

Janani

Water – the Sustainer of Life

Swami Prembhava Saraswati

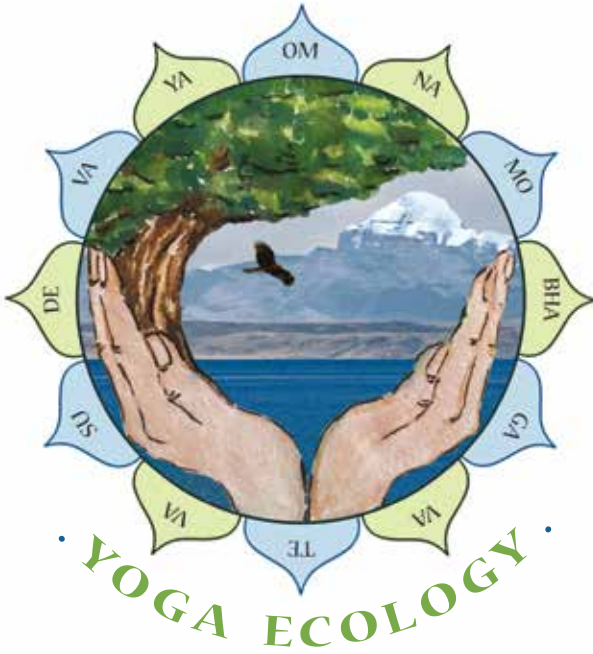


Janani

Water – Sustainer of Life

With kind regards, ॐ and prem

Sriani Nivaran



• Promoted by Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth •



Yoga Ecology is the yogic science of ecological living and is part of the 2nd Chapter initiative by the Bihar School of Yoga.

In our Yoga Ecology image, Mount Kailash represents the manifest form of the supreme tattwa of creation, the state of 'I am'. Lake Mansarovar symbolizes inner purity without which spiritual awareness is not possible. The tree epitomizes selfless giving and living according to the laws of nature.

All these aspects of Prakriti are seen nestled in the hands of Lord Narayana, the nurturer and sustainer of creation. The sixteen petals of anahata chakra surround them with the qualities of loving, giving, sharing and connecting. The mantra of Narayana rests on these petals:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ।

Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya.

Janani

Water – Sustainer of Life

Swami Prembhava Saraswati

Under the Guidance of
Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



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The purpose of this book is to provide relevant information regarding yoga practice; it is not a practice book and it is not to be used for teaching oneself or others. All yoga training is to be learned and practised under the competent guidance of a person well versed in the practice. It is the responsibility of the practitioner to choose the teacher and the manner in which the classes are being conducted. Bihar School of Yoga is not responsible in any way for the individual's choice.

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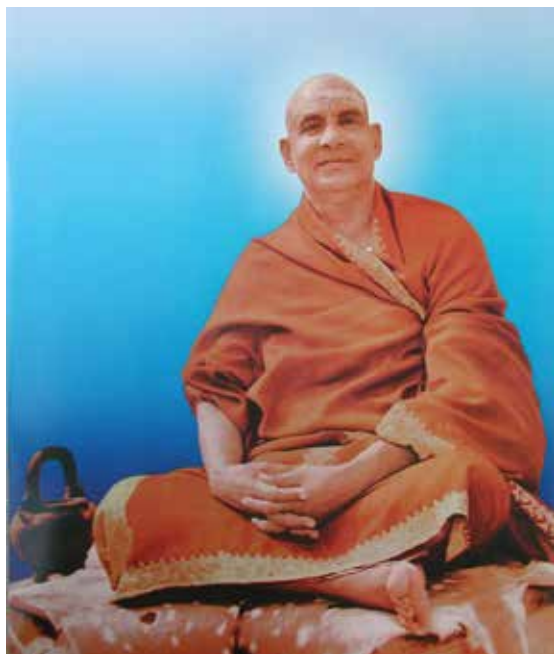
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Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati,
who recognized the unity of all life as the divinity of Nature.*



Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Satyananda Saraswati, who inspired
aspirants to honour Nature with respect and care,
living life in the spirit of yoga ecology.*

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Janani

The cosmic universal energy, power or *shakti* is known as *Janani*, the Mother. Another name for this universal shakti is *Yoga Maya*. As Yogamaya, two prominent functions of this cosmic shakti are defined: Yoga, her ability to lead us to harmony, peace and union, and Maya, her ability to lead us astray to distraction, illusion and ignorance. From Yogamaya emerge the three faculties of *jnana shakti*, *iccha shakti* and *kriya shakti*, the powers of knowledge, will and action. They converge for creation to occur, and their convergence is known as Prakriti. The power or energy required to express and manifest is *Prakriti*. With the three faculties Janani defines the nature of Prakriti which is to create evolve and expand. Prakriti is present in atoms, particles, gaseous, liquid and solid matter in stars and galaxies; she is everything manifest for she is the shakti of manifestation.

Prithvi, the earth, is the final outcome of Prakriti. Prithvi is the manifestation of Janani, and Prakriti is the power that moves everything on this earth. Prithvi is the perfect manifestation. Here on earth she appears in all her beauty and splendour and bestows on us her immeasurable treasures. To date we do not know of any other planet in all the multiverses where such an abundance of life and life forms exist. Since the creation of Prithvi, countless ecosystems have existed side by side expressing the joyful play of creation: the oceans' unfathomable depth, the lofty

heights of mountain ranges, jungles and deserts, from small unicellular beings to the biggest mammals and us, the human beings of this planet. Everything on earth is a celebration of Janani and her creative aspect Prakriti.

Philosophically Prakriti is the creative energy and realistically Prithvi is our home planet from whose womb all life forms have taken birth and continue to enjoy the bounty given by her for the development, sustenance growth and evolution of us, her children.

Yoga ecology honours Janani and Prakriti, both the beatific and cosmic expression of cosmic shakti, and attempts to bring harmony through a series of simple practices such as aradhana, yama and niyama, havan and mantra chanting. At the same time, an effort is made to harmonize the individual nature and connect to the natural forces, the natural environment and the people we share life with through genuine sattwic qualities, respect and love for all.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Yoga Ecology – The Vidya for Today

Central to the teachings of Satyananda Yoga is the concept of the yogic lifestyle. Yoga is not just a practice to be performed. Yoga is a way of life, a manner in which life can be lived, with awareness, understanding, positive intention and appropriate and creative action. When yoga becomes a part of life, then it becomes universal and dynamic. This is the aspect of the yoga vidya which has been emphasized in the Satyananda Yoga tradition. It is a holistic vision of yoga, leading to the development of a balanced personality and harmony between body, mind and spirit, which expresses as wisdom and restraint in management of the sensorial and sensual world.

Contrary to popular belief yoga is not limited to a set of practices, neither is it static and inert. Underlying the practices and techniques, is the *yoga vidya*, an inherent *jnana* or wisdom arising from direct understanding and experience of the transcendental reality. It is this yoga vidya which emerges through the yogic traditions or *parampara*, the true spiritual knowledge and wisdom that shines forth as a progressive and inspiring force which evolves according to the circumstances and the need of the time.

It is the duty and purpose of a spiritual parampara or tradition to preserve the vidya. The spiritual luminaries, the seers of traditions maintain the spiritual knowledge in its pure radiant and pristine form, untainted and unsullied by

the ignorant and free from permutations and combinations. Only when the time is right, when there is a genuine need and thirst for knowledge and the conditions are conducive, is the vidya revealed for the benefit of humanity.

It was at a critical juncture in the history of humanity in the 1940s, that Swami Sivananda in Rishikesh began the work of the Divine Life Society. The early 1900s saw a world devastated by the horrors of wars, epidemics and depression. The Divine Life Society shone forth as a beacon of light in the darkness of materialism, misery, fear, selfishness and greed. To one and all regardless of caste or creed, Swami Sivananda taught an integral system of yoga which could be practised in any situation and station of life. The call to live the Divine Life was a clarion call inspiring people to cultivate virtues, purify the heart through selfless service and develop universal love.

Swami Sivananda's disciples expounded the science and discipline of yoga as a practical method to improve the quality of life. Taking yoga across the world they taught an integral yoga, a synthesis of karma yoga, hatha yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga, jnana yoga and kriya yoga to harmonize the attributes and expression of head, heart and hands. Yet the global development of yoga today pays more tribute to the popularity of asana and the physical culture, than it does to the qualities of mind and heart necessary for harmonious personal development and spiritual transformation.

In 1963, Sri Swami Satyananda established Bihar School of Yoga to take yoga from 'shore to shore and door to door'. His vision of yoga as a science, a lifestyle, a culture of humanity, necessitated a profundity of understanding, experience and an ability to look at life differently. Accordingly, his method of teaching was different. Yoga was taught in the ashram, a yogic environment, where practices and techniques were embedded within a lifestyle that supported the underlying yogic principles and focused on developing serenity, simplicity, restraint, contentment and happiness in daily life.

The importance of lifestyle cannot be underestimated. As Swami Satyananda demonstrated through his own life, when adhered to correctly without deviation, the yogic lifestyle culminates in *atmabhava*, the understanding and experience of the connection between all beings and the underlying spiritual reality.

Following its Golden Jubilee in 2013, which celebrated the conclusion of 50 years of yoga propagation, Bihar School of Yoga embarked upon the 'second chapter of yoga'. There is no doubt that through increased physical health the practice of yoga has enhanced the lives of millions. Yet, faced with irrefutable evidence of environmental devastation, society across the globe finds itself at another crisis point and unable to find a solution.

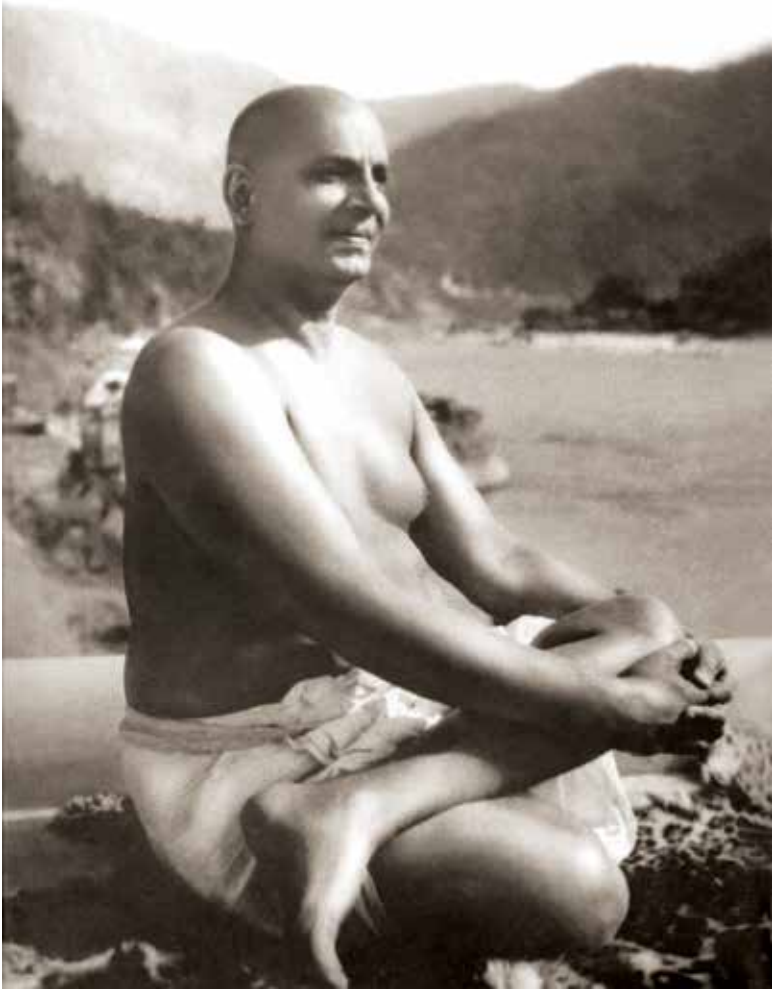
Essentially, there is only one real cause, which contains within it every cause, and that is imbalance. To provide a means by which the individual person can make an effort to redress the imbalance of modern material life, the vidya of yoga ecology is being revealed by Bihar School of Yoga, under the inspiration of Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati.

