
M.C. Mehta Vs Union of India (UOI) and Others

Writ Petition No. 3727 of 1985

Court: Supreme Court of India

Date of Decision: Sept. 22, 1987

Acts Referred:

Civil Procedure Code, 1908 (CPC) " Order 1 Rule 8#Constitution of India, 1950 " Article 48A, 51A, 252#Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 " Section 15, 2, 3, 5, 9#Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 " Section 24, 2(j), 16, 5, 7

Citation: AIR 1988 SC 1037 : (1987) 3 CompLJ 69 : (1987) 3 JT 630 : (1987) 2 SCALE 611 : (1987) 4 SCC 463 : (1988) 1 SCR 279 : (1988) 1 UJ 75

Hon'ble Judges: K. N. Singh, J; E. S. Venkataramiah, J

Bench: Division Bench

Advocate: Party in perso, for the Appellant; B. Datta, R.A. Gunta, S. K. Dholakia, Miss Bina Gupta, B.P. Singh, S.R. Srivastava, Krishan Kumar, Vineet Kumar, R. Mohan, Mrs. Shobha Dixit, A. Sharan, D. Goburdhan, Mrs G.S. Mishra, Paraieet Sinha, R.C. Verma, R.P. Singh and Ranjit Kumar, B.R.L. Iyengar, for the Respondent

Final Decision: Disposed Of

Judgement

@JUDGMENTTAG-ORDER

E.S. Venkataramiah, J.

This is a public interest litigation. The petitioner who is an active social worker has filed this petition inter alia for

the issue of a writ/order/direction in the nature of mandamus to the respondents other than Respondents 1 and 7 to 9 restraining them from letting

out the trade effluents into the river Ganga till such time they put up necessary treatment plants for treating the trade effluents in order to arrest the

pollution of water in the said river. Respondent 1 is the Union of India, Respondent 7 is the Chairman of the Central Board for Prevention and

Control of Pollution, Respondent 8 is the Chairman, Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board and Respondent 9 is the Indian Standards Institute.

2. Water is the most important of the elements of the nature. River valleys are the cradles of civilization from the beginning of the world. Aryan

civilization grew around the towns and villages on the banks of the river Ganga. Varanasi which is one of the cities on the banks of the river Ganga

is considered to be one of the oldest human settlements in the world. It is the popular belief that the river Ganga is the purifier of all but we are now

led to the situation that action has to be taken to prevent the pollution of the water of the river Ganga since we have reached a stage that any

further pollution of the river water is likely to lead to a catastrophe. There are today large towns inhabited by millions of people on the banks of the

river Ganga. There are also large industries on its banks. Sewage of the towns and cities on the banks of the river and the trade effluents of the

factories and other industries are continuously being discharged into the river. It is the complaint of the petitioner that neither the Government nor

the people are giving adequate attention to stop the pollution of the river Ganga. Steps have, therefore, to be taken for the purpose of protecting

the cleanliness of the stream in the river Ganga, which is in fact the life sustainer of a large part of the northern India.

3. When this petition came up for preliminary hearing, the Court directed the issue of notice under O.I.R. 8 of the CPC treating this case as a

representative action by publishing the gist of the petition in the newspapers in circulation in northern India and calling upon all the industrialists and

the municipal corporations and the town municipal councils having jurisdiction over the areas through which the river Ganga flows to appear before

the Court and to show cause as to why directions should not be issued to them as prayed by the petitioner asking them not to allow the trade

effluents and the sewage into the river Ganga without appropriately treating them before discharging them into the river. Pursuant to the said notice

a large number of industrialists and local bodies have entered appearance before the Court. Some of them have filed counter-affidavits explaining

the steps taken by them for treating the trade effluents before discharging them into the river. When the above case came up for consideration

before the Court on the last date of hearing we directed that the case against the tanneries at Jajmau area near Kanpur would be taken up for

hearing first. Respondents 14 to 87 and 89 are the tanneries near Kanpur. Of them respondents 16 to 32, 34 to 36, 43, 47, 51, 52, 54, 55, 57,

58, 60 to 62, 64, 67 to 69, 72, 74, 75, 77 to 82, 85, 87 and 89 are represented by counsel. The remaining tanneries did not appear before the

Court at the time of the hearing nor were they represented by any counsel.

