

Editorial

Ganga (Ganges) is the largest river of the Indian subcontinent (2,510 km) originating from the western Himalayas in the Uttarakand, flowing across the Gangetic plains, Bangladesh and finally merging into the Bay of Bengal. The Ganga occupies a unique position historically, religiously and ecologically. Its basin drains one million square kilometres and harbours a great density of human population. Ganga has been adopted as a National River of India. However, in spite of its importance, not much has been published about its ecosystem health, integrity and fisheries. For more than a decade the Aquatic Ecosystem Health and Management Society (AEHMS) has been trying to organize symposia/conferences dealing with the aquatic ecosystems of India in general, and the Himalayan and Ganga ecosystems in particular. The following scientific meetings were convened by the AEHMS in collaboration with various Indian institutions which resulted in the publication of several peer reviewed papers focusing on the tropical-temperate-Himalayan ecosystems:

- Aquatic Ecosystem Health of Tropical and Temperate regions: Health and Management, New Delhi, October 1999. (*Aquat. Ecosyst. Health Mgmt.* 4(1)).
- The Great Himalayas: Ecology, Health and Management, Kathmandu, January 2004. (*Aquat. Ecosyst. Health Mgmt.* 8(3)).



- The Majestic River Ganga: Health, Integrity and Management Patna, November 2006.
- The International Tropical Ecology Congress Dehra Dun, December 2007.
- Special Symposium on Rivers, Indian Fisheries Forum Kolkata, November 2008.

The above meetings collectively provided networking, and opportunities to interact with various speakers and scientists who then agreed to contribute to a compendium of articles focusing on the ecosystem health of River Ganges. Several papers were submitted for peer review of which five survived the stringent review process of the Journal. We are pleased to publish this set of papers and a foreword from Professor S.P. Singh covering the health and fisheries of this majestic river. We hope that this collection of papers will be useful to all those who revere, love, and care for River Ganga.

We would like to thank all the contributors of the compendium including Prof. S.P. Singh, Advisor State Planning Commission, Government of Uttarakhand (former Vice-Chancellor, Garhwal University, Srinagar) for his contribution. We are grateful to Ken Minns, Scientist emeritus, who devoted much of his time and effort to reviewing and improving the Ganga papers. Thanks are also due to Susan Blunt and Jennifer Lorimer of the AEHMS for their hard work and editing of these papers.

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“The Ganges, above all is the river of India, which has held India’s heart captive and drawn uncounted millions to her banks since the dawn of history. The story of Ganges, from her source to the sea, from old times to new, is the story of Indian civilization and culture, of the rise and fall of empires, of great and proud cities, of adventures of man.

–Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, Discovery of India, 1946.