The essential spiritual truth of the interrelationship and interconnectedness of all things, between the microcosm and the macrocosm, is an intrinsic aspect of the yogic lifestyle. When the individual awareness expands, the individual is able to transcend the all-consuming experience of the limited, selfish, egocentric self, and begins to feel the interconnectivity and interrelationship that exists and underlies all life.

Explained here in simple, practical terms is the connection between the purity of the internal environment of every individual and the external world around us. The sadhanas given in this book are ancient and powerful techniques of purification, transformation and spiritual awaking. Yet alongside any regular practice there must also be a sincere commitment and effort to refine the lifestyle, restrain the outgoing senses and desires and develop simplicity, humility and love, thus realizing the inner spiritual nature.

This is the yoga vidya of the Satyananda Yoga parampara. This is the teaching of Sri Swami Sivananda which still echoes in the Himalayas. This is the wisdom of Swami Satyananda eternally aloft on the rivers of the Ganga. This is the boon which is being placed before humanity by the inspiration of Swami Niranjanananda.

—*Swami Ratnashakti Saraswati*



Introduction

Janani: Water – Sustainer of Life describes the many aspects of water. It presents the reader with the bleak condition that water has to endure in today's world. The journey continues through the myths and tales from many cultures surrounding rivers and then explores the nature of water in regard to the macrocosmos and the microcosmos of the human body. Life on planet Earth is born from water and depends on it for growth and evolution. The seers and sages of vedic times knew of the importance and used rituals and yajna to propitiate the gods for the blessing of water.

The worldwide overuse, misuse and abuse of water in the 21st century is a stark contrast to the wisdom of the ancient civilizations. The disrespect towards and ignorance in regard to water is the cause of water shortage, pollution and the cause of much suffering. *Day Zero*, the day when a community finds itself without water, has become a reality.

The laws of Nature take their course and it is up to us now to pay our respect, if we want to survive as a species. Each community can help establish schemes on a collective scale to save and recycle water. Each individual can contribute by being aware of the use and wastage of water.

A yogic lifestyle develops this awareness in a practical way. We learn to recognize the importance of water and show our gratitude through an appropriate use. It is our attitude that has to change from being selfish to being selfless, from

looking at our own whims and comfort to looking at the needs of others and the world.

Water is the Sustainer of Life, yet we have ignored and neglected this role. The time has come to return to our original relationship with nature by living a balanced and harmonious yogic life. This will allow water to sustain us and future generations.



1

The World Today



Imagine our Mother Earth without water – a dry, burnt, brown and barren land void of life. Earth would be a wasteland of intense heat, dust and winds, an environment similar to that of planet Mars. Without water there can be no life and without life there can be no water. Life and water have evolved together to create the Earth we know today. Water is the basis of creation and the source of life. Earth is called the ‘blue planet’ attributable to the water that covers its surface. 70.8% of the Earth’s surface is ocean.

All the universe rests within your nature, in the ocean, in the heart, in all life.

—Rig Veda (6:58:21)

All ancient scriptures describe the presence of water in creation. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the spirit or breath of God moves on the face of the waters (Genesis 1:2) and sets into motion the divine creation of life. The Koran says that we have created every living being from water. Every religion speaks of floods. In the Old Testament Noah builds an ark to brave the storm of 40 days and 40 nights that God sent to punish human beings. Aztec and Mayan people believe that floods separated the different eras on Earth. Persian texts speak of millennial floods covering the world. Indian scriptures have spoken of *pralaya*, the space between destruction and creation where only water exists.

Water is the sacred, most precious liquid that links us to the oceans and rivers of the Earth and to the origins of life itself.

Human beings are 70% water by weight. The oceans flow through our veins, and inflate our cells with the same saline water. All metabolic reactions are mediated in aqueous solution. Humans, like amphibians and reptiles, have evolved from continuous immersion in water. The growing human embryo floats in a primeval sea of amniotic fluid, sprouting gills in a recapitulation of our aquatic origins and when the waters break the delivery of the child begins.

Our body's water comes from the rivers, lakes and oceans of the world. It is evaporated from grasslands, forests and the vast canopies of the great tropical rainforests. The water molecules that perfuse every part of our body link us to the Earth and to all other forms of life through the Earth's water cycle, the hydrological cycle.

Water enters our bodies, circulates through it to the rhythm of the heart, ceaselessly carrying food, fuel, cellular and molecular waste to and from the organs of the body.

Water leaves our body through the pores of our skin, from our lungs as vapour in our breath and as waste in urine and faeces. This water re-enters the hydrological cycle, its waste filtered out as it trickles through soil, absorbed by plants, and is then evaporated back into the atmosphere



forming clouds and falling back to the surface as rain and snow into rivers, lakes and oceans. The water cycle is a part of our being and it links us to the Earth completely. Whatever we do to water, we do to every cell of our bodies, to every animal, plant, fish and ecosystem on the Earth, for we are all interlinked as one living breathing entity called life.

World water crisis

The world over is facing a severe water crisis. Due to global warming and climate change, over population and pollution, the clean, fresh water we require for life is becoming scarce. If water is not available we may survive for as long as ten days, depending on the temperature, our activities and the clothes we are wearing. If the water we drink is polluted then we become sick. Fresh water is essential for our survival.

We have been abusing and misusing the Earth's water resources, seeing them as an endless supply falling from the sky, or flowing from our taps. We have been polluting the rivers and oceans with plastic and the toxic wastes of our modern technological societies. Our agricultural, industrial and domestic lives depend on water. 70% of all water used globally is for agriculture.



As populations increase our requirement for water also increases. But the amount of available water cannot increase. The Earth has a finite amount of water, it is the same as it has been for millions of years, simply changing form and place on earth through the hydrological cycle.

Of all the water on Earth 97.5% of it is salty water and two-thirds of the available fresh water is held in polar ice caps and glaciers. This leaves only 0.5% in our lakes rivers and groundwater. But due to pollution of our modern society the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that the amount of clean potable water available on the planet is only 0.007% of the Earth's water. Currently over 7.3 billion



of us share this precious resource with all other species and ecosystems on the planet. Unfortunately, this water is not shared equally amongst the people and natural ecosystems and today while some people laze around the swimming pool enjoying soft drinks over 1.2 billion people in the world do not have access to clean drinking water. More people in the world have access to mobile phones than those who have access to clean drinking water and sanitation.



The rate at which the exploding human population is polluting the water of the planet threatens the future of our civilization. Many civilizations have come and gone since the beginning of the human race, if we continue to misuse the water on Earth we will bring our own civilization to its end. Wars have been fought over 'Black Gold', as our passion for oil grew to fuel our modern technological society. Wars are already being waged for 'Blue Gold', water, a resource so precious it far exceeds the value of oil or even gold. We can live without oil and gold, but we cannot live without fresh water.

We *can* survive on less water but until we are threatened directly, the reality of a life without fresh water seems far from us. It will always remain as somebody else's problem. However, the water shortage problem is one that we must all recognize. The Earth's water, cycles its way through the hydrological cycle, a global cycle which influences each and every one.

FRESH WATER CRISIS

In many major cities around the world, people are facing serious water shortages and local councils and governments are enforcing water saving regimes and restrictions. The United Nations estimate we will exceed our global requirement for fresh water by 40% by 2030, pushing every city in the world to *Day Zero* – the day we run out of water.

In continents such as Africa, India and South America, people and ecosystems are daily facing zero water or ‘Day Zero’. The price of water is way above the daily wage of most and each day is a fight for survival as women and children spend their days looking for and carrying water for kilometres.

Due to climate change, combined with a sudden increase of population and water mismanagement, lack of water is no longer a poor man’s problem, it is everyone’s problem. The following examples show briefly the state of water reserves around the planet.



Cape Town, South Africa

In 2018, Cape Town was faced with *Day Zero*, the day when the city would literally run out of water. After three years of serious drought, the dams and water supply levels dropped quickly. The rapidly growing city of 4 million had to enforce

water saving rations and people were permitted only 50 litres of water per day for all their daily water consumption. Considering the average toilet flush requires 10 to 15 litres of water, and the average American uses 570 litres of water daily, it was a struggle for many in the modern city to adjust.

In the poor areas of Cape Town, called 'the townships', the people have always had to struggle for water; daily they carry their water containers from small water taps which supply the whole township. They have never had the luxury of running water in their houses. So for them, the stark reality was that *Day Zero* means no water at all and possible death.

News Channels the world over showed people queuing for hours to fill their containers with water; it was a global warning for everyone to conserve water.

Bengaluru, South India

Bengaluru, a city of over 12 million people was once known as the City of Lakes and the Garden City. The lakes once provided Bengaluru with all of its water for drinking, domestic and city uses. Now the city is known as the Silicon Valley of India and the population is booming. However, the population and technological boom has paid a high price on the environment and water resources of Bengaluru. The term Garden City has been replaced with Garbage City. The Lakes are so polluted with raw sewage and toxic waste they are unusable and are frequently covered in white toxic foam that catches fire due to the flammable nature of its pollutants. 85% of the water bodies have disappeared due to unchecked urbanization.

Bengaluru continues to grow but the city is unplanned and unprepared for this pressure. Privately owned tankers sell water to households and as the population increases in the city the water table is being depleted and the cost of water increases. It is predicted that by 2020 Bengaluru will be without water, and uninhabitable by 2025 if changes are not made now. Rather than trying to manage the current situation

by limiting growth, construction, urbanization and improve pollution laws and water management, the government is looking to bring water through pipelines from rivers 100 km away. This plan will not solve the Bengaluru problem. In fact, it will deplete water from other regions of the country.

Perth, Australia

Australia is a very dry country and has been facing severe droughts for many years. In the last few years the farmers in Australia have faced severe hardships associated with drought. Cattle farmers have watched their livestock slowly wither and die as a result of lack of food and water. Unable to manage life without water, many have been forced to leave the land with huge debts.

Perth, a coastal city, has also faced drought. Inflows of Perth's water has decreased by 90% since 1974, and the city had to look for alternative water supplies. Now, 40% of Perth's water supply comes from a 'climate resilient water source' which is a term to describe a water source that is unaffected by climate change such as low rainfall, temperature and drought. This water comes from desalination plants or recycled water plants. Desalination plants use the salty water of the ocean and through an expensive process remove the salt from the water to make it potable. Recycled water plants treat waste water to make it potable. Many other cities in Australia such as Adelaide and Sydney are also using water desalination plants to provide drinking water.

Detroit, USA

Cities in the US, like Detroit, have people who are living without water. As water becomes a commodity its price increases. As the cost for water increases the poor people cannot afford to pay their water bills, leading to the council cutting off their water supply. People then start stealing and illegally taking water from council water supplies just to survive. Water is the basic right of not only humans but every species and ecosystem on this planet. Water is life.

Chemicals in drinking water

In many cities in the US and around the world, waste chemicals from pharmaceuticals are found in the water supply. The chemicals and drugs end up in waterways after being excreted from the body or when unused medication is flushed down the toilet. Painkillers, antibiotics and antidepressant drugs are a few that have been found in significant quantities. The drug molecules are very difficult to remove from the water ways and require complicated purification that most cities do not have. Further research is required to understand the effects, toxicity and accumulative effects of these chemicals on ecosystems, animals and humans.

Rajasthan, India

In the Indian state of Rajasthan, multinational companies have been pilfering the water from underground water supplies to produce soft drinks. As water supplies diminish, water is transported to the villages in tankers at a cost way beyond the financial capacity of the village people. Women in the villages are forced to walk hours to carry an 8 litre ration of water allocated per person per week. It seems that the poorest people are paying the highest prices for water in the world. Areas in India have already reached *Day Zero* and 20,000 people die annually from dehydration and water borne diseases due to bad sanitation and polluted water.





Tanzania, Africa

A country once vibrant in wildlife is now experiencing severe water shortages. Animals such as the hippopotamus whose whole life depends on water are dying and may soon become extinct.

More and more people are moving into the cities from the rural areas with the hope for income and a better life. However, the lack of sanitation, water and city planning is a major problem. Slums fill 70% of the city. The slums of the city are situated along sewer canals filled with rotting garbage, plastic and sewage. The children play along these canals accustomed to the stench and filth that surrounds them.

24,000 people die in Tanzania each year from dehydration and water borne diseases such as typhoid and cholera and 16,500 of them are children. Water prices are high and fresh water is just not available.



