



Research Paper

# A Complex Interplay of Conflict, Contradiction and Politics: Understanding the Mahanadi River Water Dispute

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*In India, inter-state water dispute refers to disputes that arise between two or more states regarding the use, allocation and control of rivers flowing through multiple states. It is a conflict between different regions of the country, with the river system solely dependent on the lives and livelihoods of the people or other uses. When numerous states use the same river system, a series of disagreements emerge between or among them. This divergence finally leads to a contradiction between the user and users or the stakeholders who fight for their water rights. The stakeholders contradict each other regarding who has the right to access how much water when required. In addition to this, the inter-state water issue is also further complicated by the political factor, which makes the water issue more complex. In the case of the Mahanadi water dispute, the inter-state water conflict started due to the unequal distribution of water resources between the two states, Odisha & Chhattisgarh. The disagreement shows a downstream and upstream fight for the necessity of water for agriculture and industry. There is a contradiction in the Mahanadi water's fight between 'water rights' and 'rights to water'. There is an incongruity between the water economics vs. ecology in the Mahanadi water row. The Mahanadi water issue is complicated by the political factors for political competitiveness, such as disagreement between political parties of the disputant states, issues of vote bank politics and politics of assembly debates between the opposing parties and ruling administration in Odisha, which make the issue too convoluted. The current research paper tries to delineate a complex interplay of conflict, contradiction and Politics over the Mahanadi water conflict. It highlighted the challenges faced by the conflicting states and Central Government while dealing with the dispute. The paper also proposes several key recommendations for the healthy resolution of the inter-state Mahanadi water row, which would facilitate the development of comprehensive and effervescent water federalism in India.*

**[KEYWORDS:** Mahanadi River, Water Conflict, Political Competitiveness, Water Rights, Odisha and Chhattisgarh]

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Mahanadi River is one of the interstate rivers between Odisha and Chhattisgarh. The river originates nearly 6 km away from Pharsiya village in the Dhamtari district of the state of Chhattisgarh. The river runs a sum of 851 km from the starting point to the endpoint, which finally meets at the Bay of Bengal (India-WRIS, 2016). Terminologically, the term Mahanadi comprises two words: 'maha' means great, and 'nadi' means River. It means Great River. It is also generally called the lifeline of the common people of Odisha and Chhattisgarh. The river represents 4.3 % of the area in the national geography of the countries, with an extension of 141,589 km<sup>2</sup> of the river basin (India-WRIS, 2016). The important uses of the river water are for agriculture, industries, tourism, fisheries, navigation etc., on which the state's economy solely depended.

After the formation of Chhattisgarh state from Madhya Pradesh, the inter-state issue emerged between Odisha and Chhattisgarh due to the diversion of river water to the industrial sectors. Both the states have devoted themselves to mining and industrialization, which they claim is for the persistence of 'development,' and have been supporting Mahanadi as a water surplus river to bid more investment. While the conflict is centered on the reduced flow of water to the lower part of the river, both competing states of Odisha and Chhattisgarh pay no attention to the impact of coal mines, thermal power plants (TPPs), and other industries.

Ajit Panda, an environmental activist (Odisha), said that Odisha and Chhattisgarh each have contracted nearly 120 MoUs with Industrial segments that are extracting enormous amounts of water and are responsible for inter-state river water disputes between the two states (Prava, 2021).

To the farmers and industries in Odisha and Chhattisgarh, the Mahanadi River holds great importance. Inter-state Tensions between the two states arose when the state of Chhattisgarh instigated plans to construct barrages along the river. Chhattisgarh's rationale for the barrages was to preclude excess floodwater from flowing unexploited water into the sea, deprived of unsettling the natural flow of the river. However, the Odisha government strongly opposed the building of these dams and barrages, citing the welfare of farmer's communities in the state as a primary concern. While both state governments claim that their actions in the Mahanadi issue are in the interest of farmers and agriculture, in reality, industries in both states guzzle the majority of their water resources (Mohanaty and Mohanta, 2025).

