

## BIODIVERSITY OF CYANOBACTERIA IN RIVER GANGA AT KANPUR, UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

Cyanobacteria are an important group of gram-negative photosynthetic prokaryotes which play a vital role in all kind of aquatic ecosystems. The biodiversity of cyanobacteria from five sampling stations (Bithoorghat, Ranighat, Sarsaiyaghat, Golaghat and Jajmaughat) of River Ganga at Kanpur has been estimated, between Bithoorghat to Jajmaughat, during the period from February 2013 to January 2014. Total 114 species of cyanobacteria belonging to 2 orders (Chroococcales and Nostocales), 4 families (Chroococcaceae, Oscillatoriaceae, Nostocaceae and Rivulariaceae) and 23 genera have been identified from different sampling stations of river Ganga during the study period. The minimum of cyanobacteria have been recorded at Bithoorghat and maximum at Jajmaughat. During the entire study the most dominating genera were *Anabaena*, *Aphanizomenon*, *Chroococcus*, *Cylindrospermum*, *Lyngbya*, *Microcystis*, *Nodularia*, *Nostoc*, *Oscillatoria*, *Phormidium* and *Spirulina*.

**Keywords:** *Cyanobacteria, Diversity, River Ganga, Pollution*

### INTRODUCTION

Kanpur is a biggest city of the Uttar Pradesh and known as the commercial capital of state and situated on the right bank of river Ganga. The major industries of city are leather, textile, chemical, machinery and pharmaceuticals etc. These industries generate a wide variety of organic and inorganic wastes such as oils, plastics, phenols, heavy metals, pesticides, herbicides etc. Due to indiscriminate removal and discharge of the above mentioned harmful substances the river Ganga gets high amount of contaminated substance and become highly polluted in Kanpur. Such condition of river water provides the great opportunity to proliferate various kinds of algae including cyanobacteria and these can serve as indicators of declining water quality.

Cyanobacteria are chlorophyll containing gram-negative photosynthetic prokaryotes, found in huge variety of environments ranging from Antarctic lakes, nutrient poor oceans to highly nutrient rich ponds, lakes and rivers (Whitton and Potts 2000; Castenholz 2001a, b). In tropical and sub-tropical regions cyanobacteria may dominate at any time of year or persist throughout the year (Mur, *et. al.* 1999; Huisman and Hulot, 2005). They are morphologically diverse having unicellular, colonial and filamentous forms (Whitton and Potts 2000). They play a vital role in the various biogeochemical cycles such as nitrogen, carbon, Phosphorus and oxygen. For a long time, the economic importance of cyanobacteria was limited to their use as bio-fertilizer in agriculture but during the last few decades they have been recognized for their high potential in a wide variety of biotechnological applications (Thajuddin and Subramanian, 2005; Spolaore, *et.al.*, 2006). They are major components of water blooms which are extremely toxic due to presence of cyanotoxins (Sivonen and Jones, 1999) and thus, pose a health risk to humans and other aquatic and domestic organisms (Kuiper-Goodman, *et. al.*, 1999).

Cyanobacteria are commonly found in polluted and unpolluted water and due to this behavior they are generally considered useful to determine the quality of water at very low cost. These are very suitable organisms for the determination of the impact of toxic substances on the aquatic ecosystems because any effect on the lower level of the food chain will also have consequence on the higher level. Clean water would support a great diversity of organisms, whereas polluted water would yield just a few organisms, with one or few dominant forms (Trainor, 1984). Few reports have been available on cyanobacterial flora from different regions of India (Desikachary, 1959; Prasad and Saxena, 1980; Tarar and Bodkhe, 1997;

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Mahadev and Hosmani, 2004; Parikh, *et. al.*, 2006; Gupta, *et. al.*, 2006; Sankaran, 2006; Chaudhary and Kumar Mukesh, 2006; Saha, *et. al.*, 2007; Kumar Mukesh, 2010; Kumar, Mukesh, *et.al.*, 2011). Some algal infestations have been reported from Kanpur by various workers in time and space (Ahmad, 1973; Shukla, 1983; Tripathi and Pandey, 1989; Tiwari, *et. al.*, 2001; Tiwari and Shukla, 2007, Rishi and Awasthi, 2012).

