

GANGA MANTHAN

A NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON GANGA REJUVENATION



National Mission for Clean Ganga
Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation



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गंगा सेवा भारत सेवा

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River Ganga, along with her many tributaries, has been the source of physical and spiritual sustenance of Indian civilization for millennia. And for ages, Indians have held the munificent River Ganga as a Divine Body. To the Indian mind, River Ganga is not only the holiest of rivers and purifier of mortal beings, but also a living Goddess – MOTHER GANGA!

River Ganga is a lifeline for millions. It drains a basin of an extraordinary variation in altitude, climate, land use and cropping pattern. Ganga has been a cradle of human civilization since time immemorial. It is one of the most sacred rivers in the world and is deeply revered by the people of this country.



Considering the socio-economic and cultural significance, the Government of India has declared the river Ganga as the National river. Despite being highly revered and being the primary water resource for the main heartland of India, the Ganga river is highly polluted and under extreme environmental stress. Its rejuvenation and management warrants the commitment and involvement of all the stakeholders. Ganga Manthan is the first effort in this direction which can lead to a mass movement or Jan Andolan for the conservation of the river.

Ganga basin is the largest river basin in India in terms of catchment area, constituting 26% of the country's land mass (8,61,404 sq km) and supporting about 43% of its population (448.3 million as per 2001 census). River Ganga, emanating from Gangotri Glacier at Gaumukh, traverses a distance of 2525 kms before emptying into the Bay of Bengal. A large number of tributaries like Alaknanda, Ramganga, Kali, Yamuna, Gomti, Ghagra, Gandak, Kosi and Sone and many sub tributaries, draining 11 states of the country join River Ganga at different confluence points during its journey. This mighty river is the home for some of the rarest and strangest animals on the planet.

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The Event

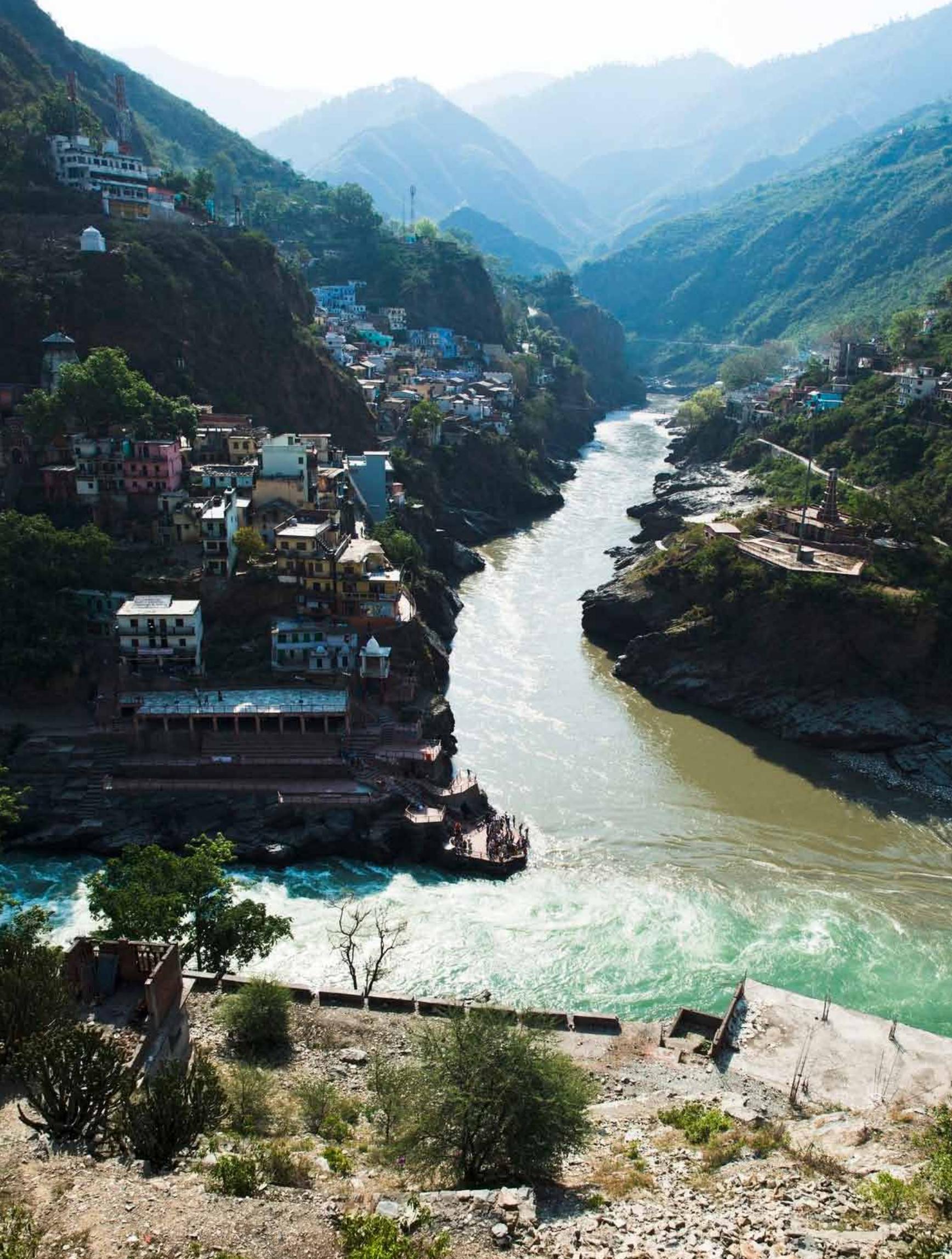
Ganga Manthan was organised on 7th of July, 2014 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. It was a national level consultation to facilitate interaction among various stakeholders including policy makers and implementers, academicians, environmentalists, saints and spiritual leaders from all faiths and NGOs for the cause of Ganga Rejuvenation.