## **II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:-**

- A. To know the real cause of the dispute in the context of Mahanadi River Water.
- B. To study the nature of Mahanadi Water conflict in the context of demands of water for industry & agriculture between upstream and downstream states.
- C. To study the root cause of the unequal distribution of River Water.
- D. To study the politics over river water dispute in the context of the Mahanadi Water Conflict.
- E. To trace out the role of the Federal Government & Disputant States over the Mahanadi Water Dispute.
- F. To highlight the challenges faced by the Disputant States (Odisha & Chhattisgarh) as well as Federal Government in deciding the Mahanadi Water Row.
- G. To make some essential suggestions for the proper and harmonious relations among the stakeholders.

## **III. MAHANADI RIVER AND WATER CONFLICT:-**

The Mahanadi River and its water conflict between Odisha and Chhattisgarh can be studied with the following heads.

### **3.1 Understanding the Mahanadi Water Dispute:-**

The Mahanadi Water Dispute is one of the burning and on-going water disputes on India's list of inter-state water disputes. There is a dispute in Central East Asia between the two Indian states of Odisha and Chhattisgarh. The Mahanadi water dispute started for the development of water projects in the form of dams and barrages by the upper riparian state. In the water dispute, the state of Chhattisgarh works as an upper riparian state, whereas Odisha is part of the dispute and works as a lower riparian state. The dispute started as an inter-state water dispute in three phases: The Mahanadi water conflict began in the first phase during the construction of the Hirakud dam project and after the inauguration of the dam. The Madhya Pradesh state first challenged to it because of the part of the riparian state. The Government of Madhya Pradesh complained to this development because Odisha started industries without the consent of the upstream state, i.e. Madhya Pradesh. The second phase of the water dispute began in 1983 when the implementation of a Joint Control Board between Odisha and Madhya Pradesh was discussed to resolve the water issue. The Third or current phase of the fight taking place in July 2016 caused by the composition of water projects by the upper riparian state (Chhattisgarh) in the upper part of the river, which is directly protested by the lower riparian state (Odisha) (Sahu, 2022).

### **3.2 Root Cause of Unequal Distribution:-**

In the case of Mahanadi River water, there is an unequal distribution of water resources between the competing states of Odisha and Chhattisgarh. This is because of the construction of many water projects in the upstream state of Chhattisgarh. Put differently, the dam constitution is the primary source of degradation of the water flow to the lower part of the river. The diversion of river water to high water-consuming industries or manufacturing companies is another cause of the unequal distribution of Mahanadi river water. In the Mahanadi Water Dispute, the water demand is higher for the industrial sectors than the agricultural sectors, and the river faces a water crisis during the non-monsoon period. This unequal distribution of water finally led to water conflict between the competing states of Odisha and Chhattisgarh.

### **3.3 Nature of Mahanadi Water Conflict:-**

The nature of conflict over the Mahanadi River water highlights the tensions' between Odisha and Chhattisgarh over the sharing of the Mahanadi River Water. It also explores the competing demands for water, particularly in the sectors of industry & Agriculture.

### 3.3.1 Upstream vs. Downstream:-

The Mahanadi Water Disputes are not only a conflict between two disputant states but also a battle between upstream and downstream. The state of Chhattisgarh tries to monopolise river water in upstream areas without prior communication with the lower riparian states. A crucial facet of the Mahanadi water dispute is the upstream vs. downstream dispute, which is a central argument of contention between Odisha and Chhattisgarh. The building of dams and barrages in the upstream zones is the foremost disagreement between Odisha and Chhattisgarh. In this matter, the state of Odisha argued that Chhattisgarh had built several dams and barrages in the upstream areas of the river for the industrial units, water marketing and the production of hydroelectric power for the state of Chhattisgarh. To counter Odisha's statement, Chhattisgarh said that we have constituted the dams and barrage projects not for the industry but for irrigation facilities in our state. It is meant for agricultural units. Furthermore, Chhattisgarh state argues that these projects of our state are to help to regulate the water flow and prevent floods in the downstream area particularly in the Hirakud Reservoir during the non-monsoon period.