During the past few decades research on cyanobacteria were academic interest only and mostly unnoticed as nuisance but, now they are proved as potential candidates for much biotechnological utilization (Richmond, 1990; Sundararaman and Sekar, 2001; Thajuddin and Subramanian, 2005). The main objective of the present study to exploit the occurrence and distribution of cyanobacteria from different sampling stations (Ghats) of River Ganga at Kanpur, between Bithoorghat to Jajmaughat, during the period from February 2013 to January 2014.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Study Area:** Kanpur is situated at 26.46° N latitude and 80.35° E longitudes at an elevation of 126 meters from sea level on the right bank of river Ganga. It is one of the oldest industrial townships of North India and known as Manchester of North India. The major industries of city are leather, textile, chemical, machinery and pharmaceuticals etc. It is famous for leather industries. The entire length of river between Bithoor to Jajmau is approximate 24-25 Kilometers (Fig.1).

**Sampling Stations:** Five sampling stations were carefully inspected and selected for the entire River Ganga at Kanpur from Bithoor to Jajmau for the sampling of cyanobacteria.

**Bithoorghat:** Bithoor is situated on the Kannauj Road, 27 km from center of Kanpur and Situated on the banks of the river Ganga. Its coordinates are 26.36° North and 80.16° East. The pollution load at Bithoorghat is reported lesser than nearby stations of Kanpur. There are no such major industries in this rural area except minor sewage channels and agricultural runoff adds to pollution.

**Ranighat:** Ranighat is situated at Nawabganj, Kanpur and near the Ganga Barrage and its coordinates are 26.30° North and 80.19° East. Ranighat is the first station of river Ganga which gets more domestic and industrial wastes. Pollution load at this station is higher than Bithoor.

**Sarsaiyaghat:** This ghat is situated at 26.28° North and 80.21° East. Sarsaiyaghat has been selected for sampling due to presence of microbial diversity.

**Golaghat:** Golaghat is a famous ghat in Kanpur city, the industrial hub of Uttar Pradesh in North India. It is situated on the bank of River Ganga at Kanpur and its coordinates are 26.27° North and 80.22° East. This ghat gets high amount of domestic and industrial effluents.

**Jajmaughat:** The coordinates are 26.45° North and 80.35° East and situated near Jajmau. It is home to some of the Biggest Leather tanneries in Northern India.

**Collection, Preservation, Identification and Quantification of Cyanobacteria:** An exhaustive collection of cyanobacterial samples have been made from different sampling sites with a view to record their diversity in river Ganga at Kanpur in first week of each month from February 2013 to January 2014. Due to heavy rainfall and flood the sampling have not been done in July and August, 2013. The cyanobacterial samples were collected by using 20µ mesh size plankton net by filtering 50 liters water and preserved in 50 ml water containing FAA for further analysis. For quantitative analysis, one drop of sample was taken on a clean glass slide and cyanobacteria were counted by drop count method. The results obtained are expressed as number of cells/units per Liter of sample.

