

EDITORIAL

FINALLY GANGA DECLARED AS NATIONAL RIVER

Central government declares Ganga as national river. This decision was taken by a high level meeting presided over by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. A decision was also taken to set up a Ganga River Basin Authority in this meeting. This authority would prepare its plan for making the Ganga pollution free and their effective implementation. The Prime Minister said that Ganga is residing in the heart and mind of every Indian. Therefore it is necessary to take strong and effective measures to keep Ganga clean and pure. Dr. Manmohan Singh will be the president of this authority. The chief ministers of the states through which Ganga flows will be its members.

The entire nation celebrated when the central government declared River Ganga a national river. Had Prof. B. Katle been alive today then he would have been extremely happy on hearing this news. Military engineer Katle working under British government had fought at the highest level to declare Ganga River as a national river and Ganga canal as a national canal. However, his mission could not be completed. But now 'Save Ganga Forum' and people from various walks of life are completing that mission.

Prof. B. Katle had immense faith on Ganga River. During 1840 famine in north India, the British government had given him the responsibility of building a water source. At that time he had tried to see Ganga with a religious viewpoint. It is said that Prof. Katle had called Ganga as a symbol of faith after completing the task of construction of Ganga canal.

He had begun his efforts to get Ganga declared as a national heritage from that time onwards. He had also presented the technical basis for this in front of British government. Katle was called to British senate then he had said that Ganga is not an ordinary river, therefore every tributary of Ganga is actually a flow of faith for all the countrymen. It is noteworthy that Prof. Katle had traveled on horse from Bheemgoda Barrage to Neelkantha Mahadev at the time of construction of Bheemgoda Barrage. He had seen Ganga quite closely till Gangotri. The retired engineers of irrigation department say that this is the reason that Bhagirathi and Bhilangana rivers are also clearly described in Katle Atlas. They said that India can never be poor because there are rivers like Bhagirathi, Bhilangana, Alaknanda, which are associated with people's faith. It is not just water that is flowing in these rivers, but it is the flow of prosperity, progress.

The scientists claim that the bacteria present in Ganga are helpful for it. They keep the river clean. They make it pollution free and also eat away the harmful bacteria. Its water is unmatched. Ganga cannot be compared with any other river. The Ganga water never gets decomposed. It contains iron in abundant quantity, which is not present in other rivers. This has been found out through scientific research.

Scientific research began with the initiative of Ministry of Science and Technology. IIT Kanpur began the investigation. Prof. Vinod Tare of civil engineering department said that soil samples were collected from the banks of Ganga river. It was tested in core lab. Five types of bacteria were found in soil and core, which are beneficial for Ganga. On the other hand, Prof. Rajiv Sinha told that according to the facts mentioned in ancient texts, Saraswati river had disappeared six thousand years back. The history of Yamuna is two thousand years old. Ganga is flowing from the last 30 thousand years. Core and sand samples were collected from a depth of 50 feet with the help of pipe. Different types of

tests were done to find temperature, magnetic and multi proxy approach.

This was the basis of finding the age of river Ganga. Research is also going on to find out its longevity. Prof. R.Raghunath of chemistry department is also involved in this work. Unique bacteria were found out with his help. The movement of bacteria is being observed along with the methods to find their names. These bacteria help in cleaning the river.

The history of revolutions for Ganga is around 100 years old. Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya had started this revolution in the beginning of 20th century and finally won it in 1916. But subsequent revolutions were directionless and solution less. If we talk about the past 100 years then Ganga faced the first danger in 1905. Malviya was involved in the establishment of Hindu University. Meanwhile Babu Shivprasad Gupta shared the information related to the plan of British to construct a dam on Ganga river. Afterwards they joined hands and contacted the kings of small provinces. 11-year-old struggle proved to be successful.

There were no transport sources in 1916. New techniques were not developed. Hundreds and thousands of Hindu kings gathered in a meeting at Hardwar. As a result, British had to bow down. The British decided to let the Ganga flow like a perennial source of water. Then the revolution came to an end. Lakshmi Narayan Rao and then UP Chief Minister Dr. Sampurnanand Ji led the mission of beautification of Ganga banks after independence. They established a Kashi Ganga bank development committee.

It is said that everything bows down in front of faith in India. The government finally realized after two and half decades and an expenditure of two thousand crore rupees that Ganga should be declared a national river and give it a new life. The Ganga Action Plan was started in 1985. It was believed that the first phase would be completed over a period of six to seven years. But nothing special happened. The work proposed for 1990 could not be completed even till 2004. This point was raised in the report of public accounts committee report of parliament. CAG and the apex court did come down heavily on concerned authorities and state governments from time to time.

The second phase of Ganga Action Plan was started before the completion of first phase. The purification of

Yamuna, Gomati and Damodar rivers also started along with Ganga. The objective was to complete the second phase by 2000, but it will take more time to complete it.

