

## Ansupa Lake : The Pride of Odisha

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### ANSUPA : A WETLAND

Odisha is proud of three lakes namely Chilika, Ansupa and Sara. In fact of these three, Chilika is geographically a lagoon whereas Ansupa and Sara are two lakes. Chilika is the largest brackish water lagoon of Asia whereas Ansupa is the largest freshwater lake of Odisha. Literature and geography discuss Chilika as lake. Let us see the difference between lagoon and lake.

Lagoon (Latin-Lacuna and Italian – laguna) is defined as a shallow lake, especially one near or communicating with sea or river. Lake (Latin-lacus, French-lac, old English-lacu) is defined as a large or considerable body of water within land. Certain terms are associated with lake (Table 1) considering the features of lake.

Lake is such a natural creation on earth, it attracts the attention of thinkers, poets, writers and all categories of nature lovers as well as naturalists. The ever remembered poem “Chilika” written by the poet Kabibara Radhanath is an amazing poem. The still water, flora, sunrise and sunset, hills of the lake and congregation of migratory and resident birds of the lakes are certainly unforgettable.

**Table 1**

<b>Terms associated with lake</b>	
<b>Terms associated with lake</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Lakelet	A little lake
Laker	i) A fish found in lakes ii) A boat for lakes iii) One who sails on lakes
Lake poet	A visitor to the lake District
Lake-basin	i) A hollow now or once containing a lake ii) The area drained by a lake
Lake District	A picture sque and mountainous region is cumber land, Waste land and Lancashire with many lakes
Lake- lawger	i) The bow fin ii) The borboat
Lake poets, lake School	Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey dwellers in the Lake District.



**Table 2**  
**Characteristics of Ansupa lake**

Description	Fact and figure
Total water spread area	152.00 ha
Catchment area	5231.00 ha
Number of micro watersheds	07
Number of villages in catchment area	28
Number of primary fisherman cooperative society	01

*Source:* Chilika Development Authority, Forest and Environment Department, Government of Odisha.

### **Ansupa and its Geography**

Ansupa lake is so named as it is a part of the river, the Mahanadi. This lake is situated in Banki Block of Cuttack district under Athagarh Forest Division. Geographically, it is within 20.26'28.43"to 28.28'34.44"latitude and 85.35'56.74"to 85.36'30.01"longitude. It is exactly situated on the left bank of the river, the Mahanadi. The length of the lake is approximately three kilometres and breadth varies from 250m to 500m embracing an area of about 328 acres. The total water spread area of this lake is 152.00ha and catchment area 5231.00 ha. with seven micro watersheds. Interestingly enough, the number of villages in catchment area is 28 (table 2). It comes within the territorial jurisdiction of Athagarh Forest Division. Apart from this original existence as lake, it is declared as "Wetland of national importance.

The lake Ansupa is surrounded by two hills. One is Saranda hill on its western side and Bishnupur hill on its north-eastern side. Within these two hills, village namely Bishnupur, Subarnapur, Malbiharpur, Ghadabasa and Kabalibadi are situated. Ansupa is connected with

the Mahanadi on its southern side with a channel called Kabula Nala (Kabula Channel) through which flood water of the river Mahanadi passes the lake. There is another Channel called Haluhula Nala (Haluhula Channel) to the south west of Ansupa which transverses through the borders of some villages KanthaPanhara and Ghadabasa. The geometry of this lake is as like as a horse shoe, for which it is popularly known as horse shoe lake of Odisha.

Ansupa is well connected and the approach from Bhubaneswar and Cuttack is very simple. The nearest airport Bhubaneswar is 70 km, nearest railway station in Cuttack which is 50 km and the nearest bus stop is Athagarh which is just 10 km to Ansupa. One can visit this lake throughout the year which is approachable in all seasons. The connecting route by bus or any two wheeler vehicles is excellent and scenic.

