

Important bird areas of Gujarat: Ranmal Lake, Jamnagar

India needs to develop a very sensitive approach to actions being initiated for the betterment of her huge and bludgeoning human population. The Ranmal Lake (more popularly known as the Lakhota Lake) of Jamnagar, Gujarat is an outstanding example of how concern for the conservation and enhancement of our remnant natural heritages can enrich lives of thousands of people even as urbanisation inexorably spreads. The avian assembly on this historic water body in the heart of a city is unique in providing an identity to Jamnagar, that was once a feudal capital and is now rapidly becoming India's petrochemical capital. Happily, the state government has provided a generous financial package to optimise this absolutely unique gift nature and history have conspired to give Jamnagar.

Unhappily, the blueprints drawn up totally lack sensitivity of how to go about the task as is apparent from an anguished message I have received from Princess Harshakuvarba, the elder sister of the Jam Saheb,

"... Ranmal Talav is at such a critical stage with unthinkable plans being made around it.

"Our lake is such a rarity with a multitude of birds living on it, specially in winter when they come in hordes and spend months around our rich historic archeological treasures and the two Jams who brought Jamnagar onto the world map of yore and the modern.

"JMC [Jamnagar Municipal Corporation] must respect our city's nature and ethos as also the fact that they've not left any other open leisure space in or around the city.

"The lake needs only restoration of the archeological heritage and focus on the calm needed by the birds and offer subtle bird watching infrastructures. No tree cutting or increasing roads to fill up the water body space!



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"Why should we try to emulate another city's pride? We have our own with:

1. The only remaining built heritage.
2. Birds.
3. Temples and some open areas where all Jamnagris, old and young can come at will.

"They need to enjoy fresh air, exercise.

"Authorities wish to control this freedom by having lockable gates; predetermining what space can be used how and when. Its Spanish Inquisition worse than even ... [the] Emergency, which didn't dream of telling people when to breath or exercise!

"Please help Bhai, as our MPs, MLAs, corporators, and [the] JMC officialdom wish to just desecrate the site and play with a one-time grant."

Needless to say, people like me, and the silent majority are deeply concerned and would want the available funding to be utilised in a manner that would maximise the avian presence against the backdrop of great monuments along with spaces for old and young to relax under the shade of graceful trees and get opportunities of interacting with the birds. The funding made available by the government should be profitably utilised in ensuring that the water supply to the lake is enhanced and sequestered from the inflow of waste-water from sewers.

—Lavkumar Khachar



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