“Manthan” signifies a deep contemplation and churning of facts and ideas that leads to enlightenment. It is in this spirit and with this objective that the event “Ganga Manthan” was organised.

“Ganga Manthan”, a national level consultation to facilitate interaction among various stakeholders was organised as one day event on 7th July 2014 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.

The aim was to bring together various stakeholders on a common platform to discuss the issues and possible solutions for the challenging task of Ganga Rejuvenation. The views expressed by the stakeholders who participated in the ‘Ganga Manthan’ would aid in formulating a comprehensive strategy for the conservation of the river.

The event commenced with a combined opening session for all the stakeholders including eminent personalities and dignitaries followed by four separate concurrent sessions for Academicians & Technical experts, Spiritual leaders & Saints, NGOs & Environmentalists and Policy makers & Implementers. It concluded with a combined valedictory session where views and ideas discussed in the concurrent sessions were shared.



Organisers

The event was organised by National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), the project implementation arm of the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) under the aegis of Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation (MoWR, RD & GR)*, Government of India.

NMCG has been established to accomplish the twin objectives of NGRBA : (i) effective abatement of pollution and (ii) conservation of National River Ganga. It is the National level coordinating body for the project implementation and is being supported by the individual State level Programme Management Groups (SPMGs) of five basin states on the main stem of River Ganga namely Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.



Participants

The event witnessed an overwhelming response from over 500 participants comprising spiritual leaders, environmentalists, scientists, academicians and technocrats, water conservationists, NGOs, policy makers, public representatives & administrators and has paved the way for a nationwide people participation program. NGRBA Members such as Rajender Singh, K.J.Nath, Rama Rauta, Ravi Chopra, B.D.Tripathi, R.K.Sinha, Himanshu Thakkar, U.K. Choudhary and other experts also participated in Ganga Manthan.

Categories of participants

Group A: Saints and Spiritual Leaders

Group B: NGOs and Environmentalists

Group C: Technocrats and Academicians

Group D: Public Representatives, Administrators and NGOs

* NMCG has been brought under the administrative purview of Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation from 1st of August 2014.



INAUGURAL SESSION



Welcome Address by Mr. Rajiv Ranjan Mishra

Mission Director, NMCG

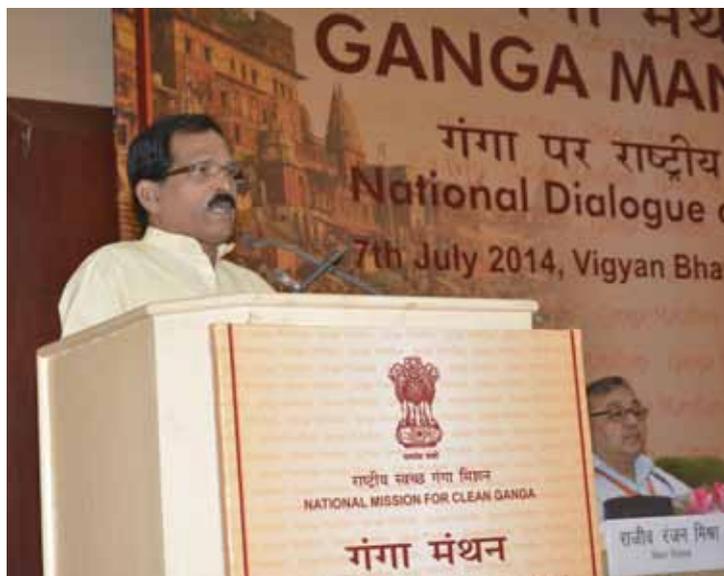


Mr. Rajiv Ranjan Mishra, on behalf of National Mission for Clean Ganga, welcomed the Hon'ble Ministers, and all the participants. He said, "This is the beginning of a national dialogue on conservation of the river Ganga. If the desire and opinion of all the concerned are one then the goal can easily be achieved. There is a hope that the exchange of views and ideas from the diverse stakeholders would provide valuable inputs to the preparation of a comprehensive, long-term strategy for the conservation of river Ganga. Also this effort may lead to transforming the national task of Ganga Rejuvenation in to a people movement/ Jan Andolan. Despite the fact that the event has been organised in a short span of time the enthusiasm and commitment to attend the event shown by all the participants instill a confidence that the objective of 'aviral' (continuous) and 'nirmal' (unpolluted) Ganga will certainly be accomplished."



Address by Mr. Shripad Naik

Hon'ble Minister for Tourism & Culture



“This day would mark a new beginning for the conservation of river Ganga and would be written in golden letters in the history of India for bringing together diverse people who have served river Ganga with devotion. The significance of river Ganga is well known to the entire country and the task of rejuvenating Ganga will lead to purification of individual soul. Ministry of Tourism would completely support the task of rejuvenating the River Ganga. Public awareness will be generated at all tourism centers located from Gaumukh to Gangasagar by setting up of tourist information kiosks. Laying down and implementing certain code of conduct -‘Ganga Achar Sanhita’ at these centers will also be considered. Involvement of local experts and NGOs for cleaning the River Ganga should be thought of. There is a need to keep the river front/ghats clean. Introducing certain incentives like awarding ‘Nirmal Bhakti Puraskar’ to clean worship places can not only encourage the cleanliness of the ghats but also reduce the pollution load on the river. There would also be efforts toward employment generation and training for the locals by promoting ‘shikara’ (tourist boating) facilities similar to the lakes in Kashmir. We have to continue our work till the river is completely rejuvenated.”