### **Ansupa lake and its mysterious history**

Saranda hill or the area called Sarandagada is famous in the history because of the ruling of the king having a fort at Saranda hill top. It is believed that during Ganga dynasty, the king Subarnakeshari was overwhelmed with the natural beauty and panoramic view of Ansupa. Subsequently, the king established the village Subarnapur on the bank of the Ansupa and Saranda hill. According to the legend, one of the brothers of Dhala Dynasty of Banki had established his kingdom on the top of the Saranda hill which was popularly known as Sarandagada. As per the history, the king of Saranda had married one of the daughters of nearby king of Tigiriagada, which is 15km away from Saranda.

The king of Saranda preferred and had chosen this place to develop his fort for his safety and protection. There was an entrance gate constructed by stones connected with footsteps built on stones starting from Ansupa lake. The



king had also built a house made up of stones for storing arms and ammunition which is known as magazine house (Baruda Ghara). This structure is still existing without any damage. The king had fixed a heavy metal door made up of bronze metal (copper + tin) at the entrance of the fort which was producing an intense sound. This sound was indicating the king's arrival and departure to his fort.

At present, the entrance gate of the fort, magazine house, a twin well at the top of the hill locally called Brother-Daughter-in Law well or Bhai-Bhou Kua) and another big well like hole made up of stone are still existing showing the King's creation. After independence in 1970, the Government of Odisha declared 160.93 ha of Saranda hill area as proposed "Reserved Forest". After being declared as a reserved forest, the forest growth and development in this area is dense which is evidenced from the view taken from the watch tower of the hill. The entire horse shoe shaped area of the lake appears to be surrounded by greenery or large trees.

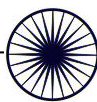
### Floral and Faunal Diversity of Ansupa Lake

The lake Ansupa is famous as it is the largest freshwater lake of Odisha State. Further, it has drawn the attention of visitors and tourists of different corner owing to rich floral diversity and some resident and migratory avian species (birds). During winter season, the migratory birds of various species enhance the beauty of lake. Apart from winter period, one can observe a good number of resident birds sitting on the vegetation of the lakes and banks or swimming in water of the lake. Different species of insects like butterflies, dragonflies, damselflies, honeybees, wasps and beetles multiply the magnitude of the beauty. The lake as such enjoys varieties of fish species in its water.

In addition to animal diversity, the lake is unique for its floral diversity (table 3). Submerged species and floating species of plants of this lake is spectacular. The sides of the lakes are flooded with magnificent lilies of pink, red and white colours whose leaves cover the surface of the water. The total water spread area measures about 152 ha and catchment area 5231 ha embracing seven micro watersheds (Table2). Floral diversity inside the lake, bank of the lake, surface of the lake and around the lake is varied and diversified. This enhances the beauty of the green environment.

**Table 3**  
**Importance Vegetation of Ansupa lake**

Category of plant	Scientific name of the Plant
Plants of the fringes	Polygonum glogrum Polygonum barbatum Limnophila heterophylla Cyperus platystylis Aeschynomene aspera Ludurgia octovalvisare
Submerged species	Hydrilla Verticellah Ceratophyllum demersion Myriophyllum tetrandrom
Floating	Nymphades hydrophylla Trapa natans varbispinosa Eichhornia crassipis
Emergent species	Saccidrpis interrupta Echinochloa stagnina
Shoreline Species (Dryseason plants)	Eleocharis dulcis Scirpus grossus Fuirena ciliaris
Rooted floating Species	Euryale ferox Nymphaea nouchali Nelumbo nueifera
Free floating species	Nynphoides indica Trapa natans Varbispinosa
Weeds	Pistia stratiotes Eichhornia Crassipis Monochoria Vastate Salvinia Cucullatae



Submerged Species	Potamogeton Lecrnatub Najas foveolata Utricularia inflexa Ottelia allismoides
Amphibious Life forms	Typha angustata Saceharum spontareun Scirpus grosses Setaria Pumila Enhydra flactuans
Swamp Plants	Eleocharis duleis Sphaeranthus indicus Eclipta prostrata Coldenia Procumbens Phyla nodiflora Oryza rufipogon Lymnophyton obtusifolicum Sagittaria Ludwigia adsendens.

facility is also available near ecogarden which is managed by the local boatmen.

