



F. No.:L-25011(13)/7/2019-LME NMCG/01

Dated 16th September, 2019

DIRECTIONS UNDER SECTION 5 OF THE ENVIRONMENT (PROTECTION) ACT, 1986 REGARDING THE IMMERSION OF IDOLS IN RIVERS AND WATER BODIES ON FESTIVE OCCASIONS.

WHEREAS, on festive occasions such as Ganesh Chaturthi, Viswakarma Puja, Durga Puja, Deepawali (Lakshmi/ Kali Puja), Chath Puja (Surya Sasthi), Sarswati Puja etc., there is large scale immersion (visarjan) of idols of gods and goddesses as well as puja materials/religious offerings in water bodies like rivers, lakes, ponds, wells etc. which cause alarming rise in water pollution level. Studies carried out to assess deterioration in water quality due to idol immersion reveal deterioration of water quality in respect of Conductivity, Bio-chemical Oxygen Demand and Heavy Metal Concentration.

AND WHEREAS, an increasing trend of making idols using non-biodegradable materials like plaster of Paris (PoP), baked clay, resin fibers and thermocol etc. has been popular during festivals. The chemical dyes /synthetic paints and colours applied on idols contain hazardous chemicals/toxic metals and carcinogenic compounds like Mercury, Chromium, Lead, Cadmium, Zinc Oxide etc. which causes harmful effects to aquatic life. The PoP also contains chemicals/ elements like Gypsum, Sulphur, Potassium and Magnesium which causes harmful effects to aquatic flora & fauna and in turn causes harmful diseases like cancer, respiratory ailments, skin infections etc., if such aquatic life is consumed by human beings.

AND WHEREAS, Hon'ble National Green Tribunal (NGT) in the matter of O.A. No. 6 of 2012 - *Manoj Mishra Vs. Union of India & Ors.* and connected matters had pronounced various directions in respect of any type of visarjan in river Yamuna (an important tributary of river Ganga) vide orders dated 13.01.2015 and 16.09.2015. These orders prohibit throwing Pooja material or any other material like idols, flowers, havan samagri, food-grain, oil, etc. into river Yamuna except at the designated sites. Any person who is found disobeying this direction shall be liable to pay compensation of Rs. 5,000/- on the "Polluter Pays" Principle. Hon'ble NGT is monitoring various activities causing pollution in River Ganga and its tributaries through O.A. No. 200 of 2014 - *M. C. Mehta Vs. Union of India & Ors.* and connected matters and has observed idol immersion to be a major factor causing pollution in the river Ganga. Hon'ble Tribunal completely prohibited disposing of any kind of waste into the river Ganga vide orders dated 11.04.2017 and 13.07.2017. Defaulter to this direction would be liable to pay Environmental Compensation of Rs 50,000 per default for such dumping and/or throwing of waste of any kind into the river.

AND WHEREAS, Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has issued the Guidelines for immersion of idols and other puja materials during festival and Hon'ble Tribunal directed respective District Magistrates and other authorities to ensure implementation of the guidelines of CPCB to curb pollution due to immersion of idols in rivers and water bodies.

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AND WHEREAS, National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) has been constituted as an authority by Govt. of India vide its Notification S.O.3187(E) dated 07.10.2016 and has been conferred with the power under Section 5 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 for prevention, control and abatement of pollution in River Ganga and its tributaries. As per the provision of the said notification, NMCG has been empowered to issue directions in writing that are necessary for abatement of pollution and rejuvenation, protection and management of the River Ganga and its tributaries.

AND WHEREAS, as per the provisions of Section 15 of Environment Protection Act, 1986 "Whoever fails to comply with or contravenes any of the provisions of this Act, or the rules made or orders or directions issued there under, shall, in respect of each such failure or contravention, be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to five years with fine which may extend to one lakh rupees, or with both, and in case the failure or contravention continues, with additional fine, which may extend to five thousand rupees for every day during which such failure or contravention continues after the conviction for the first such failure or contravention".

AND WHEREAS, Director General, NMCG in a meeting held with representatives of Government of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal on 12.09.2019 urged for strict implementation of prohibitions related to immersion of idols/disposal of puja refuse, flowers etc., into river Ganga and its tributaries and directed concerned authorities to make suitable arrangement for immersion of idols/disposal of puja refuse, flowers etc., in an environmental friendly manner.

