

SAVE GANGA MOVEMENT

Gandhi symbolizes a culture of Truth and non-violence, i.e. a culture of pursuit of ethical perfection as the ultimate goal of life and pursuit of selfless ethical life of universal love as its means; the Ganga, symbolizes all rivers and water bodies; and the Giriraj Himalaya, symbolizes all mountains, forests and wildlife.

What We Must Do to Save the Ganga: Some Reflections

Protection of the Ganga, symbolizing all rivers and water bodies, and the Giriraj Himalaya, symbolizing all mountains, forests and wildlife, must be accorded highest priority in our national development process. Ultimately, we must create a new paradigm of development for India based on Gandhian principles Truth and universal non-violence.

The value of the natural ecology of the Ganga & of the Himalaya is invaluable. The Ganga is the life-line of crores of our people: a naturally flowing fresh and clean Ganga (Aviral & Nirmal Ganga) freely and permanently meets various water requirements of people on its banks, recharges the ground water all along its flow, improves the fertility of a lot of farmland through its silt, provides the habitat for hundreds of diverse life forms, etc. The dense natural forests of the Himalayas prevents floods, constitute the natural store house of invaluable water and natural manure, provide the habitat for the invaluable Himalayan diverse life forms, provide us seasonal fruits, nuts, edible oil seeds, honey through its flowering trees, medicines through its medicinal plants, and fuel, timber, fiber for local use, and freely contribute to the fertility of the agro-ecosystems of the entire Gangetic planes depositing fresh nutrient rich silt through freely flowing rivers. The GANGAJAL (water of the Ganga) is traditionally claimed to have bactericidal, health promoting, non-putrefying and purifying properties. The aesthetic and religious value of the natural ecology of the Ganga and of the Himalaya is also invaluable. All great religions, explicitly or implicitly, accept the natural eco-systems which sustain healthy life to be sacred and invaluable. We must not allow our development activities to deprive the masses the various invaluable services they have been getting freely since ages from the Himalayas and the Ganga and its tributaries.

We must make the Ganga Aviral and take time bound decisive steps to make it and its tributaries completely free from (1) industrial effluents, (2) sewage of the cities and towns (3) hazardous chemicals from agricultural run-off within five years as our short term goal and make serious effort to solve the problem of eco-hostile industrialization, urbanization and population growth by trying to realize the Gandhian conception village Swaraj and Swadeshi within a few decades as our long term goal. (For a discussion on this issue, please see the note entitled “Gandhian Solution of Global Ecological Crisis” in our website, [www. savegangamovement.org](http://www.savegangamovement.org).)

To begin with we must make Uttarakhand an absolutely eco-friendly ideal

Himalayan state and must take time-bound decisive steps to make the Yamuna at Delhi completely and permanently free from pollution, which would set an example for the entire country.

The highly earth quake prone, eco-fragile Uttarkhand region of the Ganga Basin must be declared “Ecological Fragile”. The first 130-kilometre stretch of the Bhagirathi-Ganga’, at least, must also be declared a ‘wild river’ and all steps must be taken to protect it and the eco-system it supports. The river should be allowed to flow freely in its natural path without obstruction. The ill conceived various dam projects for hydroelectricity on the Alakananda and Mandakini which would cause massive and permanent harm

to their invaluable ecology must not be allowed. All eco-hostile activities such as construction of eco-hostile dams, mining, blasting, etc, near our national river and its tributaries must be completely banned and implemented. We must not allow any activities which harm to the bactericidal, health promoting, non-putrefying and purifying properties of GANGAJAL We must never forget that Ganga is not only the lifeline of crores of our people but also considered to be divine mother by crores of them. **Efforts must also be made as soon as possible to rectify the past mistakes as far as possible.**

Industrial effluents, treated or untreated, must not be allowed to enter into the rivers and must not also be allowed to mix with the sewage, which should be converted into valuable natural manure for organic farming: industries must treat their effluents and use only the recycled water. Sewage from the cities and towns, treated or untreated, must not also be allowed to enter into the rivers: we must not forget that our rivers are the source of drinking water for crores of people and STPs cannot convert sewage into potable water. Treatment of the sewage for converting it into natural manure through “Pond System” and “Plant Based Management of Sewage and Waste Treatment”, which are cheapest and durable and need least management and electricity, should be preferred wherever possible. **Our National laboratories of CSIR-NEERI, Nagapur, NBRI, Lucknow, ITRC, Lucknow, CLRI, Chennai, etc. - along with our other prominent research centers of environmental science/ engineering of the IITs, BHU, etc. should network and collaborate with each other to play the central role to clean the Ganga and its tributaries within five years with the help of a culture of GPPP (Government, Private, Public Participation.) They have the knowledge and skill to clean our national river within 4 or 5 years if they get the full support and cooperation of the government. Our scientists, not the bureaucrats, should play the central role in deciding the technology to be used to clean the rivers .**

Entry of hazardous chemicals from agricultural run-off into the rivers must be prevented through promotion of organic farming in a massive way.

Union Ministry of Environment and Forests must take the full responsibility of the protection of our national river: the central government authorities must acquire powers to overrule the state government authorities with reference to protection of the national river.

We must replace the present extremely eco-hostile, out-and-out consumerist and inherently unsustainable self-destructive culture of development of unlimited desires and cut throat competition for getting more and more wealth for their satisfaction, by an ethical culture of contentment, purity and sustainable non-violent development. Surely our classical Indian civilization has the moral and spiritual resources to create a mass Satyagraha to save the world from the impending massive ecological crises (in the form of causing pollution of air, water, land, global warming and climate change, depletion of non-renewable natural resources, depletion of ozone layer, etc.), which has devastating implications not only for our future generations but also for the entire life world, and surely India, the mother of this only great living ancient civilization, is in far better position than any other country to create and lead such a movement. Let India provide the world a culture of non-violence and Truth, i.e., the true Ultimate meaning of life, in the context of our present technological age, where all religions could grow harmoniously in spite of their differences in the realm of metaphysics, and where development could take place with loving care of the invaluable countless kinds of flora and fauna of our life-sustaining natural systems. (For a discussion on this issue, please see the note entitled “Gandhian Solution of Global Ecological Crisis” in our website, [www. savegangamovement.org](http://www.savegangamovement.org).)

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