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The Rising Levels of Water Pollution in Delhi NCR: A Specific Focus on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a Potential Solution

SOUMITRA CHATTERJEE[1]

ABSTRACT

Despite the fact that access to clean and safe water is considered a basic entitlement of every human being, a significant number of individuals worldwide are deprived of this crucial need. Delhi, the vibrant capital of India, is now facing a serious water shortage that poses a danger to the welfare of its inhabitants and the long-term viability of its development. Due to the increasing population and intensification of industrial operations, there has been a significant rise in the demand for water, which is placing a great deal of strain on the city's limited resources. The issue at hand encompasses not just the accessibility of water, but also the presence of uncontaminated water. Human activities such as agriculture and urban development have diminished the regions that were formerly conserved as water catchment zones. Of far greater concern is the inadequate water management that results in substantial waste with insufficient replenishment. Companies are actively participating in worldwide efforts to increase the availability of freshwater for human use and prevent a future catastrophe via their corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. Many corporations are joining worldwide water conservation projects in response to the increasing water demand, in order to prevent a probable and severe water shortage that might have negative impacts on ecosystems and biodiversity. Furthermore, several firms and industrial complexes are linked to the exertion of excessive strain on water resources, which might potentially result in a lack of a viable and renewable supply of potable water for human use on a global scale. This article mostly addresses water pollution resulting from the operations of factories and industries, particularly in the Delhi NCR area. The article explores several corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs and their potential to effectively preserve water bodies and promote long-term sustainability.

***Keywords**: Water Crisis, CSR initiatives, contaminated water, Industrial waste, sustainability.*

[1] Author is an Advocate in India.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The population of Delhi has multiplied dramatically over the course of the last several decades, going from around 8.4 million in 1991 to over 30 million in 2023. This fast urbanisation has resulted in a considerable rise in the demand for water, which has greatly exceeded the amount that is now available. The city's infrastructure has had a difficult time keeping up with the city's increase in population, which has resulted in acute water shortages and excessive groundwater exploitation. The Yamuna River, which is Delhi's principal supply of surface water, has been highly polluted as a result of the accumulation of industrial waste, sewage, and agricultural runoff. In the past, the river was a source of pure water; however, it is now extensively polluted with hazardous chemicals, rendering it unsafe for human consumption. The city has been forced to depend even more on its diminishing groundwater supplies as a result of the pollution that has been caused by the Yamuna.[2]

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)[3] refers to the dedication of companies to promote sustainable economic growth by collaborating with workers, their families, the local community, and society as a whole, in order to enhance their well-being in a manner that benefits both the company and overall development. Put simply, firms are obligated to foster a sustainable economic growth by collaborating and cooperating with their employees, their families, and society as a whole. Within the framework of corporate social responsibility (CSR), a significant component is the mitigation of pollution and the complete eradication of trash, sometimes known as achieving zero waste.[4]

II. THE CURRENT SCENARIO

Ashwini Kumar Choubey, state minister for the Union ministry of environment, forest and climate change (MoEFCC), said the Lok Sabha that 3,186 grossly polluting industries (GPI) release around 402.6 million litres of effluents (MLD) into the rivers Ganga and Yamuna daily. The Ganga receives about 249.31 MLD of discharge, whereas the Yamuna receives around 153.36 MLD. Ganga has 1,229 GPIs and Yamuna had 1,957, according to an analysis of GPIs in seven states. The two rivers and the waterways that flow into them might be influenced by these groundwater pumping stations (GPSs) in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Delhi, and Haryana. With 13.73 TPD in the Ganga and 6.01 TPD in

[2] Divya Christopher, 'Water Quality Status Of River Yamuna In Delhi With Reference To Presence Of Heavy Metals: A Review' (2012) 1(2) *Int. J. Pharm. Med. & Bio. Sc.* 266.
[3] Ganga S. Dhanesh, 'Why Corporate Social Responsibility? An Analysis of Drivers of CSR in India' (2014) 29(1) *SAGE* 44. https://doi.org/10.1177/08933189145454.
[4] Vijita S Aggarwal, 'Pressures of CSR in India: an institutional perspective' (2019) 12(2) *Journal of Strategy and Management* 12.

