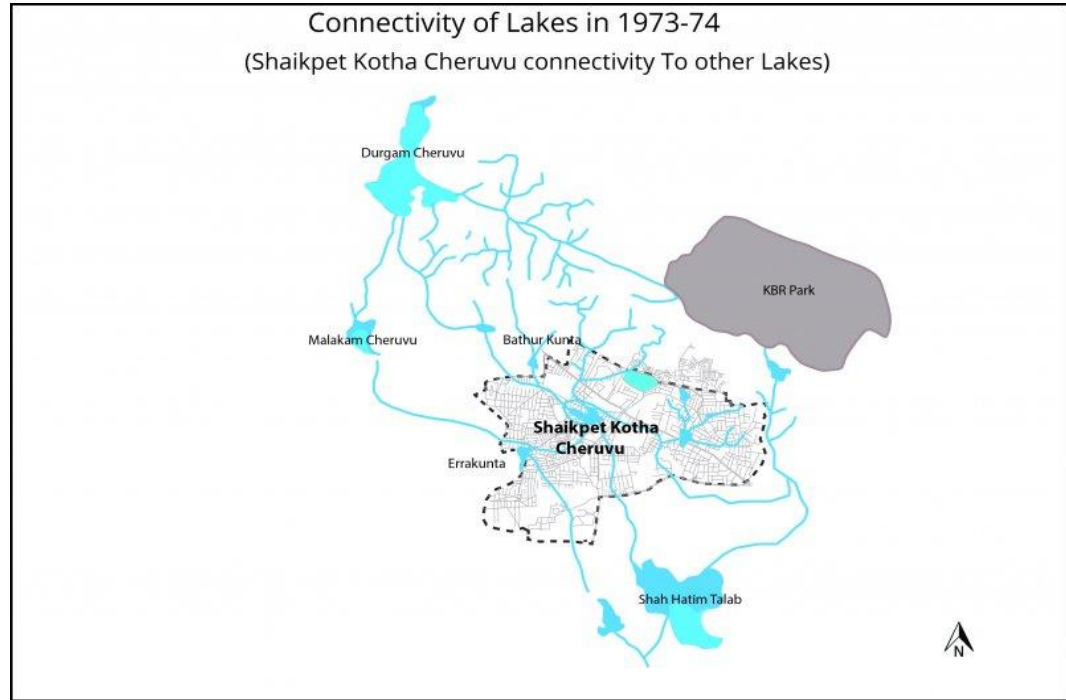
slums is carried out with the intervention of local political leaders. So these are the people who have been controlling what should be in the slums and what should not. It appears that the development of slums in the city is because of people who come and occupy land illegally. But this statement is not true in all the cases and the Shaikpet case suggests how local political interventions lead to unprecedented development of slums in areas like lakes. At present, slums in Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu have presence of all the local and national political parties and they have been active in the development of slums. All these developments in the slums have huge impacts on the lake and people's daily activities are affecting the lake and its water by dumping domestic waste.

Detailed study of Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu watershed which is carried out based on the catchment area of lake from people's history indicates that the lake areas have been perceived differently by different actors. The reasons for problems around lakes are primarily the way state and its administration perceived the lake through its conservation practices in the city. More importantly, it is also related to how people who had a long association (caste-based occupations) with the lake perceived the lake over a period of time. It is interesting to see the developments that occurred in the lake area during different points of time. The developments on lake not only shows the perception of different actors but it also denotes how each development by external forces such as new land development, globalization, and neoliberal policies. Urban development authorities and private real estate developers, have also shaped the people's orientation to lakes in the city. It is important to see how these transformations have played out at different scales on the lake as well as in its environs. In this, each meaning that has resulted from various transformations is really important to understand changes over a period of time by various actors. Further, it will also show the extent to which each actor exercised power over the lake and its environs. But all these developments have also been suggesting that the urbanization trends and development patterns have largely determined what really has happened to Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu. As a result, the lake is impacted the most by the activities of urban planning which divided lake area for residential and commercial purposes.

The impact on lake is not only confined to the influence of external forces such as new land development, globalization, and neoliberal policies, which do not have any relation with the lake but also people who have a long association with the lake. Transformations of the lake have started with the creation of new administrative boundaries that surrounded the lake area. Increase in land value has started to change the attitude of people who now want to benefit in accordance with the trends of urbanization. These urbanization trends have not only changed the physical landscape of the lake but also changed people's relationship with the lake.

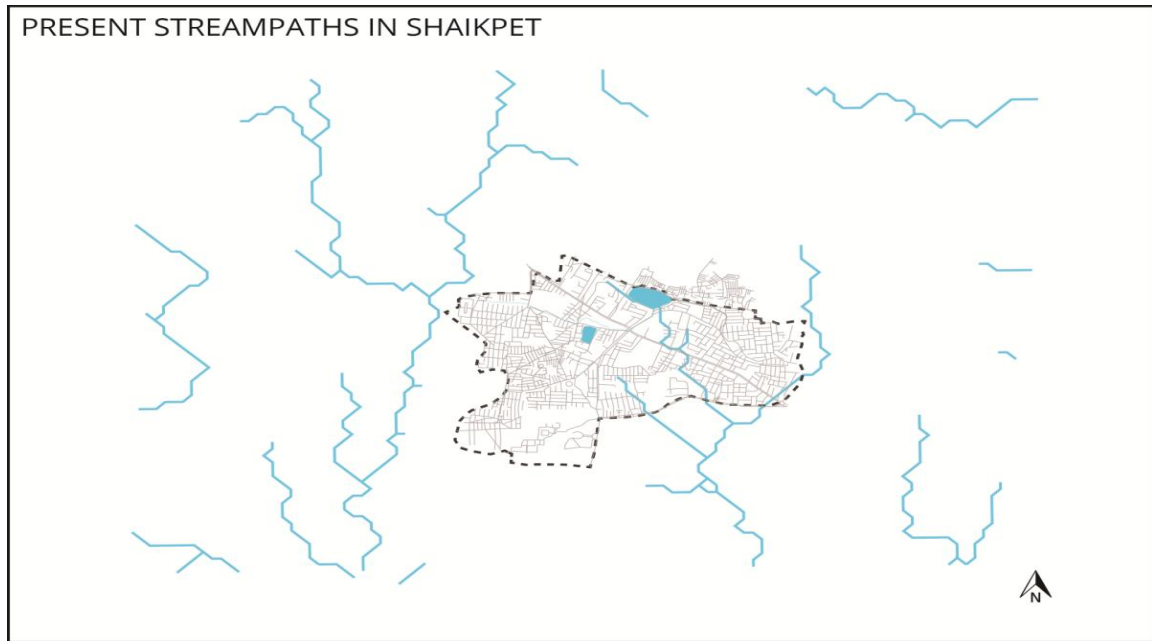
During the transition of lake from a fresh water body to a polluted lake, residents were left with no alternative other than selling their land around the lake due to change in the lake water which led them to search for alternative livelihoods (Sriramulu 2014). On the other hand, it is also evident that those residents of Shaikpet who have a claim on lake wanted to be part of the process of urbanization by selling their land. They also wanted to be the agents of urbanization by being in the real estate business and part of development of the area in terms of new buildings and other commercial activities. They also became (residents of Shaikpet who took active part in urbanization of the area by selling or transformation of land turned out as victims by facing the same problems that are common to everyone in the many of the places in city) victims of the same urbanization processes where they lost their claims and rights on the lake and its water, now paying for each drop of water, and suffering with the scarcity of water, pollution, floods etc. So here it is important to establish how the lake and its people have been impacted by the urban planning and the way urban planning is done in places like Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu.

Map 3.1: Lakes Connectivity in Relation to Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu



Map 3.1 shows lakes connectivity in relation to Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu, which is containing the details of actual stream networks that were surveyed during 1973-74 by Survey of India. Intent of showing these details about flows of natural streams and its connectivity to the lakes from one lake to the other, which denotes lakes system in this region and their existence for long (Survey of India 1975).

Map 3.2: Status of stream paths in Shaikpet



Map 3.2 shows the current status of natural stream paths in Shaikpet over a period of time. This map is also showing spread of residential areas, which occurred due to urbanization and migration from different parts of the country in lake areas. This gives us sense of changing status of lakes due to heavy built environment, and land use / land cover areas for development through urbanization over a period of time. For instance, construction of a road laid down at Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu, which is connected from Film Nagar Golconda.

3.5 History of Hyderabad Urban Planning

History tells us how rulers through time planned and built cities. For instance, Pius Malekandathi, is a Professor at the Centre for Historical Studies Jawaharlal Nehru University, argues in his work *Cities of Medieval India* that “there was two kinds of urbanism in medieval India, (i) ‘commercially charged urbanism’ in the towns like Jaunpur, Burhanpur, Multan, Patna, Ahmedabad, Ujjain, Ajmer and Allahabad sprang along trade routes manufacturing-cum-exchange as the major activity, (ii) ‘politically charged urbanism’ where urbanism grew up around a political seat, Delhi has been the prime example along with Agra, Daulatabad, Gulbarga, Gaur, Lahore, Bijapur, and

Golconda” (Fahad 2016). While there can be no universal principles at work, planning requires foresight and ability to judge right and wrong. When planners succumb to the lure of short term gains, cities end in disasters. In what follows, I provide a brief history of urban planning in modern Hyderabad and follow it up with an analysis of how the lake’s ecosystem has been affected.

“The city of Hyderabad was built in 1591 by Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah who was the fifth ruler of Golconda under the Quli Qutb Shahi dynasty” (Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation 2016). Hyderabad city’s growth tells us about the way rulers viewed its landscape. Each ruling regime left its imprint on the city’s development and its stature. These imprints exist in the form constructions of water bodies, such as tanks, which were also considered as development projects and something that the city takes pride in. A good example of this would be Hussain Sagar. Apart from these, took place constrictions of tall and magnificent architectural monuments such as royal palaces, courts, rest houses, and administrative buildings, but also through other service-based infrastructure such as roads, railway stations, bridges, hospitals, and rest/leisure buildings (*sarais*).

Over time, the city’s boundary has been extended several times, each time bringing in more and more agricultural and non-agricultural land into development. “The city’s urbanization process was impacted by the pressures of increasing population due to influx of migrants. While the increase in population during 1970s and 1980s was fundamentally due to the setting up heavy manufacturing industries around the city, after 1991, it was due to the processes of urbanization over-lapped with the liberalization of the economy both at the federal and state levels (Rao, 2007)” (Das 2015). “Municipal administration for Hyderabad city was introduced in 1869, when Hyderabad was divided into four zones and its suburbs were divided into five zones. In 1886, a special officer was given charge of the area and Chaderghat was constituted as a municipality. In 1921, Hyderabad municipality’s range increased from 55 sq.kms to 84 sq.kms. the status of Municipal Corporation was given after merging Hyderabad it with Chaderghat municipality. In 1937, the Jubilee Hills municipality was established; however,

Hyderabad's corporation status was removed during in 1942. In 1945, Secunderabad municipality was created, and in 1950, Hyderabad city was again given corporation status and this time Jubilee Hills municipality was also included. Subsequently, in 1955 by merging Hyderabad Municipal Corporation with Secunderabad Municipality, Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad (MCH) was established. A further change was effected on 16th April 2007 by merging 12 municipalities and 8 gram panchayats with Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad to Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC)" ("Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation" 2018). Then the Hyderabad Development Authority formed HUDA's under the Andhra Pradesh Urban (Dev.) Act 1975 by extending the jurisdiction an area of 1,348 sq.km, which includes MCH, 10 surrounding municipalities of Ranga Reddy, Medak districts, and vast area under gram panchayats. HUDA was reorganized in 2008 as HMDA with a 7,100 sq. km area under its authority by merging the erstwhile HUDA, BPPA, HADA, and CDA." ("Understanding Hyderabad City: Differences Between MCH, GHMC, HUDA, and HMDA" 2012a).

During the last four decades there has been a significant increase in population of the city due to migration. The expanding urban jurisdiction also changed agrarian land use pattern which located were mostly sensitively relative to the contours and gradients allowed water to flow and seep into the soil and also collected and stored in tanks. Chennamaneni and Rao (2007) point out that "capacity of the city to absorb precipitation was reduced due to change in land use pattern, and thereby producing waste water that were being let into lakes creating them as cesspools. These observations were drawn by studying the catchments of Hissain Sagar and Durgam Cheruvu located within the city limits" (Chennamaneni and Rao 2007). There was also reference to Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu in the study where in connectivity of the lakes and lake environs characterized by the nature of the area that was destroyed in the process of changing land use pattern. The report suggested that function of water bodies were being visualized as cesspools urban planning and other developments actively aided this transformation. As a result, problems such as pollution, water shortages, and floods/inundation occur in city.

In other words, I argue that changes in water bodies can be better understood by examining variables such as history of the place, temples and ritual practices, caste-based associations, global market forces, migration, slum development, new administrative authorities and urban planning in general.

According to Pareek, “planning is a continuous process of decision-making, which aims at achieving desirable goals. Its ultimate goal is the welfare of the mankind and its nature is problem solving” (Mujtaba 1994). “The city of Hyderabad was originally planned by Mir Momeen, a Persian scholar who oversaw the construction of Charminar and the surrounding areas in a grid pattern in the 16th century on the southern banks of Musi River” (Anonymous 2016a). Since then, the city grew by gradually adding areas on the northern banks of the river as well. North of the city, Hussain Sagar was built as a fresh water lake. And still further north of it, the British cantonment emerged in the 18th century around the village of Trimulgherry. “The first modern planning initiative in Hyderabad did not occur until after the great flood in the Musi River in 1908. After this flood, the Hyderabad government constituted the City Improvement Board in 1912 to organize, structurally the whole city” (Kalpana and Geeta Reddy 2011). “It was only in 1975 that a new core area plan with zonal regulations was created by the newly constituted Hyderabad Urban Development Authority. It was also prepared master plans and zonal developmental plans in the later years” (“Understanding Hyderabad City: Differences Between MCH, GHMC, HUDA, and HMDA” 2012b). Subsequently, many zonal plans made in order to develop the areas in various parts of the city and also the master plan revised for the erstwhile Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad area in 2010” (Anonymous 2010). The mandate of the master plan was to create regulations regarding:

- **Land use:** Purpose of land use (residential, commercial, entertainment, industrial, conservation, recreation, special reservation zone, manufacturing, traffic and transportation)
- **Infrastructure development:** Roads, flyovers and buildings
- **Zoning:** In terms of services, urban planning, infrastructure development and economic development

- ***Economic development:*** Industrial development, development of services
- ***Transport:*** Roads, land use, connectivity and network, and
- ***Environment:*** Conservation methods for biodiversity and water bodies

According to Alam (1972) “it was during the period from 1951-1961 that the first assessment of vacant lands in the west and south was carried out to identify potential sites for infrastructural facilities, shopping convenience etc. He observes that vacant land was heavily concentrated on the west and south part of Hyderabad city” (Alam and Khan 1972). Shaikpet is located in the western part of the city and consists of hilly and rocky areas which cannot be used for residential or any other purposes. Hence, the city did not expand here as in other parts of the city even though it lies on the city boundary. However, by late 1990s, this situation had dramatically changed. In its draft master plan of 2003, HUDA observed that land use pattern shows that residential zones expanded with population increase. This shift corresponded with another shift. According to National Remote Sensing Agency (NRSA), “satellite image analysis in 1993 indicates that the extent of water bodies was much less than the area marked as full tank level areas⁵” (Hyderabad Urban Development Authority 2003).

3.6 Infrastructure Development and Economic Growth Ushered through Neoliberal Policies

The same plan also, however, proposed a land use plan for Special Area Development authorities which has been created by the erstwhile government of Andhra Pradesh by amending the Andhra Pradesh Urban Areas (Development) Act 1975 (Hyderabad Urban Development Authority 2003). The new special areas proposed at this time were:

⁵ “The full tank level is the highest level which water could be stored in the tank. Since or any excess water will go out through the surplus weir. The height of the surplus weir is same as the full tank level (Seenivasan, R.2006-07)” (Padian n.d.).

- Cyberabad Development Authority through G.O.MS. No. 21 M. A, dated 20th January 2001 by identifying an approximate area of 52 sq.kms of total area under out of HUDA's jurisdiction
- The Buddha Purnima Project Authority around Hussain Sagar lake through G O Ms. No. 575 M A dated 12th December 2000 by excluding approximately 9.02 sq kms of area out of HUDA's jurisdiction
- The Hyderabad Airport Development Authority through G.O. Ms. No. 352 M A dated 30th July 2001 consisting of 89 villages (total 438.80 sq km) by excluding parts of HUDA (approx 168.55 sqkm) and by adding more areas (270.25 sq km) south of the Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad (MCH).

The identification and creation of these new special areas impacted land use of area around Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu. There was also an increase in the value of land and increased demand for rental housing. Creation of Cyberabad Development Authority (CDA) resulted in transformation of land by changing its usage based on changed land value since the lake falls at the vicinity of CDA. "The master plan for the Cyberabad Development Authority area puts forth a proposed land use for various zones" (Deekshith 2018). In the villages adjacent to Shaikpet, such as Manikonda and Dargah, lands were allotted to a number of MNCs, national and local organizations for setting up IT and IT-related firms and businesses by the state governments. For illustration, "Telugu Desam led state government had allotted 30 acres to Software Company Wipro, 15 acres to VJIL a consultant, 7 acres to Polaris Software Ltd., 50 acres to Infosys, 54 acres to Microsoft, 17 acres to Boulder Hills, 110 acres to MR, 200 acres to Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) and 250 acres to Indian School of Business (ISB). Similarly, the congress party led state government allotted 108 acres land to Lanco Hills Technology Park" (Anonymous 2017a).

Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation Ltd (APIIC) has played crucial role in the new land development around Shaikpet by using the area for IT parks. This development shows that land usage is not only determined solely by the planning authority but many other agencies had a role hand in the transformation and transactions.

On examining closely, a portion on the land in Shaikpet has been allotted to a private company for development so that revenue is accrued by the erstwhile Government of Andhra Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh Housing Board. For example, “Deccan Infrastructure and Land Holdings Limited (DILL) was given land to develop (by issuing G.O. Ms. No. 1555 in 2007 and 1228 in 2008) for commercial purposes like hotels and residential complexes” (Anonymous 2013). The change in land use pattern in Shaikpet is a complex story since ownership of land was complex. These owners include Bhoodan Trust, Waqf Board, Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad and HUDA now HMDA. For instance, according to a respondent, Sidda Sadanand (vice-president of Gangaputra Sangham), “Nizam Circar had given 52 acres and 10 guntas under Bhoodan movement to Acharya Vinoba Bhave. In this, some of the land was encroached and used for various purposes. In Sidda Sadanand words, some of the encroached land was turned into a residential colony and some land was given to set up a school called Sakkubai Memorial High School” (Sidda Sadanand 2014). State Congress President Minority department Mr. Mohammad Siraj Uddin protested against “the construction of road on Shaikpet graveyard and demanded cancellation of agreement between Municipal Corporation and Waqf Board” (Anonymous 2011).

Figure 3.1: Graveyard at south side of the Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu



The graveyard is located at the south side of the Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu (see figure 3.1) and the road cuts through the graveyard and then leads to Film Nagar and Banjara Hills road by cutting through the natural flows that were connected to Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu (see figure 3.2). This is the road proposed by HMDA from Film Nagar to Golconda and the works implemented by GHMC. In this section I have highlighted the lack of co-ordination among government agencies and the problems that create for cross-cutting domains. So for example, road development does not sufficiently consider ecological and social contexts.

Figure 3.2: Road Construction from Film Nagar to Golconda via Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu



3.7 Infrastructure Development and Economic Growth

Sivaramakrishnan, Kundu and Singh (2005) have documented the extent, patterns, and trends, socio-economic and spatial characteristics of urbanization by using the

migration data. The authors show “despite lack of robust data one can conclude that global market forces caused rapid urbanization especially during 1990s, when state governments aggressively promoted policies to attract multinational investments” (Sivaramakrishnan, Kundu, and Singh 2005). Andhra Pradesh was one of the states influenced by global market forces as Nirmala Rao (2014) argues, “Since 1990s, the Andhra Pradesh state government is proactive in taking initiatives to promote growth and investment. The state developed its own strategies, prioritized its investments and liaised directly with foreign investors and it is proved as proactive state by bringing economic reforms more than any other state in between 1994 to 2004” (Nirmala 2014).

Rapid development in the city landscape has started after neoliberalism which opened up economy across the borders. “Densification due to speculation and exponential population growth created extreme stress on infrastructure in the Hi-Tech City precinct, rampant land use conversions, asphyxiation of natural precincts like ‘Durgam Cheruvu’ and Botanical gardens and intense movement of automobile traffic through many calm residential areas adversely impacting their livability” (Anonymous 2017b). These new economic policies and urban planning has resulted not only in the land use being changed, but also entities such as, water bodies, plants and other living creatures. “Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) destroyed 500 year old water channel in order to drain sewerage away which is entering into the lake” (Serish 2015). Construction of six lane road from Film Nagar to Quli Qutub Shahi Tombs destroyed natural streams, which have connected to Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu from the upstream lakes” (Anonymous 2016b).

By creating new authorities with new rules and regulations, Hyderabad also used public-private partnership governance models. As a result, new private players started to play a key role in the major infrastructural programs. The PPP (Public and Private Partnership) model was brought by the local governments in the major infrastructural programs. For instance, “the GMR Hyderabad International Airport Limited (GHIAL) is a consortium between the state government and private partners including the GMR group to develop the Shamshabad International Airport” (Bhan, Srinivas, and Watson

2017). “These are basically brought by and for the interests of the state as well as local political party aspirants” (Schoneveld 2008). In light of these aspirations and global economic forces, the areas that have come under urban planning were never thought through carefully in terms of their physical and ecological character. These problems and oversights can be observed in lake areas as well.

The urban watershed of Hyderabad is riddled with problems arising out of inadequate knowledge of the hydrological system, which many-a-times on ignoring and this results in failures of various initiatives and also generate new hydrological problems. “The absence of an effective coordination mechanism, amongst municipal, metropolitan and state level agencies has implications for orderly spatial development, coordinated infrastructure provision, local economic growth, development management, service delivery and expenditure effectiveness” (P. P. Rao and Venkatesh 2011). Rao and Venkatesh also draw on “how Hyderabad Urban Agglomeration witnessed unsustainable development through its land-use and land-cover patterns which indicates weak administration, population increase due to migration and inappropriate planning” (P. P. Rao and Venkatesh 2011). The work of cleaning the Balkapur Nala (Purana Nala) was given to a private consultancy by GHMC. However, the cleanup work in the stretch from Malaka Cheruvu to Hussain Sagar was only undertaken Balkapur Nala does not start from Malaka Cheruvu, but starts from outside the city boundary and connects many lakes through its flow before merging in Hussain Sagar. According to Ali Khan (1991) “Hussain Sagar was built in 1562 by Ibrahim Qutub Shah and was fed by the Balkapur river which branches off from the Musi about 32 miles from Hyderabad” (Ali Khan 1991).

3.8 Implications of un-model of development

Hyderabad city has been increasingly portrayed by media and civil society groups as an unsustainable area due to densification with population growth and its impact on the peri-urban areas. Land use change has transformed the nature of peri-urban areas of Hyderabad which have used land for different purposes by undermining what is there within the land. For instance, the way water bodies have been destroyed in the name of

development or expansion of city or industrial or residential purposes. The status of water availability in the city is reported by HUDA as follows: “Present source of water for Hyderabad are the Osmansagar, Himayatsagar, Manjira and Singur reservoirs. As in 2002, the total availability of water is 735 MLD including the enhancement of 55 MLD made possible from Singur” (Hyderabad Urban Development Authority 2003). Apart from this, Hyderabad city is also drawing water from Kishna River through phase I, II, III and “the state plans to bring Godavari river water as well due to steep fall in the ground water table” (Anonymous 2017e).

The status of water bodies in the city got attention with “the encroachments on Gandipet reservoir case which is one of the main water resources for the city’s water needs” (Anonymous 2015a). The case of Gandipet reservoir pushed for checking of all encroachments on lakes, enforcing the “Irrigation Act, 1357 against constructions in FTL limits and also to list out lakes that are witnessing encroachments” (Government of Andhra Pradesh n.d.). Then, the “HUDA enlisted the number of lakes in the city which are now 169 which are bigger than 10 Hectares (25 acres)” (Anonymous 2018b). Ownership of all the lakes does not vest with the Government.

“While 62 lakes are fully Government owned, 25 are in private hands and 82 are owned partly by Government departments and partly by private individuals. However, even private ownership does not entitle the owners to reclaim or destroy the lakes or use them for housing and other urban uses in accord to Sec. 48 of the Telangana Area Irrigation Act, 1357F” (Hyderabad Urban Development Authority 2000). In May 2000, “HUDA published a notification of major lakes for public information and caution” (Hyderabad Urban Development Authority 2003).

“APWALTA Act was also brought to promote water conservation and tree cover in 19.04.2002” (Government of Andhra Pradesh 2002).

CDA area regulation activity brought by the Master Plan for Cyberabad Development Authority states “no construction activity is permitted in water bodies use except for Jetties, embankment, temporary kiosks on the shore and other open air

recreational activities and water sports” (Cyberabad Development Authority, n.d.). Then the Municipal Administration and Urban Development Department, HMDA issued an order “to ensure preservation and protection of lakes and water bodies in HMDA area, the Government of Andhra Pradesh constituted a Lake Protection Committee (LPC) vide G.O.Ms.No.157 MA&UD (I1) Department Dt.06-04-2010” (Government of Andhra Pradesh 2010).

The nature of urbanization has impacted the lake area, which involves intersecting histories of administration has been the predominant narrative and emphasis of most research studies. Lets attention has been given to occupational-change, caste and cultural practices that may also provide potential explanation on the changes lakes have been facing.

Urban services are basically comprised of basic amenities that people who live in the city need like housing, water supply, electricity supply, drainage facilities, provision for ration card, voter card and pension card. Housing has become a huge demand in urban areas over the last few decades due to rapid urbanization and unprecedented migration from rural areas, especially after 1990s.

