

Day – 12 & 13

It is 6 o'clock in the morning. The entire team is fresh and excited as our next destination is none other than Prayagraj, the city situated at the confluence of the Rivers Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati, the city that draws the attention of pilgrims and heritage lovers from all over the world, the city that opens the traveller to a world of mythological and spiritual wonders, the city that is a fusion of sanctity, religion, traditions, history, and architecture, the city that holds world's largest congregation of devotees, the city that was the nerve centre of activities during India's Freedom Movement, the city that is known as 'Teerthraj', the holiest pilgrimage centre and is indeed a perfect place to have a soulful escape.

But at the same time, it was time to bid adieu to Kalakankar, the place Gandhiji visited on 14th November 1929 and started the movement of boycotting imported clothes. The one thing that needs special mention here is the warmth of the people in Uttar Pradesh. They debate with an open mind, embrace your ideas once convinced and then win you over.

We reached the ghat early in the morning. DFO, Kalakankar was present with the locals at the ghat. We thanked the people for their cooperation and with a promise that each of them will act as Ganga Rakshak, we left for Prayagraj.

We reached Kidganga Boat Club, Prayagraj in the evening and was received by the District Magistrate and DFO, Prayagraj. Our sincere thanks to the district administration for the grand reception we received. We, by now have covered almost one-third of the journey and the physical fatigue has started to dominate. So, we decided to halt for a day at Prayagraj and refresh our senses. We were pleasantly surprised to know that Shri G. Ashok Kumar – Executive Director, Projects, National Mission for Clean Ganga has arrived to join us.

The reception was followed by a cultural program. Speaking on the occasion Shri G. Ashok Kumar said when we establish a destination by defining what we want, take physical action by making choices that move us towards that destination, then the possibility for success becomes limitless and arrival at the destination becomes inevitable. But to achieve this in something like Ganga cleaning and river rejuvenation, people's participation is a must.

He said that in the past couple of years Namami Gange Mission has taken giant strides and it was possible only because we were able to generate belief in the people and belief triggers the power to do even the impossible.

Citing the example of Kumbh Mela organized last year, he emphasized that it is very easy for the government to keep the Ganga clean for a limited period but in order to sustain it, public connect is mandatory. The main objective of Ganga Aamantran Abhiyaan is to establish and amplify that connect.

Reaching out to the people he said GANGA IS OUR FUTURE. How can we defile that which purifies and sustains us? Let's give back to Ganga what she has always given to us. PURIFICATION. Let's don her avatar.

Since it was getting late and our body needed rest we called it a day after Ganga Aarti. We woke up early the next day as we have planned lots of activities involving schools, colleges, rotary club, NGOs along with district administration. Once again, we salute the meticulous planning done by the administration for the same.

Led by team leader Wing Commander Paramvir Singh, the activity started with the Ghat cleaning at Sangam. From head to toe, he himself was dressed with the message boards explaining dos and don'ts to keep the Ganga clean. We interacted with the general public and explained how small steps taken at individual level go a long way in keeping Ma Ganga clean. Soon, we were joined by many locals who not only did shramdaan but also pledged to keep the river clean.

Shri G. Ashok Kumar, ED-P, National Mission for Clean Ganga visited 50 MLD STP being developed at Numayadahi, Prayagraj and took stock of the progress being made. With the instruction that the project must be completed in time we left for the cultural program.

After the Ghat cleaning, we decided to spend some time with students and hence headed towards Rani Rewati Inter College, Prayagraj. We had a very long and detailed session with the students explaining how Namami Gange Mission is moving towards not only cleaning Ganga but also towards the related

Sustainable Development Goals laid out by the UN. We were really overwhelmed to experience the knowledge, curiosity, and willingness to contribute the students had for the mission. The experts from WII came handy as it was becoming really difficult to satiate the interest they had in Ganga's rich biodiversity and their sustainability.

Our next stop was Vigyan Parishad where a cultural programme was organized. The children portrayed the role of Ganga in our lives through dance, music and street plays. It was so overwhelming to see the way children understand the looming water crisis and their commitment to do their bit in finding a solution.

Our day ended with Ganga Aarti. We thanked Ma Ganga for selflessly sustaining the livelihood of the millions.