



National River Conservation Directorate
Ministry of Jal Shakti,
Department of Water Resources,
River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation
Government of India

LEGAL CONSTRAINTS & CHALLENGES IN GODAVARI RIVER BASIN



August 2025



© cGodavari, cGanga and NRCD, 2025

LEGAL CONSTRAINTS & CHALLENGES IN GODAVARI RIVER BASIN



© cGodavari, cGanga and NRCD, 2025

National River Conservation Directorate (NRCD)

The National River Conservation Directorate, functioning under the Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, and Ministry of Jal Shakti providing financial assistance to the State Government for conservation of rivers under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes of 'National River Conservation Plan (NRCP)'. National River Conservation Plan to the State Governments/ local bodies to set up infrastructure for pollution abatement of rivers in identified polluted river stretches based on proposals received from the State Governments/ local bodies.

www.nrcd.nic.in

Centres for Godavari River Basin Management Studies (cGodavari)

The Centres for Godavari River Basin Management Studies (cGodavari) is a Brain Trust dedicated to River Science and River Basin Management. Established in 2024 by CSIR-NEERI and IIT Hyderabad, under the supervision of cGanga at IIT Kanpur, the center serves as a knowledge wing of the National River Conservation Directorate (NRCD). cGodavari is committed to restoring and conserving the Godavari River and its resources through the collation of information and knowledge, research and development, planning, monitoring, education, advocacy, and stakeholder engagement.

www.cGodavari.org

Centre for Ganga River Basin Management and Studies (cGanga)

cGanga is a think tank formed under the aegis of NMCG, and one of its stated objectives is to make India a world leader in river and water science. The Centre is headquartered at IIT Kanpur and has representation from most leading science and technological institutes of the country. cGanga's mandate is to serve as think-tank in implementation and dynamic evolution of Ganga River Basin Management Plan (GRBMP) prepared by the Consortium of 7 IITs. In addition to this, it is also responsible for introducing new technologies, innovations, and solutions into India.

www.cganga.org

Acknowledgment

This report is a comprehensive outcome of the project jointly executed by CSIR-NEERI (Lead Institute) and IIT Hyderabad (Fellow Institute) under the supervision of cGanga at IIT Kanpur. It is submitted to the National River Conservation Directorate (NRCD) in 2024. We gratefully acknowledge the individuals who provided information and photographs for this report.

CSIR-NEERI Team

Lead persons

Dr. S. Venkata Mohan	Director, CSIR-NEERI
Dr. Rajesh Biniwale	Senior Principal Scientist & Chair
Dr. Amit Bansiwala	Chief Scientist

The Team

Dr. Rakesh Kadaverugu	Principal Scientist
Ms. Asha Dhole	Project Associate
Ms. Gayatri Shende	Project Associate

IIT Hyderabad Team

Lead Persons

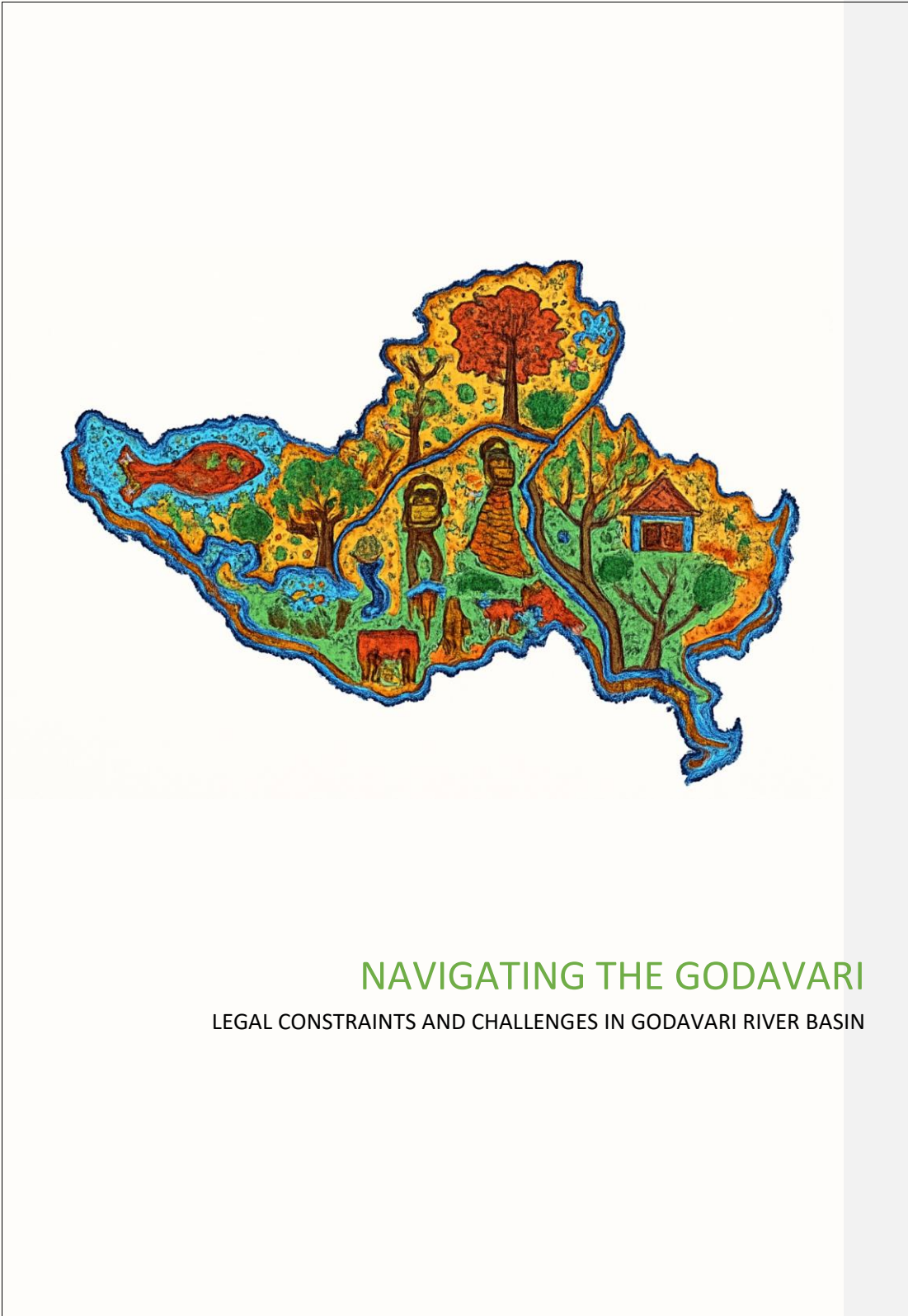
Prof. B.S. Murty	Director, IIT Hyderabad
Prof. Asif Qureshi	Professor

The Team

Prof. Asif Qureshi	Professor
Prof. Debraj Bhattacharyya	Professor
Prof. Prabheesh K.P	Professor
Dr. Satish Regonda	Associate Professor
Dr. Anindita Majumdar	Associate Professor
Dr. Pritha Chatterjee	Associate Professor
Dr. Mir Sumira	Project Scientist
Dr. Srijia Danguubiyyam	Project Associate
Mr. Azharuddin Hashmi	Project Associate
Mr. Anshuman Panigrahi	Project Assistant
Mr. Soumyaranjan Sahoo	Project Assistant
Mr. Rahul Thangallapally	Project Assistant
Mr. Naresh Essapally	Project Assistant
Ms. Dhanshri Bawankar	Project Assistant
Ms. Sakshi Chak	Project Assistant
Ms. M.Sri Vidhya	Project Assistant
Ms. Neha Gupta	Project Assistant
Ms. Fathima Fakiha Imam Khan	Project Assistant
Mr. Ashis Sarkar	Project Assistant
Ms. Meenaz Kakalia	Legal Consultant
Ms. Mehar Shah	Legal Consultant

Report prepared by IIT Hyderabad Team

Ms. Meenaz Kakalia	Legal Consultant
Ms. Mehar Shah	Legal Consultant
Dr. Anindita Majumdar	Associate Professor
Prof. Asif Qureshi	Professor



NAVIGATING THE GODAVARI

LEGAL CONSTRAINTS AND CHALLENGES IN GODAVARI RIVER BASIN



NAVIGATING THE GODAVARI

LEGAL CONSTRAINTS AND CHALLENGES IN GODAVARI RIVER BASIN

PREFACE

Rivers have played a fundamental role in the development of human civilization. Their valleys have served as fertile grounds for agriculture, they have been a source of freshwater for drinking, irrigation and sanitation, and they have served as transportation routes enabling the movement of people, goods, and even ideas, all while supporting ecosystems and biodiversity.

In Indian culture, rivers are not just physical features; they are living, sacred ecosystems central to the lives and livelihoods of many.

For these reasons, they have been the focus of intense academic and legal scholarship. As a river flows from source to sea agnostic to political borders, it traverses not just myriad landscapes but numerous administrative jurisdictions – villages, municipalities, cities, and states, each having its own set of rules governing its affairs.

The Godavari is the second longest river in India after the Ganga, originating in Maharashtra and flowing eastwards across Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Odisha before emptying into the Bay of Bengal. It is considered sacred in Hinduism and a key pilgrimage site, much like the Ganga. It is a lifeline for agriculture in Central and Southern India and vital for fisheries, transport and livelihoods. Its river basin is home to rich flora and fauna.

