



#Naagarika - Citizens' Watch Committee

June 03, 2017

Smt. K. Moortheswari
Superintending Archaeologist
Archaeological Survey of India - Bengaluru Circle
5th Floor, F Wing, Kendriya Sadan
17th Main Road, Koramangala
Bengaluru - 560 034

Dear Madam,

Subject: Encroachment of Medieval era Vasanthpura Kalyani by Private Builder in Collusion with Authorities.

Naagarika-Citizens' Watch Committee and residents are writing to you, urging you to end the tragic situation that has befallen the historic Vasanthpura Kalyani attached to an ancient Cholan Era temple in Bomanahalli Zone in Bengaluru. As per media reports (copy enclosed), the 350-year-old Kalyani built by Maratha ruler Shivaji's father Shahaji Bhonsle in the 17th Century has been encroached upon by a builder named N Balakrishna Naidu, who along with government officials is using the Kalyani to build a wide road to his property.

The Infosys Foundation had taken up work to restore the past glory of the Kalyani; however, unfortunately citing recent developments of encroachment and the Muzrai department's erroneous maps of the tank, the Chairperson of Infosys Foundation has suggested that they would withdraw funding of the restoration work.

Moreover, the Government acting in haste with the recent media attention regarding the Kalyani have stated they can neither restore the Kalyani nor build a road but will construct a park on the land earmarked for the road.

S. Indu
Received Letter
Office of the Suptdg Archts
Archaeological Survey of India
Kendriya Sadan,
BANGALORE - 560 034

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These developments are alarming and pose a threat not only to Bengaluru's heritage but also pave the way for greedy builders and vested interests encroaching on other heritage structures and waterbodies that are central to the identity of Bengaluru. In your recent statement to the Deccan Herald you had said that you 'will only take action if somebody gives me(you) a written complaint'. We request take necessary actions in accordance with law to stop the Kalyani from being defaced by unscrupulous elements.

Looking forward to your immediate action in ending demise of the Vasanthapura Kalyani.

Yours faithfully,

H.S. Doreswamy

H S Doreswamy
Sr Freedom Fighter

S. Vishwanath

S Vishwanath
Rain Water Club

Nitin Seshadri
N.S.M VIKUNDA

Nitin Seshadri
Koramangala

Sridhar Pabbisetty

Sridhar Pabbisetty
CEO - NBF

Phani Sai

Phani Sai
Vasanthpura

Suresh NR

Suresh NR
Convener - #UnitedBengaluru

Encl.

*THE DECCAN HERALD
FOR INFORMATION*

*AJIT NAIR
FIGHT FOR RERA
Karnataka Chapter*

1. Deccan Herald Article 'Sudha Murthy May Stop Funding Temple Tank Restoration Project' dated 02.06.2017
2. Deccan Herald Article 'Wrong and Foolish to Close Temple Tank for Road: Archaeology Officials' dated 01.06.2017
3. Deccan Herald Article 'Govt Building Road on Heritage Temple Tank to Help Builder' dated 31.05.2017

Sudha Murty may stop funding temple tank restoration project

Sudha, from Page 1

Under scrutiny after DH exposed their plan to cover up the 17th century tank, they said they would 'correct' the map, but wouldn't be able to save the tank.

The BDA will acquire about 25,000 sq ft of temple land to widen the road leading to Kanakapura Road, and the temple is set to lose a portion of the tank.

Moreover, the tank is not archaeologically significant, muzrai officials claimed.

Neither the Archaeological Survey of India nor the state archaeology department had listed the tank as protected monuments, a muzrai department note said.

Archaeology officials say that is because heritage shrines where rituals are conducted regularly fall under the muzrai department and not the archaeology department.

"The BDA has decided to acquire a portion of the tank to the north. The government is empowered to acquire such pieces of land. It had earlier shifted a monument while widening Ballari Road on the way to the international airport," G V Sridhar, muzrai assistant commissioner, told DH.

DH News Service

Sudha Murty may stop funding temple tank restoration project

Bengaluru, DHNS: With muzrai officials admitting to preparing inaccurate maps, the Infosys Foundation is likely to withdraw support for the restoration of the Vasanthapura temple tank.

"We were not involved in preparing the plan. We are just facilitators and are funding the tank restoration plan," Foundation chairperson Sudha Murty told DH on Thursday.

Earlier this week, DH had reported how the government was filling up a 350-year-old stepped temple tank (kalyani) in southern Bengaluru to build a road to a private developer's property. Officials have since said they would build a park there, and not a road.

"We don't know about the real estate interests associated with the development plan," Sudha said.

The foundation is funding the restoration generously, and grants add up to at least Rs 2.5 crore, according to official sources. Sudha wouldn't disclose the amount she is giving away.

She said she had taken up work on the kalyani as the heritage structure had been in shambles. "Government officials referred to me this temple tank," she said.

Govt: can't save tank

Meanwhile, apologetic muzrai officials said they had got the map all wrong and had no plans to build an approach road to a private land developer's property.

They said they would use the space for a park instead.

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Where is it?

The tank is said to have been built by Maratha king Shivaji's father Shahaji Raje Bhonsle about 350 years ago.