The dream of Clean India is baseless unless Ganga is clean. Swami Ramdev's statements made on September 18th at Kanpur worked like magic. The Save Ganga Forum under the leadership of Patanjali Yogpeeth proceeded. Eminent people from different social organizations, saints of pilgrimage centers, members of Gayatri family took the resolution at Har-ki-Paudi. The issue gathered heat with invitations, actual work, discussions etc. and the resolution taken at Har-ki-Paudi to declare Ganga as a national river finally reached its historical goal.

Ganga river, the symbol of Indian culture became a victim of industrial pollution for the last several years. However, various measures at different levels were taken by the government to make it pollution free. But it had no impact. The situation was so critical that the water was not worth of using even for religious purposes (Achaman etc.) Former Governor of Uttarakhand, Sudarshan Agarwal participated in the Ganga Mahotsava at Gangotri, the origin place of Ganga and was disappointed to see the condition of the river. He later proposed to start the movement of cleaning Ganga. The saints of Hardwar organized a rally from Gangotri to Delhi and expressed their anger against the government.

Swami Ramdev performed an Abhishek (worship of Ganga) with milk, turmeric and honey at Sarasaiya ghat, Kanpur and made the people present at the occasion to take a resolution of Save Ganga. It was said that construction of dam on river would prevent its free flow and increase the risk of environmental dangers and pollution. Therefore the demand for declaring Ganga a national river became stronger. The religious leaders, social and cultural scholars declared openly at Har-ki-Paudi that if Ganga is not declared a national river by 2010 then the saints would boycott the Mahakumbha. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh called upon the Home Minister for State Shri Prakash Jaiswal, Swami Ramdev and chief of Gayatri Pariwar, Dr. Pranav Pandya in New Delhi and discussed this matter with all seriousness. Prime Minister was told about the faith attached with Ganga and the demands of saints.

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Ganga Action Plans are being implemented since 1985. In spite of spending several crores of rupees the report says about the water of Ganges that its water is not worth taking bath also at several places.

The plans of different ministries, agencies working for purification of Ganga will now be under the scanner of this authority. There is possibility to bring the various campaigns, sewage treatments, industrial wastes and other programs being carried on in villages and cities around Ganga river also under this authority. This work will be given final shape in the next two months. Yog guru Swami Ramdev Ji Maharaj expressed his happiness on the step taken by the central government along with Dr. Pranav Pandya that this was the victory of the peaceful revolution made in this direction. Swami Ramdev said at Har-ki-Paudi in the presence of thousands of people that the government has done its task and now it is the duty of the citizens to keep the Ganga clean, pure and pollution free.

People of Hardwar celebrated as soon as they heard the news of declaring Ganga a national heritage. A special Aarti was conducted at Har-Ki-Paudi. Dr. Pranav Pandya along with various communities, saints of ashrams, officers of social and political organizations and devotees of Ganga were present at this occasion. Swami Ramdev, founder of Save Ganga Forum and other members of Patanjali Yogpeeth reached Har-ki-Paudi to participate in this occasion.

Swami Ji addressed thousands of Ganga devotees present there and said that Save Ganga Forum was established just last month and people of various spiritual, cultural and social organizations from across the country had associated with it. The movement was started from Kanpur. Signature campaigns from 550

districts of India were sent to the Prime Minister and President. This is the result of this peaceful demonstration that the government agreed to their demand within two months.

He thanked Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and said that he kept the promise he had made to the delegates of Save Ganga Forum. He also thanked the members of VHP, RSS, Shantikunj, Ganga forum, all India Akhada Parishad, All India Saint Committee, saint Morari Bapu, Ramesh bhai Ojha and other organizations for their selfless contribution.

He said that today a historical decision has been taken with respect to Ganga. This day has a special importance in our history. Ganga is polluted up to 99 percent at almost all the places, now polluting Ganga would be a cognizable offence as per the government's decision. The perennial, pure flow of Ganga will be easily available for everybody. He said that the government has also set up a national Ganga Authority along with this declaration. Prime Minister would be the president of this authority. He said that the government has done its work and now it is our turn to contribute in maintaining it.

Swami Ji is organizing special training programs for Yog volunteers. The decision of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to declare Ganga as national river has been seen as a great decision. Swami Ramdev Ji Maharaj said in this regard that a reform cannot be completed by just making acts. There is a need for social awareness. He said that Prime Minister is himself the president of this authority therefore there are no chances of any loopholes in the work of saving Ganga. However public awareness is very necessary.

Swami Ji said that the revolution of Save Ganga Forum has not ended, but its form has changed. Now it will start campaigns against anti-social elements, which are polluting Ganga. Swami Ji believes that polluting Ganga is a serious punishable offence. The public would have to watch such people and make sure that they are punished. The Indians having faith towards Ganga would have to be responsible and maintain its sanctity just like worship of God. Committees of devotees would be made at all the banks of Ganga. He also said that the workers of Patanjali Yogpeeth would be made alert in this respect.

Acharya Balkrishna