

## Commentary

### ***Ganga Aarti: A Case Study of an Initiative to Disseminate Message of Environmental Peace building***

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#### **Abstract**

This study investigates whether Ganga Aarti, a kind of religious ritual performed before revered river Ganges can be useful in disseminating message of environment peace building. A thorough research on significance of Ganga and the mythological aspect of Ganga Aarti has been done. An effort has been done to make the ritual a tool for spreading message of keeping river clean and pollution free. Religiosity imbibed into society can be helpful in communicating the issues to save the environment which is threatened daily by the unbridled industrial growth. The mythological component of the ritual has been analyzed extensively and has been used to communicate message of peace building by exploiting religious sentiments of devotees.

#### **Keywords**

Ganga, Ganga Aarti, symbols, pollution, Hindus, Ghats, Varanasi

#### **Introduction**

**Idy dyq'k Hkaxs! LoxZ lksiku laxsA rjy rj rjaxs! nsoh xaxs! izlhnAA** (Mehta 2004)  
(Destroyer of all the sins, forms steps to Heaven, withmost liquefied waves- Goddess Ganga grant us your blessings). India is a land of rivers. The **Ganges** also pronounced as **Ganga** in Devan?gar? and in most Indian languages is the major river in the Indian subcontinent flowing east through the eponymous plains of northern India (Mathew, 2007) into Bangladesh. The 2,510 km river begins at the Gangotri Glacier in the Indian state of Uttarakhand, in the central Himalayas, and drains into the Bay of Bengal through its vast delta in the Sunderbans. The Ganges and its tributaries drain a large - about one million square kilometres - and fertile basin that support one of the world's highest-density human populations. It should be noted that almost

half of the population of India live on one-third of the landscape within 500 km of the Himalayan range along the Gangetic plains north of Devanagari.<sup>1</sup>

### **Religious Significance of Ganga**

Ganga has enjoyed a position of reverence for millennia among India's Hindus, by whom it is worshipped in its personified form as the goddess Ganga. From its origin till its end in the ocean, Ganga is 1500 miles long. Nile River is almost double of it. Even Amazon, Mississippi is longer than it. Then how come Ganga is referred as the greatest river? Ganga is greater in the sense that for the forty three crores of Hindus and others it is the most venerated river. For all of them Ganges is the mother- Mother Ganga (Newby, 1973).

### **Ganga in Varanasi**

Situated on the banks of River Ganges, Varanasi is considered by some to be the most holy city in Hinduism. It is also known as other names as Kashi and Banaras.

Okkjk.klh ija rhFkZ xkS;Zs izkg egs''oj%A HkqfDreqfDrizna iq.;a olrka x`.krka gfje~AA (Sharma, 1999). (Varanasi is the greatest Tirth as said by Lord Shiva to Goddess Parvati. Those who reside in Varanasi get salvation.)The Ganga River flows from south to north in a crescent form only in Varanasi. There are 84 Ghats (stairways to the riverbank), forming a symbolic chain of holy sites. Among the 84 Ghats, 5 described as more merit giver and sacred, called Panchatirthis, are - Asi, Dashashwamedh, Manikarnika, PanchaGanga and Adi Keshava.<sup>2</sup>

Taking holy dip at these five Ghats provides merit of bathing at all the Ghats. These five Ghats symbolize microcosmic body of Vishnu, respectively as head, chest, navel, thighs and the feet. Thus the area along the Ghats is eulogized as Vishnu's body. The luminous city is regarded as being lifted up by the trident (Trishul) of Lord Shiva and never conquered, ruined or vanquished. Varanasi means Ganga, Vishwanath, and Salvation. Here every work or ritual begins with Ganga and ends in Ganga. There is a popular saying 'Ganga Nahaye' (I have had a bath in Ganga) meaning I have finally done my duty and in return I ask for nothing. For a Banarasi-Ganga is the mother. She is his life. She speaks to him, she sings for him, she awakens him, she sleeps after he sleeps and when he is in pain or worry she affectionately takes him in her lap. She enchants wearing the Piyari (yellow cloth) but when angry she becomes Mahakali (the goddess of destruction) ( Mehta, 2004).

