Save India’s Lifelines
Proposal for Collaboration
“Major Indian rivers have depleted dramatically in a matter of a few decades. So far, the approach has been just to exploit the rivers, not rejuvenate them. Water resources and soil are being destroyed at such a rate that in another fifteen to twenty years’ time, we may not be able to feed the 1.3 billion people and quench their thirst anymore. The simplest and most effective solution is to increase the tree coverage around the water bodies. This means we have to work towards creating awareness and induce policy changes.”

– Sadhguru, Founder, Isha Foundation
Subject

Request for partnership for Isha Foundation’s Rally for Rivers.

- By joining Sadhguru on one or multiple legs of the rally between September 3rd and October 2nd, 2017
- By endorsing / spreading the word about the cause through social media channel.
- Financial sponsorship or any other means.
Why a Rally for Rivers?

Rivers are a lifeline for the human civilization—a vital and accessible water source for drinking, irrigation, hygiene and other essential living needs. The current devastation of India’s rivers and water bodies, which support the livelihood of hundreds of millions of people, is a precursor for the gravest of crises of our times, in a country with a billion-strong population. To mention some of the main critical issues:

**Surface water resources depletion**

- Perennial major rivers are moving towards being seasonal. Many of India’s minor river systems have vanished.¹
- For the 91 water reservoirs in India with recorded data by the government, the average water levels in May 2016 have fallen by 30% compared to the average level over the last decade.²
- Among India’s non-glacier fed rivers, the biggest, Godavari, has shrunk by almost 20% from historical flows. Other major rivers such as the Krishna and Narmada have shrunk by 60%, while some such as the Cauvery have shrunk by 40%.³
- The desertification of north India is not far away. By 2050, it would lead to a 50% reduction in wheat yields, and the resulting displacement of millions of people from what were once agricultural lands. ⁴

**Surface water resources accessibility**

- 22 out of 32 major Indian cities deal with daily water shortage.⁵
- Five cities—Delhi, Kolkata, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad—will face ‘Absolute Water Scarcity’ in just 35 years.⁶
- Once forest-fed rivers are now surrounded by dry parched cultivation leading to their progressive depletion.
Ganga

- Ganga is one of the world’s 10 most endangered rivers.
- The Ganga River is the most threatened by water over-extraction. Barrages control all of the tributaries to the Ganga and divert roughly 60% of the river’s flow to large-scale irrigation.7
- The Groundwater level in the Ganga-Brahmaputra is falling by 15-20 mm every year.8


(Bottom) The canal connecting the Ganga to the power station dried up because of a lack of water. Photo by Ronny Sen, Source: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-35888535
Indus

- Indus is another one of the world’s 10 most endangered rivers.
- The Indus is the most threatened river by climate change. Himalayan glaciers provide the Indus with 70-80% of its water. The Indus basin has already lost over 90% of its original forest cover.\(^7\)
- The Indus Basin is the second-most overstressed on the planet, its groundwater levels falling by 4-6 mm/year.\(^7\)
- The Indus and Ganga basins support the livelihood of 750 million people in 2.1 million sq. kms.
Tamil Nadu, the big southeast Indian state along the Bay of Bengal is gripped by the deepest drought since 1876. Rivers are dry. Water supplies for farmers are scarce, killing harvests. The drought’s effects are a facet of big public demonstrations that lasted for over a week in late January all over the state. Here, the Cauvery River has no water for irrigation. Photograph by Dhruv Malhotra. Source: www.circleofblue.org,”Choke Point: Tamil Nadu” Keith Schneider, February 1, 2017

Cauvery

• Compared to ten years ago, Tamil Nadu’s reservoir levels have fallen by 49% and Karnataka by 30%.9

• The evergreen forest in the Cauvery catchment area has decreased by 35% between 1977 and 1997.10

Krishna

• The observed runoff to the ocean fell from a pre-irrigation development average of 57 Billion cubic meters a year (Bcm/yr) in 1901-1960, to less than 21 Bcm/yr in 1990-2000 and even more strikingly to 0.75 Bcm in 2001-2004 during an extended period of low rainfall.11

