



## Rebirth of Water Bodies

In a urbanisation dominated world the restoration water bodies in Berhampur town may remain unknown to many from recognition etc but it is igniting many around the region to take care water bodies in their respective cities & towns. So in short the story below with photographs will let you know how Water Bodies were restored for a Positive Change in Berhampur, Odisha, India.

Water bodies are perhaps the only lively Oasis of the Cities. However, many often these oasis are turned into cesspool, dumping yards for waste disposal or toilet sheet for informal settlers or sites for criminal offenses; posed health hazard for people living around. Same time no one ready to take serious actions towards rejuvenation of these water bodies, rather remained as neglected spots in city maps.

Berhampur a city in Southern Coastal Odisha has no exception; where its water bodies followed all above nuisance pattern for over three decades. Historically there were numerous number water bodies existed in this city interconnected to each other through underground channels for irrigation & portable



water purposes constructed by the then kings over years. However, over the years these channels were vanished and most of the private owned lakes/ponds were reused for residential and commercial purposes. Some evidence suggested that disappearance of water bodies in Berhampur started way back in the 80s. Same time no one ready to take serious actions towards rejuvenation of these water bodies, rather allowed this to remain as neglected spots in city maps In other words most of the public owned water bodies went into comma waiting for their turn into death.





In late nineties at a city level capacity building programmes of key city decision makers; a young man shared the importance of City Water Bodies to elected representatives and officials. Around that time of late city decision makers realized importance of these water bodies and took a decision work towards restoration these orphan water bodies. Thereafter through community mapping 42 water bodies were identified covering an area of 270 acres for restoration, the statistics surprised many city dwellers.



So once used for open defecation and nuisance ground are today restored with water, they are contributing substantially for improving city environment, the physical character of water bodies

are improving, abolished open defecation and citizens got new public space for amusement and social gathering. Interestingly both present & past generation were surprised as the old says they never thought blue water will ever arrive and young ones astonished with arrival of blue water in neglected barren land, which they use to call waste land.



In between five summer passed but the water bodies have not gone dry and community are actively managing these water bodies with a promise that they will never let these water bodies go dry again. The project is financially supported by Govt. of India with 80% and 10% each by both State & Local Govt.

#### Communication

Dr. Piyush Ranjan Rout

Co Founder, Local Governance network

[www.lgnet.in](http://www.lgnet.in) e-mail: [piyush.rout@lgnet.in](mailto:piyush.rout@lgnet.in)