## **Aarti**

Aarti is a Hindu ritual, in which light from wicks soaked in ghee (purified butter) or camphor is offered to one or more deities. Aartis also refer to the songs sung in praise of the deity, when offering of lamps is being offered. Aarti is performed and sung to develop the highest love for God. "Aa" means "towards or to", and "rati" means "right or virtue" in Sanskrit. Earlier Aarti used to be performed by married woman and courtesans. One of Primary object of this ceremony was to counteract the influence of the evil eye and any ill-effects which, according to Hindu belief, may arise from the jealous and spiteful looks of ill-intentioned persons (Dubois, 1978).

It is performed during almost all Hindu ceremonies and occasions. It involves the circulating of an 'Aarti plate' around a person or deity and is generally accompanied by the singing of songs in praise of that deva or person (many versions exist). In doing so, the plate itself is supposed to acquire the power of the deity. The priest circulates the plate to all those present. As in praise of Hindu deity God or Goddess hymns are sung in form of Aarti likewise in many holy places of India; Rishikesh, Haridwar and Varanasi, Aarti of River Ganga is done as Ganga is considered to be a form of Goddess. Since Ganga is a symbol of belief and faith for millions of Hindus, thus to show their gratitude and respect its worship is done in form of Aarti.

## **Historicity of Ganga Aarti at Varanasi**

Ganga Aarti was performed for the first time in Varanasi at Panch-Ganga Ghat. Panch-Ganga Ghat is said to be the confluence (sangam) of five rivers namely; Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati, Kirana and Dhutpapa. At this Ghat only famous epic "Ganga Lahiri" by Pandit Jagannath was written. So the Aarti done at this Ghat carries special Punya (blessings). With the support and initiative of former king of Kashi, Dr. Vibhuti Narain Singh, the main Panda (priest) of Panch-anga Ghat Vijay Shankar Upadhyaya started Ganga Aarti on 11th November 1984. This has continued regularly till date.

The Aarti is performed during sunrise and on special occasion like Kartik Purnima and Ganga Dusheera it is done in evening also. Many dignitaries like former president of India Gyani Jail singh have participated in the Aarti. From Panch-Ganga Ghat soon the Aarti spread in other Ghats also like Durga Ghat, Lal Ghat, Shitala Ghat, Dasaswamedh Ghat and Assi Ghat.

Ganga-Aarti at Dasaswamedh Ghat is performed in the most lavish and grandeur way. Ganga Seva Nidhi organizes it. Ganga Seva Nidhi founded in 1992 by Shri

Satyendra Mishra, is a philanthropic Non-Governmental Organization registered under the Amended Societies Registration Act 1860 with Registration No. 207.

### **Ganga Aarti at Dasaswamedh Ghat**

Ganga Aarti started at Dasaswamedh Ghat in 1992 by a philanthropic Non-Governmental Organization registered under the Amended Societies Registration Act 1860, Ganga Seva Nidhi founded by Shri Satyendra Mishra, with Registration No. 207. Earlier Ganga Aarti used to be performed at Kartik Purnima and Dev Deepawali only. Ganga Aarti started at regular basis on 31st December, 1999. Ganga Seva Nidhi celebrated this event as Millennium year. On the eve many spiritual leaders like Dalai Lama, B.K Modi, Chidananad Saraswati, etc... adorned the function. From then on Ganga Aarti was performed at Sun-rise and Sun-set regularly. Daily Ganga Aarti, followed by prayers and discourses, is a constructive effort of GSN to reawaken the latent consciousness of people towards the sordid impurities and pollution of Ganga.

Dev-Dipavali Mahotsava (on Karttika Purnima) - October-November, Ganga Dusshera Mahotsava (celebrated in commemoration of descent of the Divine Ganga on Earth) - May-June, are two main functions, which are held by GSN in which Ganga Aarti is performed on massive and lavish scale. Thousands of tourist flock to see the Aarti. Hindalco (Aditya Birla Group), Reliance Life Insurance, etc... sponsor the function.