So in several ways, the attraction of Ansupa is enhanced and the tourism complex which is developed is named as “Ansupa Saranda Ecotourism complex” Saranda, Athagarh.

Ansupa is unforgettable owing to multifarious aspects like picnic, boating, landscapes, ecopark, bamboo cottage, historical prints, bird watching and nature viewing.

Tourists, naturalists, visitors, scientists, botanists, zoologists, ecologists and historians interested in visiting and gathering information may contact Divisional Forests Officer (DFO), Athagarh Forest Division, Athagarh, Cuttack having phone and Fax-06723-220225 and can email to atgforest@yahoo.co.in. The detailed information may be downloaded from the internet or website.

Tourists interested to gather information in the form of hard copy may also collect from the Department of Tourism, Government of India, BJB Nagar, Bhubaneswar or Department of Tourism, Government of Odisha or even from all tourist information centres located in district headquarters including important tourist information centres located in district headquarters including important railway stations. This is the significant contribution of the government to provide information, facts and figures to the common people as to various tourist spots of the state as well as the country.

### **Ansupa of Odisha and its future**

As a single largest freshwater lake of Odisha, it has tremendous potential for study, observation, analysis and interpretation. The location, the architecture, design and development of this lake is so unique it may be called as the “Horse shoe lake of Odisha” or “Horse shoe lake

### **Eco-Tourism of Ansupa**

Ansupa had lost its glory and importance due to siltation and non entry of water from the Mahanadi. Recently, the Government of Odisha has taken serious measures and steps to renovate this area. The Forest Department has taken initiative in developing eco-tourism. An attractive ecogarden has developed on the bank of Ansupa lake in the western side below the foot hill of Saranda hills over an area of 200ha by the Chilika Development Authority (CDA), Bhubaneswar. The Forest Department has built up a watch tower from where one can observe and enjoy the beauty of entire Ansupa with its surrounding.

ii) Very close to this tower, an area is being developed with gran within few months, this lawn will give a different lush green look.

iii) Moreover, three independent modern bamboo cottages are constructed for the tourists for temporary or short stay. A big dining hall and a platform with roof for the visitors have been constructed by the forest department.

iv) The ecopark is maintained by the women self help group (SHG) of the locality. Pedal boat



of India". Proper management care, attention and interest of the common people, tourists as well as the Government would certainly amplify the glory and importance of spectacular wetland. The State government of Odisha has no doubt taken serious initiative in rejuvenating the lake to a great extent. This has been proved by the attendance of a good number of various cross section of people like visitors, scientists, ecologists, biologists and environmentalists. If the magnitude of the interest towards the lake is maintained, this lake would certainly occupy a key position not only in India tourist map but also in the map of the world.

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## Subhas Bose

*Geeta Devi*

Oh, the commandant  
Of a gallant corps !  
On a spur  
How you slipped  
To the far frontier,  
Miles and miles  
Crossing the woodland core  
Amidst thousands tigers' roar. (1)

Oh, the valiant Marshall<sup>9</sup>  
Of a daring force !  
Son of the soil  
Thou hazardous Bose none sans thee  
Could thought of  
That horrible course  
To dive in guise  
Under the ocean  
Beneath the seas  
Dashing a rock  
On the vigilant eyes, (2)

Oh, the lava  
of a blazing fire !  
thou covered the land  
thou covered the air  
the sea and the space  
from layer to layer,  
perhaps that burning ache  
Provoked the sky  
to be rude and shrewd  
to blow up a volcano  
from land to the cloud  
the loving idol  
of millions of crowd. (3)

1. January 17th, 1941
2. February 8th, 1943
3. August 18th, 1945

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Geeta Devi, Ex-Principal, Old Town, Nayagarh-2.