



On the Banks of the Ganga: When Wastewater Meets a Sacred River

Kelly D. Alley

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In this rich ethnographic study, Kelly D. Alley sheds light on debates about water uses, wastewater management, and the meanings of waste and sacred power. *On the Banks of the Ganga* analyzes the human predicaments that result from the accumulation and disposal of waste by tracing how citizens of India interpret the impact of wastewater flows on a sacred river and on their own cultural practices.

Alley investigates ethno-semantic, discursive, and institutional data to flesh out the interplay between religious, scientific, and official discourses about the river Ganga. Using a new outward layering methodology, she points out that anthropological analysis must separate the historical and discursive strands of the debates concerning waste and sacred purity in order to reveal the cultural complexities that surround the Ganga. Ultimately, she addresses a deeply rooted cultural paradox: if the Ganga river is considered sacred by Hindus across India, then why do the people allow it to become polluted?

Examining areas of contemporary concern such as water usage and urban waste management in the most populated river basin in the world, this book will appeal to anthropologists and readers in religious, environmental, and Asian studies, as well as geography and law.

Kelly D. Alley is Associate Professor and Director of Anthropology at Auburn University. In addition to being a prolific writer, she has conducted research on public culture and environmental issues in northern India for over a decade. Alley is currently overseeing a project to ameliorate river pollution problems in India.

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