In this matter, Odisha claims that the upstream projects of Chhattisgarh state would reduce the water flow to the Hirakud Reservoir and affect the water quality downstream. It would affect Odisha's irrigation facilities and agriculture sectors. Another argument of the state of Odisha is that Chhattisgarh's dam project may not afford satisfactory flood control procedures in which the downstream areas are always at risk.

### 3.3.2 Agriculture vs. Industry:-

Another critical feature of the Mahanadi Water Dispute is the agriculture vs. industry, which creates a contention between Odisha and Chhattisgarh. In this context, the dispute started due to the mismanagement of river water for industry and agriculture. The dispute began when the upstream state aimed to encourage industrial development, predominantly in the steel and power sectors, which necessitate significant water properties from the Mahanadi River. The state of Chhattisgarh uses the industry for its economic growth.

In this matter, Odisha state argued that privatisation of river water is the main dispute between Odisha and Chhattisgarh. Due to the development of the corporate sector, the water demand has also increased, which is creating scarcity in fulfilling the water demands of the Odia farmers & riparian communities. Whereas industry is the primary source of state economy for Chhattisgarh, agriculture is the key element for the economic development of the Odisha state. Interference of irrigation facilities through the diversion of water to industries could have influential financial implications.

## **IV. MAHANADI WATER DISPUTE AND CONTRADICTION:-**

In the Mahanadi water dispute, there is a contradiction over the water rights over the Mahanadi River. Contradictions started over the use of the Mahanadi River when the state of Chhattisgarh activated various water projects in the upper part of the river. When Odisha state challenged this development, the state water resource and industries Minister Brij Mohan Agarwal said, "As the River Mahanadi is flowing into Odisha state through the state of Chhattisgarh, So, we have the first right on the water of the Mahanadi" (Odishatv, 2016). Countering Agrwal's statement, Odisha's CM said that no single riparian state has special rights to overflowing water. It is because the river starts from a state, passes through various states, and ends with a state. When any state attempts to use it singularly, it is against the federal system of India. In the Mahanadi case, the state of Chhattisgarh did this by passing the norms and contradictions of the inter-state water-sharing principles of India (Business Standard, 2016). In the Mahanadi water issue, we can say that words of war started pertaining to the rights of Odisha and Chhattisgarh over the water of the Mahanadi River.

## **V. MAHANADI WATER DISPUTE AND POLITICAL CONFLICTS:-**

In the Mahanadi River water dispute, political conflicts emerged due to disagreements over the sharing of water resources. The Mahanadi water dispute and its political conflicts can be studied in the following two sections.

### 5.1 Politics of the Mahanadi River Water Dispute:-

In the river water disputes in India, politics is directly involved. In the Mahanadi water conflict, a political battle was started between the two Indian states of Odisha and Chhattisgarh for the first time in the Indian Parliament. Dillip Tirkey, a Parliamentarian from the BJD party of Odisha, raised a strong argument in the Rajya Sabha. His argument is surrounded by the illegality of the upper riparian state (Chhattisgarh) in making a series of water projects without any knowledge of the lower riparian state (Odisha). After that, the Mahanadi issue was transformed into a political issue between two disputant states. The conflict also involved the position of two state political parties, the BJP and the BJD. After that, a two-level battle was started from Odisha to fight for the water of the Mahanadi River. One is at the official level, and another is at the political level. To highlight the illegality of the Chhattisgarh state, the Odisha state sends many official letters to the Federal Government to instruct the riparian state of Chhattisgarh to stop the working of the dams and barrages

projects. At the same time, the Odisha state also wrote letters to the Chhattisgarh state to stop the on-going water projects (Panda, 2019).