4. Before proceeding to consider the facts of this case it is necessary to state a few words about the importance of and need for protecting our

environment. Article 48-A of the Constitution provides that the State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the

forests and wild life of the country. Article 51-A of the Constitution imposes as one of the fundamental duties on every citizen the duty to protect

and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life and to have compassion for living creatures. The proclamation

adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment which took place at Stockholm from 5th to 16th of June, 1972 and in

which the Indian delegation led by the Prime Minister of India took a leading role runs thus:

1. Man is both creature and molder of his environment which gives him physical sustenance and affords him the opportunity for intellectual, moral,

social and spiritual growth. In the long and tortuous evolution of the human race on this planet a stage has been reached when through the rapid

acceleration of science and technology, man has acquired the power, to transform his environment in countless ways and on an unprecedented

scale. Both aspects of man's environment, the natural and the man made, are essential to his well being and to the enjoyment of basic human rights

- Even the right to life itself.

2. The protection and improvement of the human environment is a major issue which affects the well-being of peoples and economic development

throughout the world, it is the urgent desire of the peoples of the whole world and the duty of all Governments.

3. Man has constantly to sum up experience and go on discovering, inventing, creating and advancing. In our time man's capability to transform his

surroundings, if used wisely, can bring to all peoples the benefits of development and the opportunity to enhance the quality of life. Wrongly or

heedlessly applied, the same power can do incalculable harm to human beings and the human environment. We see around us growing evidence of

man-made harm in many regions of the earth; dangerous levels of pollution in water, air, earth and living beings; major and undesirable disturbances

to the ecological balance of the biosphere; destruction and depletion of irreplaceable resources; and gross deficiencies harmful to the physical,

mental and social health of man, in the man-made environment; particularly in the living and working environment.

A point has been reached in history when we must shape our actions throughout the world with a more prudent care for their environmental

consequences. Through ignorance or indifference we can do massive and irreversible harm to the earthly environment on which our life and well-

being depend. Conversely, through fuller, knowledge and wiser action, we can achieve for ourselves and our posterity a better life in an

environment more in keeping with human needs and hopes. There are broad vistas for the enhancement of environmental quality and the creation of

a good life. What is needed is an enthusiastic but calm state of mind and intense but orderly work. For the purpose of attaining freedom in the

world of nature man must use knowledge to build in collaboration with nature a better environment. To defend and improve the human environment

for present and future generations has become an imperative goal for mankind a goal to be pursued together with, and in harmony with, the

established and fundamental goals of peace and of world-wide economic and social development.

To achieve this environmental goal will demand the acceptance of responsibility by citizens and communities and by enterprises and institutions at

every level, all sharing equitably in common efforts. Individuals in all walks of life as well as organizations in many fields, by their values and the sum

of their actions, will shape the world environment of the future. Local and National Governments will bear the greatest burden for large-scale

environmental policy and action within their jurisdictions. International co-operation is also needed in order to raise resources to support the

developing countries carrying out their responsibilities in this field. A growing class of environmental problems, because they are regional or global

in extent or because they affect the common international realm, will require extensive cooperation among nations and action by international

organizations in the common interest. The Conference calls upon the Governments and peoples to exert common efforts for the preservation and

improvement of the human environment, for the benefit of all the people and for their posterity.

The proclamation also contained certain common convictions of the participant nations and made certain recommendations on development and

environment. The common convictions stated include the conviction that the discharge of toxic substances or of other substances and the release of

heat in such quantities or concentrations as to exceed the capacity of environment to render them harmless must be halted in order to ensure that

serious or irreversible damage is not inflicted upon eco systems, that States shall take all possible steps to prevent pollution of the seas so that

hazards to human health, harm to living resources and marine life, damage to the amenities or interference with other legitimate uses of seas is

avoided, that the environmental policies would enhance and not adversely affect the present and future development potential of development

countries, that science and technology as part of their contributions to economic and social development must be applied with identification,

avoidance and control of environmental risks and the solution of environmental problems and for the common good of mankind, that States have

the responsibility to ensure that activities of exploitation of their own resources within their jurisdiction are controlled and do not cause damage to

the environment of other States or areas beyond the limit of national jurisdiction, that it will be essential in all cases to consider the systems of

values prevailing in each country and the extent of the applicability of standards which are valid for the most advanced countries but which may be

inappropriate and of unwarranted social cost and that man and his environment must be spared the effects of nuclear weapons and all other means

of mass destruction. These are only some of the statements of principles proclaimed by the Stockholm Conference.

(Vide Lal's Commentaries on Water and Air Pollution Laws (2nd Edn.) pages 6-7).