OCEANS



Covering more than 70% of our planet, oceans are very important for life on Earth. They govern the weather, provide oxygen for the planet and absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Oceans are home to a large percentage of life on Earth, the depths of the oceans contain unexplored ecosystems and a high biodiversity, from microscopic algae to the blue whale, the largest animal on Earth. They help feed the people of the world and provide pathways for ships to travel the world over transporting goods to every corner. The oceans are the meeting point for all rivers and eventually all the pollution in the rivers is received by them.

Marine or ocean pollution occurs when harmful chemicals, oils and wastes enter the ocean. 80% of all ocean pollution comes from the land – from industrial, agricultural and residential wastes. Air pollution also adds pesticides, dust and carbon dioxide from the land.

When we burn fossil fuels we also pollute the ocean. Oceans absorb as much as 25% of all man-made carbon

emissions. CO₂ changes the pH of surface waters and this leads to acidification. As acidity increases it causes the oceans carbonate levels to go down. This threatens the lives of shellfish, oysters, coral, clams and mussels who require calcium carbonate for their shells. More acidic waters also contribute to the bleaching of coral reefs.



Plastic



The majority of the rubbish that enters the ocean each year is plastic. The single use grocery bags, water bottles and drinking straws are among the 8 million metric tons of plastic items we throw away each year. Plastic enters the ocean via rivers, storm drains, sewers, boats, airplanes, and is blown from the land and beaches. These plastics persist in the ocean environment for hundreds of years.

Plastic pollutes the beaches, entangles and strangles marine life, is ingested by fish and seabirds. Every year hundreds of thousands of seabirds, fish, mammals, turtles,

die slowly and painfully due to plastic in their digestive systems along with the build-up of toxins from the plastic. Plastic debris can absorb toxic chemicals from the ocean pollution, and therefore poisons whatever eats it.



There is an island of garbage the size of Europe inside the Pacific Ocean called the North Pacific Gyre. It is the largest oceanic garbage site. Plastic does not degrade; it merely breaks down into progressively smaller pieces and becomes microplastic. It is ingested by fish, mussels, oysters and then the plastics and toxins biomagnifies up the food chain to humans. This means that the species at the top of the food chain, humans, receive the highest concentration of pollutants in their sea food. Microplastic and associated toxins are now found in human tissues, organs and blood.

Oil pollution in the ocean

Oil is the fastest source of deterioration to the ocean. Oil wastes enter the ocean from many sources. Accidental spills or leaks from offshore drilling or oil tankers account for only 10% of oil dumped in the ocean. The greatest cause of harm in the ocean is a result of oily storm water drainage from cities and agriculture, untreated waste disposal from factories and industrial facilities and unregulated recreational boating. The immediate effects of toxic and smothering oil waste may be mass mortality and contamination of fish and other



species. Long-term oil waste poisons the sensitive marine and coastal organic substrata, interrupting the food chain on which fish and sea creatures depend, and it destroys their reproductive cycles.

Noise pollution



Sound waves travel further and faster in the oceans than they do in air. Many marine mammals like whales, dolphins, and fish rely on sound wave communication to find food and mates and to navigate the ocean. However,

an ever increasing bombardment of human generated noise pollution is changing the underwater acoustic landscape worldwide, harming and even killing marine species. Imagine the incessant sound of approximately 60,000 commercial tankers and container ships that travel the oceans at any one time. The underwater racket that results creates a kind of smog that reaches nearly every corner of the ocean and shrinks the sensory range of marine wildlife.

Acid rain

Acid rain is any form of precipitation that is acidic, meaning that it has elevated levels of hydrogen ions. Acid rain is caused by emissions of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide which react with the water molecules in the atmosphere to produce acids. Natural causes of acid rain are volcanoes, wetlands and lightning. However, now the principal cause of acid rain is sulphur and nitrogen compounds from the combustion of fossil fuels from human sources such as electricity generation, factories and motor vehicles. Electrical power generation using coal is among the greatest contributors to gaseous pollutions that are responsible for acidic rain. The gases can be carried hundreds of kilometres in the atmosphere before they are converted to acids and deposited.

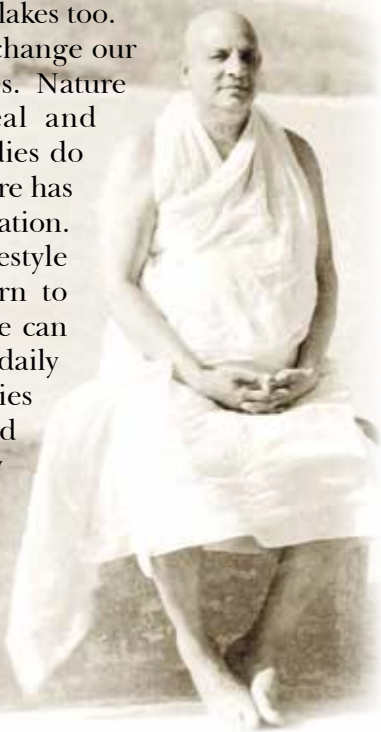
Acid rain has adverse impacts on forests, freshwaters and soils. It kills insect and aquatic life forms, causes corrosion of steel structures like bridges, weathering of stone buildings and monuments and adversely effects human health.

SUMMARY

As individuals we must now start to re-evaluate the way in which we use water, and recognize its importance in our lives. From the moment we wake in the morning we begin our dependence on water. If we review our day we will see that nearly 80% of all activities take place with water: bathroom, kitchen, eating and drinking, cleaning, cooling of car engine, washing clothes, air conditioners. We cannot live our lives without water . . . water is life, not only fresh water but the salty oceans and lakes too.

It is well past the time to change our attitudes, habits and lifestyles. Nature has a great capacity to heal and restore herself just as our bodies do after sickness or injury, but there has to be time for rest and recuperation.

By living a simple yogic lifestyle with yogic awareness, we learn to respect and care for water. We can start to reduce our water use daily and protect the water supplies around us from waste and pollution. It is the simple daily actions that make a difference to the world around us and to our own growth, evolution and happiness. Save water and live yogically. This will allow the rivers and oceans of the Earth to restore themselves to health.



2

Ganga

*Himalaya mere pita hai, Ganga meri Ma hai.
Himalaya is my father and Ganga is my mother*

There once was a king called King Bhagirath who had observed prayers and penance to Brahma for a thousand years, requesting Ganga to come down to Earth from heaven to purify and consecrate the ashes of his ancestors who had been cursed by Kapila Muni. Brahma warned King Bhagirath that Earth will not be able to hold the strength and power of Ganga's flow. Lord Shiva is the only one



who would have the ability to hold the power and strength of Goddess Ganga. Through tapasya and prayers King Bhagirath asked Lord Shiva to release Ganga. Lord Shiva agreed to receive her from heaven through the labyrinth of his hair and from there she would fall to Earth.

When Shiva called on Ganga she became upset at the request and in her anger decided she would crash down to Earth with enough force to wipe out

the entire surface of the planet with her water. Lord Shiva received Ganga and all her anger and force and dissipated her flow into seven smaller rivers, they are known as Bhagirathi, Janhvi, Bhilangana, Mandakini, Rishiganga, Saraswati and Alakhanand. Ganga said she would return to the Himalayas if the sins on Earth became too great. She would help and purify the Earth for some time, but if no respect and care was shown to her she would return to heaven and leave the Earth forever.



The holy Ganga is a blessing. My joy was indescribable when I spent hours in the evenings on the sand banks of the Ganga or sitting on a fine rock and gazed at wonderful nature. I became one with nature.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Ganga flows until this day and is considered to be the purest and most sacred river in India. People believe that River Ganga came to Earth to bring salvation to humankind and anyone who bathes in the Ganga will be purified.

*Mother Ganga,
Coming down from the Himalayas through Shiva's hair,
You unfurl like a pearl necklace on the dress of the Earth.
May my body not perish before having lived on your banks,
Drunk your water, danced on your waves
And repeated your name while casting a final glance upon you.*

—Adi Shankaracharya, 700 CE

Ganga flows 2,700 km from the Himalayan mountains to the Bay of Bengal and is the second largest river in India. Ganga is now one of the five most polluted rivers in the world. In the mountains the powerful flow of Ganga has been contained in dams and diverted through man-made tunnels used for hydroelectricity while original river beds and riparian ecosystems are left dry and barren. Sand is taken from her banks for industry. Daily toxic chemicals and two billion litres of untreated raw sewage are emptied into her without control or regulation. This pollution, causes typhoid, cholera, diarrheal and skin diseases to those who drink or bathe in her water.

Daily religious activities add to the river pollution; plastic and styrofoam offerings, idols painted in toxic colours and



ashes are thrown into the river. Today, Ganga is dying on her journey from her source in the mountains to the sea. Her pollution levels have reached an alarming level. Faecal coliform counts which should be zero have been measured thousands of times above healthy level. Chromium is 70 times above normal levels. Ganga is now so saturated with pollution she has lost the ability to purify herself, let alone the millions of people who daily bathe in her.

At her source Ganga river is fed by glaciers high in the Himalayas at a place called Gangotri. The Himalayan glaciers are disappearing due to climate change and global warming, and as they retreat so does the flow of water from Gangotri.

The survival of 400 million people plus fish, dolphins, animals, birds and ecosystems depend upon Ganga. Less than 2000 Gangetic dolphins survive in Ganga now, due to overfishing and pollution. Thousands once lived the whole way from the Himalayas to the sea.



Since vedic times people of India worshipped the rivers as the Mother. Even today the rivers Ma Ganga and Ma Yamuna are considered to be divine forces. And people come to offer their prayers to the Mother along the banks of these rivers. Daily in the city of Varanasi, Ganga Aarti is



performed to the river Ganga by the pandits of the temples. The devotion or *bhakti* to the river is a strong force among the people. It is still believed that a bath in Ganga is to purify oneself and wash away the sins of lifetimes. To die in Varanasi on the banks of Ganga will lead one directly to God and liberation, leaving the endless cycle of birth and death. For this reason, 40,000 bodies are cremated annually on the banks of Ganga in Varanasi alone.

However, with increased population in India to now over 1.3 billion and hundreds of millions of people living along the banks of River Ganga and River Yamuna, the rivers now carry the weight and filth of society.

Ma Ganga will disappear if the human race does not change its ways. If she disappears there will be pain, suffering and death to millions of people, fish, birds, animals and ecosystems. Mother Ganga has carried the filth and negativity of our civilization for thousands of years, but now it has destroyed her. It is a sad story of how the most sacred and precious river, the Divine Mother, has become our dumping ground. As the Earth's temperatures rise and the glaciers are retreating so will Ganga retreat back to her heavenly home away from the greed and stupidity of the human race. Ganga will keep her promise.

Ganga is considered a *tirtha* which means a crossing point between 'Heaven and Earth'. At a *tirtha*, prayers and offerings are thought most likely to reach the gods and blessings can descend most readily from heaven.

35

10th January 1946.

I love Ganga. and the
Himalayas. Ganga is my Mother
Divine. Himalayas is my Father
Divine. They inspire and guide me.
I take bath in Ganga. I swim
in Ganga. I adore Ganga. I
feed the fishes of Ganga.

I wave light to Mother
Ganga. I pray to Ganga. I do
salutations to Ganga. I sing
the glory of Ganga. I write
about the grandeur and glory
of Ganga.

Ganga has nourished me.
Ganga has comforted me. Ganga
has taught me the truths of
the Upanishads.

Glory to Ganga!

Sivananda



All glory be unto Mother Ganga, the giver of life, light and love. Worship her with faith, devotion and piety. Adore her with flowers of purity, love, self-restraint and equal vision. Sing her names. Attain Brahman through her grace. May Mother Ganga bless you all. May she help you to live on her banks and practise yoga and tapas.

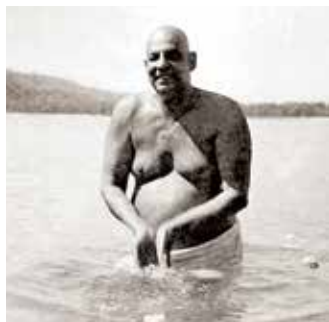
—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Ganga and the Bihar School of Yoga

Ganga has always played an important part in the life of BSY. Swami Sivananda lived on the banks of the Ganga in Rishikesh. He adored the river and would worship her every morning.

