A tributary of the much larger Banas, the Nagdi River, flows through a portion of Rajasthan's Bhilwara District including the old market town of Jahazpur. Unlike India's major sacred waterways such as the Ganga and the Yamuna which have the status of goddesses, the Nagdi was never deified. However, within living memories the Nagdi displayed miraculous properties, and it figures in Jahazpur's origin legend, reaching back to the epic Mahabharata. At present, due to a complex convergence of conditions unique to this place but strongly resonant with ecological tragedies the world over, the Nagdi's flow has dwindled and its waters are badly polluted. Many in Jahazpur mourned the end of their river. Once proud of the Nagdi's miraculous properties, Jahazpur residents were aware of having lost an important part of their environmental and cultural heritage. Several activists have initiated or participated in movements to save the Nagdi, but most of these defenders have given up hope. This presentation explores the complex causalities of the Nagdi's deterioration and emergent possibilities for restoration.

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