### **Purpose of the Study**

According to Ian Harris, "Environmental Peace Building urges the application of standards of justice to human interactions with Nature, providing norms for fairness and equity so that all are treated with full human rights and dignity" (Mishce and Harris, 2008). Ganga Aarti is a initiative to protect environment through communication about importance of river Ganges in our daily lives. Most of the rituals performed in the Ganga Aarti at all these ghats are same like Sankalp Dharnam, Shodashopachar Poojnam. Generally three types of Aarti are done - Dhoop Aarti (Aarti done with incense), Jhar Aarti (Aarti done with lighted lamps) and Sayan Aarti (Aarti done with Camphor). There are many rituals (Karm-kand) used in Hindu religion. All the rituals especially during Puja (worship) are performed with the usage of lots of signs and symbols. Mudra (gesture), Mantra, High, medium, low note of sound during chanting of Mantras, Ingredients used during Puja, colors,

light, clothes, etc... carries different connotations with them. They communicate something. Since Hindu religion is very old and these Puja procedures exist in the society through centuries; that means there must be some meaning, rationale and logic associated with it. Whenever rituals like Ganga Aarti is performed hundreds and thousands gather to see it. What do these rituals communicate to them? What is the science behind them? Can Ganga Aarti serve as a medium to spread the message of environmental peace through control of pollution of the revered river Ganga. All these matters have been taken into consideration and therefore this issue has been chosen to be studied.

Varanasi being the holy city brings in thousands of pilgrims both from India and abroad to visit the city. Ganga Aarti imitating Haridwar and Rishikesh is playing a pivotal role in attracting tourists and therefore adding to the business of the city. Ganga Aarti has also helped in increasing awareness and spreading the communication about the cleanliness of Ganga among masses. All these factors compel to study this issue comprehensively.

### **Semiotics**

Semiotics or semiology is the study of sign processes (semiosis), and communication, signs and symbols, both individually and grouped into sign systems. It includes the study of how meaning is constructed and understood. A science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable; it would be part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology. Semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them (Wollen, 1969).

Dr. Bhanu Shankar Mehta in his book "Dhan Dhan Matu Gang", 2004 gives a complete picture of history, origin, current status, pollution in Ganga and what eminent historians and writers say about Ganga. According to him Ganga is an institution. The classical vedic learning of a Brahmin child begins here. Here they finalise the business contracts. They swear by Ganga, take vows in the name of Ganga. When the goal is achieved, they come to Ganga again. At the time of every sanskar and there are about 16 in the life of a Hindu viz. birth of a child, sacred, thread ceremony, marriage, etc. Ganga is the evidence (sakshi). After lone illness when one recovers, he comes here to offer thanks. For every desire fulfilled, Ganga is accredited. Elaborating further Dr. Mehta explains the importance of Ghats for offering prayers. He says that Ganga is a goddess in herself and worshipped by her own waters and

innumerable stones bathe in Ganga-Jal. French Scholar, Abbe Dubois in his book "Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies" (Dubois, 1978) talks about the various Hindu rituals being practiced in Hindu society. He gives an interesting reason for the invention of the practice of Aarti ceremony. According to Dubois, Aarti was invented to counteract the influence of the evil eye and ill-effects (drishti-dosha) on persons of high rank such as rajahs, governors of provinces, generals and other distinguished members of the society. Dubois says that Aarti used to be performed only by married women and courtesans. Widows would not be allowed, under any circumstances, to participate in it. Whenever people of high rank have been obliged to show themselves in public, or to speak to strangers, they invariably call for courtesans or dancing-girls from the temples to perform Aarti over them, and so avert any unpleasant consequences that might arise from the baleful glances to which they have been exposed. Kings and princes often had dancing-girls in their employ who do nothing else but perform this ceremony. Dubois, also writes about the religious connotations of Aarti. He says Aarti used to be performed for idols also. After the dancing-girls have finished all their other duties in the temple, they never fail to perform this ceremony twice daily over the images of the gods to whom their services were dedicated. It was performed with even more solemnity when these idols have been carried in procession through the streets, so as to turn aside malignant influences, to which the gods are as susceptible as any mortal object.

