



FILE PHOTO

PROTECT THE LIFELINES

River of Protest, Sea of Concern!

While Puneites are fighting to protect the life of the rivers, British citizens are struggling to save the sea waters

Leonardo da Vinci has rightly said, "Water is the driving force of all nature."

Water is a vital source of life, a major component of all living things. Besides giving life, it gives us transport, its beauty gives us infinite peace and pleasure, it has been a muse to many poets. And it has an all-pervading almost effervescent quality, it moves from seas, rivers and lakes by evaporation to clouds, and rains in distant places away from its origin, this is the hydrologic cycle that students study in school. Mercury from China ends up in the fjords and rivers of Greenland because of this cycle. So, though a source of life, water can be the messenger of death and disease if it is messed with.

The water on earth has a natural

capacity to replenish itself, clean itself through the hydrologic cycle. Every monsoon, we see Pune's dirty waters getting cleaned naturally. However, there is a limit to nature's restorative powers as water assimilates the pollutants it receives. Further, the hydrologic cycle that contributes to the restoration process is also the mechanism that can spread contamination. Water pollution is pervasive; every human activity contributes to the pollution.

So, what is common between the protesters of the Riverfront Development (RFD) project in Pune and those protesting against sewage in the sea waters of England? It is water. While protesters in Pune are fighting to conserve the life of the rivers, the British are fighting to save the life of the sea waters. The health



of these waters is vital not only for the life within the waters but also for human health. If we kill life in the rivers, we kill ourselves.

Water pollution can be a point-source or a non-point source. A point source is any single identifiable source from which pollutants are released, such as a factory, or a residential society. A nonpoint source is one that cannot be identified accurately and degrades the environment in a diffuse, indirect way over a relatively broad area.

In the case of Pune's rivers, we not only have toxic industrial waste, a point source, we also have domestic sewage that is also a point source. Both are toxic, and can lead to illnesses or kill. The advantage of a point source is that it can be easily managed. The Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) just has to make polluting a costly activity. The day

PMC slaps fines that are costlier than the pollution, the polluting activity will stop. Industries will fall in line as their profits will dwindle and residential societies will also stop their sewage water entering the water bodies when they find the fines unaffordable.

Ecological Society chairperson Swati Gole spoke of rivers as living beings many decades ago, and so they are. They are born, they have a life and with polluting human activity, they can die.

—**Priti Mastakar**
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