The Godavari River is perhaps the prime example of the significance that a river holds and consequent complications in issues of governance, dispute resolution and conservation. This report explores these complexities, the evolving challenges in inter-state river water governance and offers insights to address some of these challenges.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	8
CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK PERTAINING TO INTER-STATE RIVER WATER DISPUTES AND CONSERVATION	11
INTER-STATE WATER DISPUTES.....	12
CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS.....	12
LEGISLATIONS	13
RIVER WATER CONSERVATION.....	16
CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS	16
LEGISLATIONS AND POLICIES.....	18
EXAMINING INTRA AND INTERSTATE DISPUTES WITH RESPECT TO THE RIVER GODAVARI	24
EXAMINING CONFLICTS PERTAINING TO THE GODAVARI RIVER.....	24
WATER DISTRIBUTION.....	24
FLOODING.....	26
RIVER INTERLINKING PROJECTS.....	27
EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY INTERVENTIONS AIMED AT RESOLVING INTER-STATE DISPUTES	27
GODAVARI WATER DISPUTES TRIBUNAL	27
THE ANDHRA PRADESH REORGANISATION ACT, 2014: (APRA).....	30
NATIONAL WATER POLICY 2012.....	30
SHORTCOMINGS IN EXISTING LEGAL FRAMEWORK PERTAINING TO DISPUTE RESOLUTION	31
FAILURE TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT EXISTING LEGAL TOOLS.....	33
SUGGESTIONS.....	33
CHALLENGES TO CONSERVATION.....	35
EXISTING CHALLENGES TO CONSERVATION.....	35
ABSENCE OF UNIFIED CONSERVATION/ REJUVENATION POLICY AMONGST STATES.....	35
DISPARATE DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS IN EACH ADMINISTRATIVE JURISDICTION THROUGH WHICH THE RIVER PASSES AND LACK OF INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT	36
LACUNAE IN EXISTING LEGAL FRAMEWORK PERTAINING TO CONSERVATION.....	38
FAILURE TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT EXISTING LEGAL TOOLS	40
ONGOING LITIGATION WITH RESPECT TO POLLUTION/ CONSERVATION	41
SUGGESTIONS.....	45
RIVER CONFLICTS AND PEOPLE	47
SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GODAVARI RIVER AND ITS BASIN.....	47

CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE	47
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE	48
THE RIVER AS COMMONS	49
INDIAN LAW AND THE CONCEPT OF "COMMONS"	49
THE NEED TO RECOGNIZE COMMONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE RIVER GODAVARI.....	50
NON-MAPPING OF TRADITIONAL USES	51
TRAGEDY OF THE COMMONS.....	52
DISPUTES BETWEEN PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS REGARDING THE GODAVARI WATER:	53
CITIZENS VS. INSTITUTIONS	53
SUGGESTIONS.....	55
<u>CONCLUSIONS.....</u>	<u>56</u>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines the challenges surrounding governance, dispute resolution, and conservation of the Godavari River—India’s second-longest river. The Godavari is vital not just for its ecological and economic importance but also for its deep cultural and religious significance. The analysis traverses constitutional, legal, and administrative frameworks, highlighting the persistent obstacles to the resolution of inter-state water disputes and the environmental issues that ail the river.

The report notes the historical arrangements between states to resolve disputes including through the legal framework created by the Inter-state Water Disputes Act, 1956 and how these solutions are periodically tested by political changes, climate pressures, and shifting demands, indicating the need for more adaptive governance in the future.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

Water is primarily a state subject under the Indian Constitution, but inter-state rivers like the Godavari introduce exceptions, empowering the Union Government to legislate and adjudicate on the use, distribution or control of the river waters.

In exercise of this power, Parliament enacted the Inter-state Water Disputes Act, 1956 and the River Boards Act, 1956. While the Inter-state Water Disputes Act, 1956 provides for the resolution of disputes relating to waters of inter-state rivers and river valleys through the setting up of Tribunals, the River Boards Act, 1956 provides for the establishment of River Boards which may advise the concerned State Government on the integrated development and regulation of rivers.

The legal apparatus for river conservation is fragmented, involving a web of Central and State legislation and policies such as the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, and the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, supplemented by Supreme Court and National Green Tribunal interventions.

Intra and Inter-state Disputes with respect to the river Godavari

There exists a complex web of interstate water disputes surrounding the Godavari River, involving multiple states including Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, and Chhattisgarh. The analysis reveals significant shortcomings in India's current legal framework for resolving interstate water conflicts.

The Godavari Water Disputes Tribunal (GWDT) Award of 1980 established water-sharing allocations, but remains challenged by evolving circumstances, such as the bifurcation of the State of Andhra Pradesh in 2014. The Godavari disputes exemplify systemic challenges in India's federal water governance, requiring comprehensive reforms. These reforms must balance regional autonomy with basin-wide coordination while incorporating environmental sustainability and updated legal frameworks.

Conservation Challenges

The Godavari's ecosystem faces serious degradation: pollution from untreated sewage, industrial effluents, agricultural runoff, and unregulated development. There is an absence of unified, basin-wide conservation policy and weak coordination among state and municipal entities, with management hampered by jurisdictional fragmentation and lack of a standardized regulatory regime for riverbanks and floodplains. The failure to incorporate cumulative environmental impact assessments further threaten the river's health.

Implementing environmental safeguards remains a struggle as demonstrated by persistent non-compliance with tribunal and court orders, a chronic shortage of monitoring staff, and bureaucratic inertia.

People, Commons, and Governance

Communities along the Godavari are deeply tied to the river, which sustains agriculture, fisheries, traditional livelihoods, and religious practices. Yet, large-scale projects have triggered displacement, inadequate compensation, and loss of traditional rights, especially among Adivasi and rural populations.

The doctrine of the river as “commons” underlines the need for recognizing customary and community rights—currently fragmented across various laws that are weakly enforced.

Environmental justice issues are acute — public protests, ongoing litigation, and interventions by the Supreme Court, High Courts and the National Green Tribunal all illustrate a gap between legal provisions and effective protection or redress, particularly for marginalized communities.

CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK PERTAINING TO INTER-STATE RIVER WATER DISPUTES AND CONSERVATION

In recognizing the unique and complex challenges posed by inter-state river governance, the constitutional and legal framework governing inter-state water disputes is unique. This chapter analyses the exceptions that have been carved out with respect to inter-state rivers to otherwise general principles regarding the distribution of legislative powers between the Union and State Governments, and the manner in which disputes between States are resolved. As will be discussed, this scheme is aimed at fostering a spirit of dialogue and cooperation, facilitated by the Union Government, rather than one of adversarial parties to a dispute.

The chapter also analyses the complex set of laws, delegated legislations, and judicial pronouncements that govern river water conservation in the country.

The first part of the present chapter examines the Constitutional and legal provisions concerning inter-state river water disputes. The second half examines the Constitutional and legal provisions and judicial precedent that govern river water conservation.

INTER-STATE WATER DISPUTES

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

ARTICLE 246 AND THE SEVENTH SCHEDULE

Article 246, read with the Seventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution, deals with the distribution of legislative powers between Parliament and the Legislatures of States. The subject matters over which the Central Government can pass laws are enumerated in List I of the Seventh Schedule (also known as the “Union List”), and those over which the State Legislatures can formulate laws are set out in List II of the Seventh Schedule (also known as the “State List”). Both Parliament and the State Legislatures are empowered to pass laws concerning the matters enumerated in List III (also known as the “Concurrent list”).

Entry 56 of List I empowers Parliament to legislate on matters pertaining to the regulation and development of inter-State rivers and river valleys “*to the extent to which such regulation and development under the control of the Union is declared by Parliament by law to be expedient in the public interest*”. Entry 17 of List II empowers State Legislatures to frame laws with respect to water (pertaining to water supplies, irrigation and canals, drainage and embankments, water storage and water power).

However, the State Legislature’s power has been made subject to entry 56 of the Union List. In essence, this means that although the State Legislatures are primarily responsible for framing laws with respect to water (which, needless to say, includes rivers), Parliament may frame laws with respect to the *development* and *control* of inter-state rivers if it is deemed to be in public interest. The framed law must also explicitly declare that such an expediency exists.

ARTICLE 262

Although the Supreme Court is generally empowered under Article 131 to decide disputes between two State Governments or between any State Government (or Governments) and the Central Government, an exception has been carved out for inter-state rivers or river valleys in the form of Article 262. Under Clause (1) of Article 262, Parliament may pass a law to provide for the adjudication of disputes with respect to the use, distribution and control of inter-state rivers. Clause (2) of Article 262 empowers Parliament to pass a law to exclude the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court or any other court with respect to such disputes.

The Supreme Court has almost consistently held that its jurisdiction, whether under Article 32 (original jurisdiction in enforcing fundamental rights) or Article 131 (original jurisdiction in federal disputes), stands excluded by virtue of Article 262 of the Constitution, read with Section 11 of the [IRWDA]. This position was clarified in the decision in *Atma Linga Reddy v Union of India* (2008).

Commented [MS1]: I think this is the first time we are mentioning this law so we should abbreviate it in brackets.

The Supreme Court has, however, observed that the bar on its jurisdiction is limited to disputes which have not been decided or resolved. It has frequently entertained petitions relating to the enforcement of Tribunal award and has also, through numerous judgments, outlined the limits, powers and jurisdiction of the Tribunals appointed under the IRWDA.

LEGISLATIONS

INTER-STATE RIVER WATER DISPUTES ACT, 1956 AND THE RIVER BOARDS ACT, 1956

In exercise of its powers under Article 262, Parliament enacted the Inter-state River Water Disputes Act, 1956 (IRWDA), to provide for the resolution of disputes relating to waters of inter-state rivers and river valleys. Section 11 of the said Act excludes such

disputes from the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court. The Act confers powers upon the Union Government to constitute tribunals to resolve such disputes.

A State Government may request the Central Government to refer a dispute. If the Central Government finds that a water dispute exists, *and*, importantly, that it cannot be settled by negotiations, it must constitute a Water Disputes Tribunal. The decision of the Tribunal is final, non-appealable and has the force of law. The Act was amended in 2002 to introduce a time limit for the Tribunal to deliver its award (3 years, which may be extended by 2 years).

Exercising its power under Entry 56, Parliament enacted the River Boards Act in 1956 (RBA). This Act contains a declaration that it was deemed expedient in public interest for the Central Government to take under its control the regulation and development of inter-state rivers and river valleys. The Act provides for the establishment of River Boards for one or more inter-state rivers or river valleys, which are to be constituted by the Central Government in consultation with the concerned State Governments. The Boards are responsible for advising the concerned State Governments on the integrated development and regulation of rivers.

River Disputes

CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Article 246 and the 7th Schedule

Article 246 and the 7th Schedule of the Constitution deal with distribution of legislative powers between parliament and the legislatures. While Parliament is empowered to legislate on matters pertaining to the regulation and development of inter-state rivers “in public interest”, the state legislatures can frame laws with respect to water

Article 262

Although it is generally the Supreme Court that adjudicates inter-state disputes, an exception is carved out with respect to inter-state river disputes. Under Article 262, Parliament may pass a law to provide for the adjudication of disputes with respect to the use, distribution and control of inter-state rivers.

Inter-State River Water Dispute Act, 1956

This Act confers powers upon the Union Government to constitute tribunals to resolve such disputes

The River Boards Act, 1956

The River Boards Act provides for the establishment of River Boards for one or more interstate or river valleys, which are responsible for advising the concerned State government on the integrated development and regulation of rivers.

RIVER WATER CONSERVATION

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

Although there is no specific Constitutional provision that deals with the conservation of water resources, the Directive Principles of State Policy contained in Part IV of the Constitution provide guiding principles in this regard. Article 48-A of the Constitution requires the State to endeavor to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country. A concomitant duty has been imposed upon citizens under Part IV-A, which deals with Fundamental Duties, in the form of Article 51-A(g), requiring them to protect and improve the natural environment including rivers and wildlife.

In the context of river water conservation, the provisions of Article 243-G and 243-H of the Constitution are also worth mentioning. These Articles empower Panchayats at the village level on various matters that are both directly and indirectly relevant to river water conservation. These provisions empower the State Legislatures to grant Panchayats the authority to plan and implement schemes for economic and social development including water management and watershed development, drinking water, maintenance of community assets like check dams, tanks, and ponds. These provisions recognise that sustainable water management requires grassroots involvement.

Additionally, the guarantee of protection of life and personal liberty contained under Article 21 has been expanded through judicial pronouncements to include the right to a pollution-free environment and, in particular, the right to clean water. The jurisprudential principles that animate environmental conservation have been fleshed out in numerous judgments of the Supreme Court and are briefly discussed below.

MC Mehta v UOI (1987):

In MC Mehta v. Union of India, the Supreme Court unequivocally declared that the right to clean water is an essential part of the right to life. The case dealt with the pollution of the Ganga River and led to significant directives for the establishment of treatment plants and pollution control measures.

Subhash Kumar v State of Bihar (1991):

In this landmark case, the Supreme Court of India, held that “the right to live” includes the right to enjoyment of pollution-free water and air. The Court held that this is an important aspect of right to life enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution, and a citizen has right to have recourse to Article 32 of the Constitution for removing the pollution of water or air which may be harmful to the quality of life.

Vellore Citizens' Welfare Forum v. Union of India (1996):

The Apex court awarded compensation to victims of environmental pollution while recognising the right of the people to a clean and healthy environment, on the basis of the ‘precautionary principle’ and the ‘polluter pays principle’.

Narmada Bachao Andolan v. Union of India (2000):

In this case, the Supreme Court reaffirmed that water is a basic need for the survival of human beings and is part of the right to life and human rights as enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution of India. It reiterated that the right to a healthy environment and to sustainable development are fundamental human rights implicit in the right to “life”.

Almitra H. Patel v. Union of India (2000):

This case addressed untreated sewage contaminating water bodies. The Supreme Court directed municipalities to implement effective waste management systems to reduce water pollution. Notably, this matter led to the framing of the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2000 (since replaced by the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016).

Indian Council for Enviro-Legal Action v. Union of India (1996):

This landmark case focused on industrial pollution in Rajasthan, where chemical industries caused extensive groundwater contamination. The Supreme Court directed compensation for affected communities and the cleanup of polluted sites.

Jitendra Singh v. Ministry of Environment (2019):

The Supreme Court in this case underscored the constitutional imperative of preserving natural water bodies. It emphasised :-

- **Non-alienation of Natural Water Bodies:** It observed that the State cannot transfer natural water bodies for industrial or commercial purposes under the pretext of creating artificial alternatives.
- **Constitutional Duties:** The Court observed that the State has a duty to protect and improve the environment, including water bodies under Articles 21, 48A, and 51A(g) of the Constitution.
- **Public Trust Doctrine:** Importantly, it held that natural resources like ponds and lakes are held in trust by the State for public use and cannot be privatized.

The Court also highlighted the ecological importance of natural water bodies, stating that their destruction cannot be justified by the creation of artificial ones.

LEGISLATIONS AND POLICIES

There is a lack of a unified legislation that deals with river conservation - river conservation is governed through a combination of laws, delegated legislations policies and government policies and programmes which are briefly discussed below.

THE WATER (PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF POLLUTION) ACT, 1974

The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 was enacted to control water pollution. It led to the establishment of the Central Pollution Control Boards (CPCB) and State Pollution Control Boards (SPCB) which are responsible for monitoring and enforcing pollution control.

The CPCB has been given wide powers and responsibilities under the statute, including to advise the Central Government on matters concerning the prevention and control of water pollution; to plan and execute a nation-wide programme for the prevention and control of water pollution; and to lay down standards for effluent discharge, prepare manuals, codes and guides relating to treatment and disposal of sewage and trade effluent. Similar powers have been granted to the SPCBs to be applied locally in each respective State. Additionally, SPCBs have been granted the power to issue clearances for the establishment and operation of any activity.

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION ACT (1986)

The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, is an umbrella legislation for the protection and improvement of the environment. Wide powers have been granted to the Central Government to take measures to protect and improve the environment. In exercise of these powers, the Central Government has issued two notifications relevant for river water conservation: the Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2006 (EIA Notification) and the Coastal Regulatory Zone Notification, 2019 (CRZ Notification).

The EIA Notification, 2006, requires a prior environmental clearance for certain activities that are listed in Schedule I to the Notification. River valley projects are included in this Schedule. The Notification provides for an assessment

process whereby the potential impacts that could be caused by the project are considered by an expert body. Accordingly, general and specific conditions are imposed to mitigate any such impact. These conditions are stipulated in a document known as an “environmental clearance”.

Similarly, the Central Government has issued the CRZ Notification, 2019 (which replaced the CRZ Notification of 2011), under which, *inter alia*, development activities in “tidal influenced water bodies”, meaning water bodies influenced by tidal effects from the sea including rivers, are regulated. An assessment process is carried out and a clearance known as a CRZ Clearance is issued subject to certain conditions that must be complied with by the project proponent.

It should be noted, however, that this notification has limited application to rivers as it applies only up to the point where the river is affected by the tides from the sea. There is a proposal to introduce a policy on similar lines for all river bodies – the River Regulation Zone which has been discussed later in this report.

WILDLIFE PROTECTION ACT, 1972

Although there are no provisions that directly deal with river water conservation, the Wildlife Protection Act necessitates the conservation of natural habitats of wildlife, including rivers and wetlands. Areas considered ecologically significant can be declared as Sanctuaries, National Parks, or Conservation Reserves. Many of these protected areas include or are situated around river ecosystems which necessitates safeguards against environmentally polluting activities such as sand mining and deforestation etc.

The provisions relating to Community Reserves are particularly relevant in the present context. Community Reserves may be declared by the State Government in areas where local communities or individuals voluntarily come forward to

conserve wildlife and biodiversity. These are community- or privately-owned lands. Community Reserves empower local people to conserve local water bodies, streams, and wetlands. This encourages traditional water management practices.

RIVER BOARDS ACT, 1956

As noted above, the River Boards Act, 1956, was enacted to provide a framework for the planning, regulation, and development of inter-state rivers and river valleys through the creation of River Boards. While the focus is broader than just conservation, sustainable and coordinated management is at the core of the Act's vision. The Act envisions coordinated planning across entire river basins, which is essential for conservation. Conservation efforts (e.g., pollution control, maintaining ecological flow, catchment area treatment) require basin-wide planning, which the River Boards could facilitate.

NATIONAL WATER POLICY

The National Water Policy, 2012, (NWP) formulated by the Ministry of Jal Shakti, (previously Ministry of Water Resources), is a strategic guideline that emphasizes the sustainable development, management, and conservation of water resources, including rivers.

The NWP encourages river basins as planning units and promotes integrated planning across sectors. The Policy suggests that a portion of river flows should be maintained to meet ecological needs. It recommends strict regulatory and enforcement mechanisms for pollution control. Notably, it encourages the involvement of local communities, Panchayats and NGOs in water management.

This can be seen to be in consonance with Articles 243-G and 243-H which have been discussed above.

As a policy guideline, the NWP does not have statutory force.

RIVER CONSERVATION

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974

Though this Act doesn't directly deal with river conservation, it contains provisions for the prevention and control of water pollution in general

The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986

This is an umbrella legislation which, amongst other things, empowers the Central Government to issue notifications for the protection and improvement of the environment.

The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972

Although there are no provisions that directly deal with river water conservation, the Wildlife Protection Act necessitates the conservation of natural habitats of wildlife, including rivers and wetlands. Areas considered ecologically significant can be declared as Sanctuaries, National Parks, or Conservation Reserves.

The River Boards Act, 1956

The mandates of the river boards under this Act are pollution control and maintaining ecological flow of rivers.

National Water Policy

This policy provides strategic guidelines and recommends, amongst other things, strict regulatory and enforcement mechanisms for pollution control.

EXAMINING INTRA AND INTERSTATE DISPUTES WITH RESPECT TO THE RIVER GODAVARI

Inter-state water disputes play out across a range of issues including water sharing, usage rights, and the construction of irrigation and hydro-electric projects.

As stated in the previous sections, the Inter-State Water Disputes Act, 1956, guides the resolution of inter-state disputes. This section aims to examine past and ongoing conflicts to determine the effectiveness of existing arrangements and mechanisms in resolving interstate water disputes.