### **Methods**

Varanasi being the holy city brings in thousands of pilgrims both from India and abroad to visit the city. Ganga Aarti imitating Haridwar and Rishikesh is playing a pivotal role in attracting tourists and therefore adding to the business of the city. Ganga Aarti has also helped in increasing awareness and spreading the communication about the cleanliness of Ganga among masses. Whenever rituals like Ganga Aarti is performed hundreds and thousands gather to see it. What do these rituals communicate to them? What is the science behind them? Through centuries these rituals have existed in the society. Do these carry any rationale and logic behind them? How are they performed and what do these symbols signify? All these queries made it pertinent to decipher the rituals and symbols used in the Ganga Aarti to understand the actual meaning behind them. Whether there exists a rationale and logic associated with the various rituals (Karam-kand) or not. There are lot of ingredients and tools used in Ganga Aarti and Priests use various gestures during the aarti. Do these carry any meaning? There are different channels of communication through which public comes to know about Ganga Aarti. What are those?

Hence, the purpose to the study was to find the rationale, logic behind Ganga Aarti and to find a gap /divide between what priests say and what audience understands so that a communication strategy can be developed; incorporating message of saving Ganga from pollution, into the rituals and thereby creating awareness among masses. To achieve the purpose, the study was conducted in two phases. Since the study was to observe a process, that is, Ganga Aarti in depth, therefore a case study was done in phase-I. Only the Ganga Aarti held at Dasaswamedh Ghat was included in the study. Primary data based on actual observation was gathered. This was done by taking interviews of Head priest who perform Ganga Aarti at the above mentioned Ghat. The study in Phase -1 was an intensive one to decipher the rituals and symbols used in Ganga Aarti. To back up the study done in Phase-I, that is, to examine the meaning that the devotees understand from these rituals was done through survey design in Phase -II of the research. The devotees present at the time of Ganga Aarti in evening at Dasaswamedh Ghat formed the population of the study. Since the population was floating one so survey was done over a period of seven days and ten samples were taken as per convenience on each day. As no data was available regarding the profile of the samples so samples taken on each day were different.

For getting the required data different elements were studied. Those elements are: Ingredients used in Sankalp Pujanam of Ganga Aarti - Asanam (A seat presented to deity to sit on), Jal (Water of Ganga), Vastram (cloth), Tilak/Roli/Sindoor (Married women's symbol), Akshat (Grains of rice coloured with saffron), Pusp (flowers), Dhoop (Incense), Deepak (a lighted lamp), Navedyam (sweets); tools used in Ganga Aarti- Shankh, Dhoop Aarti (Aarti done with incense), Jhaar Aarti (Aarti done with lighted lamps), Sayan Aarti (Aarti done with Camphor), Chanwar, MorPankhi (equipment made of feathers of peacock), Achmani (Aarti done with a piece of cloth) and channels of communication about Ganga Aarti among its audience- Inter-personal communication, Mass- Media (Television, Newspapers).

## **Results**

### **Ritual of Sankalp- Poojnam in Ganga Aarti**

Out of 70 respondents, 26 respondents said "yes", 37 said "no" while 7 respondents said that they "didn't remember" the ritual of sankalp-poojnam. This shows that majority of the audience didn't see the ritual.

