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## Detoxing Delhi

**RAVI AGARWAL** [Toxics Link](#)



EVERYONE acknowledges that the Yamuna — at least for Delhi — seems little better than a sewage drain, despite the crores the government has pumped in to save the water body that flows right through the Capital.

And yet, no one knew what impact the hazardous river was having on us.

That is, until environmental NGO Toxics Link decided to carry out a Yamuna Mapping project, revealing the huge quantity of heavy metals and chemicals that pollute not just the water, but also the vegetables Delhiites eat.

[Enlarge Image](#)

Toxics Link is the brainchild of Ravi Agarwal, who has spent the last 17 years working on chemical safety, toxics and waste. With a team of 25 people, Agarwal has played a key role as part of a civil society advocacy group that helps shape policies and regulations relating to bio- medical, municipal solid and hazardous waste.

“ We need to be optimistic about the future and understand that our work is a longterm investment rather than a quick-fix solution to any environmental problem,” says Agarwal, who is also an accomplished photo artist and has published two books of pictures taken by him.

Agarwal is part of several standards and regulatory committees of the government, participates in UNEP, Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety ( IFCS) and WHO deliberations, and is a regular invitee to international conventions, and to various committees. He has been awarded the IFCS Special Recognition Award ( 2008) and the prestigious Ashoka fellowship, and he writes regularly on environmental issues in the mainstream media and academic journals.

Agarwal's work with Toxics Link, along with many other like- minded organisations, resulted most recently in the passage of legislation such as the e- waste and plastic waste laws in 2011. “ I believe we can define what our politics should be,” says Agarwal, who was part of the team that managed to save 8,000 hectares of forest on both sides of the arterial Ridge Road in the Capital.

“ We make sure that during every Parliament session at least three questions are tabled on issues we raise.” Our parliamentarians cant afford to ignore a defender of the environment as dedicated as Agarwal.

### Next big thing

TOXICS LINK is now working to make the Capital and the entire country mercuryfree, having already managed to launch a pilot project in Delhi hospitals. India signed the International Mercury Legislation last month, giving Agarwal's organisation a larger platform from which to advocate the cause.