Total cells/units per liter =  $A * (1/L) * (n/v)$

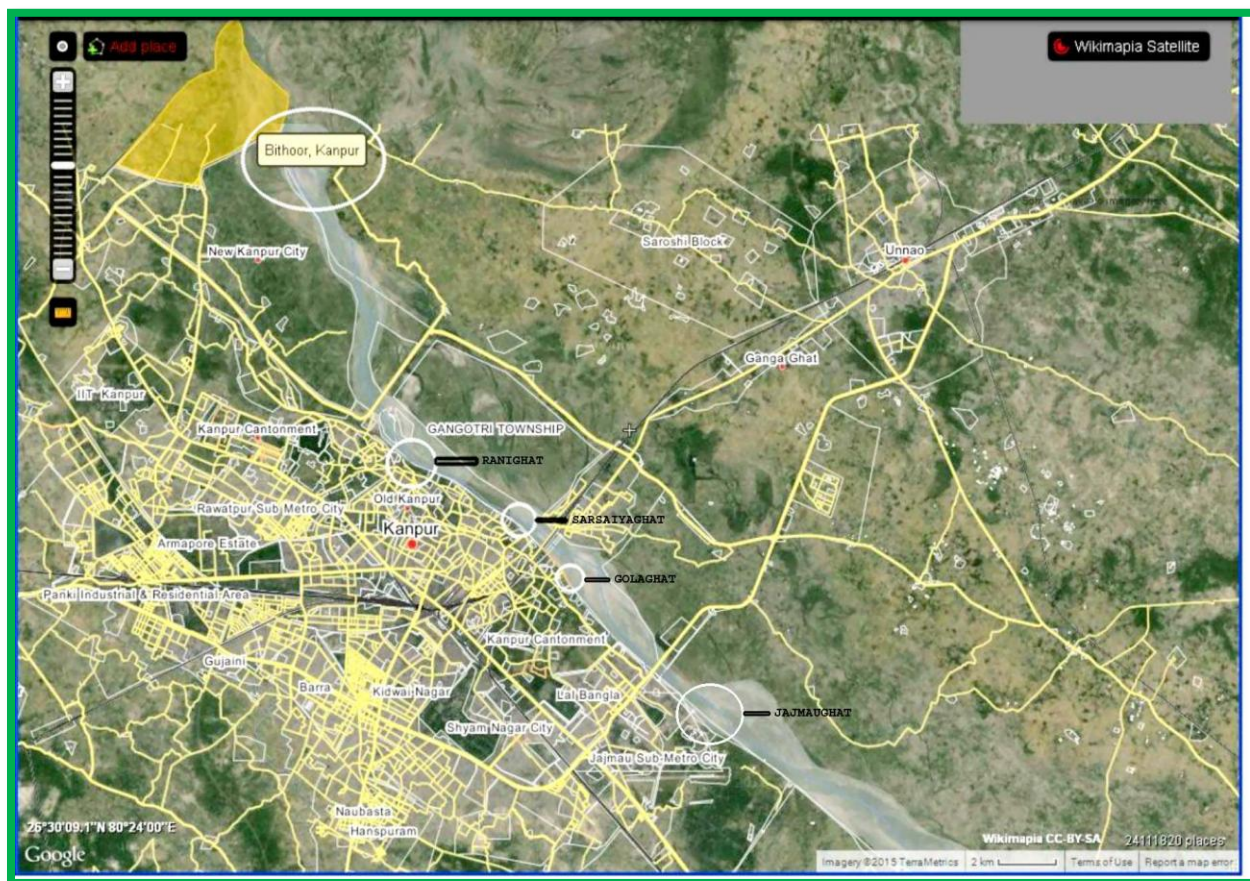
Where, A= Number of cells/units per drop

L= Volume of filtered water through plankton net (liter)

n= Volume of concentrated sample (ml.)

v= Volume of one drop (ml.)

Identification of different genera and species of cyanobacteria has been made by using standard texts and monographs *i.e.* Desikachary, 1959; Prescott 1962 etc. on the basis of their structures and measurements. Occurrence and distribution of cyanobacteria has been made for all sampling stations.



**Fig.1: Satellite map of river Ganga at Kanpur, showing different Ghats (sampling stations) in white circles (Source wikimapia).**

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the present study, the cyanobacterial community of river Ganga at Kanpur was represented by the members of four families. Total 114 species of cyanobacteria belonging to 2 orders (Chroococcales and Nostocales), 4 families (Chroococcaceae, Oscillatoriaceae, Nostocaceae and Rivulariaceae) and 23 genera have been identified from different sampling stations of river Ganga at Kanpur, between Bithoor to Jajmau during the period of February 2013 to January 2014 and their site wise occurrence has been given in Table 1. Result showed that the minimum species have been recorded at Bithoorghat (15 genera and 52 species) and maximum at Jajmaughat (21 genera and 89 species) (Table 1). The minimum density (540 units/liter) has been recorded at Bithoorghat and maximum (3680 units/liter) at Golaghat (Table 2). The observed genera such as *Aphanocapsa*, *Aphanothece*, *Chroococcus*, *Gloeocapsa*, *Gloeotheca*, *Merismopedia*, *Microcystis*, *Synechococcus* and *Syechocystis* belong to the family Chroococcaceae; *Arthrospira*, *Lyngbya*, *Oscillatoria*, *Phormidium* and *Spirulina* belong to family Oscillatoriaceae; *Aphanizomenon*, *Anabaena*, *Cylindrospermum*, *Nodularia*, *Nostoc* and *Raphidiopsis* belong to family Nostocaceae and *Calothrix*, *Gloeotrichia* and *Rivularia* belong to family Rivulariaceae. During the entire study the most dominating genera were *Anabaena*, *Aphanizomenon*, *Chroococcus*, *Cylindrospermum*, *Lyngbya*, *Microcystis*, *Nodularia*, *Nostoc*, *Oscillatoria*, *Phormidium* and *Spirulina*. Site wise detailed analysis as follows:

**Bithoorghat:** Total 52 species belonging to 15 genera have been identified. Their minimum density 540 units/litter were recorded in the month of September, 2013 and maximum 1720 units/litter in the month of June, 2013. The most significant genera of this station were *Anabaena*, *Aphanizomenon*, *Chroococcus*, *Lyngbya*, *Oscillatoria*, *Phormidium* and *Spirulina* (Table: 1& 2; Fig. 2).