Ganga is the form of Vishnu. Her sight is soul stirring and elevating. How magnificent she is when she flows in the valley of Rishikesh. She has a blue colour like the ocean. The water is extremely clear and sweet.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati



In Swami Sivananda's time in Rishikesh during the 1940s to 1960s Ganga was clean, blue, free flowing and powerful. Dams and pollution had not yet poisoned her flow. The waters of Ganga once contained healing salt, minerals and herbs that came flowing down from the Himalayan mountains. Therefore, people asked her for her life-giving and healing waters to take away pain and illness and bring peace and wisdom into their lives. She had powers of healing and people believed she could perform miracles and destroy viruses such as typhoid and cholera. Scientists experimented and saw that the viruses could not stay within the water.



The water of Ganga is extremely pure and sanctifying. No germs can flourish in this. Rich in minerals, this water cures almost all kinds of disease. The Ganga is saturated with antiseptic minerals. Ganga is not merely a river. It is a sacred tirtha. It is possessed of mysterious powers which are not found in any other river of the world.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Swami Satyananda received his sannyasa initiation, his sannyasa and yoga training from Swami Sivananda on the banks of Ganga in Rishikesh.



On the day of Swami Sivananda's mahasamadhi in 1963, Swami Satyananda was in Munger meditating on a hillock overlooking the River Ganga. While in meditation he had a vision of his guru Swami Sivananda on a boat crossing the Ganga. The experience was so real he felt the water of Ganga splash over him. He opened his eyes and found he was in fact wet from the water he had seen in meditation. He knew his guru had taken mahasamadhi, and it was a sign that he should settle in Munger. He established the BSY in Munger next to Ganga. In the early days, during monsoon the ashram would be flooded with the waters of Ganga and the residents would move around the ashram by boat.

The Bihar School of Yoga is surrounded and protected by Ganga. The campus in Munger carries the name Ganga Darshan which means to have the vision of Ganga. In monsoon she stretches like an ocean as far as the eyes can see. The endangered Ganga river dolphins can be seen in this region of the river from Patna to Munger only.

Ganga is the life force, the inspiration and the beauty that propels BSY to be one of the powerful spiritual centres of teaching, learning and lifestyle. People come the world over to study and live yoga here, on the banks of river Ganga.



Do you see how Ma Ganga has turned in a sweeping arc at this place, with the town of Munger perched in the middle like a child sitting in his mother's lap. The beautiful morning and evening riverside vistas with the wide, expansive fields all around are worth seeing. Ma Ganga symbolizes yoga, the journey of the soul from gross to subtle. I have great plans for that place – a yoga training centre, yoga library, yoga research centre and hospital to name a few. From this very platform, where Karna used to distribute his gold, I will distribute the fruits of yoga.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Swami Niranjan and Ganga

Swami Niranjan is referred to as Ganga Putra, the son of Ganga. It was at Gangotri, the source of Ganga, in 1959 that Swami Satyananda performed tapas and aradhana to the Himalayas and Ganga to invoke a soul. Swami Niranjan was born nine months later to Swami Satyabrata and Swami Dharmashakti, his first disciples.

In 2010, Sannyasa Peeth, the third institution envisioned by Swami Satyananda, took birth on the banks of the Ganga at Paduka Darshan, Munger.



Every year in September, the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna is held by Sannyasa Peeth in Paduka Darshan. The yajna is blessed, charged and purified by the fast flowing monsoon river. The Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna and the river Ganga are the support and creative power of the budding Sannyasa Peeth, which will become a place of spiritual living, learning and inspiration on the banks of Ganga.

Swami Sivananda says that we must learn from Mother Ganga and imbibe all her qualities:

Mother Ganga pours out all that she has in a continuous flow to humanity. She loves all. She has equal vision to a peasant or a king, a sinner or a saint, and is quite indiscriminate.

Be pure, be adaptable, be tolerant, be forgiving, be sweet, pour out your love on all. Share what you have – physical, moral, mental and spiritual, with the whole of humanity. The more you give, the more you get. Give without any selfish motive, without expecting reward. Embrace all. Cultivate equal vision.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Unless there is immediate change to people's mentality and awareness the life of Mother Ganga is in serious peril. We can no longer ignore her, we must change now.



Ganga is the glory of India. She has the ability to provide liberation. And she is our Mother.

There was a time when we drank her water cupped in our hands. If we go to drink it today, we will get hepatitis and typhoid, because we do not care for our Mother. This is our biggest mistake. If we do not care for our Mother, there will be no children. Once Mother has gone, creation and humanity will end. Therefore, collectively protecting Mother Ganga and our Mother Earth is our responsibility and duty, for we are her children.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati,
Guru Poornima 2018

3

Sacred Rivers

Our rivers circulate fresh water, the blood of life, throughout the land on Earth. These life-giving rivers, flow through all ecosystems, from mountains, through forests, rainforests, grasslands, deserts and now through our modern towns and cities. All rivers finish their meandering journeys by merging with the ocean.

From the air, the rivers of the planet look like blood vessels circulating throughout the body, transporting food, oxygen, water, goods, and people around the world. The rivers, streams, and lakes of the Earth have sustained and preserved our societies since the beginning of our ancient civilizations. Rivers were the high roads of most ancient civilizations and towns and cities were built and developed along them to the seas and oceans.

All ancient civilizations on Earth revered rivers as divine forces that would bring life and sustenance to their lives. Rivers such as the Nile, the Amazon, Ganga, the Murray River, the Mississippi, the Seine and the Yellow River have been recognized and worshipped as sacred divine beings continuously flowing and bringing life-giving water to the people and their farms, settlements and towns. Even today people worship the rivers as divine beings.

Our cities and societies have grown and the technology of dams, reservoirs, water pipes and tunnels have advanced to allow us to manage our own water supplies. Hidden water

pipes carry water kilometres underground for domestic, industrial and agricultural use. Millions of fortunate people in developed countries simply turn on their taps and water flows for all their daily requirements. We have therefore lost our connection to our rivers and lakes, the very source of fresh water and the life it supports.

For thousands of years we lived in harmony with the rivers and the rivers were capable of absorbing our wastes and could provide clean water for all our needs. In the last 200 years as the industrial revolution boomed and populations grew exponentially the rivers have paid an exorbitant price. Waste of the modern cities, industrial, agricultural and domestic, has been thrown into the rivers without restriction or control. As technology grew so did the waste associated with it. The recent discovery of plastic has become the burden of our rivers and the oceans now.



Nearly all the sacred and large rivers around the world are now so polluted they must undergo a lengthy water purification process before drinking or not be drunk at all for fear of lethal diseases. The fish, turtles, dolphins and other aquatic species are poisoned with our waste, and the rivers are dying. Population growth, the accompanied uncontrolled pollution and a change in our awareness, from



respect and reverence of the rivers to neglect and abuse, has killed them.

For example, in India people have always believed River Ganga would absorb the negativity, disease, death and waste of society. And for thousands of years she has done that. However, populations, cities and industry have grown and expanded without planning, control and awareness of the impact on the rivers.

Ganga is still the sacred Mother to millions of Indians today who worship her daily, but she is now more polluted than ever before. The sacredness of rivers, like Seine or the Nile, has been forgotten due to people's ignorance, arrogance and their greed for material wealth.

Despite our spiritual or religious connection with rivers, the human species has grown beyond the carrying capacity of the rivers, lakes and other ecosystems. Whether the rivers are worshipped or not is of little consequence to the high level of toxic and deadly pollution that flows in them. The rivers will continue to flow through cities, dirty dark and smelling; they will continue to take our rubbish because that is what they do.



Spirituality cannot be only esoteric, it has to be practical, and devotion to the river should be with awareness to support the health and vitality of our rivers. We would not pollute our own mothers blood with the waste of our household, similarly we should also care for our mothers, the sacred rivers, who sustain our lives.

There is still hope, if we can change our ways. Nature has a great ability to heal and renew herself and rivers can become healthy again if they are protected, supported and cleaned.

The following are examples of sacred rivers that have been worshipped and revered since time immemorial.

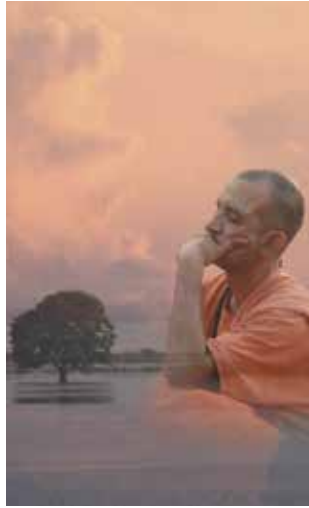
River – the Goddess

Since ancient times in many cultures, rivers were the goddesses and divine female healers who came to Earth to purify, give life, maintain the beauty, health, vitality and biodiversity of the land. Without the river goddesses there would be no life as we know it on Earth. The rivers of the Earth provide water to the land and give life to the ecosystems.

Rivers have always been associated with healing, birth, life and death. The river gives birth and life, and she is also the one who takes life back when she bursts her banks,

flooding surrounding villages, destroying crops and livestock, or she may change her flow and direction; we were always at her mercy.

It was believed that human beings return to the rivers womb at death, representing the eternal cycle of renewal. The rivers provide for us in life, death and also in the afterlife and were believed to ensure a proper voyage to the afterlife and beyond. Rivers have also been associated with wisdom, poetry and perceptiveness.



Be praised my lord through Sister Water. She is very useful, humble, precious and pure.

—St Francis of Assisi

YAMUNA

Like Ganga, Yamuna is also a goddess. She is also called Yami, the daughter of Surya, the Sun god, and the twin sister of Yama, the god of death. Yama is Dharmaraj, the Lord of Dharma, the king of righteousness. Yama decides our fate at the time of death and our rebirth, life after life, depending on our choices and decisions in life.

Yamuna is also the beloved of Lord Krishna and played a vital role throughout his life. On the night of Lord Krishna's birth, it is said that Yamuna river parted to allow Krishna's father Vasudev to carry the baby safely across the river to hide from his evil uncle Kamsa who wanted him dead. Young Krishna use to play with gopis on the banks of the Yamuna. The Raslila was performed on the banks of the Yamuna and Radha and Krishna danced and romanced by the Yamuna.

In one story, the Yamuna River had become very polluted. Kaliya, a huge five-headed serpent had moved into the river and its poison had killed the river. Krishna fought with Kaliya until he begged for mercy. When Krishna released him, the serpent fled and the waters were once again clean and all the birds, fish and trees returned. It seems now the human race has become the Kaliya serpent of modern times poisoning our rivers.

Yamuna is a goddess of infinite love and compassion. Yamuna is called the river of love, due to her love for Lord Krishna, and with her divine powers she increases *bhakti bhava*, or the feeling of devotion to the Lord, in anyone who bathes in her waters. She is the remover of all obstructions and impurities that keep devotees from direct access to Lord Krishna's divine love.



Yamuna's water is dark, unlike her sister Ganga whose water is white, clear and light. Her dark colour indicates her divine union with the dark-skinned Krishna and she is burnt from the fire of her father Surya. Yamuna is visualized as a mournful, melancholy, dark goddess riding a turtle, unlike her cheerful, happy sister Ganga who rides a dolphin.

Yamuna is the longest tributary river of the Ganga in Northern India. Its source is the Yamunotri glacier in the lower Himalayan ranges. Yamunotri is the first pilgrimage site of the four prominent pilgrimage places called Char Dham. The river is 1376 km long and passes through the cities of Delhi, Mathura and Agra. She is the longest river that does not flow directly to the sea. Yamuna joins the Ganga at Triveni Sangam at Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh. It is here that the Kumbha Mela takes place every 12 years.



Unfortunately, Yamuna like her Sister Ganga, is severely polluted and dying. 57 million people rely on the water of the Yamuna. Industries, agriculture and human waste fill her waters from the time she reaches the capital city of Delhi until she merges with Ganga at Allahabad.

The maximum pollution, approximately 70%, takes place at Delhi where she meets the Wazirabad Barrage. From this point on the colour and chemical composition of Yamuna changes dramatically. A major drain drops 500 million litres of raw sewage into her every day, and more and more industrial waste, human waste, agricultural waste and garbage enter Yamuna here and downstream

In 2017, the High Court of India, declared that Ganga, Yamuna and their tributaries have the same rights of living people – 'Living Entity Status'. The two rivers are living persons with rights. In an attempt to clean, protect and preserve the rivers, legal cases can be filed against industries, companies and individuals who threaten their health and life. The bill has been passed and is a step in the right direction. However, to help and save Ma Ganga and Yamuna there have to be strict regulations and penalties enforced for those who pollute. Every individual has to be inspired, encouraged and educated to feel responsible for the revival of these sacred rivers. It has to be a combined effort of industry, governments and individuals. Without that Ganga will retreat back to her Himalayan abode and the Yamuna will stop flowing and dry out. This we can be sure of.