Address by Sushri Uma Bharati

Hon'ble Minister for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation

“Separate ministry for Ganga Rejuvenation had been a distant dream for all those having a strong devotion to the river Ganga and this dream has been realized now because of the Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision and determination to give solemn and focused attention to river Ganga. This event has been organised at the earliest as the outcomes of this event would guide the exercise of the preparation of a clear road map for the conservation of river Ganga by the group of Secretaries from different ministries such as Environment, Forests & Climate Change; Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation; Shipping; Tourism; Urban Development; Drinking Water Supply & Sanitation. There is a great enthusiasm for conservation and rejuvenation of River Ganga across the world. The whole world is zealous about how we can ensure that the river is continuous (aviral) and clean (nirmal). This government has strong conviction and vision for making river Ganga ‘aviral’ and ‘nirmal’. All the concerned ministries are extremely committed to restore river Ganga with the support of the group of secretaries which is designing the necessary project profile. The views of different stakeholders present here would definitely help the government in drafting the road map for conserving our Mother Ganga. According to the Indian Mythology, it was the king Bhagirath who brought Ganga on earth, but it is our duty to make it ‘aviral’ and ‘nirmal’ from Gaumukh to Gangasagar.”



“Ganga has given the power to the Government to restore her to its original glory. Even now if this task is unsuccessful then it will be all our fault and Mother Ganga will never forgive us.”



“*If there is will, there is a way. If there is no will, there is only survey, excursion, seminar, committee, and sub-committee.*”



Address by Mr. Nitin Gadkari

Hon'ble Minister for Shipping, Road Transport and Highways, Rural development, Drinking water supply & sanitation

“The strong political will of this government and the positive will of the officials will definitely lead to the restoration of the river Ganga. The suggestions of each individual is valuable and therefore the government is in the process of launching a website on River Ganga which will be an open portal for offering suggestions. The government is expecting Cooperation, Communication and Coordination among all those who are concerned about Ganga. As our nation is growing rapidly, the three “E’s”: Ethics, Economy and Ecology & environment become critical to ensure sustainable development. Water pollution in the river is critical and the government is working closely with the Ministry of Urban Development to deal with pollution in major towns like Kanpur, Allahabad, and Varanasi etc. Discharge of untreated sewage and industrial effluent into the river has to be prevented. Recycling and reuse of the wastewater shall be encouraged. Public private partnership (PPP) model of development has to be encouraged. There is also a proposal for re-establishing navigation in the river Ganga. Ministry of Rural Development will also provide full support to all the concerned ministries for this magnanimous task. The government is committed to develop the necessary funding mechanism for successfully taking up this national endeavor of Ganga rejuvenation.”

Address by Spiritual Leaders

“O Goddess Ganga! You are the divine river from heaven, you are the saviour of all the three worlds, you are pure and restless, and you adorn Lord Shiva’s head. O Mother! May my mind always rest at your lotus feet”

Spiritual leaders of different religious beliefs came together on one platform to guide and share the viewpoints on the challenges and solutions for rejuvenation of river Ganga. The addresses of the spiritual leaders highlighted the need to protect our national river Ganga irrespective of the religious belief. The spiritual and religious significance of the river Ganga is recognized unanimously. Following points came forward during the address of spiritual leaders:

1. Ganga is a symbol of India’s culture and tradition. It is important to note that faith in this river is not limited to a particular religious community rather it is a national legacy and people from all religious backgrounds need to come forward for the protection of our national river.
2. It is not only the responsibility of Government rather bringing it back to its original state but is the responsibility of each and every person of this country. It is the responsibility of spiritual leaders to intimate and guide the government from time to time for the restoration of River Ganga.
3. Various spiritual leaders can bring change of heart by increasing the awareness of the significance of River Ganga through various seminars, satsangs, sammelans, yatras and Jan Jagran. The change in attitude of public by not throwing any waste in the river is required in retaining its ‘nirmal’ flow.
4. Restoration of ‘aviral’ and ‘nirmal’ flow of river Ganga needs contribution and efforts from all persons without any difference on ground of cast, creed, religion and profession.
5. A proper plan for ‘aviral’ and ‘nirmal’ flow and a strict legislation can really be a step forward for the conservation of river Ganga.
6. The draft of National River Ganga Conservation and Management Act prepared by the leading advocates, members of Ganga Mahasabha, M.C. Mehta, Paritosh Tyagi and Swami Gyananandswaroop should be taken into consideration seriously by the ministry.

Left to right: Jyoti Peeth Adishwar, Gyani Santok Singh Ji, Father M.D.Thomas, Jagatguru Ramanandacharya and Acharya Lokesh Muni Ji





PANEL DISCUSSIONS

GROUP A: Ganga and Sanskriti

“Pristine Ganga with cultural heritage, traditions, spirituality, physical lives and livelihoods”



To save Ganga, we need a 'Parashuram' who excised the arms of Sahasrarjuna when he tried to obstruct the flow.

