

### A solution to floral pollution

Flower means beautiful, soft, colorful, sacred, i.e., every possible word infuses something positive into it. Hence, the term floral pollution sounds a bit bizarre to us. But the facts and figures are not something to ignore, ~ 16% of river pollutants in India stem from floral wastes. A careful look at any urban or semi-urban waterbody reveals a good fraction of waste is from floral members. These wastes are mainly from temples (or other religious places) and from our households. The cultural-religious association of flower often precludes us to consider it as normal waste, therefore regular waste treatment plans turns futile. Although seems less harmful, flowers have their own role in pollution affecting aquatic life to a certain extent. Flowers are organic in nature, therefore, excess deposition in waterbody increases the organic load beyond the permissible limit. Similarly, pesticides and weedicides which are often used to grow flowers are also end up to the water.

Here is a story that tells about an exception. Kanpur, one of the prosperous cities in northern India on the bank of the river Ganges, had this floral waste problem. Along with the industrial and household effluents, flowers from temples and mosques also used to pollute the river on a regular basis. To deal with the problem, two young entrepreneurs,

Ankit Agarwal and Karan Rastogi, adopted an innovative strategy which addressed multiple issues at a time. Their initiative 'helpusgreen' made an agreement with religious places to receive the temple waste, i.e., tons of flowers on a daily basis to their recycling unit. Those used up flowers are then recycled through 'flower cycling' technology to vermicompost and incense sticks for further use. Majority of the workers in their unit are women who earlier involved in



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manual scavenging activities, therefore have to withstand severe social stigma. Their inclusion in this initiative assured both social acceptance and economic upliftment. This unique approach towards the environmental issue blended with social justice caught the attention of the United Nations Environment Program and is appreciated as one of the inspiring steps towards the sustainable development goals.

Image: moneycontrol.com, Economic Times, India Today

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