5. Realising the importance of the prevention and control of pollution of water for human existence Parliament has passed the Water (Prevention

and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 (Act 6 of 1974) (hereinafter referred to as "the Act") to provide for the prevention and control of water

pollution and the maintaining or restoring of wholesomeness of water, for the establishment, with a view to carrying out the purposes aforesaid, of

Boards for the prevention and control of water pollution, for conferring on and assigning to such Boards powers and functions relating thereto and

for matters connected therewith. The Act was passed pursuant to resolutions passed by all the Houses of Legislatures of the States of Assam,

Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tripura and West Bengal

under Clause (1) of Article 252 of the Constitution to the effect that the prevention and control of water pollution should be regulated in those

States by Parliamentary legislation. The Act has been since adopted by the State of Uttar Pradesh also by resolutions passed in that behalf by the

Houses of Legislature of the said State in the year 1975 (vide notification No. 897/IX-3-100-74 dated 3-2-1975). Section 24 of the Act prohibits

the use of any stream or well for disposal of polluting matter etc. It provides that subject to the provisions of the said ny poisonous, noxious or

polluting matter determined in accordance with such standards as may be laid down by the State Board to enter whether directly or indirectly into

any stream or well or no person shall knowingly cause or permit to enter into any stream any other matter which may tend either directly or in

combination with similar matters to impede the proper flow of the water of the stream in a manner leading or likely to lead to a substantial

aggravation of pollution due to other causes or of its consequences. The expression stream is defined by Section 2(j) of the Act as including river,

water course whether flowing or for the time being dry, inland water whether natural or artificial, sub-terrene waters, sea or tidal waters to such

extent or as the case may be to such point as the State Government may by notification in the Official Gazette, specify in that behalf. Under the Act

it is permissible to establish a Central Board and the State Boards. The functions of the Central Board and the State Boards are described in

Sections 16 and 17 respectively. One of the functions of the State Board is to inspect sewage or trade effluents, works and plants for the treatment

of sewage and trade effluents, and to review plans, specifications or other data relating to plants set up for the treatment of water, works for the

purification and the system for the disposal of sewage or trade effluents. "Trade effluent" includes any liquid, gaseous or solid substance which is

discharged from any premises used for carrying on any trade or industry, other than domestic sewage. The State Board is also entrusted with the

work of laying down standards of treatment of sewage and trade effluents to be discharged into any particular stream taking into account the

minimum fair weather dilution available in that stream and the tolerance limits of pollution permissible in the water of the stream, after the discharge

of such effluents. The State Board is also entrusted with the power of making application to courts for restraining apprehended pollution of water in

streams or well. Notwithstanding the comprehensive provisions contained in the Act no effective steps appear to have been taken by the State

Board so far to prevent the discharge of effluents of the Jajmau near Kanpur to the river Ganga. The fact that such effluents are being first

discharged into the municipal sewerage does not absolve the tanneries from being proceeded against under the provisions of the law in force since

ultimately the effluents reach the river Ganga from the sewerage system of the municipality.

6. In addition to (he above Act. Parliament has also passed the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 (29 of 1986) which has been brought into

force throughout India with effect from Nov. 19, 1986. Section 3 of this Act confers power on the Central Government to take all such measures

as it deems necessary or expedient for the purpose of protecting and improving the quality of the environment and preventing, controlling and

abating environmental pollution. Environment includes water, air and land and the inter-relationship which exists among and between water, air and

land and human beings, other living creatures, plants, microorganism and property, (Vide Section 2(a) of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986).

u/s 3(2)(iv) of the said Act the Central Government may lay down standards for emission or discharge of environmental pollutants from various

sources whatsoever. Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law but subject to the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

the Central Government may u/s 5 of the Act, in the exercise of its powers and performance of its functions under that Act issue directions in

writing to any person, officer or authority and such authority is bound to comply with such directions. The power to issue directions under the said

section includes the power to direct the closure, prohibition or regulation of any industry, operation or process or stoppage or regulation of the

supply of electricity or water or any other service. Section 9 of the said Act imposes a duty on every person to take steps to prevent or mitigate

the environmental pollution. Section 15 of the said Act contains provisions relating to penalties that may be imposed for the contravention of any of

the provisions of the said Act or directions issued thereunder. It is to be noticed that not much has been done even under this Act by the Central

Government to stop the grave public nuisance caused by the tanneries at Jajmau. Kanpur.