- Swami Chinmayanand

To protect the honour of river Ganga, it should be 'aviral' from Gangotri to Ganga Sagar. - Swami Avimukteshwaranand

The discussion from Group A brought out following important points:

1. No additional barriers should be constructed on river Ganga and the existing dams and barriers should be regulated such that environmental flow in the river can be maintained. Continuous or 'aviral' river is a pre-requisite for unpolluted or 'nirmal' river.
2. Fishing and hunting of aquatic animals living in the river Ganga should be completely banned to protect the ecological entity of river. River and fishes are dependent on each other, if fishes cannot survive without river water even river cannot be rejuvenated until the aquatic life is conserved.
3. Creation of Awareness against the dumping of dead bodies in to the river can happen only through the spiritual leaders. Saints and spiritual leaders have decided that they will stop the common practice of 'Jal Samadhi', i.e. disposal of dead bodies of saints directly into river without cremation, and will also encourage their followers to use the electric crematorium for cremating the bodies. Saints will also spread awareness that Indian scriptures do not allow the disposal of used cloths, beddings, injection syringes, medicines, etc in to the river which is commonly being practiced during cremation.
4. River bed farming should be completely stopped. The runoff from these farms brings a huge quantity of harmful chemicals into river Ganga as only 5% of the fertilizers and pesticides applied in the farms are absorbed by the crops and rest all flows into the river. Organic farming should be compulsory in Ganga basin.
5. Chrysopogon zizanioides (Vetiver grass) commonly known as 'khus' in India can help in preventing landslides and soil erosion as the roots of this grass reaches 15 feet within one year. Plantation of these grass along the river can solve the problem of siltation which is the biggest challenge in developing water transportation.

Participants:

Saints and Spiritual Leaders

Chair of Group A:

Swami Vishvesha Teertha Ji Maharaj,
Pejavara matha

Panellists:

- Swami Jitendranand Ji, Jyotishpeeth
- Acharya Balakrishna Ji, Patanjali
Yogpeeth

Key Speakers:

- Swami Narendra Giri Ji Maharaj
- Swami Chinmayanand Ji
- Raj Raghavendranand Ji
- Sant Sukhjit Singh Seechewal
- Geeta Manishi Swami Gyananand Ji
Maharaj
- Sadhvi Samarпита
- Representative of Jagadguru
Shankracharya Puri Peethadheshwar
- Swami Avi Mukteshwaranand Ji
- Swami Narayan Giri Ji
- Swami Viyoganand Ji
- Dr Aditya Hinsar
- Representative of Gayatri Shakti Peeth



GROUP B: Nirmal & Aviral Ganga

“Safeguard the river’s natural, undisrupted flow”



If USA can remove many of its massive Dams, why can't we remove Tehri Dam knowing the damage it has done to the river? - Shri Manoj Mishra

In my childhood I was told not to do Ganga Snaan without having a bath and cleaning myself, but now true reverence doesn't remain anymore. - Shri Rajendra Singh

The discussion from Group B brought out following important points:

1. Plantation of local native species can protect the banks of river Ganga
2. The length of river Ganga is not 2500 km but 25000 km as all the tributaries merge with the river to give an identity to river Ganga and hence, should be conserved. It is required to redefine the river “Ganga” as it is more than the water and it is important to understand the properties of Ganga that makes it unique
3. It is disheartening that the number of Gangetic Dolphins is meagre 1800 in river Ganga and its tributaries coming from Nepal. Gangetic Dolphins play a key role in natural method of cleaning the river and hence, its conservation is important.
4. Glacier receding due to climate change is hampering the ‘Aviral Dhara’ and a study of impact on climate change needs to be conducted.
5. There are 384 fish species in river Ganga that should be conserved to restore the river.
6. Run-of-River (ROR) projects are the biggest deception as it hampers the continuity of the flow of river. The river is diverted into a tunnel which is devoid of air, sunlight and sediments. Traversing through tunnel also destroys the special property of river Ganga
7. Allahabad High Court has given verdicts that orders to stop construction beyond 500 m from the high flood level of the river and to relocate the 402 listed and unlisted tanneries away from the flood plain. These orders have to be strictly implemented on ground.
8. Zero discharge of municipal sewage is the key to make river Ganga ‘nirmal’. Government should promote 100% reuse and recycle of treated wastewater.
9. River beds which were essentially the turtle breeding sites have been encroached for agriculture practices which has significantly affected the turtle habitats.

Participants:

NGOs and Environmentalists

Chair of Group B:

Shri Giridhar Malviya, Ex-Justice

Panellists:

- Mr Bhure Lal, Environmental Pollution (Prevention & Control) Authority (EPCA)
- Dr. Arun Kumar, Chief Scientific Officer, IIT Roorkee
- Dr. Brij Gopal, National Institute of Ecology
- Mr. Manoj Mishra, Yamuna Jiye Abhiyan

Key Speakers:

- Prof. S.K. Mishra
- Mr. Anil Gupta
- Shri Rajendra Singh “Jal Purush”
- Mrs. Rama Rauta
- Mr. Prahlad Goenka
- Mr. K. C. Chandramouli
- Mr. Jagat Singh Chaudhary ‘Jungle’
- Ms. Mallika Bhanot
- Mr. Shiv Prasad Thakur
- Mr. Anil Saumitra
- Mr. Kapil Rastogi
- Mr. Raja Mandal
- Dr. Harshvanti Bisht



GROUP C: Comprehensive and Sustainable Solutions

“Action based plan that ensures that our future generation inherit the best planet we can give them & Legal framework”



Zero Liquid Discharge will lead to increase in water treatment cost and production cost of products such as paper. Are we willing to pay more for the interventions required to clean Ganga or not? - Mr Bharat Jhunjhunwala

When there is no data or insufficient data available in Ganga River basin, then on what basis all the planning in the basin is being done? - Shri Jatinder K. Bajaj

The discussion from Group C brought out following important points:

1. There should be focus on rainwater harvesting. Percolation tanks along the river can help in storing the rain water during monsoon and recharge the river during summers.
2. It should be mandatory for tanneries and other grossly polluting industries to recycle and reuse 100% of the generated effluent.
3. It should be ensured that there are no adverse environmental impacts during the production of any goods. It shall improve the credibility of Indian goods in foreign markets and will fetch more price.
4. A water credit system must be introduced and a mechanism of calculation of water footprints must be developed for all industries.
5. Research must be conducted to identify an alternative for chromium sulphate used in the tanneries.
6. Sewage Treatment Plant should be installed only at places where alternate options cannot be taken up. Nagar Nigam shall have the right to install and maintain the STP according to the local requirements.
7. An umbrella agency is required for Ganga conservation to improve the inter-ministerial and inter-departmental co-ordination.
8. Lack of accurate data and information is also an issue and needs proper attention.
9. A report card at every 10 km for the river health should be published and there is a need to develop a strict regulation. A massive scale public awareness program would be required to get this regulation accepted and internalized by the common mass.
10. The monitoring of bacteriological quality of water needs constant inspection by introduction of tough standards. Multi-stabilization ponds and UV may be seen as promising solution.
11. All the states in the Ganga river basin should adopt Sanitation Act as this will ensure complete management of the sanitation.
12. The technical aspects associated with various issues should be carefully analyzed before taking any decision & watershed approach should be considered while planning for the interventions.

Participants:

Technocrats and Academicians

Chair of Group C:

Dr Vinod Tare, IIT-Kanpur

Panellists:

- Padma Bhushan Shri N. Vittal
- Mr. Partitosh Tyagi, CPCB (Retd.)
- Dr. Bharat Sharma, IWMI
- Mr Sriram Vedire
- Mr. K.J.Nath, Arsenic Task Force, West Bengal

Key Speakers:

- Prof U.K. Choudhary
- Prof Prabhakar Badoni
- Shri R. Bahl
- Prof A.K. Gosain
- Dr Bharat Jhunjhunwala
- Prof Sanjukta Bhaduri
- Dr Rajesh Biniwale
- Prof. B.D.Joshi
- Mr M.P. Singh
- Mr Sandeep Joshi
- Dr R.K. Sinha
- Mr K.G.Vyas
- Dr Faiyaz A Khudsar
- Mr Chandra Bhan Singh
- Mr Jatinder K Bajaj
- Mr V. Jaitley
- Dr Sanjiv Tyagi
- Dr S.N. Upadhyay
- Dr. Arvind Dixit
- Mr Shashank Chaturvedi
- Mr Anand Krishnamurthy
- Mr Virag Gupta
- Dr Vachaspati Tripathi
- Dr M.Dhinadhayalam
- Dr S.S.Garg
- Dr Vikram Soni
- Dr A.P.Sharma
- Dr Chaturvedi
- Mr D. Gangappa



GROUP D: People participation & movement for Ganga

“To include all people for the common cause of restoring Ganga regardless of their race, gender, cast creed economic status or nationality.”



We will have to change the way of Governance. The crisis is wrong way of governing, thinking, talking & behaving. - Mr Anil Madhav Dave

If there is no water, there is no tomorrow; If we will not think about this issue today then it will never be solved. - Mahendra Nath Chaturvedi

The discussion from Group D brought out following important points:

1. Policy measures like metering and water tariff that focuses on minimum leakage, improved distribution and minimizing water usage with better services are required.
2. It is needed to move from conventional big treatment plants to decentralized small sewerage treatment plants (STPs) that are easy to commission, manage & operate and require much less land
3. The innovative technologies like bio-digester technology developed by Defence Research & Development Organization (DRDO) should be promoted.
4. Development on both sides of the river should be regulated through implementation of river regulation zone.
5. It is imperative to ensure 24X7 power supply for STPs and alternate energy sources like decentralized solar plants can also be looked as an option.
6. Capacity building of local bodies is very important and setting accountability for each and every agency involved in the rejuvenation of river Ganga is required. There is need to improve coordination among various agencies involved in the task.
7. Renewal of Environmental Clearance after a specified number of years must be done.
8. History of river and importance of river Ganga should be included in the curriculum of Schools
9. Reinvention of the toilet approach is required that involves modification of the design and regulation of the septic tank which can lead to onsite toilet based treatment.
10. 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments should be effectively enforced to engage and empower the urban local bodies in the overall process of conservation of the river.
11. International and national Institutional models should be incorporated in the plan of Ganga rejuvenation, (for e.g. setting up of river parliament etc).

Participants:

Public Representatives, Administrators and NGOs

Chair of Group D:

Mr Vinay Sahasrabudhe, Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini

Panellists:

- Mr Anil Madhav Dave, MP (RS)
- Mr Sudhir Krishna, Secretary, MoUD (Retd.)
- Mr Ram Gopal Mohale, Mayor (Varanasi)
- Prof. Srinivas Chary, ASCI

Key Speakers:

- Acharya Hari Om
- Mr M A Chitale
- Mr Vindhya Vasini Kumar
- Mr RBS Rawat
- Mr Yogesh Sharma
- Mr Vimal Kumar
- Mr Suresh Awasthi
- Mr Manoj Garg
- Mr Naresh Sirohi
- Mr Shailendra Pandey
- Mr Mahendra Singh
- Mr Deep Sharma
- Mr Pankaj Vidyarthi
- Mr Ramesh Singh
- Mr Subodhan Mishra
- Mr Sanjay Tyagi
- Mr Omkareshwar Sharma
- Mr Vijay Menon
- Mr Sandeep Joshi
- Dr Bharat Jhunjhunwala
- Mr Gopal Agarwal
- Mr Mahendra Nath Chaturvedi
- Dr Aditya Hinsar



