

Environmental Problems: Causes and Solutions

- Editors -

Dr. S. V. Rankhamb
Dr. V. B. Kulkarni

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A REVIEW ON ‘SWACCHTA- PAKHWAAADA’ UNDER ‘NAMAMI GANGE PROJECT’: ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PUBLIC AWARENESS.

Aabshar Abbasi

School of Media and Communication studies
Doon University, Dehradun Uttarakhand
Email- aabshar.doon@gmail.com

Introduction: ‘Namami Gange’ is an ambitious national mission, approved as a ‘flagship program’ by Union Government of India in June 2014 to conserve and rejuvenate the water of holy river Ganga and its tributaries. The main objective of this mission is the abatement of pollution and conservation of river Ganga to be achieved till the end of year 2022. It’s the integrated project of budget of Rs. 20.000 crores, which will be outlay for reformation of the quality of river Ganga water. This is the project cover around 8 states and 42 towns and in total 12 rivers throughout the country. Uttarakhand is one of the states covered majorly under this project predominantly in the part of Rishikesh and Haridwar cities.

River Ganga originates in the Himalaya Mountains at Gomukh, the terminus of the Gongotri Glacier, State of Uttarakhand. When the ice of this glacier melts, it forms the clear waters of the Bhagirathi River. As the Bhagirathi River flows down the Himalayas, it joins the Alaknanda River, officially forming the Ganges River. (national geographic.org, n.d.)

For this project, ministry of drinking water and sanitation, State government of Uttarakhand is practicing it's best for the success of the desirous project 'Namami gange' and to accomplish its goal to clean Ganga river and its tributaries till 2022. There are various dimensions of this projects which are regarded as the pillars of this project and best described as the action plan for this mission.

Major pillars of Namami Gange Project:

The major pillars which will help into turning this project a reality and to help in upgrading the ecological balance and environment upgradation are-

- Sewerage treatment Infrastructure
- River front Development
- River surface cleaning
- Bio Diversity
- Afforestation
- Public awareness
- Industrial affluent monitoring
- Ganga Gram

Uttarakhand Govt. is keeping its eye on every aspect of this project and has invested crores to achieve the goal. One major concern or the pillar of this project is 'Public awareness' which has a direct impact on this project. Public is an important asset of any dream project to be accomplished.

Public Awareness:

Under this mission, various state Ganga committees have been formed nationally and under the supervision of these committee's series of various activities like events, workshops, seminars and conferences were organized to make a strong move towards public outreach and community participation. Many

rallies, campaigns, exhibitions, shram Daan, cleanliness drives, plantation drives and other development programs were conducted under this mission. Media is also playing a significant role in the wider publicity of this program. The coverage, advertorials and other resource materials have been published in mass media like Print, Electronic and social media. Digital media or social media which now considered as the fastest medium of information dissemination is casting a dominant role to enhance the visibility of the program.

National mission for Clean Ganga, a registered society working under the department of water resources, river development and Ganga rejuvenation has a wide presence in the social media platform like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc. Gange theme song, which is an official anthem of national mission on clean Ganga has also been released on YouTube.

One of the recent activities under Namami Gange mission is “Swacchata Pakhwaada” which was commenced from 16-31st March for public awareness. This was a 16-day program initiated by the central Govt. and were implemented in states with the help of state wise committees formed for this program which was further completed with the support of district committees and institutional nodal officers working for this project. On the directives of state govt. various institutions like state universities, colleges, institutes conducted swacchta-pakhwada from 16-31 March 2021. They organized various activities like awareness rallies, cleanliness drives, interactive sessions, poster & other competition and different campaign for public awareness and visibility. But the success of this program was totally dependent on the visibility in print, electronic and social media as well. This is again a challenge for them as earlier in 2018, according to the ground report from Haridwar, it seems far of achieving its goal for cleaning Ganga.

Role of Social Media in Public awareness:

Community outreach is one of the major concern in the issuance of any public policy or the implementation of any public development project. Media as an agent of social change has a specific responsibility to fill the gap between the administrative bodies and the local public. As the public is dependent on media for their social learning or awareness need, media has to play a crucial role to fulfill this need and also sometimes as an educator or a public opinion leader. On the environmental issues the responsibility of Media is more elaborated and pervasive. Beside all the activities and efforts from the Government and other executive bodies working on the project its more prominent how this project has been pitched among the people or public and for this reason more and better visibility is needed in media or social media. The success of this project is subject to the involvement of local people living around the areas near river banks and other city areas which is again directly proportionate to the visibility and awareness about the scheme.

Though this project has an extensive presence on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube but it's more important to focus on its authenticity and interactive side. For instance, if we search for the Facebook page for 'Namami Gange' we will find a few pages named similar and creates a state of confusion among netizens. The Namami Gange, Uttrakhand is the Facebook page (<http://spmguttrakhand.uk.gov.in/>) liked by 1708 people, is considered to be the official page of Namami Gange, Uttarakhand for National mission for clean Ganga by Ministry of water resources , river Development and rejuvenation. It is an official page that informs about the various initiatives taken by the state govt. under Namami Gange Program but the last post (retrieved on 10 April 2021) is updated is September 2018. There is no information regarding the recent '*Swacchta*

Pakhwaada’ or any other event organized after 2018. There is one another page named with the similar name in Devnagiri (uekfe xaxs mRrjk[k.M) which is last updated in 2017. Another Facebook Page run from New Delhi (<https://mncg.nic.in>) is the page by NMCG, Government of India which is updated and informing about the ‘Ganga Quest 2021’ event in the last updated post. Also, the Twitter account of ‘Namami Gange UK’, which is run from Dehradun, the capital city, was last updated in 2018 itself.

The YouTube channel named ‘Namami Gange’ with a tag line in hindi “*Nahi rukenge, swaccha karenge*” has 9.82 thousand subscribers and has a better reach among youth can be a medium of publicity with number of updated videos and broadcasted content on ‘Ganga Quest 2021’. Again there is no information regarding the Swacchata Pakhwada 2021.

The Universities, Colleges and other institutions who are working as the nodal agencies who are working on this project as a part of their community outreach program have conducted different programs and were covered by the regional print media like Amar Ujala, Dainik Jagran e.t.c and also in local electronic media news channel & portals in a regular event category or follow ups of the event organized. Some of the agencies have updated it in their institutional websites or their regular social media accounts, but it’s more important to reach to the grassroots level so that people become more aware about these events. The various nodal agencies are casting their role by conducting awareness campaigns and other activities but the success of any program, is not just reaching out to the people it’s more about reaching to their minds. How much enthusiastic they are about cleaning their surroundings and how well they are acquainted with their responsibility towards their surrounding and environment. Now, the more important point is to

understand the ground realities and hurdles in the implementations of the schemes and projects.

Conclusion and suggestions-

The Public awareness is a very important aspect when it comes to the success of any project. Any scheme of project which has a direct impact on public or demands an extensive public participation needs to be address actively. Media being the fourth pillar has a definite responsibility towards society and it should take the matter of general interest more seriously. The way the public awareness through media has been handles or executed should be more active and upgraded in presentation style. Though, social media has certain issues pertaining to gatekeeping and legitimacy, but it substantially has a parallel power to reach people to a greater extent. The regular upgradation of the social media site and YouTube channels can emerge as game changer and can help in making people more aware about this mission. Public awareness and people participation goes aligned and it's become supreme to take an account of giving it more space and relevance in accordance with the future goals and objectives for the success of this pioneer project.

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