

Yamuna Youth Camp at Samalkha, Haryana

By Minakshi Arora
(Edited/Updated by Subijoy Dutta)

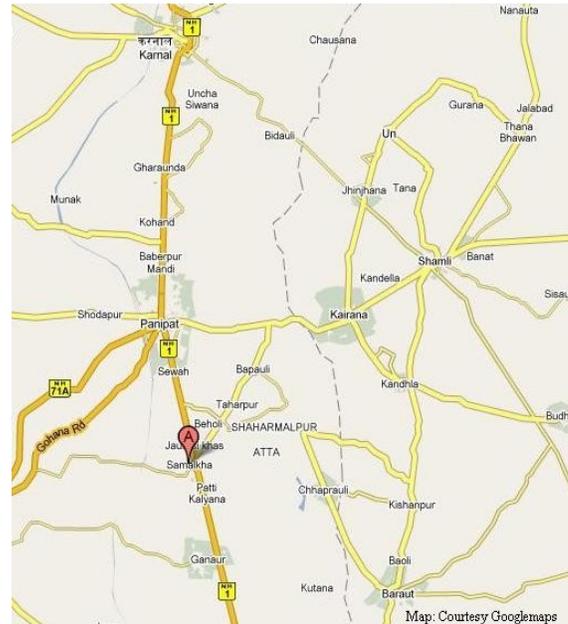
September 4, 2009

Date - August 7-9

Location- Nature Cure Center, Pattykalyana Ashram, near Samalakra, 68 km from Delhi, on Delhi-Chandigarh Road Organization-ROW Foundation, Water Community India, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, Servants of People's Society (Delhi).



A 'Youth Camp for Yamuna' was organized during August 7 – 9, 2009 at the Nature Cure Center, Pattykalyana, Samalkha, Panipat, India under the banner of Rivers of the World (ROW) Foundation and Water Community India to create awareness and understanding amongst the youths about the status and problems related to the Yamuna River and other Rivers and water bodies in general. Mr. Sudarshan Chugh, president Rotary, Midtown, Panipat was honored as chief guest. Ms. Minakshi Arora, Chairperson Water Community India coordinated the program.



The training program was initially planned about 4 months ago by environmental water experts of the ROW Foundation in US. The Activities and Study items planned for the event included a background and history of the Yamuna River; some details on the water cycle; the concept of a watershed; Environmental indicators of change; painting by students; Poetry and story writing on rivers; and Do's and Don'ts to protect streams and rivers.

Although most of the above components were addressed at the camp, some of these items could not be covered at this time due to limitations of resources and time. These items will be covered in a few field workshops planned for January 2010, when members from the ROW Foundation and Alice Ferguson Foundation in Washington, DC are scheduled to visit.

The camp for Yamuna began in the lecture hall of Nature Cure Center. There were pictures of wise people from all over the world on the wall of the hall, even including a Chinese philosopher. Along the same lines we had people from different countries who came to the youth camp because of their care for the water and environment of our world. Some of them were experts on water from America; some of them were leaders of environmental conservation NGOs in India, and one environmental law student, Ms. Wen Min, from China joined the camp.



Mr. Ramakrishna Koduri, P.E., one of the founding members of ROW foundation USA, was the Keynote Speaker of the camp, He told the youths how to clean a River and how we can keep our rivers pollution free. Moreover he also guided them how to prevent the waste from being released into the rivers, and what are the benefits of a blue and clean river.

Prof. Vikram Soni told the youths that river bed of Yamuna can quench the thirst of entire Delhi but for this we've to save our rivers and riverbed.

The other speakers of the program were Shri Onkar Chand (Servants of People's Society), Mr. Mahesh Dutt Sharma (Gandhi Smarak Nidhi), Mr Diwan Singh (Yamuna Satyagraha), Shri Kapil Mishra (Youth 4 Yamuna), Mr Rajesh Dokwal (Nature Foundation), filmmaker Rakesh Khatri.



Water, global warming, environment, rapidly decreasing water level of rivers and it's implications were discussed during the workshop. Main Focus of the discussion was Yamuna and its problems.

Participants were told about all the environment and water Crisis, to make the camp more interesting

some films on Water were presented at evening session on first and second day. After dinner, they watched movies on River Yamuna. River Yamuna is one of the most important rivers in India. It fed Indian people from ancient times. It is the mother of Indian culture. But now it is suffering a lot because of pollution from industry and waste from cities. It is shocking to see that those who put away their waste into the river, were rather happy and could not help laughing when they threw down the rubbish even in front of the camera. They did not even know what is right and what is wrong for lack of education! Maybe that is why we should invite these children who were from poor families to our camp.



For personality development students learnt some Yoga Exercises in the early morning and evening. Second day they had the field visit on the banks of Yamuna in the nearby village named Hathwala, participants were told the status of rivers and were encouraged to save and clean the River. All of us were shocked by the sight. When we reached the riverbank, all we saw was only white sand and grass. There was no water at all! We walked about 500 meters and found some water in the riverbed. But the water was dirty and smelled rather bad. There were many plastic bags and other floaters in water. It was reported that 12 cows died in a village nearby because they drank the polluted water in this river.

Third day was the closing session. Wen Min from China sang a song of River Changjiang, Minakshi Arora translated the song in Hindi for the Participants. She praised the River coming from Himalaya and said, "River is like our mother, coming from Himalaya it irrigates our fields and gives us mountains, hills from its silt and water to drink. Hail the River! Participants from different schools presented a skit on Yamuna and showed their interest to save their river.

Agenda and action program for further move was discussed and settled. A team of 10-20 Youths was prepared for the next action. A 100,000 signature campaign was launched for a clean and blue Yamuna.

Youth in this camp were mainly from grass-root families. Although they dressed in rag, their eyes were bright and pure. Everyone listened to the lecture so earnestly that sparks in their eyes could be seen. After the lecture, many of them talked about their opinion on water conservation and how to save the River Yamuna. The discussion lasted for a long time and weather was rather hot then, but all of them enjoyed it with much passion. It was evident that when they go back to their family, this special experience will last forever in their memory and they will influence people around them.