### **Use of ingredients in Ganga Aarti**

Asanam-According to the head priest worshipping the deity on bare earth is prohibited in Shastra and God is our guest, therefore he is offered a higher seat. Majority of audience also comply with this logic, however many thought that Asan purifies our soul, it pleases God. Asan is a symbol of our culture. Water-According to the head priest water is offered to reduce the weariness of journey of the guest by washing his feet. Ganga jal is auspicious and it destroys our sin to make us pure. Majority of audience agreeing to the same regard Ganga Jal as a symbol of purity but they also see it as a custom, healer, as an element of five natural elements and as a symbol of life. Vastram-According to the head priest, it is a custom and it provides protection from bad weather. It also provides peace and dignity. Audiences completely have a different idea on this. They think garment as a symbol of welcome, grace (punya) and social relations. Tilak- According to the head priest, tilak is a must to make start of any puja successful. It awakens the third eye and is a symbol of knowledge. Chandan (sandalwood) brings prosperity, grace and destroys sins. Audiences differ by considering Tilak as a symbol of good luck and safety. It is also a symbol of married woman, prosperity, social and religious revolution. It relaxes the mind and is a God's gift to woman for all over the year's married life. Akshat-According to the head priest, rice is offered so that all the ventures undertaken by us in life leads to completion. Rice is a symbol of persistent hard work. Ingredient unavailable during puja is compensated through rice. Audiences don't comply with logic of the priests and regard rice as a symbol of start of puja, symbol of peace and prosperity. They also take rice as a source of nourishment and as a fodder for mosquitoes. Flowers- According to the head priest, flowers are symbol of conduct, love and affection. Flowers increase grace and reduce sins in us. Greater number of respondents among audiences agrees with the priests however some believe flowers to be a symbol of purity and earth also. Flowers inculcate happiness, joy and religious inspiration in our lives. Incense- According to the head priest, Dhoop contains valuable herbs and has a very pleasing smell and every deity likes it, therefore it is offered. Majority differs from the logic of the priest. According to them dhoop has a purgatory significance; it purifies atmosphere by killing mosquitoes and helps in creating spiritual atmosphere. According to some devotees, dhoop symbolizes earth element and it also revives our senses. Lighted Lamp- According to the head priest, Deepak symbolizes five vows; nonviolence, truthfulness, non-stealing, chastity, and non possession. Deepak is a symbol of radiance. Majority of audiences agree to this but some also think Deepak to be an atmosphere cleaner

against mosquitoes. Lamp is lighted to attract God's attention. It educates us to progress spiritually. Sweets- According to the head priest, in the pooja, deity is believed to be a guest. So food is offered to him in form of sweets. The food/sweet which is offered to God results in development of divine sanskar inside us. Majority among audiences agree with the former logic of the priest but no one had any view similar to latter logic. According to audience offering of sweets brings sweetness in our life, it pleases mother Ganga.

Glimpse of tools used in Ganga Aarti- Out of 70 respondents 35 saw the tools, 37 didn't see it at all while 3 didn't remember. This shows that the majority didn't see the tools.

Use of tools in Ganga Aarti- Shankh-According to the head priest, sankh is blown to bring silence in the atmosphere and make people conscious about start and end of pooja process. Greater numbers of respondents comply with this reason however according to many Sankh is a symbol of invocation of God, symbol of purity and symbol of Naad from where prana urja emanates. Some also think that blowing of sankh makes our lungs powerful. Dhooop Aarti- According to the head priest, dhooop aarti is done to please Lord Brahma and it purifies atmosphere. Majority of audiences agree with this. In addition to what priests say audiences think that burning incense creates religious atmosphere, our good deeds reach God and also it concentrates our mind. Jhaar Aarti- According to the head priest, Jhar Aarti is done to please Lord Vishnu. Hexagonal shape of the equipment saves the hand of the performer from burning and 54 numbers is auspicious. Audiences have an entirely different concept about this aarti. They consider jhar aarti to be a symbol of enlightenment and energy. It wards off evil eye and is a sign of welcome of evening. None of the audience is able to answer about the shape and number of lighted lamps in the equipment.- Sayan Aarti- According to the head priest, Syan Aarti is done in praise of Lord Shiva whose one of the disciple is snake so the shape of the equipment is in shape of a snake. The aarti is done with camphor because color of camphor is white and skin of Lord Shiva is also white. Audiences differ from the priest. According to audience sayan aarti checks pollution. Camphor symbolizes intensity of devotion towards God and keeps the mosquitoes away during sleep. Chanwar- According to the head priest, to please Lord Ganesh and to welcome guest chanwar is used. Audience has a different perception. They consider chanwar to be a symbol of respect, bhakt-seva. It is a substitute for fan, keeps the evil spirits away and protect deity from mosquitoes and flies. Morpankhi- According to the head priest, Morpankhi is used to provide peace and tranquility to river Ganga. Majority of the audience

agree with the priest's logic. In addition to that some think that Morpankhi reduces excessive energy emanated due to aarti. Morpankhi educates us to be always cheerful. Achmani Aarti- According to the head priest, Achmani serves as linen for the deity. Majority agrees with it; however some believe Achmani to be like a handkerchief for the deity.

