



Threats to waterbodies and success stories from India



Waterbodies are critical for cities

Waterbodies are sources of drinking water and irrigation. They are vital sponges in the city. They prevent flood and recharge groundwater

Every city gave its land for rain.

Today.....

These holes in the ground are either lucrative real estate for builders, the last resort for slum dwellers, or garbage dumps.



Vanishing waterbodies in urban areas

- Bangalore, at the beginning of the **1960s** had **262** lakes, now only **10** hold water
- The Ahmedabad collector – on directions from the high court – listed **137 waterbodies** in the city but also said that over **65** had been built over already
- In Delhi, **625** waterbodies were identified – again on court orders – but are not protected.

Urban water bodies in courts

Concerned citizens across the country have come together to fight to halt this degradation of urban water bodies. In state after state, citizens and NGOs have filed legal cases for protection of urban lakes.

The cases:

- 1. The cases are in response to encroachment or any change of landuse pattern by the government***
- 2. The cases are filed in many cases by the citizens in the face of water shortage or community rights***
- 3. The petitioners receive threats from builders or land sharks very frequently***
- 4. There is no clear policy on the allotment of land area for waterbodies***



Churning still water: Few questions about the waterbodies of India

Who owns the waterbody?

How many waterbodies are there?

Which waterbodies should be protected?

What is the no-construction zone around the waterbody?

Will the catchment and channels feeding the waterbodies be protected?

Who will maintain the waterbody?



Few existing laws and policies to save the waterbodies

Wetlands (Management and Conservation) Rules, 2010 was issued by Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF), for conservation and management of wetlands.

Guwahati Water Bodies (Preservation and Conservation) Bill 2008

The objective is to preserve wetlands and to re-acquire lands in the periphery of the waterbody for its protection.

East Kolkata Wetland Conservation and Management bill, 2006.

This bill includes provision for penalties – Rs 1 lakh for encroachment.

Andhra government's 'Water, Land, Trees Act', 2002.

The act empowers state agencies to take steps to protect water bodies and to prevent conversion.

National Capital Region (NCR) Plan, 2021.

It is mandatory for NCR towns to reserve 2-5 % area under waterbodies (natural/constructed)



2009



2011











Mansagar lake, Rajasthan revived through PPP



1960



2007

Bhimtal lake, Uttarakhand revived after the High Court order



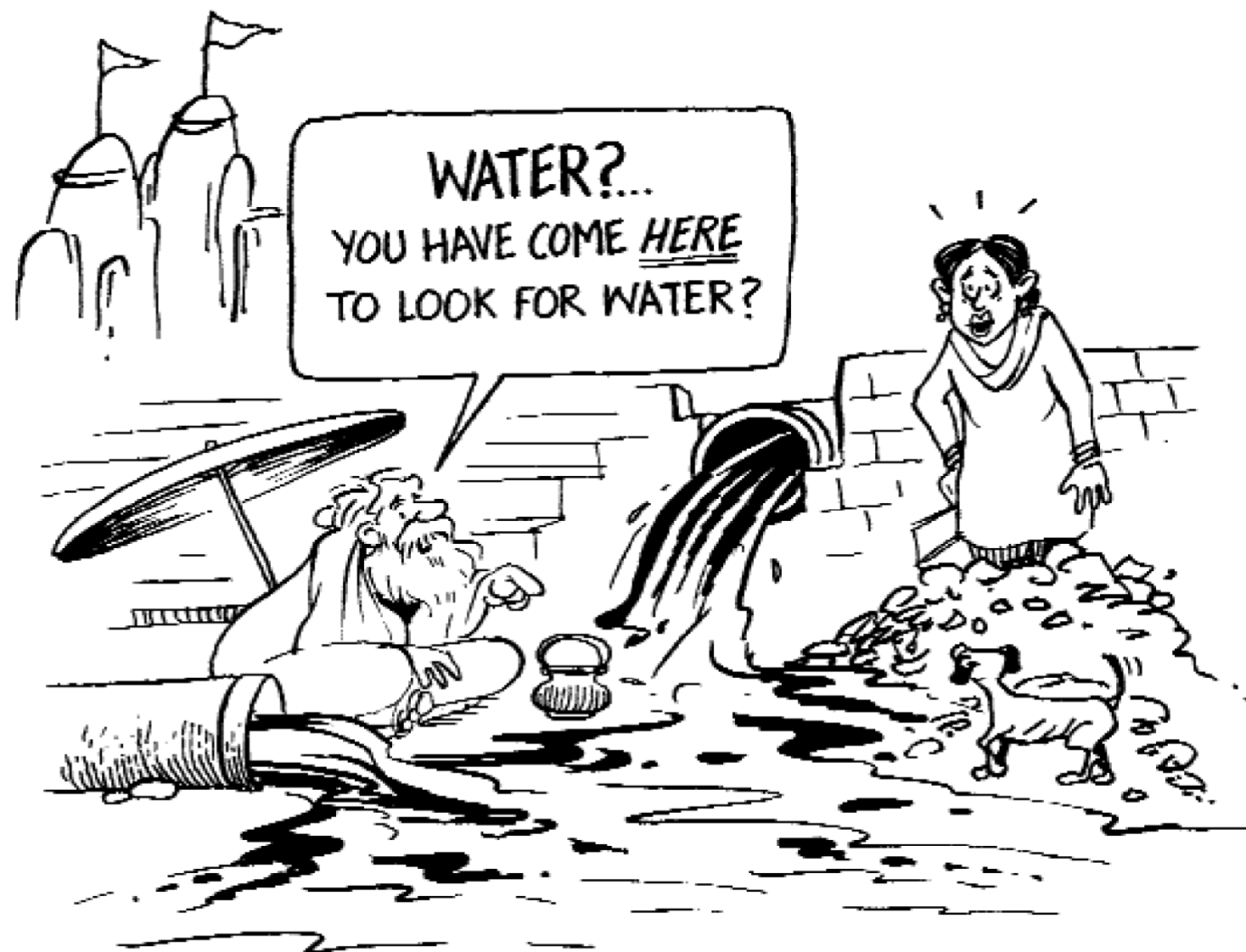
Healing touch: Naintal lake revived after the High Court judgement





Protection of lake and catchment is just one side of the coin.....

The real challenge lies in ensuring that these bodies are supplied unpolluted rainwater, that is, they are recharged.



Thank you