At the same time, Odisha state also started a political march and campaign at the political level. Its primary purpose is to highlight the illicitness of the Chhattisgarh state in the development of industrial barrages in the upstream areas. In order to fight for the water rights of the people of Odisha, a civil society organisation known as Mahanadi Bachao Andolan played a crucial role. It is the first organisation who stages a silent water protest against the industrial raj of Chhattisgarh state (ibid).

After the two-level battles, Odisha state alleged that the central government, which is ruling with the BJP party, has direct favouritism in Chhattisgarh on the Mahanadi issue. The federal government is directly helping Chhattisgarh state to engage in illegitimate activities in the construction of water projects that are also run by the same party, i.e., the BJP. To resolve the water issue of Mahanadi, the then Chief Minister of Odisha, Naveen Patnaik, also wrote an official letter to the Hon'ble PM of India. In his letter, Patnaik mentioned that "as the head of the Indian Federalism, I wished for your cooperation to intervene in the river water issue of Mahanadi and request the issue an order to the Chhattisgarh state to discontinue their on-going water projects, which they are carried out in the river's upstream areas. He wrote this letter of complaint on dated 19th November 2016. In addition, Patnaik also requested to open the gates of Kalma barrage, which stores large quantities of water for the natural flow of water to the downstream state. He further stated that it is our rightful claim to get a judicious share of river water from the River Mahanadi (Odisha Diary Bureau, 2017). To act in response to the statement of Patnaik, Raman Singh, the then CM of Chhattisgarh, alleged that "the statement of CM of Odisha is shameless and not rational". Mahanadi's issue is not an issue for Odisha, but the Patnaik Government is trying to make it an issue for the benefit of his party. He is trying to make the Mahanadi issue an issue for state politics (ibid).

In this context, former BJD MP from Odisha Rabindra Jena said that "there is a close nexus between the Central Government and the Chhattisgarh Government over the issue of Mahanadi because the BJP party runs both Governments. In contrast, my state, Odisha, is run by a regional party, BJD". Indeed, we can say that there is clear-cut party preferential treatment over the Mahanadi issue. Due to this treatment of the federal government, Mahanadi is now a controversial federal issue in India. He further argued that the Federal Government is not serious about the rightful demands of Odisha in the Mahanadi issue and very serious about supporting the party-run state of Chhattisgarh in the construction of the industrial barrages upstream of the Mahanadi River. Due to this unsupportive nature of the Central Government, Odisha state is losing its legitimate share of river water. It is facing a water crisis in agriculture, ecology, and livelihoods of the riparian communities (Singh, 2018).

By looking at the unsupportive nature of the Centre, the state of Odisha alleged that the BJP-led central Government is purely anti-Odisha and pro-Chhattisgarh. Due to the anti-Odisha nature of the Centre, Odisha state is not getting judicious water shares from the Mahanadi River. In contrast, due to the pro-Chhattisgarh nature of the Centre, the Chhattisgarh state is going to complete its water projects to develop its industries. This attitude of the Federal Government is against the true principle of the Federalism, and the Federal Government itself violates this (Prava, 2021). Civil society organizations and environmentalists also criticize this partial attitude of the Federal Government. They argued that the federal government is unable to resolve the issue between Odisha and Chhattisgarh. Both state Governments are fighting with each other for the vote bank politics. They are using political techniques to harvest more politics from the Mahanadi issue. They are not serious about the ecology of the river, which is in a degrading situation (ibid). They further said that both competing states are not doing justice to the riparian communities of their concerned states nor to the river or its environmental restorations (Sahu, 2022).

The primary demand of the Odisha state is the permanent solution of the dispute through the formation of a water tribunal. But when the Federal Government tried to form a negotiation committee, Odisha state objected to this and demanded a tribunal. After that, a blame game was started over the Centre's negative reply to form a tribunal. In this matter, the then Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Shri Dharmendra Pradhan said, "Odisha state is not interested in getting involved with the process of dialogue with the Chhattisgarh state. First, Odisha state should be ready for this". Further, Pradhan said that Patnaik Government is not serious for the Mahanadi issue. He is trying to politicise the issue for the party benefits. He is not serious to find out a better solution for the Mahanadi issue(The Indian Express, 2017).