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**Table 1: Occurrence of Cyanobacteria in Different Ghats of River Ganga at Kanpur**

S. No.	Species of Cyanobacteria	I	II	III	IV	V
1.	<i>Anabaena ambigua</i>	+	+	+	-	+
2.	<i>A. circinalis</i>	+	+	-	+	+
3.	<i>A. fertilissima</i>	+	-	+	-	-
4.	<i>A. flos-aquae</i>	-	-	+	+	+
5.	<i>A. iyengarii</i>	+	+	-	+	+
6.	<i>A. iyengarii</i> var. <i>tenuis</i>	+	+	+	+	+
7.	<i>A. oscillariodes</i>	-	-	+	+	+
8.	<i>A. sphaerica</i>	-	+	+	+	+
9.	<i>A. variabilis</i>	+	+	+	+	+
10.	<i>Aphanocapsa biformis</i>	-	-	-	+	-
11.	<i>A. littoralis</i>	+	-	-	+	-
12.	<i>A. montana</i>	+	-	-	+	+
13.	<i>A. muscicola</i>	+	-	-	+	+
14.	<i>A. pulchra</i>	+	-	-	-	+
15.	<i>Aphanothece castagnii</i>	-	-	+	+	-
16.	<i>A. naegeli</i>	-	+	+	-	-
17.	<i>A. pallida</i>	-	+	-	+	-
18.	<i>A. saxicola</i>	-	-	-	+	-
19.	<i>Aphanizomenon gracile</i>	+	+	+	+	+
20.	<i>A. flos-aquae</i>	+	+	+	+	+
21.	<i>Arthrospira platensis</i>	+	-	-	+	+
22.	<i>A. spirulinoides</i>	+	-	-	+	+
23.	<i>Calothrix bharadwajae</i>	-	-	-	+	-
24.	<i>C. clavata</i>	-	-	-	+	+
25.	<i>C. elenkinii</i>	-	-	-	-	+
26.	<i>C. indica</i>	-	-	-	+	+
27.	<i>C. scytonemicola</i>	-	-	-	+	+
28.	<i>Chroococcus giganteus</i>	-	+	+	+	+
29.	<i>C. minor</i>	+	+	+	-	+
30.	<i>C. turgidus</i>	+	-	+	+	-
31.	<i>C. tenax</i>	-	+	-	+	+
32.	<i>Cylindropsentrum lichenifome</i>	-	+	-	+	+
33.	<i>C. majus</i>	-	-	+	+	-
34.	<i>C. muscicola</i>	-	+	+	-	+
35.	<i>C. stagnale</i>	-	-	+	+	+
36.	<i>Gloeocapsa compacta</i>	+	+	-	-	+
37.	<i>G. kuetzingiana</i>	-	+	-	+	+
38.	<i>G. quaternata</i>	+	+	-	+	-
39.	<i>Gloeotheca distans</i>	+	-	+	-	+
40.	<i>G. rhodochlamys</i>	+	-	+	-	-
41.	<i>Gloeotrichia echinulata</i>	-	-	-	-	+
42.	<i>G. indica</i>	-	-	+	-	+
43.	<i>G. intermedia</i>	-	-	+	-	-
44.	<i>G. natans</i>	-	-	-	+	+
45.	<i>G. raciborskii</i> var. <i>conica</i>	-	-	+	+	+
46.	<i>G. raciborskii</i> var. <i>longispora</i>	-	-	+	+	+
47.	<i>Lyngbya confervoides</i>	+	-	+	+	+
48.	<i>L. contorta</i>	-	+	-	-	+