AND WHEREAS, in spite of directions against use and immersion of idols made of non-biodegradable and toxic materials like PoP etc. in rivers and water bodies, River Ganga has been facing serious threat due to idol immersion and also disposal of pooja materials into River Ganga, bank of River Ganga or its tributaries.

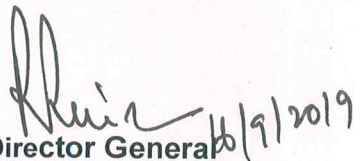
NOW, THEREFORE, in view of the above and in exercise of powers delegated to Director General, NMCG under the Notification dated 07.10.2016 of the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation (now Ministry of Jal Shakti), Government of India, following directions are issued for compliance by all concerned State Government, authority or local authority or other authorities or Board or Corporation:

- i. No use of synthetic material/non-biodegradable material, PoP, baked clay, resin fibers and thermocol etc., for making of idols (for immersion/visarjan thereof). Use of toxic and non-biodegradable chemical dyes/synthetic paints for painting of idols should be strictly prohibited.
- ii. No idol immersion into River Ganga and its tributaries and on their banks.
- iii. River banks and ghats should be cordoned off and barricaded to prevent any stray immersion of idols in the river or its banks.
- iv. Adequate arrangements should be made for designated idol-immersion sites within municipal area or bank of river Ganga and its tributaries by constructing temporary confined ponds with removable synthetic liners at the bottom.
- v. Sufficient numbers of separate bins/containers should be provided at designated idol-immersion sites for collection of flowers, garlands and decorating materials/clothing/metal items.



- vi. Separate bins/receptacles should be also provided at ghats on river Ganga and its tributaries for collection of flowers, garlands and decorating materials/clothing/metal items.
- vii. Three bin system to be provided at all pooja pandals for proper segregation of biodegradable and non-biodegradable pooja refuse and other materials for ensuring efficient disposal.
- viii. Biodegradable pooja materials like flowers, garlands, etc. should be composted while non-biodegradable materials like decorating materials (made of paper, plastic and clothing) and metal items etc. should be recycled, in an eco-friendly manner.
- ix. No pooja material to be disposed directly in the river.
- x. A Co-ordination Committee comprising of District Administration Officials, Municipal Officials, Police, NGOs etc. may be set up for guiding the public & Puja Committees for carrying out puja and immersion with no adverse effect to the environment.
- xi. Within 48 hrs. of the immersion of idol (visarjan), the left over material at all designated idol immersion sites within municipal area/ panchayat/bank of river should be collected by the local bodies for disposal as per CPCB guidelines.
- xii. Notification of designated idol-immersion sites to Pooja Samitis, mela authorities, general public through newspaper advertisements and other means of information dissemination.
- xiii. Public and Pooja Samitis be educated regarding ill effects of idol immersion in the rivers and water bodies through mass awareness programmes. Messages should be constantly played by Pooja Samitis for information of devotees regarding the arrangements of designated idol-immersion sites.
- xiv. Adequate numbers of hoarding boards/banners to be placed at various locations within municipal area and near Pooja Pandals with Do's and Don'ts in respect of idol immersion during festivals. Similarly, hoarding boards/banners related to ban of idol immersion in rivers/water bodies/ill-effects of idol immersion in rivers and water bodies to be placed at designated idol immersion sites and important ghats on river Ganga and its tributaries.
- xv. District Magistrate shall enforce the above directions by issuing relevant instructions to the concerned officials for monitoring and enforcement of the directions. If any person violates above directions, then Rs. 50,000 as environment compensation should be levied, collected and deposited with State Pollution Control Boards.

An action taken report on compliance of above said directions shall be submitted to NMCG by concerned officials within **seven (07)** days from the end of each festival like Ganesh Chaturthi, Viswakarma Puja, Dussehra, Deepawali (Lakshmi/ Kali Puja), Chath Puja (Surya Sasthi), Sarswati Puja.



Director General

National Mission for Clean Ganga

To,

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6/9/2019

**Director General
National Mission for Clean Ganga**

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3. The Secretary
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4. The Chairman
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Director General
National Mission for Clean Ganga