After the statement of the Pradhan, Industries Minister of Chhattisgarh Amar Agrawal said that the Mahanadi River issue is not new. Still, now the Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik & his party leaders were politicizing the Mahanadi issue to give the wrong impression to the people of Odisha. The Chhattisgarh state directly blames him for creating conflict with the Chhattisgarh state without any cause. He argued that the dam projects were taken up in the upstream areas many years ago in Chhattisgarh, but why is the BJD Government in Odisha raising the issue now? They intend to politicize the water issue. They are going to lose state popularity in Odisha due to the upcoming by-election in Bijepur. To reply to the statement of Agrawal, Prasanna Acharya, BJD Vice-President, purported that “the Chhattisgarh’s water projects over the Mahanadi River were “uninformed and illegitimate”. The Government of Chhattisgarh always uses the dual standard faces & makes the contradictory statements on the Mahanadi water issue” (Financial Express, 2017).

According to Ratha (2019), the BJP leaders in Chhattisgarh alleged that the Odisha-led BJD Government has taken up the Mahanadi River water issue as a major plank. In this matter, BJD has raised two issues: (1) Regionalism and Parry favouritism, and (2) the Centre’s disregard to resolve the issue. Firstly, to full fill the regional feeling and sentiments of the local people, the Chhattisgarh Government used the Mahanadi River issue as a political agenda and blamed the Odisha and created the regional feeling. The same BJP party in the Centre & Chhattisgarh engaged themselves in the Mahanadi issue and allows the Chhattisgarh Government to continue the dam projects. Secondly, the BJP-led Government of India is not serious about the Mahanadi River settling dispute being the leader of the federal system of India. To counter the report of the BJD regional outfit in Odisha, Chhattisgarh Government alleged that BJD Government in Odisha already turned the Mahanadi issue into a poll issue through the rallies, Jal Satyagraha, and padayatras in Cuttack and Sambalpur. Furthermore, Ratha proclaimed that both Odisha and Chhattisgarh used the Mahanadi issue as their election strategy in the field of electoral politics. Achieve Electoral advantages is the main objective of both states without treating the Mahanadi river issue as an ecological entity. The BJP and BJD in Chhattisgarh and Odisha respectively are too busy in identifying blunders with each other just for secure political returns. The Mahanadi River water issue provides an opportunity to the political parties in Odisha and Chhattisgarh for electoral advantages. Inter-state water politics is clearly perceptible in Mahanadi River water disputes due to the ‘less water, more conflicts’ (Ratha, 2019:108).

## 5.2 Politics of Assembly Debates over Mahanadi Water Dispute in Odisha Legislative Assembly:

In the Mahanadi Water issue, politics also exists over the assembly debates among the BJP, BJD, and Congress parties. After the issue was raised in the Indian parliament over the Mahanadi issue, the opposition parties of Odisha also raised their voice in the Odisha Legislative Assembly. The opposition Congress and BJP criticized the ruling BJD Government for the non-seriousness of the Mahanadi River water dispute. Pointing to the problem, the Leader of the Opposition, Narasingha Mishra, purported that the state Government was aware of the construction of water project activities taken by the Chhattisgarh Government since 2001. The Hon’ble CM of Odisha had assured this August that the upper riparian state would not be permitted to continue with any more projects without the prior consent of the downstream state. He said that the congress party from Odisha would cooperate on the Mahanadi issue if the CM of Odisha would like to request it. He also criticized the CM of Odisha for his regular absence from the house while a discussion on the Mahanadi issue took place in the house (Business Standard, 2016).

The state opposition party of Congress said that the state government is totally responsible for the Mahanadi issue. The ruling Government is not serious about resolving the water issue & trying to make politics over the river water. The Odisha assembly also witnessed pandemonium, where the ruling government and the opposition members antagonized each other on the Mahanadi water issue. The state BJP alleged that the state BJD is doing nothing for the Mahanadi issue and is only busy politicizing the issue. Shri Naveen Patnaik is doing for the state politics or party benefits by using the Mahanadi issue in their election agenda. The state BJP further alleged the unsympathetic attitude of the state Government and its failure to resolve the Mahanadi water issue, whereas the Congress targeted both competing states and the Union Government while the ruling BJD administration chose to shift the ball in the courts of the Union Government (The Pioneer, 2023).

