

#DAY22 NATURE

TASK GREENER

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Declaration of Rights for Nature

The concept of the **Rights of Nature** recognizes that ecosystems like rivers, forests, and other natural entities are living beings with intrinsic value and the right to exist, thrive, and regenerate.

For today's challenge I have chosen the Buriganga River in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The Buriganga has historically been the lifeline of the city, supporting trade, transportation, and communities along its banks. Today, however, the river suffers from severe pollution caused by industrial waste, untreated sewage, and plastic dumping. I chose the Buriganga because it is a vital ecosystem that directly affects the lives of millions of people, yet it is under threat. Recognizing its rights and creating awareness about its protection is crucial for both environmental sustainability and the well-being of local communities.

Ecuador or New Zealand's Rights of Nature laws

Ecuador

In 2008, Ecuador became the first country in the world to legally recognize Nature's Rights in its Constitution, inspired by the Indigenous concept of *Pachamama* (Mother Earth). Articles 71–74 give ecosystems the right to exist, regenerate, and be restored. Citizens can take legal action on behalf of nature. A notable case was the Vilcabamba River, where the court ruled to protect the river from pollution (Ecuador Constitution, 2008).

New Zealand

In 2017, New Zealand granted the Whanganui River legal personhood through the *Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act*. Influenced by Maori beliefs- "I am the river, and the river is me"-the river now has legal rights and two guardians (one Māori, one government) to represent its interests. Similar protections have been extended to Mount Taranaki and Te Urewera Forest (New Zealand Parliament, 2017).

These examples show that ecosystems can be recognized as living entities with legal rights, ensuring protection, restoration, and sustainable coexistence with humans.

Voice of the Buriganga River

VOICE OF THE BURIGANGA RIVER



WHAT IT IS NOW..



WHAT IT DESERVES TO BE

Letter from the river

I AM THE BURIGANGA , ONCE FULL OF
LIFE, NOW FIGHTING TO BREATHE.
I CARRIED BOATS, FISH, AND PEOPLE
WHO CALLED ME THEIR HOME.
BUT NOW, MY WATERS ARE DARKENED
BY WASTE AND SILENCE.
I AM NOT YOUR DRAIN; I AM PART OF
YOUR LIFE.
LET ME FLOW FREE AGAIN — CLEAR,
ALIVE, AND LOVED.
RESTORE ME, PROTECT ME, AND LET ME
HEAL.
FOR WHEN I DIE, SO DOES A PART OF
YOU."

Declaration of Rights for the Buriganga River

We, the people of Dhaka, recognize the Buriganga River as a living entity and it deserves the following rights:

1. **Right to Exist and Flow Naturally:** The river has the right to maintain its natural course and water cycles.
2. **Right to Be Free from Pollution:** The river has the right to remain unpolluted by industrial waste, plastics, and toxic substances.
3. **Right to Restoration and Regeneration:** The river has the right to be cleaned, restored, and protected from further harm.
4. **Right to Representation:** The river has the right to have human guardians who will speak and act on its behalf in environmental decision-making.
5. **Right to Sustain Life:** The river has the right to support all forms of life that depend on it, both human and non-human.

How My Community Can Apply These Ideas

In Dhaka, we could introduce a River Guardianship Program for the Buriganga. Local residents, students, and environmental activists could act as guardians to monitor the river's health and raise awareness about its protection. Schools and organizations could organize clean-up drives, workshops, and advocacy campaigns to promote sustainable practices. Policies could also be strengthened to regulate industrial waste and enforce pollution laws. By applying these ideas, the Buriganga could begin its journey toward recovery and renewal.

The Rights of Nature movement teaches that protecting ecosystems is protecting ourselves. The Buriganga River, once a lifeline of Dhaka, now needs justice and restoration. Recognizing its rights allows us to see it as a living being, not just a resource. By listening to its voice and taking action, we can create a cleaner, healthier, and sustainable future. When nature thrives, humanity thrives too.

Link of the Instagram post

https://www.instagram.com/p/DQJoX1Wkh7M/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFiZA==

Screenshot of the post

