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AN 11 YEAR VETERANS
COMMITMENT FOR
GANGA REJUVENATION

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Aulya Ganga Tableau at Republic Day Parade 2023

**ATULYA GANGA PILOT PROJECT - HOLY GANGA PILGRIMAGE CYCLOTHON
BADRINATH - KEDARNATH OCTOBER 2026- ADVOCACY TO INDUCE REVIVAL OF
BHARAT'S HERITAGE, ARREST ENVIRONMENT DEGRADATION, AND TO BRING INDIA
ON GLOBAL TOURISM STAGE**

Overview

Revival of the millennium old heritage of Bharat, dormant for the last seven centuries, needs urgent attention. Equally urgent is the need to arrest the environmental degradation of the Ganga Basin, which threatens the survival of future generations of forty percent of Bharat's population. Atulya Ganga Trust (AGT), a people-centric environment protection initiative of Indian Armed Forces veterans working to contribute to the rejuvenation of the Ganga Basin and operational since 2019, is taking up this monumental challenge through its proposed pilgrimage cyclothon from Badrinath to Kedarnath in October 2026. AGT invites you to be a part of it, leave your indelible footprint on the sands of time, and be remembered for your vision. Contact us through www.atulyaganag.com and mail to hem@atulyaganga.com for details and to express your interest.

Char Dham religious pilgrimage attracts around five million participants annually. This massive footfall unfortunately adds to the woes of the Deity Ganga through carbon footprints left by vehicular traffic and senseless dumping of plastic waste. There is an urgent need to think of green pilgrimage options. The cyclothon combines awareness and advocacy tools to highlight environment degradation of the Ganga basin by vehicle based char dham pilgrimage. It gives a peep into an alternative, which, if adopted, will arrest the environment degradation significantly. Massive spin offs will be reminding the citizens of Bharat, the oldest living civilization, of the need to take pride in our prehistoric heritage, induce participation of Generation Z, averse to sermonizing and mere religious discourses, by presenting the lore of our lineage through adventure, groom our youth as environment protectors, and to bring Bharat on the global tourism stage.



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Background of AGT

Operation of AGT is based on three As; **Awareness campaigns** to induce meaningful *Jan Bhagidari* to support the Government's efforts. Solution-driven **Action Plans**, and **Advocacy**, aimed at inducing desired systemic changes. AGT commenced its journey with the epic 5,530 km long, 190 days continuous, walkathon, the first ever Ganga Parikrama on foot since the vedic times in 2020-21, and submitted to the Ministry of Tourism, an extensive report identifying travel circuits along Ganga's span, Ganga Parikrama as an Iconic walk, 108 days long Grand Ganga Yatra starting at Gangotri when the Deity moves to Mukhba for Her winter abode, culminating at Gangasagar on Makar Sankranti, and identified heritage tourism spots., AGT has followed up the Parikrama with a 2,800 km Gangotri – Gangaasagar cyclothon in 2022, 780 km Yamunotri – Agra cyclothon in 2023, and a 1200 km Uttarkashi – Prayagraj Mahakumbh cyclothon in 2025. Its other actions include pollution mapping of waters of Ganga basin, and forestation drives.

A glimpse of Himalayan Pilgrimage walk, The Char Dham Trail

The proposed one Continuous Walking Trail connecting Yamunotri → Gangotri → Kedarnath → Badrinath, a unified 50 day, 800 km, Himalayan spiritual walking pilgrimage, is divided in three stages. Stage 1: Yamunotri → Gangotri (Source-to-Source Walk). Stage 2: Gangotri → Kedarnath (High Himalayan Traverse). Stage 3: Kedarnath → Badrinath (Ancient Traditional Pilgrim Path). It uses the model of leading Global walks, viz., **Camino de Santiago (Spain–Portugal)** – The Gold Standard of Pilgrimage Tourism, one of the world's most recognized long-distance walking routes, attracting over 3.5 million pilgrims annually, **Shikoku 88 Temple Pilgrimage (Japan)** – a 1,200 km circular route linking 88 Buddhist temples, dating back 1,200 years, and **Kumano Kodo (Japan)** – A UNESCO-Recognized Pilgrimage Network.

Brief of the proposed cyclothon

The cyclothon aims to take up the third stage from Badrinath to Kedarnath, a lure to cycle for 10 days through the serene Himalayan meadows of Rohini Bugyal, high altitude lake Devariya Tal, and Tungnath, the highest Shrine of Lord Shiva.

Key Features

To revive a heritage, we need to be aware of it, and develop pride in it. Due to the dormant status of our heritage, most of us are not aware of the depth of our heritage. This awareness will be induced among participants through folklore presentation of seven stories associated with Deity Ganga narrated below.

- Divine incarnation when the raised toe of Vamana incarnation of Lord Vishnu pierced the Cosmic egg, causing the flow of divine waters.
- The curse of Durwasa imposed on Ganga to descend on earth as a mortal river where humans will wash their dirt, when she laughed at the nudity of Durwasa whose clothes were



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blown away by a gust of wind. The curse was diluted by the sage by decreeing that she would become purifier of all sins.

- The curse of Lord Brahma upon King Mahabhisha and Ganga, banishing them to Martyulok, for the lustful look of the king at Ganga in His court and acquiescing response of Ganga. The king was borne as King Shantanu of Hastinapur. Ganga, agreed to marry him on the condition that she would stay till Shantanu did not question her actions. Ganga, approached by the eight vasus of Indralok, to relieve them of the curse of sage vashishtha banishing them to Martyulok, gave birth to seven of them, and drowned them immediately on being borne. When she was questioned for her cruelty by Shanatnu, as she was going to drown the eighth son Devvrata, she agreed to spare his life, but left Shantanu. Devvrata lived on as Bhishma of Mahabharat.
- Ganga avatar, as a result of one thousand years penance by Bhagirath of Lord Brahma, followed by one year's penance to Lord Shiva standing on his toes, for salvation of 60,000 sons of Kings Sagar.
- Reemergence of Ganga as Janhvi from the ears of Sage Jahnu, who had swallowed her.
- Ganga, as the mother of Lord Kartikeya, to defeat demon Tarkasura.
- Ganga, as the vehicle for carrying King Manu after the first deluge or paralaya for recreation of life on Earth, guided by Matsyaavatar of lord Vishnu.

Other feature include local Community Integration through creation of a bank of environmentally aware local guides trained in waste management and, Homestay clusters, Safety Infrastructure, Environmental Safeguards, waste management, Cultural & Spiritual Depth, Digital Platform.

Expected Outcomes

Environment protection: The trek will bring home to the participants the sad realization, that the degradation of environment of the Ganga basin is not limited to the plains, that it begins at the source, caused by us through deforestation, and mindless dumping of plastic waste, as we trod on mercilessly. There will be minimum carbon foot print. Efficient waste management will induce awareness of the need for environment, river & forest conservation, and controlled responsible pilgrim movement.

Tourism: Revival of centuries-old pilgrimage routes, heritage temples & folklore to attract 500,000+ walkers annually in 3–5 years, massive global visibility,

Economic: Himalayan villages gain sustainable income, boost for rural crafts, food, home-stays, new livelihoods for youth as guides.