The Odisha Assembly also viewed repeated adjournments as the members of the three political parties (BJD, Congress & BJP) engaged in the way of words over the Mahanadi water dispute with Chhattisgarh. In the Assembly Debates, the opposition Congress Legislators sougled slogans against the Union Government & state Governments of Odisha and Chhattisgarh for not constituting a water tribunal to solve the Mahanadi water war. On the contrary, the BJP MLAs also accused the ruling BJD Government of a stalemate over the water issue. The BJD Government also raised its voice against the non-seriousness of the BJP-led Central Government in resolving the Mahanadi issue through the tribunal (Business Standard, 2017).

Further, the Odisha Assembly also saw pandemonium from the opposition Congress and BJP MLAs, who have demanded clarification of the Mahanadi water war from the Hon'ble CM of Odisha. They asked what Odisha's stand is over the Mahanadi water issue, which is waiting for the people of Odisha for information. As the Congress MLA Taraprasad Bahainipati said, what action has been taken by the Patnaik Government to stop the on-going water projects of the Singh Government in Chhattisgarh? To reply, Naveen Patnaik said that we have already fought for the Mahanadi issue at both the administrative and legal levels. To answer the statement of Patnaik, Bahinipati said that the Patnaik Government is doing nothing for the Mahanadi issue. Now, they are in a sleeping mood because they do not think of the Mahanadi issue as an issue for the state of Odisha. The ruling BJD criticized the BJP & Congress for apparently taking a step in motherly assertiveness towards Odisha in the context of the Mahanadi water battle (The Times of India, 2016).

In the assembly debates, Criticizing CM Naveen Patnaik for trying to politicize the Mahanadi issues, Shri Narasingha Mishra, Leader of Opposition, said that "there is a need for unanimity among the political parties for an integrated fight, but the Hon'ble CM rejected the suggestions to stand for Mahanadi river water issue. He also criticised the CM of Odisha not for spelling out his action plan on the Mahanadi issue and raised the voice concerning the concealed agenda of Odisha with Chhattisgarh. They have a secret understating with the Raman Singh Government to advantages of the renowned industrialists for whom dams and barrages have been constructed". Furthermore, Pradip Purohit, BJP MLA, said that it is ill-fated that the Patnaik Government wanted to politicise the water issue of the Mahanadi Panchayat election (The New Indian Express, 2016).

Recently, there were also words of war over the Mahanadi issue in the Odisha Legislative Assembly. Health Minister of Odisha, DR. Mukesh Mahaling, disparaged the previous BJD-led Government in the Assembly for mismanagement of the Mahanadi River dispute when they raised the topic of the current water management plans of the BJP-led Odisha Government. He said that the Water Resources Department is formulating a comprehensive roadmap to resolve the water issue through the formation of an inter-ministerial committee (Mishra, 2025).

## **VI. CHALLENGES, SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:-**

The following are the challenges Odisha & Chhattisgarh face in the Mahanadi Water Disputes and the Federal Government in handling the Mahanadi water dispute.