WHANGANUI RIVER, NEW ZEALAND

The Whanganui River flows 290 km through the North Island of New Zealand. It was the first river to be given the 'Living Entity Status' by the Government of New Zealand. Which provides personhood status to the river. This river is recognized as having all the rights, powers, duties and liabilities of a legal person. This is something the Maoris say they have always believed in. Rivers are sacred beings worthy of respect, reverence and care. The river has always been sacred to the local Maori tribes who view it as a living, breathing ancestor.

THE NILE, AFRICA

The Nile is the longest River on Earth. It is 6695 km long and supports 360 million people in Northeast Africa.

The Nile has existed since the beginning of human history. Ancient Egyptians worshipped the river and considered it to have been responsible for the creation of the land. The Egyptians believed that the Nile gave them life, and it is said that the Nile was the possible birthplace of modern humans. This river is an oasis in the desert and the only source of fertility to surrounding desert lands.



Ancient Egyptians personified and worshipped all aspects of creation. For them the gods did not control the sky, earth, air, or rivers, they *were* the sky earth, air and rivers. The Nile was known as the father of life and mother of all human beings.

Anuket is the Goddess of the Nile and nourishes the fields. She was worshipped as the floods brought water and silt that enabled the crops to grow. Ma'at was a Goddess in the Nile, she was the personification of law, truth and order. The Nile God Hapi was the god of annual floods, which brought an annual deposit of silt onto the rivers banks, fertilizing the land and boosting the growth of crops. When the Nile flooded, they called it the arrival of Hapi. Osiris, the god of regeneration and rebirth, was assassinated by his brother Set and thrown into the Nile in a lead-weighted box. His wife Isis found him and brought him back to life. He became associated with nature's cycles, including the growth of vegetation and flooding.

THE VOLGA, RUSSIA

The Volga is the largest river in Europe and flows 3700 km from Northwest Russia to the Caspian Sea. The river flows through Russia's heavily populated western region and is viewed as the national river of Russia.

There is a group of people called the Mari who have lived along the banks of the Volga for hundreds of years. The Mari practise a pagan faith. According to their beliefs, nature and the Volga exerts a magical influence over people. They relate to the river as a sacred, powerful and living being upon which people are completely dependent. The river serves as a source of absolute good and always helps men and women as long as they do not harm or oppose nature. The Volga is called Mother Volga by the Russian people as they believe that she feeds them, gives them employment and provides everything.

THE AMAZON, SOUTH AMERICA



The Amazon is the world's second longest river. It is estimated that one sixth of all fresh water that flows into the world's oceans enters the 320 km wide delta of the Amazon, where it meets the Atlantic Ocean. The volume of water in the Amazon river is greater than the next seven largest rivers combined. Its source is in the Peruvian Andes, at an elevation of 5598 metres and the river travels over 6400 km to the Atlantic Ocean.

For the indigenous people of the Amazon Rainforest, the river plays a vital role in their understanding of life, their beliefs and cosmology, and as a source of food and water for survival.

To the people of the Amazon, the river was created by an ancient snake that weaved its way through the forest forming the river. The river is a transport system, an intricate road



flowing through the forest, changing its shape and size in the seasons and carrying them by boat wherever they need to go.

The Amazon people are completely connected to the nature around them and they consider the river, insects, mammals, birds, plants, fish and rocks as living beings. They relate and connect to the river as a friend, talking, joking and asking the river for advice. At the time of fishing, they pray to the spirit of the river and with gratitude they seek permission to fish in her waters. In their meditation they invoke the spirit of the river and the spirit guides them and transforms them.



THE YELLOW RIVER, CHINA

The Yellow River is one of the most important rivers in China, and runs more than 4600 kilometres. This river has nurtured the culture and history of the Chinese civilization. The dragon which is now recognized as a symbol of Chinese culture is actually the God of the Yellow River. Since ancient times the Yellow River has been turbulent and prone to flooding, which has provided a lot of rich and fertile soil for agriculture, and also created many natural disasters. These

disasters have created fear and awe in the people towards the river.

In Chinese folk tales, the deity of the Yellow River is a male God, called River Uncle, who sometimes took the form of a white dragon. This dragon was sometimes restless, ferocious or mischievous and people would therefore worship and pray to River Uncle in order to pacify him and calm the river.

THE DANUBE, EUROPE



The Danube is Europe's second largest river basin flowing from Germany's Black Forest to the Romanian and Ukrainian Danube Delta. It is 2860 km long, travelling through 11 countries, 20 million people depend on the Danube for drinking water.

The Danube was regarded as a sacred river by the Celts, and the gods were the children of this Goddess River. The name Danube comes from the root Danu, which is the name of the Irish Goddess, the mother of gods.

Rivers were sacred to the Celts and were often personified as goddesses. River goddesses were providers and sources of healing and fertility. Many rivers still bear the

name of the Goddess who, according to myth, lived near them or died in them.

It is difficult now to find any stories of the sacredness of the Danube and other European rivers. For so many years they have been considered as mere waterways for human exploitation and their sacredness has been lost to modern society.



THE SEINE, FRANCE



The city of Paris, France, grew up on the banks of the River Seine. The Seine is 777 km long from its source in Côtes d'Or through the towns of Troyes, Paris and Rouen. It enters into the English Channel. The beauty and romance of the city of Paris arises through the water, prana and life force of the Seine.

The river is named after the Goddess Sequana. There is a shrine at the source of

the river from Celtic and Roman times dedicated to the goddess Sequana. She stands on a boat in the shape of a duck. Hundreds of coins and bronze, silver, wooden and stone images of limbs and organs have been found at the shrine. They were offered to her in hope of healing and curing diseases. She and her waters had great power for healing and people would come from far away to receive her blessings and her healing and rejuvenating water.

THE MURRAY, AUSTRALIA

The Murray is the second longest river in Australia. It forms part of the 3750 km long combined Murray Darling River System which drains most of inland Victoria, New South Wales and South Queensland. Its source is Mount Kosciusko.

The aboriginal people of Australia tell creation stories of land, rivers, forests and mountains. Every aspect of creation has a dreamtime story. The stories have been passed down through generations. The Murray also has an ancient aboriginal dreamtime story of its creation and the fish who live within it.

In the dreamtime story the river was formed by a huge cod fish who was being chased by two hunters in a water hole. As the fish escaped from the water hole the water hole burst its banks and the water and the cod fish started to move along the ground. The fish flapped and pushed its way along the ground in the flow of the water and the Murray river was formed. After the hunters managed to capture and kill the gigantic cod the hunters received a message from the spirit-gods to chop up the fish and throw the pieces back into the water. These pieces became



the different fish species in the Murray river, including the famous Murray cod. The Aboriginal dreamtime stories encourage a connection to nature and all the biodiversity, to which we are all connected to and interlinked.

SUMMARY

All around the world, in the historical stories of rivers, we find the same theme of respect and reverence for the sacred rivers that provide us with the water we require for life and who hold the powers of healing and purification. Although the stories of the goddesses may seem like tall tales and myths they describe the origin, quality, nature and important role of rivers in our lives. Throughout history these tales and myths relate the same message, that without vital rivers there would be no life. It is no wonder they have been revered and worshipped since time immemorial.

A RAY OF HOPE – THE RIVERS THAMES AND TARA

The River Thames, Great Britain

In 1957, the Natural History Museum declared the Thames river biologically dead. It was described as a vast foul smelling drain with no oxygen – this means no life could be found in it. 60 years later and the Thames river has been called the cleanest metropolitan river in the world. Hundreds of fish species have returned to the river along with birds, water fowl, otters, even dolphins and seals can be found. The clean-up of the river Thames has been achieved by strict legislation that prevents industry from dumping polluted effluent into the river and its tributaries. Sewage treatment works clean all domestic waste water before being released into the river. Today in London, half of the sewage sludge is sold in pellet form as fertilizer for agricultural use.

Concrete barriers that were made to control the river had stopped wildlife habitats and the natural flow of the river. These have been replaced with mud and reeds, creating

habitat and natural ecosystems which have invited wildlife back into the river. The Thames is now cleaner than it has been in nearly 150 years but it faces a new problem – plastic. Plastic finds its way into the river from many different sources and never breaks down. England now cleans the river of tonnes of plastic yearly. Death by plastic is the new terror in our society.

The Tara River, Montenegro

The Tara River runs through Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and is said to be one of the cleanest rivers in the world. It is fed from pristine sources in the Komovi mountains. The Tara River is called the Jewel of Europe and is a protected river under the Worlds Natural Heritage Site. The water in the river is clean and is drinkable directly from the river, and the area is rich in wildlife and biodiversity. This grand river carves the Tara Canyon, the second biggest canyon (after the Grand Canyon, USA) in the world. Several attempts have been made to dam the river but it has been protected by people who appreciate the beauty of her life giving waters.



4

Yogic Physiology of Water: Apas Tattwa and Swadhisthana Chakra

According to yogic sciences, there are five elements, the *panchatattwas*, that provide the building blocks for the whole manifest and unmanifest *Prakriti* or nature.

	Prithvi Earth	Apas Water	Agni Fire	Vayu Air	Akasha Ether/ Space
<i>Nature</i>	heavy	cool	hot	erratic	mixed
<i>Quality</i>	weight, cohesion, solidity, support, strength, base	fluidity, contraction, emotion, memory	heat, expansion, light, prana, power of change, destruction	motion, movement, gaseous, weightless, instability, breath	diffused, space- giving, motionless, all- pervading, sound
<i>Colour</i>	yellow	white	red	blue-grey	black, colourless
<i>Tanmatra</i>	smell	taste	sight	touch	sound
<i>Function in the body</i>	skin, blood vessels, bone structure	all bodily fluids	appetite, thirst, sleep, digestion	muscular expansion, contraction	space

These tattwas are present in the microcosm of the body, mind, emotions and personality, and in the macrocosm as the universe, our planet and human civilization. It is the same quality and energy existing at different vibrations at all levels of the manifest and unmanifest world.

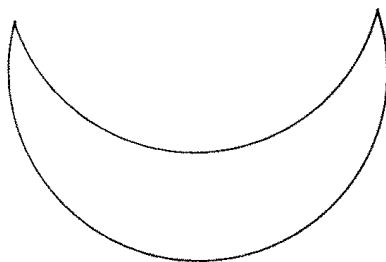
Yogis said that the state of the macrocosm reflects the state of the microcosm and vice versa.

Yat pinde tat brahmande.

You are the universe within the universe.

If we care for the elements, protect them and keep them clean and healthy, then naturally the tattwas within us will be clean and healthy and the evolution of consciousness will take place. The more we pollute the tattwas around us the more we pollute ourselves and prevent ourselves from living healthy and happy lives.

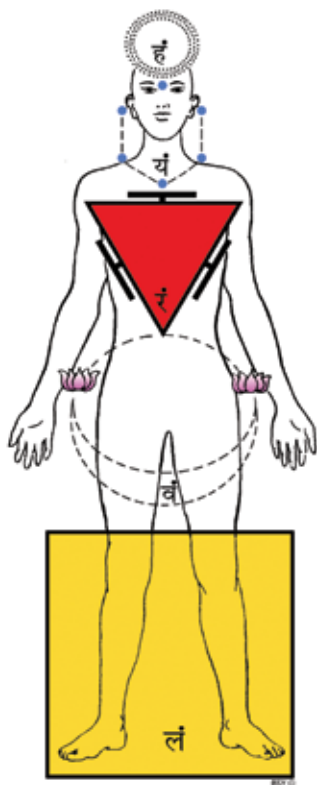
Apas tattwa



The word *apas* or water is derived from the root 'ap' which means to pervade. The apas tattwa is the water element which pervades all of creation. Apas evolves from ether, air and fire and emerges from the fire-agni tattwa. Therefore, water contains aspects of the other three elements within it. Ether provides water the space in which to exist. Air provides water the ability to move and flow. Fire gives water the energy and power of life.