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49.	<i>L. infixa</i>	+	+	+	+	+
50.	<i>L. limnetica</i>	-	-	+	+	-
51.	<i>L. majuscula</i>	+	+	+	+	+
52.	<i>Merismopedia glauca</i>	+	+	-	+	+
53.	<i>M. punctata</i>	+	-	-	-	-
54.	<i>M. tenuissima</i>	-	+	-	+	+
55.	<i>Microcystis aeruginosa</i>	-	+	+	+	+
56.	<i>M. aeruginosa</i> var. <i>major</i>	-	+	+	+	+
57.	<i>M. flos-aquae</i>	-	-	+	+	+
58.	<i>M. marginata</i>	-	+	+	-	-
59.	<i>M. robusta</i>	-	+	-	+	-
60.	<i>M. viridis</i>	-	-	+	-	+
61.	<i>Nodularia herveyana</i>	-	-	+	-	+
62.	<i>N. spumigena</i>	-	-	+	+	+
63.	<i>N. spumigena</i> var. <i>major</i>	-	-	+	+	+
64.	<i>Nostoc commune</i>	+	+	+	+	+
65.	<i>N. ellipsosporum</i>	-	+	+	-	-
66.	<i>N. linckia</i>	+	+	-	+	+
67.	<i>N. linckia</i> var. <i>arvense</i>	+	+	-	+	+
68.	<i>N. muscorum</i>	-	+	+	+	+
69.	<i>Oscillatoria agardhii</i>	+	+	+	+	+
70.	<i>O. acuminata</i>	+	+	+	-	+
71.	<i>O. acuta</i>	+	+	+	-	-
72.	<i>O. amoena</i>	-	-	+	+	+
73.	<i>O. amphibia</i>	+	+	+	-	-
74.	<i>O. anguina</i>	-	+	+	+	+
75.	<i>O. annae</i>	+	+	+	-	+
76.	<i>O. boryana</i>	+	-	+	+	+
77.	<i>O. chalybea</i>	+	+	+	+	+
78.	<i>O. chlorina</i>	-	+	+	+	+
79.	<i>O. curviceps</i>	+	+	-	+	+
80.	<i>O. foreaui</i>	+	+	+	+	+
81.	<i>O. formosa</i>	+	+	+	+	+
82.	<i>O. hameli</i>	-	-	+	+	+
83.	<i>O. irrigua</i>	-	+	+	+	+
84.	<i>O. laete-virens</i>	+	+	-	+	+
85.	<i>O. limnetica</i>	+	-	-	+	+
86.	<i>O. limosa</i>	+	+	-	+	+
87.	<i>O. nigroviridis</i>	+	+	-	+	+
88.	<i>O. okeni</i>	-	+	+	+	+
89.	<i>O. peronata</i>	+	+	+	+	-
90.	<i>O. princeps</i>	+	+	+	+	+
91.	<i>O. pseudogeminata</i>	-	+	+	+	+
92.	<i>O. raciborskii</i>	-	+	+	+	+
93.	<i>O. rubescens</i>	+	+	+	+	+
94.	<i>O. sancta</i>	-	-	+	-	+
95.	<i>O. subbrevis</i>	-	+	+	+	+
96.	<i>O. subuliformis</i>	+	+	+	+	+
97.	<i>O. tenuis</i>	-	+	+	+	+
98.	<i>O. terebriformis</i>	+	+	+	+	-

