Exploration of Algae from Wastewater Bodies of Pilkhuwa

Vinita Dheeran[1], Astha Sharma[2], Anshika Kumari[3]

[1]Associate Professor, Department of Botany, M.M.H. College, Ghaziabad
[2,3]Department of Botany, M.M.H. College, Ghaziabad

ABSTRACT
The study titled "Exploration of Algae from Wastewater Bodies of Pilkhuwa" seeks to examine the diversity and traits of algae found in contaminated water sources. Algae serve as natural indicators of pollution, offering crucial insights into the ecological condition of aquatic systems. This research targets wastewater areas where algal blooms are prone to develop due to the elevated nutrient levels in the water. Samples were gathered from stagnant and marshy areas in Pilkhuwa and then subjected to microscopic analysis to identify different algal species. The study not only underscores the adaptability of algae in polluted settings but also investigates their potential use in environmental management and wastewater treatment.

Keywords: Pilkhuwa, Algae, wastewater,

INTRODUCTION
Water pollution is a growing environmental concern globally, particularly in developing countries like India, where rapid industrialization, urbanization, and population growth have led to the contamination of natural water bodies. Wastewater, which is water that has been adversely affected in quality by anthropogenic influence, often ends up in lakes, ponds, rivers, and open drains. These wastewater bodies not only pose threats to human and animal health but also create an ecological niche for various microorganisms, including algae. Algae are simple, autotrophic organisms that play a significant role in aquatic ecosystems. They are known for their ability to survive in a wide range of environmental conditions, including polluted water. The presence of algae in wastewater bodies is not just an indicator of pollution but also a potential resource for environmental restoration, biomass production, and biotechnology. With growing interest in sustainable solutions for wastewater treatment and bioenergy, algae have emerged as a key biological agent worth exploring. Wastewater ecosystems are complex, dynamic environments where a variety of chemical, physical, and biological processes occur. These bodies often contain high concentrations of nutrients such as nitrates and phosphates, which promote the growth of algae, particularly microalgae. Unlike clean freshwater systems, wastewater bodies often exhibit extreme conditions, such as low dissolved oxygen, high turbidity, and the presence of heavy metals or toxic compounds. Despite these conditions, many algal species not only survive but thrive, adapting through physiological and genetic mechanisms. The algae found in such environments serve as primary producers and support microbial food webs by producing oxygen through photosynthesis. Their ability to grow rapidly in nutrient-rich environments makes them excellent candidates for wastewater treatment. In fact, many wastewater treatment plants around the world have begun integrating algal ponds or

photobioreactors into their systems to improve efficiency and reduce costs. Algae play a significant role in the natural purification of wastewater. Through their photosynthetic activity, algae generate oxygen, which supports aerobic bacteria in breaking down organic matter. This synergistic relationship between algae and bacteria enhances the overall efficiency of biological treatment systems. Moreover, algae absorb nutrients such as ammonia, nitrate, and phosphate—major contributors to eutrophication. They can also immobilize or bioaccumulate heavy metals like cadmium, lead, and mercury, thus detoxifying the water. In engineered systems like algal ponds and high-rate algal raceways, these organisms are used to reduce the pollutant load in municipal and industrial wastewater, offering a cost-effective, eco-friendly alternative to conventional treatment methods. Recent innovations have also focused on integrating algae with constructed wetlands or coupling algal systems with wastewater-fed aquaculture, maximizing both environmental and economic benefits.

Challenges in Algal Exploration and Identification:

Despite their potential, studying algae in polluted environments comes with several challenges:

Microscopic Size and Morphological Plasticity: Many algae are microscopic and can change their appearance under environmental stress, complicating identification.

Taxonomic Complexity: The taxonomy of algae is still evolving, and many species are yet to be formally described, especially in polluted or less-studied habitats.

Sampling and Culturing: Collecting viable samples from wastewater requires careful planning, as contamination and variability in water conditions may affect algal viability.

Environmental Variability: Seasonal and temporal changes in temperature, pH, and pollutant load influence algal distribution and abundance, necessitating repeated sampling.