VALEDICTORY SESSION

Conclusions of the Group Discussions

Group A: Spiritual Leaders



Left to right: Acharya Balakrishna presented the outcome of Group A; There were around 80 participants in the Group A; Sushri Uma Bharati also listened to the suggestions of respectable spiritual leaders along with Mr Sanjeev Balyan (Minister of State for Agriculture & Food Processing). Mr. Shripad Naik (Minister of State for Tourism and Culture) also attended initial part of the session

The water of river Ganga acquires its special properties due to the unique natural environment of the Himalayas with the availability of the various natural medicinal plants and herbs. There are more than 500 types of such medicinal plants which are important for the natural environment of the Himalayas. Such plants can be grown along the river to maintain the health of the river and prevent landslides. For example 'Khus' is one such plant found here in India, but is used by China to prevent landslides in hilly areas. Interventions for conservation of the natural environment or habitats of the various species, aquatic or terrestrial, should also be included in the Ganga River Basin Management Plan.

Ganga is formed by the tributaries which join it at different locations and these tributaries directly impact the state of the river. Therefore, the tributaries of the Ganga River should also be considered for pollution abatement and river rejuvenation.

The disposal of dead bodies directly into the rivers should be banned and use of the electric crematoriums shall be promoted.

The belongings of the dead should be incinerated in a furnace as these cause more pollution than the dead body.

In case of the floral offerings which are disposed into the river, the waste generated will not create much problem if the river is 'aviral'.

Recycle and reuse should be promoted and even treated wastewater should not be discharged into river Ganga.

In addition to this, the chemical pesticides and insecticides which are being used in huge quantities for agriculture in the Ganga river basin is very harmful to the river. Organic farming should be promoted in the Ganga belt to avoid the hazardous effects of such chemicals.

In case of dams, the general opinion of the participants was that dams pose a huge threat to the health of the river. Therefore, existing dams should support the continuous flow of water and movement/ migration of fish and other species and construction of any new dams should be stopped immediately.



Group B: NGOs & Environmentalists

There is an immediate requirement of safeguarding the Himalayan Environment. To sustain the 'aviral' flow in the river, Himalayan Glaciers need to be protected. In order to protect the Himalayan Environment, native plant species like Oak (Baanjh), Rhododendron (Burans), Myrica esculanta (Kafal), Acacia (Pangar) needs to be planted at open land spaces.

The length of river Ganga is not merely 2500 kms rather it is a complex system of more than 25000 kms along with tributaries, all of which needs to be conserved. The river flood plain must be preserved and there should be minimal human interference in these flood plains.

Extensive research has been carried on more than 900 rivers across the Globe and it has been established that the water level in these rivers has been reduced by 20% in last 50 years. Due to exponential population growth and increasing water consumption, it has been estimated that if the water level decreases by this rate then after 50 years these water bodies may get critical.

A river is not merely a water body, but a complex system of sediments, water, flora and fauna. Therefore, it is essential that the whole river dynamics including all the elements of the river be studied in order to conserve it. Although many researches have been carried out on river Ganga at various institutes but these information are dispersed. Therefore, a complete holistic research study and a proper documentation on river Ganga is required as a prerequisite for further policy interventions.

Aquatic life present in the river is crucial for river health, but the number of many aquatic species is decreasing continuously. Thus, it is also necessary to conserve the aquatic life in the Ganga, including aquatic vertebrates like dolphins, gharials, turtles and more than 384 types of fish species, which are an integral part of River Ganga.

A task force for the protection of River Ganga needs to be constituted which could be involved in various activities like afforestation, river front development, awareness generation, and monitoring of banned activities.

All the works undertaken by Government for the conservation of river Ganga should be implemented in a time bound, result oriented and systematic manner. Previously, even though the policies were formulated but adequate attention and efforts could not be given on effective implementation and timely completion of projects due to lack of effective institutions and inter-departmental co-ordination.



Above: Justice Girdhar Malviya who chaired the session.

Top: Shri Ashish Gautam, facilitator of the group, presented the outcome of Group B.

There were more than 200 participants in this session from various institutions all across the country. Eminent Environmentalists like Mr Rajendra Singh "Jal Purush" and Mr Bharat Jhunjhunwala attended the session.

GROUP C: Academicians & Technocrats

Ganga river basin is one of the largest and highly populated river basins of the world, supports a highly diverse geographic landscape and has a complex hydrology. The maintenance of the 'aviral' and 'nirmal' nature of the river Ganga is extremely important. Local Watershed Management is required to increase the local ground water level and base flow to the river. It will also reduce the dependency on the direct abstraction and diversion of water from the river.

For 'nirmal dhara' (clean flow), complete management of all wastes (both solid and liquid), promotion of reuse and recycle in all sectors, and preventing any waste from entering into the river are essential. All such interventions may require a huge amount of investment. However, the cost of innovative sustainable technologies and better management of waste should be valued against the health benefits derived from the clean environment. Such interventions will also reduce the use of individual household level water purifiers such as ROs, which are actually an unnecessary additional demand created due to poor quality of drinking water.

Appropriate technological interventions for recycle and reuse are possible these days. However, suitable financial & economic model for

implementation and sustenance of such projects is the need of the hour.

A decentralized approach for waste management and treatment with location or site specific use of technology should be preferred.