### **Identify the channels of communication about Ganga Aarti among its audience**

Place of Residence- Out of total 70 respondents, eight belonged to foreign country, 29 were from city other than Varanasi while rest 33 were residents of Varanasi. This shows that greater number of respondents is from the city itself while majority are tourists. Age-Out of total respondents, 28 (40%) belonged to age bracket 21-30. This shows that greater number of respondents is youth and is more keen and interested in watching Ganga Aarti. Interpersonal Communication, Mass Media, Other Sources- Out of total respondents, 30 respondents came to know about Ganga Aarti through friends and relatives. This shows that greater number of respondents got informed about Aarti through interpersonal communication.

Solution of pollution through Ganga Aarti- Out of 70 respondents, 31 said 'Yes'. 28 said 'No' while rest 11 said 'No Idea'. Thus greater number of respondents believes that Ganga Aarti can prove beneficial in creating awareness among public to control pollution of Ganga.

### **Conclusion**

The study suggests that a huge gap exists between what the priests decipher from the rituals and what the audience deciphers from it. The most significant aspect of the Aarti; the sankalp-poojnam process is done without inviting and explaining public about its religious significance. As the study indicates, majority of the audience seems to be completely unaware of this ritual. More of mythological interpretations on part of priest have been done in order to explain the logic behind occurrence of rituals. Not even a single scientific reason has been given by the priest for performance of any ritual.

The difference in opinion regarding offering of ingredients such as Vastram, Tilak, Akshat is evident. Majority of public is not interested in the shape and use of tools in the Aarti. Priest and general mass both seems to be ignorant about purpose of usage of tools. Majority of the audience did not take any pain to know about the

significance of the tools. Lack of information and inquisitive mind on part of audience is apparent in the research. There is a stark difference between their beliefs in usage of sankh, jhar Aarti, Sayan Aarti, and chanwar which is an integral part of the Pooja.

The study suggests that people are more interested in watching the gestures used in the Aarti. Lack of dissemination of comprehensive message and logic behind the gestures by the priest keeps the crowd ignorant. They seem to have no knowledge about the logic behind performance of the gestures as mentioned in the Shastras. None among the audience was able to answer the real reason for Aarti being done sitting and facing in east direction and for movement of Morpankhi. Audience have an entirely different perception about the process of Aarti being done standing and facing in east, west, south and north direction respectively. Their views regarding movement of chanwar in specific manner is also contrary to that of the priest. It is strange to know that these rituals are being carried on through centuries and still people don't know the logic and rationale behind the rituals.

### **Recommendations**

Out of 70 respondents, 37 were tourists/ visitors from outside the city while 33 belonged to Varanasi. This shows that Ganga Aarti can play a pivotal role in disseminating message of awareness about the river among masses. Use of technology and mass media can prove beneficial in doing so. An existence of huge gap between the understanding of rituals between the priest and the masses has been observed. Following are some recommendations to bridge the knowledge gap between the priest and the audience regarding deciphering of rituals.

- There is no availability of a big TV screen in which procedures of rituals can be explained. Hence it is recommended that a big TV screen should be installed at Ghat through which mantras and their translation in Hindi and their significance could be explained to the spectators.
- To bring about a coherence between the thinking of the priest and audience regarding offering of ingredients especially Vastram, tilak, akshat, Deepak and sweets, their religious and mythological importance plus their importance in day to day life should be explained to the general mass through TV screen.
- The source/origin from where these rituals have been picked up should also be explained as that will create curiosity among masses regarding our mythological literature.

