

## **Saving The Wild: Pancheshwar's Eco-Makeover**

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Nestled in the picturesque state of Uttarakhand, Pancheshwar is a hidden gem where the Saryu River meets the Kali River, creating a serene confluence that draws visitors from around the globe. Renowned for its exceptional golden mahseer fishing, Pancheshwar attracts avid anglers seeking the thrill of catching this prized game fish. However, this tranquil heaven holds more than just the promise of a great catch; it is also a sacred site in Hindu culture, where families come to perform cremations in the confluence's holy waters.



Despite its spiritual significance and natural beauty, Pancheshwar faces an environmental crisis. The traditional practice of cremation involves burning bodies using wood and, alarmingly, even tyres. This method poses a dual threat to the environment and the golden mahseer, a vital indicator of aquatic health.

### **The Double-Edged Sword: Environmental Impact of Traditional Cremations**

The burning of wood and tyres in Pancheshwar has far-reaching consequences:

**Aquatic Hazard:** The remnants of burnt tires and wood often find their way into the river, endangering the golden mahseer. These fish, known for their voracious appetite, can mistakenly consume harmful debris, leading to severe injury or death. Moreover, they can become entangled in the burnt remnants, disrupting their natural habitat and diminishing their population. As the golden mahseer is a key species indicating the health of the aquatic ecosystem, their decline signals broader environmental distress.

**Deforestation and Pollution:** The demand for wood to fuel cremation pyres leads to rampant deforestation, exacerbating environmental degradation. The loss of trees contributes to reduced oxygen levels and destabilizes the local ecosystem, making the area more susceptible to forest fires. Additionally, burning tires releases toxic fumes, contributing to air pollution and global warming. This cycle of destruction threatens not only the local biodiversity but also the global climate.

### **A Sustainable Solution: PRESPL's Biodegradable Briquettes**

Self and the organization of PRESPL, in response to this urgent environmental crisis, under the leadership of Lt Col Monish Ahuja (Retd), CMD PRESPL, have initiated a groundbreaking conservation project in Pancheshwar. PRESPL specializes in recycling biodegradable waste to produce eco-friendly briquettes for cremation purposes. Their innovative approach aims to replace the harmful practice of burning wood and tires with a sustainable alternative.



Recently, we conducted a Cremation trial using biodegradable biomass briquettes in presence of District Magistrate, alongside local families, and self. The Cremation trial was carried out successfully on biomass briquettes. The biomass briquettes burned efficiently, signifying its environmental benefits with the new method of cremation, less polluting and leaving no harmful residues in the river. We observed firsthand potential for a cleaner, greener future for Pancheshwar. Now the biomass will be stored monthly, in a facility near the river so that localities can use biomass briquettes replacing wood for cremation, being more cost-efficient, and ecofriendly.



### **Community Empowerment and Environmental Stewardship**

The success of the trial has sparked hope and inspiration within the Pancheshwar community. By adopting biodegradable briquettes, residents can preserve their sacred traditions while protecting their natural heritage. This initiative not only safeguards the golden mahseer and other aquatic life but also promotes afforestation, reducing pollution and contributing towards the global fight against climate change.

Under the leadership of Lt Col Monish Ahuja (Retd) and Mr. Anurag Verma's, initiative and consistent efforts have been instrumental in rallying community support and fostering environmental stewardship. Their dedication to sustainable practices and innovative solutions exemplifies the positive impact that thoughtful conservation efforts can be achieved.

### **Looking Ahead: A Sustainable Future for Pancheshwar**

PRESPL's Eco Cremation project in Pancheshwar marks a significant step towards harmonizing cultural traditions with environmental conservation. The permanent customized metal pyre made by PRESPL Team for carrying out Eco Cremation activity using biodegradable biomass briquettes for cremation activity has paved way for a sustainable future where the golden mahseer can thrive in the pristine sacred river.



As Pancheshwar transforms into a model of eco-friendly cremation practices, it sets a powerful example for other regions facing similar challenges. The confluence of the Saryu and Kali rivers will continue to be a place of spiritual significance and natural beauty and is now being safeguarded for generations to come due to the sustainable eco cremation activity.

In the heart of Uttarakhand, where tradition meets innovation, the efforts to conserve Pancheshwar's environment resonate with a universal message: by working together, we can protect our planet and honor our heritage, ensuring a legacy of sustainability for the future.

### **Price Aspect of Biomass**

Though price of biomass remains a significant consideration due to its relatively high costs and procurement and transportation of biomass are expensive, which can be a deterrent for widespread adoption. However, recognizing its numerous benefits to the community and environment, the government has stepped forward to provide funding. This support aims to offset the high costs and encourage the use of biomass as a sustainable and eco-friendly Renewable Energy source. By investing in biomass, the government is not only promoting Renewable Energy but also contributing to a healthier and more sustainable future.

**In conclusion,** the eco-friendly transformation of Pancheshwar through PRESPL's innovative use of biodegradable briquettes exemplifies the balance between tradition and environmental conservation. By addressing the environmental impact of traditional cremations and introducing sustainable alternatives, the project protects the sacred rivers and the golden mahseer while fostering community empowerment. Government support is crucial in ensuring its adoption. Pancheshwar's journey serves as a beacon of sustainability, inspiring similar efforts in other regions.