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Pathways of heavy metals contamination and associated human health risk in Ajay River Basin, India

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1 **Research Paper**

2 **Title: Pathways of heavy metals contamination and associated human health risk in**
3 **Ajay River Basin, India**

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10 **Abstract**

11 The sources of heavy metals and their loads in the Ajay River were investigated based on the
12 seasonal and spatial variations. To identify variation and pathways of heavy metals, seventy-
13 six water samples were estimated for two years at nineteen sampling sites. The multifaceted
14 data were applied to evaluate statistical relation between variables and arithmetic calculation
15 of the indices. Fickling plot suggested that the acidic pollutants do not affect the water quality
16 because all samples lie within the neutral pH range. Further, OC showed significant relation
17 with Fe, Mn, Ni and Co. Compositional analysis identified weathering of rocks, mobility of
18 soil and sediment, atmospheric deposition and numerous anthropogenic inputs as major
19 sources of heavy metals. The mean values of heavy metal pollution index (HPI) and pollution
20 index (PI) were found above the critical index and strong loadings respectively due to higher
21 values of Cd, Pb and Fe. Similarly, assessment of human risk revealed that the high load of
22 Cd, Pb and Fe in water body could harm the population. Majority of the samples showed high
23 concentration of heavy metals as compared to regulatory standard and background values,
24 which suggests that the water is highly contaminated through numerous geogenic and
25 anthropogenic sources.

26
27 **Keywords:** Heavy metals, Environmetric techniques, Exposure, Ajay River

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