Godavari

• In 2016, the Godavari—second largest river in the country that waters three states — Maharashtra, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh—ran dry at Nashik for the first time in 139 years.12
Farmers in Rajasthan, India are looking to hold polluters responsible for the droughts and monsoons that have hurt crop yields over the past 40 years. Photograph by Savita Kirloskar / Reuters

Source: www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/eij/article/atw/
Rally for Rivers Main Objectives

• Disseminate information on the current status of India’s rivers, open eyes to the coming crisis and present pragmatic solutions to halt and reverse the degradation of surface waters.

• Develop one or several practical and impactful action(s) that would have short-term to long-term positive results following the concept of restoring and rejuvenating surface water resources and riverine ecosystems associated with them. Namely the main action would be reforesting river banks with native trees on public zones or productive horticultural crops on farming zones.

• Gathering, documenting and creating a database of all human resources—from individuals, to communities and organizations, to donor agencies, to the government, willing to get involved and actualisation of a river rejuvenation project.

• Culminate in a government and community-led project of rejuvenation with firm plans of policy intervention to effect the needed results.

This initiative will be unique in spirit and substance, as it is not an activist movement aimed against anyone but a call for collaboration of all concerned parties towards creating a very effective solution based upon sound economic incentives.

The Underlying Vision

Create a kilometer-wide green corridor on the riverside—and a half a kilometer wide corridor for tributaries which will increase the groundwater through tree-root percolation as well as enhanced precipitation, a very simple yet effective means to arrest the depletion of the rivers and replenish them over the needed time frame.

The vision is to target:

• Government-owned land: planting multipurpose forest trees, endemic and natural to the concerned geography.

• Privately owned land: an organic, remunerative horticulture-based model with the much-needed value of enhancing the livelihood of the farmers
Rally Details

Date
September 3 - October 2, 2017

Location
India—from Coimbatore (South) to Delhi (North)

Estimated Reach
• In-person attendance to Rally for Rivers events: over 200,000 individuals
• Social Media: through Isha Foundation’s social media channels’ reach:
  - Facebook: 1.8+ Million
  - YouTube: 5.5+ Million
  - Twitter: 250,000+
Project Components

- The rally will depart from Isha Yoga Center, Coimbatore, head to Kanyakumari and culminate in Delhi, covering 13 states and 20 major cities, traversing a stretch of over 7,000 km across India.

- Sadhguru—founder of Isha Foundation and envisioner of this project, will drive the entire distance with leaders and celebrities actively participating in various legs of the journey.

- City stops aim to generate a local awareness movement with government representation and involving every level of society—from the young to the elderly, schools and universities, clubs and institutions, farmers, citizens. The grievous state of Indian rivers and a powerful call to action will be communicated through:
  - Lively and interactive events aimed at schools, universities, corporates, communities and the general public with active participation from celebrities and political figures, and aiming to attract over 10,000 attendees per city.
  - Incorporation of documentaries, music concerts, cultural performances, including renowned artists from India, to ensure the event is not only informational but also celebratory and motivational in spirit.

- The awareness campaign will culminate in New Delhi with the handover of the revitalization proposal to the Government.
Next Steps

Based on the level of awareness raised and following an assessment of the support and human resources garnered, will follow discussions with the government, policy experts, scientists and all other concerned parties to launch a phase of assessment, followed by proper planning of various river rejuvenation initiatives.

Collaborators

The rally and subsequent measures will be organized in consultation and collaboration with:

- Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
- Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation
- Active participation of leadership of the States.

This initiative also aims to inspire and catalyze many other actions that are necessary for a multi-pronged approach to the gravest of crises of our times.
About Sadhguru and Isha Foundation

Named one of India’s 50 most influential people, Sadhguru is a yogi, mystic, visionary, bestselling author & poet.