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the Yamuna, these effluents contribute 19.74 TPD to the biochemical oxygen demand pollution load. In addition, 105 Ganga front towns in five states (Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal) produce around 3,558.5 MLD of sewage. About 72% of the generation, or 2,561.7 MLD, of sewage treatment capacity has been established.

III. INVESTIGATING THE POLLUTION CAUSED BY INDUSTRIAL UNITS IN THE YAM UNA RIVER

Monitoring the pollution that is created by industrial units in the rivers Ganga and Yamuna is the responsibility of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). Actions taken by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) against Grossly Polluting Industries (GPIs) that discharge into the main stem of the Ganga River and its tributaries (Kali-East and Ramganga) and that do not comply with the prescribed norms and do not connect to the On-line Continuous Effluent Monitoring System (OCEMS) over the course of the past two years and the year before are as follows:[5]

Sl. No.	Action taken	During December 2020- February 2021	During March 2021- December 2021	During January 2022- April 2023	**Total**
1	Closure Direction	87	365	42	**494**
2	Show Cause Notice	75	118	21	**214**
	Total	**162**	**483**	**63**	**708**

In Muzaffarnagar, in the Hindon River basin (a tributary of the Yamuna River), the CPCB and the Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board (UPPCB) together inspected 32 companies. The jo int inspection report was presented to the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal. Seven pulp and pa per companies were each ordered by the Hon'ble Tribunal to pay Rs. 10.0 lakhs in environmen tal compensation in a decision dated 22.09.2017. A abattoir and a chemical company were eac h ordered to pay Rs. 15.0 lakhs and Rs. 5.0 lakhs, respectively. Regular inspections and monit oring of Grossly Polluting Industries (GPIs) are conducted out under the "Pollution Inventoris

[5] PIB, Government of India Report, 2023 ‘Inspection of Industrial Units Polluting Ganga and Yamuna Rivers’.

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ation Assessment & Surveillance on river Ganga (PIAS)" project, which is executed by CPCB under the Namami Gange program, to verify compliance with the specified environmental regulations. Third party technical institutions such as the IITs, NITs, and CSIR institutes conduct inspections on a yearly basis to verify compliance. In 2017, technical institutions conducted the first round of inspections; now, the second round is underway, and SPCBs are taking necessary measures against the industries that have defaulted. In May and June, the CPCB also visited factories in the Yamuna basin (Sonipat and Panipat) that send their wastewater down the Yamuna River.[6]

IV. CSR INITIATIVES: THE WAY FORWARD

1. boAt – CSR 2024[7]

In order to fulfil its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) effort, the consumer electronics company boAt has formed a partnership with the Shoobhi Foundation and the water brand Wahter. The goal of this partnership is to provide the general public and communities in the Delhi National Capital Region with clean and safe drinking water. Through the establishment of this cooperation, boAt will provide financial assistance to the Shoobhi Foundation, which will be responsible for supplying the general population with potable water that is free from contamination.

2. PepsiCo CSR program in NCR[8]

PepsiCo India, in partnership with Alternative Development Initiatives (ADI), has launched the Sustainable Water Resource Development and Management (SWRDM) initiative as a component of World Water Week 2023. PepsiCo India's extensive water resource plan seeks to replace all of the water used in industrial operations while rejuvenating vulnerable local watersheds. The program entails the construction of seven communal rainwater collection ponds, with a combined capacity to replenish groundwater of 214 million litres. These ponds play a role in replenishing the groundwater in seven adjacent settlements. PepsiCo India and Alternative Development Initiatives (ADI) have jointly organised training sessions for more than 450 farmers, in partnership with training institutes and internal capacity development resources, as part of their project. The program focusses on promoting water conservation, implementing contemporary agricultural methods, raising technology knowledge, and using

[6] Rohit Sharma, 'Analysis of Water Pollution Using Different Physicochemical Parameters: A Study of Yamuna River' (2020) 8 *Sec. Toxicology, Pollution and the Environment* 12. https://doi.org/10.3389/fenvs.2020.581591.
[7] boAt ties up with Shoobhi Foundation for CSR initiative, https://www.thehindu.com/business/boat-ties-up-with-wahter-shoobhi-foundation-for-csr-initiative/article67797464.ece.
[8] Pepsico, https://www.pepsico.com/our-impact/esg-topics-a-z/water.

diverse agronomic approaches.