Table 3.1: Activities of Urban Municipal Administrative Authorities in Relation to Lakes

| No. | Initiatives | Year | Objectives | Remarks | Donor |
|-----|------------------|------|---|--|-------|
| 1 | APIIC | 1973 | Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation Ltd. was formed in 1973 by the GO No: 831 dated 10-SEP-1973 issued by Government of Andhra Pradesh. | APIIC was established in the year 1973 for identifying and developing potential growth centres in the State fully equipped with developed plots/sheds, roads, drainage water, power and other infrastructural facilities; providing social infrastructure, like housing for workers near industrial zones; coordinating with the agencies concerned for providing communication, transport and other facilities. | |
| 2 | G.O.Ms.No.50 M.A | 1989 | “Prohibiting interception of any inflows of water into the lakes, removal of unauthorized check dams, tapping of groundwater in the catchment areas of Osmansagar and Himayatsagar” (Municipal Administration and Urban Development Department 2007). | | |

| No. | Initiatives | Year | Objectives | Remarks | Donor |
|-----|---|------------|--|---|-------|
| 3 | Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply & Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) | 1.11. 1989 | “The Supply of portable water including planning, design, construction, maintenance, operation & management of water supply system” (Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board 2015). | | |
| 4 | G.O.Ms.No.192 M.A | 1994 | “Prohibits the establishment of any polluting industries, major hotels, residential colonies or any other pollutant activities in the catchment area within 10 km radius from full tank level To prevent pollutants from upstream as well as downstream at some extent” (Municipal Administration and Urban Development Department 1994) | 84 villages falling within the 10 km radius in the catchment area Shaikpet is one among them | |

| No. | Initiatives | Year | Objectives | Remarks | Donor |
|-----|-------------------------------------|-------------|--|---------|-------------------|
| 5 | G.O.Ms.No.111 | 16.07.2007 | “To prevent unauthorised occupations in the catchment areas of Himayat Sagar and Osmansagar” (Municipal Administration and Urban Development Department (II) Department 1996). | | |
| 6 | APWALTA | 2002 | “To promote water conservation and tree cover” (Government of Andhra Pradesh 2002). | | |
| 7 | Green Hyderabad Environment Program | 2002 - 2006 | “To Increase the green cover in Hyderabad Development Area Conservation, treatment and management of 87 lakes in Hyderabad Development area” (Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority 2016a). | | Royal Netherlands |

| No. | Initiatives | Year | Objectives | Remarks | Donor |
|-----|---|-------------|---|---|---|
| 8 | Hussain Sagar Lake and Catchment Area Improvement Project | 2006 - 2016 | “To fulfil the drinking water requirements of the people by preventing untreated sewerage and industrial influents through the nalas that flows to the lake” (Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority 2016b). | | Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) |
| 9 | G.O.Rt.No.952 | 29.11 .2005 | “A committee proposed HMWSSB to permit activities in the downstream and government has submitted report and recommended activities beyond 10 km radius in the downstream such as low residential, commercial, IT Units, Public and Semi-public” (Municipal Administration and Urban Development Department 2005). | HMWSSB felt after careful examination that there is a need to regulate the developments in the downstream areas | |

| No. | Initiatives | Year | Objectives | Remarks | Donor |
|-----|--|---------------|---|--------------------------------|--|
| 10 | Lake Protection Committee | April 6, 2010 | “It was constituted in order to cater the protection of lakes in the Hyderabad Metropolitan Region. It is involved in the administration of the protection and improvement of lakes and their catchments” (Municipal Administration and Urban Development Department 2010). | | |
| 11 | Say No To Plastic (As part of Environmental Initiatives in BPP) | May 1, 2010 | “Metropolitan Commissioner of HMDA declared the area of Hussain Sagar and its surroundings as Plastic Free Zone. A series of measures are taken in this regard” (Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority 2010). | | |
| 12 | Campaign for Conservation and Restoration of Lakes | 2010 | “HMDA has identified over 20 major and minor lakes which face encroachment and poor maintenance”. (Anonymous 2010). | Durgam Cheruvu is part of that | Lakes restoration works like desilting took under the NREGES |

| No. | Initiatives | Year | Objectives | Remarks | Donor |
|-----|---|---------------|--|---|--|
| 13 | Mission Kakatiya | 2015 | “To rejuvenate all the lakes in the Telangana region including lakes in Hyderabad” (Government of Telangana 2015a). | | South Korea-based Green Climate Fund of the United Nations Organization (UNO) NABARD |
| 14 | Telangana Ku Harithaharam | July 11, 2016 | “86 institutions are partnering with GHMC and HMDA to plant 25 lakh saplings on July 11, 2016” (Government of Telangana 2015b), (Anonymous 2016c). | GHMC covers about 650 sq.kms comprises 150 wards & HMDA covers 7257 sq.kms | |
| 15 | Telangana Real Estate Development Authority (TREDA) | | “Self-regulated body and its vision is to encourage growth” (Treda 2017). | | |

| No. | Initiatives | Year | Objectives | Remarks | Donor |
|-----|--|---------------|--|--|---|
| 16 | Beautification of lakes in HMDA limits | July 14, 2018 | “Intended to make lakes as tourist spots” (Anonymous 2015b). | 535 crores accommodated for the development of 40 lakes in HMDA limits (seven districts) | HMDA providing 253 crores for 21 lakes and GHMC spending 282 crores for 19 lakes In this Gandipet lake itself received 100 crore by HMDA |

Source: Prepared by Author

CHAPTER IV

Lake Degradation and the Reworking of Caste

4.1 Introduction

At Shaikpet village, Kotha Cheruvu, I identified several socio-religious associations, which are all linked to the occupations that they pursue⁶. The argument is that the associations are not as caste that is witnessed in villages because as Luis Dumont argues they do not form part of a system. Many of the associations were formed post-1990s period, after the onset of structural changes brought forth by the state government necessity changes in how the people's response came about after witnessing several attractions that directly or indirectly impinge upon their livelihood. Thus we have Rajaka Sangham, Munnurukapu Sangham, and so on. A total of socio-religious associations were identified in this study, who all are located in Shaikpet and have strong links with the Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu in the village.

This chapter reports on analysis of the societal relations to the lake through their everyday activities. The developments on and around the lake by various actors have resulted in water-logging, contamination/pollution of water and have also led to flooding of low lying areas of the lake. This analysis is based on people's account of Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu and of their everyday activities on the lake and its water.

Contrary to expectations of urbanization dismantling caste, I show how urbanization leads to decline in traditional occupations and degradation of resources that are customarily claimed. With this situation, my study reveals growth in numbers and 'influence' of caste associations, and becoming nodal agencies for local politics and lobbying to claim various urban resources (see Hollup 1994 who found similar formations have come about in Mauritius). I also examine the emergence of residential

⁶ Traditional occupations on Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu are agricultural farming, fishing, washing, laboring in agricultural fields, and pot-making. Apart from these occupations there are also other socio-cultural usages exercised on lake such as ritual performances of Katta Maisamma, Eeramma, last rites of persons, exorcism, and grazing.

welfare associations among slum-dwellers in Shaikpet. Although these slum welfare associations are often seen as instruments for claiming citizenship rights, they also often work for making caste-based claims. In this chapter I show how the workings and reworkings of caste-based associations are closely tied to changes in the degradation of the lake and changing urban political economy.

4.2 Context

Around Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu, there are two specific types of civic associations: one organized around traditional occupations and the other around property. In the village society, traditional occupational groups known as *jatis* have always existed. With changing times, these groups got organized in modern forms as cooperative societies. Setting up of these associations is driven by a particular purpose, that is, the intent of it being a collective social group to promote public good or welfare of a social group. Resident Welfare Associations and Neighbourhood Welfare Associations/Societies are registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860. After 2001, the Andhra Pradesh Societies Registration Act, 2001 would apply. “RWAs are voluntary associations made by residents and they don’t have any statutory powers. For example, a Resident Welfare Association cannot really impact your right to hold or exercise rights over the property you own and will have its powers restricted to the contribution of sums for maintenance, the organization of workshops and cultural functions etc. As societies, Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) also pass their own rules and regulations to define their powers, functions, governance structure, names of dignitaries etc. Main work of an RWA is to address any disputes over management of the colony or maintenance of common areas” (Aggarwal 2017).

They have to create their own document that decides what their purpose is, and what are the terms of their membership, etc. Here is an article on the basics of law relating to Resident Welfare Associations that you might have seen, but sharing in case you have not:

A co-operative society is a different legal entity, usually registered under the state law on co-operative societies, the AP Co-operative Societies Act, 1964 which was amended in 2018, in Telangana. The main objective of a co-operative society is the economic betterment of its members (Andhra Pradesh Gazette 1995).

As for the caste-based associations and weaker section societies, there is nothing to indicate that they *have to be registered* under the law. These are essentially non-profit organizations. If registered, they are most likely to be registered under the Societies Registration Act, which permits for associations of seven or more members to register themselves for a wide variety of purposes. The pattern of caste-based associations and weaker section societies in Shaikpet containing at least seven members of a association such as President, Vice-president, General Secretary, Joint Secretary, Advisor, Treasurer, Operating Secretary, and Executive Members.

Figure 4.1: Letter pad of Ambedkar Nagar

DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR WELFARE COMMITTEE
 BASAMATHNAKA NAGAR, SUDH LABOUR UNITS & TRADE UNION
 (Regd. No. 513)
 Registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1929
 For the purpose of the Societies Registration Act, 1929
 P. Mohan Rao
 Chairman
 C. Narasing Rao
 Advisor

President
 Sri K. Nagaraju

Vice President
 Sri K. Nagaraju
 M.D. Choudhury
 K. Balamma

General Secretary
 Sri N. Yadagiri Chary

Joint Secretary
 Sri B. Buggala
 Sri K. Srinivas Chary
 Sri P. Nakhanna

Advisor
 Sri B. Ramiah
 Sri S. Venkatesh
 Sri S. Sain Begum

Treasurer
 Sri A. Parvatha Chary

Operating Secretary
 Sri M.D. Kasim
 N. Ananthamma

Executive Members
 Sri K. Narender
 Sri M. Sareem
 S.D. Zennath Begum

Working President
 Sri P. Sai Reddy

Organizer
 Sri. Md. Khaja
 Md. Nareem
 B. Laxmi

Executive Members
 Makenah
 D. Ramulu
 Vijay Kumar
 Md. Mahammad
 Bhasker
 Dargalah
 Md. Hameed
 Meenuddin
 S. Krishna
 Md. Jaffer
 Md. Tujuddin
 T. Renuka
 Md. Mallan Bee
 K. Lalitha
 A. Saravathi

To
 K. Srinivasulu

From
 Gen. Secretary

See the figure 4.1 and 4.2 which shows the letter pad of slum society or association which have containing the details of members.

Figure 4.2: Human Welfare Mahila Mandal Committee of Basava Taraka Nagar Slum

**Human Welfare Mahila Mandal Committee
of Basava Taraka Nagar Slum**

Basava Tarakanagar, Jubbil Hills, Film Nagar, Hyderabad
Registration No. 1056/93

President:
Smt Naseem Banu & Miya Khan

Vice-President:
N. Nagaraju
Jeehan Begum

General Secretary:
F. Sar Kumar

Joint Secretary:
Shehnaz Begum

Organising Secretary:
S. Chandra
A. Balarama

Treasurer:
D. Narayana
Bis Choud

Councillor:
Bis Akappa
B. Narayana

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

Bis. Hussain
P. Kalahanna
S. S. Srinivas
Kumar Begum
Rajya Begum
K. Ganga Raju
Sayed Farman
K. Raju
M. Akbar
M. Javed
S. Srinivas
B. Rajasekhar
M. Yousuf
M. Balaram
P. Saju
M. Jemal Khan

Rel:

Adm:
S. K. Vail & Sakinabi

Date:

Residential welfare associations have been established under “the Andhra Pradesh Societies Registration Act, 2001” (Andhra Pradesh Gazette 2001). Setting up of these associations is driven by a particular purpose, that is, the intent of it being a collective social group to promote public good or welfare of a social group. “The Resident Welfare Associations are societies that are formed to handle different issues and matters pertaining to its members.

According to Gopalakrishnan (2012) “The Resident Welfare Associations are societies that are formed to handle different issues and matters pertaining to its members. They act as the voice of their members and not only take care of ensuring good maintenance of the place but also represent members when and where needed on matters

related to the place” (Gopalakrishnan 2012). This distinction between the two types of societies: one organized around work and resources, and the other around property is critical to our understanding of the lake’s social geography. The caste-based societies make claims⁷ particularly in the realm of securing incentives from the government, while the resident welfare associations have been active when problems with civic amenities and services in the area needed improvement. However, this is not a strict separation of functions between the caste-based associations and residential welfare associations. There have been many instances of caste associations undertaking causes of service provision and environmental management while resident welfare associations have taken on the form and function of caste associations. But principally, functionalities of caste-based and RWAs are having clear instructions on the activity they suppose to be taken as mentioned above. So, what Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu case explains is that the mix of both activities by the associations which are caste-based and residential based on their interest.

4.3. Activities of caste-based and residential welfare associations on Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu

The present Shaikpet area is consisting of new colonies around apart from the core village area. There are five caste sangham’s (Gangaputra, Munnurukapu, Rajaka, Mudiraju and Harijan Sangham), eight colony welfare associations (Vinobha Nagar Colony Welfare Association, Maruthi Nagar colony welfare Association Dattatreya Nagar Colony Welfare Association, and so on), one Central Committee (which exercise power on the caste-based and residential welfare associations), and cooperative societies (Fishermen Cooperative Society). Shaikpet is also having the presence of eighteen slums (Ambedkar Nagar slum, Mahatma Gandhi Nagar slum, Basavataraka Nagar slum and so on) at Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu. These associations have established for particular purposes and their functionality is based on the association principles which will carry the intent.

⁷ State or asset that something is the case, typically without providing evidence or proof.

4.3.a. Gangaputra Sangham

Gangaputra Sangham main objectives: (objectives are drawn based on in-depth interviews with key respondents)

- To come out from the clutches of middlemen
- Establish power over other caste communities
- Control the resources

Figure 4.3: Bhavan of Gangaputra Co-operative Society and Gangaputra Sangham



According to Sidda Sadanand (Ex-general Secretary, Gangaputra Sangham member), “Fishermen Co-operative was society established in Shaikpet village during 1956 (see figure 4.3 which is not only functioning as a fishermen cooperative society but also Gangaputra Sangham bhavan). The main intent in establishing the Fishermen society in the village was to secure their livelihoods without the intervention of middlemen. These middlemen (Raja Singh and Savay Singh) were from Baniya community from

North India. Their intervention was not only in fish marketing activities but also in bidding process. By investing some money, middlemen used to bid and take away the authority to fish in the lake. Under those circumstances, the fishermen in the village became laborers to middle person who secured the bid. The, fishermen were not making much money in this arrangement as they could only catch fish and sell it to the highest bidder instead of selling them in the market. In sum though fishermen have a right on the lakes and its resources, they are unable to do much because ‘outsiders’ or middlemen have made a strong claim through various means such as to make money, bidding. In previous paragraph I noted how change is coming about for fishermen who were traditionally livelihoods that become a laborer in the fishing industry. This situation was aggravated by globalization, which gave cities like Hyderabad better access to fish markets that operated at much larger scales. Earlier, the fishermen used to sell their fish at the lake bund, near Shaikpet nala, on Purana Pul Bridge, in Begum Bazaar fish market and other surrounding villages. Men and women were involved in this activity where men used to bring fish and women used to go by foot to nearby villages to sell fish.

The fishermen were undermined by the system of middlemen who most times underpaid them, and made sustentative profits by selling the fish in bigger markets like Begum Bazaar fish market in the city. Some of the fishermen were also favored by the middlemen, which in turned them against whoever was vocal about the problems with the middlemen. Fishermen from Shaikpet responded gradually by becoming aware of the fishermen cooperative societies in the city and by interacting with them eventually set up a Fishermen Co-operative Society. With the establishment of the society⁸, the fishermen collectively started to decide for the welfare of fishermen in the village. Together they lobbied against the system of middlemen bidding in the city, and, ultimately the government passed a declaration that no middlemen in between fishermen and market. With government’s support the fishermen started accessing major markets in the city and came out of the ‘clutches’ of middlemen. The fishermen association began initiatives to

⁸ ‘Society’ means a society registered or deemed to be registered under the Act

safeguard themselves from external forces and slowly but surely started to work as an ‘agent’ for fishermen’s problems.” (Sidda Sadanand 2014).

Gangaputra Sangham emerged as the gateway to people and their problems in the village. The fishermen’s association also started to take decisions, collectively and on numerous activities that covered them. As a major community in the village they already had relatively greater control on affairs of entire village by especially holding caste panchayats. But the fishermen’s control is challenged by the Munnurukapus’ who have secured political power in the village. Gangaputras were dominant in term of number and Munnurukapus are dominant due to their close affiliation with national political parties like Indian National Congress (INC). So, there is a power struggle not only at the political level but also in the social matters since they are one of the higher castes in the Backward Caste communities. Though fishermen make up 60% of total village population, all the major political positions of the village are however occupied by Munnurukapus, who are large landowners, wield greater social status, and are members of the Gram Panchayat committee. The activities of the Fishermen Co-operative Society gradually got embedded into the developmental activities of the village, and there by sought community’s development in particular, and village development in general. Making themselves an agent for every negotiation with the local political parties as well as municipal administrative authorities in this region.

Organization of caste community associations in Shaikpet had started with the Gangaputra Sangham. Their subsequent intervention in all the village activities asserted their claim to being the dominant community in terms of number. They further established their power by establishing Mahankali temple for the entire village, which allowed them to ‘regulate’ the village population as they were the main decision makers with regards to temple activities. The Gangaputra Sangham also demonstrated an important strategy to the other caste communities by establishing Fishermen Co-operative Society to fight against the dominance injustice that had happened to the entire fishing community due to middlemen intervention in the fishing activity. These two events also

encouraged other caste communities to carve places for themselves in the village activities and they started to mimic the Gangaputras.

4.3.b. Munnurukapu Sangham

Main objectives of Munnurukapu Sangham: (objectives drawn based on in-depth interviews with key respondents)

- To be active in politics
- Obtain control on resources
- to obtain incentives from the government started to mimic Gangaputra Sanghamin
- diversify and develop Have chosen alternative livelihoods (where some have become businessmen, some are doing traditional work with some modifications, and some are involved in local politics)

Munnurukapus constitute about 6% of the total village population (Sidda Sadanand 2014), (Vimal 2014), and (Balaiah 2015). Though they are less in number, they are landlords in the village. Most of the land held by them is not only around the village but also on the Northern and Southern side of Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu. Traditionally, they are one of the upper castes in this region. They are also among the “elders” in Shaikpet village, i.e., they hold many influential positions, such as head of the Panchayat. Thus, Munnurukapus have a remarkable influence on village life despite their small numbers. Munnurukapus are politically active and they have been involved in various ways both from inside and outside, political parties like the Indian National Congress and the BJP. This socio-religious group has always secured positions governing the village. For instance, Mulle Satyanarayana worked for 30 years as the President for the Central Committee⁹ in Shaikpet. He also worked for Congress party occupying various positions in the state and Hyderabad city politics. Mulle Satyanarayana claimed that:

⁹ Shaikpet village has five caste-based associations and eight colony welfare associations and above that the Central Committee which is higher authority. Every activity that comes to Shaikpet, has to come through the Central Committee which has the power to decide for entire village. Central committee mostly involved in developmental activities that comes from the municipality or government, and also involves in cultural and social matters such as

నాకు నేషనల్ కాంగ్రెస్ పార్టీ తో ఉండేటటువంటి సంబంధాల వలన షేక్ షేట్ గ్రామానికి వసతి గృహాలు ముఖ్యంగా అణగారిన వర్గాల వారికి, స్కూల్ పిల్లలకు ఆడుకోవడానికి ఆట స్థలాలు మరియు ఇందిరాగాంధీ కమ్యూనిటీ హాల్ నిర్మాణం జరిగాయి. ఈ కమ్యూనిటీ హాల్ ను సెంట్రల్ కమ్యూనిటీ హాల్ కార్యక్రమాలకు కూడా వాడుకోవడం జరిగింది.

“It means that because of my association with the National Congress party, the village has received housing for the poor and downtrodden, playgrounds for children, a school, and the Indira Gandhi community hall which is also used for central community activities in Shaikpet” (Satyanarayana 2015).

Being one of the elders in the village, Munnurukapus are also involved in dispensing local justice; that is to resolve issues of disagreement in panchayat activities. As a result, they have a modicum of direct or indirect over other communities in the village.

Munnurukapu Sangham was established after the setting up of the Gangaputra Sangham in the village. According to G. Yadaiah (President, Gangaputra Sangham), “Munnurukapu Sangham was formed after Gangaputra Sangham in the village” (Yadaiah 2015). Mainly to gain power that may have been lost with the establishment of the Gangaputra Sangham in the village. In fact, these two communities have been ruling and organizing the village in ways suitable to them through temple activities, village festivals and village developmental activities. The Munnurukapus livelihoods option changed from agricultural cultivation to petty businesses and owners of rental housing due to change in Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu water and increase in land value. Further, the Munnurukapus also started to lobby local political leaders and parties just like

festivals and caste panchayats. Most of the time positions in Central committee had acquired by upper castes in the village. For instance, Malle Satyanarayana has worked as president for thirty years and now Ashok Kumar who belongs to Gangaputra Sangham. Central committee consists of two members from each caste-based association and colony welfare associations.

Gangaputra Sangham, for government incentives, subsequently efforts were also placed by Munnurukapus through cultural activities.

4.3.c. Mudiraju Sangham

Traditionally the occupation of Mudirajus is to hunt and gather food articles and selling them for their living. Their main objectives:

- to stem loss of livelihood
- to mitigate impact as directly affected by the changes in the lake water
- identify chosen alternative livelihoods (some have chosen to be part of fishermen community by training, some were involved in real estate business and some built apartments for rental housing for new software workers migrating into the area)

According to some of the Gangaputra community respondents, Mudirajus make up 11% of the total village population. Their main livelihood source is hunting and gathering. They were directly affected due to changes in the quality of lake water. They are one among the higher caste communities in the village who do not have much land and ‘status’ in the village.

Figure 4.4: Mudiraju Sangham bhavan



The Mudiraju Sangham established once they started to see shrinkage in their resource base due to change in the water. Figure 4.4 shows the Mudiraju Sangham bhavan located near Gangaputra Sangham. They have chosen fishing practice which was the major activity in the village because of the presence of several lakes around. They learned from Gangaputras how to fish in lakes and gradually got involved in fishing activity which gives some employment and economic stability. The Gangaputra fishermen in the village objected, once they noticed that many in the Mudiraju community were taking up this occupation. The original fishermen in the village, that is Gangaputras, tried to prevent them from entering into their space by approaching some political leaders. But Mudirajus also started interacting with the local community and political class. By then, the Mudirajus started to claim that they are also part of fishing community, which the Constitution of Indian classified them under “one sub-category that is Backward Castes (A). This sub-caste category labeled as Telugollu in Telugu language which embedded many sub-categories within this sub-caste” (Government of Andhra Pradesh 2009).

According to N. Sriramulu (Member, GangaputraSangham) “historically Gangaputras are by birth fishermen, but Mudirajus through doing fishermen’s work are becoming Gangaputras” (Sriramulu 2014).

Thus, the Gangaputras’ disagreement and argument is that the profession-based Mudirajus will not be considered as Gangaputra community because Gangaputras are fishermen by birth. The Gangaputras are anxious about the reservations and other government incentives that they feel entitled will slowly be being grabbed by the Mudiraju community.

In the words of Sidda Sadanand (Ex-General Secretary, GangaputraSangham): “The matter is that the Mudirajus are doing small-time fishing and they are claiming that they are also Gangaputras. So how can they also claim the reservations allotted to Gangaputras? Even if they fish, how can they become Gangaputras? The government has given Gangaputras these opportunities because there are many poor among us. Now they want to take these opportunities away from us” (Sidda Sadanand 2014).

Telangana state government’s move to merge Mudiraju’s (BC ‘D’) into Gangaputra community (BC ‘A’) was strongly opposed by the Gangaputra community across the state and “Neeli Ramachander (District President of Telangana Gangaputruula Sangham [TGS] and BC ‘A’) Joint Action Committee (JAC) Chairperson stated that all the castes in the group were vehemently opposing the government’s move and staged protest in front of the office of the BC Commission” (Anonymous 2017f).

At the same time it is not the Mudiraju community alone which is adopting this profession because of some benefits. Some of the people from Harijan communities are also starting to fish in the lakes since the Irrigation Minister announced that “every lake in Telangana region should be owned by fishermen only” (Anonymous 2017c). Some of the rural areas in Telangana region do not have fisher folk; there are different communities that have been practicing fishing activity. With the Minister of Irrigation’s statement, all these different communities across Telangana region came under the Gangaputra community. With this, the opportunities and incentives reserved for

Gangaputras are diminishing/reducing away and being distributed among new population due to political decision. One more statement made by Irrigation Minister T. Harish Rao was that “people who have been displaced in the irrigation project areas have the right to fishing in the nearby tanks and lakes” (Anonymous 2018a). This has been strongly objected by the Telangana Fishermen Co-operative Societies. They have been fighting against this “injustice to the community” where their resources are slowly being taken away by other communities.

Mudiraju community which is also active in the real estate business started to witness sharp rise price of their land in Shaikpet and many land holders sold their land, in and around the lake. Mudirajus living in other areas of the city were already involved in real estate business and that was in some ways were inspirations for Mudirajus living in Shaikpet. Mudiraju Sangham, thereafter have started negotiations with local political parties for bettering their lives by strengthening their claims under these circumstances.

4.3.d. Rajaka Sangham

Their main objectives:

- to stem loss of livelihoods
- to mitigate ‘losses’ due to change in the lake water
- to survive against all the odds that have emerged due to new land development, and have been mimicking Gangaputra and other caste communities in order
- adjust similarly in the face of difficulties in pursuing traditional occupation (some become governments employees and some chose education as their career option)

Figure 4.5: Rajaka Sangham bhavan



According to the members of Rajaka Sangham, the Rajaka caste community makes up 4% of the total population of the village. Their main livelihood option is washing clothes. Figure 4.5 shows that the Rajaka Sangham bhavan that has established inside the lake beside their washing activity area. They have been sustaining on Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu and its water since the time of their forefathers. Their livelihoods were directly affected due to change in the lake water. Their association with the lake hasn't been lost yet. They are still using the water from the lake, not from the lake's surface but groundwater pumped by a bore well inside the lake since the water in the lake is totally contaminated.

According to Raju K (member in Rajaka Sangham and vice-president of Maruthi Nagar welfare association) the reasons for establishing Rajaka Sangham are as follows "We used to wash clothes in Kotha Cheruvu. We still do, but earlier it was a fresh water body. We even washed clothes in Balkapur Nala. We got land at the north side of the lake for housing but it was occupied by others and the case is in court. The land of two and half acres was given to us during the N. T. Rama Rao period. Initially nobody was interested to build houses there because it is far from the village and the whole land is

covered with the rocks and shrubs. Later all the people in the sangham tried to get the land but it was already transferred on some other names so we filed a case. More importantly if you want to get something in the village for your community you need more numbers, and then only your voice will be heard. Otherwise no work can be done. So now we are trying to get people from the same community in the slums around Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu. Here it is still higher castes who dominate at every level of any activity. So we are going to improve our sangham we still do not have our own community bhavan. We are also including people in the slums belongs to same caste from different parts of Telangana since number is key for any negotiation at the political level or community level” (Raju 2015).

They established the Rajaka Sangham because the water in the lake was polluted by other communities around the lake. Their efforts to prevent pollution in the lake water have failed since they consider themselves as a small powerless group against those who are polluting the lake. They also felt that it is difficult for them to lay claim collectively on the lake water since their numbers are small. Here the number plays an important role to claim or show the strength in order to achieve anything (Srinivas 2002). They have been seeing how Gangaputras fought against people who were polluting the lake not only from upstream and also around the lake. They have also realized how Gangaputra Sangham has been dealing with the issues that they have faced through the number that they have. But here, we see the tragedy where caste communities in relation to lake have been fighting for their own groups but not collectively as a village. Hence, Rajakas in the village also started to mimic Gangaputras in various issues while losing their control on their resources. Part of the story was that they persuaded a local political leader regarding the issue and were provided a bore well inside the lake for their livelihood. They have also started to extend their community in the village by recruiting new migrants in slums in and around the lake, who are also from Rajaka community, but from Sangareddy, Medak and Nalgonda districts.

