



# A river running dry

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## **A river running dry-The Ganga basin is becoming increasingly fragile with more and more hydropower projects coming up**

- From aiming for Aviral Dhara (uninterrupted flow) of the Ganga to Nirmal Dhara (unpolluted flow), the government is now simply focussing on a Swachh Ganga (Clean Ganga).
- While the whole focus of the Clean Ganga project has been on setting up sewage treatments plants and cleaning ghats and banks, the main issue, which is that the river does not have adequate flow of water, has been ignored.
- With severe pollution destroying the river, and developmental projects critically affecting its flow, the Ganga is in a dire strait.

### **A fragile region**

- Today, several hydropower projects are mushrooming at the source of the river, which is the Garhwal range of the Himalayas.
- The understanding that hydropower projects mean development needs to change.
- Many studies have been conducted near the existing dams along the course of the Ganga.
- The immediate impacts of these projects have been loss of agriculture, drying of water sources, and landslips.
- As construction in such projects progresses, there is also dumping of muck, which can pose severe threats.
- As the Ganga is diverted into long tunnels, de-silted, and directed to powerhouses to churn turbines and generate power, the barren landscape, dried water sources and the obscene muck slopes narrate a story of destruction.
- This is a far cry from the promise of development.
- The irony is that even after all this devastation, electricity is not generated as per the intended capacity.
- In the case of the Ganga, these projects also prevent sediments from

going downstream.

- This affects the fertility of the delta downstream and also destroys the unique self-purifying properties of the Ganga.

### **Reports of committees**

- Twenty government committees and reports warn about the anthropogenic activities in these fragile areas and recommend conservation of these areas for food and water security.
- The result of such a relentless push for hydropower projects is that only 80 km of a 2,500 km-long river now remains in the Aviral-Nirmal state.
- Unless we question these projects now, we will not be able to save the Ganga, the lifeline of millions of people.

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