### **6.1. Challenges:-**

- 1) There is lack of data sharing and accurateness between Odisha and Chhattisgarh.
- 2) There are no hydrological studies on the Mahanadi River Water for its water conditions, geography of the river basin, development of a model for future water availability & its impact on human activities.
- 3) There is no platform for the proper coordination and cooperation between Odisha and Chhattisgarh for dialogue and conversation.
- 4) There is no speedy dispute resolution mechanism in the Mahanadi Water Dispute to resolve the water dispute in time.
- 5) There are no official joint endeavours between two conflicting states (Odisha & Chhattisgarh) to manage the river water system properly.
- 6) Ignoring pertaining to Climate Change is the main challenge in the Mahanadi River Water dispute.
- 7) The contending states are too busy to sell water to the industrial hub instead of the Agricultural zone.
- 8) In the Mahanadi Water issue, there is no specific River Water policy for the proper implementation of the river water resources and its river basin.
- 9) There is no proper enforcement of ISRWDA-1956 in the case of Mahanadi Water conflict.
- 10) The Federal Government failed to form the tribunal on the issue of Mahanadi in due time and violated the constitutional doctrines.
- 11) The involvement of direct politics is the main challenge to the Mahanadi water issue.
- 12) The demand for river water is unequal in the Mahanadi due to the development of the industrial barrages.
- 13) The role of the Central Government faced challenges for unbalancing the water demands of the competing states.
- 14) There is no non-state actor engagement in the decision-making process for the resolution of the MWD.
- 15) There is too much dirty politics or Game of Politics over the water issue of Mahanadi River.

### **6.2 Suggestions and Recommendations:**

The following are some points of suggestions and recommendations for the resolution of the river water disputes over the Mahanadi River.

- 1) There is a need to share factual data between Odisha and Chhattisgarh on the usage of river water, availability of the river water and flow of river water to resolve the water issue.



- 2) There is a need for a joint analysis of the agreements or disagreements over the water issue.
- 3) There is a need for a Joint Committee from the representatives of Centre, Odisha & Chhattisgarh to provide dialogue and negotiations.
- 4) To resolve the water dispute, there is also a need for an interim water-sharing agreement to ensure a minimum flow of river water to the lower part of the river until a long-term solution to the dispute.
- 5) For the long-term solution of the Mahanadi Water Dispute, there is also need of comprehensive water sharing treaty between Odisha and Chhattisgarh as per the needs of the states.
- 6) In order to ensure a sustainable and equitable share of river water, the constitution and smooth functioning of the Mahanadi River Basin Authority is the need of the hour.
- 7) There is a need for a water management framework in the context of protecting the river ecology, ensuring minimum flow of river water for lower riparian communities, and addressing water pollution caused by the water-guzzling industries.
- 8) For sustainable river water management, there is a need for civil society engagement, which will expose the public opinion regarding the importance of river water and their water rights.
- 9) The engagement of civil society is a prerequisite in the decision-making procedure to solve the water issue equitably.
- 10) There is a need for capacity building at the level of institutions and stakeholders for effective and sustainable water resource management.
- 11) There is urge to amend the ISRWDA-1956, for the speedy resolution of the river water dispute
- 12) Effective water laws and regulations are highly required to check illegal water use by the stakeholders & safeguard the water rights of the riparian communities.
- 13) There is a need for positive politics instead of negative politics among the stakeholders to resolve the water dispute harmoniously.
- 14) For fair transparency and effective resolution of water disputes between Odisha and Chhattisgarh over the Mahanadi River, the establishment of a Dispute Resolution Mechanism is needed of the hour.
- 15) There is a need for proper implementation of the National Water Policy to distribute Mahanadi River Water equitably.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

By instigating the above suggestions and recommendations, the Mahanadi Water Conflict can be resolved in a rational, maintainable, and rightful manner for the equitable share of river water to stakeholders. Without any party politics, there is urgency for political dialogue, discussions, and conversation among the political leaders of the competing states & also at the level of the political executive. The ordinary people of both competing states should come to the front and highlight the real issues of the Mahanadi water distribution, which will help both the state governments (Odisha and Chhattisgarh) in solving the issue harmoniously. There is a need for the absence of political snooping to maintain the ecological health of the Mahanadi River. Mahanadi Water issue should not be the agenda of politics in the political constituencies of Odisha and Chhattisgarh. A healthy atmosphere for the Mahanadi River is essential, and both conflicting states should take a proactive approach to it. Despite the water tussled, conflicting states should be the leading actors for the availability of river water to the needs of the riparian communities, which they are waiting for last decades.

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