

# River Erosion: Mahashmashan is disappearing in Akkelpur

**Chaytanna Chatarjee-** Nawabganjghat Mahashamsan, temple and adjoining Devasthan infrastructure of Akkelpur upazila of Joypurhat are threatened to disappear anytime due to erosion of Tulsi Ganga river.

Due to the lack of RCC pilings, retaining walls and blocks on the banks of the Mahasmashan river, every year the temple and crematorium premises are being washed away in the river due to floods and heavy rains. Bangladesh Water Development Board carried out the excavation of Tulsi Ganga river under Joypurhat district, the Mahashamsan is facing more erosion as a result of digging along the banks of the crematorium in the name of controlling the river. Due to this, the river bank of Mahashmashan is collapsing before the river water recedes.

Panic has arisen among the traditional communities of Akkelpur upazila and Badalgachi upazila of neighboring Naogaon district.

Sushil Kumar Agarwala, General Secretary of Nawabganj Ghat Crematorium, Devasthan and Samaj Kalyan Sangh, said that in 1816, Mr. Surtlal Chowdhury, Mr. Mahadev Agarwala, Mr. Bhimraj Agarwala of Akkelpur Upazila and the initiative of the local Marwari Samiti at Nawabganj Ghat on the banks of the Tulsi Ganga river for the cremation, burial and good work of the dead people of Sanatan community. He donated 11 bighas of land in the name of crematorium. Temples of various gods and goddesses were built on that land. Every year Durga Puja, Sanyas Puja, Kali Puja and other deities are worshiped here.

There are also burial sites, kilns and rest houses with many ancient traditional banyan and pitar trees. Pedestrians rest under this tree, Sanatan devotees who come to perform good

deeds chant. There are also registration and listing certificates from the Department of Social Services of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Hindu Religious Welfare Trust for the preservation and development of this crematorium.

The crematorium and the temple are not safe from being washed away by the Tulsiganga river due to floods and riverine regime. Even the centuries-old traditional banyan trees and pīkar trees are under threat due to soil erosion from the roots. The crematorium is located about two hundred yards from the Akkelpur-Jaipurhat road. The leaders of the Hindu community informed the higher officials to resolve the crisis and suffering of the crematorium, but no benefit has been found even today. As a result, fear is increasing among them.

He also said that this mass crematorium is the only place to cremate and bury the bodies of hundreds of thousands of Hindu and Marwari communities of Badalgachi upazila of Akkelpur and Naogaon districts. Repeated appeals have been made in writing to the Water Development Board to protect crematoriums and temples. Jaipurhat-02 Constituency Mahan Jatiya Sangsad Whip Abu Saeed Al Mahmud Swapan MP has given a DO letter to Bangladesh Water Development Board to start RCC, piling, returning wall and block work on river banks through tender as soon as possible.

Even two weeks ago, the trustee of the Hindu Religious Welfare Trust of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Swapan Kumar Roy, a veteran freedom fighter, visited the crematorium. He assured the development of the crematorium.

We are appealing to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of democracy, to take necessary measures to protect our cremation from the river's erosion.



Advocate Rajendra Prasad Agarwala, President of Akkelpur Upazila Branch of Bangladesh Puja Celebration Parishad, said that the crematorium, temple and adjacent infrastructure need to be protected from river erosion. I wish the administration to look into this matter.

Omprakash Agarwala, president of Akkelpur upazila branch of Bangladesh Hindu-Buddhist-Christian Oikya Parishad, said that the site of this crematorium and temple needs to be protected from river erosion as soon as possible. And those who have illegally occupied the cremation ground need to be evicted quickly.

Joypurhat District Water Development Board Executive Engineer Md Sakhawat Hossain said that the contractor has been asked to provide geo bags and pilings to prevent cremation erosion.

Akkelpur Municipal Council Mayor Md. Shahidul Alam Chowdhury said, I have informed the Executive Engineer of Joypurhat District Water Development Board to take measures to prevent erosion.

Akkelpur upazila executive officer Manjurul Alam said, I have informed the executive engineer and he has assured that a

contractor has been appointed to provide geo bags and piling at a fast pace.

Swapan Kumar Roy, trustee of the Hindu religious welfare trust of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, said, "The great crematorium of the Sanatan community is disappearing today due to the erosion of the Tulsī Ganga river. I have asked the executive engineer to take immediate action."

Shri Sheetal Kumar Das, Anath Chatterjee, Sujan Kumar Sarkar (Ringku), Shri Mithu Mahant, Shri Vidut Mahant, Shri Pappu Shri Biman Mahant, Shri Kishore Kumar Bihani, who live on the banks of the river have demanded to protect the crematorium, temple and adjacent infrastructure from river erosion. Shri Kali Charan Agarwala along with thousands of Sanatan religious and Marwari community.

[chaytannachaterjee@gmail.com](mailto:chaytannachaterjee@gmail.com)