As will be seen, the existing mechanism has proven ineffective. This ineffectiveness stems from several reasons, such as noncompliance of awards by the concerned states without consequence, and ambiguities in executing and implementing the awards.

The ongoing controversies with respect to the Godavari River highlighted in this section reveal that while the Godavari Water Disputes Tribunal Award remains the legal foundation, new projects and changing political boundaries have added layers of complexity.

EXAMINING CONFLICTS PERTAINING TO THE GODAVARI RIVER

WATER DISTRIBUTION

GODAVARI WATER DISPUTES TRIBUNAL (GWDT) AWARD (1980)

A joint tribunal was established in 1969 under the Inter-state River Water Disputes Act to resolve conflicts among the riparian states (Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Karnataka) regarding the utilisation of the Godavari River's water resources. After bilateral accords in 1975–76, it

issued its final allocation order on 7th July, 1980, delineating water-sharing among Maharashtra, Andra Pradesh (including Telangana), Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, and Chhattisgarh. The background of the controversy that the Tribunal was called upon to decide, and the impact of its award, are discussed in further detail later.

UPSTREAM BARRAGES AND THE BABLI CONTROVERSY

Post-GWDT, Maharashtra began constructing several barrages, including Babli on the Penganga tributary. This led to legal conflicts with Telangana/Andhra Pradesh due to reduced downstream flow during lean periods. The Supreme Court ruled in Maharashtra's favour in 2013, but mandated that "Babli gates remain lifted during monsoon (1 July–28 October)" (New Indian Express, 2013).

TELANGANA–ANDHRA PRADESH TENSIONS POST-BIFURCATION (2014)

Telangana, demanding a re-evaluation, has challenged Andhra Pradesh's moves such as the Godavari–Banakacherla river linking project, citing violations of GWDT and the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act (APRA). Telangana has argued that the project could impact their existing and future water requirements from the Godavari. In April 2025, Telangana's Irrigation Minister, Uttam Reddy, confirmed plans to petition the Supreme Court, emphasising that these schemes breach tribunal and state bifurcation rules (New Indian Express, 2025).

POLITICAL DISPUTES AND WATER DIVERSION ALLEGATIONS

Political tensions surrounding the sharing of Godavari River waters have intensified post the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh in 2014. The division of irrigation projects, water infrastructure, and river water entitlements has led to frequent clashes and competing narratives between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. These conflicts are not purely administrative; they are deeply political and regularly find expression in public accusations, press statements, and legislative debates.

Political leaders have pointed fingers at each other for mismanaging flood releases, over-appropriating water, and undermining ecological and livelihood needs downstream. These inter-state and intra-state narratives often reflect deeper anxieties about regional development, federal fairness, and the role of central agencies in managing India's water federalism.

FLOODING

Seasonal flooding along the Godavari River has become a persistent inter-state issue, particularly between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, due to uncoordinated dam water releases. The lack of a basin-wide real-time flood management protocol has exacerbated the frequency and impact of these floods, with Telangana often accused of releasing dam water without providing timely alerts to downstream Andhra Pradesh.

One of the most visible flashpoints is the temple town of Bhadrachalam in Telangana, which is frequently inundated due to upstream rain and dam discharges. Multiple reports document the region crossing danger marks, prompting mass evacuations and emergency relief operations.

In 2023, amid heavy rainfall across Telangana, the Godavari River water crossed the danger mark in the Bhadrachalam town, inundating low-lying areas and cutting off road links (Hindustan Times, 2023).

Notably, a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) has been filed in the Telangana High Court, seeking a declaration of the floods between Kaleshwaram and Polavaram as a national disaster. The petition highlights the backwater effect (the rise in water level upstream of a dam caused by the dam's impoundment of water) caused by dam releases and seeks expert assessment and disaster planning. Subsequently, the High Court issued notices to the Centre and the States of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, demanding counter-affidavits on their flood response strategies and the alleged neglect in coordination between dam operations. Furthermore, local administrative accounts show repeated flooding in Bhadrachalam within short spans (The Hindu, 2023).

RIVER INTERLINKING PROJECTS

Polavaram is a multi-purpose irrigation project in Andhra Pradesh. Odisha and Chhattisgarh have opposed the project on grounds of submergence of tribal areas in their states and lack of proper consent or rehabilitation measures. Telangana also raised concerns post-2014 bifurcation, questioning the relevance of the allocations made in a united Andhra Pradesh. The project has been challenged in courts and by local movements but is moving ahead with Central Government support (as it was declared a National Project in 2014).

Telangana, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh have raised objections in the Supreme Court, citing the risk of submerging tribal habitats, such as those in Khammam (Telangana) and Malkangiri (Odisha), as well as the sanctity of national parks (Papikonda). Odisha argued that the environmental clearances overlooked rehabilitation measures (OdishaPlus Bureau, 2025). The Supreme Court mandated affidavits from all concerned parties (the Centre and affected States), affirming adherence to the GWDT award (Firstpost, 2017).

EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY INTERVENTIONS AIMED AT RESOLVING INTER-STATE DISPUTES

GODAVARI WATER DISPUTES TRIBUNAL

In 1951, the first conference was held to discuss utilization of supplies from Krishna and Godavari Rivers which was attended by the representatives of Bombay, Madras, Hyderabad, Madhya Pradesh, and Mysore. A Memorandum of Agreement allocating the flows of the river basin amongst the concerned states was drawn up.

In view of changes in the political boundaries of the basin area, non-participation of the State of Odisha in the 1951 agreement, and the growing demands towards the utilisation of basin waters, applications for reference of the dispute to a Tribunal was made by the concerned states.

The Godavari Water Disputes Tribunal was constituted by the Government of India on 10th April 1969 and was referred Godavari disputes for adjudication to this Tribunal. While the dispute was under adjudication before the GWDT, the party states entered into a number of individual agreements for mutual adjustments of their claims. The Tribunal incorporated these agreements in its final adjudication and award. The final award of the Tribunal was declared in November 1979. It allocated specific shares to each state, resolving many disputes regarding how much water each state could use.

However, despite the tribunal, occasional disagreements do flare up over implementation, especially in lean years or during new project planning (e.g., Kaleshwaram, Polavaram). Unlike some other tribunals, the GWDT did not establish a standing mechanism to handle future disagreements or environmental challenges. New political realities (like state bifurcation) and emerging water stress have begun to test its adequacy.

GODAVARI WATER DISPUTE

A TIMELINE

1930S-1940S

Initial inter-regional interest in the development of irrigation and hydroelectric projects along the Godavari basin; no significant disputes yet.

1956

Formation of new linguistic states under the States Reorganization Act, including Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh, increasing inter-state competition for river resources.

1956-1960

As states propose and begin irrigation/hydroelectric projects on the Godavari, disputes begin to emerge between Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Odisha

1969

The Government of India constitutes the Godavari Water Disputes Tribunal (GWDT) under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956.

1969-1979

Tribunal hears claims and counterclaims from riparian states (primarily Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Karnataka). Emphasis placed on mutual agreements between states for specific project clearances. The Tribunal encourages states to sign bilateral and tripartite agreements, several of which are recorded as part of the award.

1980

The GWDT Award is finalized and published. It allocates Godavari water among basin states (over 148 BCM of utilisable water based on availability). The Award includes recorded agreements for several proposed or existing projects such as Polavaram, Sriramsagar, Inchampalli

1980-1989

Implementation of the Award beings. Some residual issues, such as project clearances and submergence concerns, continue to be negotiated.

Polavaram Project, in particular, becomes a point of administrative contention in the following decades (especially with Odisha and Chhattisgarh).

THE ANDHRA PRADESH REORGANISATION ACT, 2014: (APRA)

After the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh in 2014, Telangana emerged as a new stakeholder. Since the GWDT award did not account for this, disputes have re-emerged between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Following this reorganization, shares of the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh in the Godavari River water have not yet been reallocated to the States of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, leading to recurrent flare-ups of disputes between the two states.

The Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, provided for the constitution of the Godavari River Management Board. The functions of the board include: the regulation of water supply (having regard to awards granted by Tribunals and any agreements entered into between states); the regulation of supply of power generated; the construction of remaining ongoing or new works connected with the development of water resources, and appraising proposals for construction of new projects on Godavari River.

NATIONAL WATER POLICY 2012

The National Water Policy, 2012 (NWP), lays out a framework of guiding principles for dealing with water disputes and how they can be prevented or resolved.

The NWP promotes integrated water resource management across basin levels, including inter-state river basins. This encourages states to collaborate on river basin planning, potentially reducing conflicts through joint decision-making.

It encourages sharing water data, which has been a key friction point in many interstate disputes, including the Godavari River. Furthermore, it recommends establishing river basin organisations (RBOs) with adequate authority to manage inter-state rivers. It suggests comprehensive legislation for water management that could standardize how disputes are addressed. However, no steps have been taken in this regard yet, and interstate water disputes continue to rely on tribunals under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956.

While the NPW is not legally binding, it serves as a reference for policy-making and even tribunal deliberations in disputes.

SHORTCOMINGS IN EXISTING LEGAL FRAMEWORK PERTAINING TO DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Srinivas Chokkakula argues that the historical geography of colonial power relations, pre-independence agreements, and post-independence reorganization complicate the anatomy and ongoing remaking of inter-state water disputes in contemporary India (Chokkakula, 2015).

The frequent disputes over the Godavari River among Indian states—particularly Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha—serve as a revealing case study of the deeper challenges embedded in India’s federal water governance system. These conflicts underscore the structural, political, and environmental dimensions of inter-state water disputes that persist across the country.

Furthermore, the overlapping of legislative duties between the Union and State Governments with respect to river waters has given rise to some ambiguity. The amorphous scheme has resulted in the unwillingness of States to relinquish control over river water resources due to regional and political considerations,

while the Union Government has been reluctant to perform its role. This has consequently led to the frequent recurrence of conflicts.