Lack of Regional Databases: There is limited baseline data on algal diversity in specific regions like Pilkhuwa, which hinders comparison and reference. These hurdles underline the importance of localized, detailed studies such as the present one, which can add to scientific databases and inform environmental management practices.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

STUDY AREA

Geographic and Environmental Context of Pilkhuwa

Pilkhuwa is a semi-urban town located in the Hapur district of Uttar Pradesh, India. Known for its textile industry and rapidly growing population, Pilkhuwa has experienced significant environmental pressures, particularly related to water pollution. Numerous small-scale industries, domestic settlements, and agricultural fields contribute to the release of untreated or partially treated wastewater into nearby drains, canals, and ponds. The region's climate, characterized by hot summers, monsoon season, and mild winters, creates favorable conditions for algal growth throughout the year. Additionally, the presence of stagnant and slow-moving water bodies in the area provides ideal habitats for the colonization and proliferation of various algal forms. Exploring these ecosystems offers a unique opportunity to document native and pollution-tolerant algal species that could serve both ecological and industrial purposes.

For this study, water samples were collected from two main locations:

1. Daldal (Marshy Area)

Daldal is a stagnant, marsh-like area in Pilkhuwa that continuously receives wastewater from nearby residential colonies and drains. The water body is shallow and remains waterlogged for most of the year, especially during monsoon.

2. Jod (Water Collection from a Small Reservoir/Pond)

The second site, Jod, is a man-made water accumulation point or a small pond that also receives runoff from surrounding areas. It is semi-stagnant with slightly clearer water than Daldal.

Water samples were collected using sterilized glass bottles during early morning hours to avoid disturbances. Samples were taken from the surface and sub-surface using standard plankton nets and directly collected in sterilized bottles and preserved in formalin.

Basic requirements for study:

Gloves, GPS tracker, Camera, Microscope, Slides, Slides cover, Forceps, Sample Collection tubes, Stains.

Microscopic Observation:

After collecting, the water samples were transported to the laboratory in sterilized containers and were examined under a compound microscope by temporary slide preparation by using differential stains such as safranine, aniline blue and hematoxylin which targets specific cellular structure. The microscopic analysis involved the observation of morphological features such as cell shape, color, arrangement, and motility. Algae were identified based on standard taxonomic keys, with focus on major groups such as Chlorophyceae (green algae), Cyanophyceae (blue-green algae), and Bacillariophyceae (diatoms). The diversity and density of algae were recorded, and photomicrographs were taken for further documentation from both the collection sites. This microscopic study provided detailed insight into the types of algae capable of surviving in highly polluted environments. (Fig. 1)

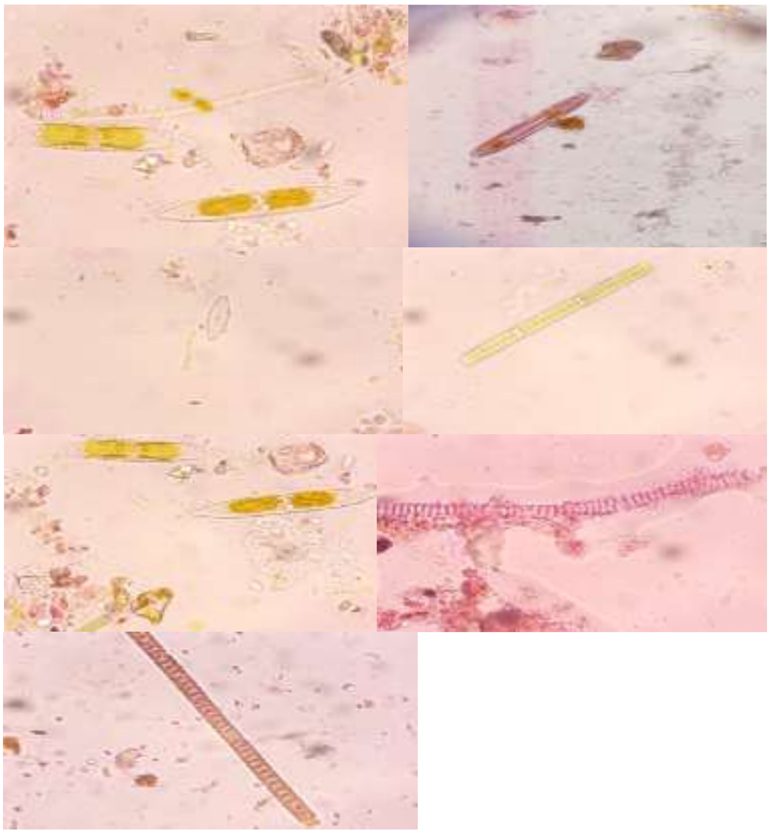

Fig. 1. Members of Bacillariophyceae and Cyanophyceae

RESULT

The study revealed a high diversity of algal species in the polluted water bodies of Pilkhuwa.
Predominant groups included:
Site 1. Due to its high organic load and minimal water flow, this site was observed to have dense growth of blue-green algae (Cyanobacteria) such as *Oscillatoria* and *Microcystis*. These algae thrive in nutrient-enriched, low-oxygen conditions and are common indicators of eutrophication and pollution.
Site 2. Diatoms (Bacillariophyceae) such as *Navicula* and *Nitzschia* were observed in significant numbers here. These algae prefer slightly better oxygenated water and are good indicators of moderate pollution levels. Some green algae were also present on both sites, indicating a mixed algal community. Both study sites provide distinct microhabitats for the development of different algal groups, depending on factors like water flow, nutrient availability, and sunlight exposure. (Fig.1)