With his grasp of world affairs and his scientific approach to human well-being, Sadhguru’s talks have earned him the reputation of a speaker of international renown. He has been a primary speaker at the United Nations World Headquarters, a regular speaker at the World Economic Forum in Davos 2006-2009 and a special invitee at the Australian Leadership Retreat, Indian Economic Summit and TED. He has also been invited to speak at leading educational institutions, including Stanford, Harvard, Yale, Wharton, MIT, Oxford, London Business School and IMD.

Sadhguru established Isha Foundation, a non-profit, volunteer-run organization operating in more than 300 centres and supported by over seven million volunteers worldwide. Through powerful yoga programs for inner transformation and inspiring social outreach initiatives, Isha Foundation has created a massive movement dedicated to addressing all aspects of human well-being.

Under Sadhguru’s leadership and with the support of its large volunteer base, Isha Foundation is involved in large-scale human service projects for environmental stewardship (Project GreenHands), rural upliftment (Action for Rural Rejuvenation), quality education for the disadvantaged children in rural India (Isha Vidhya) and holistic health (Isha Arogya), which have impacted the lives of millions of people around the world. This approach has gained worldwide recognition and reflects in Isha Foundation’s special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.
Existing Environmental Initiatives
Project GreenHands (2004 to date)

Project GreenHands (PGH) is a grassroots ecological revolution of an inspired public, which aims to take corrective measures to increase the green cover, restore soil health and manage natural resources appropriately. Designed to be a replicable model across the world, the project aims to increase the green cover of an entire state, Tamil Nadu, India—an area the size of Louisiana—whose land and vegetation supports a population of over 62 million people—nearly twice the population of California.

With the support of over 2 million volunteers, PGH is involved in an array of rural and urban greening campaigns across South India, and has over the years partnered with the government, corporates, schools, colleges and NGOs in various environmental initiatives. PGH wants Tamil Nadu to be a beacon of environmental responsibility, illustrating what is possible when people take their future into their own hands and take action now, to save their environment.

Since its inception in 2004, the project has grown exponentially, planting a yearly average of 4-5 million trees, over 30 million saplings to date and with a target of over 114 million trees—increasing the green cover of the state to 33%.

In October 2006, PGH set a Guinness World Record by planting 852,587 saplings in a single day with the active participation of over 250,000 volunteers.
Project GreenHands Partners

Under their campaign "Plant for the Planet" Yves Rocher Foundation, France committed to plant 50 million trees all over the world in support of the "Billion Tree Campaign" led by the UNEP. Project GreenHands had the privilege of being their biggest planting partner for a partnership of planting 15 million trees by the end of 2014.

Following the successful completion of the campaign, Yves Rocher has extended their partnership with Project GreenHands for planting 10 million trees by the end of 2017. Yves Rocher Foundation has been the biggest donor for Project GreenHands.

Other Partners
Price waterhouse Coopers, UK
Tree Sisters, UK
National Geographic Green Magazine
Charities Aid Foundation
Data Source Mobility, US
Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research Inc., US
Coaches Across Continents, US
Art et Environnement Association, France
EADS
Sadhguru on the Environment

Saving India's Lifeline – Why Rivers Need Trees

Sustainability: Is Consciousness the Key?
Address at the House of Lords, London
http://isha.sadhguru.org/blog/sadhguru/spot/house-of-lords-address-london/

Sadhguru in Conversation with Ed Begley
Full Version
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9CG28YI&feature=youtu.be
Excerpt: The Power of Water
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sbUtgWPBGjY&t=4s

Sadhguru in Conversation with Jacques Rocher & Seemantinee Khot

Interview with National Geographic Green Magazine

Contact

Email: rallyforrivers@ishaoutreach.org
Ph Num: 9910028884, 8329900195
Resources

5. Times of India Article, Data provided by states to Urban Development Ministry, presented in Parliament
8. NASA, twin Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment (GRACE) satellites between 2003 and 2013
Email: rallyforrivers@ishaoutreach.org
Ph Num: 9910028884, 8329900195