

BEFORE THE HON'BLE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL
SOUTHERN ZONE, CHENNAI.

Original Application No. 108 of 2020 (SZ)

Suo Motu Proceedings
Based on the News Paper Report
published in Vikatan E-Magazine edition
dated 09.07.2020 "Coonoor Misery:
Increasing waste in River Water! –
Elephants looking for good water"

...Applicant

Vs

The Principal Secretary to Government,
Public Works Department, Secretariat,
Fort St. George,
Chennai – 600 009 & Others

... Respondents

**RESPONSE OF THE DISTRICT ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEER,
TNPCB, UDHAGAMANDALAM ON THE ALLEGATIONS IN THE
PAPER REPORT AND THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SEWAGE IS
TREATED IN THE CONONOOR MUNICIPALITY AS ORDERED BY
THE HON'BLE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL ON 25.09.2020**

Filed by
Thiru.C. Kasirajan,
Advocate, Chennai.

RESPONSE OF THE DISTRICT ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEER, TAMIL NADU
POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD, UDHAGAMANDALAM ON THE ALLEGATIONS IN
THE PAPER REPORT AND THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SEWAGE IS TREATED IN
THE CONONOOR MUNICIPALITY AS ORDERED BY THE HON'BLE NATIONAL
GREEN TRIBUNAL ON 25.09.2020 IN O.A. No.:108 OF 2020 (SZ)

Background:

The Honourable National Green Tribunal (SZ) during its hearing on 25.09.2020, took the Interim Report filed by the Joint Committee into record, and issued the following directions:

"7. The committee is directed to submit the report to this Tribunal on or before 19.11.2020 by e-filing along with necessary hard copies to be produced as per rules.

8. The Registry is directed to communicate this order to the members of the committee and also to the official respondents immediately by e-mail, so as to enable them to comply with the direction and also to file their independent response regarding the allegation in the paper report before the next hearing date.

9. For submitting independent response of the respondents regarding the manner in which sewage is treated in the Municipality and further action for improving the system and also consideration of report of the committee to be filed, posted on 19.11.2020".

The Report of the Joint Committee is prepared and being submitted by the Public Works Department-Water Resources Division, the nodal agency. The responses of Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board on the allegations contained in the Paper Report and the manner in which the sewage is treated by the Municipality, further action for improving the system is being submitted, in compliance of the orders dated 25.09.2020, of the Honourable National Green Tribunal (SZ).

Response of TNPCB on the allegations contained in the Paper Report

- (i) *There is good flow in the river. Even though found along the banks of the River, the elephants are not drinking the river water. Come to the railway station to drink good water :*

It is not correct to state that the elephants are not drinking the river water. The report depict that the elephants are coming to Railway Station (Rannmimedu) to drink the water that is stored in the Railway Station for other purposes. But, the fact being that the elephants came to the River flowing adjacent to the Rannimedu Railway Station, and drank water there. It is an occasional incident, which was also prompted due to the absence of human activity in the Railway Station, since the lock-down started from the last week of March, 2020.

The locations in which the elephants normally drink water are all located at the down-stream of Rannimedu Railway Station, River. Downstream of Coonoor Municipal Limits, there is no discharge of any sort of waste stream, in to the stream. As such, there is no possibility of the quality of the river water downstream of Rannimedu Railway Station affected, and thereby the elephants not drinking that water and coming to Ramnnimedu Railway Station, searching good water.

More-over, in the downstream of Rannimedu Railway Station, the over-flow from Kattery Dam joins with the river. Further, many streams from the Estates are also joins with the River, thereby there is every likely-hood that quality of the water get improved, due to the effect of dilution.

As such this allegation is without any logic and contrary to the situation prevails there.

- (ii) *Coonoor River is used as a Dumping Yard for Garbage, makes the River a Waste Drain :*

It is learned that the practice of dumping the garbage in to the River prevailed, for a long time. As stated in the Report, the dumped material in the

River was removed by the Municipality with the support from a Non Governmental Organization, and chain-link fencing has been established over a length of 414 m has been made, which has prevented the dumping in to the river to a large extent. Moreover, during the Joint Inspection, dumping of garbage was not observed. This may be attributed to the absence of tourists, due to lock-down at the time of Joint inspection.

Moreover, there is adequate system for the collection, processing, treatment and disposal of the Solid Waste in Coonoor Municipality, and by efficiently operating the system, together with strict vigil and imposing penal provisions on violators, the dumping of garbage in to the water bodies could be completely eliminated.

The allegation that the River becomes a waste drain is completely baseless. As stated in the Interim Report, the quality of the water in the River is found to be satisfactory. The results of the samples collected also support the same claim. Even though, some quantity of untreated sewage enters the river, the reason for maintaining the quality of water is attributed to the effects of dilution, and the natural aeration occurred due to the flow in the undulated terrain.

(iii) *There is no septic tank in many houses. The Public Toilets are also directly connected to the River:*

As submitted in the Interim Report, it is estimated in 50% of area of the Town, there is no Septic Tanks, at house-hold level. It is also learned that out of thirty community toilets and four public toilets, septic tank is not available only in one public toilet in the Bus Stand. It is informed that the same would be connected to the Sewage treatment Plant, that is proposed under 'Nadanthai Vaazhi Cauvery' project.