DISCUSSION

While various studies have examined algal diversity in major river systems and urban wetlands, small towns like Pilkhuwa have received relatively little attention. Most existing studies focus on large-scale wastewater treatment plants or natural lakes, often overlooking smaller, informal, and often more polluted water bodies. This has created a knowledge gap regarding algal diversity in semi-urban wastewater ecosystems. The ecological role of algae in small-scale, unmanaged wastewater bodies. The potential of local algal species for industrial or environmental applications. This study aims to address these gaps by conducting an in-depth exploration of algae from wastewater bodies in Pilkhuwa, contributing valuable data to regional biodiversity records and sustainable resource use. Algae found in wastewater environments are incredibly diverse, encompassing a wide range of taxa such as Chlorophyceae (green algae), Cyanophyceae (blue-green algae or cyanobacteria), Bacillariophyceae (diatoms), and Euglenophyceae (euglenoids). These groups differ in morphology, pigmentation, cellular organization, and ecological function. In polluted environments, certain species exhibit a high degree of tolerance to toxic substances and fluctuating environmental parameters. Cyanobacteria, for instance, are often dominant in nutrient-rich waters due to their ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen and withstand extreme conditions. Diatoms, on the other hand, are known for their silica cell walls and serve as reliable bioindicators of water quality. The presence, abundance, and composition of algal communities in wastewater bodies can provide critical insights into the level of pollution and the ecological health of a water body. Understanding this diversity is essential not only for ecological monitoring but also for selecting strains with desirable traits such as, high biomass yield or pollutant removal efficiency for applications in bioremediation and bioresource development.
The present study focused on the exploration of algal diversity in wastewater bodies of Pilkhuwa, with special attention to sites such as local ponds (daldal) and water accumulation areas (jod). The collected samples showed the presence of various algal groups, especially blue-green algae (Cyanobacteria) and diatoms (Bacillariophyceae), both known for their roles in nutrient cycling and water quality indication. Wastewater ecosystems serve as nutrient-rich environments where algae thrive due to high concentrations of nitrogen, phosphorus, and organic matter. The dominance of cyanobacteria in these environments is often linked to eutrophication, which is a major concern for ecological balance and water usability. Cyanobacteria like *Oscillatoria*, *Microcystis*, and *Anabaena* were frequently observed during microscopic analysis, indicating a high level of nutrient enrichment and possible organic pollution.

Similarly, diatoms such as *Navicula*, *Nitzschia*, and *Pinnularia* were also recorded. Diatoms are excellent indicators of water quality and are often used in environmental monitoring. Their silica-based cell walls (frustules) and species-specific habitat preferences make them reliable tools in water pollution assessment. The references reviewed in this study support the understanding that algae not only serve as primary producers in aquatic ecosystems but also act as bioindicators of pollution and agents of phytoremediation. Research by several workers supports the notion that microalgae are effective in removing heavy metals and excess nutrients from wastewater. Additionally, work by other workers explores the potential of algae in biomass production and biofuel applications, adding value to wastewater-grown algal biomass. Studies by researchers emphasize the dual role of algae, as indicators of pollution and as potential environmental saviors depending on how they are managed. The uncontrolled growth of algae due to pollution can lead to harmful algal blooms (HABs), while controlled growth in engineered systems can assist in wastewater treatment and resource recovery. In the context of Pilkhuwa, the results indicate a potential for using naturally occurring algae for bioremediation and environmental assessment. The diversity observed suggests a complex ecosystem under stress but also shows signs of resilience and potential for restoration.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that wastewater bodies of Pilkhuwa support a rich diversity of algae, many of which have adapted to survive and even thrive in polluted environments. The presence of Bio-indicator species also helps in assessing the level of water pollution. These algae have potential applications in wastewater treatment, environmental monitoring, and even as biomass sources for various industries. The findings encourage further research and the possibility of using native algae for eco-friendly wastewater management solutions in Pilkhuwa and similar regions.

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