The qualities of apas tattwa are cool, stable, heavy, moist, smooth, flowing, dull, cloudy and soft. Apas is a feminine element, it is the element of emotion, memory, subconscious feelings, intuition and imagination. Apas is white in colour and associated with *Chandra*, the moon.

Apas is all the water in the universe, planet, the oceans, rivers and lakes. It is in the clouds, the rain and snow. It pervades everything in the world around us.



Similar to all the other tattwas, *prithvi*, earth, *agni*, fire, *vayu*, air and *akasha*, space, apas exists within us, permeating all levels of our body from the gross physical aspects through to our subtle spiritual qualities. Apas is the element that controls the kidneys, the lymphatic system, the reproductive organs and blood in our physical bodies. Water protects the body, and is required for nearly every chemical reaction in the body, including the brain.

In the pranic and mental bodies, the tattwas control and influence the character and personality of the individual. Astrologically, people who are ruled by a water sign are more affected by the phases of the moon and are generally psychic people. Somebody with a strong water element, will be sensitive, compassionate, adaptable, courageous, psychic and intuitive, whereas the characteristics of a weak apas tattwa are fearfulness, insecurity, over-sensitivity and being over emotional.

Evolution of consciousness

Everything in life is evolving. Since its birth billions of years ago, everything on Earth is constantly changing and evolving in unison: the Earth, climate, ecosystems and all species on the planet.

Our bodies have been evolving from one generation to another, changing to become more adapted to the environment. In each stage of evolution, there are experiments, mistakes and improvements; they are all necessary events towards perfection. The human being is a masterful example of the power of evolution. Swami Satyananda said the human brain has evolved intelligence and ego, so that humans can think, they can know they are thinking and they know that they know they are thinking. Animals do not have this innate witness ability.

This intelligence gave the human race the ability to manipulate and alter the environment and thus have become a geological force; and we are literally changing the face of the Earth. We may have evolved intelligence, but this intelligence is used to express our instinctive animal qualities of destruction, greed and cruelty. Although human beings have the potential to behave with higher qualities of love, compassion and forgiveness, history has shown that they take the negative tamasic choice, a choice based on the instinctive human traits of greed, possessiveness and hate.

We have evolved materialistically but not spiritually. We are stunted in our spiritual evolution and have remained selfish, self-centred animals. The ambitions and dreams of most people across the globe are materialistic. It is this materialistic evolution which has led to the pollution and destruction of the very ecosystems and water vital to our existence on Earth.

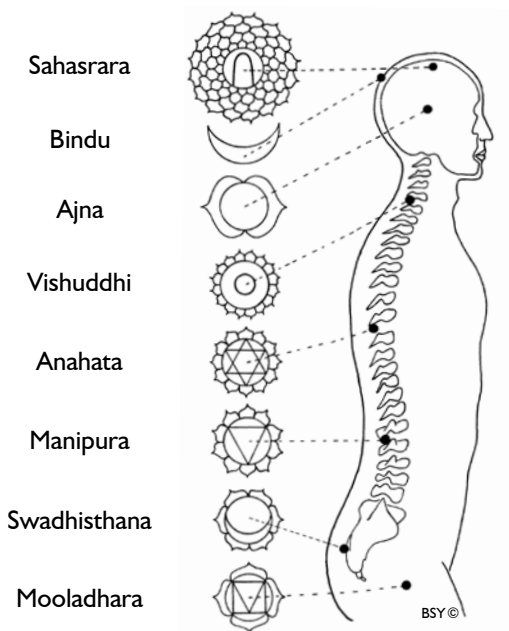
We must make a shift from a life based on materialistic ambitions to a life based on spiritual aspirations. It is time to evolve out of our instinctive human nature. In that life, we think feel and act with higher qualities of kindness, compassion, care, simplicity and love for our fellow human

beings and with respect for nature that sustains us. We must seek out a way to balance our material and spiritual dimensions of life.

Yogic principle of evolution

According to yogic physiology, human spiritual evolution, both individual and as a race, is a journey through the seven chakras, from mooladhara to sahasrara. Mooladhara is the most basic and fundamental chakra from where we commence our evolution out of our instinctive animalistic nature. Sahasrara is where our evolution is complete. All individual awareness and ego begins at mooladhara. Above sahasrara there are chakras of higher states of consciousness and evolution called the lokas.

Location of the Chakras



Below mooladhara there are other chakras, known as patalas which represent the evolution of the animal kingdom. Mooladhara is the highest chakra that animals have the capacity to awaken. These lower chakras are related to the level of evolution of the instincts and not to mental awareness. Therefore, the animal kingdom is compelled to follow the instinctual path of eating, sleeping, fearing and mating. Animals live according to nature's laws and nature is responsible for every phase of their evolution.



Once Kundalini reaches mooladhara chakra, we move into the realm of the evolved higher consciousness of the human being. From this point onwards the evolution is no longer spontaneous, instinctive and in nature's control, and we as individuals have to work towards the evolution of mind and consciousness.

Through our intelligence and ego we have changed our environment. We control the elements of fire, water, soil, wind and tame other animals. We can mate when we want, grow food when and how we want, build cities and communities how and where we want. This ability has made our species arrogant and we have come to believe we are above and separate from nature and other life forms.

It is this level of consciousness in human beings that makes us a dangerous species. It gives us choice, and depending on our level of understanding of interrelatedness with all of creation we behave accordingly. We have the power to be the caretakers of this planet or a force of its destruction. Unfortunately, it is the latter that we have chosen. It is our responsibility to strive not only for our own health and happiness but also to care for and nurture our environment. That is the ultimate responsibility

given to us as a species; if we do not we will destroy ourselves.

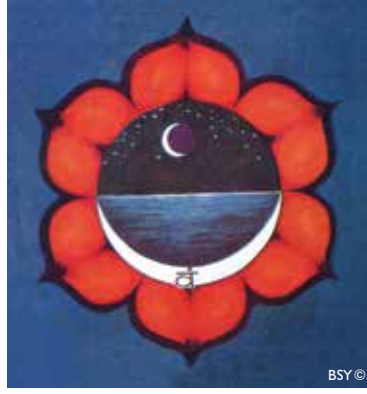
Awakening of the chakras is a very important event in everyone's spiritual evolution. These changes in consciousness have significant relevance and impact on one's day-to-day life. The present state of mind is not capable of dealing with simple daily situations in life. People cannot manage their minds, and their lifestyles reflect that chaotic state. Negativity and hatred, fears and insecurities, greed, consumerism and sickness are all consequences of the quality of people's mind and consciousness. These same traits are the cause of the pollution and desecration of the planet's ecosystems and water. All the problems we face as individuals, society and as a race are responses to our level of evolution and mind.

As individuals the purpose of awakening the chakras, sushumna and Kundalini should be realized as the journey to become better human beings who care for people and the world around us. Through the evolution of consciousness, the positive sattwic human qualities of care, love, sharing, compassion, understanding, charity, mercy and purity are expressed. These are the higher qualities and expressions of a mind which are influenced by awakened chakras.

Each chakra confers certain abilities and as purification and evolution takes place that quality will be naturally expressed. When the chakras are awakened the mind begins to change and evolve from the tamasic state to the sattwic state. Values in life change. With new values you are able to live with greater awareness and your attitude towards yourself and towards life is more positive, caring and creative. The quality of your relationships improve greatly, enabling you to manage all situations in life.

It is the evolution of the spiritual consciousness through yogic practices, awareness and lifestyle that will lead us as individuals and as society to live in harmony with ourselves and our home planet Earth. This is the path of yoga and yoga ecology.

Swadhisthana chakra



The Sanskrit word *swa* means 'one's own' and *adhisthana* means 'dwelling place or residence'. Thus swadhisthana means 'one's own abode'. It is the vortex or control centre of apas tattwa, the water element. It is regarded as the basis of individual human existence. Swadhisthana is associated with the unconscious mind and with its storehouse of mental impressions and samskaras. It is the abode from which most people express themselves to the world.

The *jnanendriya* or sense of this chakra is taste and the *karmendriya* or sense organ is the tongue.

In the human body swadhisthana is located at the base of the spine in the coccyx. Sexuality is one of the main expressions of swadhisthana, as it controls the endocrine glands of reproduction, the basic drive of life.

Swadhisthana chakra represents the level of being where one is principally concerned with pursuing pleasurable sensations. One is motivated to obtain pleasure through the sense organs in the form of food, sex, pleasant environment, friendships, and the material wealth required to attain these desires. At mooladhara chakra these desires are sought in order to satisfy the need for security and safety. However, in swadhisthana pleasures are sought after to simply satisfy desires, here the whole aim of life is to attain

the pleasures peculiar to the individual. Nature, all things and other people are viewed according to the amount of sensual satisfaction that they can offer, regardless of the impact or cost. It is said that most people in the world today predominantly function at this level of swadhisthana

Fears and insecurities are also expressed through swadhisthana. We perceive the world and our place in it according to our samskaras. Due to our fears and insecurities, we want to live in a world that is safe and that makes us feel satisfied and content. We are unknowingly conditioned to believe that this contentment will be fulfilled by satisfying our sensual desires. If we spend our lives aiming to satisfy the senses, we will be caught in a 'catch 22' for our senses can never be satisfied, as it is their nature to always be in a state of agitation; and there will always be something that we crave in life.



There need not be renunciation of the level of living that we have attained, this would not work. In yoga there is no renunciation only attainment, but attainment of a different kind. It is the attainment in spiritual life that allows you to drop the unnecessary items of life and live spontaneously and naturally.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

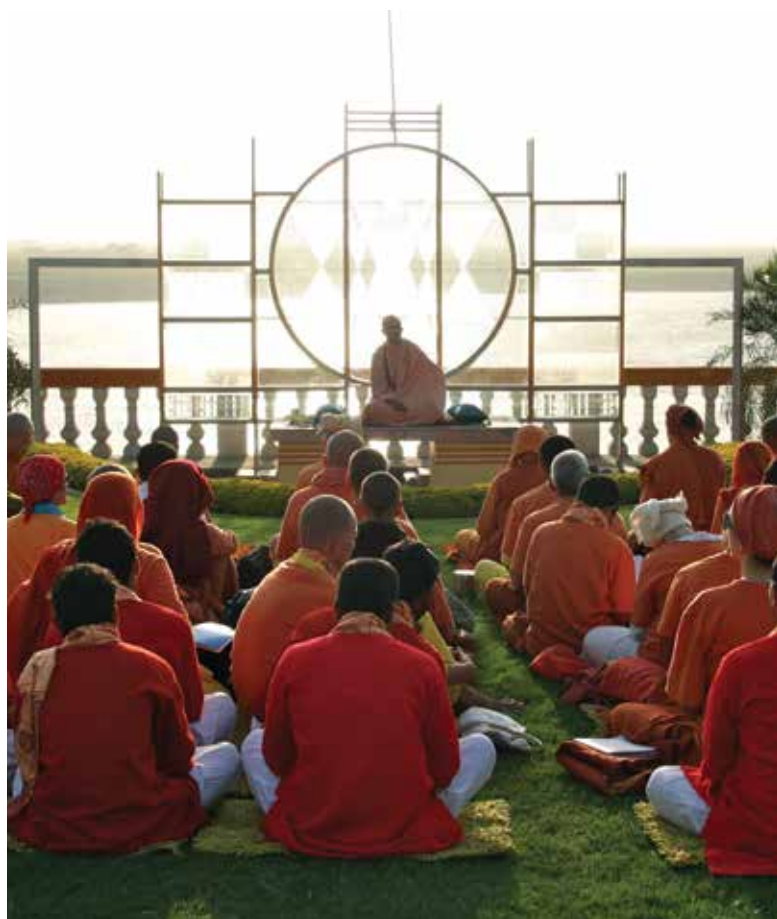
Trying to satisfy our sensory desires has resulted in consumerism and overconsumption, in particular fossil fuels, soil, water and forests. These excesses are rapidly depleting the planet's resources and creating massive waste and pollution. If the consumer societies' exploitation of these resources continues at its current rate, we threaten the very ecosystems that we and all other species are an integrated part of and depend upon.

The sexual energy of swadhisthana is one of the strongest instincts in humans. If this energy is not channelled and expressed properly it creates damage and conflict within the individual and in society. Much of our society today is based on the need to prove our worth as sexual beings. The material possessions and advertisements for such things as cars, clothes, mobile phone are all expressions of our sexuality.