- (iv) **Meat waste is dumped in the River. The River becomes a source of spreading diseases to animals and Human:**

Coonoor Municipality has provided Box Type composting equipment, at an estimated cost of Rs. 5 lakhs, for composting the meat, fish and chicken stall wastes, at Vasampallam. The same is functioning satisfactorily. The dumping of such wastes were not observed during the Joint Inspection or on other occasions. The allegation that the River has become a source of spreading disease is baseless.

Response of TNPCB on the manner in which sewage is treated in the Municipality and further action for improving the system

- (i) ***Treatment of Sewage in Coonoor Municipality:***

It is estimated that Coonoor Municipality generates around 2.0 MLD of sewage, of which 25% (0.5 MLD) of sewage is handled within the premises of generation, as they are having adequate land area. Another 25% (0.5 MLD) is catered through 30 community toilets and 4 public Toilets. It is learned that barring one Public Toilet in the Bust Stand, others are having septic tank arrangements. The remaining 50% of the population is either having septic tank and the treated sewage from the septic tank is let into the river directly or let in to drains, from where it joins with the river. It is informed by the Municipal Authorities, the sewage generated from the following areas of the Municipality viz. 1. Krishnapuram 2. Mission Hill 3. Vannarper 4. Parasuram Street 5. V.P. Street 6. Model House 7. Rajaji Nagar 8. Old Hospital line 9. Ambedkar nagar and 10.Chandra Colony, are said to have discharging the sewage into the River.

- (ii) ***Action Proposed for improving Sewage Management:***

A proposal for collecting the sewage generated from 2088 households of Krishnapuram Area through Pipelines and providing a Sewage Treatment Plant at an estimated cost of Rs. 500.00 Lakhs was formulated and submitted to Government and the Administrative Sanction obtained on 26.02.2020.

Subsequently this proposal is included under '**Nadanthai Vaazhi Cauvery**' project through Public Works Department, aimed to conserve, rejuvenate and augment the water resources in Cauvery basin and to effectively curb sewage discharged. This work is expected to be commenced shortly. On completion, the sewage generated from areas like Krishnapuram, Mission Hill, Parasuram Street, Aloy Sait Compound, Fairy Bank Street, V P Street, M G R Nagar areas, entering in to the river would be curtailed, and thus 60% of sewage presently entering in to the River without treatment would be prevented.

(iii) Further Action required:

Coonoor Municipality shall, by 31.12.2021, shall ensure that there shall be no discharge of untreated sewage in to the water bodies. To achieve this goal, they shall formulate action plans and execute them, as listed below:

1. Undertake a survey of commercial discharging sewage directly in to water bodies shall be completed before 31.12.2020.
2. Undertake a survey of households discharging sewage directly in to water bodies, shall be completed before 31.01.2021.
3. All commercial establishments shall be prohibited from discharging sewage in to water bodies directly, before 31.01.2021.
4. Trade Licenses of establishments discharging sewage directly in to water bodies after 31.03.2021, shall be cancelled.
5. During the intermittent period, substantial cost on the discharge in to water bodies, as ordered by this Honourable Tribunal shall be levied.
6. Those house-holds shall be made to provide septic tank and soak pit arrangements, wherever space is available, before 31.03.2021.
7. In the house-holds, where adequate space is not available for providing septic tank and soak pit arrangement, suitable common public land be identified, to provide common septic tank and soak pit arrangement or leach pits, with a view to ensure that untreated sewage entering the River is completely prevented. This exercise shall be completed before 30.06.2021.

8. The Public Works Department shall undertake the Sewage Treatment Plant, under 'Nadanthai Vaazhi Cauvery' project, on a priority basis, as this would prevent the entry of about xx% of untreated sewage entering in to the water body.
9. It is considered that, for places like Coonoor Municipality, providing of decentralized treatment plants, in a few locations would be beneficial. The possibility of such option may be studied.
10. Considering the much undulated and unfavourable terrain, which is a challenge to Coonoor Municipality in the collection and conveyance of the sewage generated, and the low temperature the area is experiencing in most of the year, which is also a challenge in maintaining the biological treatment systems, and on the question of providing few Decentralized Sewage Treatment Plants, it is recommended that that the Honourable Green Tribunal may direct the Government to institute an expert technical team to study and suggest means for the collection and conveyance of sewage, selection of treatment technology, etc, with a view to ensure that untreated sewage is not let in to the water courses.

Prayer:

The District Environmental Engineer, Udthagamandalam, a member of the Joint Committee nominated by Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, do hereby submits this individual response, as ordered by this Honourable Tribunal, and request the Honourable National Green Tribunal (SZ) to accept the Response and to pass appropriate orders the Honourable National Green Tribunal (SZ), considers deem and fit on the facts and circumstances of the issue.


District Environmental Engineer,
Tamil Nadu Pollution control Board
Udhagamandalam

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**Advocate for Respondents No.5
Thiru. Kasirajan
Advocate, Chennai.**

Date: 18.11.2020

