

Tanks of Kamalapura

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Water is the most precious gift of nature. It is found everywhere and the other name of it is life because it is the basis of fluid element of living organisms. We find water in tanks, ponds, wells, rivers, rains, and springs. Almost three-fourth of the earth is water. We should conserve and save water so as to protect the water environment. Historians have researched that building tanks was in existence prior to the reign of Kadamba Dynasty in Karnataka.¹ There was an age when the rivers flowed clean and free, when the tanks and lakes in Karnataka were brimming with glistening water and when there were no droughts and water shortage. Those were the times of the Vijayanagara Empire, when the 15th century kings made sure their subjects never went thirsty in the searing heat and had enough water to farm their fields and reap a bountiful harvest. The glorious age has gone and all that remains are crumbling inscriptions and plaques to remind us of the wisdom of the ancient rulers, who knew that the welfare of their people started with providing them something as basic as water.

An inscription named after Lakshmidhara, a minister dating back to the period of Proudhadivaraya, recounts how a mother tells her kid,

“Kereyumu kattisu, baviyumu savesu, devagaram madisu, sajjereyolu silukida anatharannu rakshisu” (build tanks, dig wells, make temples and protect those orphans/slaves caught in the vicious circle). An inscription planted in front of Kadalekalu Ganesha Temple in Hampi reveals that building a tank was as sacred as worshipping the gods which was why the Vijayanagara kings gave prime importance to constructing anicuts and tanks across their empire. What worked to their advantage was the fact that Hampi, the erstwhile capital city of the empire, was located in the natural basin formed by river Tungabhadra, which flows in a north-easterly direction. Many embankments were built along the streams to create reservoirs of different sizes. Since Vijayanagar was one of the most arid zones in the peninsula, perfect arrangements were made to store rainwater to be used in the city.

Kamalapura tank is the best example of such a tank, built in the early years of the fifteenth century. Water from this tank was used not only for irrigating fields but was also sent through a channel to the 'royal centre.'

Kamalapura is an apt example of how expertise in hydraulics can be put to use to make optimum use of water for drinking and irrigation. Revenue department records say the tank is spread across 476 acres and irrigates around 1,500 acres throughout the year, enabling farmers to reap a good harvest of paddy, sugarcane and banana crops.

An inscription dating back to 1540, found near Raghunatha Temple in Penugonda, describes Kamalapura as ‘the big and never drying tank of this suburb’. It also states that parts of fields adjacent to Kamalapura tank namely Huvina Siddaiana Gadde (farm) and the produce of the farm and coconut trees were given in donation to Natha Temple in Varadarajamma Pattana. Another inscription dating to 1581 says that during the rule of King Achyutadevaraya, Danna Nayaka, the chieftain of Saluva Dynasty, donated a land in Kamalapura to Lakshminarasimha Temple. A folk tale narrates that the name of the village is named after Kamaladevi, the chief deity of this region.² Kamalapura, sometimes written Kamalapur and Kaamalapura is a panchayat town in Hosapete Taluk, Bellary district in Karnataka. It is located 12 KMs away from the town of Hosapete. Kamalapura is situated at 15° 40' North latitude and 75° 150' East longitude. The altitude of the place is 457.000 meters above MSL (Mean Sea Level).

Kamalapura Tank

Kaifiyats reveal that this large tank was built by Proudhadavaraya, the son of Achyutharaya.³ This historical tank, located at Survey No 479, is spread in sprawling 476.03 acres and irrigates 714 acres of agriculture lands. The tank bund is built in 3kms circumference. The tank was fed by river canal with water directly from perennial River Tungabhadra. The Tank receives water from 'Raya-Canal' and was meeting the varied requirements of the residents of Vijayanagara City. It is the biggest tank in the entire local planning area and is located on the Hospet-Kamalapura road i.e. to the south of Kamalapura Town. The circular shaped tank bund of around 3km length has further enhanced the scenic beauty of the environs surrounding the historical tank making it a prized possession of the village. The tank has four sluices and the total water storage capacity of 105.00 MCFT. The dead storage capacity is 85.00 MCFT. The size of the four sluices are as follows:

1. +1475.00
2. +1443.05
3. +1463.05
4. +1469.14

The first sluice is 320 mts, second is 395 mts, third is 675 mts and the fourth is 450 mts.

Utilization of Water: The tank caters to the water needs of sugarcane and paddy growers and the general public. The government authorities have banned washing vehicles and clothes in the tank citing dangers of water contamination.

Beliefs: Folk beliefs on tanks and water bodies are plenty. It is belief in folklore that building a tank would bring good fortunes both on earth and heaven. Farmers offer puja every year and it is custom not to open the sluices on Wednesday and Sunday.

Hallikere Tank

Hallikere tank is located to the southeast of Kamalapura near Hampi Kannada University. The tank is located in Survey no 863 and 673 A of Kamalapura village and covers an area of 3.62. As per the inscription available at Byluvaddiegere village this tank was built during the period of Krishnadevaraya.⁴ In 1975, this tank was feeding water 190 acres of wet lands. However, The TB Board vide its letter TBP/IRR-I/84-85/92/dated 6-4-1985, another 193 acres of agriculture lands were included to be fed water. Presently, 4.6 cusses of water is being released to this tank from the TB Dam canals. The total water storage capacity of the tank is 0.0564 TMFT and supplies water to 595.65 acres of land. The water storage in January the water level drops and there shall be no water supply till the month of April.

Sl No.	Tank Area	Area in Acres	SC Farmers	ST Farmers	Percentage		Total Percentage of Farmers
1	Hallikere tank	383.00	49.02	110.24	-	-	-
2	HLC 1A Tail end	212.65	131.51	49.75	-	-	-
	Total	595.65	180.53	159.99	30.30	27.13	57.43

The total water storage capacity of the tank is 56.40 while the dead storage is 50.63. The tank has two sluices and the details are as follows:

1. +1520.00 L/S
2. +1516.00 R/S

Utilization of Water: The Tank water is supplied to sugarcane, sunflower, paddy and groundnut fields and it mainly for agriculture purpose. The water is not allowed for any commercial purpose except fishing.

Beliefs: The farmers offer puja to this tank very year and on Sundays and Wednesdays the sluices are closed.⁵

Reference :

1. Koppa.S.K, Tardavadi Nadu: Ondu Samskrutika Adhyayana, page 237
2. H.Thippeswamy, Kamalapuradallina Vijayanagara Kalada Shilamurtigalu,Page 229, 2006
3. Kalburgi.M.M, Karnatakada Kaifiyattugalu, pg 517
4. Kannada University Inscriptions Vol-1, Ballari District.
5. Information given by A Siddeshwar, 18th cross, Kamalapura

Photo of Kamalapur kere:







Photo of Hallikere Tank:



