

## 'PLANET IN FOCUS'

## Faculty's Note

The environment is one of the most important beats in journalism today, yet it is often pushed to the margins. This is surprising because issues like climate change are no longer distant or abstract but shape the air we breathe, the food we eat, and the futures we imagine for ourselves and the next generation. Even in the midst of ongoing global crises and their consequences, environmental stories are still frequently overshadowed by more immediate or dramatic news such as politics or crime. While those issues are necessary to be discussed, environment demands equal attention, if not more.

Part of the problem is that environmental reporting can seem complex or slow-moving. At its core, however, it is deeply human. It is about farmers coping with unpredictable weather year after year, families facing scarcity of resources, and cities struggling with dangerously high pollution levels. These are not niche concerns. They are everyday realities that directly affect people's lives.

When journalism overlooks the environment, it misses the opportunity to tell some of the most urgent and meaningful stories of our time.

Recognizing the environment as a central rather than peripheral concern, therefore, is crucial. Greater investment, of both time and money, in environmental reporting can help ensure that these long-term issues receive the sustained attention they demand. As Marshall McLuhan observed, "There are no passengers on spaceship Earth. We are all crew." This reminds us that responsibility for the environment is shared, and that awareness is the first step toward accountability.

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## केन-बेतवा परियोजना विकास और विस्थापन की कड़वी सच्चाई...

रिमझिम कुमारी  
तृतीय वर्ष

मध्य प्रदेश के पन्ना और छतरपुर जिलों में केन-बेतवा नदी जोड़ो परियोजना के खिलाफ विरोध जारी है। हालिया स्थिति में प्रशासन के आश्वासन के बाद आंदोलन अस्थायी रूप से रुका है, लेकिन प्रभावित ग्रामीणों में असंतोष बना हुआ है।

5 अप्रैल 2026 से शुरू हुआ यह आंदोलन करीब 12 दिनों तक चला, जिसमें हजारों ग्रामीण और आदिवासी शामिल हुए। प्रदर्शनकारियों ने 'जल सत्याग्रह' और 'चिता आंदोलन' जैसे प्रतीकात्मक विरोध कर उचित मुआवजा और पुनर्वास की मांग उठाई।

करीब 44,605 करोड़ रुपये की इस परियोजना के तहत केन नदी पर दौधन बांध और 221 किमी लंबी नहर बनाई जाएगी। सरकार का दावा है कि इससे बुंदेलखंड क्षेत्र में 10.62 लाख हेक्टेयर भूमि को सिंचाई और लगभग 62 लाख लोगों को पेयजल मिलेगा।

हालांकि, प्रभावित लोगों का कहना है कि 20 से अधिक गांव डूब क्षेत्र में आएंगे और हजारों परिवार विस्थापित होंगे। उनका आरोप है कि सर्वे और मुआवजा प्रक्रिया में पारदर्शिता की कमी है।

प्रदर्शन के दौरान 50 से अधिक लोगों पर मामला दर्ज किया गया, जिससे तनाव और बढ़ा। प्रशासन ने नए सर्वे और संवाद का आश्वासन दिया है, लेकिन मांगें पूरी न होने पर फिर से आंदोलन की चेतावनी दी गई है।



# THE HARD QUESTION

## Delhi Pollution Crisis Raises Questions Over Data Transparency

Vatshala  
1st Year

New Delhi, April 30: Delhi is witnessing yet another year of hazardous air pollution. Just like every other year, the crisis began in early October 2025 with the festival season, crop-residue burning in neighbouring states, and the arrival of cooler weather that trapped pollutants close to the ground, experts suggested. The smog often lingers until the early monsoon. However, this season appeared different for another reason. Alongside the toxic air and polluted environment

Delhi already had, the alleged manipulation of data raised concerns over how AQI readings were selectively presented to the public. Many residents questioned whether official numbers reflected the true severity or not. They called it a form of environmental greenwashing rather than actually solving the problem.

The situation began worsening in October 2025 as post-monsoon winds weakened and pollution levels rose sharply. Experts pointed to multiple causes for this: vehicle emissions, industrial smoke, construction dust, firecrackers, and stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana.

Official data frequently placed Delhi in very poor or severe AQI categories, while some private monitors reportedly recorded much higher figures than government dashboards. Many such readings, however, remained independently unverified. Severe breathing discomfort, poor visibility, and a rise in respiratory complaints were widely reported during the period. Doctors and health experts repeatedly warned that newborn children and elderly residents remain among the most vulnerable during such pollution episodes, with long-term respiratory risks linked to prolonged exposure.

What raised greater concerns was not only the pollution itself, but whether it was being measured accurately or not. In hotspots like Kashmiri Gate, Chandni Chowk, and Anand Vihar ISBT, social media users, independent journalists, and observers circulated videos of sprinkler trucks and water tankers operating near AQI stations. Critics alleged that dust was being temporarily suppressed around sensors to lower readings. Experts noted that sprinkling water may briefly reduce roadside dust, but it does not solve emissions from vehicles, industries, waste burning, or regional transport pollution. The Yamuna also remained under focus during the Chhath season. Authorities highlighted cleaned ghats and foam-control measures, while critics argued this was cosmetic clean-up rather than solving the river's structural pollution crisis. Toxic foam was repeatedly reported during the season.

The question here is simple: if pollution is actually being controlled, why are the results not visible? And if it is not being controlled, what is the government doing? This is a question that now requires clear answers and immediate structural action.

## Earth Was Never Ours to Own

Navya Roshan  
2<sup>nd</sup> Year

There is a quiet arrogance in how humans talk about the Earth, as if it were property designed solely for us. Cities grow, forests shrink, rivers change course, and species vanish, all under the belief that human needs are more important than any other form of life. But the reality is much simpler and more uncomfortable: The Earth was never ours to possess.

Humans have gained control over land, water, and air, but not without consequences. In India, rapid urban growth has caused severe ecological harm. Air pollution has reached alarming levels, with PM2.5 concentrations often far above safe limits, resulting in millions of early deaths each year. In Delhi, the situation is even worse, with pollution levels frequently compared to smoking several cigarettes daily.

This damage affects more than just humans. Animals, who share this environment without any protection, often suffer quietly. Stray animals in Delhi face constant exposure to toxic air, leading to respiratory issues, exhaustion, and even death during extreme weather. Climate change-driven heatwaves have caused birds to drop out of the sky and animals to collapse from dehydration in cities where natural water sources have disappeared.

Land, too, has been altered with little consideration for balance. A 2025 Delhi University study published in *Research in Ecology*, based on satellite data spanning three decades, found that South Delhi has lost nearly 97 per cent of its wetlands in just thirty years, replaced by concrete and unchecked development. This loss is not only ecological, but also deeply ironic. Students at Delhi University, through their Environmental Studies (EVS) curriculum, learn that wetlands are vital ecosystems. They control floods, replenish groundwater, support biodiversity, and filter pollution. They are presented as areas that need to be protected at all costs. Yet, outside the classroom, the very institutions in power allow these ecosystems to be destroyed for infrastructure and growth. The contradiction is striking: What is taught as essential for survival is treated as expendable in practice.

This pattern extends beyond Delhi. The proposed Great Nicobar development project in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands showcases this mindset. Marketed as a way to promote economic and strategic growth, the project involves large-scale deforestation, port building, and urban expansion in one of India's most ecologically sensitive areas. It endangers unique biodiversity, including endangered species, and disrupts the lives of indigenous communities that have coexisted with these ecosystems for centuries. Once again, development is prioritized over ecological balance, treating nature as an obstacle rather than a foundation.

The belief in human superiority continues to fuel such choices. Worldwide, human activity has caused a dramatic decline in biodiversity, with wildlife populations dropping by nearly 68 per cent since 1970. Millions of species now face extinction while humans and livestock dominate the planet's biomass. The imbalance is clear.

The ongoing debates about stray animals in Delhi highlight this mindset. Efforts to remove stray dogs from urban areas raise a deeper question: Why are animals seen as intruders in spaces that they once called home? Cities are not just for humans; they are shared environments shaped by all living beings.

If humans claim superiority, it should come with responsibility. The ability to reshape the Earth also carries the duty to protect it. This involves more than just policies, it requires accountability, a commitment to align what we teach with what we practice, and a willingness to coexist rather than dominate. The Earth is not ours to control. It is a shared space that needs care, humility, and respect.

# पर्यावरण पर गहराती संकट के बीच सरकार तथा न्यायालय का दोहरा रूख

भारत एक विकासशील देश है जो तेजी से आर्थिक, तकनीकी और अन्य क्षेत्र में प्रगति की ओर बढ़ रहा है लेकिन इस तेज विकास, बढ़ते जलवायु परिवर्तन और वैश्विक ताप के बीच पर्यावरणीय संतुलन बनाए रखना सबसे बड़ी चुनौती बन गई है। जहां एक तरफ सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने सभी नागरिकों के लिए स्वच्छ पर्यावरण को मौलिक अधिकार के रूप में मान्यता दी है और भारत सरकार आए दिन सतत विकास के लिए नई नीतियां और योजनाएं लागू कर रही है। वहीं दूसरी तरफ आर्थिक और तकनीकी विकास के नाम पर ऐसी परियोजनाएं लाई जा रही है जो सीधा पर्यावरण और स्थानीय समुदायों पर दुष्प्रभाव डाल रही है। ऐसे में यह सवाल जरूरी हो जाता है कि हमारा विकास सच में सतत है या फिर पर्यावरण की चिंता केवल सरकार की नीतियों में ही दिखाई देती है जमीनी स्तर पर इसका कोई असर नहीं है।

पिछले कुछ वर्षों में भारत सरकार द्वारा कुछ ऐसे निर्णय लिए गए हैं जो उनकी पर्यावरणीय नीतियों पर बहुत ही गहरा प्रश्न खड़ा करता है। हसदेव अरण्य वनों की कटाई इसका एक बहुत ही मुख्य उदाहरण है। सरकार का यह कहना है कि यहां कोयला खनन से देश की ऊर्जा की जरूरत को पूरा किया जा सकेगा जिससे कि औद्योगिक विकास को गति मिलेगी। लेकिन पर्यावरण विशेषज्ञों ने इस परियोजना को जैव विविधता और वन्य जीवों के लिए बहुत ही गंभीर खतरा बताया है। विज्ञान एवं पर्यावरण केंद्र और डाउन टू अर्थ जैसी संस्थाओं के अनुसार यह क्षेत्र हाथियों के लिए प्राकृतिक आवास है। साथ ही इस परियोजना के परिणाम स्वरूप लगभग 10000 से अधिक लोगों को यहां से विस्थापित होना पड़ेगा। जिसके लिए यहां पर रहने वाले आदिवासियों ने बहुत ही लंबे समय तक इसका विरोध किया और साथ ही देश देश की नागरिकों ने भी उनके विरोध में सोशल मीडिया के द्वारा साथ दिया लेकिन इसके बाद भी बहुत से स्थानों पर खनन की अनुमति दे दी गई है और लोगों का संघर्ष अभी तक जारी है।

इसी तरह सरकार उत्तराखंड में चार धाम ऑल वेदर रोड प्रोजेक्ट को पर्यटन कनेक्टिविटी और सुरक्षा के लिए आवश्यक मानती है लेकिन वाडिया हिमालय विज्ञान संस्थान के अनुसार हिमालय अभी भी बहुत नवीन निर्मित प्रवचन करना है यहां पर यदि इस तरह से वनों का कटाव तथा हाईवे और सुरंग आदि निर्माण के लिए पर्वतों में भारी मशीनी कार्य एवं विस्फोट किए जाएंगे तो भूस्खलन भूमि दर्शन और बाढ़ जैसी बड़ी प्राकृतिक आपदाओं का खतरा बढ़ सकता है। जोशीमठ का भयंकर भूमि धंसाव इसका सबसे बड़ा प्रमाण है।

सिर्फ यही नहीं अरावली पर्वतमाला, जो दिल्ली-एनसीआर के लिए एक प्राकृतिक सुरक्षा कवच का काम करता है, पिछले कुछ वर्षों में अवैध खनन और निर्माण गतिविधियों के कारण लगातार विवादों में है। वर्ष 2022-23 में पंजाब भूमि संरक्षण अधिनियम(PLPA) में कुछ ऐसे बदलाव प्रस्तावित किए गए थे जिसके अनुसार अरावली में निर्माण गतिविधियाँ और बढ़ सकती थी जिससे वहां की पारिस्थितिकी को बहुत नुकसान पहुंचेगा। हालांकि सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने इसके लागू होने पर रोक लगाई। उसके बाद भी यह देखा गया कि अवैध खनन निर्माण की गतिविधियां पूरी तरह से रुकी नहीं है अभी भी जारी है जिन पर कोई ठोस कदम नहीं उठाए जा रहे हैं।

वही हाल ही की बात की जाए तो केन बेतवा नदी जोड़ परियोजना आजकल सुर्खियों में है। स्थानीय महिलाएं अपने बच्चों को लेकर प्रदर्शन कर रही हैं। क्योंकि इस बांध के बनने के करीब 21 गांव डूब जायेंगे जिसके कारण लगभग 2000 से अधिक परिवारों को विस्थापन करना पड़ेगा और उनकी आजीविका के साधन पूरी तरह से खत्म हो जाएंगे। सिर्फ यही नहीं इससे पन्ना टाइगर रिजर्व का लगभग 10 प्रतिशत हिस्सा डूब सकता है जो बाघों के प्रजनन और रहने के लिए सबसे अधिक सुरक्षित माना जाता है। लेकिन सरकार के अनुसार यह परियोजना बुंदेलखंड क्षेत्र की पानी की समस्या का समाधान है। जबकि जल विशेषज्ञ बताते हैं की केन में इतना पानी नहीं है जिससे इस परियोजना को सही तरीके से चलाया जा सके। स्थानीय लोगों की पानी की समस्या को और भी अन्य छोटे और पुराने तरीकों से भी हल किया जा सकता है।

इन सभी परियोजनाओं में एक बात सामान्य है कि सरकार ने पर्यावरण विशेषज्ञ द्वारा दी गई चुनौतियों और स्थानीय लोगों पर पड़ने वाले प्रभावों को पूरी तरह से नजरअंदाज किया है। इसके बाद सरकार 2047 तक सतत विकास के दावे करती है लेकिन जमीनी स्तर पर यह विकास कुछ नवीनीकरण परियोजनाओं के अलावा कहीं भी दिखाई नहीं देता। इन परिस्थितियों को देखकर यह कहना बिल्कुल भी गलत नहीं होगा कि विकास और सतत विकास के बीच जो संतुलन की बातें हैं वह केवल नीतियों में है जबकि भूमिगत सच्चाई इससे बिल्कुल अलग है और यदि यही स्थिति बनी रही तो यह विरोधाभास भविष्य की एक बड़े पर्यावरणीय और सामाजिक संगठन का कारण बन सकते हैं।

प्रिया कुशवाहा  
तृतीय वर्ष

## AI's thirst: A Growing Toll on Our Planet

The world has been largely blinded by the brilliance of AI's benefits that it has failed to see the deepening scars it leaves upon our environment. Since the emergence of various AI platforms like ChatGPT, Claude and, Gemini, people have started reconstructing their lives around them, granting them complete access to our world.

While we address certain issues linked to our daily use of artificial intelligence, like privacy concerns, data security and fear of losing jobs, one major concern often goes unnoticed: The toll it takes on our planet.

According to Exploding Topics, over 66 per cent of people currently use AI on a regular basis. Nearly 1.8 billion people worldwide have used AI tools, with 500-600 million engaging daily. Around 78 per cent of organisations use AI in at least one business function. These figures are only set to grow as we head towards our future where our digital habits cause disastrous changes in the environment. Every prompt we send and every image we generate comes with a hidden cost of large amounts of electricity and millions of gallons of water being used.

As the unric.org puts it, the rise in AI usage has raised the demand for more data and computing. This trend draws out a sustainability challenge, as the massive requirement of water and energy of these systems pose a serious strain on our natural resources. The AI's hardware life cycle, from raw material extraction, production, transportation to data centre construction, followed by e-waste management, maintenance and disposal, is complex. Each stage has its own environmental impact. According to Unric.org, most AI servers are stored in data centres, which produce electronic waste and can contain toxic chemicals such as mercury and lead. Vast amounts of electricity is consumed by data centres, leading to the emission of greenhouse gases. They also require large amounts of water for construction and to cool the electrical components. By 2027, global AI demand is expected to consume 4.2-6.6 billion cubic metres of water, surpassing Denmark's total annual water withdrawal of 4.6 cubic metres.

Though we often talk about the digital economy as something virtual or in the 'cloud,' it actually depends on a lot of physical material. Computers, their parts along with the infrastructure of the building that holds them are made from plastic, glass, ceramics and, various minerals and metals. Data centres also need special minerals and rare elements that are often mined from the earth in ways that hurt the environment. In fact, making just one 2kg computer uses up about 800kgs of raw materials.

AI tools like ChatGPT use much more power than regular search engines. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA) a single ChatGPT request requires ten times more electricity than a Google search, costing about 0.36 cents (USD) each time. In 2021, AI made up a very small part of the world's total energy use and pollution. However, as AI use grows, energy demand will increase. So it is important to use clean power sources to keep pollution low. The vast amount of energy, consumed by data centres that host AI technology, comes from fossil fuels, contributing to GHG emissions. As stated by UNEP, in 2022, data centres accounted for about 1 per cent of global electricity demand, which is only expected to rise as the number of data centres have already been increased from 500,000 in 2012 to 8 million today. As experts predict, AI's escalating energy needs will sustain this rapid growth.

Even though AI affects the environment, it can also help fix it. According to the UNEP's Climate Technology Progress Report 2024, AI is becoming increasingly important in mapping renewable energy potential. However AI can't replace the actual equipment and management systems essential for the energy transition. We need strong governance frameworks to make sure AI is used responsibly in energy projects. Government can also create plans to reuse materials and reduce the growing demand for ICT hardware and infrastructure. However, money is still a big problem especially in poorer countries, making it hard for them to use AI to help the environment. Governments and global groups are working to lower the damage AI does to nature. More than 190 countries have agreed to follow UNESCO Recommendations on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, focusing on using AI in the right way, including protecting the environment. The European Union has also passed a new law called the AI Act to control how AI affects the planet. While AI and digital growth help society and the economy move forward, their effect on nature is disastrous. It impacts the health of our planet and ours as well. Since data centres need more and more water, minerals and rare elements, it is high time we pay heed to the damage being caused by these practices.

If we ignore these hidden costs, it can lead to gradual catastrophic consequences for the future of our planet. In conclusion, while we wait for large scale industrial changes and government rules to take full effect, what we can do at a common person level is to switch to more eco friendly search engines. Examples include Ecosia, which uses its profits to plant trees and OceanHero, which helps clean plastic from the sea. Besides, we can focus on recycling electronic waste as well. By balancing our use of AI tools with mindful habits, we can enjoy the benefits of the digital age without scarring the earth irreparably.

# The Green Mirage: Selling the Green Dream, How PR Turned Environmental Responsibility Into a Marketing Campaign

Kamal Gulati  
3<sup>rd</sup> Year

Grab a cart at any Modern Bazaar in South Delhi today and you'll see it everywhere: items wrapped in earthy brown packaging, labels stamped with leaves and recycling symbols, brands screaming "green" on their labels. Everything looks quite green! The question is how much is it?

Greenwashing" occurs when companies show more "green" responsibility than they actually have in reality. It originated in the 1980s when environmental activist Jay Westerveld saw that hotels asked guests to re-use towels "to save the planet", while the same hotels were being built in fragile beach ecosystems.

Forty years later, the game of greenwashing is much more complex, more costly and more prevalent, than we really realise. Companies employ whole PR teams to develop the right environmental message. They don't always have the follow-through, though.

Greenwashing manifests itself in a variety of ways. Occasionally it's making use of a very vague terminology, the kind of language that sounds right but doesn't actually mean anything, words such as "natural," "eco-friendly," or "sustainable" that have no legal definition but can be applied to almost anything. It is also usually a selective disclosure, the company can boast and shout about a green project, while remaining silent about three other major polluting projects. Other times it's offsetting, paying someone else to plant trees (or tell consumers they are doing so) so you can continue to do what you do while you're at work (Hello, Mamaearth!).

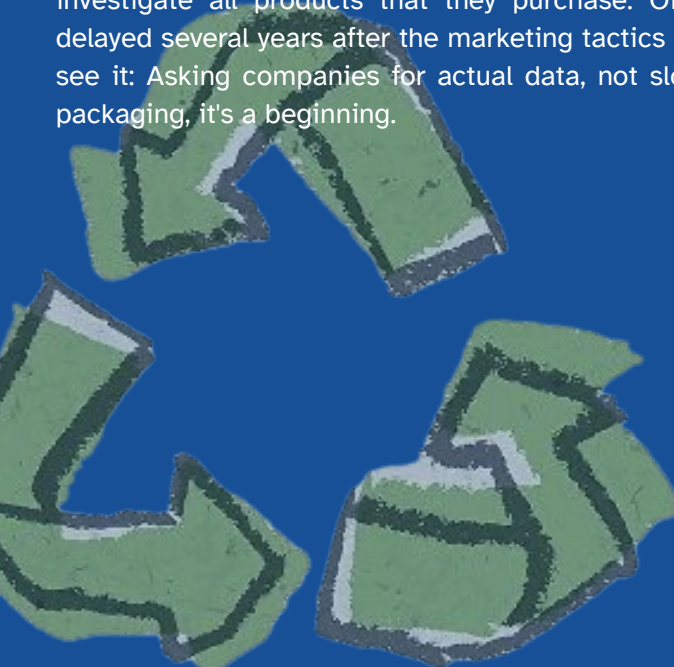
Take for example Hindustan Unilever. The company has said it is "plastic positive," picking up and recycling more plastic waste than it produces. It's quite impressive until you remember that HUL is also one of the largest manufacturers of single-use plastic sachets in India. Those little bottles of shampoo and soap with the price of five or ten rupees? They appear all over India and in rural markets, and are almost impossible to recycle. The sachets were made to be profitable and easy to sell, not sustainable. It does not make up for this if you collect plastic waste somewhere else.

Similarly, H&M has introduced a "Conscious Collection" of what it claims to be "sustainable" clothes, and even developed a website scoreboard that rates its products on environmental impact. That was investigated by the Norwegian regulations and it turned out that the method of comparison was misleading: The "Conscious" line did not perform as well as regular H&M clothes and in some cases it was worse. The score cards were taken out of sight.

## Why it really matters?

Greenwashing is not only unpleasant, it's quite unhelpful. It confuses consumers who are looking to make better choices. It puts unfair competition against companies that are investing in sustainable practices and can't afford to match the marketing budgets of companies that are not. If the company is not actually green, and it's "credited" for being green, then there's less pressure on the company to "actually" be green. When everyone is doing it, it's not easy to determine who is doing it straight and who is just doing it for the "PR" factor.

There's no simple answer to how to solve the problem. Consumers are not able to investigate all products that they purchase. Often the regulatory response is delayed several years after the marketing tactics are used. But naming it when we see it: Asking companies for actual data, not slogans, for transparency, not just packaging, it's a beginning.



# Jayshree Vencatesan: A 'Maami in a Saree' Who Helped Save Chennai's Wetlands

Nidhi  
2<sup>nd</sup> Year

Jayshree Vencatesan, co-founder of Care Earth Trust, has become the first Indian to receive the Ramsar Award for "Wetland Wise Use." The award is given under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands which recognises efforts in sustainable wetland management. According to reports by Times Now, she is also among twelve women changemakers globally identified by the Ramsar Secretariat.

Climate shifts and frequent city flooding have brought fresh spotlight to saving wetlands. Though long overlooked, spaces like Chennai's Pallikaranai Marsh matter more now than before. Urban growth along with garbage disposal has shrunk this area sharply through the years. For many years, Vencatesan has stood firm in protecting such fragile lands across India.

She began her work with just \$350, at a time when wetlands were widely dismissed as useless land. Despite limited resources, her efforts gradually changed how people perceived these ecosystems. Because of studies run through her group, the marsh's role came into focus, home to more than 337 kinds of plants and animals. What once looked barren turned out to be alive. Out here, migration patterns shape much of what happens.

Now as cities grow, India moves to protect its wetlands. Through programs tracking water areas plus naming key zones internationally, awareness climbs slowly. Still, signs show city swamps shrinking under buildings, choked by waste seeping in day after day.

Vencatesan's approach stands out as something that actually works. Her method links science with community involvement when protecting nature in fast-expanding urban areas. Take Chennai - rising waters hit often now, yet nearby marshes quietly soak up heavy rains. Because she pointed at this link, city planners started seeing wet spots not as wastelands but as shields against floods. What she built didn't just stay in journals; it slipped into real decisions shaping the city.

Science shapes her method. Talking to The Indian Express, she described conservation tangled in layers. Old property records drag things down. Rights to use land are often a mess. Paperwork piles up. Progress stalls because of these hurdles.

Looking closely, she sees how tangled green rules get across India. One group acts, then another must follow - villages, state teams, watchdogs all moving at once. When goals clash or steps differ, things stall, proving that wetland care needs smoother links between players.

Old claims on land sometimes block protection work, she noticed. Wetlands struggle to come back, she explained during that talk, because of such hurdles, although nature demands recovery. An entirely female crew runs her research projects. Care Earth Trust became a path for women in science under her guidance, building space where more join conservation study.

Now Tamil Nadu has eighteen places listed under Ramsar. As cities grow fast and weather turns unpredictable, what she does matters more each year. Wetlands must be shielded if growth is to last, that much is clear. Jayshree Vencatesan's acknowledgment shines light on how crucial marshes are across India - showing proof-driven efforts shape real decisions behind the scenes.



# Dying Rivers of India: When Policies Exist But Action Fails

READS



Akanksha  
1<sup>st</sup> Year

India's rivers, once symbols of life and purity, are now becoming carriers of pollution and neglect. To understand this issue, it is important to define river depletion. River depletion refers to the reduction in the quality and quantity of water in a river over time, to the point where the river can no longer function properly as a natural ecosystem. The report of NITI Aayog and Central water commission states that Indian rivers decline at the rate of 1-3 per cent every year.

India has over 400 rivers, including around 14 major river systems and numerous minor rivers and tributaries. India has both perennial and seasonal rivers that support the country's livelihood. In North India, most existing rivers are Himalayan-Ganga, Brahmaputra, and Indus. Additionally, people in India worship rivers as sacred. The very rivers that people revere with devotion are often the same ones they pollute through their actions. Around 60 per cent of waste at Varanasi ghats comes from human activities; according to NEERI and an environmental report, 8 million tonnes of flowers are dumped into the river every year. While these practices are deeply rooted in cultural and religious belief, their cumulative impact significantly increase the organic and solid waste load on the river. Over time, this leads to reduced water quality, affecting both aquatic life and human usage. Along with ritual waste, untreated sewage and industrial discharge are also contributing factors. Billions of liters of sewage enter the river daily, according to a Harvard University case study. A recent ground report based on local observations and interviews reveals the growing intensity of the problem.

Ms. Puja Kumari, a faculty member of Geography, stated that the dilution capacity of the Ganga is higher than that of the Yamuna; however, she emphasized that addressing river pollution is a shared responsibility of both the government and the public. Following this, Mr. Abhishek Kumar, a former UPSC aspirant, highlighted that cremation practices along riverbanks contribute significantly to the problem, as partially burnt remains and ashes are often released into the water, affecting its quality. At this point, several residents expressed their concern about the situation. Asmita, a resident of Bihar, and Shiven, a resident of Uttar Pradesh, shared similar views, stating that ritual practices are a major cause of river pollution; according to them, "devotion becomes disaster." Lastly, Mr. Ranjit Mishra, a former Army officer, shared his past experiences. He said "While patrolling around the Jhelum River, we also faced problems due to pollution in the water and often had to carry our own drinking water." He also added that his unit started a campaign for cleaning the river. These responses clearly highlight the seriousness of the issue and the need for immediate attention.

While many countries have successfully managed and restored their rivers, India continues to struggle with implementation and enforcement. Rivers like the Thames have been revived through strict regulation; it was declared biologically dead in the 1950s and now supports over 100 fish species, according to the CPCB and the European Environment Agency. The Nile River is also regulated but is more predictable. Indian rivers continue to face high pollution due to weak enforcement. So, the point is, if global river management can succeed, India can also achieve it, and this can be accomplished through strict enforcement of environmental laws, efficient sewage treatment, public participation, and accountability in government schemes.

Rivers are not just flowing water; they are the lifeline of civilization, carrying the stories, faith, prayers, and survival of millions. Saving rivers, therefore, is not just an environmental duty; it is a reflection of who we are.

## जल संकट: भारत की अनदेखी समस्या

प्रतिभा वर्मा  
प्रथम वर्ष

मिल जाए तो मिट्टी है न मिले वो सोना है। अब कुछ वर्षों में, यह लोकोक्ति बदलकर "मिल जाए तो तेल है और न मिले वो भूजल है," होने वाली है। "जल जीवन है।" पर ये जीवन किताबों के पन्ने, अखबार के सुर्खियों, विज्ञापन बोर्ड और नारों तक ही स्पष्ट दिखाई देता है। जो नदी, समुद्र हमें पूर्ण रूप से मैली दिखाई पड़ रही है, उसके लिए कदम नहीं बढ़ रहे, तो भूजल की समस्याओं पर बात करना आज की पीढ़ी में शून्य के समान है। धरती की गोद में बहती, शांत, अदृश्य, उदार, कभी पृथ्वी का सबसे स्वच्छ जल भंडार। आज वही जल भंडार एक मौन संकट बन चुका है। यह संकट शोर नहीं करता, अखबार की सुर्खियों नहीं बनती, लेकिन हर सूखते कुएं और हर गहराते बोरवेल के साथ अपनी कहानी कहती है।



भारत दुनिया में भूजल का सबसे बड़ा उपभोक्ता है। पृथ्वी पर मौजूद कुल जल का केवल 0.6% से 0.76 प्रतिशत ही भूजल है। वर्ल्ड बैंक और सेंट्रल ग्राउंड वाटर रिपोर्ट की रिपोर्ट्स बताती हैं कि देश की लगभग 85% ग्रामीण पेयजल आवश्यकता और 60% से अधिक सिंचाई भूजल पर निर्भर है। लेकिन विडंबना देखिए, जो स्रोत आधार है, वही सबसे तेजी से खत्म हो रहा है। नीति आयोग की एक रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, भारत के कई बड़े शहर जैसे दिल्ली, बेंगलुरु और हैदराबाद आने वाले वर्षों में गंभीर जल संकट का सामना कर सकते हैं। बिहार में हो रहे भू-जल अतिदोहन पर केंद्रीय भू-जल बोर्ड की एक रिपोर्ट सामने आई है, 20-25 साल में पेयजल का भारी संकट का सामना करना पड़ सकता है। 2004 से 2025 तक भू-जल का इस्तेमाल में लगभग 34 प्रतिशत की वृद्धि हुई है। भू-जल दोहन का स्तर 2004 से 2025 तक बढ़कर 46.2 प्रतिशत हुआ है।

पश्चिमी उत्तर प्रदेश, हरियाणा और पंजाब के खेतों में हर साल बोरवेल और गहरे होते जा रहे हैं। कभी 50-60 फीट पर मिलने वाला पानी अब कई जगह 200-300 फीट नीचे जा चुका है। महाराष्ट्र के मराठवाड़ा क्षेत्र में सूखे के दौरान, महिलाएं कई किलोमीटर चलकर पानी लाती हैं। दंगमल गांव की "पानी बाई" जैसी प्रथाएं इसे खबर नहीं, बल्कि जमीनी स्तर पर हो रहे जल त्रासदी का प्रतीक है।