- It has been observed that audience is not much knowledgeable about the shape of tools and their use. One day in a week, scholars, scientist, etc... should be invited to explain scientific significance of these tools if any to the general audience.
- Significance of geographical directions when procedure of gestures is performed in Aarti should be explained to the public. This can be done by inviting guest speakers from geography department in different universities of Varanasi.
- In the rituals many times hands are washed. During performance of this ritual, simultaneously a message can be delivered to the public that like we wash our hands and keep them clean during Pooja, we should also wash and keep our hands clean during performing other day to day activities. That will protect us from many infectious diseases.
- Recently in intercultural festival 'Spandan' organized in Banaras Hindu University, Ganga seva nidhi; chief organizer of Ganga Aarti at Dasaswamedh ghat performed Aarti which created much curiosity among students about it. The same pattern can be implemented at other universities, schools, prestigious clubs, etc... This will help sensitize people about the importance of Ganga and its cleanliness.
- Finally, a communication strategy is recommended to make the audience aware of the importance of river and its cleanliness.

### **A Proposed Communication Strategy**

The study has indicated that there is a desperate need to develop a communication strategy to create awareness among masses about cleanliness of Ganga through Ganga Aarti. The survey suggests that majority of audience thinks that Ganga Aarti can prove beneficial in creating awareness to keep the river clean. Considering all these factors a communication strategy is formulated. The experience of this study is being presented in the form of an action plan that can be implemented followed by organizer of Ganga Aarti. The action plan is divided into Phase, Phases into steps and each phase having time duration.

**Phase-I-** It has been observed that majority of the audience do not observe the ritual of Sankalp-Poojan carefully. This is because head priest and the main Jajman

(main contributor in the puja economically or otherwise) take oath separately without inviting the audience.

In Hindu mythology, Sankalp-Poojan is the most important process to start the puja. Once the devotees understand the process of Sankalp-Poojan, they will adhere to it. So in the first phase process of Sankalp-Poojan will be explained. The following are the steps.

**Step 1** Process of Sankalp-Poojan will not be done by head priest and Jajmaan (main contributor to the pooja) only. Instead whole of the audience would be made party to it.

**Step 2** Whole process in lucid and simple language will be explained through loud speakers. The mantras will be displayed on big screen explaining important factors of puja in Hindi and English both so that tourists from abroad can also understand the process.

**Step 3** Oath of contributing something to curb Ganga Pollution should be added in the oath statement as explained below.

ÅWaaaa fo'.kqfoZ'.kqfoZ'.kq% Jhen~Hkxorks egkiq#'kL; fo'.kks,jkK;k izarZekUkL;] v| Jh czã.kks f}rh;ks  
ijk/ksZ Jh "osrojkkgdYis] oSoLoreUoUrjs] HkwyksZds] tEcw}his] Hkkjro'ksZ] Hkjr[k.Ms]  
vk;kZoÙkSZdns''kkUrxZrs]-----{ks=s} ekilkuka eklksÙkesekls-----ekls-----i{ks-----frFkks-----okljs-----  
xks=ksRiUu%-----ukek?ga lri`ofr&lao)Zuk; xaxk iznw'k.k fuokjk.kFkZa izcy iq#'kkFkZa dfj';s]  
vLeS iz;kstuk; p dy''kkfn&vkokfgrnsork&iwtuiwoZde~-----deZIEiknukFkZa ladYie~  
**vga dfj';sA**

Oh! Lord Vishnu, the ruler and preserver of this vast universe. Oh! Brahma. Oh! Varah (white pig God), the incarnation of Vishnu. Oh! Vaivaswata Manu, the power in the Kali-Yuga. Oh! Continent Jambu in which India is situated. Oh! Great king Bharata. Inside India, in region of Abode of lord Shiva-Kashi, in particular month, paksha, tithi(date according to Hindi Calendar), day and gotra, I take oath for establishment of good deeds and will labor hard to save Ganga from pollution. For that purpose I worship Kalash and all the invoked Gods.

**Phase-II-** In this phase after process of Sankalp-poojan, audience would be explained about the significance of the river.