The use of fresh water or ground water in industrial production can be avoided/reduced by the use of treated wastewater. In addition to this, emphasis should be on choosing greener ways of implementing projects, which can lead to Green labeling of the products that would enhance the acceptability in the international markets. Integration of the efforts of various ministries/departments working on different aspects of conservation is highly essential for the success of such magnificent programs. Development of a suitable institutional set up for this purpose should be considered.

Strategies for appropriate data collection with the participation of local communities, need to be adopted for improved scientific assessment of ground realities and effective planning & implementation of the projects.

Creation of a single authority or institution as well as a legal framework or an act to promote the coordination between different government bodies and to prevent conflict of interests is highly needed.

Left to right: Prof. Vinod Tare presented the outcome of Group C; Padma Bhushan Shri N. Vittal was also amongst the panellists; There were more than 100 participants in this session from renowned universities and academic institutions





GROUP D: Public Representatives & Administrators

The culture of developmental authorities needs to be realigned to the objectives of the conservation of river Ganga. The towns located along the river Ganga are expanding, which is going beyond the limits of the Nagar Palikas and Municipal Corporations and these development authorities can be entrusted with the task of controlling the pollutants entering into the River Ganga. In the states situated on the main stem of Ganga, local bodies are usually neglected in the decision making process and it is essential that these authorities should also be involved in decision-making.

There needs to be a decentralized mechanism of waste management in each town located in the Ganga Basin. Per capita usage of water needs to be restricted and leakage control in drinking water supply system is essential in each town. The problem with the current system is that the policy makers do not practice it and those who practice on ground are not involved in policy making and therefore this gap needs to be curbed for better implementation of policies. Public, government and institutions need to undergo change in behavior to undertake this gigantic task.

Many different agencies are working for the conservation of River Ganga and there is lack of coordination and integration amongst these agencies. Thus, proper coordination amongst different agencies is required for better implementation of projects. There is a need to enhance the accountability of government agencies associated for the conservation of River Ganga.

In all the rural habitations along the river Ganga, there is a need to develop free crematory services to prevent the disposal of dead bodies in the River Ganga.

In all school curriculums, a lesson on river Ganga needs to be incorporated. The continuous encroachment in the river flood plains needs to be checked.

The wastewater treatment plants are not fully operational at many locations due to interrupted power supply and provision of alternative power supply is to be made by the government.

It was further projected that five sectors need to work in coordination for the conservation of river Ganga i.e. Government, Academicians, Industries, Communities and Individuals.

In France, there is a separate river parliament for the conservation of rivers. Similar examples of different countries and international best practices also need to be looked into and appropriately used for the River Ganga restoration.



Top: Mr Vinay Sahasrabudde presented the outcome of Group D.

There were around 60 participants in this session. Mr Anil Madhav Dave, MP Rajya Sabha, who is renowned for his contribution for the conservation of river Narmada, was also one of the panellists in Group D.





Concluding Remarks

by Sushri Uma Bharati



“ *In Purana, it is written that in the era of darkness, i.e. current era, Ganga will disappear. Only king has the power to change the 'kaalchakra' and king in democracy is the public.* ”

Views and thoughts from all the participants derived at a common consensus that River Ganga should be 'nirmal' and 'aviral'. Numerous suggestions by the participants will be taken into due consideration during consultation amongst higher authorities to formulate a comprehensive strategy for Ganga conservation. Though the previous efforts like GAP(Ganga Action Plan) and NGRBA(National Ganga River Basin Authority) were framed with the worthy objectives, analysis reveals that the lack of integration and coordination among different government departments and ministries is one of the reasons for these efforts not achieving the desired results. The government is ensuring that the task of Ganga Rejuvenation does not lack in coordination, uniformity of thoughts and sharing of responsibilities amongst different government departments and ministries. Also it will be ensured that the projects will be taken up in a time bound manner. Ganga rejuvenation needs to be a social movement "Jan Andolan" with uniformity, complete awareness and total participation from each section of society. In order to enhance transparency and people movement for Ganga conservation, a website on Ganga would be launched soon and public can share their suggestions and feedbacks in the website. Service of river Ganga is free from

any communalism and people from all religions are involved in it. There has been a continuous demand for legislation on Ganga from many sources, but people in India are more concerned about the social arrangements than the legislative provisions. Legislation is essential but effective enforcement of it can happen only through a suitable social arrangement and this is a must for protection and conservation of River Ganga. Spiritual leaders in this social arrangement would play an important role in generating "Jan Chetna" and each individual of the society would be involved to preserve the 'aviral' and 'nirmal' flow in the River. Prime Minister is also very keen that Ganga becomes 'aviral' and 'nirmal' and that is the reason that the officials of different ministries like Water Resources, Urban development, Rural Development, Environment and Forests are united and determined to serve Ganga. Efforts of the media in creating public awareness for rejuvenation of river Ganga are also laudable. It is high time for the conservation of the River Ganga as this opportunity will not come again and the condition of the river may get deteriorated and become irreversible. Therefore, maximum efforts have to be put forth for this task and Government of India is focused and fully committed to conserve river Ganga.



Concluding Remarks

by Mr. Nitin Gadkari

Ganga rejuvenation will fructify by 'Jan Andolan' and the strategic planning and efforts of Government. Both these elements are to be streamlined for proper implementation of projects and better yielding of results. It has been evident in today's event that people are inclined and committed for the conservation of River Ganga and therefore abundant useful ideas, suggestions and implementable solutions have come forth making this event a big success.