3. Earth5R initiatives[9]

Earth5R collaborates with local residents to address sustainability concerns that have an impact on the ecosystems in their communities. In the Yamuna River, Earth5R has carried out one of its activities, which may be found here. As a result of the pollution, fifteen to twenty volunteers from Earth5R travelled to the Yamuna water, where they were startled to see that the water appeared to be completely devoid of any life. Not only was the water murky, but there was rubbish all over the place. It was quite evident that their waste management tactics, or the lack thereof, had not been effective. The volunteers dispersed themselves geographically and cleaned up as much of the region as they were able to. As a direct consequence of this, around two to three full bags of plastic and other types of trash were gathered from that particular tiny area. Following that, the debris was handed over to the ragpicker, who was able to recycle it and establish a means of subsistence for himself.

V. Conclusion and Suggestions

The River Yamuna's catchment basin in Delhi is extensively urbanised and interconnected with several drainage systems. The Najafgarh and Shahdara drains are the primary conduits that release a substantial amount of pollution into the river. The rapid process of urbanisation and population increase leads to industrialisation, which presents a significant risk of heavy metal contamination for water bodies in close proximity.[10] The water quality analysis of River Yamuna has shown a substantial concentration of several heavy metals in its water. Iron (Fe) was discovered to be the most prevalent heavy metal in the water of the River Yamuna, above the established limit. Elevated concentrations of heavy metals in water may lead to many health consequences, including stunted growth and development, cancer, organ impairment, and harm to the neurological system.[11]

Indian society is more aware of the importance of sustainable development, inclusive growth, and environmental preservation. Businesses' perspectives on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) have changed due to its growing significance throughout time.[12] India has a rich history of corporate social responsibility and it is a well-established practice in the country. In pre-independence India, the two prevailing forms of CSR were corporate philanthropy, where

[9] Yamuna River Pollution And Sustainable Solutions For The Future, https://earth5r.org/yamuna-river-pollution-and-sustainable-solutions-for-the-future/.
[10] Developed India by 2047? https://www.downtoearth.org.in/governance/developed-india-by-2047.
[11] Ananda Das Gupta, *Business Ethics: Texts and Cases from the Indian Perspective*, New Delhi, Springer (2013).
[12] Neelmani Jaysawal and Sudeshna Saha, 'Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India: A Review' (2015) 3(2) *Space and Culture* 83.

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business households would occasionally donate to charities, and the Gandhian Trusteeship Model, where business leaders were influenced by Gandhiji's principles of generosity and trust. According to the Companies Act of 2013 (referred to as the Act 2013), corporations in the nation have become more accountable for creating a well-defined corporate social responsibility (CSR) framework. Several firms, like TATA and Birla, have actively engaged in corporate social responsibility. The Act fosters a culture of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in India by requiring enterprises to have a CSR strategy and donate funding for social upliftment programs. In order to effectively lead the organisation and make informed decisions, it is essential for corporate leaders to have a comprehensive understanding of the legal obligations and implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).[13]

Some suggestions in this regard includes:

a. Strengthening the level of responsibility and liability for Corporates as outlined in the Indian Companies Act, 2013. It is essential to provide comprehensive and inclusive environmental impact evaluations for every project.

b. Enforcing strict regulations to prevent companies and hospitals from disposing of garbage in the river.

c. Facilitating the integration of water management by establishing connections between the business sector, local communities, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to guarantee a proficient and productive distribution and utilisation of water resources for everyone.

d. It is important to encourage companies to consistently provide Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reports in order to keep stakeholders well-informed.

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[13] Deepak Garg, 'Corporate Social Responsibility and Its Effectiveness in India' (2013) 3(11) *International Journal of Research in Economics & Social Sciences* 22.

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