At the core of the issue lies the constitutional paradox: while water is a State subject, rivers like the Godavari River are shared across state boundaries. This creates a fundamental tension between regional autonomy and the need for coordinated, basin-wide management. States often pursue unilateral projects, such as dams or irrigation schemes, triggering protests from downstream neighbours over reduced water availability or lack of consultation.

Historical agreements, such as the 1975 Godavari Water Disputes Tribunal Award, further complicate the picture. These agreements, though legally binding, are increasingly viewed as outdated in the face of demographic changes, shifting water needs, and climate stress. Disputes frequently arise from disagreements over the interpretation or relevance of such allocations, especially when states feel they are receiving less than their fair share.

Trust is another major casualty in these disputes. A lack of transparent data-sharing, coupled with political posturing, often fuels suspicion among states. Water issues are highly politicized. State leaders often use them to rally regional support. This can lead to rushed projects that prioritize political gain over ecological sustainability or cooperative planning.

It is observed that environmental considerations tend to take a backseat in these disputes. Focus tends to remain on human use, especially agriculture and drinking water, while concerns like river ecosystem health, biodiversity, and long-term sustainability are neglected.

FAILURE TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT EXISTING LEGAL TOOLS

The existing mechanisms meant to resolve these disputes, such as the water tribunals under the IRWDA, are often slow and ineffective. The Godavari Tribunal, for instance, took 11 years to deliver its final award. There is no permanent institutional framework to adapt water-sharing agreements to evolving circumstances or to enforce tribunal decisions efficiently.

The River Boards Act (RBA) of 1956 enables setting up of river boards by the government to regulate and develop inter-state rivers and valleys. However, the Act restricts these boards to an advisory role when it comes to influencing states. In case of any difference between states over the advice of boards, judicial arbitration can be resorted to. This is redundant, as the act puts no obligations on states for implementing the decisions of boards. Thus, boards remain restricted to technical functions and are often only set up to implement or manage specific projects.

SUGGESTIONS

- The Godavari River disputes highlight the need for a more integrated and forward-looking approach to water management in India. Strengthening inter-state cooperation, modernizing legal frameworks, ensuring data transparency, and incorporating environmental concerns into planning are essential steps toward more equitable and sustainable river governance.
- The final Award of the GWDT was declared in 1979. Updating mechanisms or institutional frameworks might now be needed to ensure continued water-sharing harmony among riparian states.
- The proposed River Basin Management Bill, 2018, which provides a more integrated governance framework, is a step in the right direction.

The Bill proposes to establish a River Basin Authority (RBA), for the “*regulation and development of interstate rivers and river basins.*” It uses various normative principles such as participation, cooperation, sustainable utilisation of resources, integrated management of water, demand management and conjunctive use of water for effective and efficient management of river basins.

- As pointed out by Modak and Ghosh (n.d), the course of litigation and adjudication for resolving disputes can become extremely adversarial between the conflicting states. This often results in either non-implementation or delayed/improper implementation of the tribunal or court verdicts. Thus, formulating an alternative to political negotiation, coupled with a political will that can forge an amicable consensus for mutually agreed river-water sharing, is the only long-term and durable solution to river water conflicts in India.

CHALLENGES TO CONSERVATION

The Godavari river has long been plagued with issues of pollution. Multiple studies and reports have highlighted the significant environmental degradation of its waters and biodiversity due to industrial effluents, untreated sewage, agricultural runoff, and encroachments along its course.

In Maharashtra, a 300 k.m. stretch has been marked as critically polluted by the Central Pollution Control Board, with Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) levels ranging from 6 to 36 mg/L, indicating severe organic pollution. In Telangana, areas like Mancherla, Ramagundam and Bhadrachalam have recorded high levels of coliform bacteria, a sign of sewage contamination (CPCB, 2022).

Efforts to make the Godavari pollution-free have been ongoing, with approximately ₹150 crores being spent on this initiative so far. Despite these significant investments, the pollution levels in the river have not reduced, indicating that more comprehensive and sustained measures may be required to effectively address the pollution issues plaguing the Godavari River.

This section examines the contributing factors to the pollution of the Godavari river, the regulatory gaps, and the shortcomings in implementation of existing regulations.

EXISTING CHALLENGES TO CONSERVATION

ABSENCE OF UNIFIED CONSERVATION/ REJUVENATION POLICY AMONGST STATES

Environmentalists have long highlighted the need for an ecosystems-based, holistic approach to environmental conservation rather than a hyper-local approach that misses

the proverbial forest for the trees. Nowhere is the need more apparent than in the case of rivers, particularly those as vast as the Godavari River. As rivers *flow* through multiple landscapes and jurisdictions, the impacts of any interventions also *flow* from one geographic location a river passes through to the next.

India has multiple regulations and policies related to water resources. However, these policies lack a unified approach to river basin management. Poor coordination amongst municipal bodies, irrigation departments and pollution control boards has created accountability gaps, making comprehensive river management challenging.

As such, there is an urgent need for a unified policy/ regulation dealing with inter-state river conservation and to establish an institutional mechanism to coordinate inter-state efforts in river water conservation.

Water pollution has not been adequately addressed in any policy in India, either at the Central or the State level. In the absence of a specific water pollution policy that would incorporate pollution prevention,, treatment of polluted water, and ecological restoration of polluted water bodies, government efforts in these areas will not get the required emphasis and thrust (Comptroller and Auditor General of India, 2011-12).

DISPARATE DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS IN EACH ADMINISTRATIVE JURISDICTION THROUGH WHICH THE RIVER PASSES AND LACK OF INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT

Although they do not directly relate to conservation, construction and development norms, insofar as they control how land is used, how infrastructure is built, and how natural resources are protected, play, an important role in protecting the environment. Land use and zoning regulations, waste management norms, and water management regulations, in particular, are relevant to examine in the context of river conservation.

However, complications exist in land governance and planning. Just as water is a State subject under Schedule VII of the Constitution, so too is land. State Town and Country Planning Acts have been brought into force by State Governments based on the Model

Town and Country Planning Laws framed by the Central Government in 1962. The model law grants autonomy to the local planning authorities to frame their own development regulations. This has resulted in each administrative unit having its own respective regulations concerning planning and zoning, including along the riverbanks and floodplains.

Furthermore, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, which aimed to decentralize power and encourage participatory governance at the grassroots level, envisioned the devolution of the power to the smallest unit of governance, granting it control of, amongst other things, planning and resource management. Under this Constitutional scheme, a State Government may pass legislation empowering Municipal Councils and Municipalities to deal with issues of urban planning, urban forestry, environmental protection, and promotion of ecological aspects. It may pass similar laws empowering Gram Sabhas to deal with issues of minor irrigation, water management, and watershed development.

This has resulted in the existence of a number of heterogenous development regulations and norms, as well as *ad-hoc*, sporadic, and uncoordinated water management and conservation efforts.

Recognizing this, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, has framed guidelines for river-centric urban planning. It highlights the need for mainstreaming river conservation efforts with urban planning (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, n.d.). These guidelines have been prepared as an advisory to States to ensure sustainability of rivers passing through cities and towns to regulate development along the riverbanks and floodplains.

LACUNAE IN EXISTING LEGAL FRAMEWORK PERTAINING TO CONSERVATION

LACK OF A STANDARDIZED POLICY

The existing regulatory framework is wholly inadequate to deal with the conservation of inter-state rivers. The lack of a standardized policy to regulate activities along riverbanks and floodplains has led to un-coordinated, *ad-hoc* measures being adopted that are unsustainable in the long run.

Interestingly, in an apparent to address this issue, the State of Maharashtra framed a River Regulation Zone Policy in 2000, which prohibited certain activities while regulating others along the riverbanks and required the grant of a clearance for any proposed activity along the river. However, this policy was inexplicably withdrawn by the State in 2015 and has not been replaced by any similar policy thereafter.

In February 2016, the Ministry of Environment Forests and Climate Change released a draft River Regulation Zone (“RRZ”) notification under the Environment Protection Act, 1986. The RRZ Notification intended to regulate development and industrial activities up to 5 km from the banks of river and an equivalent area for mountain/ hill stretches under three categories of River Conservation Zones (“RCZ”) demarcated with reference to the Highest Flood Level. Activities were either prohibited, restricted or regulated depending on which RCZ it fell within. This draft policy was circulated to all the States and UTs for their comments; however, it is not clear what has happened thereafter. As a result, there is presently no uniform policy governing development activities along river banks and floodplains.

LACK OF CO-ORDINATION BETWEEN POLLUTION CONTROL BOARDS

A related issue is the lack of coordination between Pollution Control Boards of the riparian states. The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, does

not necessitate the coordination of Pollution Control Boards with respect to matters of mutual concern, such as river conservation, with each Board being responsible for dealing with matters within its own respective jurisdiction. Thus, the role of the Central Pollution Control Board is crucial in this regard. It is empowered to coordinate activities of the State Pollution Control Boards. It should be noted, however, that there is no known instance of the CPCB exercising this power with respect to inter-state river conservation.

ABSENCE OF REQUIREMENT OF CUMULATIVE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The current Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regime, primarily governed by the EIA Notification of 2006 under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, mainly assesses individual projects. This often fails to account for the cumulative impacts of multiple projects in a region.

Environmentalists have therefore long highlighted the need for a more comprehensive evaluation of a project's environmental impact by taking into account its cumulative impact on the environment rather than considering it in isolation. This is particularly crucial in the case of hydroelectric projects and dams constructed in river basins. Rivers are dynamic, interconnected ecosystems that are deeply affected by multiple, simultaneous interventions. Although the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has at times commissioned cumulative assessments, especially under court orders or public pressure, there is no standardized, enforceable cumulative impact assessment framework.