7. All the tanneries at Jajmau, Kanpur which were represented by counsel, except respondents Nos. 87 and 89 have relied upon a common

counter-affidavit filed by them and their case is argued by Shri S.K. Dholakia and Shri Mukul Mudgal. Respondent No. 87 is represented by Shri

R.P. Gupta and respondent No. 89 is represented by Shri P. Narasimhan. There is not much dispute on the question that the discharge of the trade

effluents from these tanneries into the river Ganga has been causing considerable damage to the life of the people who use the water of the river

Ganga and also to the aquatic life in the river. The tanneries at Jajmau in Kanpur have themselves formed an association called Jajmau Tanners

Pollution Control Association with the objects among others:

(1) To establish, equip and maintain laboratories, workshop, institutes, organisations and factories for conducting and carrying on experiments and

to provide funds for the main objects of the Company.

(2) To procure and import wherever necessary the chemicals etc. for the purpose of pollution control in tanning industries.

(3) To set up and maintain common effluent treatment plant for member tanners in and around Jajmau.

(4) To make periodical charges on members for the effluent treatment based on the benefit he/it derives from time to time to meet the common

expenses for maintenance, replacement incurred towards effluent treatment.

8. In the Fiscal Plan for setting up common Effluent treatment Plants for India Tanning Industry - (March, 1986) prepared by the committee

constituted by the Directorate General of Technical Development (Government of India) it is observed thus:

Leather industry is one of the three major industries besides paper and textiles

consuming large quantities of water for processing of hides and skins into leather. Naturally most of the water used is discharged as waste water.

The waste water contains putrescible organic and toxic inorganic materials which when discharged as such will deplete dissolved oxygen content of

the receiving water courses resulting in the death of all aquatic life and emanating foul odour. Disposal of these untreated effluents on to land will

pollute the ground water resources. Discharging of these effluents without treatment into public sewers results in the choking of sewers.

Realising the importance of keeping the environment clean, the Government of India has enacted the Water Pollution Control Act (Central Act 6 of

1974) and almost all the State Governments have adopted the Act and implementing the Act by forming the Pollution Control Boards in their

respective States. The Pollution Control Boards have been insisting that all industries have to treat their effluents to the prescribed standards and

leather industry is no exception to this rule. Tanneries situated all over the country have been faced with the problem of treating their effluents.

Seized with the problem of finding out a solution, the Central Leather Research Institute, Madras has brought out a Management Investment

Report (CLRI Core Committee Report) as early as 1976 which contains 14 flow sheets indicating the treatment technologies for various types of

leather processing techniques, quantity of effluents etc. including the cost of treatment.

8A. A monograph entitled "Treatment Technology of Tannery Effluents" prepared by S. Rajamani, W. Madavakrishna and G. Thyagarajan of the

Central Leather Research Institute, Adyar, Madras states that generally the waste water from beam house process namely soaking liming, deliming

etc. are highly alkaline containing decomposing organic matter, hair, lime sulphide etc. and is nearly ten times as strong as domestic sewage and

refers to the various methods by which the effluents of the tanneries could be treated before their discharge into any river. They recommend four

types of waste water treatment technology so far as the tanneries are concerned - (1) segregation or mixing of suitable sectional waste water from

different processes; (2) primary treatment; (3) secondary biological treatment; and (4) disposal of solid wastes from the treatment system. The said

monograph explains the work at the primary treatment unit thus:

the primary treatment units principally comprise of coarse screens, two numbers of settling tanks and sludge drying beds. The settling tank, each of

about 1-2 days capacity acts as an equalisation-cum-setting tank as well. As an alternative, clarifier can be provided in place of settling tank for

treating higher capacity effluents. Depending on the quality of composite effluent, addition of neutralising chemicals like lime, alum, ferric chloride

etc. would be required for effective precipitation of chromium and removal of suspended solids in the sedimentation process. The sludge from the

settling tanks and clarifier is removed and dried on sludge drying beds made up of filtering media gravel, sand and supporting masonry structure.

For operational reasons, sludge drying beds are divided into four or more compartments. The dried sludge from the sludge drying beds can be

used as manure or for landfill if it is vegetable tannery waste. In case of chrome tannery waste, the dried sludge should be buried or disposed of

suitably as per the directions of regulatory agencies and local bodies.

9. The secondary treatment units are explained in the said monograph thus:

The pre-treated effluent needs suitable secondary biological treatment to meet the pollution control standards. The general biological treatment

units which can be adopted under Indian conditions are anaerobic lagoon, aerated lagoon, extended aeration systems like oxidation ditch, activated

sludge process etc.

