

## Day – 04

Day-03 was quite hectic. Almost a 100 km stretch from Haridwar to Bijnor, was faced with many challenges and hence our itinerary got delayed by couple of hours. We wended up our programs around 9 PM and went straight to bed as a new day full of new challenges, a fresh try, one more start with perhaps a bit of magic waiting somewhere behind the morning was ahead of us all. After all we had to cover approximately 100 more kilometers the other day from Bijnor to Garhmukteshwar.

We all woke-up early and rushed for Madhya Ganga Barrage Ghat in Bijnor for the new start. We all were so excited as none other than Shri U.P.Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Jal Shakti, himself was all set to take the lead.

We reached the ghat around 6 am - optimistic, ready and excited, only to find that the ghat was covered with a very dense layer of fog and the visibility was down to nearly 100 meters. The disappointment has started to sink in when Shri U.P.Singh himself took the situation under his command and announced that such small incidents are not going to bog us down. The distance and the situation are nothing; it's only the first step that is difficult and we are going to take that first step. His response to the adverse situation infused a fresh gush of optimism and energy amongst us and the Ganga Aamantran Abhiyan team led by Wing Commander Shri Paramvir Singh cautiously yet full of hope and optimism set off for Garh-Mkteshwar. We were again joined by Shri Ramakant Pandey, DM, Bijnor who flagged-off the journey.

During the journey, the team decided to take a break at Viderkuti Ghat when Shri U.P.Singh observed that the beauty of the ghat was marred by single use plastics and went plogging. The Swedish phenomenon of plogging went global recently as both environment and fitness fanatics benefit from the trend.

The team reached Brijghat, Garhmukteshwar around 5 PM where hundreds of school children from various schools, volunteers from Rotary International, Ganga Prahari and other organizations apart from the local administration were present to receive us.

When we reached Brijghat we were delighted to see thousands of devotees taking a holy dip in Ganga only to realize that we have reached Garhmukteshwar on this auspicious day of Sharad Purnima. The energy and the atmosphere were just infectious! People from all walks of life from distant villages to the urban areas have turned-up to celebrate Sharad Purnima.

New beginnings are exciting! They become exciting to us because they offer the promise of hope, the anticipation of change in our lives, and the prospect that our dreams will indeed come true!

Soon we were joined by Shri Kamal Malik, MLA, Garhmukteshwar. Speaking on the occasion Shri Malik appealed to the audiences not to offer flowers and other materials to Ganga but to compost and use them in their farm fields which in turn will enhance the fertility of the soil. He also spoke about the eco-tourism potential Garhmukteshwar has to offer and seek Shri U.P.Singh's intervention to help explore new avenues for the same.

Addressing the gathering, Shri U.P.Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Jal Shakti emphasized the importance of Ganga in our daily lives. He said that the flow of the Ganga is synonymous with the flow of our culture and we need to ensure that her flow is Nirmal and Aviral if we have to pass on a rich cultural and sustainable future to our future generation.

While interacting with the local press, Shri U.P.Singhsaid the Ganga Aamantran Abhiyan is not only about a rafting expedition. It is much more. While on one hand the scientists are collecting water samples for a comparative and region-centric study, doing bio-diversity census on the other it is also providing us the opportunity to review the various infrastructural projects in an integrated fashion.

The cultural event began with the auspicious 'Saraswati Vandana'. The children growing up in today's world are tomorrow's future. They are also individuals today, with hopes, fears, needs, aspirations and rights. Keeping this in mind the Rotary International has conducted a day long awareness drive for the students that included drawing, essay writing, slogan writing and public speaking competition. Shri Singh distributed the trophies and mementos to the winners and wished them good luck for the future.

The evening ended with Auspicious Ganga Aarti. As the sun sets for the day, the team for the rafting expedition prepares for an early start tomorrow, where they set out towards their next destination in the 'Ganga Aamantran Abhiyan'.