FAILURE TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT EXISTING LEGAL TOOLS

NON-FORMATION OF RIVER BOARDS

As mentioned earlier in this report, the River Boards Act, 1956, empowers the Central Government to establish River Boards to advise the concerned governments on matters concerning the regulation or development of inter-state rivers. The Act contemplates such Boards acting as coordinating bodies to deal with a wide range of issues, including those of conservation of inter-state rivers. Under Section 13 of the Act, these Boards may be empowered to advise interested Governments in coordinating their activities for the purpose of, *inter alia*, conservation, control and optimum utilization of water resources of the inter-state rivers and prevention of pollution of the waters of inter-state rivers. However, as discussed earlier, the Central Government has failed to exercise its powers under this Act and to establish any River Boards in the country. Such River Boards could be of particular benefit in managing inter-state river as vast as the Godavari, which requires the coordination of multiple states and stakeholders.

POOR MONITORING OF ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE CONDITIONS

Under the present regulatory regime, river valley projects and irrigation projects require an environmental clearance under the provisions of the EIA Notification, 2006. A report of the Comptroller and Auditor General on “*Environmental Clearance and Post Clearance Monitoring*” found a number of discrepancies in the environment impact assessment process (Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General, Report No.21 of 2011-12). The issue of post environmental clearance monitoring was dealt with in great detail. It found that there was lack of compliance with environmental clearance conditions by the project proponents and there was weakness in monitoring by the State Pollution Control Boards and Regional Offices of the MoEF-CC. Part of this is attributable to the acute lack of staff. A report submitted by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to NGT revealed that

5,401 posts (or 46.53%) of the 11,606 sanctioned posts in 26 states and eight Union Territories continue to be vacant. The CPCB's status report was filed as part of an ongoing suo motu matter in which the tribunal is considering the issue of filling vacant posts in state pollution control boards (SPCB), Pollution Control Committees (PCC), and the CPCB, and creating adequate infrastructure.

NO FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The absence of a structured framework for community participation in environmental protection is deeply detrimental not only to the effectiveness of environmental governance, but also to social justice, sustainability, and long-term ecological resilience. Communities, especially indigenous and rural populations, often have deep, place-based ecological knowledge. This includes traditional conservation practices, seasonal patterns, water use cycles, and biodiversity interactions that formal assessments often miss. Without a framework to involve them meaningfully, critical ecological insights are lost, leading to poorly informed or ecologically harmful decisions.

ONGOING LITIGATION WITH RESPECT TO POLLUTION/ CONSERVATION

LEGAL FORUMS AND JURISDICTION

The Godavari River has been at the centre of complex legal disputes concerning water allocation, environmental protection, and implementation of significant irrigation projects. These disputes are adjudicated by different judicial and quasi-judicial institutions each having distinct jurisdictional boundaries and roles.

The National Green Tribunal (NGT), a specialized judicial body established under the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010, is dedicated to environmental protection cases. Its creation aimed to reduce the burden on High Courts and expedite case

disposal, ideally within six months of filing. However, this statutory timeline is often exceeded, and the NGT continues to address numerous environmental law violations concerning the Godavari River.

The High Courts primarily hear cases that fall outside the NGT's specific environmental jurisdiction. The Supreme Court of India, as the nation's highest judicial authority, entertains appeals against NGT orders on specific legal grounds and exercises original jurisdiction under Article 131 of the Constitution for disputes between states and/or the Union of India. Notably, for inter-state water allocation, the Government constituted the Godavari Water Disputes Tribunal under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956, in 1969. Following its 1980 award, the Supreme Court has repeatedly affirmed that states remain bound by its terms, emphasizing a preference for tribunal-based dispute resolution in such matters (*State of Orissa v the State of Andhra Pradesh & ors*, 2018).

ENVIRONMENTAL LITIGATION

The NGT is currently hearing a case addressing a significant pollution crisis in the Godavari River, triggered by the unchecked discharge of industrial effluents and untreated sewage in Telangana (NGT Principal Bench, 2025). This case, registered *suo motu* (on its own motion) by the NGT based on a May 13, 2025, *Telangana Today* newspaper article, highlights potential violations of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974; the Hazardous Waste (Management, Handling and Transboundary Movement) Rules, 2016; and the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The Tribunal has directed the Telangana State Pollution Control Board, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), and the Godavari River Management Board (GRMB) to submit their responses by August 1, 2025.

Notably, the NGT has repeatedly addressed Godavari River pollution. In 2022, for instance, the Tribunal sharply criticized the Municipal Council Trimbak and other Maharashtra authorities for their failure to prevent municipal waste discharge into

the river (*Dr. Kiran Ramdas Kamble & Anr. v. State of Maharashtra*, 2022). Despite multiple prior orders, the NGT condemned their inaction and incomplete reporting. However, the case was ultimately disposed of based on the Chief Secretary's assurances of discharge treatment and remedial actions, including a deposit of Rs. 1 crore with the Nashik District Collector for environmental restoration.

Similarly, in 2021, the NGT highlighted extensive environmental violations by the State of Andhra Pradesh concerning several irrigation and river-linking projects on the Godavari (*Dr. Pentapati Pullarao v. Union of India*, 2021). The Tribunal emphasized that environmental protection is an integral part of the Fundamental Right to Life under Article 21 of the Constitution. Stressing the 'Polluter Pays' principle, it condemned the State's conduct in flouting environmental laws.

Laying a foundational directive, the Supreme Court in 2017 mandated that all industries requiring 'consent to operate' must have a fully operational Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) to continue functioning (*Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti v. Union of India*, 2017). It declared the establishment of Common Effluent Treatment Plants (CETPs) an 'urgent mission,' requiring states to complete their setup within three years. The Supreme Court further entrusted the NGT with supervising the implementation and addressing non-compliance of these CETPs (*Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti v. Union of India*, 2017). However, by 2021, the NGT regrettably observed 'little progress' in fulfilling these Supreme Court directives after four years of monitoring (*Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti v. Union of India*, 2017). As of September 2020, data indicated significant non-compliance, with 1,831 industries in the country continuing to operate without ETPs, 1,123 with non-compliant ETPs, 62 non-compliant CETPs, and 530 non-compliant Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) (*Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti & Anr. vs Union of India & Ors.*, 2021). In response, the NGT decided to maintain its direct monitoring while establishing a more centralized monitoring mechanism, to be led by the Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS) and Chief Secretaries of all States/UTs (*Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti & Anr. vs Union of India & Ors.*, 2021).

Despite a series of authoritative orders and judgments from both the Supreme Court and the National Green Tribunal (NGT), ongoing litigation continues to reflect that the pervasive issues of effluent discharge and pollution in the Godavari River remain unresolved and are far from being effectively controlled. Even after specific deadlines mandated by the Supreme Court for the establishment and functioning of treatment plants, and subsequent NGT orders imposing stringent compensation regimes for non-compliance, challenges persist in bridging the significant gaps in waste treatment capacity and operational efficiency. This sustained challenge underscores the need for a deeper examination of the problem of non-adherence to environmental norms by various authorities and industrial entities.

LITIGATION CONCERNING IRRIGATION PROJECTS

The Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP), a multi-stage lift irrigation project on the Godavari River in Telangana, is globally recognized for its scale. However, it has been a subject of extensive litigation concerning cost escalation, structural failures, environmental clearances, and village displacement (*Sriram Gangajamuna v. State of Telangana*, 2022). In July 2022, the Supreme Court ordered a status quo on KLIP's expansion, citing the absence of requisite environmental clearances (*Sriram Gangajamuna v. State of Telangana*, 2022). A subsequent clarification in January 2023 permitted land acquisition and Detailed Project Report review, but explicitly prohibited any physical expansion without environmental clearance. This case remains pending before the Supreme Court. Further, in March 2024, the Telangana state government initiated a judicial inquiry by setting up a commission led by Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghosh, into alleged corruption and irregularities associated with the KLIP. The commission's term has been repeatedly extended, with its current deadline set for July 31, 2025.

Similarly, the Indira Sagar (Polavaram) Multipurpose Project in Andhra Pradesh, despite its status as a national project on the Godavari River, faces significant

litigation challenges. States such as Telangana, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh have consistently raised concerns regarding potential flooding and the absence of comprehensive environmental clearances. A 2007 case filed by the State of Odisha against the project remains pending before the Supreme Court. A recent order from September 6, 2022, suggested that the Central Government, in consultation with the concerned states, should facilitate a resolution to allow the project to advance (*State of Orissa v State of Andhra Pradesh*, 2022). The Supreme Court's most recent order on December 7, 2022, further noted the Ministry of Jal Shakti's commitment to holding meetings with the Chief Ministers of the concerned states, aiming to build a consensus and politically resolve the dispute (*State of Orissa v State of Andhra Pradesh*, 2022).

The overarching legal and constitutional framework governing water disputes in India, principally articulated in Article 262 of the Constitution and the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956 fundamentally prioritizes non-judicial resolution. These provisions specifically empower Parliament to establish specialized tribunals and, crucially, to exclude the jurisdiction of ordinary courts, including the Supreme Court, over such inter-state water conflicts.

Thus, while the judiciary actively intervenes to ensure environmental compliance and accountability, its underlying approach for core water allocation and distribution disputes consistently favours encouraging states to forge comprehensive political solutions. The persistent legal complexities and pending aspects in major projects like KLIP and Polavaram underscore the need for resolving such issues through fostering long-term cooperation and political agreement between states.

SUGGESTIONS

- The National Water Policy, 2012 recognised the need for a comprehensive legislation for the optimum development of inter-State rivers and river

valleys to facilitate inter-State coordination ensuring scientific planning of land and water resources and the balanced development of both the catchment and command areas.

