

The Times of India**Title : Over 500 tonnes of nirmalya collected in 10-day festival****Author :****Location :****Pune:****Article Date : 09/29/2015**

The Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) and wastepickers working with the Solid Waste Collection and Handling (SWaCH) cooperative were able to divert over 500 metric tonne 'nirmalya' (floral offerings) from entering the river during Ganeshotsav this year.

“Over the course of the ten days, we managed to collect over 398 tonnes of nirmalya at the ghats. About 213 tonne of this was collected on the last day of the festival,” a PMC official said. The nirmalya collection has increased by nearly 100 tonne this year. In the same period last year, the civic body had collected about 303 tonne, he added.

“We have received a very good response from the public this year. Over the years, awareness about potential river pollution has increased by leaps and bounds and people are increasingly choosing to immerse Ganapati idols in tanks and hand over the nirmalya to us,” said Suresh Jagtap, head of the PMC's solid waste management department.

He added that the material that can be recycled will be sent for recycling and the flowers and other offerings will be composted.

Meanwhile, SWaCH collected an additional 125 tonne nirmalya during the festival. SWaCH staff and wastepicker members, along with 250 volunteers, worked across 21 ghats in Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad, a statement issued by the organisation said.

“We were at the ghats on the seventh day and on the final day of the festival,” said Aparna Susarla of SWaCH.

The volunteers noted the change in the mindset of people coming for immersion. “People at Mahadev Ghat in Bopodi were asking where the immersion tank was. Since there was no tank, people were disappointed. Some even went to Aundh Gaon ghat so that they could immerse the idols in a tank instead of the river,” said Sangeeta John, a coordinator at the ghat.

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Suresh Jagtap | HEAD, SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT