

## **GANGA POLLUTION: THREATS & SOLUTION FOR INDIA'S HOLY RIVER**

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Ujjwal Singh, BHU

### **ABSTRACT**

*Ganga, a significant river that flows through northern India, is facing increasing pollution. This pollution has become a growing concern as it affects major resources and defies sustainable development. In 1985, the Indian government launched the Ganga Action Plan to systematically control and monitor the pollution of the river. However, with the growth in population, urbanization, agricultural practices, industrialization, inadequate sewage treatment, and water disposal systems, the river remains contaminated.*

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### **Sources of Pollution in Ganga**

Several sources contribute to the pollution of the river. A significant amount of dead bodies are burnt on the ghats, and cases of throwing human and animal bodies into the river without converting them to ash are frequent. Various industries discharge water effluents into the river without treating them. Excessive fishing, household sewage, and waste from temples and devotees taking holy baths also contribute to the pollution.

### **Ganga at Varanasi**

The city of Varanasi is causing serious harm to the river. The Ganga Expressway project may put the river in danger of drying up, and flooding during the rainy season causes a loss of employment to thousands of people, affecting citizens' lives and harming the government's tourism sector. The Assi River, which is now mere sewage, drains into the river, and the water treatment plant treating the Assi River before merging with Ganga is also ineffective. Banaras Locomotive Works and Ramnagar Industrial Estate, along with small industries like press and sari printing, contribute to the pollution.

### **Previous Attempts to Clean Ganga**

Campaigns to clean Ganga were launched in the early 1980s in Varanasi when the pollution of the river gained widespread attention. Community-based initiatives like the Clean Ganga Campaign (Swatcha Ganga) were inaugurated in 1982, followed by the government-sponsored Ganga Action Plan (GAP), conceived by Rajiv Gandhi in 1986 to create treatment facilities for sewage around the stretch of the river. However, despite a total expenditure of Rs 901.71 crore over 15 years, the GAP was not able to achieve its objectives.

### **Namami Gange Programme**

The Namami Gange Programme was launched by the Indian government in 2014 with the objective of effective abatement of pollution and conservation and rejuvenation of the National

River Ganga. However, this scheme has been a failure, as untreated water is still discharged into the river, and the pollution caused by burnt and half-burnt human bodies and carcasses of animals still flows into the river.

### **Consequences of Ganga Pollution**

The increase in water pollution has led to an increase in water-borne diseases such as cholera, hepatitis, typhoid, amoebic dysentery, and others. The extinction of water species is also causing harm to the ecology.

### **Right to Clean Environment**

The right to life guaranteed by Article 21 of the Constitution of India means the right to live life with human dignity, which includes the right to a clean environment and clean water.

### **Conclusion: Protecting Ganga**

In conclusion, the pollution of the Ganga river is a growing concern that requires immediate attention and action. It is not just a physical and economic issue but also holds immense religious and symbolic value. The government, industries, and individuals must work together to take strict measures to control and monitor the pollution sources, educate people about the importance of the river, and promote sustainable practices to protect this holy river. Only with collective efforts, can we ensure that future generations can enjoy the benefits of this magnificent river while preserving its ecological balance and cultural significance.

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