According to K. Raku (Member, RajakaSangham) “we need more numbers because higher castes in the village are not listening to us about solving our problem. So

the only way to improve our strength is through show of numbers. Only then will everyone look at you and listen. This is what is happening exactly with the Gangaputra Sangham who has been successful in solving problems that they have been facing” (Raju 2015). Thus, the Rajaka Sangham (Shaikpet) has started to interact with the washermen in the slums around to include them as well so that their number will increase and they will be able to negotiate with any local political party or leader in the locality.

Over the years Rajakas have been mobilized towards education, government jobs, and software training. Most of them are not interested in doing the traditional job i.e. washing. The entire new generation is no longer taking up the profession. The older population also modified their way of washing clothes due to change in the lake water. Many of them have stopped washing clothes and taken to running ironing stands. Currently, some still do washing at the lake bed, some do the washing part inside their house, while some have given up on washing jobs but are continuing by ironing clothes. They have also mobilized community members to apply for government jobs via the reserved category and other incentives. Now they have been fighting for the available resources on lake through the Sangham.

4.3.e. Harijan Sangham

Their main objectives:

- to stem loss of livelihoods
- to mitigate ‘losses’ due to change in the lake water
- exposed to state level Dalit activism in the state as well as in city
- to survive against all the odds that have emerged due to new land development, and have been mimicking Gangaputra and other caste communities in order
- Mobilized towards Constitutional guarantees such as reservations in government jobs and opportunities in education

Harijan Sangham makes up 17% of the total village population. Their main livelihood source was laboring in the agricultural fields of Munnurukapus. They have lost

their livelihoods directly with the change in the lake water where agricultural fields were sold off by Munnurukapus and transformed into residential plots. Their alternative livelihoods started when the Harijan Sangham was established in the village with intent to fight against oppression by the higher castes in the village.

Figure 4.6: Harijan Sanghambavan



Figure 4.6 shows that BJR Harijan Sangham which also functions as community hall for harijan community in the village. They have been oppressed for all these years and have suffered in silence due to the treatment and discrimination meted out by the upper castes in the village. Earlier, “Dalits did not even have the right to walk on the main street of the village. There was a two glass systems in the village. Their existence in the village was entirely dependent on the Munnurukapus since their occupation was only agricultural laboring” (Jangaiah 2014). In search of alternative livelihoods after change in the lake area, they found Dalit movement in Hyderabad city and across the state which is Madiga Reservation Porata Samiti (MRPS). They were actively involved in Dalit movement and activities and started to mobilize the government opportunities and Constitutional guarantees that they have. They have given priority to education and most of them aspire to get into government jobs. This also gave them an opportunity to gain access to local political leaders from the same community.

With this identity, they have started to become less dependent on the higher castes, unlike in the past. Their status has changed due to various opportunities from the government. They have also mimicked Gangaputra Sangham and other community associations to get the things done by approaching and using strategies on caste and community lines. Establishment of Harijan Sangham has not only given them a personal identity but also changed their social status by helping them gain access to education and employment. Now they are receiving respect from higher castes not on the basis of caste but on the basis of class in the village. The oppression meted out by upper castes has reduced drastically since the SC/ST Atrocity Act came in. But they still face discrimination and ill-treatment in different forms. For instance, there will be a committee for Bonalu festival in the village for every two year celebration. This committee has people from all the caste-based sanghams as members. But the higher posts like Chairman and Joint Secretary and Treasurer are always held by higher castes in the village.

In the words of B. Jangaiah (Advisor), C. Balaraju (President) and C. Sadanand (Treasurer of Harijan Sangham) “higher castes openly say that Bonalu festival committee included people from all castes as members. The committee considers everyone equal and considers everyone's views, opinions and decisions with regards to the festival in the village. But in practice, however, the lower castes like Mudirajus, Rajakas and Harijans are often not considered in the decision-making process. All the higher caste people in the village say the same thing that we are so inclusive unlike other villages and caste communities and we treat everyone equally but in practice it is not the same. They have included us in the Bonalu festival committee but not as equal members. They call us for meetings but don't ask our opinion to celebrate Bonalu festival. Even if we suggest anything they will not consider it and finally they implement whatever decisions they make for festival celebrations” (Sadanand, Jangaiah, and Balaraju 2014).

Establishment of sangham helped us gain access to many leaders that could in turn be beneficial for bringing in development in the village. We then accessed leaders not only from the same community but also other caste communities. People also

mobilized themselves as being one of the dominant caste groups in terms of number but not as a social group among all. This started with being involved in the Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi (MRPS) movement led by Manda Krishna Madiga. As a result, whichever political leader visited the village the Harijan community leaders were able to represent the entire community and facilitate some developments by negotiating with their numbers like the other caste communities in the village. The sangham also gave us an identity as one of the main actors in the overall village development” (Sadanand 2014).

4.3.f. Central committee

Central Committee in Shaikpet village level consists of members from caste-based associations and residential welfare associations. This agency is the higher authority above the different caste-based associations and residential welfare associations. There are four major caste-based associations and eight residential welfare associations in Shaikpet. Most of the activities at the Shaikpet village level take place through the approval and agreement of the central committee. The Central Committee is mostly involved in village developmental programs that come from the municipal corporation or government, in village festivals and in resolving issues between different associations. Most of the time, higher positions of Central committee are occupied by people from the higher caste communities in the village. For instance, Mulle Satyanarayana (Munnurukapu Sangham) worked as the president of the Central Committee for thirty years, and now Ashok Kumar, who belongs to the Gangaputra Sangham, has been elected as president. The central committee consists of two members from each caste-based association and residential welfare association in the village. Number is more important in taking decisions in the committee regarding different issues. According to Sidda Sadanad “number is important to take any decision in regarding to any issue since the Central Committee established for entire village and this is the norm we have set for village development which is why we follow the core quorum to take up issues or solve (Sidda Sadanand 2014). This committee is also instrumental in bringing some of the government programs into the village and plays a key role in the selection of local political leaders.

4.3.g. Caste Associations – Overview

Although sub castes did not originally belong in the same register as the varna system, the modern state's categorization brought about a hierarchy and grouping by imposing the *varna* system on the *jati* system. Deshpande (2010) observes that “because of the caste division based on varna system, all the sub-caste communities have come under Shudra (sub-caste) who took over agriculture and cattle rearing while the Vaishyas became traders and merchants. Shudras were considered only capable of serving as slaves to the three upper classes and Dalits (outcaste) who are excluded from the varna system”(Deshpande 2010). The Varna system has classified all non-brahmins as one group but there are so many groups within. For instance, OBC group has a, b, c, d classification and within that there are also other sub-caste groups whose status wasn't clearly mentioned in administrative classifications.

The caste system has divided them into sub-castes with particular occupation but is not equal on their status in the society. For instance, within Dalit group, there is categorization a, b, c, d and within them again there are other occupational groups whose status and position is not clearly mentioned such as Dakkli, Dommari, Yanadi sub-caste communities within Scheduled Caste (SC) and so on. But in fact, they are all ‘integral parts of the society’ who also hold traditionally given occupations. There is an overlap in identifying sub-caste communities on the basis of their Jati or traditional occupation.

In shaikpet village there are several traditional occupational groups (sub-caste groups) in the village such as Gangaputra (fishermen), Munnurukapu (farmers), Mudiraju (hunter and gatherers), and Harijan (untouchables). There are also other service communities such as Rajaka (washermen), Kammari (black smiths), and Kummari (pot-makers).

Table 4.1: Details of Sub-caste Communities in Shaikpet

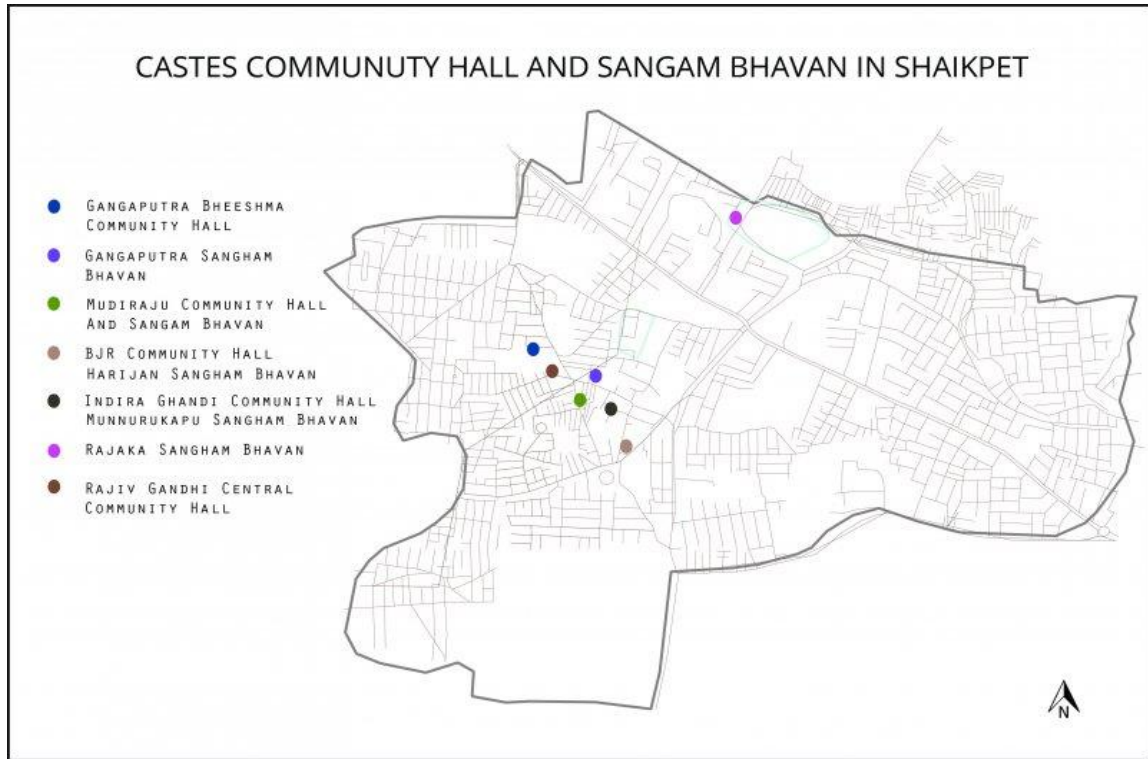
| S. No | Name of the Caste | Traditional Occupations | Claims (an assertion that something is true) | Name of the Sub-caste Associations |
|-------|-------------------|---|--|------------------------------------|
| 1 | Gangaputra | Fishing | Lake water | Gangaputra Sangham |
| 2 | Munnurukapu | Agriculture | Land around the lake | Munnurukapu Sangham |
| 3 | Mudiraju | Hunting animals and gathering food and other articles | Areas around lakes | Mudiraju Sangham |
| 4 | Harijan | Agricultural Labor | ----- | Harijan Sangham |
| 5 | Rajaka | Washing | Lake water | Rajaka Sangham |
| 6 | Mangali | Hairdressing | ----- | ----- |
| 7 | Kammari | Metalsmith | ----- | ----- |
| 8 | Kummari | Pot-making | Soil in the lake areas | Kummari Sangham |
| 9 | Vadrangi | Carpentry | Wood products around the lake | ----- |

Source: Prepared by Author

There has been a change in the traditional occupations of Shaikpet villagers due to change in the lake water.

People in the village have established caste-based associations when their resources began to shrink and disappear. Earlier, these associations were worked out to secure their resources from the external forces, which tried to occupy their resources. There has been a considerable change in the functions of these associations accordingly in with the economic activities they pursue. The names of these associations are based on the occupation of most members. Table 4.1 explain about the details of caste communities and provides the information in regards to each caste community names, their traditional occupations and claims that they have been exercising over a period of time. This structure also will give sense of associational relationship of people based caste identity.

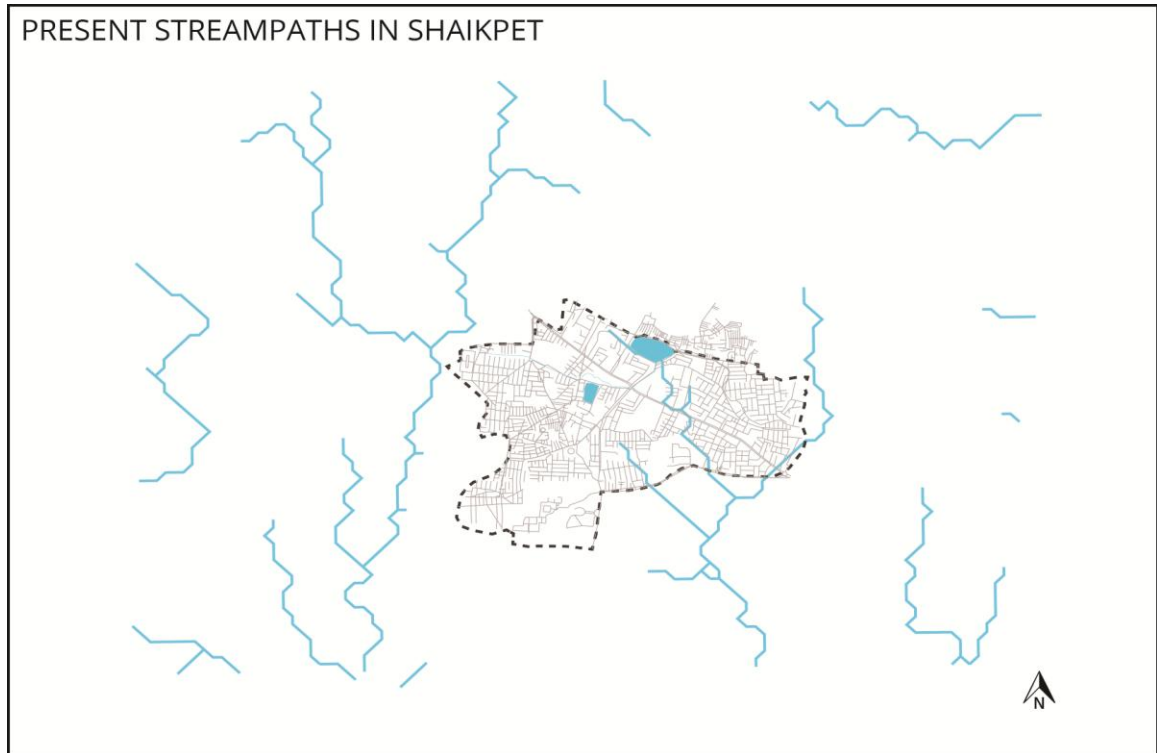
Map 4.1: Caste Community Bhavans and Community Halls in Shaikpet



Map 4.1 about caste community bhavans and community halls in Shaikpet provides the information regarding to caste communities and their nature of activities. Places of caste sangham bhavans and community halls also give the sense of locational importance of each caste community which represents pretty much the older village structure.

There are two main lakes in the village: Errakunta and Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu and some wells for drinking and other purposes. Balkapur Nala cuts across many villages from outside the city to Hussain sagar. Livelihood options of Shaikpet villagers comprise of fishing, agriculture, washing and pot-making.

Map 4.2: Present Stream paths in Shaikpet



Map 4.2 shows the current status of stream paths shows that the present status of streams in Shaikpet area and gives sense the kind of changes occurred due to various processes of urbanization. These can be observed through the built environment, new land development, its usage, migration, and so on.

The lake also played an important role in the socio-cultural life of the village. Social activities like death of a person have to follow some rituals at the lake and in its water, exorcism, and presence of local goddesses around the lake for different purposes, which tell their histories in association with lake and its water such as Katta Mysamma and Eeramma temples.

- All the sub-castes in the village formed their associations on the name of their caste (Gangaputra Sangham, Munnurukapu Sangham, Mudiraju Sangham, Rajaka Sangham, and Harijan Sangham)
- All associations have an organizational pattern. They specify activities that the

Sangham has to initiate in the village for the community, such as temple activities, festivals, donations for cultural activities such as to put up idols during Bonalu, Rama Navami and Ganesh festival, approach and access to local political leaders on community interests and for other purposes

More broadly, an examination on the emergence and development of the socio-religious (caste) associations reveal the following features:

- No women is part any of these associations as a member
- All associations have political affiliation, and
- All associations are working as an agent for the community development and represent the community on various platforms (caste associations in Shaikpet represent their respective communities for different purposes. They used to represent their communities to get benefits from government or politician, or municipal administration. By doing these negotiations on behalf of the community, caste sangham members try to gain the control on the represented community. For example, intent of community halls in Shaikpet is basically to gain the control on community and also resources. The same, we can also observe in between different caste associations.)

4.4. Socio-religious (caste) associations as interest and lobbying groups

Dominance, control and power play are all closely linked to the caste structure. Appropriation of these characteristics shows how the Varna system worked earlier based on the category of higher and lower caste. It is not only evident in Brahmins or Dalits but in any given caste community. For illustration, people from to Kummari and Kammari (Pot-makers) caste communities treated not equals though they are all belongs to OBC community.

Many a times, sub-caste associations project themselves as agents for the development of the village. This is because of their limited numbers strengthens their position, especially by being able to negotiate with outside agencies. However, claims to

bring whatever works for everyone in the community while claiming benefits on behalf of the entire village gives them a certain power over the village community, which in turn will help them gain further control on their own caste members as well as other caste communities. For example, Gangaputras have started to negotiate with local political leaders for their own gains by offering their vote bank. Mulle Satyanarayana projected himself as a *Good Samaritan* for downtrodden people in the village by bringing housing for them. Likewise, each caste has pioneers for the development discourse not only in the community but also in the village.

Organizing festivals and celebrations is one of the main functions of sub-caste associations in Shaikpet which shows their own cultural values related to ritual practices. For instance, Bonalu is celebrated every year in Hyderabad and in the entire Telangana region. But in Shaikpet, it is celebrated once in two years. They have a particular story which is believed that during the past years Shaikpet village hit by severe consequent droughts. The villagers felt that the village goddess Gutta Pochamma is angry for not known reasons and they wanted to know them and made her not to angry with them. Then the villagers went to Gutta Pochamma (village goddess) temple and prayed her and the goddess told them that celebrate Bonalu not in every year but once in two years (Sriramulu 2014), (Balaiah 2015) to celebrate Bonalu in the village. Since then, their cultural activities have extended to Sri Rama Navami, Anjaneya Swami Jayanthi and Ganesh Chaturthi and so on. For all of these festivals, Gangaputra Sangham takes charge of celebrations on behalf of the entire village and includes people from other castes too to collect money, take care of decoration and arrangements, and to invite politicians. By doing this, they lead processions on the main streets of the village and have control on the way the festival is celebrated.

Another core function of sub-caste associations in Shaikpet is to run the *local justice system*, which runs as an individual unit and central committee in the city. It is also somewhat of an ultimate justice system. Shaikpet has a long history of holding village panchayats where the elders decide on matters related to justice in the village. The village panchayat has set down a list of principles on how to lead life and exercises a

control on the practices of villagers. Also, each caste association has its own set of principles (have taken the general principles of caste panchayat and applied to their own caste communities). For instance, (according many respondents, these principles were set up by the elders of (names not known) dominant caste communities in the village such as Gangaputras and Munnurukapus) people should marry only within their own caste community, inter-caste marriages are not allowed, people should not cross their original boundaries of the village structurally and people who don't obey or do not follow instructions should be boycotted socially. Local Panchayat system is still prominent and happening under the garb of sub-caste associations. With this system, they have not only entered into the social life of the people but especially people's interpersonal relationships.

In this, gender also plays an important role where principles of caste suggest how men and women should be which again is often based on religious texts and their interpretations. So there is a very thin line between caste principles and religious principles. It always mixes both and determines the roles of women in the society. For instance, women were not seen as productive members though they have done tremendous in a given traditional occupational work and that is due to gender relations that were established and the meanings that are derived are still based on the Varna system. For the question as to why no sub-caste association has a woman member, Sidda Sadanad and G. Yadaiah from Gangaputra Sangham said that "What do women do? They know nothing about village and activities. They are good at housework but not village activities" (Sidda Sadanand 2014), (Yadaiah 2015).

Subsequently, their activities as associations started on Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu traditional occupations disappeared and this situation led for initiation of caste-based associations as well since their resources disappeared due to pollution and encroachments. During the early 1990s, Gangaputras sensed a threat to their livelihood when fish in the lake died due to heavy pollutants that were being released into the lake from Ramanaidu studio and Apollo hospital (Sidda Sadanand 2014), (Sriramulu 2014), and (Narasamma 2012). In addition to this, residents around Film Nagar and around the

lake also dumped their several liquid wastes in the lake water. Gangaputras tried their best as a collective group to fight against all these pollutants but took a step back since their voice wasn't heard enough. They fought as fishermen but did not include other caste groups. They themselves felt that they were not powerful enough to win the fight and then started to secure their livelihoods. For instance, Gangaputras have been paying the bid money for fishing rights to the state government in order to get incentives under the fishermen welfare schemes even though they can no longer fish in the lakes around them.

After change in the lake water, people from Rajaka Sangham started to agitate against pollution and since they were small in number they strategized their approach differently. They approached same caste community members in the nearby slums and went to local politicians seeking help in this regard. As a result, they were sanctioned a bore well inside the lake to get water from the ground to continue their profession on lake. Since then they have been securing the place and continually exercise their power. Rajakas also established/inagurated Eeramma temple at north-side of the lake during early 1990s and started ritual practices once in a year, that too one-week before and after the Pongal festival. This is now on their regular calendar to celebrate Eeramma.

The Rajakas' realization to become more assertive in the local caste politics occurred at the time of fighting for their livelihood option which was disappearing due to different actors' control and encroachments on it. So, Rajakas also started to mimic the way Gangaputra's and Mudiraju's thrived it came here in order to explain the assertiveness of Rajakas by using the collective approach to solve the issues. Rajaka's felt that they need more number even to claim the resource and then they started to build the community by including people from slums with the same community but not belonging to Shaikpet. Like other caste groups in Shaikpet Rajaka's also started to build network with the local and regional political parties. In the processes they also established themselves as an agent for the entire Rajaka community by establishing Rajaka Sangham and community hall. By being a representative of (agent) entire community, members of Rajaka Sangham are able to gain the control like Gangaputras and Munnurukapus. As a result, gaining control on the community.

Figure 4.7: Anjaneya Swami temple built inside the lake



Meanwhile Anjaneya Swami temple was built within the lake (see figure 4.7 which shows the temple construction inside the lake boundary) by Ambedkar Nagar slum people. This temple came up in 2006. “One representation was given to the Collector, Hyderabad at this time and the letter addressed the issue of rapid encroachments, debris dumping in the lake, and construction of temple in Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu” (Hyderabad Urban Development Authority 2000) (SOUL 2013). But Kota Krishna Rao (Advisor, Ambedkar Nagar) claim that “the temple is not inside the lake area was not encroached by us. The lake boundary was expanded beyond its actual limits during Chandrababu Naidu period and our survey number is 403” (Krishna Rao 2015). At present, massive dumping of debris is taking place in the area around the temple in the lake.

As part of securing the lake, the municipal administration started putting up a fence and built a wall around the lake but left the area around the Katta Maisamma temple near the road that leads to Film Nagar and Tolichowki. There was a small enclosure that was built around Katta Maisamma as Gangaputras from Shaikpet village have staked a claim on the lake area. The Katta Maisamma temple land is secured, but the practices have been abandoned since fishermen no longer get fish from the lake. But their

control on the temple land is still there. The change in the practice of Katta Maisamma is that the actual ritual has gone and now some of the slum dwellers from M G Nagar basti started praying to the Goddess. Figure 4.8 shows that current status of Katta Maisamma temple near the out let nala of the lake.

Figure 4.8: Katta Maisamma temple



Consequently, we also see that there's one more Shiva temple that has sprung up at the north-east side of the lake. That is built by people from the Babu Jagjeevan Rao Nagar slum.

Figure 4.9: Immersion of Bathukamma in Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu



Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu has also got a new ritual practice now. Bathukamma festival was never celebrated at Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu by Shaikpet residents. But since the Telangana state made it a state festival in 2014 and allocated funds to celebrate it on a bigger scale, people in the slums started to celebrate Bathukamma at the lake and they have been doing for the past three years now. With this, women and men from many slums have played Bathukamma songs at the lake and immersed Bathukamma in the polluted lake (see figure 4.9). One more important thing in the practice of Bathukamma is that there are changes in the way it is celebrated after it became a state festival. Shaikpet villagers have also started participating in Bathukamma festival unlike before and they mentioned that they did not have much history of celebrating Bathukamma in the past and that they only celebrate Bonalu as a village festival. They had got funds to immerse Bathukamma in Errakunta and they brought water in tankers and emptied it in Bathukamma tanks which were constructed in a tub-like shape. According to Atmakuru Babu Rao (Treasurer, Munnurukapu Sangham) “Errakunta dried up for the first time in the history of Shaikpet due to construction of huge housing complexes in the low lying

areas of the lake which sucked up all the lake water through bore wells. The condition worsened with the digging of more bore wells” (Babu Rao 2015).

So these are all the functions that sub-caste associations have been carrying out in relation to lake and its water. All these activities show us that the status of people who are associated with the lake and caste communities are dependent on the lake that did not fight against the problems as one. They are under some circumstances like festivals, but not at other times. Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu is still being contested by many actors for their own interests with particular meanings and interpretations. For instance, when “Shaiket Kotha Cheruvu was adopted by the government under the Mission Kakatiya program for beautification and to decide turn into a tourist spot by the Irrigation Department, Telangana” (Anonymous 2015c). Now the traditional claims of people are at danger but not much has happened in terms of the beautification part except the walkway on the boundary line and some few trees being planted along the walk way around Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu.

On the whole, the way sub-caste associations functioned earlier has changed due to change in their relationship with the lake as the lake is no longer a community asset or commons but a fenced property now. These associations have become more rigid (more assertive in order to gain control the available resources) while their resources have slowly disappeared due to the inflow of commercial and domestic waste into the lake, which resulted in there being no fish at all in the lake. But the fishermen continue to bid on lakes because they are getting some incentives from the government, such as loans under fishermen co-operative society, reservations in government employment, targeted policy interventions, subsidy for fishing tools like net, boat, seeds for forge fish fauna, and other necessary equipments. This is happening because it is in the interest of fishermen and the government did not declare it as a dead lake. This is because no one is ready to take the responsibility for what happened to the lake. Whenever I pose a question who caused for the lakes situation today, informants responded by saying this is because of people around the lake, state, private parties like gated community, apartment complexes. The respondents never put themselves into the lakes degradation story but

bring others stories as culprits. The times when I asked them what did you do to the lake if someone is harming, they replied by saying it is the responsibility of the municipality and state but not us alone since the lake is maintaining by the state. The state's approach towards protection or conservation of the lake also needs to be observe carefully because conservation of lake efforts by the state administration not succeeded so far since the way they implemented conservation activities. These can be seen through diverting drainage channel that carries pollutants, fence around the lake, construction on Balakapur Nala, not been able to stop encroachments on lake area (temple inside the lake, residents, commercial shops), and construction of walk way inside the lake (see figure 4.10).

Figure 4.10: Walkway inside the lake



State government did not declare the lake as dead though the lake condition is degraded and the lake is alive because of the drainage water channel that connected to it. I think that, this kind approach by the state denotes that its concern on lake conservation and its responsibility as an authority over lakes. Once the government declares Shaikpet

Kotha Cheruvu as a dead lake, it then has to take the prime responsibility and explain its own accountability. Also, the fishermen are not acknowledging that the lake has died because they are getting benefits by claiming it is not dead.

