

### Water Connects "Ek Pavitra Bandhan": Bridging Science and Society at Water Fest 2024



**T**he Water Fest 2024, organised by the WforW Foundation in collaboration with the Department of Civil Engineering of IIT-BHU, Drop-Dead Foundation, and the Ministry of Jal Shakti, unfolded at the IIT-BHU Campus on the 16th and 17th of February. Titled "Water Connects *Ek Pavitra Bandhan*," the festival aimed to forge a sacred bond between science and society through meaningful discussions on water conservation.

#### **Delving into the Dual Role: Rituals vs. Recreation**

Under the insightful moderation of Dr Swayamprabha Das, the festival's spotlight turned towards the dual role of waterbodies. The central question posed was, "What is a waterbody needed most for - conducting rituals or for recreational purposes?" This ignited a compelling discourse, emphasising the delicate balance required between the sacred and the serene. The debate explored the integral role of water in spiritual practices, serving as a canvas for rituals like *pravah*, idol immersions, and holy baths. Simultaneously, waterbodies were acknowledged as serene spaces for recreation, where communities gather for boating, lakeside strolls, and communal activities. The need to find equilibrium between these two aspects emerged as a key theme.

The second question, "Should rituals be banned at waterbodies due to concerns about pollution, or should they be allowed, given the water's integral role in our practices?" spurred a lively exchange. Participants weighed the environmental impact of rituals involving offerings and the cultural significance attached to them. The consensus leaned towards a nuanced approach, aiming to mitigate pollution without forsaking deeply rooted traditions.

As the debate unfolded, the dilemma of recreational activities was brought to the forefront. "Should recreational activities be promoted despite the potential environmental impact?" raised concerns about infrastructure and construction. Striking a balance between supporting leisure activities and preserving the health of waterbodies became a central point of discussion.

In conclusion, the festival underscored the multifaceted role of water in our lives – from spiritual rituals to recreational pursuits. Participants unanimously agreed that prioritising the health of waterbodies is paramount. The need to curtail pollution through sustainable and eco-friendly practices was emphasised.

The discourse recognised the diverse meanings water holds for different communities, necessitating thoughtful consideration of cultural, ecological, and social dimensions. The call to action from the festival was clear – prioritise the preservation of waterbodies, adopt eco-friendly practices, and foster a harmonious coexistence between the sacred and the serene. As we navigate the complexities of water usage, let us collectively embrace our role as stewards of the environment, ensuring the longevity of these precious resources for generations to come.