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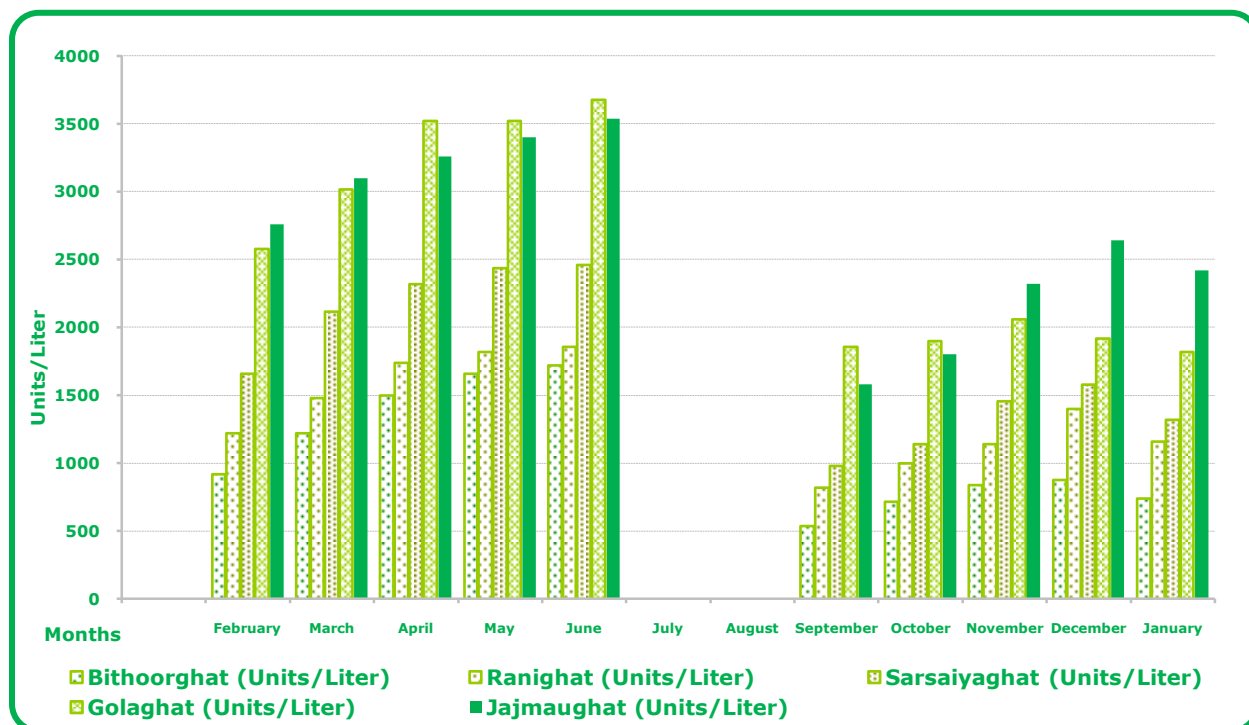
99.	<i>O. wellei</i>	-	-	+	+	+
100.	<i>Phormidium ambiguum</i>	+	+	+	+	+
101.	<i>P. fragile</i>	+	+	-	-	-
102.	<i>P. molle</i>	-	-	-	+	+
103.	<i>P. tenue</i>	-	-	+	+	+
104.	<i>Raphidiopsis curvata</i>	+	-	-	+	-
105.	<i>R. indica</i>	+	-	+	+	-
106.	<i>Rivularia aquatica</i>	-	+	+	+	+
107.	<i>R. hansgiri</i>	-	-	-	+	+
108.	<i>Spirulina gigantea</i>	+	+	+	+	+
109.	<i>S. laxissima</i>	-	-	+	-	+
110.	<i>S. major</i>	+	+	+	+	+
111.	<i>S. subsalsa</i>	-	-	-	+	+
112.	<i>S. subtilissima</i>	-	+	+	+	-
113.	<i>Synechococcus aeruginosus</i>	+	+	-	-	+
114.	<i>Synechocystis aquatilis</i>	-	-	+	+	+

(Abbreviations: + =Present; - = Absent; I=Bithoorghat; II=Ranighat; III=Sarsaiyaghat; IV=Golaghat; V=Jajmaughat)

**Table 2: Monthly Density of Cyanobacteria at different sampling stations of River Ganga at Kanpur during the period from February 2013 to January 2014**

Months	Bithoorghat (Units/Liter)	Ranighat (Units/Liter)	Sarsaiyaghat (Units/Liter)	Golaghat (Units/Liter)	Jajmaughat (Units/Liter)
February	920	1220	1660	2580	2760
March	1220	1480	2120	3020	3100
April	1500	1740	2320	3520	3260
May	1660	1820	2440	3520	3400
June	1720	1860	2460	3680	3540
July	0	0	0	0	0
August	0	0	0	0	0
September	540	820	980	1860	1580
October	720	1000	1140	1900	1800
November	840	1140	1460	2060	2320
December	880	1400	1580	1920	2640
January	740	1160	1320	1820	2420

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**Figure 2: Graphical representation of Cyanobacteria densities at different sampling stations of River Ganga at Kanpur during the period from February 2013 to January 2014**

**Ranighat:** Total 61 species belonging to 15 genera have been identified. Their minimum density 820 units/litter were recorded in the month of September, 2013 and maximum 1860 units/litter in the month of June, 2013. The most significant genera of this station were *Anabaena*, *Aphanizomenon*, *Chroococcus*, *Lyngbya*, *Merismopedia*, *Microcystis*, *Nostoc*, *Oscillatoria*, *Phormidium* and *Spirulina* (Table: 1& 2; Fig. 2).