4.5. Functioning of Residential Welfare Associations in relation to Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu

New colonies have emerged around Shaikpet village which were developed by Shaikpet villagers. They are building these new colonies because they are the owners of that land and they have been involved in land transactions and exchanges since increase in land value. Most of the new colonies developed by the Shaikpet villagers are people who converted the land into plots, sub-plots and built apartments for rental housing for the new software population.

Figure 4.11: Vinobha Nagar Colony



For instance, there was a new colony created as an extension of Shaikpet village called Maruthi Nagar, which comprised of migrant old and new population. There is one more colony called Vinobha Nagar, Siddha Sadanand colony (see figure 4.11), which was developed by Siddha Sadanand, former general secretary of Gangaputra Sangham. Shaikpet also has people who work in Telugu Film Industry since it is located near and

rental value is less than Film Nagar area. Likewise other colonies are led by different people from the village who have established colony welfare associations for each colony and assert their power by giving various instructions which were used to sanction by the village elders in Shaikpet village to the colony residents.

Other than these, there are a number of slum welfare societies which are also organized around caste. Presidents or vice-president positions in slums are around Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu led by only particular caste communities. For instance, Vaddeboina Sattaiah who belongs to (Vaddera caste – sub-caste community in Backward Caste) has been working as vice-president for Vivekananda Nagar colony slum since its inception (1994), Md. Saleem, has been working as President for Jhani Jail Singh Nagar slum (1995), Smt. Naseem Banu is President for Basava Taraka Nagar slum (1993), and Gauri Shankar for Mahatma Gandhi Nagar slum (1993).

Residential Welfare Associations in Shaikpet comprise of not only new colonies but also new bastis in and around Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu. More than ten new colonies (Vinobha Nagar, Vinayak Nagar, Vivekananda Nagar, Ikamatya Nagar, Dattatreya Nagar, Sairam Nagar, Balaji Nagar, Dwaraka Nagar, Maruthi Nagar, OU colony, Samatha colony, Brundavan colony, Sairam Nagar, Al-Hamara colony, Gulshan colony and Sabza colony) have emerged due to new land use which have transformed the land irrespective of their nature whether places of nala, or cremation ground, or lake. Apart from this, there are also eighteen slums that have come up in and around the lake. These slums were largely formed, encouraged and established by the development of slums around the lake was done by the local politicians for their interests. Emergence of these slums is not organic in the sense that they didn't grow themselves but have particular pattern, context and history local political leaders. Reasons for these are:

- To stake claim on the land and try to get other basic services by the government
- Vested interests which are self-driven. In this case to increase vote bank in Jubilee Hills Constituency by an political leader of local political leaders and parties
- Slum dwellers aspiration to be identified and recognized as citizens of the city

Though slum dwellers hail from not only the districts of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh but also Maharashtra and Karnataka from different places, they live side-by-side. Slum dwellers approaches to political leaders for their development and their activities in slums broadly relate to getting *pattas* for the land, ration cards, voter cards, pensions, Aadhar cards, electricity connection and water connection.

4.5.a. Slums (Bastis)

Slums in and around Shaikpet are diverse in their socio-economic profile. Migrant population in these slums is made up of people from within the city, inter-state and across the country. Most of the people are engaged in informal economic activities, which are mostly daily-wage labor. They have platforms called labor *addas* (common place for a group of people) to get work. Their association with the lake is very different from that of people who were dependent on the lake. Development of slums in and around Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu started during 1992 to 1995. They were largely mobilized by the local political leaders for their own interests. There were very few houses (not even more than 40) around the lake in 1992. Slowly, by 1995 and 1996 there were considerable number of houses and also the area spread not only around the lake but also towards the hill near Film nagar (see figure 4.12). So the slum population numbers have reached a level where they can start an association that can work towards their betterment. They also closely observed and gathered information on what people do in other slums to obtain permanent housing and other facilities.

Figure 4.12: Slums around Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu



People in the slums have established *basti* associations to get *pattas* for the piece of land they have been sitting on and for other basic services. Some people have demanded that the Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu which is filthy and dead needs to be covered up. There were also demands from people around the lake for something to be built (some respondents in the slums wished for apartment complexes or government housing for slum dwellers.) This demand has come from the people living in the bastis as they are the ones who have been affected by the pollution and the hazardous conditions caused by pollution. Venkatesh (Resident, Mahatma Gandhi Nagar and hails from Prakasam district) said that “the lake will not use for any purposes and it is being a trouble maker for everyone who is staying around. It is not only remitting bad smell but peoples also died by fell into to this lake as well as in the out let channel of the lake. Around three children died due to without fencing along the lake as well as along the nala down side where new migrants are living with squatter settlements. He also expressed his opinion on the lake that it would be better if the government close this lake and build something and give us some work” (Venkatesh 2012).

Some of them were also very much aware of the fact that the lake was slowly turning into a dead lake from a fresh water body. People who settled in the slums earlier were dependent on the lake for water as it was still a water-source back in 1992. Consequently, slums developed with the new migrant population and people started to occupy the lake area for their living. Their own account of how the Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu was polluted starts from how waste from Ramanaidu studio and Apollo hospital was dumped into the lake plus the inflow of domestic waste from Film Nagar and slums around. For instance, Ravi (Saloon shop owner at the lake bed) migrated from Mahboob Nagar and is a resident of Mahatma Gandhi slum since 18 years said that “One day we suddenly saw a sea of fish floating on the lake which looked like a white carpet on the lake. It covered the entire lake and the number could have been in thousands. It contained large fish along with small fish and other fauna. That happened due to a pipeline connected from Rama naidu Studio’s and Apollo hospital in Film Nagar which carried the commercial waste and medical waste. We also witnessed that all the Gangaputra’s came and protested against this. At that point of time even we were not allowed to take water from the lake. It was maintained by the Gangaputras and other caste communities of Shaikpet. This same story is also shared by many other slum dwellers who came here and settled down” (Ravi 2015).

Basti associations were established basically to get minimum basic services from the government and one of the main aspirations that people had was to be recognized as citizens of this city. But it wouldn’t be possible without local political leaders or parties supporting them. So these associations do not have immense power like sub-caste associations in Shaikpet village. Because slum associations and life of slum dwellers is entirely determined by the local political leaders and parties, local political leaders have established their power on slum dwellers by giving them slum dwellers a piece of land. But slum associations have also started to work for their own development during election times by showing their strength through the number of people and then they were able to negotiate with local political parties. Because slum dwellers also see the opportunity to gain, since slums have the presence of more than one political party. Now every slum has the presence of more than four local and regional political parties. With

this presence of multiple parties, every *basti* committee is also divided on the basis of the agenda that the local and regional political parties have. So now members of slum committees have the bargaining power for their own development. This is how members of slum committees are working now. This strategy of members of slum committees is also a hindrance for their development since *basti* committees are representing multiple parties. Because of each and every member being from different parties, and they bring their own party agendas, working for the overall development of slum goes for a toss. So solving the problems in the slum has taken a back seat with this approach. Slum committees are active in order to get voter ID cards, pensions, ration and sometimes *pattas* for houses in the slum. In these processes of becoming citizens of this city, they don't really care about where they have settled/occupied land, especially on what is that land and what is happening to commons that they have been using etc. People who are in need of piece of land are not been able to see what kind of land that they have been sitting and in most of the case people cannot relate to the places they situate. It takes time for them to get a sense of the place. Meanwhile, they create their own space within the place they have been living. That is where we could see reconstruction of new spaces within the place. This approach has its own consequences based on the activities that people do and the implications that these activities have on urban commons like lakes.

Basti committees consist of representatives from multiple parties and their strategies for development are also often hindered since they represent their own agendas. Due to this, there is no possibility of any issue being resolved in one or two sittings with all the committee members. Thus, they actually never come to solve the problem since they have to persist with their own party's agendas and also their personal aspirations towards party politics. Therefore these slum committees largely work for some specific purposes, such as getting voter ID cards, pensions, ration, and sometimes *pattas* for some people in the slum. They cannot relate to the place as a lake place since they didn't maintain any association with the Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu and have no sense about the potentiality of the lake

Figure 4.13: Open Drainage at the lower end of Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu



Slums are divided not based on caste and identity but problems within. There are no clear boundaries of slums and these are often contested based on the economic benefits they get. For instance, open drainage is one of the major problems that slums at the lower end of the Film Nagar Hill slope and along outlet *nala* of Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu face (see figure 4.13). There is no proper drainage line constructed in the slums since the geography of the place does not allow laying down of any infrastructure that works for housing and allied activities. Since there is no proper drainage system, people

from the north-side hill area let out the used water to the downstream area and that comes and stays at the low lying area of lake where there are now houses as well. This is a major cause for the spread of diseases (Venkatesh 2012). Since no municipal worker comes and removes the waste (see figure 4.14). So people who face this problem downstream have to take measures to handle this open drainage system.

Figure 4.14: No proper drainage system at Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu outlet nala



This has created conflict between people who reside upstream and downstream. Though they belong to the same slum, they are divided based on the drainage problem. They never seriously discussed this issue in the slum committee meetings since they believe that this can only be solved by the municipal authority (GHMC). All the waste from this open drainage further gets into Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu and the outlet nala. According to B. Hanumantu and M. Hanumantu introduced me K. Vijaya (TRS party

workers, M G Nagar) slum, there were also some deaths due to stagnated filthy waste water in the outlet *nala*” (Hanumantu, Hanumantu, and Vijaya 2013). So in these processes, residents in the slums from upstream and downstream never bothered about what will happen to the lake and its water by letting the waste water into it. This denotes their association with the lake and also how they perceive the lake; as a dump.

4.6. Socio-Spatial Relationship of Sub-caste Associations and Residential Welfare

Associations in relation to Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu

Socio-spatial (social relationships of caste groups in Shaikpet to people in the slums and spatial segregation of caste groups and slum committees in relation to the lake) relationship of caste associations and residential welfare associations in Shaikpet to Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu can be understood through periodical changes based on hierarchy (Varna system), ritual practices (cultural values), economic status and political positions.

4.6.a. Hierarchy

Spatial segregation of caste groups in Shaikpet area is based on old form of caste hierarchy through Varna system where we could see that the higher castes occupy land in the centre of the village and other lower castes used occupied land outside centre, and the area where the Dalit community (panchamas) stay is most often divided by a road or pathway from the village. Dalit colony used to be situated at the south-side of the village. There is a story to this and it is believed that Dalits settled down at south-side because the wind that flows should not go through the areas where people from the higher caste communities stay. These are the stories that have been transmitting from oral histories passed on from generation-to-generation.

Now there is one slight change that happened in this structural relationship, and, that is, some houses have been constructed on the other side of the road which was divided earlier based on Varna system.

4.6.b. Ritual Practices

Ritual practices are significant to understand people's cultural values in Shaikpet, and these rituals have been performed based on the old caste hierarchy. Shaikpet has its own way of celebrating festivals through the belief system of people in the village. It is unique in this way and at the same time it connects the caste practice in the region. For example, we can look at the celebration of Bonalu festival. Bonalu celebrations in Shaikpet have its own importance where the people celebrate it once in two years, but, not every year, like other areas within the region. There is a story behind this practice. It is believed that when they faced droughts for consequent years, they prayed to the village Goddess Gutta Pochamma to save them from hunger. Then she told them to celebrate Bonalu once in two years but not every year. When they started doing that, they saw a spell of adequate rains over the years and the villagers got to experience wellbeing in all spheres of life. That is the belief which made them celebrate Bonalu once in two years.

Important feature to understand caste through this ritual practice is performance of certain rituals by each caste at each given position. Entire ritual practice includes specific rituals by each caste related to their profession. Each caste community occupation is given based on their *Jati* by the Varna system. These Jatis were usually service communities such as Rajakas (washermen), Vadrangi (Carpenter community), Kummari (potters) and Dalits (agricultural labors). We could see caste communities' relations during offering *bonam* or *naivedhyam* (food to Goddess) and during the procession time. While offering bonam to the Goddess, Brahmins occupy the main sanctum of temple, higher castes also access the sanctum of temple and offer bonam. While offering bonam, higher castes do not cut the goat and there is a particular community to cut the goat's throat called as Katikavallu (Pinjari community), clothes to Goddess are offered by Sale caste community (Weavers), pots are offered by pot makers, wood for fire at the temple are offered by carpenters and Dalits beat drums in front of the temple. Likewise there are total 12 caste communities usually involved in this ritual practice across the region but there are slight differences in between the caste communities' presence in the villages.

Procession of the deity is also an important feature to understand caste in this region, especially Bonalu. These processions are usually led by the drummers followed by the carriers of the deity who usually belong to service caste communities. Higher caste community people place themselves in front of the deity and along with deity. Brahmins are usually with the deity.

4.6.c. Economic status

Socio-spatial relationship can also be understood through the economic activities of people from different caste groups. Livelihoods of people have been classified by the Varna system through the traditional caste occupations. This system doesn't recognize one based on how rich one is or how much one earns. They still fall into the caste identity with traditional occupations. But there was change in the livelihood pattern of the caste groups where their resources disappeared due to various reasons. When they changed their livelihood pattern, people started to be identified not on the basis of caste but class since the area was hit by urbanization with modern trends. In this process, people were exposed to different means of livelihoods other than their traditional occupations. This led to changes in the way higher castes treated lower castes. Unlike before, Dalits were exposed to government jobs through reservations in education and employment opportunities. For instance, Dalit people who have respectable jobs in the society were invited to weddings of the higher castes since they equaled them on class basis but not caste.

One more example to this is that Gangaputras are not happy with the Mudirajus because they believe that the Mudirajus have taken away a chunk of benefits given by the state and they have been “fighting against merging Mudirajus and Gangaputras” (Anonymous 2017f). In Shaikpet, Mudirajus shifted their livelihood from gathering food articles which are naturally available fruits to fishing when their resources started depleting. Gangaputra claim in this situation is that they are fishermen by birth but Mudirajus are fishermen by profession. So they have been resisting Mudirajus demand “to get the same status of Gangaputras which is B C (A)” (Anonymous 2012). Presently, Mudirajus are from B C (D).

4.6.d. Political power

Gangaputras and Munnurukapus have differences on managing and controlling entire village through their political power. This is usually led by the people who have land (Munnurukapus) but in Shaikpet it is based on the number (Gangaputras). Munnurukapus are powerful in the locality due to their long association with national parties like Congress (Indian National Congress) and they were able to mobilize and bring benefits to the village. Initially, Gangaputras were not involved with politics, not even at the state level since no leader hailed from the Gangaputra community. But they used to get things done for their community through negotiations with political leaders by showing the strength of their number in village. Even today they have been doing things in a similar manner but the difference now is they are more conscious of caste politics as they see possibilities of survival mechanism and thrust of power.

All the caste groups in the village have established community halls for community welfare through various social activities. But they are using these community halls as tools to assert power and domination of caste sangham members that they had earlier through sanctioning order to celebrate any sort of social celebrations like marriage, birthdays, and welfare issues.

One more significant feature of their political power relations is their relationship with the slums in and around the Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu. Caste groups in Shaikpet do not maintain any close relationship with the slum welfare committees but they are managed by the political leaders in Shaikpet and also by whoever is elected in Shaikpet area. Except Rajaka Sangham from Shaikpet, no other caste associations are involved in the slum politics because other caste groups are strong enough to raise their voice and get things done for them but Rajakas are not active in this since their number is less. Rajakas claim to be involved with slums and the reason behind this is to show their strength through numbers in electoral politics. They said that no one cares or listens to their voice in Shaikpet because their number is less compared to other caste groups. So they realized that the only way they can survive like others is by increase the manpower that is the number of the voters since number is key to negotiate with power politics. The way caste

groups or slum committees have done the developmental activities in their village or colonies or slum.

- Basti welfare associations are not directly they don't have relations as associations related to any of the caste associations in the village. But many caste leaders in the village are also leaders of the basti committees. Rajaka Sangham has included people from slums as members.
- Though proximity closer physically to the lake, Shaikpet slum associations do not maintain relationship with the lake. But over a period of time, they gained some control over places close to the lake through building Anjaneya Swami temple inside the lake and praying to Katta Maisamma and celebrating Bathukamma.
- Slum associations do not have any regular social and cultural relationships with the village.
- Shaikpet political leaders hire people from slums for rallies, staging protests, and joining festival processions and political party meetings.

4.7. Impact of caste-based and residential welfare associations on Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu

Sub-caste associations and residential welfare associations emerged in Shaikpet village as main negotiators on behalf of the communities and started to grab public opportunities at every level. So far, every issue in the village goes through the caste-based associations and they get things done. They don't necessarily consider themselves as one community unless they get some benefit out of what they do. Otherwise everybody has their way of approaching local political parties and getting things done. That is how welfare associations in Shaikpet mandal were exposed to city and state politics. Each association has been part of major caste associations in Shaikpet as well as

in the city and in the state. So their prominence in the locality and in every activity is being expanded on the basis of local political parties concerned about them.

Activities of these associations were initially aimed at welfare for the community but later they turned out as powerful agencies, which have established their power and control on each and every aspect related to development of people. With these kinds of activities, they have not only influenced and impacted people's activities but also the nature of the place, interpersonal relations, cultural values, economic status, and degradation of Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu.

These associations have impacted people's interpersonal relationships due to a shift in traditional occupations. This development resulted in how one should be treated by others. Since there is change in occupations, people's economic status started to change. This further led to people being treated equally based on class and not caste, in some cases. Also these changes are not static and the old form of caste discrimination still persists. For instance, Gangaputra Sangham publicly announced and included Dalits in Bonalu festival celebrations. But when it comes to decision making about anything related to celebrations, they don't take any suggestions from Dalits. These are some of the nuances that are prevalent in many activities in the village. So the caste identities of people really matters based on where people found their personal aspirations over others (it can be in any form). It also impacted personal liberties of individuals by sanctioning age-old caste principles. To get control on the other party in the caste communities, all the caste associations have established community halls which serve as function halls, places for meetings and socio-cultural activities. Based on caste principles, each and every member has to conduct their marriages or any other functions in community halls and if they don't they face the social boycott by the association. These are the tools that caste associations have used to appropriate their power and dominance on the people within the caste communities.

The association of caste groups with the lake changed due to new land development in the lake area. People's association with the lake is basically based on their everyday activities on lake and its water. Their activities on lake are totally in accordance

with what right they have. By the prevailing structure of caste system in the locality, some caste groups' claims are more than others since they perceive their status based on the ideology of the Varna system. They are bringing the old caste values since their resources are at risk and they haven't been able to secure them like before.

These changes occurred mainly due to the new development and changes in the land use pattern with the urban planning due to expansion of the city. This area has suddenly started to see the changes in terms of development of land, so that whoever exercised their customary claims on land around the lake then sold it off and made some money and with that they have built houses as an alternative livelihood with the arrival of new software population in the locality. The fish in the lake have been wiped out due to pollution in the lake water from Ramanaidu studio, Apollo hospitals and residents in and around the lake. Harijans lost their only livelihood option due to transformation of land from agricultural land to residential land. Pot-makers changed their practice of getting soil around the lake to getting soil from other places and make pots. Rajakas have dug a borewell inside the lake and are drawing water and letting the used water back into the lake (see figure 4.15). And other service communities have also shifted to other livelihood options like petty businesses, government job opportunities, software training.

Figure 4.15: Construction of bore well and washing beds inside Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu



The prominence of ritual practices is reduced to the interests of associations. Caste and residential welfare associations have altered ritual practices in order to gain control and power since they were under a threat of disappearing. The local Goddesses were created or revalorized for a particular purpose in relation to the lake and its water by Shaikpet villagers. These purposes were mainly dependent on people's beliefs in relation to their existence. People's beliefs vary from one to other and time to time. It ranges from individual to family, family to social group and social group to a particular caste community. The main intent for ritual practices at the lake is based on their belief, fear, happiness, pleasure, goodness. But changes in these practices suggest loss of livelihoods that were lake-based. Many have better livelihood options now. Although their customary practices have eroded, they are continuing with their customary claims on lake. They continue the ritual practices if they get any benefit out of it, otherwise they don't. For example, the ritual practice of worshipping Katta Maisamma has disappeared since there is no fishing activity but certain caste groups' control over the Maisamma temple land

persists. It simply tells us that the purpose is not really served in accordance with their expectation. It also denotes that the importance of the location which is not rural but urban where every festival or ritual not only needs people's participation but also money.

The rituals of local Goddesses vary not only from rural to the urban areas but from place to place, irrespective of rural or urban. This suggests that it is not only people's beliefs but also economic viability which determines the subsistence or lack thereof of such practices. This economic factor works differently between rural and urban. If we look at the peri-urban, like the case of Shaikpet, it shows a mix of both tendencies. This partly explains the influence of external forces on where people were persisting with their own belief system. Therefore, in this regard, if people are economically stable in relation to their occupation then those practices will be kept alive. The change in the lake water changed the entire practice of Katta Mysamma and Eeramma Goddesses in and around the lake. Also Goddess Bathukamma has not been part of this area's history for a long period of time but there is so much focus on Bathukamma now due to state government's recognition of the festival. These festivals also differ from place to place within this region. For instance, celebration of Bonalu festival is done once in two years and Bathukamma was never celebrated in Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu. So the meanings of these festival practices do not reflect in Shaikpet people's ritual practices. On the other hand, new ritual practices were attached to the lake by new migrants and they also started celebrating the Bathukamma festival in Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu which was never part of Shaikpet people's rituals on lake.

They determined the development discourse in the locality by becoming nearly self-ruled governing systems. They acquired this position since they appropriated caste rules and regulations in accordance to the situations. These associations are really the building blocks for municipal administration to implement any developmental activities in Shaikpet since they represent the people there.

The above description shows significant shifts in the life of Shaikpet villagers from Jati to caste and caste to Jati through the new land development on the Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu due to global IT shift. I contend that there needs to be more work on sub-

caste associations, in relation to resources like lakes, in urban areas and particularly transforming peri-urban regions.

4.8. Implications for the status of Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu

Emergence of sub-caste associations and residential welfare associations in Shaikpet makes sense as coping mechanisms and strategies of people against an emergent global market in order to sustain themselves in urban space. Activities of these associations are done in the purview of securing their livelihoods but these have impacted lake and its water immensely.

These associations have slowly turned situations in their favor and grabbed every opportunity for their own good since their resources were in danger. So far, every issue in Shaikpet has gone through the caste-based associations and residential welfare associations for getting the things done. In general, they don't consider themselves as one community. They do consider themselves as one community for only some reasons which can benefit them at most. Otherwise, everybody has their own way of approaching local political parties and leaders for getting things done. That is how they get exposure from operating at the village level to mandal, city and State politics. Each association has been part of major caste associations in the city as well as in the state. Thus, their prominence has been expanding on the basis of local political parties' interest in them.

In summary, then, the major implications of sub-caste associations and residential welfare association's activities in relation to Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu are therefore:

- Urban development discourse (administrative vs caste associations or residential associations and can also be seen as global vs local).
- Caste groups became more stringent power structures (with their activities in all spheres of public life in the city)
- Changes in ritual practices
- Problems of lake (encroachments, pollution, water clogging and floods)

CHAPTER V

New Economy, New Rituals

5.1. Introduction

The regional aspect of a lake's ecosystem must also attend to the socio-religious (caste) systems, ritual practices and everyday activities on lake and its water. By describing roles played by social systems; in and around the lake, this chapter brings to light the geography, regional identities and their ramifications for lakes. This chapter reports particularly on the processes of establishing temples and their symbolic representation in relation to the lake ecosystem. For instance, lakes in this region have local Goddesses such as Bathukamma and Katta Maisamma. Apart from this there are also new ritual practices, which relate to mainstream Gods and Goddesses of the "Great Tradition" of Hinduism, so to speak, to whom temples are dedicated in the vicinity of the lakes in this region such as temples to Shiva, Anjaneya, and Gangamma. There are also other temples that have come up near simultaneously with the massive land development in the area, which has brought new migrants populations to the region. But many of the temples established do not have any relationship with the lake.

Changes in the lake-related ritual practices are also undertaken as transformations in landuse brought about by the new land economy and re-zoning for urban development. These changes are also caused by many external factors, which include globalization, neo-liberal policies in relation to land development and city infrastructure, political activism, and caste groups' involvement in state administrative activities.

Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu has its prominence in the history and that can partly be attributed to people's everyday practices in relation to the lake. These practices are not confined only to economic activities but also include social, cultural, political and ecological activities. Everyday activities of people have directly or indirectly been connected with lake and its water. In simple terms, their life had entirely been determined by the lake and its water as it was the main resource for their livelihood. Their activities

on lake are mainly classified as professional, and are customary in nature with economical, social and cultural significance. Cultural practices on the lake and its water are broadly defined as ritual practices since they are related to their traditional occupations. In this, the practice of worshipping local Goddesses in relation to the lake and its water is a significant phenomenon, which carries similar or same meanings across the Telangana region.

Shaikpet villagers have established local Goddesses in relation to the lake and its water such as Katta Maisamma worshipped by the Gangaputras (fishermen), and Eeramma temple by Rajakas (washermen). When we examine at the ritual practice of Katta Maisamma at Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu, it is believed among people in the village that she will protect people who resided in the low lying areas of lakes from natural calamities like floods. Katta Maisamma is always situated at the outlet sluice of lakes in this region (this used to be) south or south-east side of the lakes because of the topography of the area). This is the common feature of every lake not only in Hyderabad city but also across the Telangana region. Eeramma is a Goddess of washermen established with the belief that whatever the washermen (Rajakas) gain for their prosperity is only because of Eeramma. Figure 5.1 shows that Eeramma temple which is constructed inside Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu.

Figure 5.1: Eeramma temple



Likewise, Goddess Bathukamma's festival is also related to the lake and the celebrations/rituals have been practiced all over the region but they vary from place to place within the region. For the past three years, Bathukamma festival has been widely celebrated, not only in Shaikpet but also in Telangana as the state government of Telangana recognized it as a state festival.

There is a presence of several temples, when emerged due to changes in land value around the lake area. There is an Anjaneya Swami temple at the south side of the lake, Shiva temple to the north-east, Pochamma temple to the south, and Mahankali temple to the east.

Figure 5.2: Pochamma and Mahankali temple



Emergence of these temples in and around, the lake coincides with changes in the lake water due to new developments of land around, Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu. There has also been an emergence of new cultural practices from slum communities in the area, which have no historical relation to the lake (slum dwellers association with the lake has started after 1992) and its water, but are crafting new relationships with it through these new practices. Establishing of temples or other religious structures in and around the lake has implications for political economy of slums who are trying to gain control on lake land with repeated cultural or new ritual practices. For instance, Anjaneya Swami temple

which was built inside the lake also providing space for other festivals like Bathukamma since Bathukamma was not celebrated in Shaikpet Cheruvu.

Another characteristic of the lake system in the region is the presence of religious structure only one, I thought near the outlet water channel. These structures give us a sense of what kind of social group practices rituals existed at the lake and how conservation of lakes ecosystem is related to their cultural or ritual practices. For instance, if the lake area has a majority of Hindu population then one would see lot of structures/temples dedicated to Hindu Gods and Goddesses. Similarly, if the lake area is dominated by Muslim population then there's a notable presence of Dargahs and Masjids near the outlet channel of the lake. These are all the practices that have been exercised in relation to the lake and there are significant shifts in these practices due to landuse changes catalyzed by the growth of the Cyberabad zone, which called for new land-based economic activities instead of lake-based economic activities.