- There is a need to bring into force a uniform policy for the regulation of development activities along river banks and flood plains in the form of a River Regulation Zone. As stated earlier, a draft RRZ Policy has already been prepared by the MoEF & CC and circulated to State Governments. This may be pursued by the Central Government.
- Integrated ecological restoration efforts must be carried out by the concerns authorities. There is an urgent need for communication and cooperation between State Pollution Control Boards facilitated by the Central Pollution Control Board for inter-state river water conservation.
- Strengthening the infrastructure and manpower of State Pollution Control Boards is crucial so that they can effectively monitor compliance of the conditions of the clearances granted by them. Increased monitoring of industrial and agricultural activities along the Godavari river banks is essential.
- Creating a legal framework for community participation, ownership and control could lead to more sustainable conservation regime.
- Existing policies such as the concept of a “Community Reserve” under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 could be harnessed to encourage communities to lead or co-manage conservation efforts.
- Sustainable planning through the integration of river conservation concerns with development control regulations is crucial. The RCUP guidelines framed by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs discussed above could be instructional in this regard.
- Create a binding and institutionalised Cumulative Environmental Impact Assessment regime possibly by introducing this requirement in the EIA Notification, 2006.
- Enhancing the sewage treatment infrastructure along the Godavari river is essential.

RIVER CONFLICTS AND PEOPLE

For the people of India, rivers are not just another feature of the environment – rivers are inextricably linked with cultural, regional, and religious identities. They support the development of human life and sustain livelihoods. This section thus aims to examine the river as it relates to people.

Considering the Godavari River's significance, it is not without good reason that it continues to be a site for conflict and contestation. Disputes relating to the Godavari River have often seen the rights of citizens pitted against the interests of Government bodies and institutions. This section examines instances of such conflicts.

While the previous sections have highlighted the complexities in inter-state river water governance arising out of overlapping legal, environmental, and political concerns across multiple states and diverse communities, this section examines the role that the concept of “commons” can play as a guiding principle in dealing with such complexities. These rights, though often customary and not always legally codified, form the foundation of the socio-economic and cultural life of millions—especially Indigenous Adivasi groups, fishing communities, and forest-dependent populations.

SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GODAVARI RIVER AND ITS BASIN

CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE

The Godavari River holds great cultural and spiritual significance for the people of the country. It is referred to as a sacred river in religious texts such as the Mahabharata and Ramayana. It is an important site for religious festivals, such as the the Nashik-Trimbakeshwar Simhastha Kumbh Mela. The river is revered, and devotees gather there to bathe in its sacred waters, believing it cleanses their sins and lead to spiritual liberation.

The confluence of the Manjeera and Godavari River is known to be of immense religious importance. The Sri Sangameshwara Swamy Temple is located at the confluence of the Godavari, Pranahita, and Saraswati rivers in Kaleshwaram, Telangana. This temple is a significant Shaivite site, and the name "Sangameshwara" refers to its location at the confluence (sangam) of the rivers. Bhadrachalam Temple, a significant pilgrimage site, is also situated on the banks of the Godavari River.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Godavari River Basin provides essential water for agriculture, industry, and domestic use. Maharashtra covers 48.7% of the basin, supporting agriculture and livelihoods in regions like Marathwada and Vidarbha. Telangana and Andhra Pradesh have the second-largest portion (23.7%), supporting irrigation systems and paddy cultivation. Madhya Pradesh's southeastern part occupies 7.8%, while Odisha's north-eastern regions occupy 5.7%. Karnataka's 1.4% share contributes to local agriculture and water resources, while Chhattisgarh's 12.4% share is significant. Puducherry's 0.01% share is symbolic but part of the basin's significant geographic delineation (cGodavari, cGanga & NRCD, 2024).

Traditional fishing, forest-based livelihoods and subsistence farming are also commonly practiced along the river and in its basin. Many riverbank communities rely on common grazing lands and seasonal riverbank farming (called "*chervu*" or "*donka*" cultivation in Telugu).

THE RIVER AS COMMONS

While rivers are accessible to many, they are owned by none. Common property resources or commons, refer to non-exclusive areas that have been historically managed and used by a group of people. A key feature of such areas is that no private person or legal entity owns or holds property rights over such areas, and they are accessible to the public at large (Jodha, 1986). It is proposed that the principle of the river as commons can be used to encourage community participation in the conservation of this shared resource and to discourage practices that view it as a resource merely to be exploited for the benefit of a few to the detriment of the many.

INDIAN LAW AND THE CONCEPT OF "COMMONS"

There is no unified law in the country that defines commons. Its recognition comes through Constitutional provisions, environmental laws and judicial precedents.

Article 39 (b) of the Constitution which is one of the Directive Principles of State Policy conceptually recognizes the concept of commons. It enjoins the State to direct its policy towards securing that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good.

The authoritative judgment of the Supreme Court that dealt with the issue of commons is *Jagpal Singh v. State of Punjab (2011)*. The decision concerned the protection and restoration of village commons, particularly gram sabha land, which was meant for collective use by rural communities. The Court affirmed that commons are public property meant for the collective benefit. The concept of commons derives from the Public Trust Doctrine which is based on

the principle that natural resources such as air, water, forests and common lands are held by the State as a trustee on behalf of the public. As such, it is the duty of the State to protect such natural resources and ensure that they are managed in a way that ensures the welfare of the public.

Several legislations recognize non-formalised rights that communities have historically exercised over natural resources, such as fishing rights, access to forest products, grazing rights etc. Examples of some such legislations are set out in the table below:

1.	Forest Rights Act, 2006 (Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers – Recognition of Forest Rights Act)	Recognizes community forest rights for tribal and forest-dwelling communities over forest resources
2.	Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996	Gives special powers to the Gram Sabhas in Scheduled Areas especially for the management of natural resources.
3.	Panchayati Raj Acts (State-specific)	Recognizes customary rights of communities, including the right to use village wells, ponds, or pathways
4.	Indian Easements Act, 1882	Recognizes customary rights of communities, including the right to use village wells, ponds, or pathways
5.	National Water Policy, 2012	Acknowledge the role of common property resources in rural livelihoods and environmental conservation

THE NEED TO RECOGNIZE COMMONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE RIVER GODAVARI

Large-scale projects, such as dam constructions along the Godavari River, have led to the displacement of Indigenous and rural communities. Infrastructure

projects constructed along the Godavari River have required the clearing of large tracts of land including forest lands, agricultural land, and village commons.

The enforcement of existing legislations that empower local communities and provide for the recognition of non-formal, traditional rights has been poor and, in many cases, actively resisted by local administration. The perils of this have been briefly highlighted below.

NON-MAPPING OF TRADITIONAL USES

Fishing and aquaculture are widely practiced along the Godavari River. While the CRZ Notification, which applies to coastal areas, requires the mapping of coastal commons such as fish breeding areas and fishing zones, there is no such requirement for inland waterbodies and rivers. Without such a mapping and recognition process, those whose livelihoods depend on fishing activities stand to be significantly impeded.

A significant proportion of the Godavari basin comprises of forest land. Tribal communities such as the Gonds, Kolams and Chenchus rely on forest produce such as tendu leaves, bamboo, mahua flowers, honey etc. for their livelihood.

The consequence of the non-recognition of traditional non-formal rights is that communities are not provided with proper rehabilitation and resettlement if they are required to be displaced on account of large infrastructure projects along the river, and they are denied the right to fair compensation. Large-scale deforestation and submergence due to reservoir formation, restricted entry into forests post dam construction, and displacement are issues that communities have had to deal with in the past. Submergence of land due to dam constructions along the Godavari River have also led to loss of grazing commons, which riverbank communities rely on.

Although the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers – Recognition of Forest Rights Act, 2006 (Forest Rights Act) recognises and protects forest-based settlements and livelihoods (including the concept of “community forest rights”), numerous reports have highlighted the poor implementation of this Act. In the case of the Polavaram Irrigation Project, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes was called upon to prepare a report dealing with issues of rehabilitation and resettlement of project affected persons. The Commission noted in its report that many people belonging to Scheduled Tribes without land holdings were shifted without providing them alternative means of livelihood or rehabilitation and resettlement (National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, n.d.).

There has also been commentary on the Government’s attempts to dilute the provisions of this Act through other laws, such as the recent Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2023, which has done away with the requirement of obtaining the consent of the Gram Sabha *before* forest clearance is granted in order to protect customary rights.

TRAGEDY OF THE COMMONS

Since rivers are a common-pool resource, they are vulnerable to overuse without shared responsibility. The Tragedy of the Commons is a concept in economics and environmental science that describes a situation where individuals, acting in their own self-interest, overuse and deplete a shared, limited resource.

Numerous studies and reports have noted the issues of excessive sand mining, aquaculture, open defecation along the river banks and other problems leading to the ecological degradation of the Godavari River.

Community management plays an important role in preventing the tragedy of commons. Recognizing rivers as commons empowers local communities to protect and sustain them. It encourages cooperation, accountability, and traditional ecological knowledge.

Communities that rely on a shared resource often have deep, practical knowledge of how that resource behaves over time (e.g., fish migration, rainfall cycles, soil conditions). This allows them to tailor rules that match local conditions, adapt quickly when things change, and to avoid one-size-fits-all policies that might not work locally.

DISPUTES BETWEEN PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS REGARDING THE GODAVARI WATER:

CITIZENS VS. INSTITUTIONS

POLLUTION AND CIVIC ACCOUNTABILITY

- Local communities in Nashik have struggled with the degradation of the Godavari due to sewage pollution, industrial runoff, and civic inaction. Newspaper reports highlight untreated sewage from over 20 nullahs, especially near Ramkund, which has led to frequent fish die-offs, oxygen depletion, and public health concerns.
- Recent protests led by the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) in April 2025 demanded river cleanup before the 2027 Kumbh Mela. Civic leaders, priests, and citizens staged marches demanding the redirection of sewage to STPs and the clearing of river obstructions (Lokmat Times, n.d.).
- In May 2025, the Bombay High Court issued contempt notices to Nashik's Municipal Commissioner and the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) for failing to comply with a 2018 judgment mandating pollution control infrastructure and encroachment removal (Times of India, 2025)

LAND SUBMERGENCE AND DISPLACEMENT DUE TO DAM CONSTRUCTION

- As highlighted in other parts of this report, the Polavaram Project has been a major flashpoint. Tribal communities in Odisha and Chhattisgarh have protested displacement and loss of livelihood. The dam will submerge about 276 villages in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Odisha over an estimated area of 40,000 hectares, including forests and agricultural land. It will affect over 370,000 people, predominantly Scheduled Tribes. Many belong to the Koya and other tribal communities with unique cultural ties to their land and forests. There are issues of inadequate compensation, poor rehabilitation and resettlement and loss of traditional livelihoods.
- The Babli Barrage, built by Maharashtra on the Godavari river sparked a dispute with Andhra Pradesh over downstream water flow. Andhra Pradesh feared that the project would reduce inflows to the Sriramsagar Project, impacting farmers and water availability.
- The Sriramsagar Project, an early major irrigation project in the Godavari led to the displacement of several villages during its initial construction in the 1960s-70s. Since relief and rehabilitation policies were underdeveloped at the time, many displaced families received inadequate compensation.
- Similarly in Chhattisgarh and Odisha, hydroelectric projects on the Indravati and Sabari Tributaries have submerged forest land, affected tribal populations relying on shift cultivation and forest resources.