Anaerobic lagoon is a simple anaerobic treatment unit suitable for effluents with high BOD like vegetable tannery (Raw to E. 1) waste water. In

depth the lagoon varies from 3-5 metres and detention time from 10-20 days depending upon the pollutional load and atmospheric conditions. This

is an open type digester with no provision for gas collection. No power is required for this system and its performance is proved to be efficient in

South Indian conditions.

Anaerobic contact filter is also an anaerobic treatment unit. This is a closed tank type unit made up of R.C.C. or masonry structure filled up with

media like broken granite stones etc. This unit occupies less land area since the detention time is about 1-2 days only. This system is reported to be

efficient for treating high organic load, but the capital cost would be comparatively high.

Aerated lagoon is a shallow water tight pond of about 2-3metres depth with a detention time of about 4-6 days. Fixed or floating type surface

aerators are provided to transfer oxygen from atmospheric air to the effluent for biological treatment using microorganisms under aerobic

conditions. The system is suitable for treating low organic load.

Extended aeration systems like "activated sludge process" and "oxidation ditch" are the improved aerobic biological treatment systems occupying

less land area since the detention time/capacity would be only about 1-2 days. These units require secondary settling tank and sludge re-circulation

arrangements. Extended aeration systems are proved to be efficient. The operational and maintenance cost is comparatively high for smaller

installations, but economical for treatment capacity of 150 M and above per day.

10. A study of the conditions prevailing at Jajmau, Kanpur was made by the Sub-Committee on Effluent Disposal constituted by the Development

Council for leather and Leather Goods Industries along with the various tanneries situated in some other parts of India and in its report submitted in

April, 1984, the Sub-Committee has observed in the case of tanneries at Jajmau, Kanpur thus:

In the case of Jajmau, Kanpur, the committee visited few tanneries where the effort has been made to have primary treatment of the effluent before

it is discharged to the common drain/the river Ganges. There are 60 tanneries in Jajmau which will be covered under joint effluent disposal. The

total production is to the tune of 12000 hides with a total discharge of 5 million litres per day. The State Government has taken appropriate steps

in preparation of the feasibility report under the guidance of U.P. Pollution Control Board. This proposal was also supported by Central Pollution

Board, Delhi by sharing the total fee of Rs. 80,000 to be paid to the Public Health Engineering Consultancy, Bombay which has prepared the

report with the help of IIT, Bombay. The report suggests that each tannery should make arrangement for the primary treatment of their effluent and

then it will be discharged into common treatment plant.

11. There is a reference to the Jajmau tanneries in "an Action Plan for Prevention of Pollution of the Ganga" prepared by the Department of

Environment, Government of India in the year 1985, which is as under:

1.1 The Ganga drains eight States Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and the

Union Territory of Delhi. It is also the most important river of India and has served as the cradle of Indian Civilization. Several major pilgrim

centers have existed on its banks for centuries and millions of people come to bathe in the river during religious festivals, especially the; Kumbhs of

Haridwar and Allahabad. Many towns on the Ganga, e.g., Kanpur, Allahabad, Patna and Calcutta have very large populations and the river also

serves as the source of water supply for these towns. The Ganga is, however, being grossly polluted especially near the towns situated on its

banks. Urgent steps need to be taken to prevent this pollution and restore the purity of river water.

2.0. Sources of Pollution

2.1. The main sources of pollution of the Ganga are the following:

Urban liquid waste (Sewage, storm drainage mixed with sewage, human, cattle and kitchen wastes carried by drains etc.)

Industrial liquid waste

Surface run-off of cultivated land where cultivators use chemical fertilisers, pesticides, insecticides and such manures the mixing of which may make

the river water unsafe for drinking and bathing

Surface run-off from areas on which urban solid wastes are dumped

Surface run-off from areas on which industrial solid wastes are dumped

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4.4.12 Effluent from industries:

Under the laws of the land the responsibility for treatment of the industrial effluents is that of the industry While the concept of "Strict Liability

should be adhered to in some cases, circumstances may require that plans for sewerage and treatment systems should consider industrial effluents

as well. Clusters of small industries located in a contiguous area near the river bank and causing direct pollution to the river such as the tanneries in

Jajmau in Kanpur is a case in point. In some cases, waste waters from some industrial units may have already been connected to the city sewer

and, therefore, merit treatment along with the sewage in the sewage treatment plant. It may also be necessary in some crowded areas to accept

waste waters of industries in a city sewer to be fed to the treatment plant, provided the industrial waste is free from heavy metals, toxic chemicals

and is not abnormally acidic or alkaline.