The meanings of ritual practices on lakes also changed and have been given new meanings over a period of time for various reasons. It varies from one to the other group of actors, but their activities on lake denote their motives which are economical, social and cultural in nature. For instance, Gangaputra community have been practicing Katta Maisamma ritual in believing that she is the reason for their existence and sustenance but this meaning has changed when change occurred in lake water. As a result, they left the ritual practice of Katta Maisamma at the lake since sine they don't get fish.

In this chapter, I argue that the newly emerging rituals grow increasingly dissociated from the lake's ecology and actually add to the damage the lake. Also, the construction of new temples inside and around the lake has implications for the new political economy, land, nature of the ritual practices, caste, and local ecology. These new practices are largely motivated by economic considerations that are linked to people's sustenance in the area since their associations with the lake have been disrupted by various developments. Socio-cultural relationships of each caste community to the lake have been blurred in various processes of urbanization as shown in the previous chapter. This disruption has resulted in reworkings of ritual practices too. For instance, the

Gangaputra community stopped actively worshipping Katta Maisamma, even though they have not relinquished claims over the land that is located by the Katta Maisamma temple. Their interest in claiming the land as community resource gives them certain influence and leverage in the lake area.

5.2. Context

Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu's identity and history is related to the people who have settled down around the lake have been exercising their customary claims through rituals, traditions and activities. However, now socio-religious groups are redefining the processes of urbanization such as urban planning, illegal encroachments, uneven development, urban influx and migration which have had an impact on the lake and people associated with the lake. Today, the state is tending more towards creating lake as a tourist spot. The processes of lake conservation have not only influenced the geophysicality of the lake but also everyday practices of people on lake and its water. Processes of urbanization not only led to the breakdown of the association between people and the lake but also changed the nature of ritual practices of Shaikpet villagers. These ritual practices are fitted into the changing landscape defined by the construction of housing complexes, roads which destroyed natural streams, drainage and sewerage lines, which empty out into to the lake water, fence around the lake, construction of a walkway inside the lake area.

As a result, established meanings of local Goddesses in relation to the lake have changed not only at the practice level but also at the personal level since the resources of the villagers started to disappear. On the whole, in the present context, it appears that if the communities get something out of lake and its water, only then they will offer prayers to the Goddesses, otherwise they don't. For example, since there are no fish in the lake due to contamination of lake water, Gangaputras are not offering prayers to the goddess Katta Maisamma. Similarly, Eeramma has not been receiving any ritual offerings from Rajakas since the temple place is filled with contaminated lake water and shrubs all around. Bathukamma festival has been celebrated since 2015 in Shaikpet for the last three

years since it was recognized as a state festival and organizations affiliated to political parties who started pumping in money for the celebrations.

In addition, there are temples dedicated to mainstream Gods in and around the lake which do not have any association with the lake. But they carry different meanings and continue to have an impact on the lake and its water in some ways. The issues of changes through initiation of temples in and around the lake and the effect these had on the lake can be understood by treating the area as an urban watershed area. Looking at the urban watershed approach will give one a sense of people's activities on lake, especially its location of importance in relation to lakes ecosystem conservation and significance of ritual practices, which are crucial for the existence and sustenance of lakes.

5.3. Ritual Practices on Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu

The villager's mainstay used to be the lake-based economy such as fishing, washing, agriculture and pot-making on Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu. So their everyday activities and also their ritual practices are largely connected to the lake. Though Shaikpet is within the city's administrative boundary, the village didn't witness developments of the kind that the core city undergone. This village has been under GHMC and HUDA (now HMDA) which is also situated at the border of Hyderabad district. Development of the area around the lake would mean transforming rocky and hilly terrain. Shaikpet was not considered for any developmental activities in the various planning periods. Changes in this area started due to construction of Hi-Tech city and creation of Cyberabad Development Authority (CDA) through new landuse classifications. For instance, Hi-Tech city construction and development has occurred as part of new industrial policies by the state government. There were also efforts made to develop places by classifying them as zones. For example, Cyberabad Development Authority (CDA) was created by considering as special development area.

Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu used to be well connected with other lakes around and was the main livelihood source for Shaikpet villagers. It was a fresh water body and had free flow of water from the uphill area to the downhill area by connecting lakes on the

way. The flows of Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu are connected to Musi river through the Shatam Talab, Langer House lake, and connected to Hussain Sagar through Balkapur nala. The Gangaputras have been exercising authority on the fishing activity in the lake primarily because they are more in number in the village and have been considered by other sub-caste communities in the village as a dominant by its intervention in every village affairs and activities sub-caste group. Other professions in the village have their own stakes on lake and its water such as Munnurukapu's (farmer's), Mudiraju's (fruits and collecting other material), Rajaka's (washermen), and Kummari's (pot-maker's). There are other caste and sub-caste communities also that are indirectly dependent on the lake such as Kammari's (blacksmith's), Vadrangi's (carpenter's) etc. The composition of caste communities in Shaikpet village, according to my respondents is as follows: Gangaputra's (60%), Munnurukapu's (6%), Mudiraju's (11%), Rajaka's (4%), Dalit's (17%) and other caste communities (2%).

Gangaputras are not only exercising authority on fishing activity but are also active in other village activities. Historically, they have been dominant in village activities as they have the numbers. They became (there is a conflict to gain control on village and resources between Gangaputras and Munnurukapus since both holds power in the village activities as a higher caste communities among Backward Caste. By being a large group and extend their political network through their number (as votes) Gangaputras have become a most powerful group) a dominant group by slowly entrenching themselves in village activities and then started to control the villagers through various cultural practices by establishing Mahankali temple in the name of village and its people. Figure 5.3 shows that the Mahankali temple constructed by Gangaputra caste community.

Figure 5.3: Mahankali temple in Shaikpet village



According to C. Manohar, Advisor (a position in Gangaputra Sangham), Gangaputra Sangham), and B. Sidda Sadanand (Ex-General Secretary, Gangaputra Sangham) the “Mahankali temple was established in 1956. Intent of initiating Mahankali temple in the village was to promote the idea of one community to fight against all the odds. In their words we are alive today because we had fought as one against the Muslim rulers during Rajakar movement. Otherwise we wouldn’t have lived until today. We realized the importance of being together during this movement. Since there are different caste communities, it is difficult to organise them under one umbrella. So, initiating the Mahankali temple for everyone will bring us together and we can easily get together and fight” (Sidda Sadanand 2014). But in practice, the establishment of Mahankali temple by the Gangaputras was to assert their power and control other caste communities through various village activities. For instance, caste panchayat’s were being conducted to emphasize the idea of one community and how to conduct ourselves to be as one. These

are some of the activities by the Gangaputra's that have led them where they are today. As a result, the old form of the caste system is working in different forms. So in this case, caste in the urban sphere does not get dismantled, rather it is reworked and reappears in different forms.

Munnurukapus are also as powerful as Gangaputras in the village because they hold much of the agricultural land in the village. Munnurukapus are politically active as they are one of the higher caste communities in the village. There is some competition between the Munnurukapus and Gangaputras in the village as to who will take decisions and wield authority in matters relating to village activities. Other sub-caste communities are not as powerful and are mostly confined to the caste structural principles with available resources for them. Ritual practices of Shaikpet villagers are not only confined to the village itself but also to the lake since their occupations are related to the lake and its water. Ritual practices of Shaikpet villagers consist as not only lake-based but also caste-based and village based. For example, Katta Maisamma was practiced by Gangaputras and Eeramma practiced by Rajakas and Gutta Pochamma by entire villagers. So there are different ritual practices carried by the villagers.

They have been worshipping and partaking in rituals specific to mainstream gods as well as local goddesses, which are related to their professions as well as caste. Establishment of temples/structures of the gods and goddesses are based on their beliefs, happiness, pleasure and fear. They have different gods and goddesses for different purposes. For instance, temples of mainstream gods like Shiva, Anjaneya swami and Sai Baba are for different purposes and village goddess like Gutta Pochamma is to protect village and village boundary. Earlier they have established Mahankali temple to save the village community. Katta Maisamma is to protect people at downside of the lake and Rajakas initiated Eeramma temple at north side of the lake to protect their occupation and to help them prosper in all the spheres of life.

Locations of these temples are also important to know the history of the gods associated with those temples, their relevance and significance for the entire life system of nature and people. These temples and gods are not only about people but nature too

which carries particular meanings based on people's beliefs. Consequently, there is a change in these practices due to urbanization which led people to not only change their livelihood pattern but also their everyday practices on lake and its water. These changes are largely due to the economic activities which will benefit them in some form or the other.

Figure 5.4: Katta Maisamma Temple at Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu



Katta Maisamma temple at Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu shows the new developments that have resulted at the temple place. Before 1990, Katta Maisamma temple was on the bund of the lake but now it is half submerged and become part of the road that has connected Old Mumbai highway. The wall behind the temple was built as part of the fence and due to intervention of Gangaputras who worship the goddess earlier. G. Yadaiah (President, Gangaputra Sangham) mentioned that we are still custodians of the

temple because it is our temple” (Yadaiah 2015). Now the temple is not receiving any prayers by the Gangaputras since there is no fish in the lake and no fishing activity.

Figure 5.5: Eeramma Temple in Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu



Eeramma temple established by Rajaka Sangham in 1993 and the goddess is not related to the lakes in the region. The temple so far is not worshipping by Rajaka's since the temple submerged with the polluted lake water due to new drainage lines have connected.

In these shifts, the important thing to recognize is how the older form of relationship and association between nature and people has changed over the years.

These break ups between nature and people have occurred due to external (urbanization processes through globalization and neoliberal policies) and internal forces among caste groups to gain control on the available resources. External forces are ones

that can be attributed to urban planning, new liberal policies, urban influx, and migration. Internal forces are those related to the processes of urbanization and people involved in it such as realtors, sub-caste associations, private individuals and new migrants. Urban planning played a key role in changing the land value and also led to destruction of the lake by dividing the lake area for different housing layouts such as housing for the poor, individual apartments, gated communities and commercial establishments. As a result, lake area transformed from a fresh water body to a dead lake, contaminated by commercial and domestic waste, water-logging, encroachments and floods in low lying areas.

Let me very briefly describe three ritual practices that I will analyze in detail later in the chapter: viz. Katta Maisamma, Bonalu, and Bathukamma. Source for describing the ritual practices on lake are people's narrations about ritual practices that have practiced by them through in-depth interviews, and observations.

5.3.a. Katta Maisamma

Katta Maisamma is a local goddess in the Telangana region and closely related to lakes. She used to always be situated beside the outlet sluice of lakes that too at the south or south-east side of the lake. Katta Maisamma is mostly worshipped by the OBC caste communities like Gangaputras who have been dependent on the lake-based activities for their livelihoods. Katta Maisamma is also worshipped not in relation to the lakes but in relation to protecting village boundaries within the region. For instance, "Katta Maisamma in Shamirpet village worshipped to protect the village boundary" (Dube 1974) and in the case of Shaikpet village it is worshipped by the fishermen community for their wellbeing. This practice is prevalent among fishermen community in Shaikpet village. The fishermen community in the village worships Katta Maisamma every time they go to fishing in the lake and offer bonam before they enter into lake as part of their ritual. They do this every time in order to convey their gratitude to the goddess for their vows. Katta Maisamma has local meanings given by the people who practiced it.

5.3.b. Bonalu

Bonalu is an annual festival of Telangana celebrated in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secuenderabad, and also other parts of the state. The festival celebration is believed to be a thanksgiving to the goddess Mahankali and other local goddesses for the fulfilment of vows. Bonalu festival has its own significance in the case of Shaikpet village since it is a village festival. There is a lot of variation in the manner of celebrating Bonalu festival in comparison to Hyderabad city and rest of the Telangana with the Shaikpet village. Establishment of Bonalu festival as a village festival started when the village was hit by recurring droughts. According to G. Balaiah “The village people went to the Gutta Pochamma temple (see figure 23) and prayed to her to save them from the drought. Then, the goddess told them that you (village people) conduct Bonalu festival and offer prayers to me not every year but once in two years. Since then, the villagers started to celebrate Bonalu in Shaikpet once in every two years” (Balaiah 2015). This differs from even the adjacent villages. Another unique feature of Bonalu in Shaikpet is that they offer prayers to not Kanaka Durga or Katta Maisamma but to Gutta Pochamma their village goddess who protects the village boundary. These are the nuances at the very local level. These nuances usually do not get everyone’s attention, but only established practices and meanings are known by everyone across the state. Local meanings in relation to ritual practices are as powerful as established factors. These can be observed through how they determine the lives of people who have been practicing.

Figure 5.6: Gutta Pochamma temple in Shaikpet village



5.3.c. Bathukamma

Bathukamma has been largely celebrated in rural areas of Telangana, by women belonging to particular OBC communities, and also Dalits and Scheduled Tribes. Further, by those women whose livelihoods are connected to land, water, flora and fauna in the lake ecosystem. Let me briefly describe how Bathukamma is practised in the villages of Telangana. The upper castes do not participate. The celebration is led by certain OBC communities, at the main access point to the lake. They are followed by Dalit and ST communities, who typically use other spaces along the lake. Thus, the practice has clear spatial demarcations on the basis of caste.

In the next section, I show how and why there are socio-spatial transformations in the Bathukamma and other ritual practice in urban spaces.

5.4. Changes in ritual practices on Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu

The meanings of these gods in relation to the lake differ from one to the other and have been changing in accordance with various vested interests of the people. Earlier, these gods were primarily related to nature and their reference was to mainstream Hindu gods and goddesses. For instance, water in the lake is considered as Ganga which is one of the attributes of Shiva. So people who fish in Shaikpet village were called Gangaputras, which means son of Gangamma. Likewise, Eeramma is also related to the lake but the context is different from Gangaputras since they connected it to their livelihoods and well-being. Katta Maisamma has been seen in relation to nature and is referred to as the local form of Ganga. There are also other gods in the village who do not have any relation to the lake.

The meanings of local goddesses across the region have been influenced by external forces which resulted in changes in the practices and altered their purpose. These are clearly evident in the way they came into existence, time period of their emergence and the location. If we look at these three things then one can see how the meanings have changed in a particular place and at the practice level over a period of time. These meanings and ritual practices are largely not the same across the region but carry similar meanings across the Telangana region. Practice of Katta Maiamma varies from one place to the other within the region. For example, Katta Maisamma ritual in Shaikpet was practiced in relation to the lake by fishermen but in Shamirpet, Katta Maisamma practiced to protect village boundary (Dube 1974) and Katta Maisamma at Tank Bund celebrates during Bonalu festival but not in relation to fishing activity or lake. These variations among ritual practices how they play out in reality in relation to the lakes are something to look at. It will also explain how far the general meanings of these goddesses have been altered and changed.

In the face of external forces, meanings of local goddesses can vary within a short period of time among the very social groups that were practicing or exercising it. There is still debate on who has created local goddesses and what the main purpose is. Whose origin is first, local goddesses or mainstream goddesses? But the established factor is that

in any given society local belief systems are prevalent in the day-to-day life of people. In rural studies these facts are established really well since there is not much scope for changes in practices, owing to the lower possibility of any external force that influences their practice.

Though there are many local goddesses for different purposes, they are often linked to the Hindu pantheon deities. For instance, Bathukamma has been seen as Gauramma in the form of Bonam and also as Gangamma since the fishermen believe that they are the sons of Ganga. Like-wise, Katta Maisamma was basically linked to the village boundaries and lakes. Now, the Bonalu festival came from Madya Pradesh. The goddess worshipped during the festival in the earliest performances of Bonalu was Kanaka Durga and not any other goddess. Today, Bonalu is celebrated in honour of practically all the local goddesses across the Telangana region: from Mutyalamma to Maremma, Sunkulamma, Pedda Pochamma, Yellamma, Mallam Gutta Pochamma, Peddamma. The meaning of Bonalu to the Kanaka Durga is different from Peddamma or Katta Maisamma, each goddess brings their own specific powers. According to G. Balaiah (Member, Rajaka Sangham) "Bonalu festival is celebrated by all the villagers as prayers for a prosperous life to the goddess Gutta Pochamma" (Balaiah 2015). Unlike in Shaikpet, Katta Maisamma at Tank Bund has a different meaning which celebrates for the occasion of Bonalu but not in relation to protect lake bund. So the Katta Maisamma practice and its meanings vary at each level. But these local meanings so far haven't come to the fore as dominant stories since there is also politics of making stories of ritual practices based on the power that each one has. For instance, the way Bathukamma has been celebrated using state machinery by recognized as a state festival. Before Bathukamma made as a state festival, it was largely celebrated in rural areas but now urban centres have become centres for Bathukamma celebrations. Bathukamma is the women festival but there is increase participation of men in the festival processes. This indicates how particular meanings woven by powerful determine the entire practice. This process can be seen in the case of the Bathukamma festival, where the space of women is coming to be occupied by the men who are not historically part of the festival celebrations.

The regional identities of these practices are very important to understand the meanings given to these local goddesses' in relation to lakes across the region. For instance, it is believed across the Telangana region that Katta Maisamma will protect people residing at the south of the lake from the natural calamities. This is the predominant belief and meaning that has been given to Katta Maisamma across Telangana region. But this meaning differs in reality. For instance, across the region (urban, peri-urban or rural) most of the lakes have Katta Maisamma temple at the down side of the lake. But there are also lakes, which have masjids/dargahs at the outlet nalas of lakes. These different structures denote the social composition and their cultural practices in the areas along lakes. It appears that the ritual practices on lakes across the region have broad commonalities but they also have local variations depending on the social groups that reside in the areas around the lake.

These practices not only vary between places but also within specific places. For instance, if we see Hyderabad city and ritual practice of local goddesses on lakes, we see differences not only in terms of practice but also in the social groups that have been carrying out these practices. The composition of population in Hyderabad city is diverse in its nature which cuts across different areas and social groups. Many lakes in the city have Katta Maisamma temples at outlet nalas, especially in the south or south-west side. Some prominent lakes are Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu, Malaka Cheruvu, Durgam Cheruvu, and Hussain Sagar. Likewise some of the lakes also have dargahs where Muslims are a majority. For example, Hakim Baba masjid at Hakim Baba Kunta (see figure 5.7). The differences at the practice level tells us that though the meaning is same across the region, there are differences in the practice, especially in the way prayers are offered to the goddess. For illustration, Gangaputras pray to Katta Maisamma while they enter into the lake for fishing, At Laxshminarayana lake in Ghatkesar, people offer prayers to Katta Maisamma before they harvest the crop. At Hussain Sagar, people offer prayers to Katta Maisamma during Bonalu festival. In Shaikpet village, Gangaputras have been offering prayers to the Katta Maisamma temple as they claim to be sons of Gangamma goddess.

Figure 5.7: Masjid-e-Syedha Omer Farooq at Hakim Baba Kunta



But in Chinna Charlapalli village, Ghatkesar mandal, Mudiraju community has been exercising this practice as they are the fishermen in the village since there is no Gangaputra community. In the case of Shaikpet, both Gangaputras and Mudirajus have claims on the land around the lake and Gangaputras only have the right to fish in the lake water but not Mudirajus. Another point to note is that Gangaputras claim that they are fishermen by birth. They do not consider people who have taken up fishing as a profession to be fishermen per se.

In the words of B. Sadanand (Ex-General Secretary, Gangaputra Sangham) “Fishermen by birth have the pure right over the lake water and also as sons of Gangamma. But this right does not belong to those who take up fishing as a profession. Simply, Gangaputra’s are like real sons and Mudiraju’s are adopted sons” (Sidda Sadanand 2014).

In Shaikpet, Gangaputras consider Mudirajus to be fishermen by profession. But in the case of Chinna Charlapalli, there is no fishermen community, which claims to be Gangaputras by birth. So the fishing activity is practiced by the Mudiraju community and

they have been into fishing since decades and they have also established the Fishermen Co-operative Society. This phenomenon is not only confined within Hyderabad. One can see similar instances in places where there is no Gangaputra population and people from other castes have been fishing. They do not come under fishermen community as recognized/stated by the Indian Constitution but they have recognition as fishermen in the village. These forms have changed slowly and the Gangaputras have slowly realized the reservations and incentives available to them in accordance with the reservation system by the Constitution. There are also instances where people from the Harijan community have taken up the fishing profession and claim to be Gangaputras. Gangaputras from Shaikpet village accuse Mudirajus and other sub-caste communities of grabbing benefits that they are entitled to as guaranteed by the Constitution of India. This issue came into the limelight when the state irrigation minister T. Harish Rao said that “land givers to the ongoing irrigation projects will have right to fish in nearby tanks and lakes across Telangana region” (Anonymous 2018a). But the fishermen community (Gangaputras) across the region objected to the entrenchment of other caste communities and voiced their protest saying that others in this region are trying to get benefits that they feel entitled to by taking up fishing as their profession.

All the changes mentioned above have been taking place since the time the water in the lake started to change due to urbanization processes. Periodical examination of the lake will reveal what has happened to the lake and how ritual practices have changed due to developments on lake and its water by the external and internal forces. These changes will throw light on how the local meanings to these practices vary within the region and have implications for the socio-cultural and economic related activities. These will be clear once we establish the social systems, cultural practices and economic activities on the lakes, in relation to the lake and their association with the lake. So history of the lake, place, and people, are important to explain how a fresh water body turned into a dead lake which further led to changes in people’s association with the lake and its water such as changes in inter-personal relationships of people, cultural practices, economic status and environmental degradation.

5.4.a. Changes in Katta Maisamma Rituals

Change in the Katta Maisamma ritual practice by the fishermen community of Shaikpet started due to change in the lake water. These changes were a result of connecting the commercial and domestic waste lines to the lake. These are also accompanied with many other actors' activities, consisting of new migrants, residential welfare associations and caste-based associations who were associated with the lake. Fishermen community, that is Gangaputras, has left the practice since there are no fish available in the lake and their meanings to Katta Maisamma ritual practice also changed due to various developments on lake and its water. But striking to their meanings on the ritual practice is that they didn't left the land where Katta Maisamma located. Simultaneously, the lake also started to see new ritual practices by construction of mainstreams god's temples such as Anjaneya Swami, Shiva temple (see figure 5.8), and Mahankali temple and also introduced Bathukamma celebrations to the lake by slum dwellers. Like-wise the lake has been experiencing different activities by different actors whose claims on the lake do not treat it as a living entity or a resource for the caste communities.

Figure 5.8: Shiva temple at Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu



5.4.b. Changes in Bonalu

“The Telangana State Government announced Bonalu and Batukamma as State festivals on 16th July 2014. The first Bonalu started at Bhagyalaxmi Temple situated at Charminar after the formation of the Telangana state on 29th June and ended on 21st July 2014. Lashkar Bonalu started at Secundrabad on 13th July 2014. Ten crore rupees were allocated for Bonalu celebrations but not for the year 2014 since it was in the middle of celebrations, ten crore for .Bathukamma and five crore for Ramzan” (Anonymous 2014b). The government departments, including GHMC, Road Transport Corporation, power utility and water works got involved to gear up for this occasion and also government departments like the Police (Civil, Traffic, and Crime), Health Department, and Sanitation. Participation was also drawn from voluntary temple committee, and various other volunteer organizations (Deccan Manava Seva Samithi). With every passing year, Bonalu as a state festival transforms. Every year the spectacle is larger, more security personnel are deployed, and “in 2018 the budget was raised from 10 crore to 15 crores” (Anonymous 2018c).

Bonalu festival celebration in 2014 did not see much crowd and usually. All the places of Bonalu celebration in twin cities have regular devotees and it was also pitched as a tourists festivals. A lot of money was spent on advertising it with huge banners and flexies and also popularizing it through social and print media as well. Some of my respondents also pointed out that the way celebrations happen at Lashkar Mahankali temple in Secunderabad differs from the rural areas since the earthen pots missing to offer bonam to the goddess. But in rural areas or in slums we see women carry metal pots and also the original songs of Bonalu replaced by the D J remix songs in the festival celebrations.

Telangana State Chief Minister promised as part of Bonalu celebrations that “we will develop the premises of the Lal Dharwaja Mahankali temple to accommodate more people during festival time” (V6 News Telugu 2014b). Minister of Exercise Padma Rao said that “schools and colleges would be closed on the days where nearby temples celebrated the festival” (Anonymous 2014b).

Some of the change in Bonalu festival of 2014 can be observed through

1. Gattams (replicas of Bonam) installed at every main cross road in the city as well as on the way to Secunderabad
2. Huge Banners of Bonalu festival with the local political leaders are put up on the ways to the temples
3. Road dividers and houses are specially designed to resemble a Bonam
4. DJs permitted for Bonalu festival and original songs of the goddess replaced with recording and remix songs which are played at the temple as well as in procession

5.4.c. Changes in Ritual Practices of Bathukamma Festival

Here the puzzle is why Bathukamma is being celebrated only by some sections of the society and that too in urban areas, since 2014. Historically, the festival is celebrated largely in rural areas by the women particularly OBC communities. Now, it has been made into everyone's festival but still many sections of the society are not part of it due to power relations and caste dominance. Some of the reasons for these varied responses include:

1. Batukamma festival became Telangana State festival
2. Funds released for celebrations (Total allocation of funds - 10 crores and in that 10 lakhs for each district)
3. People formed neighbourhood committees for Batukamma celebrations
4. Only city of Hyderabad, district head quarters, and some of the major towns became the centers for Batukamma celebrations
5. Government gave wide publicity about the way the festival has to be celebrated through print and visual media, huge banners and hoardings
6. 2000 police personnel assigned for Bathukamma celebrations

7. Men also participated
8. Fifteen days holiday announced by the Government
9. For the (Saddula Batukamma) last day celebrations 25000 women brought from various places from the Telangana region and 35 tonnes of flowers brought from different places
10. Many artists from the Telenagana region performed their art during the procession from Lal Bahadur stadium to Hussain Sagar
11. Recorded songs and DJ remix songs replaced songs which women used to sing while playing Batukamma

Bathukamma has been contested by different socio-cultural, economical and political level which have caused for change in its nature and representation of the festival. Change in the nature of Bathukamma celebrations by the state government of Telangana indicates appropriation of culture and caste politics.

- Bathukamma celebrations shifted from rural to urban
- Specific lakes selected for Bathukamma immersion based on political considerations of the ruling party
- Women were brought from all the states of Telangana for celebration (For the (Saddula Batukamma) last day celebrations 25000 women brought from various places from the Telangana region and 35 tonnes of flowers brought from different places)
- Bathukamma's have been immersed in destroyed lakes
- Government made GHMC and HMDA the responsible authorities to do Bathukamma festival in the city of Hyderabad

Urban areas have become centres for Bathukamma celebrations

- Hyderabad as the main urban centre to celebrate Bathukamma and all the district headquarters made subsidiary centres by providing funds

5.5. Reasons for the change in ritual practices

5.5.a. Change in the land value

Ritual practices in relation to Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu and changes in these ritual practices are tied to implications with various urban planning developments through new land use pattern. These developments initially started around the Shaikpet area with the construction of Hi-Tech city during 1990s. These changes in Hi-Tech city area had influence on the land around which until then was not used for any developmental activities since the terrain was rocky/hilly and the major part of the land was made up of commons. Cyberabad Development Authority (CDA) was established as part of creating HMDA in 2008 by merging CDA, HUDA and HADA. Special development authorities like CDA have special regulations and they were responsible for creating land market around in order to transform use of land for different purposes. Transformation of lands in Shaikpet area can mainly be attributed to real estate business. Planned area has transformed the entire space as a hub for tech-industries. This further led to changes in the land value of surrounding areas where real estate boom happened in accordance with the development of CDA. So the agricultural land, urban commons (hills, rocks, lakes and river beds), and vacant government land were transformed as plots or sub-plots, different residential complexes (individual apartments and slums), and land for infrastructure development (like roads, government housing and drainage lines, construction of temples).