इस संकट के पीछे कारण भी उतने ही गहरे हैं। जैसे -बढ़ती जनसंख्या, तेजी से हो रहे शहरीकरण, और सबसे अहम अंधाधुंध भू-जल दोहन। हरियाणा और पंजाब में धान की खेती, जो अधिक पानी मांगती है, भूजल पर अत्यधिक दबाव डाल रही है। वहीं शहरों में कंक्रीट की बढ़ती परतें बारिश के पानी को जमीन में समाने ही नहीं देती, जिससे रिचार्ज की प्रक्रिया बाधित होती है।

फिर भी उम्मीद की किरण बाकी है। राजस्थान के कुछ गांवों में पारंपरिक जोहड़ और तालाब पुनर्जीवित किए गए हैं, जिससे भूजल स्तर में सुधार देखने को मिला है। सरकार की योजनाएं, जैसे जल जीवन हरियाली मिशन और अटल भूजल योजना भी इस दिशा में काम कर रही हैं। लेकिन असली बदलाव तब आएगा, जब हर व्यक्ति जल संरक्षण को अपनी जिम्मेदारी समझेगा। भूजल की कहानी किसी एक राज्य या क्षेत्र की नहीं, बल्कि पूरे भारत की है। यह एक ऐसा संकट है, जो चुपचाप हमारे पैरों के नीचे पनप रहा है। अगर हमने अब भी इस पर ध्यान नहीं दिया, तो वह दिन दूर नहीं जब धरती के इस मौन साथी की आवाज़ हमेशा के लिए खो जाएगी।

# The कविता Corner

## STILL HERE

One day, when they peel back my skin,  
they will discover what has always lived within.  
not ruin, not loss, not an ending tale,  
but a world still breathing beneath the veil.

My rivers run quiet, but they have not gone.  
My forests stand patient, still reaching for dawn.  
The roots hold their ground through the seasons  
of doubt, and the seed at my centre is still finding  
its route.

So I hereby declare, I come in layers.

Beneath the surface they forgot to read  
lies a canopy green, and a willing seed  
a shade that is waiting to shelter again,  
a bloom that is resting between the rains.

Beneath that still my warmest, truest core  
the strength to restore what was broken before.  
For the river has always remembered the sea.  
The soil has never forgotten how to be free.

I may seem silent. I may seem slow.  
But silence is simply the language of grow.  
Beneath every winter a spring holds its place,  
beneath every scar blooms unhurried grace.

The seed at my center is whole and bright.  
It has lived through the drought. It remembers  
the light.  
It carries the memory of forests once tall,  
and it holds, without fear, the promise of fall.

That what falls to the earth does not fall in vain,  
for the soil knows how to make life again.



~ Anjali Pandey  
3<sup>rd</sup> year

## धरती की पुकार

हर साँस में बसी है उसकी खामोश कहानी,  
धरती जो अभी भी हमारी मेहरबानी।

कभी नीला आकाश, हरियाली का साथ था,  
अब धुंध में खो गया, सब कुछ धुँधला सा।

पेड़ों की छाँव, नदियों का मधुर गीत था,  
अब सूनी राहें, खामोश हर रिश्ता।

हमने ही तो काटे पेड़, विकास के नाम पर,  
भूल गए मिट्टी का वो पुराना प्यार।

फिर भी कहीं जल रही उम्मीद की लौ,  
हर छोटा कदम बना सकता नई राह को।

संभाल लो इसे अभी, ये आखिरी चेतावनी,  
धरती ही हमारा घर बस यही है कहानी।

~ सृजनी कुमारी  
तृतीय वर्ष

## FUN FACT

THE BACKGROUND OF THIS PAGE IS A PROCESS CALLED SUNPRINTING.

SUNPRINTING, ALSO KNOWN AS CYANOTYPE PRINTING, IS A CAMERA-FREE ART PROCESS THAT USES SUNLIGHT TO CREATE DEEP BLUE PRINTS ON PAPER OR FABRIC. THE RICH BLUE COLOUR COMES FROM A NATURAL CHEMICAL REACTION BETWEEN IRON-BASED COMPOUNDS AND UV LIGHT FROM THE SUN. SINCE IT RELIES ON NATURAL SUNLIGHT INSTEAD OF ELECTRICITY OR DIGITAL PRINTING, IT'S CONSIDERED AN ECO-FRIENDLY AND LOW-WASTE ART FORM, TURNING NATURE INTO A PART OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS ITSELF!