Overpopulation of the human species is one of the greatest threats to our species and the resources of the planet. We humans have the knowledge and the ability to stop reproducing at such an exponential rate. However, if we are unable to keep our population growth in check we will suffer the consequences. The choice is up to us. We know that every ecosystem has a population-carrying capacity, and to maintain the optimum level of population nature employs control of numbers through disease, predators, competition, climatic changes, environmental disasters such as floods, drought, earthquakes, fires storms, or tsunamis. The more human numbers increase the more destructive are nature's controls. The choice is up to us.

Through yogic practices, lifestyle and awareness a balanced state of swadhisthana chakra can be achieved. This balanced state is a deep understanding and realization that we are more than just a physical body with sensual desires that need fulfilling. We have emotional and spiritual needs that we must discover and fulfil by living in an environment that is conducive to these needs.

A balanced swadhisthana is expressed through a sense of contentment, wellbeing and enjoyment of life. Along with



self-confidence, endurance, strength and patience, there will be a feeling of wellness, abundance, pleasure and beauty in the simple things in life.

An imbalanced swadhisthana causes emotional problems such as irritability, guilt, shyness, sexual disorders, eating disorders, laziness and over sleeping, depression and addictions. We are never content or satisfied, so we are continually trying to find happiness in material possessions. We must change our attitudes and way of living to be able to let go of the constant desire for more possessions.

Consumerism and virtual water

Nearly everything we do and everything we use in life has been possible through the presence of water. For example, it takes (approximately):

- 9 litres of water to make 1 litre of soft drinks
- 50 litres of water to make one tomato,
- 255 litres of water to produce a glass of milk,
- 170 litres of water to produce a pint of beer,
- 1700 litres of water to produce a chocolate bar,
- 2700 litres of water to produce a cotton shirt,
- 2000 litres of water to produce 1 kg paper,
- 8200 litres of water to produce leather shoes (as cows require 16,600 litres of water to produce 1 kg of leather),
- 39,000 litres of water to produce a medium sized car.

This is called virtual water, the amount of water used to produce the product, from agriculture, to industry, transportation and packaging. The food we eat contributes to the amount of water we use daily. A natural vegetarian diet uses less water than a processed or meat diet.

The modern consumer society must make a change to their lifestyles and be aware of the impact of everything they do on the waters of the Earth. This level of awareness will come spontaneously and naturally as the swadhisthana chakra is awakened.

Living simply with less is the best way to purify one's life. Clear the clutter that stops the flow and vitality in life. Flow through life with determination and resilience to achieve your goal. This is the power of apas tattwa in your life. Your desires and cravings can be observed from an understanding of need not want. When you know that you can never fulfil your desires, you can begin to manage the mind's responses and live with less. Then life becomes less complicated and more fulfilling.

5

Vedic Tradition: Water is Life – Narayana is Water

In vedic times the society lived close to nature and realized their absolute inter-dependence on the forces of prakriti such as the sun, moon, mountains, forests, lakes and rivers. The vedic people worshipped the forces of prakriti as divine and every aspect of nature was associated with a divine quality.

The Vedas are the ancient scriptures revealed to the vedic rishis who were the scientists and great minds of their time. Contained within the verses of the Vedas are hundreds of hymns and prayers to the Earth and the forces of nature. The Vedas contain the wisdom of the ages, the knowledge of creation and the universe, the evolution of the Earth, the forces of nature and the Earth's ecosystem. Contained within this vedic knowledge and wisdom are guidelines for living in harmony with nature, the knowledge of plants and forests and their importance, the care of rivers and lakes, and methods to purify water, air and soil.

Seeing nature's laws as the divine law and truth, people of vedic times continually tried to understand nature and its function and adjust and adapt their lives so as to live in harmony with nature's ways.

Rightly, I am the son of the Earth, Earth is my mother.

—Atharvaveda (12:12)



The Vedas describe the transcendental gods of the entire creation as the trinity: Brahma, the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the transformer or destroyer; all three are accompanied by Shakti, the dynamic force of creation. The rishis studied nature and worshipped Her forces as divine. They believed that although God or the divine is ultimately unmanifest, yet the divine manifests through nature. In this respect the sun, moon, wind, rain, rivers, or the oceans, all are limbs of the one divine force or reality. This supreme reality is known by different names according to its functions, attributes and form, yet in essence they are aspects of the divine and those same divine qualities are represented within every human being.

He manifests in every form and is to be identified with all Nature's richness. His manifestation is seen everywhere in creation; he moves in forms by his creative charm. His divine energy is the life force which animates all created things.

—Rig Veda (4:40:5)

From the state of yoga nidra, during the nothingness before creation, Shakti is said to have woken Narayana with her power. With this awakening creation began with Surya, the Sun, and Chandra or soma, the moon, followed by the tattvic gods or the elemental gods of the Vedas – *Agni*, fire, *Vayu*, wind, *Varuna*, water, and *Prithvi*, earth.

The Vedas expound nature's laws as eternal truth. Today, however our human race has regressed from those laws, having violated them for material rewards. The human race has thus lost the precious knowledge and experience of the essential spiritual laws and truth.

The rishis believed that the human being is a microcosm of the Lord's creation – 'as above so below'. We are mere reflections of the material and the spiritual world around us. What we do to the waters of the Earth, we do to ourselves. We are not separate, rather we are entwined in a divine unity.



Apah Suktam

आपो हि ष्ठा मयोभुवस्था न ऊर्जे दधातन ।
महे रथाय चक्षसे ॥ 1 ॥
यो वः शिवतमो रसस्तस्य भाजयतेह नः ।
उशतीरिव मातरः ॥ 2 ॥
तस्मा अरं गमाम वो यस्य क्षयाय जिन्वथ ।
आपो जनयथा च नः ॥ 3 ॥
शं नो देविरभिष्टय आपो भवन्तु पीतये ।
शं योरभि सत्रवन्तु नः ॥ 4 ॥
ईशाना वार्याणां क्षयन्तीश्चर्षणीनाम् ।
अपो याचामि भेषजम् ॥ 5 ॥
अप्सु मे सोमो अब्रवीदन्तर्विश्वानि भेषजा ।
अग्नि च विश्वशंभुवम् ॥ 6 ॥
आपः पृणीत भेषजं वरूथं तन्वेऽमम ।
ज्योक्च सूर्यं दृशे ॥ 7 ॥
इदमापः प्र वहत यत्किं च दुरितं मयि ।
यद्वाहमभिदुद्रोह यद्वा शेष उतानृतम् ॥ 8 ॥
आपो अद्यान्वचारिषं रसेन समगस्महि ।
पयस्वानग्न आ गहि तं मा सं सृज वर्चसा ॥ 9 ॥

1. O Water, the environment is so refreshing because of your presence and it imparts us with vigour and strength.
We revere you who gladdens and makes us happy by your pure essence.
2. O Water, please share your auspicious sap with us,
Like a Mother who wishes to share her best bounties with her children.
3. O Water, your invigorating essence enlivens one affected by weakness,
O Water, you are the source of our lives.
4. O Water, may the auspicious divinity that is prayed for be present in you when we drink it.
May the auspiciousness which is infused in you flow to us.
5. O Water, may the divinity in you dwell in agricultural lands,
O Water, we beseech you to nourish the crops.
6. O Water, some say that all the medicinal herbs of the world are present in you,
As well as Agni which brings auspiciousness to the world.
7. O Water, filled with medicinal herbs in abundance, please protect my body
So that I can see the sun for a long time (have long life).
8. O Water, please wash away my wicked tendencies and also cleanse the treacheries burning me from within,
Also wash away any falsehood that is present in my mind.
9. Oh Water, I come to you today, you who are pervaded by the invigorating sap of rasa. I immerse myself deep into you, who is pervaded by Agni.
May Agni produce lustre in me, may Agni create its brilliant lustre within me.

—Rig Veda (10.9)



Apas – water in vedic times

All ancient civilizations were located on the banks of rivers or close to the sea and thus the rishis and seers of vedic times were aware of the importance of water for survival and life.

*We use thee, oh water,
So that thou makest us happy.
By curing our diseases
Thou rejuvenates our potent energy
To enable us to have more progeny.*

—Sama Veda

Apas is described as the quality of water that exists in every form as ice, steam, ocean, rivers, rain, clouds and snow, on Earth and everywhere in the universes. Throughout the Vedas, hymns describe the importance of every form of water. According to the *Rig Veda* all life on this planet evolved from apas. Apas is considered a divine substance upon which we depend and it is controlled by Varuna, the God of water.

In the Vedas water was considered as the nectar of life and giver of good health. Water was said to destroy all diseases and is the source of all purification.

*We solicit from you, O divine waters,
That pure, faultless, rain shedding,
Sweet essence of the earth
Which the pious worshippers
Have first consecrated as a beverage of the resplendent lord.*

—Rig Veda (7:47:1)

Hydrological cycle in the Vedas

In the language of the Vedas the rishis describe the hydrological cycle and our total dependence on it for life. Every form of water whether liquid, solid or gas was a divine entity worthy of respect and devotion. Every form of apas is governed by a deity: Surya, the sun god, is lifting the water from the ocean. Soma is feeding the clouds to form rain. Vayu is the god of winds. The Maruts in heaven are creating rain, Parjanya is the rain. Indra is in thunder and storms. Mighty Lord Varuna rules in the oceans and rivers, influencing all aspects of the cycles of water. The rivers were associated with the feminine principle of creation, the Mother.

Oh Maruts, you draw up the rain from the ocean and full of heavenly waters make it pour.

—Rig Veda (55:5)



Lord Narayana – the lord of water

In the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, Vishnu has another form called Narayana. Lord Narayana is the abode of water. *Nar* means ‘water’ and *ayana* means ‘abode or path’. Narayana is the form of Vishnu that exists after destruction and before creation. Narayana reclines in the ocean of milk on the body of the thousand-headed



serpent called Ananta. The sustaining power of life is Narayana. The consort or dynamic aspect of Narayana is Lakshmi. Narayana himself sustains, maintains and preserves the universe as Vishnu.

Vishnu means all-pervading and is the form that exists during creation. The figure of Vishnu is depicted as standing on a lotus holding a conch, mace, wheel and lotus.

In our lives each aspect of the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva have specific roles to play. Narayana is the supreme controller and is supreme among deities. The power of Narayana manifests within each of us and sustains us from birth to death, giving us everything in plenty.

Anything that is perceivable is Narayana, anything that is growing is Narayana, anything that is content is Narayana, anything that is developing is Narayana, the whole life is Narayana, the whole world is Narayana. The entire creation is Narayana.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Narayana is the sustainer, the provider of everything you seek and desire in life: food, happiness, car, money, property, family and friends. When you invoke the power of Narayana, the sustaining power fills you internally, and you become fulfilled materially and spiritually. The grace of Narayana

brings contentment – socially, emotionally and mentally. With the grace of Narayana, you can maintain, develop and beautify life.



Narayana is the indweller of all hearts. It is due to Narayana that you live. It is due to that force and power that you are able to perceive and experience nature, the world, the cosmos and the universe, the visible and the non-visible. In order to nurture, sustain, protect and develop the shakti of Narayana there is Lakshmi who brings prosperity and peace.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

The meaning of Narayana as the abode of water shows the importance of water in every aspect of our lives from the moment of conception to the moment of death. Lord Narayana, the abode of water, provides everything we require

in life. Narayana and water is life. Without Narayana and water our Earth would be lifeless, incapable of maintaining and nourishing life as we know it.

Lord Varuna – the one who pervades all

Lord Varuna is the Lord of the oceans and rivers. The word *Varuna* comes from the root word meaning ‘to surround, cover or pervade’. Just as the oceans, rivers and skies pervade the Earth, the blood pervades the body, and prana pervades the mind and body. Varuna is the God who pervades, watches and purifies all.



The rivers flow at his command, and the size and depth of the oceans are his creation; he governs all aquatic animals and fish. Through him the moon travels the sky full of brightness, and the stars, which can be seen in the nightly sky, appear to vanish in the daylight. Varuna is associated with clouds and wind. By activating Vayu, the Lord of wind, Varuna controls the weather and movement of rain.

Varuna is self-knowing, self-mastering and moves freely with nature’s laws because he represents these laws and maintains them. Regulation of nature’s law is the work of



Varuna. It is Varuna who blesses or punishes those who follow or violate nature's law.