SUGGESTIONS

- The stringent enforcement of existing laws that recognise commons and customary rights such as the Forest Rights Act, 2013, and the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, must be ensured.
- Strengthening the role and participation of Gram Sabhas in accordance with Article 243-G of the Constitution.
- Integrating community stewardship and participation in conservation efforts and policy interventions aimed at river conservation.
- The NWP encourages the involvement of local communities, Panchayats and NGOs in water management. This must be acted upon by evolving a uniform legal framework that recognises and strengthens the concept of commons.

CONCLUSIONS

The Indus Commission, the first commission appointed in India for the adjudication of a water dispute, while setting out the principles that must guide such decisions, :

“A third principle that has been advocated is that of “equitable apportionment”, that is to say, that every riparian State is entitled to a fair share of the waters of an Inter-State river. What is a fair share must depend on the circumstances of each case; but the river is for the common benefits of the whole community through whose territories it flows, even though those territories may be divided by political frontiers.”

Determining what constitutes equitable apportionment involves balancing a wide range of legal, scientific, economic, and political factors, each of which can be interpreted differently by the parties involved. The absence of rigid formulas and the need to tailor solutions to the specific facts of each dispute make this a challenging and often contentious process. The principle of equitable apportionment in the sharing of inter-state river waters requires a holistic approach, especially in the context of modern challenges like climate change.

Analysis of conflicts that have arisen between states with respect to the river Godavari demonstrate that an adversarial adjudication does not lend itself to an enduring solution. A more concerted effort to avoid conflicts from arising ought to be made. To this end, there is a need to enhance inter-state cooperation through political negotiation and mediation in which the Union Government could play a significant role.

The severe environmental issues that plague the river Godavari demonstrate the fact that fragmented laws which address only parts of the system or specific issues fail to consider the river as a unified ecological entity. A single, composite law is thus needed that ensures conservation efforts cover the entirety of the river basin, including tributaries, floodplains and groundwater, rather than just fragmented components. This is especially important in cases of inter-state rivers such as the Godavari, where differing rules can undermine conservation outcomes. Improved coordination among State Pollution Control Boards, aided by the Central Pollution Control Board, are vital.

The National Water Policy (NWP), 2012 in fact acknowledges this and calls for comprehensive legislation to optimize development and ensure scientific planning for inter-state rivers and river valleys.

A draft RRZ policy, which is the first attempt at a uniform policy to regulate development along riverbanks and flood plains, is already prepared and awaiting government action.

A robust enforcement system for environmental laws is essential to ensure that regulations are not just words on paper but are actively upheld to protect the environment, public health, and future generations. India's State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) are seriously hampered by a persistent lack of personnel and resources, significantly undermining their ability to regulate and control pollution effectively.

Legal frameworks encouraging community participation and ownership can foster sustainable conservation. A statutory framework may be considered to support community-based commons management.

In essence, there is a need to update legal and institutional reforms, strengthen inter-state cooperation, community participation, and ecological restoration to ensure equitable and sustainable river water management and conservation in India.

References

- *Almitra H. Patel v. Union of India* AIR 1996 SC 1446.
- *Atma Linga Reddy v Union of India* (2008) 7 SCC 788.
- cGodavari, cGanga and NRCD. (2024) *Godavari River At a Glance*.
- Chokkakula, S. (2015) *The Political Geographies of Interstate Water Disputes in India*. University of Washington.
- Comptroller and Auditor General of India. (2011-12) *Report No.21 of 2011-12 of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India – Performance Audit of Water pollution in India*.
- CPCB. (2022) *Polluted River Stretches for Restoration of Water Quality – 2022*.
- *Dr. Kiran Ramdas Kamble & Anr. v. State of Maharashtra*. (2022) OA No. 544 of 2019, NGT Principal Bench, New Delhi, Order dated 18.05.2022.
- *Dr. Pentapati Pullarao v. Union of India*. (2021) OA No. 175/2018 NGT Principal Bench, New Delhi, Judgment dated 02.12.2021.
- Express News Service (2013) 'SC Deals Babli blow to Telangana Farmers', *The New Indian Express*, 1 March. Available at: <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/andhra-pradesh/2013/Mar/01/sc-deals-babli-blow-to-telangana-farmers-454655.html>
- Express News Service (2025) 'Telangana to move SC against Andhra Pradesh projects', *The New Indian Express*, 5 April. Available at: <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/telangana/2025/Apr/05/telangana-to-move-sc-against-andhra-pradesh-projects>
- Firstpost. (2017) Polavaram project dispute: Supreme Court asks Centre, six states to file 'specific affidavits'. *Firstpost*. Available at: <https://www.firstpost.com/india/polavaram-project-dispute-supreme-court-asks-centre-six-states-to-file-specific-affidavits-4353275.html>
- Hindustan Times. (2023) Amid heavy rain, Godavari river flows above danger mark in Telangana, warning issued. *Hindustan Times*. Available at: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/telangana-rain-news-latest-updates-godavari-river-telangana-above-danger-mark-imd-weather-alert-rainfall-prediction-101690762629875.html>
- *Indian Council for Enviro-Legal Action v. Union of India* (1996) 3 SCC 212.
- *Indian Council for Enviro-Legal Action v. Union of India* AIR 1996 SC 1446.
- *Jagpal Singh v. State of Punjab*. AIR 2011 SCC 1123.
- *Jitendra Singh v. Ministry of Environment* AIR ONLINE 2019 SC 1537.
- Jodha, N.S. (1986) Common Property Resources and Rural Poor in Dry Regions in India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 21, p. 1169.
- Lokmat Times. (n.d.) Nashik MNS leads protest in Panchavati demanding action to cleanse Godavari river before 2027 Kumbh Mela. *Lokmat Times*. Available at: <https://www.lokmatimes.com/nashik/nashik-mns-leads-protest-in-panchavati-demanding-action-to-cleanse-godavari-river-before-2027-kumbh-mela-a519/>
- *MC Mehta v UOI* 1987 AIR 1988 SC 1037.

- Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. (n.d.) *River Centric Urban Planning Guidelines*. Town and Country Planning Organization, Government of India.
- Modak, S. and Ghosh, A.K. (n.d.) *Federalism and Interstate River Water Governance in India*.
- *Narmada Bachao Andolan v. Union of India* (2000) 10 SCC 664.
- National Commission for Scheduled Tribes. (n.d.) *Special Report of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes on the Polavaram Irrigation Project*.
- New Indian Express. (2024, 29 April) KCR lashes out at Modi, Revanth Reddy over diversion of Godavari river waters. *The New Indian Express*. Available at: <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/teelangana/2024/Apr/29/kcr-lashes-out-at-modi-revanth-reddy-over-diversion-of-godavari-river-waters>
- NGT Principal Bench, New Delhi. (2025) *In Re: News Item titled "Telangana: Deepening pollution crisis in Godawari threatens lives livelihoods appearing in the Telangana Today dated 13.05.2025*, O.A No. 275 of 2025, Order dated 29.05.2025.
- OdishaPlus Bureau (2025) 'Rivers of Conflict – II: Polavaram – Odisha Has Nearly Abandoned Its Claim', *OdishaPlus*, 27 March. Available at: <https://odisha.plus/2025/03/rivers-of-conflict-ii-polavaram-odisha-has-nearly-abandoned-its-claim/>
- *Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti & Anr. vs Union of India & Ors.* (2021) OA No. 593/2017, NGT Principal Bench, New Delhi, Judgement dated 22.02.2021.
- *Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti v. Union of India.* (2017) 5 SCC 326.
- *Sriram Gangajamuna v. State of Telangana* (2002) SLP (C) No. 8454/2002.
- *State of Orissa v State of Andra Pradesh.* (2022) OA no 4/2007, Supreme Court Order dated 06.09.2022 in O.S No. 4 of 2007.
- *State of Orissa v State of Andra Pradesh.* (2022) OA no 4/2007, Supreme Court Order dated 07.12.2022 in O.S No. 4 of 2007.
- *State of Orrisa v the State of Andhra Pradesh & ors.* (2018) Supreme Court Order dated 15.02.2018 in O.S No. 4 of 2007
- *Subhash Kumar v State of Bihar* AIR 1991 SC 420.
- The Hindu. (2023) HC notices to Telangana, A.P., Centre in PIL plea over Godavari river floods. *The Hindu*. Available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/teelangana/hc-notices-to-teelangana-ap-centre-in-pil-plea-over-godavari-river-floods/article67228065.ece>
- Times of India. (2025) High court notices to Nashik civic chief, others in contempt plea over non-compliance of order | Nashik News. *Times of India*. Available at: [High court notices to Nashik civic chief, others in contempt plea over non-compliance of order | Nashik News - Times of India](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/News/Nashik/High-court-notices-to-Nashik-civic-chief-others-in-contempt-plea-over-non-compliance-of-order-Nashik-News-Times-of-India/articleshow/105456788.cms)
- *Vellore Citizens' Welfare Forum v. Union of India* AIR 1996 SC 2715.