5.5.b. Pollution

Ritual practices were also affected by waste water that polluted the lake which further resulted in changes in their professions. According to Shaikpet villagers and slum dwellers around Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu, the lake was polluted by the inflow of waste from Ramanaidu studio and Apollo hospital. A. Sadanand and D. Yadaiah said that

“Change in our livelihoods started with change in the lake water because of the waste water connected from Rama Naidu Studio and Apollo hospitals at north side of the lake (see figure 5.9). These two are located on the upside hill of Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu and water flows to the down side and merges into the lake. It was a fresh water lake before 1990s and after 1990s these new developments around the lake made it to use for different purposes” (Sidda Sadanand 2014), (Yadaiah 2015).

Figure 5.9: Waste water connected to Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu from Ramanaidu studio and Apollo hospitals



As a result, entire fish in the lake died and the fishermen protests did not yield anything. It further altered their livelihoods since the people responsible for the pollution were people wielding power. So the fishermen claimed that the lake was still alive and they continued to bid for fishing by paying tax to the government. Washermen started to secure their livelihood by digging a borewell inside the lake with facilitated by local political leaders who had their own interests in mind. Munnurukapus built rental housing

by selling off their lands near lake area. Mudirajus got involved in real estate business and petty businesses. Harijans became active in Dalit movements and started to gain some security by accessing education and government opportunities that were guaranteed by the Constitution of India.

5.5.c. Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure development in Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu is also one of the reasons for changes that have occurred in ritual practices. Infrastructure facilities that were provided by the municipal administration at the lake area were housing facility for new migrants in various planning periods. Along with that, other basic services were also provided in a way that the resident's needs were met. But the major debacle in this process was that no one took into account the damage that would be done to the lake and its water in this process. So various housing complexes were built, drainage/sewerage lines constructed (see figure 5.10), roads were laid in and around the lake, fence was built around the lake, iron grill wall was put up along the outlet nala of the lake and a walkway was built inside the lake area as part of beautification of the lake. All these activities resulted in blockage of rain water from the north side, and water was diverted from the main entry points. That led to the area becoming impervious and led to flooding of the low lying areas of the lake. Stagnation of water in the residential area led to the outbreak of infections and diseases. Temples dedicated to the local goddesses in the area were submerged with polluted water and the roads that were laid were damaged too.

Figure 5.10: Construction of new open drainage and sewerage at Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu



5.5.d. Establishment of New religious structures and their practices

When there was a decline in the activity in the lake area, new developments were initiated by the slum dwellers around the lake. They started gaining control on the lake and land around it by building temples. Temples that have come up in lake area after 1990s are Anjaneya Swami temple, Shiva temple, Mahankali temple and Poleramma temple. Some of these temples are located inside the lake, some in the outlet nala of the lake (Balkapurnala) and some at the edges of the lake. These new temples are encroachments on the lake area and now that they have been around for many years, no one can do anything about them.

Emergence of mainstream god's temples on and around the lake occurred for various reasons. For example, the Anjaneya temple was built to establish the presence of Ambedkar Nagar slum and their right to be there. Ambedkar Nagar is located at the south side and they created temple to not to move from there since no municipal authority or state cannot touch the temple areas. The temple is also claimed by Kota Krishna Rao (Advisor, Ambedkar Nagar) as "the temple was there before and lake boundary expanded

during N. Chandrababu Naidu's time. So now everyone saying that the temple is inside the lake but in reality it is not in the lake but the lake FTL expanded and our survey number is 403" (Krishna Rao 2015). At the north side of the lake Shiva temple constructed by BJR Nagar slum dwellers and they have been worshipping there. It was not there before they came here. This allowed them stick with the place by repeated activities with the temple and its place. Like-wise Mahankalli temple at east side of the lake was established by Mahatma Gandhi Nagar slum dwellers. These are all the temples constructed for particular reasons and used for strategic claim-making by slum dwellers. But these practices are not in relation to lake and its water. Even Eeramma temple by Rajaka's has been established inside the lake in order to secure their livelihood option with the lake resource but not as it was a age old ritual practice by them at the lake. All these new ritual practices were introduced to the lake when the land value increased due to construction of Hi-Tech city and creation of Cyberabad Corridor. At the same time, lake areas have also witnessed large numbers of new migrant populations, from not only inside the side but also from outside the state. Each group that have been situated around the lake assert their power by installation of temples.

Apart from mainstream religious practices, new ritual practices have also been observed such as Bonalu and Bathukamma festivals by people who did not have any association with the lake. These were introduced to the lake and its water due to state government's decision to make them as state festivals. These festivals were never celebrated on Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu by the Shaikpet residents. But new migrants have been practicing them since the festivals got recognized by the state and money was provided by the government to celebrate them in a big way irrespective of its significance with people and lakes. For instance, slum dwellers started offering prayers to Katta Maisamma and Bathukammas are being immersed in the polluted lake water by slum dwellers since 2015.

5.5.e. Development of slums

Increase in the slum population in and around the lake has also affected the ritual practices. Migration to this area has happened from within the city, within the state and other states as well. Most of the population migrated from Khammam, Sanga Reddy, Medak, Warangal, Nalgonda, Kurnool, Prakasam, Maharashtra border villages, Bidar and Gulberga. Since there were no proper drainage and sewerage systems in the slums, all the waste was let into the lake. As a result, the lake water started getting polluted and the people whose livelihoods dependent on it were hit hard. Then there was also a major inflow of waste from Ramanaidu studio and Apollo hospitals. With all of these activities, the fish in the lake died and Eeramma temple got submerged. So all the ritual practices associated with the goddesses were also suspended.

5.5.f. Urban opportunism (new aspirations)

With all the activities on the lake area, Shaikpet villagers have strategized their approaches to secure their livelihoods in some or the other way. But they also undermined what is actually happening to their association with the lake. Looking at all the efforts that they took to sustain that relationship with the lake tells us that they were pushed to an extent where they had no other choice but end their relationship with the lake. But here the question is that if the lake was only something that aided their survival then it has no other value other than that. This approach is a dangerous one as people are heavily dependent on nature and natural resources. People did not or were not able to think of long term sustenance since rapid changes in the land and other resources led them to focus on short-term gains. In this process, they didn't see themselves as part of the lake ecosystem which was very much part of their lives. So, rapid urbanization and its processes appeared to be the major influential factors for change in their attitude towards lake and its water. But if we closely look at the processes of urbanization and how it had an influence on people's attitude, it reveals how people perceive the lake and its water. It shows the urban opportunism and everyone aspiring to make their lives better by getting hold of whatever is available. So they became agents for the urbanization by getting involved in land transactions. They also became beneficiaries of the urbanization process

by selling their lands and building rental houses. They also became victims of the same urbanization and faced hazardous situations, floods and scarcity of water.

5.6. Impacts

5.6.a. Socio-cultural relations

There is a change in the rituals and practices related to local goddesses in Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu. These practices are predominantly for Katta Maisamma at the lake bund who the fishermen believe to be the local form of Gangamma. They call themselves Gangaputras (sons of Gangamma). Once the lake changed from being a fresh water body to a dead and polluted lake, Eeramma temple was built by the washermen community in order to protect their resources at the lake (primarily the lake water). Subsequently, there was no activity on the lake except washing. Ambedkar Nagar slum initiated Anjaneya Swami temple inside the lake and appropriated the place with repeated activity. Absence of traditional occupations on lake also led to new migrants from slums around gaining access to the lake. People started immersing Bathukammas in the lake water since the time the festival was recognized as a state festival by the State government of Telangana. So on one hand there was old practices and then there are new practices introduced by people who have no relation to the lake. These practices are assertive in nature as people want to use them as a tool to gain access and control over the place. So now most of the cultural practices are not associated with the lake. There are different motives for these activities which have to do with power, domination, beliefs and economic interests. Unlike before, old practices have been completely altered and new practices have been brought in by new residents.

5.6.b. Inter-personal relationships

People's interpersonal relations got affected due to initiation of new temples and cultural practices which led by change in the lake water. Change in the ritual practices indicates people's association and their attitude towards the lake and its water. This distinguished people who were dependant on the lake and those who weren't. There is a slight break in the old hierarchical caste relationships among all the caste communities in

Shaikpet village due to change in the professions since each caste has a specific profession. Change in their professions brought change in their economic status which then led to change in the equations on old forms of caste relations. For instance, Dalits were included in the celebration of Bonalu festival. Economically stable Dalit people started being invited to functions hosted by people from higher caste communities. People from all the lower caste communities were given a place in the Bonalu festival committee. These changes have been brought about by the higher caste groups in the name of equality. But in reality, it is not so. It shows that the appropriation of higher caste communities over lower castes which again is by bringing in the same old forms of caste relations. For example, though all the caste communities are part of Bonalu committee, often the higher positions are occupied by people from the higher castes and lower caste members are not consulted or considered in the decision making process. In the words of C. Balaraj (President, Harijan Sangham), B. Jangaiah (Advisor, Harijan Sangham), and C. Sadanand (Treasurer, Harijan Sangham) “For outsiders it is like now everyone is equal but in the Bonalu committee whatever happens is very unequal practice which reminds one of the same caste prejudices that we have experienced in the past. They did this because they want get control on us in not only in regards to the village activities but also at the personal level. These kinds of unjust things have been happening to us frequently” (Sadanand, Jangaiah, and Balaraju 2014).

In the case of new migrants, sub-caste communities have connected slums politically but not socially or culturally. For example, Rajaka Sangham built an association with people from the same caste living in different places in the slums to increase and show their strength in number in order to get benefits. People in the slums have established their relations with the lake area by setting up temples and various cultural practices. Population in the slums is made up of diverse social groups from different places and they are often identified based on the place, but their claims go in the name of caste. For illustration, if a majority of the population is made up of a particular social group like Dalits, the name of the slum will then be Ambedkar Nagar or Babu Jagjeevan Rao Nagar. This is not a standardized practice and there are overlaps in naming slums irrespective of a social group's domination.

5.6.c. Meanings of lakes conservation

The meanings attributed to conservation of lakes have changed due to other cultural practices that were introduced to the lake. Older forms of ritual practices on lakes had particular meanings which were established by people's beliefs and activities such as Katta Maisamma and Bathukamma festivals, and in some cases Dargahs or Masjids. Katta Maisamma and Bathukamma have been seen as local form of Gangamma by the way their characteristics were interpreted in the textual sources as someone who would save them from the natural calamities and other evils. Though these are mythological beliefs, they have a huge influence on the day to day lives of people and their activities.

“According to popular legends, there is ‘Kotokka Ammalu’ or ‘Kotokka Devathalu,’ that is one crore and one mother goddesses, all deemed to be daughters of Shiva. The goddesses are believed to protect people belonging to different villages and castes, and hence are worshipped as reigning deities in villages. Frequently, the images of these goddesses resemble one another” (Gade 2016). People's activities on lake reflect their belief system which has strong influence on what they do in their daily life. Their activities are largely related to maintaining the health of the lake by removing silt, weeds, cleaning the inlet and outlet water channels, maintain the bund etc. All these activities are done with an understanding that if they take care of the lake (goddess) then the goddess will take care of them. So the conservation methods of lake were internalized and inherited in their belief system. But these meanings stopped being relevant to them when they realized that they are not going to benefit in any way from the lake. They then slowly started to give up their regular practices which were linked to their well being. This statement denotes that the main reasons for people not maintaining a relationship with the lake is due to economical factors and has nothing to do with spiritual or cultural factors. Processes of urbanization were seen as main forces for change in people's attitude. But the question remains the same. How are the economic factors more dominant than the spiritual factors which are deep-rooted in people's association with nature?

Ritual practices of new migrants differ from those of the residents of Shaikpet since they do not have any strong association with the lake. But they have developed some kind of relationship which again is related to gaining something from the lake but nothing to do with protecting it. Their ritual practices have been introduced to gain control on the land that people have been sitting on.

5.6.d. Power relations

Change in lake water has empowered some and disempowered others based on the status of lake and its water. In this, change in ritual practices have impacted the power relations of people who depended on the lake and those who didn't. Initially, caste-based associations that had customary rights started losing their power on lake and its water. It is their power since their claims and activities are dominant than those of other by controlling particular parts of the lake. Gangaputras used the south-east side of the lake; washermen used the lake to wash clothes on the north side of the lake. Munnurukapus held control on the commanding area of the lake and Mudirajus collected/gathered food articles from the entire lake area. Change in the lake water led to changes in people's association with the places at the lake. As a result, there was a change in their ritual practices which were related to their livelihoods. But there are slight changes in their power relations with the places at the lake though their association seems to be cut off with the lake and its water. Earlier, their power was exercised in accordance with the caste relations that each group maintained. But changes in their power equations occurred due to change in their livelihood pattern which changed their status quo.

New power relations at the lake area were established by initiating temples and new cultural practices by new migrants such as celebration of Bathukamma, activities at Anjaneya Swami temple, prayers at Shiva temple, Mahankali and Poleramma temples. Though new groups are exercising their power over the lake, the presence of older caste groups is still there in some or the other form. For instance, fishermen community still pays tax to the government to fish in the lake and also conducts bidding for fishing. Washermen had dug a bore well inside the lake and resumed washing clothes. Ritual practices of Eeramma temple are done by the washermen. Katta Maisamma temple now

has a wall around it. Caste groups are still exercising their power on lake by being physically present and not doing any activity physically but they have a claim on the lake water.

Here it is important to understand the lakes ecosystem through urban watershed approach in order to know what really has happened to the lakes and its degradation in the region. This approach will also give the sense of cultural values that have attached to the lake and its water by establishing the importance and significance of ritual practices relationship with the lake and its water.

5.7. Perspectives on Transformation

5.7.a. Main functions and importance of Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu

- As a main livelihood resource
- As a sacred space with respect to people's professional (customary) and personal (ritual) practices
- As a well-connected lake with streams flowing from upside to the down side (chain of lakes system)
- As part of large lakes ecosystem in the region

Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu watershed functionality has been dependent on the people who are dependent on the lake and its water. The existence and status of Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu watershed is determined by the people's everyday activities. It has been perceived differently by different actors since there are different social groups that have been exercising their rights and claims.

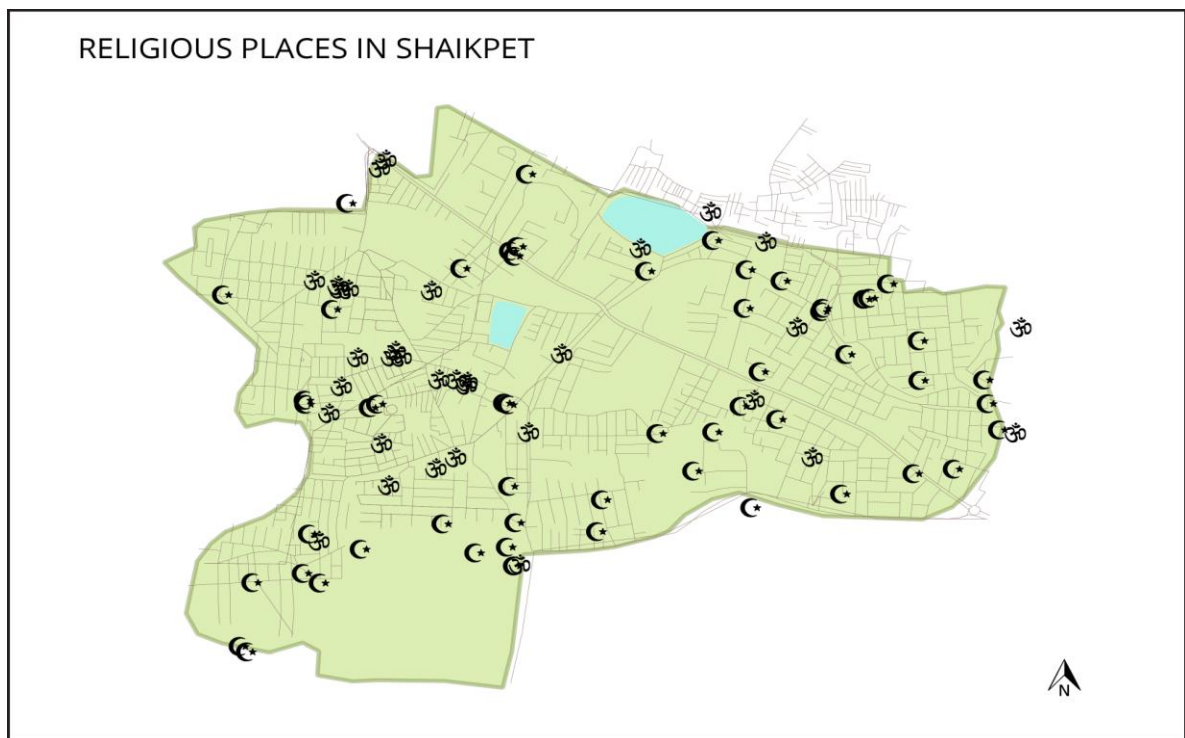
People who are dependent on the lake and its water in Shaikpet are broadly classified as Gangaputras (fishermen), Munnurukapus (farmers), Mudirajus (hunters/food gatherers), Rajakas (washermen), Dalits (daily wage labor) and other service communities such as Kummari (pot-makers), Kammari (blacksmiths) and Vadrangi (carpenters). The above caste communities have their customary practices since ages on

the lake and its water. Their activities are largely connected to their economic well-being, cultural values and ecological balance. Their everyday activities on lake and its water are determined by the geographical set up and at the same time the geography of the lake is also determined by the people's everyday practices where they had particular meanings to the particular place in lake area. The usage of lake and its water by the people marked spatial division among the social groups based on their traditional occupations. So it shows the organizational structure of different social groups that have depended on the lake. Their access and claims follow the existing social structure in accordance with the caste system which is customary in nature but not clear entitlements on lake and its water. Their claims are often mentioned as traditional occupations of Jatis in earlier period. There has been a steady change in their claims on lake and its water due to new land development where urban planning played an important role in changing the geography of the lake area. These new developments have implications with the people's interpersonal relations, cultural values, economic status and environmental degradation.

Apart from the professional activities, people have also been exercising ritual practices on lake and its water. The lake is not only a source for their livelihoods but also a sacred space for their existence. The geography of the lake has been determined by their everyday activities. Ritual practices on lakes in the region are the practice of Katta Maisamma, Bathukamma and other social activities like exorcism and death rites. Worship of Katta Maisamma has been practiced by the fishermen in the region with the belief that she is the mother Goddess for the fishermen sect across the world. Their belief is based on how the form of water has been worshiped over the years. In the past, people worshiped the water resource in the form of Gangamma who is one of the attributes of Shiva in mythology. Katta Maisamma or Bathukamma are the local forms of Gangamma and it carries local meanings but not necessarily related to how Gangamma is worshipped across the country among different social groups. The relevance of Katta Maisamma is that people believe that the Goddess will protect the people who reside at the low lying area of the lake. And the Goddess is always situated at outlet sluice. Location of the outlet sluices of lakes are based on the ridges which allows them to flow down. This symbolic feature differs within the region based on the population that lives around the

lakes. For instance, if the population is predominantly Hindu, the deity at the lake will be Katta Maisamma or if the population has more of Muslims then there will be a masjid or dargah (see figure 5.11). This map also indicates that the current status of social-religious affairs of the place and provides information about the location of various social groups in Shaikpet ward. This map also gives the sense of new developments that have occurred over a period of time in the village and lake area.

Map 5.1: Religious places in Shaikpet



Bathukamma festival is related to the lake and its environs in the region. The festival is celebrated by the women folk from the Backward Caste communities in the region. There are so many local stories related to Bathukamma but in general terms Bathukamma celebration means remembering the mother Goddess Maha Gauri in the form of flowers in gratitude to the life that is provided through lakes and its water for the prosperity of the people. It is an age old practice. Historically, Kakaiya rulers introduced Bathukamma festival and it people continued celebrating the festival with the same intent. There are some events in the history which explain how the celebration of

Bathukamma festival has been used for different purposes. Bathukamma festival is marked in the history for its significance as a festival predominantly celebrated by women and it has also been configured and reconfigured by various actors for different purposes. For instance, Bathukamma has been used for different purposes during different periods of time. This festival is also acclaimed for its role in the Telangana movement for separate statehood. The history of Bathukamma celebrations in the Telangana region will also tell about the shifts in the cultural patterns due to the intervention of political parties and actors which ultimately led to changes in the meanings of cultural practices. These meanings are often contested by the existing dominant social groups' interests but largely undermine the intent of its significance in the life of people and in relation to the lakes. These changing dimensions of cultural patterns have been played out in the name of people's culture and regionalism that is connected with the emotions of people at various levels. It is important to understand these trends to understand the changing geography of the lakes and lakes ecosystem in the region.

Bathukamma and Katta Maisamma are an age old practices in relation to the lakes ecosystem in the region and each lake has its own sacred space with local history. That is where the local histories are important to know that how the lakes and its environs have been responding to each new development. Apart from these ritual and cultural practices, there are also other social activities that take place at the lake which are closely associated with the lake and its water such as death rites, exorcism, cremation process and other related things.

The above activities have largely been practiced on lakes in Hyderabad of the Telangana region. With all these activities, the characteristics of lakes and its geography defined the region. This kind of lakes ecosystem is not only confined to Hyderabad city and the Telangana region but also in entire Deccan Plateau. Though there are some differences in lake-related practices, the entire region shares some common features and meanings. History will give this entire picture of lake related practices since importance of lakes was realized by the local rulers and they put in efforts to conserve and maintain

them. Lakes ecosystem conservation can be seen in this region mainly from the period of Kakatiya dynasty, Qutub Shahi dynasty and Asaf Jahi dynasty.

These three periods in the history gives the example of the unique lakes ecosystem in the region and how this lakes ecosystem was maintained and what the results were. The three periods had set some standards on how one should understand the local geography of the lakes and then use that knowledge for people's welfare and betterment. But unfortunately thinking about people's well-being has taken a back-seat for a long time. Also, the way lakes and their ecosystems have been maintained tell us what has gone wrong and highlight people's vested interests. People just haven't given any thought to what damage is being done to the lake and how that impacts the society at large. This mindset and lack of ownership and responsibility has resulted in damage to the city's landscape and the lakes have been disturbed, destroyed and handled very poorly.

Lakes are lifelines for every living being. In any given time period in the history, it showed that the way natural resources were maintained and used for everyone's prosperity. This also indicates the nature of social systems and approaches irrespective of whether societies were feudal, autocratic, tyrannical, anarchic or democratic. Natural resources have to be use in a manner that they are supposed to according to natural law principles. If there is imbalance in managing nature and natural resources, then there are going to be consequences.

5.7.b. Local Goddesses in relation to Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu

Local goddesses' history is related to the characteristics of village pattern in south India. "Almost, every village in the Southern Indian has powerful divine presence and is almost exclusively female with very few exceptions. These goddesses are popular as name specific, region specific and associated with the diseases, sudden death, catastrophe and disasters, particularly epidemics. Worship of these goddesses are more often particular to the people who relate them and worship of some goddesses mix everyone in

the village and some only confined to individual. These goddesses have often been referred with the great gods of Hindu pantheon” (Kinsley 1988).

The history of local goddesses in relation to the water bodies explains about the significance of the ritual processes, prominence of the place, particular goddess and particular section of the society. For instance, location of Katta Maisamma at the outlet sluice of lakes has a particular history across the region. Though there are different stories about the significance of Katta Maisamma, it carries similar meanings across the region. For instance, “Katta Maisamma in Shamirpet village was established to protect the village boundary unlike Katta Maisamma in Shaikpet where it was established to protect people located at low lying areas of a lake” (Dube 1974). Entire history of local goddesses in relation to water bodies denotes how natural resources have shaped the human lives and at the same time how the nature has been affected by the activities of human. It is important to see how the association and relationship between humans and nature has been changed over the years and what are the problems created as a consequence. What are the changes that occurred in ritual practices? How have the meanings of ritual practices changed?

The location sites of local goddesses and drawn from the mythology which explains about the sacredness of rivers and temples that reside over. The rivers and some of the places have given the names of female goddesses such as Ganga and Yamuna. “Origin of temples and local goddesses in relation to water, other natural resources and consequences of it have been explained by the *sthala purana* stories in south India” (Ramakrishna 1995). Emergence and creation of local goddesses is also connected with the *puranas* and most often these stories are exchanged through people's narratives in accordance with the local context. These are purely local in nature and have so much influence on people's everyday activities. These stories traveled from village to village and spread across the regions based on their intent and purpose. Though the names and characteristics of these goddesses differ from region to region, they carry the same or similar meanings. These similarities in the significance of local goddesses had been seen based on the local importance even within the region. Reasons for this are basically

assertions and aspirations at various levels in adopting the meanings of local goddesses which consist of political, economical, social and cultural factors. It often sees “the dominant communities’ meanings only prevail as the dominant and most accepted meaning by others” (Hardiman 1987). For instance, Gangaputras in Shaikpet believe that Mahankali goddess will protect entire village from all the evils. And that’s the general belief of everyone in the village.

With this background, the ritual practices of local goddesses in relation to lake and its water can be analyzed through the developments that occurred since two and a half decades due to globalization and neo-liberal policies through land use pattern. Emergence of temples around the lake which are not associated with the lake also explains about the implications with land-based economy and urban planning which have brought changes in the lake water and ritual practices.

The change in ritual practices on lake and its water explains about changes in people’s association with the lake and its water. More importantly, the change in people’s attitude was due to new land-based economy that made people give up or alter their ritual practices on Katta Maisamma, Eeramma. This trend indicates that people’s take on these rituals has changed from a something of a strong religious belief to a tool for their interests. Their interests are politico-cultural and socio-economic in nature. These changes can also explain about the way they perceived the lake and its water over years.

All the changes in ritual practices and emergence of new temples on lake and its water denote how the lake ecosystem has changed in the region. It also explains about the concept of bioregionalism through the changes in lake system led by new land development, urban planning due to globalization and neo-liberal policies.

5.8. Implications of changing socio-religious (caste) practices

- Local politicians discretion regarding land use has increased
- Self administered caste-based associations and residential welfare associations have become consolidated.

- Social groups with association have become powerful.
- Ritual practices and their significance have changed.

