



Thirsty For History

Every spring, something remarkable happens in Bengaluru.

A man dressed in a bright yellow sari walks through crowded streets.

On his head rests a pot covered in jasmine flowers. Thousands follow him. Drums thunder. Torches glow.

But who is he? What is inside the pot?
And what does all this have to do with water?



Swipe to know all about
the mystery of Karaga.



TO SOLVE THE MYSTERY, WE MUST TRAVEL BACK MORE THAN 800 YEARS.

Back then, Bengaluru was a city of lakes, and people depended on them. Among those who lived around these lakes were the Tigalas, skilled gardeners who grew flowers, fruits, and vegetables.

The Tigalas believed they were descendants of *Draupadi*, who was worshipped as *Adi Shakti* - the powerful goddess who protected people from danger.



EVERY YEAR, THE COMMUNITY GATHERED TO HONOUR HER.
THAT CELEBRATION BECAME KNOWN AS KARAGA.



OVER THE CENTURIES, BENGALURU GREW LARGER AND LARGER..

Roads replaced fields. Buildings replaced open land.
And many of the city's lakes disappeared.



Among them were *Dharmambudhi Tank* and *Sampangi Lake*.

Yet Karaga never forgot them.

THE FESTIVAL STILL PRESERVES MEMORIES OF
BENGALURU'S LOST WATERS THROUGH ITS RITUALS
AND TRADITIONS.



AN IMPORTANT RITUAL IS CALLED THE **GANGE PUJE**, WHERE PRAYERS ARE OFFERED TO THE SACRED RIVER **GANGA**.

The Karaga itself carries a connection to water.

Karaga which means '**earthen pot**', is made from wet soil collected from the area around the old Sampangi tank.

A sacred pot shaped from soil and the memory of water, thus carried through the city every year.



On the most exciting night of the festival, the streets fill with people and drums echo through the city.

THEN, THE **KARAGADHARI** APPEARS.

Dressed as Draupadi in a bright yellow sari, he carries the jasmine-covered Karaga on his head, which weighs nearly **20 kilograms!**

But the real mystery lies inside. The contents of the Karaga are known only to a small circle of priests.

Devotees believe it holds the divine energy of **Shiva** and **Shakti**, and the sacred power of Draupadi herself.

AS THE PROCESSION
WINDS THROUGH
BENGALURU,
THOUSANDS FOLLOW,
BELIEVING THAT THE
GODDESS
ACCOMPANIES THE
KARAGA.



THE PROCESSION TRAVELS THROUGH BENGALURU'S OLD NEIGHBOURHOODS, WELCOMED BY TEMPLES AND DARGAHS ALIKE.

People from different communities come together, keeping alive a tradition that has united the city for centuries.

But Karaga is more than a festival. It is a memory of Bengaluru's lost lakes and the communities that cared for them. And it reminds us that the resources sustaining a city must be protected.

The question for us is - If a festival can remember Bengaluru's lost lakes for **800 years**, what should we be doing to protect the lakes that still remain?



SOMETIMES, THE SMARTEST URBAN IDEAS ARE NOT THE NEWEST ONES; THEY ARE SIMPLY THE ONES WE HAVE FORGOTTEN!

The rock-cut cisterns of Kanheri, the water wheels and canals of Kashmir, the raincatches of Dholavira, the cascading tanks of Bengaluru, the stepwells of Gujarat and Rajasthan, or the hauds of Pune, so many *exciting ways to save water!*



If you could plan the waterways for your city, *which system would you choose?*

