

Story of Surinsar Lake

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Lakes are formed at all altitudes and are distributed throughout the world. They are abundant in high latitudes, particularly in mountain regions subjected to glacial action such as Tsono Riri and Pangong Lakes in Ladakh region, which are at a height of about 18480 and 17450 feet above sea level.

But the lake of Surinsar has different story to tell. According to Hindu mythology the lakes of Surinsar and Mansar emerged due to the blow of the bowshot by one of the sons of Arjuna, the hero of Mahabharata.

Jammu is a land of shrines and pilgrimages. They are numerous and varied, and belong to various faiths. There is hardly a village or town which does not have a shrine of its own. And many of them are of more than local importance. Jammu province has three lakes, Mansar, Surinsar and Sanasar. The first two lakes are rich in religious and historical association and the third one is considered as tourist resort. According to a legend these two lakes date back to the time of the Mahabharata.

Nilapura was the territory of and around Surinsar and Mansar lakes as referred by Kalhana in Rajtarangini.

Surinsar in Jammu District of Jammu and Kashmir is one of the rare, holy shrines of north India situated in the lower reaches of Trikuta Hills, Surinsar has been a centre of pilgrimage from time immemorial. The annual Mela held in the month of August every year, coinciding with other festivals like Nag Panchami, Sharavan Purnima, draws flocks of devotees from different parts of Jammu region. It is believed that a holy dip in the lake is sufficient to wash anyone's. The lake is situated to the south of Udhampur town, about 40 kms from Jammu city. The lake covers about a space of about 1½ sq mile. There is a beautiful parlor built in the middle of the lake and is an enchanting spot especially in the morning and the evening when the rays of the rising and setting sun are reflected in the ripple raised on its waters by a gentle breeze.

The legend of Surinsar Lake states that during the wander of the Pandavas in exile, the five brothers once sojourned in these parts and Arjuna disported with a Nagakanya, Alupi, whose beauty captivated his heart at the very first sight. Their meeting resulted in the birth of a son.. Babruvahana.. who grew up into a youth of great physical power. But Arjuna knew nothing about it. At the conclusion of the Great War, however, when the



Pandavas performed the Yajna, Babruvahana held the horse released by Arjuna near the site of the present lake Tat Khooni. A battle royal ensued when Arjuna asked the youthful Babruvahana to let go the horse. In this fight the great Mahabharata hero was worsted. He fell down in the swoon.

When Babruvahana's mother heard of this, she hurried to the spot and admonished her son, telling him that he had killed his own father. The son was full of remorse and hurried consultations took place about how the dying hero could be saved. The consensus was that could be done only with the help of an herb which grew in the neither world. Babruvahana therefore shot an arrow into the ground. The miraculous arrow pierced the earth and picking up the life-saving herb on the other side of the planet, returned by a different passage with the herb at its tail end. Arjuna was thus saved and the two depressions created by the arrow's passage across the earth got filled up in course of time to make the two gem-like lakes of Mansar and Surinsar, which shine like jewels on the bosom of Jammu.

The original sites of depressions created by the arrow's passage across the earth have changed very much owing to the topographical changes through the centuries. The water gushing out from these original depressions making whole lake as the nectar fills the lake to its brim.

Apart from the lake there are some remains of the palace of Bandral Raja, Balwant Singh with portions of tower, inner walls, courtyards and massive outer walls still standing. On the west of the courtyard is a long verandah with five cusped arches and six sets of twin pillars, the base and top of each pillar being decorated with engraved lotus petals. Each arch is surrounded by large rectangular slabs in lime plaster with borders of two horizontal lines.

On Sankranti day in every month a large number of people from Jammu region visit this Lake Shrine and take a dip in the holy waters of this lake and it is believed that sins gets washed out by taking a bath on this particular day.