It is attached to the Vasantha Vallabharaya temple in Vasanthapura, off Kanakapura Road, in a now well-populated neighbourhood of southern Bengaluru.

Wrong, foolish to close temple tank for road: archaeology officials

Bengaluru: The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the Karnataka State Archaeology Department are shocked that the historic Vasanthpura temple tank is being closed to make way for a road.

DH had reported on Tuesday how the government was building a road over a kalyani (stepped temple tank) to help a private land developer. With the construction of the road, three-fourths of the tank space will be covered, with just a token tank remaining.

The tank, attached to the Vasanathavallabha temple off Kanakapura Road, was built 350 years ago by Shahaji Raje Bhonsle, father of Maratha king Shivaji.

With the story going viral, and even being tweeted by Rajya Sabha member Rajeev Chandrasekhar to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's handle, a panicky muzrai department came up with a string of excuses.

The BDA wants to acquire the northern part of the tank to widen the road, according to officials under whose jurisdiction the temple tank falls.

K Moortheswari, superintending archaeologist, Archaeological Survey of India, said, "Monuments cannot be defaced. If it is a tank of a living temple, where worship happens ritually, then it cannot be defaced. How can anybody close the temple tank?"

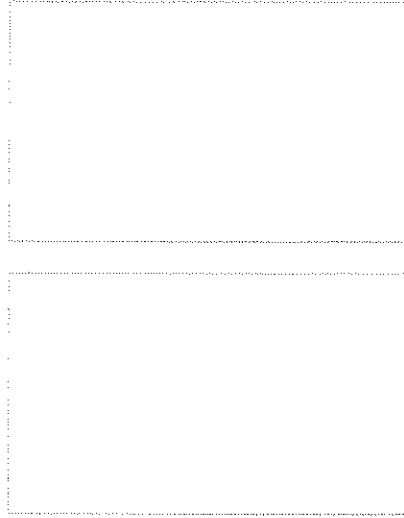
She said she had spoken to muzrai assistant commissioner G V Sridhar, who purportedly told her only a part of the tank was being closed.

"I will take action only if somebody gives me a written complaint," she said.

R Gopal, director of the state archaeology department, described the closing of a historical monument as an "act of foolishness".

"It is wrong. The muzrai department, custodian of the tank, has to protect it," he said.

DH News Service



Govt building road on heritage temple tank to help developer

G Manjusainath

Bengaluru: The government is closing three-fourths of a 350-year-old temple tank to favour a private land developer in Vasanthapura.

Once a tranquil, picturesque suburb, Vasanthapura, off Kanakapura Road, is now a bustling neighbourhood in the southern part of the city.

Historians say the tank was built in the 17th century by Shivaji's father Shahaji Raje Bhonsle, who had camped there. The temple dates back to the days of Chola rule (4th to 12th century), and was built in a clearing in the midst of a lush forest, where legend has it sages used to meditate.

The developer in question, N Balakrishna Naidu, is going all out to get a broad approach road to his land, and the bureaucracy is on his side. A good road adds immensely to the real estate value of his land, and makes it more saleable.

Work is afoot to close almost three-fourths of the tank to build a road about 50 feet wide. Naidu ostensibly offered a part of his land to the temple, and the muzrai authorities, in a letter to the revenue authorities, cited this act of 'generosity' to justify building a road over the tank.

Officials have recently altered the survey of the kalyani (Kannada for 'stepped temple tank'), shrinking its extent. Muzrai tahsildar Dinesh admitted something was wrong with the maps, and blamed it on the architect and engineer in charge.

The intention of doctored map is to show that Naidu has parted with his land to develop the tank, and justify the road cutting through the kalyani.

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Government building road on heritage temple tank to help developer

Temple tank, from Page 1

Muzrai commissioner Shadakshari and deputy commissioner Kantharaju, under whom the temple falls, claimed they were not aware of what was happening at the tank.

"Where is this kalyani? Is anything happening there? Let me check with the tahsildar. If this is happening, we will halt it," Kantharaju told DH.

Tank almost closed

A lovely piece of work from the era of the Maratha ruler, the tank was in good shape till the late 1980s.

With the advent of the software industry, construction burgeoned in the area, and the tank was filled with all kinds of debris, and almost closed.

The kalyani was vandalised, and its smooth, artistically carved stones cast aside and broken. The muzrai department showed scant respect for the structure's antiquity and heritage value.

Citizens' campaign

The tank was restored following sustained efforts by citizen activists in 2013. The temple land, according to government records, is spread across an acre and 33 guntas, or about 80,000 sq ft. Land grabbers have taken possession of some parts.

In 2013, DH had covered the citizens' campaign extensively, following which the muzrai department dropped its plans to cover up the tank. It has now begun work on it again.

The Vaishnavite temple in Vasanthapura, dedicated to Vasanthavallabha Swamy, has been a favourite venue for weddings.

In 1887, Vasanthapura was a village five miles south of Bengaluru, with a population of just 112.

In 2012, citizens petitioned the government against the muzrai department's misrepresentation of the survey to build a road.

They had also mentioned that the new road would benefit developer Naidu alone, since no settlement exists beyond his estate.

Naidu did not respond to repeated attempts to reach him for this story.

DH News Service