

Ganga: An ideal nominee for UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage Site

“The Ganga, especially, is the river of India, beloved of her people, round which are intertwined her memories, her hopes and fears, her songs of triumph, her victories, and her defeats. She has been a symbol of India’s age-long culture and civilization, ever changing, ever flowing, and yet ever the same Ganga.” – Jawaharlal Nehru, First Prime Minister of India.



Ganga, a river with many names like Jahnvi, Gange, Shubhra, Bhagirathi, Alaknanda is the largest river in India having a length of 2,510kms. This river supports livelihoods of many and is sacred to many religions. The unique and extensive biodiversity of the river is a sight to behold. Ganga has immensely provided to our nation’s prestige and should hold a stand as UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage Site.

Ganga is the soul of our nation. Flowing from ages through different parts of the country has become a lifeline to millions of people. The continuous flow of Ganga through five states has provided water to eleven different states. The extensive flow of river Ganga originating from Gangotri glacier in the Himalayas travelling through the

northern state of Uttarakhand, down through the Gangetic plain joining with different tributaries like Yamuna and then reaching West Bengal dividing into Padma and Hooghly, Padma further combining with Jamuna and discharging in Bay of Bengal and forming the third largest river on Earth by discharge.

It's just not about the immense flow the river has. Millions of people have depended on River Ganga for daily needs hence giving her the name Mother Ganga. Approximately 55% of Indian population depend on Ganga directly or indirectly. Fertile soil of Ganga basin has extensively supported the agricultural economy of the nation. Sugarcane, lentils, potatoes, legumes, mustard, and jute are just some of the chief crops that get perennial irrigation from Ganga. Ganga also backs the fishing industry as well.

Additionally, Ganga water is scientifically proven to be self-purifying. It has 24 times more oxygen than any river in the entire world which gives it unique ability to remain fresh for prolonged period. This has also made Ganga basin a hotspot of biodiversity. It inhabits approximately 140 species of fish, 90 species of amphibians, and reptiles and mammals, including critically endangered species such as the gharial and South Asian River dolphin. Ganga basin is home to National aquatic animal Gangetic Dolphins and National animal, the Bengal Tigers.

Furthermore, Ganga has its mythological aspect in Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism. It is said to be descended from Heaven carried by Lord Shiva to Earth for providing Moksha to devotees. Hence his name Gangadhara. There are many pilgrimage sites for Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains on the banks of the river Ganga. This has attracted devotees from all over the world at the banks of the river.

The proclaimed status that the river has earned, brings many benefits towards tourism. The rapids of ganga in the upper Ganga basin add on to water sport activities like river rafting which is a key for adventure seekers in the summer months. Several cities like Kanpur, Kolkata and Patna have developed riverfront walkways to attract tourists. The spiritual side of Ganga has brought many pilgrims to the sacred sites like Haridwar (Gateway to Gods), Allahabad (Home to Treveni Sangam) and Varanasi (city of temples) for a holy dip in the sacred water of the river.

Ganga a saviour, a giver, is the pride of our nation and has contributed to our economy, biodiversity, and livelihood for ages. The contributions from river Ganga have added



to our nations cultural and natural wealth making it ideal to be UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage Site.