On the whole, ritual practices on lake and its water have changed due to change in the lake water. These goddesses were created for particular purpose by the villagers. These purposes were linked to people's beliefs. People's beliefs vary from one to other, time to time and place to place. It ranges from individual to group, group to community and community to village. It simply explains the association that people have with the local gods and goddesses in relation to the lake and its water. If we think of why these gods and goddesses were brought into existence by people then that can be linked to factors like belief, fear, happiness, pleasure, goodness, etc. But there have been changes in these practices due to economic impact on their livelihoods. If people get something from the lake they then offer prayers to the goddess, if not then they don't pay any attention. It also highlights the importance of the location. In this case, Shaikpet is no longer rural but is now urban. And every festival or ritual not only needs people's participation but also money. The rituals related to local goddesses differ not only from rural to the urban areas but also within the rural or within the urban. It denotes that prominence of ritual practices is not based on the people's belief system but also the importance of economic viability to continue with such practices. The economic factor works differently between rural and urban. If we see it in peri-urban context, it shows a mix of both. It partly explains the influence of external forces where they persist with their own belief system. So in this, if people are economically stable in relation to their occupation then those practices will be alive. But in some cases, people are still carrying out their religious rituals because of factors like fear, happiness and belief. The change in the lake water changed the entire practice of Katta Maisamma and Eeramma goddesses in and around the lake. Also goddess Bathukamma has not been part of this area for a long time but people are now celebrating Bonalu widely due to the recognition it gained as a state festival by the State government. These festivals also differ from place to place within the region itself. For instance, the practices of Bonalu and Bathukamma in

Shaikpet differ from other areas within this region. So here one need to answer the question that how does a state festival involve or include everyone's culture?

The lake and its environs have changed due to various developmental activities as a result of urban planning. These developmental programs destroyed natural streams and led to contamination of lake water by letting the commercial and domestic waste into the lake. New migrants feel that Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu is not useful for any purpose; it is dead and people living in and around it are a huge risk die to the harmful pollutants. A lot of people have also drowned in the lake as there is no fence around it. According to Venkatesh M. (Prakasam district) and B. Hanumantu (Mahaboobnagar district) some people have also committed suicide by jumping into the lake due to various family and interpersonal problems" (Venkatesh 2012), (Hanumantu 2013). Moreover, they have been living in this filthy environment and hazardous conditions with contaminated water in the lake as well as in and out let nalas. They have gained nothing from the lake except diseases.

The general feeling among people is that if they get something from the lake or water then they will consider it as something valuable. This point is contradictory to some extent when I spoke to Shaikpet villagers whose livelihoods solely depended upon the lake. Shaikpet villagers still continue their claims and association with the lake though the lake is destroyed because they feel that it is *their* lake. There are changes in their association with the lake due to change in the water which is not yielding any benefits like before. This has put a stop to some of the ritual practices that people have been doing. For instance, offering prayers to Katta Maisamma before fishing in the lake. This change is directly connected to their livelihood pattern where they have exchanged things with the nature based on certain cultural values. It is like give and take relationship. If they get anything from the lake they do pay something in return as gratitude. To convey this gratitude, they have gods and goddesses which are locally created but have religious roots. This religious belief system is connected to the age old practice that existed even before religion emerged. In the Vedic age, people prayed to the five elements - Agni, Varuna, Vayu, Prithvi, Aakash (natural resources for human

existence). The natural resources received peoples gratitude in different forms based on the belief. For instance, god Varuna has been seen as goddess Ganga in later period who is one of the attributes of Lord Shiva. The fishermen in Shaikpet village called themselves as Gangaputras as they believed that they are the sons of goddess Ganga.

There has been change in this association with the water and belief system that they have established in and around the lake. There are local gods and goddesses who were also created in relation to the Pancha Bhootas (five elements). For illustration, in relation to Ganga there are local goddesses created for particular purposes such as Bathukamma, Katta Maisamma, and Eeramma. Bathukamma is created with the belief that one young woman sacrificed her life to save entire village from the floods. Katta Maisamma goddess was created with the belief that she saves people who stay at the down side of the lake from natural calamities like floods and Eeramma was created with the belief that she will take care of the washermen and their survival and prosperity. There were also other goddesses created for various purposes such as Gutta Pochamma who will protect people from drought, Nalla Pochamma who protects the village boundary from all the evils.

Now we only see their interests on the lake and its water due to urbanization processes. This is because of urban development has not only led to changes in the color of water but also entire livelihoods. Once they started to see effects on their livelihood pattern, their relationship with the lake also changed. The fish and fauna in the lake have disappeared due to heavy pollutants. As the result there are no fish for fishermen in the village. This development led to them not practicing the ritual of praying to Katta Maisamma before they ventured into the lake for fishing. Now goddess Katta Maisamma is left alone and no one prays to her like before because there's no fishing activity. So it clearly shows how economic relations are associated with their cultural practices. Also, people used to pray to Katta Maisamma at the south-side bund of the lake to protect them from floods. But now no one to offers prayers to Katta Maisamma to protect them from floods because people living on the south-side of the lake are new migrants from other places. That practice was only confined to Shaikpet villagers. These entire local lake

systems have been destroyed by the processes of urbanization which led to uneven development in the locality and destruction of value system associated with the natural resources.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion: Theorizing Urban Commons

The experience of a majority of Indian city spaces show that lake degradation occur due to expansion of urban development into peri-urban areas. This process of uneven development adversely affects commons like water-bodies in the peri-urban zones as the shifting boundaries of urbanization are not sensitive to the thick layering developed through local practice, and management of resources. Whatever might be the reasons for the expansion of city or development, so far, absorption of lakes into cities has not been used as an opportunity to provide resources to the city or to service the communities that were already dependent on them. These kinds of developments on lakes and their environs have stories to tell about how they have become degraded, filthy, and dead, almost untouchable. Lakes in city spaces have retained only these native connotations or adverse meanings today, and their histories of being resource providers fade away even from local memory. Commons, in other words, are starting to be seen exclusively as an arena for understanding our dilemmas and problems.

Through the case of Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu in Hyderabad I unraveled various processes that were determinants for the degradation of the lake; which include: nature of urbanization, urban planning, new land economy, migration, residential welfare associations, and role played by socio-religious associations (caste) and politicized processes with regards to lakes and their environs in city spaces.

Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu case-study also brought out how lake and their functions are understood by responsible authorities, and local communities who govern and manage them. Further, conservation policies seem to be largely designed based on generalizing experiences of other lakes' but do not sufficiently understand the local lakes system and its nature. This is evident in the way state and urban municipal policies treated lakes since 2003.

The task of doing ethnography is important since it has bearing on how the data is gathered and for further analysis of the research problem. I found it particularly interesting to think about the entanglements of rural and urban in Shaikpet, although cities are thought to dismantle structures like caste. Cities do not erase characteristics of rurality in people's everyday practices, but it does rework them.

In this dissertation I examined Shaikpet is as a rural area that got absorbed into the city. Urban areas are also cultivating caste in different forms¹⁰.

At the initial level, these can be read through different urban planning activities which have affected the very geo-physicality of the lake, which further eroded people's association with the lake. These can be seen through changes in their social inter-personal relationships and cultural values in changed meanings over traditional ritual practices. The practice of Katta Maisamma on Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu by Gangaputra community stopped due to change in the lake water by pollution. Now the lake has been experiencing new ritual practices such as Anjaneya Swami temple (by Ambedkar Nagar slum dwellers), Eeramma (Rajaka community), and Bathukamma festival celebrations (slum dwellers around the lake).

Urban planning of Hyderabad is itself implicated in the history of lake creation and their destruction. Chapter III documented different 'ruler's treatment of lakes and their efforts to use and conserve lakes in the city or in the Telangana region. This goes back to the Kakatiya rulers' efforts to construct lakes across the region in order to make the area prosperous. They were followed by the later rulers such as Qutub Shahi and Asaf Jahi rulers. These rulers' efforts in order to meet the demands of water and its usage is

¹⁰ Forms of caste and its characteristics are different from rural areas. Theoretically urban areas have been seen as casteless society, place of freedom, liberation and modern. But the city spaces are also remitting caste and related activities prominence in many aspects of urban development. This particular change is increasingly gaining momentum in the peri-urban areas which were rural areas and exercising the older forms of caste in order to sustain and secure their livelihoods against the external forces. Caste and related activities which were only confined to communities betterment in the village areas earlier have become stringent powerful groups by associating other caste communities in the city space. Caste and its forms can be identified through the activities of caste associations such as conducting caste panchayat's, by establishing community halls, organize festival celebrations, and intervene in the developmental activities of municipal administration which are led by caste groups in Shaikpet village.

substantial, and more importantly their treatment to the water bodies shows an attitude towards natural resources that took into consideration their ecological and social value. This can be observed through their efforts in implementing lakes conservation and its maintenance for future generations.

This is contrast to many of the efforts of the state and its administration to conserve lakes, which are confined merely to protect them by fencing and consider them as spaces of recreation. But the fence does not protect the lake since its water is polluted by people or private agencies throwing up or dumping waste in it, a practice remains unaddressed. Majority of the lakes were destroyed through implementing infrastructural developments such as roads, various housing complexes, drainage channels, construct fence around lakes, and beatification of lakes. These are the activities in the lake areas that destroyed natural stream connections to the lakes, altered the flow of rain water from the upside of hills to the downhill lake. Clogging of the drains and clogging of *nalas* leading out of lakes have caused severe water-logging and flooding in many lake-side areas in Hyderabad.

2003 was the year when the first declaration was made on lakes conservation and lakes were selected for conservation by HUDA with fund from external agencies. This plan was to conserve lakes as sources of water supply for the city's growing needs. Save Gandipet and Save Hussain Sagar lake campaigns did not resulted in conserving them or making them viable sources of water, but rather just made them into tourist spots. Initiation of the Lake Protection Committee (LPC in 2010) and implementation of the WALTA Act have also not resulted in protecting lakes.

On the contrary there has been heavy encroachment by gated communities and slums alike on lakes since 2010.

The policy efforts are concentrated in the lake areas, within FTL, but not beyond the lake which is where inlet and outlet water channels are found. Intervention in these crucial feeders and drains are not part of policy interventions thus far because all the areas around lakes are occupied by various residential complexes. Thus, lakes in the city

were aimed for water demands but not considered beyond it which is why no one is able to understand the functionality of the lakes. There is little knowledge among decision-makers on the functionality of lakes in the region.

Though there are aspirations to bring back Kakatiya's prosperity into the region by rejuvenating lakes, the very methods of lakes conservation do not support any steps to build a prosperous life for people. Because Mission Kakatiya's methods draw heavily on engineering activity rather than people's practices and participation, it loses out on people's local knowledge of lakes in this region. Thus, decisions with regards to water bodies exclude the users and protectors of the lakes. This disjuncture between the decision making-bodies for the natural resources management and people's well being is pervasive / widespread.

Chapter IV focuses on another more major factor to understand Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu's degradation, that is, socio-religious (caste) associations and residential welfare association's activities. These associations, through various practices, are directly or indirectly, exercised various claims on the lake, which are often traditional or customary, but also based in the idiom of citizenship. The activities consist of agriculture, fishing, washing, pot-making, agriculture laboring, grazing livestock, and ritual practices.

With these regular activities they have historically established meanings for the lake and its environs and also their inter-personal relationships. Their activities on lake and its water followed in accordance with the traditional professions which were given based on prevalent *jati* divisions. Since Gangaputras are the majority in the total village population their profession of fishing was the major activity on Sahikept Kotha Cheruvu and also agriculture by Munnurukapus. Based on their activity the Gangaputras, Munnurukapus have also evolved cultural practices that were prominent on the lakes and its health. The practice of Katta Maisamma worship by Gangputras symbolizes giving thanks to the Ganga or the lake water for fulfilling their vows. Through these rituals and fishing activity they had maintained the lakes health for many years, while it was the source of their livelihood.

Ironically, however, degradation of the lake and the interest of certain caste groups have resulted in new problems. Even as the lake degrades and yields no fish or clean water, it is claimed to be healthy by various socio-religious (caste) groups so that they can claim benefits from the government as fishermen. They bid for fishing rights on 'dead' lakes and lobby for benefits. Thus, as their old livelihood is destroyed they leverage the lake to gain alternate benefits by representing as jati's (traditional occupations) such as get loans for welfare, to buy tools for fishing (fishing net, boat, and seeds) under Fishermen Cooperative Society, and reservations that come for community based on caste classification.

New migrants do not have any customary right to use the lake water since they came from outside but they use and build a relationship by virtue of being located around the lake. In the processes of preventing the lake from degrading gets little attention. New migrants claimed in the name of citizenship and establishing their right to perform ritual practices with new developments by the state. The state and its administration claimed right over the lake the name of protecting and developing it. Civil society groups claim rights in the name of protecting it from all kinds of encroachments. And commercial and residential establishments claimed on it by using it as a dump for their waste. Meanwhile, nature has its own effects on lakes and its environs.

Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu has been entangled in all these claims. It is simultaneously a dead lake, a livelihood resource for certain caste groups, a neighborhood public space, a tool to generate revenue for the state, and a cesspool for people residing around the lake. In the middle of all these claims, Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu has become a fenced property. But it does not occur to any of them that what really has happened to the lake with all these claims. Further, these claims are not static but dynamic in nature, based on the benefits that each social group or institution can reap from the lake resource. Thus, we see that their claims are sometimes based on caste, sometimes based on citizenship and sometimes institutional (regulatory) guidelines. Finally, the multiple claims can also be observed through ritual practices that are carried out on the lake.

Chapter V focuses on the ritual practices related to Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu. Ritual practices not only explain the uniqueness of the lake system's ecology and sociology but also addresses broader perspectives of lakes ecosystem in the region. Attention to rituals remarkably highlights the importance of urban watershed approach in order to understand lakes ecosystem and its nature for the sustenance of places and people. Originally, Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu had only Katta Maisamma worship which was done by Gangaputra (fishing) caste community. Apart from this, there is the practice of exorcism and last rites at the lake, which shows the way humans and their daily activities, which were associated with the nature and natural resources means that the entire human life is associated with the lake. According to Sidda Sadanand "this is the usual practice across village's life in the Telangana region" (Sidda Sadanand 2014) although the practice differs a bit based on the social groups that are dominant in the lake areas.

If the majority of the population is Hindus population then we have Hindu related goddesses and ritual practices on lake area, but Muslims are in majority then there are Masjids or Dargahs. Though the practices are different functions associated with lake are similar. This can be observed based on their location and their ritual to the lake and its water. Because of Hindu and Muslim ruler's regimes Hyderabad and surrounding areas, lake areas are comprised by both Hindu and Muslim religious structures and their respective practices. For instance, Durgham Cheruvu has Katta Maisamma and a Masjid, and Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu also has Katta Maisamma and Masjid located in a very close proximate distance.

Katta Maisamma worship declined due to changes in the lake water that resulted in decimation of fish in the lake and ultimately, led the Gangaputras to stop the practice. The practice of exorcism has also been stopped since the banyan tree that was at the north side of the lake was cut down due to growing slums. Last rites practice disappeared from the lake due to objections from new developments around. They shifted this practice for some time to Errakunta which is located in the village. Errakunta was used only for agriculture purpose that too by only two communities, i.e. Munnurukapus and Reddys.

However, beside the lake a small area has been under use for cremation of dead persons from the village. Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu area started to see cremation grounds for new migrants at the north side of the lake. Earlier it used to be at the south side.

More recently, Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu has started to see new ritual practices, which are not related to the lake and its activities. Emergence of these new ritual practices is purely based on

- New land economy which allowed new migrants to construct Anjeneya Swami temple inside the lake, Shiva temple at north side of the lake, and Mahankali temple at east of the lake
- Political opportunism for all the regional and national political parties which sees opportunity to use slums and villagers organized as castes as vote banks by deploying resources and funds to run various activities in the slums and on the lake area
- Sustenance factor for the caste communities which have exercised their customary rights. For instance, Rajakas have established Eeramma temple at north side of the lake to continue their power on the lake area. As a result, they put up a bore well inside the lake and also built Rajaka Sangham bhavan. Gangaputras are still paying the tax in order to maintain their right as Gangaputras in order to get the incentive that were provided by the state
- Aspiration of the newly formed led the lake to transform from a community resource to tourist spot not for people who depended on it but for outsiders and also introduced Bathukamma to the lake which was not the case before. Now the lake has been celebrating Bathukamma again not the people who have customary claims on the lake but by the slum dwellers who used to celebrate in their native places across the Telangana.

These kinds of established meanings with the water bodies (lakes) changed due to change in the land use due to new land development in the space. These changes in the geo-physicality of the lake have brought new ritual practices, which have emerged due to various developments caused by urbanization such as migration from rural to urban. Lake maintenance has been taken over by the state and municipal authorities from the community that has been dependent on it. Political parties' and leaders' interventions led to the emergence of slums. Urban planning has accommodated different housing complexes in the lake area by classifying it for different purposes so the lake area consists of gated communities, individual apartments, slums, and state housing colonies. Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu has been experiencing these kinds of changes and has been serving different purposes for different actors. The lake carries different meanings which are changing from time-to-time and activity-to-activity. In all of these activities, Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu is experiencing unprecedented consequences not only for itself but it also reflecting in people who have been living around it, people who have customary and historical associations with it, and also people who do not have any association. This is manifested mainly in the form of pollution and water-logging which creates hazardous situations.

Thus, the impact of the activities of any one actor or group of actors on the lake—whether they are caste associations from the village, middle-class households or commercial establishments farther away, slum-dwellers, or the government itself—are not only confined to some people but affects everyone in some or the other form since the lake ecosystem is densely inter-connected. This is where the importance of urban watershed plays a role in understanding how the problems of lakes have been emerging. The human-nature relationship which is largely ignored due to all these urbanization processes is starkly highlighted.

This research study is a theorization on urban commons. I find globalization placed political and economic organization / structure, which led to a cascade of consequences on the urban commons. Significantly, in this research the question of *either* commons or collectivity does not bear out. A long-term perspective on the urban

commons identified transitions; where the self-interested nor the cooperating paradigm shine throughout the three decades of the urban commons. Initially, urban planners, and elites, especially those associated with the government, who had the capacity to act chose to operate political economies according to the principles of maximizing economic growth. The element of justice, that is, access and control of 'traditional' social groups to the commons was not significantly impinged upon. As a result what is in place is a relationship of hierarchy on the basis of scientific expertise that monitors the commons and prevents capacity of life supporting system is not exceeded. In other words, the need for controlling access to commons as well as placing great emphasis on scientific expertise has been governance paradigm of the urban commons (lakes in this case). This governance paradigm of the urban commons undermines the knowledge, experiences, and 'rights' commoners have in relation to the commons. The scientific expertise gives primacy to the urban plans and protection of commons as they deem fit with no wiggle room for bringing-in competing values, or to accommodate values that politicians routinely seek (see Singh et al. 2018 for a similar observation).

As time passes by, there is significant deterioration in the water bodies (lakes). There is illegal dumping of wastes, many of the channels that are carrying water to the lakes are destroyed, and land use around the lake and in its watershed is altered significantly. These changes occur despite monitoring and regulation by the experts and state government authorities. Political interventions were not unheard of, which brought further changes in the land use as well as an influx of migrant's residency in illegal slums. In other words, much of the decision-making is restricted to the elites and there is negligible involvement of the people.

As the limits of the commons are fast approaching, the challenges of ecological damage as well as, in some cases, to the livelihood exacerbated. Socio-religious (caste) associations are formal, and by this time substantive measures of decentralization, as per the 74th constitutional amendment, in urban local bodies has taken hold. Residents of the housing around the lake form a residential welfare association as well, and the spirit of involving large numbers of people, albeit indirectly, came about. The role for public

authority was brought down and role for private entities increased. In other words, managing commons is no longer by the hierarchical control of the scientific expertise, nor the ‘authoritarian’ government. The discourse set forth by Garrett Hardin seems to have completed its course. Instead, what emerges is an alternate paradigm of governance, most notably advocated by Elinor Ostrom. According to Ostrom, a collective action by communities can emerge and there is no need for top-down management to manage commons. In essence, Elinor Ostrom argues that a cooperative management can better for the commons.

The initiatives placed at the Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu (commons) in the years and decade by the interest groups reveal an elitist affair, rather than involving large members of people (see Lele and Srinivasan 2017 for a similar observation). The governance mechanism was subordinate to governments. Claims of the actors were instituted through multiple, and ‘new’ rituals, while morphing the collective identities. Political power was exercised in the ‘grabbing’ of access and control to commons. The politics and political power exercised is not to be treated as hindrance in the cooperative management or collective action towards the shared interest in the quality of the commons. Instead, the challenge may be to think about bringing multiple perspectives with equal weightage.

Decidedly, a subsequent maneuvering of policies and practices by urban planners, experts, and the state government came about to not only claim and control access to water bodies, but also to undermine ‘traditional’, occupation related claims. The “solution” to situations described by Garrett Hardin as ‘tragedy of commons’ is “mutual coercion mutually agreed upon.” Rejecting this solution Elinor Ostrom speaks by of communities’ collective action or ‘polycentric’ governance with multiple initiatives at different places. These solutions are fraught with strengths, weaknesses, and assumptions, nonetheless have formed in the literature a major point for anchoring theorization on commons and urban commons.

The case study of Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu offers a methodology to overcome some of these challenges that have existed in the academic debates over problems that are related to lakes and its ecosystem. Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu also illustrates the complex

nature of identifying and understanding lakes degradation in a place at given time period. The case might be generalizable to think of shifting boundaries of urban and rural and the overlying of different developments that have occurred on the lake over a period of time. Unless, one puts together these spatial and temporal dimensions, the problems of protecting lakes from degradation and decline cannot be understood.

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Appendix I Listing of Respondents

| S. No | Categories | Name | Date | Recorded or Written |
|-------|----------------------|--|------------|----------------------|
| 1 | Gangaputra's | Group Discussion | 16.06.2014 | Written |
| 2 | | N. Sriramulu (Gangaputra Sangham) | 18.06.2014 | Recorded and Written |
| 3 | | Sidda Sadanand (Gangaputra Sangham) | 02.09.2014 | Recorded and Written |
| 4 | | G. Yadaiah (President – Gangaputra Sangham) | 27.04.2015 | Written |
| 5 | | P. Gopala Krishna | 27.04.2015 | Written |
| 7 | Munnurukapu's | Vimal (Milk Vendor) | 03.03.2014 | Recorded and Written |
| 8 | | Mulle Satyanarayana (President – Central Committee for 30 years) | 09.05.2015 | Written |
| 9 | | Atmakuru. Babu Rao (Treasurer) | 20.05.2015 | Written |
| 10 | | Atmakuru. Satyanarayana (Member) | 20.05.2015 | Written |
| 11 | Rajaka's | Lakshmi (Rajaka Sangham) | 17.12.2012 | Recorded |
| 12 | | K. Raju (Member in Rajaka Sangham and Vice-President (Maruthi Nagar) | 26.04.2015 | Written |
| 13 | | G. Balaiah | 26.04.2015 | Recorded |
| 14 | Harjjan's | C. Jangaiah (President for 20 years – Harijan Sangham) | 07.09.2014 | Written |

| S. No | Categories | Name | Date | Recorded or Written |
|-------|-----------------------------|--|------------|----------------------|
| 15 | | B. Jangaiah (Advisor Harijana Sangham) | 07.09.2014 | Written |
| 16 | | B. Sadanand (Treasurer, Harijana Sangham) | 10.09.2014 | Written |
| 17 | | C. Balaraju (President, Harijana Sangham) | 10.09.2014 | Written |
| 18 | Mudiraju's | Madan Rao | 24.06.2014 | Written |
| 19 | Residents – Shaikpet | Manikya Reddy | 17.09.2014 | Written |
| 20 | | Srinivas (Tailor – Vaishayas) | 20.05.2015 | Written |
| 21 | | G. Vijaya Brahmam and G. Vijaya Lakshmi | 10.02.2018 | Written |
| 22 | Mahatma Gandhi Nagar | Hanumantu (TRS/Slum Committees - Vice President) | 07.11.2013 | Recorded and Written |
| 23 | | K. Vijaya (TRS Party Worker) | 07.11.2013 | Recorded and Written |
| 24 | | Hanumantu | 12.11.2013 | Recorded and Written |
| 25 | | B. Jangaiah (President SC Cell – Slum Committee) | 12.11.2013 | Written |
| 26 | | Venkatesh | 26.04.2014 | Written |
| 27 | | B. Ravi | 11.05.2015 | Recorded |
| 28 | | Venkatesh | 11.05.2015 | Recorded |
| 29 | | A. Radhika | 11.05.2015 | Recorded |
| 30 | | B. Suneetha | 11.05.2015 | Recorded |
| 31 | | P. Jayamma | 11.05.2015 | Recorded |
| 32 | | P. Gouri Shankar (President – M G Nagar) | 14.05.2015 | Written |
| 33 | | M. Seenu (Vice – President, Hyd & RR, IFTU) | 16.05.2015 | Written |

| S. No | Categories | Name | Date | Recorded or Written |
|-------|---------------------------------|--|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 34 | | Hanumantu (TRS/Slum Committees - Vice President) | 07.11.2013 | Recorded and Written |
| 35 | Babu Jagjeevan Ram Nagar | V. Rajesh | 07.11.2013 | Recorded and Written |
| 36 | | Krishna | 11.05.2015 | Recorded |
| 37 | | G. Johnaiah | 12.05.2015 | Written |
| 38 | | B. Chandra Shekar (Advocate – High Court, AP & TS) | 12.05.2015 | Written |
| 39 | | Narasamma (Vendor) | 17.12.2012 | Written |
| 40 | Jhani Jail Singh Nagar | Sai | 12.11.2013 | Recorded and Written |
| 41 | | Md. Saleem | 14.05.2015 | Written |
| 42 | Swami Vivekananda Nagar | Vaddeboina Sattaiah (Vice – President) | 16.05.2015 | Written |
| 43 | Basavataraka Nagar | Venkatesh | 15.05.2015 | Recorded |
| 44 | | Smt. Naseem Banu & Miya Khan | 17.12.2012 15.05.2015 | Written |
| 45 | | K. Narasimha | 15.05.2015 | Written |
| 46 | | Ramanamma | 15.05.2015 | written |
| 47 | | Mohana Chari | 1:17 to 1:59 pm | Written |
| 48 | Virat Nagar | Meharunissa Zamindar (President) & Kaleem Zamindar | 15.05.2015 | Written |
| 49 | Hakim Shah Colony | Hadheer Ahmed | 15.05.2015 | Written |
| 50 | Nadheem Colony | Ramachandhar | 11.05.2015 | Written |

| S. No | Categories | Name | Date | Recorded or Written |
|-------|--|--|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| 51 | Ambedkar Nagar | B. Suresh (Car Driver) | 11.05.2015 | Recorded |
| 52 | | Kota Krishna Rao (Secretary – Ambedkar Nagar) | 11.05.2015 and 12.05.2015 | Written |
| 53 | People who live in Shaikpet and works outside (New Migrants) | Teja (Supervisor – Shaikpet Sarai) | 27.06.2014 | Written |
| 54 | | Mahesh | 02.09.2014 | Written |
| 55 | | Vendor in front of Saibaba Temple | 16.09.2014 | Written |
| 56 | | M. Anjaneyulu | 01.05.2015 | Written Recorded |
| 57 | People who live outside and works in Shaikpet | Kolli Krishna | 12.03.2014 | Recorded and Written |
| 58 | | Manikanta | 06.05.2015 | Written |
| 59 | People who live around Shaikpet | Suraiah Hassan Bose and Dominic Hassan Bose | 21.06.2014 | Recorded and Written |
| 60 | | Bala Chari | 27.04.2015 | Written |
| 61 | People from other parts of the city who face similar problems | Ram Murthy | 20.04.2013 | Recorded and Written |
| 62 | | Ramesh (Resident of Chilakalaguda) | 09.06.2014 | Recorded and Written |
| 63 | | Pittala Srisailam | 20.10.2014 and 26.10.2014 | Written |
| 64 | | Pentesh Mudiraj | 26.10.2014 | Recorded and Written |
| 65 | | Batte Shankar | 26.10.2014 | Written |
| 66 | | Satteiah | 26.10.2014 | Recorded and Written |
| 67 | Interviews in relation to the histories of Local Goddesses | V. Bichanna and V. Shivamma | 07.12.2014 | Written |
| 68 | | Sasmitha Rout and Kabita Baral | 09.12.2014 | Written |

| S. No | Categories | Name | Date | Recorded or Written |
|-------|--|---|------------|----------------------|
| 69 | Outsider | Dagmar | 23.02.2014 | Recorded |
| 70 | Conversation with Experts in the field | Maheep Thaper Singh (Town Planner and Chief of ADAPT) | 30.09.2013 | Recorded |
| 71 | | B. V. Subba Rao | 12.03.2014 | Written |
| 72 | | Dr. Anant M. | 13.03.2014 | Written |
| 73 | | Prof. Sanjay Subodh | 10.07.2014 | Written |
| 74 | | Prof. Preethi Ram Murthy | 16.12.2014 | Written |
| 75 | | Prof. Radhika Seshan | 16.12.2014 | Written |
| 76 | | Arun Ganesh | 23.12.2014 | Written |
| 77 | Interactions with the Researchers who are working similar problem areas | Y. Srinath Reddy (Ph.D – History) | 04.12.2014 | Written |
| 78 | | Dr. Alok Pande | 23.12.2014 | Written |
| 79 | Civil Society Organizations | SOUL – Jasveen Jairath | 21.03.2013 | Written |
| 80 | | Divya Disha Bala Sikshaw – S. Saidamma | 11.05.2015 | Recorded |
| 81 | For Bathukamma | Pandu (Attender – CRS, UoH) | 23.09.2014 | Recorded and Written |
| 82 | | Sravan Reddy | 15.02.2015 | Written |
| 83 | On Bonalu Festival | Sambha Siva Ranjan (Prakasham District) & Satyanarayana (Telangana) – Civil Police | 13.07.2014 | Written |
| 84 | | Lakshman (Intermediate – Neradmet) | 13.07.2014 | Written |
| 85 | | Sai (9 th Class – Mirjalaguda, Malkajgiri) | 13.07.2014 | Written |
| 86 | | Teja (9 th Class – Uppal) | 13.07.2014 | Written |

| S. No | Categories | Name | Date | Recorded or Written |
|--------------|-------------------|--|-------------|----------------------------|
| 87 | | Nagraj (Deccan Manava Seva Samithi) | 13.07.2014 | Written |
| 88 | | Shivaji (Sub-Inspector) | 13.07.2014 | Written |
| 89 | | A member (Sri Balaji Metal Merchants Association) | 13.07.2014 | Written |
| 90 | | P Rama Rao (Deccan Manava Seva Samithi) | 13.07.2014 | Written |
| 91 | | Chandrakanth (Damodaram Sanjeevaiah Colony) | 13.07.2014 | Written |
| 92 | | Veresham (Shobana Bus Stop – Damodaram Sanjeevaiah Colony) | 13.07.2014 | Written |

Research in Progress: Doing Ethnography in Urban Spaces

Author(s): Vidyapogu Pullanna

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Doing Ethnography in Urban Spaces*

--- Vidyapogu Pullanna

Abstract

This paper is a discussion of ‘doing ethnography’ of people that depend on a lake located in an urban space. Ethnographic accounts of their experiences invariably discuss how over time one builds credibility, trust, and acceptance among respondents. Applying this evidence and logic I proceeded to conduct ethnography in urban spaces, which are cosmopolitan and have ushered in modernity. My identity in the field mattered to respondents; to either reveal or conceal information. These were multiple identities, at times, journalist, agent of the government, nativity, and caste. Several complications arose due to researcher’s caste identity. Unlike identities of profession, class, race, belonging, gender, language, and such, the identity of caste hindered ethnographic work. There was continued resistance and non-cooperation from respondents. I contend that one opens up spaces of advancement by being reflexive and understanding nature of embodiment.