In such circumstances, scheme proposals have to carefully examine the case of integrating or segregating industrial wastes for purposes of

conveyance and treatment as also the possibilities for apportionment of capital and operating costs between the city authorities and the industries

concerned.

12. Appearing on behalf of the Department of Environment, Government of India. Shri B. Dutta the learned 1st Additional Solicitor General of

India placed before us a memorandum explaining the existing situation at Jajmau area of Kanpur. It reads thus:

Status regarding construction of treatment facilities for treatment of wastes from Tanneries in Jajmau area of Kanpur.

1. About 70 small, medium and large tanneries are located in Jajmau area of Kanpur. On an average they generate 4.5 MLD of waste water.

2. Under the existing laws, tanneries like other industries are expected to provide treatment of their effluents to different standards depending on

whether these are discharged into stream or land. It is the responsibility of the industry concerned to ensure that the quality of the wastewater

conforms to the standards laid down.

3. From time to time, tanneries of Kanpur have represented that due to lack of physical facilities, technical knowhow and funds, it has not been

possible to install adequate treatment facilities.

4. Jajmau is an environmentally degraded area of Kanpur. The location of numerous tanneries in the area is a major cause of the degradation. Civic

facilities for water supply, sanitation, solid waste removal etc. are also highly inadequate. Because the area abuts the Ganga river, its pollution

affects the river quality as well. Accordingly, under the Ganga Action Plan an integrated sanitation project is being taken up for the Jajmau area.

Some aspects of the Plan relate to tannery wastes as follows:

(i) The medium and large units will have to up up pretreatment facilities to ensure that the standard of sewage, discharged into the municipal sewer

also conform to the standards laid down. Scientific institutions such as Central Leather Research Institute are looking into the possibilities of pre

treatment including recovery of materials such as chromium. The setting up of pre-treatment facility in the respective units will be the responsibility

of the individual units concerned. The Ganga Project Directorate as part of the Ganga Action Plan, will play a facilitative role to demonstrate

application of modern technologies for cost effective pre-treatment which the small tanners can afford.

(ii) Since the wastes will be ultimately discharged into the river, the waste will have to further conform to the standards laid down for discharge into

the stream. For this purpose, it will be necessary to treat the waste further and as part of the Ganga Action Plan a treatment plant will be

constructed for this purpose utilising some advanced processes. It is also proposed to combine the domestic waste with the industrial waste

conveyed through the industrial sewer which will then be treated in a (treatment plant.

(iii) It is estimated that cost of this proposed sewage treatment facility which will treat the waste from the domestic sources and the pretreated

wastes from tanneries will be about Rs. 2.5 crores. It will have a capacity of 25 MLD and the first demonstration module of about 5 MLD is

expected to be installed in early 1988-89). Necessary work for designing of the plant has already been initiated and the infrastructure facilities such

as availability of land, soil testing etc. have also been ensured. Tender specifications are being provided and it is expected that the tenders will be

floated sometime in October 87. It is expected that in the combined treatment facility of 25 MLD, about 20 MLD will be from the domestic

sources and 5 MLD will be from the tanneries after pre treatment in the region.

13. In the counter-affidavit filed on behalf of the Hindustan Chambers of Commerce, of which 43 respondents are members it is admitted that the

tanneries discharge their trade effluents into the sewage nallah which leads to the municipal sewage plant before they are thrown into the river

Ganga. It is not disputed by any of the respondents that the water in the river Ganga is being polluted grossly by the effluent discharged by the

tanneries. We are informed that six of the tanneries have already set up the primary treatment plants for carrying out the pre-treatment of the

effluent before it is discharged into the municipal sewerage which ultimately leads to the river Ganga. About 14 of the tanneries are stated to be

engaged in the construction of the primary treatment plants. It is pleaded on behalf of the rest of the Tanneries who are the members" of the

Hindustan Chambers of Commerce and three other tanneries represented by Shri Mukul Mudgal that if some time is given, to them to establish the

pre-treatment plants they would do so. It is, however, submitted by all of them that it would not be possible for them to have the secondary system

for treating wastewater as that would involve enormous expenditure which the tanneries themselves would not be able to meet. It is true that it may

not be possible for the tanneries to establish immediately the secondary system plant in view of the large expenditure involved but having regard to

the adverse effect the effluents are having on the river water, the tanneries at Jajmau. Kanpur should, at least set up of the primary treatment plants

and that is the minimum which the tanneries should do in the circumstances of the case. In the counter-affidavit filed on behalf of the Hindustan