**Step 4** It has been seen that majority of the audience belong to this city only. Therefore historical, cultural and religious significance of river would be explained to them. They should be made feel proud about being native of a city that has a river which has a rich and revered past. This will be done by citing some slokas from Hindu epics. For e.g.

**n''kZukRLi''kZukRikukÙkFkk xaxsfrdhrZukRk~A  
iqukfr lk iq.;iq#''kk^Nr''kks?Fk lgL=''k%AA** (Sharma, 1999)

(Seeing Ganga, touching water of Ganga, drinking the same and chanting the name 'Ganga' purifies hundreds and thousands of lucky People.)

**Phase-III** In this phase importance of ingredients would be explained to the public.

**Step 5** Since findings prove that audience considers ingredients such as camphor, Dhoop, Deepak, etc... as elements that purify the atmosphere. So at the time of their offering it should be linked with Ganga pollution. For e.g. as Dhoop (incense) that has valuable herbs burns to purify our atmosphere, we should also contribute something to save Ganga from pollution.

**Phase-IV** In this phase Youths will be sensitized about the river

**Step 6** It has been observed that Youths are most interested in watching Ganga Aarti compared to other age brackets. Therefore, in the middle of the process of Aarti, on a big screen message carrying importance of keeping Ganga clean will be displayed by some celebrity whom youths adore. He/she can be a movie star, a sportsman, a politician, etc....

**Phase-V** In this phase after aid of excerpts from shastras will be taken to educate masses about importance of keeping Ganga clean.

**Step 7** It has been inferred that people are mostly interested to see gestures/movement of Aarti rather than ingredients used in pooja or shape of equipments. Therefore all the gestures could be accompanied by a message. It can be that Ganga is our mother, so we should not drop sewer, plastics and garbage into it.

Keeping Ganga clean will increase punya which the comparer should tell and simultaneously the message will be displayed on big screen.

**Step 8** Messages from Shastras will be taken regarding stopping people from polluting the river. For e.g.

Xakxk iq.;tyka izkI; prqnZ''kk footZ;srA  
''kkspekPkuea ds''ka fuekZY;e?ke'kZ.ke~AA  
Xk= laokgua ØhMka izfrxzgeFkksfjre~A  
vU; rhFkZ jfr pSo vU; rhFkZ iz''kalu~AA  
oL= R;kxeFkk?kkrka larkja p fo''ks'kr%AA (Mehta, 2004)  
¼czãk.Miqjk.k½

Avoid doing following things in the river:

- Defecating near the river
- Mouth cleansing in the river
- Combing hair in the river
- Throwing faeces in the river
- Using soap in the river
- Massaging in the river
- Washing clothes

Along with the above messages from Shastras, people can be educated to not do the following:

- Do not defecate on ghats near Ganga.
- Do not throw dead bodies in the river.
- Do not bathe animals in the river.
- Do not throw garbage in the.
- Use electric furnace for funeral purposes as it will save lot of filth dropping in the river.

**Phase-VI** In this phase communication material will be distributed to the public educating them about the dangers of polluting Ganga.

#### **Step 9**

- It has been seen that interpersonal communication has been most successful in disseminating information about Aarti. After the aarti, it is an usual custom that sweets are distributed by the priest to the devotees as Prasad. Therefore, along with the sweets a booklet explaining dangers of polluting ganga along with the religious and spiritual significance of the river will be distributed.
- The distribution of the booklet can be expanded to colleges, universities, schools, clubs, religious institutions, etc...This would help to create an awareness among people to save Ganga from pollution.

#### **Proposed Process Model**

Phase-I	Phase-II	Phase-III	Phase-IV	Phase-V	Phase-VI
Step-1	Step-4	Step-5	Step-6	Step-7	Step-8
<b>Sankalp-Poojan</b> should be done collectively. Step-2	Explain significance of river	Explain significance of ingredients used	Address youths by a celebrity	Explain significance of gestures used. Step-9	Present and Distribute communication material
Display puja process on Big TV screen Step-3				Quote Shastras to curb pollution	
Modification in process of oath					
1 hour daily	15 minutes daily	10 min daily	15 min twice a week	30 min a daily	20 min daily

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### Websites

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