Key Words: Caste, Embodiment, Ethnography, Reflexivity, Urban

Introduction

In the year 2013 I decided to study the relationship between people and lakes in order to understand the process and causes of rapid degradation and decline in the number of lakes in the city of Hyderabad. After reviewing literature I found that most authors have offered conventional explanations and statistics that gave a broad picture of the nature and acuteness of the problem, and the solution(s) relied mostly on technology and finance. Sceptics saw financing massive projects as a

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built-in mechanism to siphon off public funds allotted for the purposes, which seemed like a widespread perception. In another approach to stem degradation of lakes, judicial intervention was sought. Courts were approached seeking orders that the state act in public interest. These approaches dominate the public debate on protection of lakes and are applied throughout the country. There is very little debate on alternative ways in which the problem can be addressed. Activists, for instance, have sought to shift the locus of decision-making to the people themselves, but with limited success. There is also very little discussion on the specifics of places where the problems are located, which was the beginning of the recognition that ethnographic information will be crucial for my research.

After recognising that ethnographic information will be crucial for my research, my initial effort at gathering data was unlike what I had read about how ethnography proceeds. My respondents were evasive, did not cooperate and share information, sceptical of my research endeavour, and in general, did not see any value in aligning with the proposed research work. Here again, many researchers have documented the resistance and scepticism of respondents, which then reduces with the passage of time as credibility and trust in the researcher begins to take hold among the respondents. However, this was not my experience in the field. In paragraphs below, I map the journey of doing ethnographic research in urban spaces. I argue that reflexive and embodied understanding of places or sites of ethnographic enquiry is required.

Linking research questions to ethnography

I begin by noting that there is a connection between research questions and ethnography and introspecting on this linkage is an opportunity to shape the field work. In my case, upon reflection, and in discussions with peers, I realised that initially the focus of my inquiry is on factors or variables that are posed in my research questions. Many of the variables in research questions were identified from the literature. Pursuing fieldwork in this vein resulted in gathering all information pertinent to the variables which becomes the fulcrum of data collection. This is an instrumentalist approach to data gathering. At this point I had negligible information on the processes that may contribute in the understanding of the research problem. Recognising this situation was neither easy nor straight forward. The tasks of posing question(s) and data gathering were therefore held tenuously so that I could shift my attention on identifying processes, historical as well as contextual, which may contribute in the

understanding of the problem. However, no blueprints on how to actualise this intent were available.

Similarly, from literature I learnt that the distinction between 'numeric' and 'non-numeric' forms of data per se is not significant, but revealing the ontological and epistemological limits of 'data' is important. In other words, one may be gathering non-numeric data, yet have positivistic assumptions about meaningful reality, for example. Confusion reigned in terms of identification of appropriate method(s) for ethnographic work. To overcome the dilemma the situation poses, I decided to gain familiarity with my field site. Here my contention is that a decision with regard to data gathering is partly learnt from literature, but also from direct experiences.

Most people residing in Shaikpet are employees in the state electricity and telecommunication departments. A few residents are engaged in small businesses and as brokers of rental housing. There is a spatial segregation of settlements, which is based on caste. In this structure, Dalits who are considered *panchamas* are mostly located on the south side of Shaikpet and are divided from the rest by a road. I also did not see direct impact of municipal administration on the overall development of Shaikpet since municipal schemes and programmes are negotiated and re-negotiated among caste groups. There are several caste-based associations in Shaikpet, however none of them have women members.

From the initial visits to field site I recognised that there is no single dedicated urban Authority that is responsible for the overall development of urban areas. Most urban problems have not been resolved due to lack of co-ordination. Lack of transparency and poor accountability of responsible authorities also contribute in delaying resolutions to urban problems.

The design of organisational network to manage urban areas is complicated. An understanding of the web of organisations that control urban areas however does not provide a comprehensive perspective of the field site. The dynamics and changing conditions at the field site are also to be accounted for in the research endeavour. For instance, I found that through ritual practices (Katta Maisamma, Bathukamma, and at Anjaneya Swami temple) a continuous effort is underway to gain access and control land around lake. These practices have also in some ways allowed controlling land, which have been converted from common property to private property. For example, land around Shaikpet Kotha Cheruvu was 'owned'

by different caste communities of Shaikpet, but once water quality and quantum of the lake began to decline and change, the control, ownership and benefits derived by the communities also began to wane. Washermen community no longer could derive benefits from the lake, for example. This altered condition in turn created fertile opportunity for private entities (such as gated housing community, private businesses) to gain control and access to land and lake resources. A fall out of this was contestations and conflict among various stakeholders, and several responses emerged. To gain or reclaim access and control of the land, caste based associations were started. Similarly, resident welfare associations claiming to represent weaker sections sprouted and staked claim of the land -- for the poor and for the welfare of residents staying in colonies close to the lake. Claims and counter-claims also have come about by way of ritual practices in temples, which have been started by 'non-locals', and these ritual practices were strategically developed as a blend of new and old rituals.

These observations at the field site are to be found more generally in cities of India. According to Gavin Shatkin 'in contrast to many countries, in India, authority over urban development is dispersed, notably to state governments, which are accountable to a largely rural electorate' (Shatkin, 2014). Extending this argument, Sivaramakrishnan has found that

Control of urban land is not exercised through municipal institutions, and instead ownership and control of urban land are with numerous organisations in the metro region, which include parastatals, state-owned companies and departments. Similarly, land use and the stage of development is influenced heavily by private interests and local institutions, not to mention Court interventions. All efforts to bring urban land under a common city-based regime have been resisted (Sivaramakrishnan, 2014).

This combination of field observations and inferences drawn from literature begins to shape my, an ethnographer's, perspective of the field site. Thus far I described the process by which I connected research questions with a sharper perspective of the field site. However, to further develop this perspective, I delved into the notions of urban space characterisations and observations of urban because my field site is in a city.

Conventional/traditional notions of urban space come from a general understanding of how urban spaces are characterised in terms of geographical settings and sociological studies, which highlight diversities within communities by way of culture, language, caste and so on.

Urban space is commonly perceived as inclusive, and as a space of freedom, especially from people living in villages where there is subordination by persons of higher castes. This understanding of mine about urban space is based on observing the way people live, interact at events, sit, eat, and act. Urban space is also perceived as a class-based society wherein the rich and poor live in separate geographical areas and are 'zoned' in terms of social, economic, and cultural preferences. For instance, people live in gated communities, which are located adjacent to slums. This juxtaposition of opulence and poverty is an instance of inequity. Urban space is reinforced throughout my upbringing in rural areas wherein such meanings are imparted through socialisation and by popular culture forms like films (Kammula, 2007).

While contours of ethnographic endeavour became complicated and even ambiguous, I found that there are no text books that would tell on how to proceed, or do ethnography at this time. *Caution* therefore in my case becomes the watch word. I began gathering data in earnest by visiting the field site. Building on previous field experiences in rural settings¹ I began research in urban space.

Gaining a foothold: building credibility at the field site

I went with an understanding that urban spaces are cosmopolitan. Cosmopolitan spaces are easy to move around, and people mingle without inhibitions in these spaces to share views, opinions, and experiences. I even imagined completing field work in Hyderabad city within a span of three to four months, despite not being fluent in Deccani Urdu, Hindi, and English languages. I presumed that urban areas are unlike rural areas² where you have to follow certain norms to enter into the village. With this understanding I started data gathering at the field site, in and around the lake located in Shaikpet.

While searching for potential respondents around the lake area, I encountered people who are speaking languages that are unfamiliar to me and were predominantly from the Muslim community. It also was apparent that I need to build credibility with respondents, as well as secure their confidence for gathering

data. One option that I explored was to seek the assistance of an interpreter for field work. But then I met Muslim residents who speak Telugu, and who directed me to potential respondents, newly migrated Telugu-speaking communities living near the lake. Meanwhile I improved my Hindi language proficiency, mainly by listening and watching Hindi TV programs. Initially, I found that I am interacting and interviewing 'new' or recent migrants (1992–2015), who have migrated from the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and from within the Telangana state. They all knew the Telugu language when they migrated about twenty years ago and settled around the lake. I found that the socio-economic profile of the migrants is diverse, and most have no direct relation with the lake. During this time, I met an urban planner who was part of the team that prepared the revised Master Plan of Hyderabad, 2010. As an urban planner, he was critical of new migrants staying in spaces around the lake. I also came to know that migrants perceived that the lake was 'owned' by long-term residents of Shaikpet. In Shaikpet, I found buildings with signage of caste based associations. For instance, Gangaputra Sangham (Fishermen caste association), Mudiraju Sangham (Mudiraju caste association), Harijan Sangham (Dalit caste association), Gangaputra Bheeshma Bhavan (Fishermen community welfare hall), and Indira Community Hall (Village community hall) are some of the signage that I came across. I was surprised to see presence of caste-based associations in urban areas because it was counter to my imagination of urban spaces being cosmopolitan, equal and liberal space. Additionally, I found historical monuments of medieval period near the field site, which indicated that surroundings of the lake have settlements for a long period of time, and the residents therefore may have a deep and entrenched relationship with the lake. The need for building a historical context of the field site became pertinent. Slowly, but surely, I began to see a 'village' in the urban space. Understanding history of the place allowed me to interpret my respondents' views in perspective.

Other than interviews, I carried out participant observation to gain insights into people's lives and customs, which I thought they may not share if asked. This method also gave the knowledge on the intricacies of the field settings, which could not be obtained from literature.

The task of building credibility with respondents and more generally in the community is also a process through which one learns. Below I describe the success and pitfalls in initiating the steps to develop a rapport with potential respondents.

In meeting people of Shaikpet I planned on ascertaining peoples' history and their association with the lake. I found that residents of Shaikpet viewed me as an 'outsider'. There are few public places where one can spend time or speak to potential respondents. Similarly, temples are not accessed by all, which limits access to a few social groups. I tried speaking with passersby, but received a cold shouldered response. These were all, for me, signs that I was not welcome or that the place does not welcome everyone. When speaking with people I quickly found that it is not easy to interact with them unless one is a familiar face, or has some kind of link with people. With these experiences my first challenge was to figure out how to enter and gain a foothold at the field site.

At this point I took help of Hanumantu, who was Vice-president, TRS Party, M G Nagar, Shaikpet Division because he was 'credible' among the respondents, and therefore by extension I too became 'credible' for potential respondents. I first met a person from Gangaputra Sangham in Shaikpet who described to me history of Gangaputras in Shaikpet and often highlighted Gangaputra's role in the overall development of the place. Soon thereafter I met few members of Gangaputra Sangham. Their narratives gave me a sense of their status in Shaikpet, their contribution to development, their role in the making of the place as a developed area of the city, their prominence in activities of Shaikpet and their control on all the other communities. On the question of relationship between urbanisation and lake, the residents usually bypassed the question. The descriptions given by respondents are similar to what Professor S. C. Dube noted in his work titled *Indian Village* wherein he described the history of each caste community around Hyderabad and their everyday activities in relation to natural resources (Dube, 1955). Subsequently, at a later point of the field work, I was introduced to former vice-president of Gangaputra Sangham by an acquaintance of my friend. This acquaintance was a tenant of the vice president of the Gangaputra association and this link led to a breakthrough in terms of reaching out to other members of the community as well as getting data in this situation.

Caste identity as a gatekeeper

The next community I met was Harijan Sangham which includes members from both Madiga and Mala sub-caste communities of Scheduled Caste. When I was visiting potential respondents, surprisingly, they inquired first about my caste name. In response, I first showed them my student identification card, and told

them that I am from Madiga community. But they didn't believe me initially because I am from Rayalaseema region which is outside of Telangana state. To gain their confidence and to establish my credibility, I orally shared some of the common practices of Madiga community, that of their main profession as Chamar, beating drums on various occasions in various village activities and so on. Then during our conversations I brought up Madiga Reservation Porata Samiti (MRPS) movement in Rayalaseema region since they told me about their history and empowerment with the MRPS movement in Shaikpet. This interaction connected me within caste network who all shared some of their experiences of being in MRPS movement and how they fought for their rights against Gangaputras and Munnurukapus in Shaikpet. The narratives gave me insights on the power of the Madiga community as members in the Harijan Sangham. In response to a specific query as to why they gave Harijan name to the caste association, they professed to be Harijans who pray to Hindu gods and who are members of the Bajarangdal. To bolster their point they noted that they are not following Christ, which is why one doesn't find a Church in this area of Shaikpet. The president, advisor, and treasurer of Harijan Sangham opined at the end of the conversation that not much can be ascertained any further from individual members. They then cautioned me against visiting at night times because people will be in drunken state and may even create problems for me. This way they sought to minimise my interactions any further with the community.

This interaction was memorable not because of the information I got from them, but the way they received and identified me in order to speak with me. This was for the first time in the field I felt that I have to match to the expectations of respondents in the name of the caste.

During another visit to the field site I met a person who belongs to Reddy caste and has undertaken project contract to renovate Shaikpet Sarai. He too asked my name, where I come from, and what the purpose of my visit was. Though I showed my student identification card and explained the purpose of my research in Shaikpet, my respondent was visibly annoyed and did not answer most of my questions. He observed that my questions are related to land, instead of lake. For rest of the interview and in further meetings, he was subdued and the mood was dull. His facial expression changed when responding to questions. He perceived me not only as a journalist, but as an outsider from Andhra region as well. This encounter shook me, especially on the way he responded to me.

More broadly, my interactions thus far with members of the three castes shows interplay of caste of the respondents and that of the researcher, either facilitates or constrains access to the field site and in obtaining data. Various labels are attached to the researcher and these in turn become impediments to data gathering. The skills of interviewing participant observation had to be complemented with the skill of understand gestures, facial expression and oral responses. To gain perspective of my respondents' answers, I began to introspect on the context of the interviews, which I describe in the next section.

Contextualising respondents' views

I started to appreciate the role context plays when I was interviewing a member of Mudiraju caste. I introduced myself and explained about the purpose of doing research when I met him around 8 p.m. at one of his friend's house, which is located on the main arterial road. Despite sharing my credentials with my respondent, he would evade answering or speaking with me by accusing me of belonging to Andhra Pradesh region whose people are responsible for the destruction of 'Telangana area', resources, and job opportunities. This interaction made me understand how my respondents were connected with the narrative of the Telangana agitation, and were responding accordingly. At the time of this interview the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh state was about to be realised. This meeting took place at night time because I had gone to observe whether the locality at night times was the same as one of the respondents had described. I found that the roads were empty, and most people are in their houses.

Next I met members of Munnurukapu Sangham, mainly to ascertain their history with the place. This time too I was asked about my first name, my caste name, where I come from and why I wanted to study Shaikpet. Soon thereafter doubts began to be raised. My respondent inquired 'aren't there colleges close to home for pursuing studies?' One elderly person of the community however invited me to his house, and offered some juice, and started our conversation by asking the purpose of my visit. Throughout this conversation his daughter and son-in-law, and a person from Gangaputra Sangham were present. The history of Shaikpet was equated with the history of Mr. Mulle Satyanaranayana, who in their view worked for the betterment of Dalit community by giving them housing *pattas* and making them part of Bonalu festival. My interactions with Munnurukapu Sangham made me realise the structural relationship among different caste communities in Shaikpet. While the Gangaputra's claimed that they are the ones

who that are leading every activity, the narrative on Mulle Satyanarayana however indicated that Munnurukapus had influence on each and every activity in Shaikpet.

Not all castes communities responded to me. A person from Kummari caste merely acknowledged my presence by nodding his head and did not utter one word.

Additionally, I interviewed people living in slums that are in the vicinity of the lake. Here again, access to people on my own was not easy because I am an outsider. I then approached local political leaders to gain access in the slums. A few persons were contacted directly by me and rest through the assistance of respondents. On the whole, I encountered more number of people in the *basti* committees through the good offices of local political leaders. I began to realise that it was easy to enter the slum through local political leaders, but like a double edged sword, I also found resistance from some of the respondents. Their narratives were mostly about their everyday problems with the lake water. For instance, there is mosquito menace, the area along the outlet *nala* and around the lake is prone to diseases, a few deaths have occurred because there is no fence around the lake and alongside the outlet of the *nala*.

The lesson from these observations is that field experiences are not uniform. For instance, the process of consenting to interviews was mixed. Some readily agreed to share their views. Yet at other times, respondents expressed their unwillingness to share data. This unpredictability is due to my personal identity. Therefore, a 'fieldworker must accept a devil's bargain – a poor introduction with all its constraints, which is the only way to gain access to the community' (Fettermen, 2010). On the whole ethnographic work allows one to study the socio-cultural contexts, processes, and meanings within the cultural systems.

Embodied experience

A researcher needs to have an embedded sense with people in field, which will need bodily competence as well so that one can relate, observe, and experience their worlds. Most research work thus far has celebrated agency and individuality, but more recent studies are seeking to interrogate both the politics of caste and political interactions of place and caste (Jodhka, 2012; Guha, 2016). The analogy when applied to travel writing work would be as follows: studies of travel writing

should not remain focused solely on textual, but should also need to be understood as embodied practices of the travel itself. This follows that attention is required of not only the personal identity of the researcher, but also many things based on the peoples' behaviour, field setting, and time of the interaction. A few of these aspects of ethnography as Raymond Madden observed

an ethnographer's body is part of the ethnographic toolkit...the favoured way of making the most of oneself as a tool of ethnography is to do as others do, to have the same or similar subjective bodily experience of being in a particular ethnographic place and time (Madden, 2010).

There are several questions about body competence, but an example will help to illuminate the issue. For instance, don't look them directly in the eye. Raymond Madden in essence argues and I agree that, 'doing what others do and learning through shared experience is more important methodologically than face-to-face contact with participants' (ibid). The evidence from this work points to theoretical development, albeit feebly, that there is a need for understanding and interpreting past in embodied terms.

Unmasking gender aspect of the study

Thus far my respondents were only men. Women's association with the lakes in the Telangana region is unique. This is because most of the household economy is based on tasks and activities that women undertake at the lake. Women's lake-based activities include: collecting, segregating, and selling fish; washing, and maintaining the bund and weirs; participating in socio-cultural activities that are cantered on women. Most festivals convey women's gratitude for the gains from the lake. Bathukamma and Bonalu festivals are two examples for this. For this reason I sought to factor in gender in my data gathering endeavours. I also found that male respondents opined that women's participation is not necessary in the village activities. One male respondent opined that women are at home, and are never part of the association, and therefore do not know anything about activities in Shaikpet.

The roles of women in festivals relating to lake are changing. Bathukamma, which was until recently a women festival, now sees participation from both men and women. Similarly, the predominant narrative on Katta Maisamma is that women on their way to fishing would first offer *bonam* (an offering of food) on

the bund to goddess and then proceed. In practice, women prepare bonam, while men offer the bonam. Take another instance of ritual practices surrounding the Bonalu festival, which is celebrated by all. In Shaikpet I found that men from two caste groups dominate planning and execution of the festivities. The roles to be played by other caste groups as well as by the women are also determined by the men from these two caste groups. While men dominate and lead the procession of Bonalu, women carry bonam offering on their head throughout the procession.

These narratives reveal replication of hegemonic practices, particularly practice of gendered and caste patterns of power.

Reflexivity

Ethnographer's politics and positionality influence research process and is to be considered part of the ethnographic methodology. Madden (2010) reflected on the politics of location simultaneously where the social-historical identity influenced the creation of the text. Reflexivity is a solution when making explicit the partial nature of the data and the contingencies into which any representation must be located, thereby improving legitimation and representation of the data (Brewer, 2000). Reflexivity allows an ethnographer to navigate varied purposes. In literature less is discussed about applying the ethnographic methodology to gather data and the potential pitfalls one may encounter in conducting the same in urban spaces. I cast a spotlight on three key observations drawn from field experiences. They are:

- Respondents brought up emotional feelings in the nature of caste, region, and cultural practices thereby strongly discouraging my endeavour.
- My personal identity in terms of caste, and region, as well as nature of questions posed became a hindrance at the field site.
- Sensitivity to different cultures is necessary in order to conduct an effective ethnographic study.

These observations are pointing to the need for understanding the field settings so that the issues become surmountable. A researcher is to become aware of natural, social, economic, and political relations at the field site.

Discussion and Concluding thoughts

The aforementioned narratives underscore the need for revisiting our understanding of ethnographic work, especially about how ethnography is conducted in urban settings. Ethnography has long been viewed as assisting in the study of people and its culture. Ethnographic studies are designed to explore cultural phenomena where the researcher observes society from the point of view of the subject of the study. In my case the selection of ethnographic methodology allows for exploration of assumptions that undergird the processes that degrade or destroy lakes. I employed semi-structured interviews and participant observation methods to gather data. Consequently, I obtained insights into people's lives and customs that one may not share orally or would be able to articulate if asked.

In *doing ethnography* I lived within a certain context, maintained relationships with people, participated in community activities, and took elaborate notes on the experience. The best way to ask right questions beyond the literature survey and a research proposal is to go into the field and find out what people do on a day-to-day basis (Fettermen, 2010). During discussions, body language, gestures, expressions also gave me clues on their stance and thinking. There are overlaps in the way ethnographic methods were used and gave meanings to pursue ethnographic research. 'The ethnographer's hike through the social and cultural wilderness begins with fieldwork' (Fettermen, 2010).

Overall, the following key points emerge by focussing on 'doing ethnography', especially in urban settings. These include:

- a) The value of de-linking methods of data gathering and methodology from research question(s) allows to develop an ethnographic perspective that combines various methods and strategies.
- b) Doing ethnography demands that the relationship between ethnographer and the field settings is open, flexible, and adept to the changing circumstances. Further, reflexivity on the part of the ethnographer is crucial to recognise not only the embodied nature of the individual, but also to guide the entire endeavour of field data gathering.
- c) By placing emphasis on *doing ethnography*, there is a recognition that one can go to the field setting for gathering data, initially, and later consult literature to advance efforts of data gathering. This observation is in contrast to suggestions in most text books urging ethnographers to familiarise with literature and theories prior to gathering data.

- d) The positionality of ethnographer seemed crucial to gain a foothold in the field settings, although very few books suggest the specifics of how one may navigate the field-settings, especially when dynamics of caste, class, and gender are at play in abundance.

Notes:

¹ My basic understanding of rural areas has come from the experiences of gathering data for developing my M. Phil. dissertation. For instance, though raised in rural settings, I was an outsider when visiting other rural areas. Initially, I went about gathering data as a researcher. However, people did not respond. 'Researcher' seemed like a new term, an idea for them, and they encountered an unfamiliar person with no credibility. I then gathered data at familiar locations and had full understanding of the communities therein. Data gathering was not difficult partly because of the privileges and reputation my father holds in the village. Most respondents recognised me as the son of sarpanch (village head). It was also therefore relatively easy to interview people belonging to higher castes. These experiences denote the need for building credibility at the field site and that rural areas are diverse.

² For instance, a researcher has to meet the head of the village first and intimate on the purpose of the visit. Only then the researcher can meet others in the village. This is the traditional understanding in rural areas. This practice also indicates the power village head wields. A researcher has to understand and take account of socio-cultural practices and structural relationships associated with each and every activity of the village.

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Vidyapogu Pullanna is a Doctoral Student at the Centre for Regional Studies, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad.

The Political Economy of a 'Dying' Lake: A Study of Claim- making through Caste and Rituals of Urban Commons at Shaikpet, Hyderabad

by Vidyapogu Pullanna

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