Chamber of Commerce it is seen that the cost of pre treatment plant for a "A" class tannery is Rs. 3,68,000/-, the cost of the plant for a B" class

tannery is Rs. 2,30,000/-and the cost of the plant for "C class tannery is Rs. 50,000/-. This cost does not appear to be excessive. The financial

capacity of the tanneries should be considered as irrelevant while requiring them to establish primary treatment plants. Just like an industry which

cannot pay minimum wages to its workers cannot be allowed to exist a tannery which cannot set up a primary treatment plant cannot be permitted

to continue to be in existence for the adverse effect on the public at large which is likely to ensue by the discharging of the trade effluents from the

tannery to the river Ganga would be immense and it will outweigh any inconvenience that may be caused to the management and the labour

employed by it on account of its closure. Moreover, the tanneries involved in these cases are not taken by surprise. For several years they are

being asked to take necessary steps to prevent the flow of untreated wastewater from their factories into the river. Some of them have already

complied with the demand. It should be remembered that the effluent discharged from a tannery is ten times noxious when compared with the

domestic sewage water which flows into the river from any urban area on its banks. We feel that the tanneries at Jajmau. Kanpur cannot be

allowed to continue to carry on the industrial activity unless they take steps to establish primary treatment plants. In cases of this nature this Court

act affecting or likely to affect the public is being committed and the statutory authorities who are charged with the duty to prevent it are not taking

adequate steps to rectify the grievance. For every breach of a right there should be a remedy. It is unfortunate that a number of tanneries at Jajmau

even though they are aware of these proceedings have not cared even to enter appearance in this Court to express their willingness to take

appropriate steps to establish the pretreatment plants. So far as they are concerned an order directing them to stop working their tanneries should

be passed. We accordingly direct M/s. Delight Tannery (respondent 14), M/s. Hindustan Tannery (respondent 15), M/s. Primer Allarmin Tannery

(respondent 33), M/s. Mahaboob Tannery (respondent 37), M/s. Popular Tannery (respondent 38), M/s. Standard Tannery (respondent 39),

M/s. Vikash Tannery (respondent 40), M/s. New Golden Tannery (respondent 41), M/s. D. D. Tannery (respondent 42), M/s. Himalaya Tannery

(respondent 44), M/s. Commercial Industry (respondent 45), M/s. Madina Tannery (respondent 46), M/s. Kanpur Tannery (respondent 48), M/s.

New Jab Tannery (respondent 49), M/s. Famous Tannery (respondent 50), M/s. Glaxy Tannery (respondent 53), M/s. Bengal Tannery

(respondent 56), M/s. Chhangal Tannery (respondent 59), M/s. Nadari Tannery (respondent 63), M/s. Jajmau Tanners (respondent 65), M/s.

International Tanning Industry (respondent 66), M/s. Poorwanchal Tanning Industry (respondent 70), M/s. Navratan Tanning (respondent 71),

M/s. Harouu Tannery (respondent 73), M/s. Himalaya Tanners (respondent 76), M/s. R.A. Traders (respondent 79), M/s. Alam Tannery

(respondent 83), M/s. G. T. Tannery (respondent 84), and M/s. Awadh Tannery (respondent 86) to stop the running of their tanneries and also

not to let out trade effluents from their tanneries either directly or indirectly into the river Ganga without subjecting the trade effluents to a pre

treatment process by setting up primary treatment plants as approved by the State Board (respondent 8) with effect from 1-10-1987.

14. M/s. Indian Tanning Industry (respondent 30), the U.P. Tannery (respondent 19), M/s. Zaz Tannery (respondent 28), M/s. Super Tannery

India Ltd. (respondent 21), M/s. Shewan Tannery (respondent 20), M/s. Pioneer Tannery (respondent 23), and M/s. M.K.J. Corporation

(respondent 89) who have already put up the primary treatment plants may continue to carry on production in their factories subject to the

condition that they should continue to keep the primary treatment plants established by them in sound working order.

15. Shri S. K. Dholakia, learned Counsel for the other tanneries who are members of the Hindustan Chambers of Commerce and the other

tanneries who have entered appearance through Shri Mukul Mudgal submits that they will establish primary treatment plants within six months and

he further submits that in the event of their not completing the construction of the primary treatment plants as approved by the State Board

(respondent 8) and bringing them into operation within the period of six months the said tanneries will stop carrying on their business. We record

the statement made by the learned Counsel and grant them time till 31-3-1988 to set up the primary treatment plants. If any of these tanneries does

not set up a primary treatment plant within 31-3-1988 it is directed to stop its business with effect from 1-4-1988.