There are various categories of towns and villages along the banks of River Ganga; some are large and medium towns where Ministry of Urban Development is undertaking many projects through various schemes like JnNURM etc. Ministry of Rural Development will also focus on preventing the discharge of pollution in river Ganga by implementing various innovative projects like bio toilets, zero discharge toilets etc in all the rural habitats located on the banks of the River Ganga. Location specific Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) will be prepared for such rural areas for successful and effective abatement of pollution. In addition to the scientific and technology based education there is a need for value-based education as well. If it happens then contented, wealthy, plentiful, and powerful India will emerge. Government of India will give top most priority for the conservation of the River Ganga and ensure that there is no paucity of funds for such efforts. This day will be remembered for ever in the history of the conservation of Ganga and all the valuable suggestions will definitely guide the government in promoting the noble cause of Ganga rejuvenation.



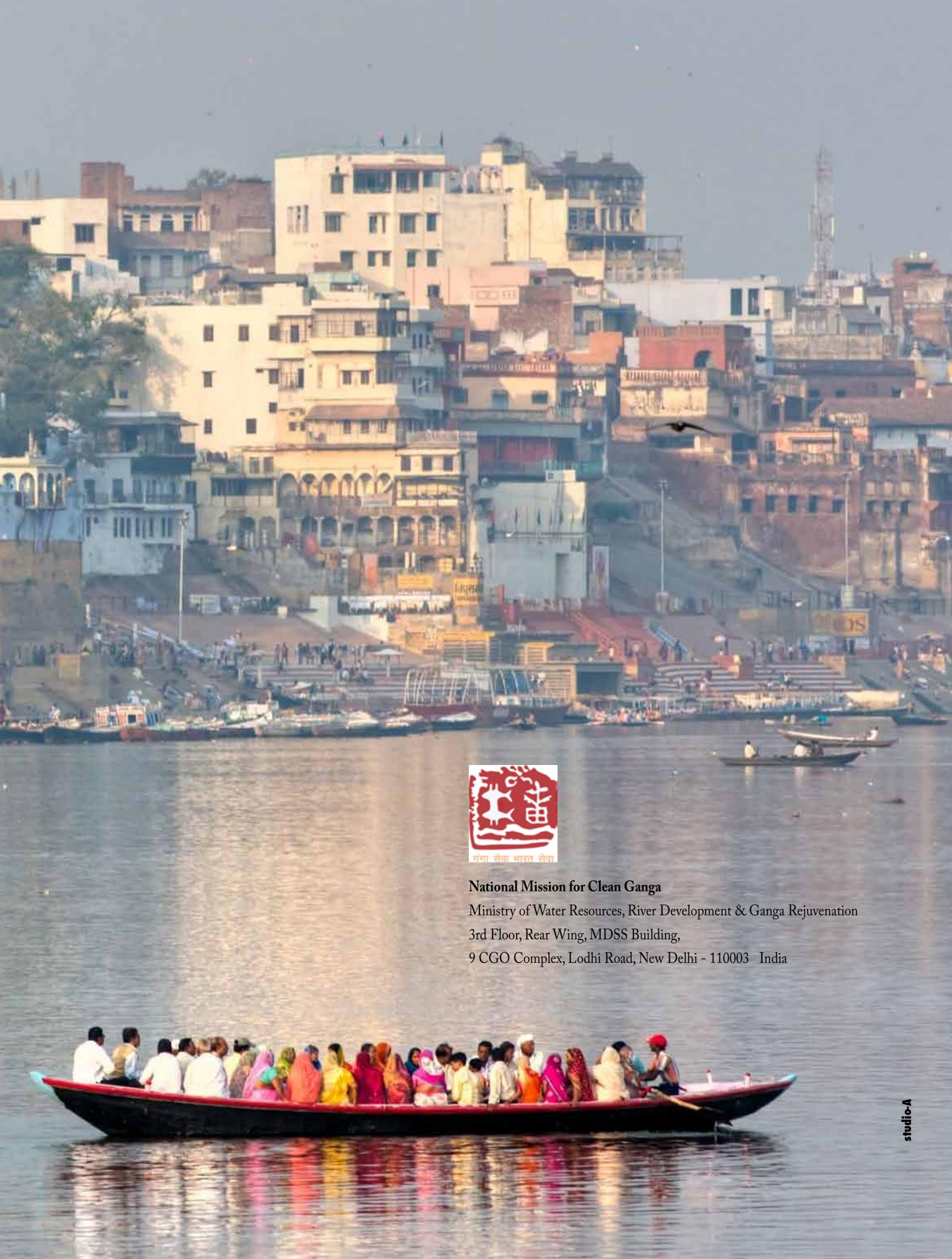
Vote of Thanks

by Mr. Puskal Upadhyay

Mr Puskal Upadhyay thanked the Ministers and the participants of Ganga Manthan on behalf of National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG). He mentioned special thanks to the Ministers for visioning 'Ganga Manthan', for encouraging NMCG to organize the event and also listening to the ideas & thoughts of various stakeholders by taking out time from their busy schedule to attend this event. Their presence in this event also showed their commitment for rejuvenation of river Ganga. He thanked the spiritual leaders for expressing their concerns and possible solutions to the challenging task of restoring river Ganga. He expressed his gratitude to the officials of State and Central Government who will be taking this task forward. He expressed thanks to all Academicians, Technocrats, NGOs & Environmentalists, public representatives and other participants whose active participation made this event successful. A special gratitude was also expressed to the chair, panellists, and facilitators of each session who conducted the sessions and presented the outcome of each session in the valedictory session. He also appreciated the media for covering this event and all the participants for their overwhelming response.



Additional Mission Director & Director (Finance) at National Mission for Clean Ganga



National Mission for Clean Ganga

Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation

3rd Floor, Rear Wing, MDSS Building,

9 CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi - 110003 India