



WULAR IS A HOME TO LARGEST FISH COMMUNITY AND THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE LIVING IN ADJACENT AREAS, WHOSE LIVELIHOOD IS ENTIRELY DEPENDENT ON FISH AND WATER CHESTNUT CATCHING.

WULAR LAKE: A HERITAGE LOST



Wajahat Shabir

With every passing day we are losing Wular, which is our heritage.

From the serpentine road along the rugged mountains overlooking north Kashmir's Bandipora town, a cursory glance beneath appears a beautiful meadow amid patches of water to every passerby. An illusion soon vanishes once the sight gets closer. The rampant growth of willows and wild grass is what Asia's largest fresh water lake, Wular looks like now.

Lake which has been recognized of international importance under the banner of Ramsar site in 1990, and of national importance as well in 1986 is a source of livelihood for a large human population living along its fringes. The sprawling area of the lake is a boon for the growth of coniferous forests, alpine meadows and orchards. Despite its

inefficiency, successive governments have invariably taken it for granted, leaving it vulnerable to the potential destruction in the coming years.

Over the years it has shrunk drastically from 217.8 square kilometers in 1911 to a mere 50 square kilometers. And in the dry spell it further shrinks. Despite the initiatives, in part of Government like 'Wular development project' with the assistance from Centre government, chances of its restoration are bleak.

Apart from encroachment, thousands of willow trees have become threat for the lake. "This lake used to give us meaning of life. It is over now," says Ghulam Qadir Reshi, a 70 year old fisherman who has grown on the serene waters of this fresh water lake. ➔

CONSERVATION OF ENVIRONMENT IN J&K



Madhiya Nabi

The present situation of water bodies in the state is disruptive. Due to lacking waste management, the water bodies like Dal, Wullar, Manasbal are degrading.

The State of Jammu and Kashmir is bestowed of having abundance of natural resources. Because of its natural beauty, the valley is often called 'the paradise on earth'. But due to increase in population and demand for natural resources, the threat to environment is increasing.

The state is considered rich in mineral resources like arsenic, borax, coal etc. If

wisely utilized, these resources can uplift the State economy and provide livelihood to many unemployed people of the valley. But, unfortunately these approaches are missing. The wise and judicious use of these resources remains a question mark for policy-makers, environmentalists and politicians as apparently they hardly care for the welfare of the state.

HOD Earth Sciences Department, →



UNREGULATED URBANISATION ALONG THE WETLAND PERIPHERIES WHICH HAS FINALLY LED TO THE ENCROACHMENT OF THE WETLAND HAS SHRUNKED IT TO A FEW SQUARE KILOMETRES.

WETLAND TURNS INTO WASTELAND

Khushar sar, a lake converted into Wetland, at the verge of extinction. Everyday thousands of gallons of untreated sewage is being dumped into the wetland which has turned the waters poisonous which has lead to extinction of natural vegetation, fish and other aquatic life besides engulfing the neighbourhood with a foul stink thereby putting the neighbourhood inhabitants vulnerable to life threatening diseases. Unregulated urbanisation along the wetland peripheries which has finally lead to the encroachment of the wetland has Shrunked it to a few square Kilometres.

Ironically, no one owes the wetland and authorities are shifting the blames from one department to another.

"If one goes by the name and the apparent functioning of the department it should come under us but our domain has been restricted to Dal and Nigeen Lakes only. Khushal Sar is no man's land", an official at LAWDA said.

As per the survey conducted by the Kashmir University Earth Science department there has been nearly 40% decrease in the size of this wet land.

In 1965 it was spread over a sprawling 0.96 square Kilometres but now it has →



Adil Amin

In 1965 it was spread over a sprawling 0.96 square Kilometres but now it has been left to mere 0.6 square Kilometres





WE USED TO SEE TOURISTS COME IN HOUSE BOATS SPENDING NIGHTS TOGETHER HERE IN DURING SUMMERS. THE VIEW PRESENTED A SPLENDOR,

'DEAD ANCHAR'



Ubeer Naqushbandi

There were even medicinal plants that used to grow inside lake. Those plants had cancer treating properties. But now this lake is so toxic that it gives back cancer.

The nauseating smell and pack of dogs have pounced over the carcass with eagles hovering overhead at Anchar Soura. Unknown of fact that site was once a pristine water body; anybody can take the place for a "dumping site". This is what has remained of Anchar lake which once spanned over an area of 19.4sq km, has now just got shrunken to 6.8 sq km.

Nazir Ahmad Taploo is an octogenarian carpet weaver. Taking a deep gushes from his hookah, he has aged all along with now "dead Anchar". "There were times when tourists visited this lake in large numbers. But now no one comes here," says Taploo while placing tobacco inside chelum of his hookah.

Anchar formed an important place in the hydrology of Srinagar. The lake is connected with the Dal Lake through a channel known by the name of Nallah Aamir Khan.

Taploo says that it is on record that

visitors used to take a boat ride from Dal Lake to the Khushal Sar -another water body which is also on the verge of extinction. "They used to enjoy. Not only them. Even we used to go ecstatic, not now anymore," says Taploo while taking hard gushes from his hookah.

"We used to see tourists come in house boats spending nights together here in during summers. The view presented a splendor," says Taploo pointing with his right hand towards massive Mahadav mountain range that houses highest peak of Kashmir; Harmukh and serene Tungalball hill in Ganderbal district.

Environmentalists after assessing the deteriorated condition of the lake had declared it "dead" in 2010.

Presently, Anchar falls under the domain Srinagar Municipal Corporation which in itself Nazir says is "irony". "Some restoration urban bodies department like UEED or LAWDA should be given the task. But handling it entirely to SMC means that government considers it a dust bin." *