**Sarsaiyaghat:** Total 73 species belonging to 17 genera have been identified. Their minimum density 980 units/litter were recorded in the month of September, 2013 and maximum 2460 units/litter in the month of June, 2013. The most significant genera of this station were *Anabaena*, *Aphanothece*, *Aphanizomenon*, *Chroococcus*, *Lyngbya*, *Merismopedia*, *Microcystis*, *Nodularia*, *Nostoc*, *Oscillatoria*, *Phormidium* and *Spirulina* (Table:1& 2; Fig. 2).

**Golaghat:** Total 87 species belonging to 21 genera have been identified. Their minimum density 1820 units/litter were recorded in the month of January, 2014 and maximum 3680 units/litter in the month of June, 2013. The most significant genera of this station were *Anabaena*, *Aphanocapsa*, *Aphanothece*, *Aphanizomenon*, *Chroococcus*, *Cylindrospermum*, *Lyngbya*, *Merismopedia*, *Microcystis*, *Nodularia*, *Nostoc*, *Oscillatoria*, *Phormidium* and *Spirulina* (Table:1& 2; Fig. 2).

**Jajmaughat:** Total 89 species belonging to 21 genera have been identified. Their minimum density 1580 units/litter were recorded in the month of September, 2013 and maximum 3540 units/litter in the month of June, 2013. The most common genera of this station were *Anabaena*, *Aphanocapsa*, *Aphanothece*, *Aphanizomenon*, *Chroococcus*, *Cylindrospermum*, *Lyngbya*, *Merismopedia*, *Microcystis*, *Nodularia*, *Nostoc*, *Oscillatoria*, *Phormidium* and *Spirulina* (Table:1& 2; Fig. 2).

During the present investigation several unicellular, colonial and filamentous species have been recorded both as planktonic and benthic micro flora. These genera were *Aphanocapsa*, *Aphanothece*, *Chroococcus*, *Gloeocapsa*, *Gloeothece*, *Merismopedia*, *Microcystis*, *Synechococcus*, and *Synechocystis* as unicellular and colonial types and *Anabaena*, *Aphanizomenon*, *Arthrospira*, *Calothrix*, *Cylindrospermum*, *Gloeotrichia*, *Lyngbya*, *Nodularia*, *Nostoc*, *Oscillatoria*, *Phormidium*, *Raphidiopsis*, *Rivularia* and *Spirulina* as filamentous types.

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Their environmental sensitivity, short life cycles and rapid species turnover are helpful to use them as biological indicators in environmental assessment studies. Although, cyanobacteria make positive contributions to the global biodiversity and the environment especially through the carbon and nitrogen fixation but they also cause severe problems in fresh water ecosystems and sewage treatment facilities through the production of toxic substances which are known as cyanotoxins (Carmichael, 1994). It has already been known that certain species form the water blooms in polluted waters. The most significant bloom forming genera are *Anabaena*, *Aphanizomenon*, *Chroococcus*, *Cylindrospermum*, *Microcystis*, *Nodularia*, *Oscillatoria*, *Phormidium* etc. and they have the capability to produce various kinds of cyanotoxins such as Microcystins, Anatoxins, Cylindrospermopsin and Nodularin. Sometimes these blooms could be massive.

### Conclusion

The river Ganga is the major source of water for various purposes and it is an important example of natural system. The Kanpur city is situated on the bank of this river thus, river gets high amount of domestic and industrial effluent from various channels. Due to this reason the river's environment provides the great opportunity for the growth and development of various micro-organisms including Blue-Green Algae or Cyanobacteria. The cyanobacteria have both, harmful and useful properties. So, they are important organisms for the future prospects because recent researches indicate that they have ability to produce various types of metabolites which may be useful in various diseases. The most important goal of present study to exploit the diversity of cyanobacteria in river Ganga at Kanpur, between Bithoorghat to Jajmaughat. In future these cyanobacteria can be used for various useful applications such as for the production of antimicrobial metabolites, enzymes, biodiesel and bioplastics. They can be used as bio-fertilizers to increase the production of various crops.

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