16. We issue a direction to the Central Government, the Uttar Pradesh Board, established under the provisions of the Water (Prevention and

Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 and the District Magistrate, Kanpur to enforce our order faithfully. Copies of this order shall be sent to them for

information.

17. The case is adjourned to 27th October, 1987 (P1. seepage 1115 - Ed.) to consider the case against the municipal bodies in the State of Uttar

Pradesh having jurisdiction over the areas through which the river Ganga is passing.

K.N. Singh, J.

18. I respectfully agree with every word that my learned brother Venkataramiah, J. has stated in the proposed order and the directions issued by

that order. However, I wish to add few words.

19. The river Ganga is one of the greatest rivers of the world, although its entire course in only 1560 miles from its source in Himalaya to the sea.

There are many rivers larger in shape and longer in size but no river in the world has been so great as the Ganga. It is great because to millions of

people since centuries it is the most sacred river, it is called ""Sursari"" river of the Gods, Patitpawani" purifier of all sins and "Ganga Ma" Mother

Ganges. To millions of Hindus, it is the most sacred, most venerated river on earth. According the Hindus belief and Mythology to bathe in it is to

wash away guilt, to drink the water, having bathed in it, and to carry it away in containers for those who may have not had the good fortune to

make the pilgrimage, to it, is meritorious. To be cremated on its banks, or to die there, and to have one's ashes cast in its waters is the the wish of

every Hindu. Many saints and sages have pursued their quest for knowledge and enlightenment on the banks of the river Ganga. Its water has not

only purified the body and soul of the millions but it has given fertile land to the country in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Ganga has been used as means

of water transport for trade and commerce. The Indian civilization of the Northern India thrived in the plains of Ganga and most of the important

towns and places of pilgrimage are situated on its banks. The river Ganga has been part of Hindu civilization. Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru who did not

consider himself a devout Hindu gave expression to his feelings for the Ganga that is to be found in his will and Testament, a short extract from

which is as under:

My desire to have a handful of my ashes thrown into the Ganga at Allahabad has no religious significance, so far as I am concerned. I have no

religious sentiment in the matter. I have been attached to the Ganga and the Jamuna rivers in Allahabad ever since my childhood and, as I have

grown older, this attachment has also grown. I have watched their varying moods as the seasons changed, and have often thought of the history

and myth and tradition and song and story that have become attached to them through the long ages and become part of their flowing waters. The

Ganga, especially, as the river of India, beloved of her people, round which are intertwined her racial memories, her hopes and fears, her songs of

triumph, her victories and her defeats. She has been a symbol of India's age-long culture and civilisation, ever-changing, ever-flowing, and yet ever

the same Ganga. She reminds me of the snow-covered peaks and the deep valleys of the Himalayas, which I have loved so much, and of the rich

and vast plains below, where my life and work have been cast.

20. The river Ganga is the life line of millions of people of India, Indian culture and civilization has grown around it. This great river drains of eight

States of India, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. The Ganga has always

been an integral part of the nation's history, cultures and environment. It has been the source of sustenance for the millions of people who have

lived on its banks from time immemorial.

21. Millions of our people in the Ganga drink its water under an abiding faith and belief to purify themselves to achieve moksha release from the

cycle of birth and death. It is tragic that the Ganga, which has since time immemorial, purified the people is being polluted by man in numerous

ways, by dumping of garbage, throwing carcass of dead animals and discharge of effluents. Scientific investigations and survey reports have shown

that the Ganga which serves one-third of the India's population is polluted by the discharge of municipal sewage and the industrial effluents in the

river. The pollution of the river Ganga is affecting the life, health, and ecology of the Indo-Gangetic Plain. The Government as well as Parliament

both have taken a number of steps to control the water pollution, but nothing substantial has been achieved. I need not refer to those steps as my

learned brother has referred to them in detail. No law or authority can succeed in removing the pollution unless the people cooperate. To my mind,

it is the sacred duty of all those who reside or carry on business around the river Ganga to ensure the purity of Ganga. Tanneries at Jajmau area

near Kanpur have been polluting the Ganga in a big way. This Court issued notices to them but in spite of notices many industrialists have not

bothered either to respond to the notice or to take elementary steps for the treatment of industrial effluent before discharging the same into the

river. We are therefore issuing the directions for the closure of those tanneries which have failed to take minimum steps required for the primary

treatment of industrial effluent. We are conscious that closure of tanneries may bring unemployment, loss of revenue, but life, health and ecology

have greater importance to the people.