Varuna, the one who encompasses the whole world, is one of the oldest and most important of the vedic gods. Sometimes, Varuna can be seen riding on a crocodile holding a serpent and a noose in two of his four arms. Sometimes, he is pictured riding a chariot drawn by seven swans and holds a lotus, noose, conch and a vessel of gems in each of his four hands, there is an umbrella over his head.

For the last few hundred years, Varuna's law have been ignored and now we are facing the consequences with drying rivers, acid rain, polluted oceans and skies, and extreme changes to the global climate.

We create dams where water should flow. We build cities in floodplains, pollute rivers and oceans with our industrial, plastic and human waste, killing thousands of aquatic animals and fish. We drag our fishing nets along the ocean floor destroying the ecological balance and forcing thousands of species into extinction. We pollute the skies with industrial waste and pollution from cars and planes and now experience the effect of acid rain on crops, soil and buildings. We dump our waste in the depths of the ocean, with an 'out-of-sight out-of-mind' mentality. And now as we explore the ocean floors we are beginning to discover the debris and damage of years of dumping our waste.



Oh powerful waters (Varuna), I might have violated the laws of Nature knowingly or unknowingly, foolishly or imprudently. Take away whatever is wrong or deficient in me.

—Rig Veda (1:23:22)

The rishis understood that sometimes, through our ignorance, we break the laws unknowingly, and asked for forgiveness. However, with the scientific research and exploration into all areas of nature's bounty, we now, more than ever, understand the cycles and laws of nature, and still we continue to violate them. We can no longer claim ignorance, and for this reason Varuna's wrath will be immense.

In the great epic, *Ramayana*, Lord Rama had to attain the blessings of Varuna before he crossed the ocean to Lanka to vanquish the great demon Ravana. Through tapasya on the ocean shore, Rama tried to invoke Varuna to dry the ocean, so that he and his monkey army could cross. With no response, in his fury Rama began to burn the ocean. Varuna appeared before Rama in all his shining glory and explained to Rama, that it is the nature of the ocean to be deep and vast, the nature of the sun to burn, the winds to blow and the rivers to flow. To dry the ocean, would mean breaking nature's law and the annihilation of the Earth. He vowed to Rama, however, that while they crossed the ocean no harm would come to them. Rather, the sea monsters

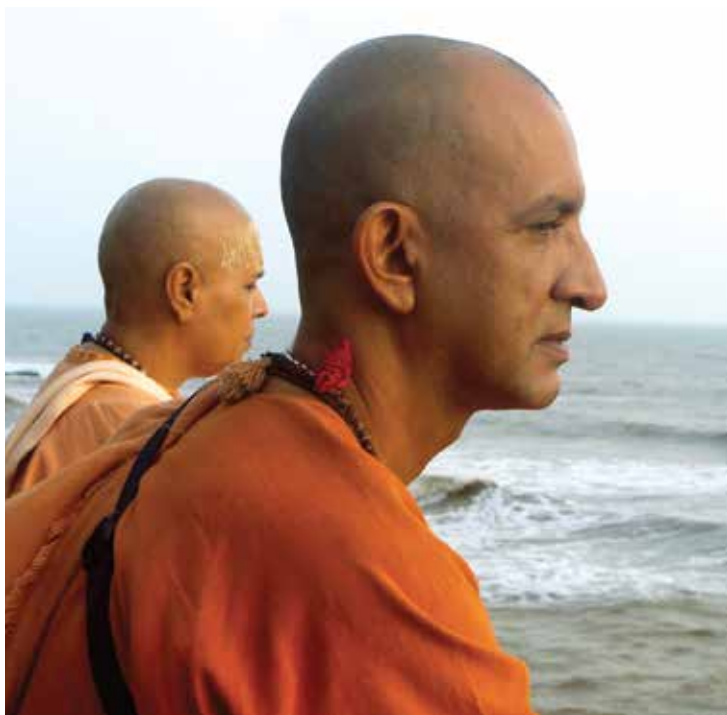


and animals would be their allies and assist them in their ocean crossing. Varuna also guided Rama to the architect who could make the bridge to take them to Lanka. With the blessings of Varuna, Rama and his monkey army crossed safely to Lanka.

This story shows that by trying to control nature for our own gain, particularly water, we will definitely destroy the Earth and all life on it. Spiritually, it represents the process of purification that even Lord Rama must undergo before he can destroy the mighty Ravana, symbolizing the final impurities of human nature lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride and jealousy. The ocean represents the storehouse of samskara and each of the monsters and sea creatures represents the karmas which can either block us or assist us on the spiritual path. We must experience these karmas and move through them. It is Varuna who clears that path and assists us through the vast ocean of samskara, to finally conquer the demons within us, and reach the heights of spiritual awakening.

It is Varuna with his thousands of eyes who watches and ensures we reap the consequences of our actions. We have been ignoring the waters that we are dependent on for life, not only physically but also spiritually. We are continually placing blocks and obstructions on our own path to spiritual awakening through our inability to uphold the laws of nature which are the same laws as our own nature. It is only through following and understanding these laws that we can eventually cross the ocean of samskara and reach the heights of spiritual evolution. As humans we have that choice, but for that to happen we must first follow the laws of nature.

Varuna is the God of water and purity, purifying and cleansing the path for spiritual awakening. Spiritual experiences cannot take place without preparation, spiritual energies need specific pathways, and Varuna prepares these pathways. Just as water can through time clear away even the greatest mountain to create its path, Varuna clears a path for spiritual awakening.



Praised through endless time will be Varuna's heroic act in removing obstacles, with thunder he smote all obstructions down and the water flows, yearning for their home.

—Rig Veda (3.33.7)

In yogic physiology the tattwa of swadhisthana chakra (see Chapter 4) is water. Swadhisthana is described as an ocean of all our samskaras, and it is Varuna who helps to purify this infinite storehouse. Interestingly, within the yantra of swadhisthana chakra is the crocodile, the vehicle of Varuna.

Varuna helps us to break through the three psychic knots or *granthis*, known as Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra granthis, allowing the spiritual energy to flow and awaken all the dormant centres of consciousness. We can imagine Lord

Varuna creating pathways for the sun to shine his knowledge and light into all the dark corners of our being. Through this awakening Varuna grants us broader vision, like the expansiveness of the ocean. In doing so, he removes our limited and narrow outlook so that we can truly experience the external spirit. Spiritually, Varuna represents the highest truth and enables the divine truth to awaken within us.

Varuna is endowed with vast willpower and willpower is an essential element in spiritual life. A strong willpower can help us manage and cross all hurdles of the lower tendencies of mind, desires and instinct, enabling us to follow Varuna's laws, the spiritual laws inherent in nature.

We can no longer ignore these truths of nature that surround us. As we repeatedly violate these laws we will suffer more and more. Now is the time to awaken Lord Varuna within and around us and ask for his guidance, otherwise we will slowly see the waters of the world disappearing, and the human race and all life as we know it will wither away, unable to sustain itself with the intensity of the sun and the lack of water.

In 2018, the effects of global warming were clearly seen as countries, such as the USA and Sweden, were scorched by the summer sun, and fires blazed destroying homes and lives. People in Greece and other Mediterranean countries were forced to run to the ocean for protection from the flames. Earthquakes, droughts, floods and fires are affecting our lives daily. We are facing these realities now. The reality of global warming and climate change is upon us. Each individual must change their attitude and lifestyle, so that nature is supported and protected.



6

Yajna and Sacred Water

In the last satsang before his mahasamadhi, Sri Swami Satyananda told everyone to perform yajna, whether in Bulgaria, Chennai, Bangalore, Greece or Japan. He said all yoga programs should contain yajna and anyone who cared about the Earth and purity of the tattwas and ecosystems should perform yajna. He said spiritual and divine powers are invited and invoked through yajna. The Mahamrityunjaya mantra havan is a small yajna which he prescribed for everyone to perform, and it is being performed by yoga and spiritual aspirants around the world.



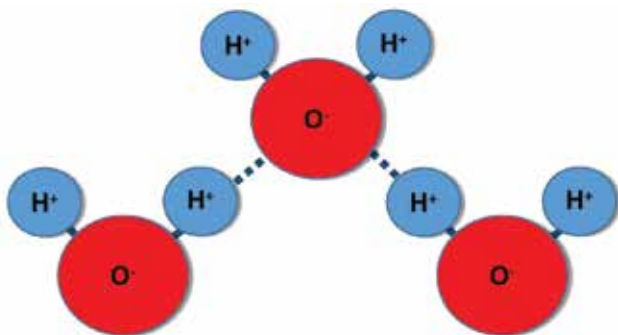
The invocation of spiritual energies and the energy field created during a yajna is achieved by various means such as: mantra, fire, offerings into the fire, yantra, satsang, daan and most importantly the sankalpa of the yajna. These aspects join forces to create the energy field of the yajna. By being in the energy field of a yajna, you can transform your whole personality from the tamasic, materialistic state to the sattwic, spiritual state. Yajna brings a balance between the material and spiritual dimensions and heals the polluted ecosystems, human hearts and minds.

Yajna is like the cool breeze on a hot, sunny day. Amidst the heat of the world, when you participate in the yajna, the spirit is fanned by a cool breeze and you go back a new person, a new body, a new mind and a new self.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

The sacredness of water – a very special molecule

The divine energies invoked during a yajna have a particularly powerful effect on *apas tattwa*, water, which pervades all of creation. To understand how yajna influences water, it is important to understand the unique qualities of water. Water is a very special molecule that contains 2 positively charged hydrogen atoms and one negatively charged oxygen atom joined by very strong covalent bonds called hydrogen bonds. These strong but flexible hydrogen bonds help to give water



its special and magical abilities. The hydrogen bonds are strong enough to stay together but flexible and fluid enough to break easily. They congregate and separate millions of times a second, regrouping each time in a very precise arrangement with an angle of 104.5 degrees from each other.

- A large amount of energy is required to break the hydrogen bonds in water and change their form from solid to liquid or gas. This means water can hold heat and vibration without being altered. This ability is what maintains the homeostasis or temperature balance of the planet. The oceans, rivers and also the blood in our body maintain the temperature within the limited range for life as we know it to exist. On a hot sunny day or when we burn with fever we sweat to cool the body temperature. Similarly, rain, strong winds and storms follow a hot sultry day. When heat increases, water increases to lower and balance the heat.



How is the heat balanced? By using its antidote. What is the antidote to fire? Water. Fire and water both go together. In the Vedas, there is a hymn, Apas Sukta, the hymn to water. Addressing water, it says: “You are the one who can balance the fire.” You don’t douse or repel the fire; you balance the fire. That is an important understanding.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



- The hydrogen bonds give water the highest surface tension of all liquids due to their position and strength at the surface or interface between air and water. This high surface tension allows insects, birds and other creatures to lightly walk on water.
- Due to its positive and negative charge (polar molecule), water molecules are very attracted to one another. This causes cohesion and the water molecules gather together and can travel against the force of gravity up trunks of hundred-metre tall trees. This is called capillary action and is at the heart of all cycles of biological life.
- Normally when liquids form solids, the molecules become dense and closely packed together. However, due to the flexibility of the hydrogen bonds water expands when it freezes and becomes less dense. This allows ice to float on the surface. This incredible ability allows life to exist under ice when rivers or lakes freeze over in the winter.
- Water is the greatest solvent on Earth. Due to the polar charge of the water molecule it attracts other atoms of opposite charge. On Earth healthy water is constantly moving and transforming as it collects and transports

oxygen, nitrogen, and carbon dioxide from the air, and calcium, potassium, manganese, sodium, and other minerals from the ground and rocks. It has the extraordinary ability to dissolve whatever it touches.

- Water is one of the few molecules that can exist and move seamlessly between all three states of solid, liquid and gas. All life on the planet is dependent on the hydrological cycle of water – a constant cycle of change and transformation. When water evaporates the salts and other substances are left behind and the water returns to its pure form.



It is these magical qualities of water that has enabled life and diversity to evolve and flourish on Earth. The powers of water cannot be underestimated. Scientists have shown that water also has memory and consciousness. It is the ability of water to absorb vibrations and communicate among themselves that helps to explain the effect of havan and yajna on people and the environment.





Water has memory

Russian scientists have shown that water has memory. Everything living contains prana or life force at a specific frequency or vibration. Water receives information through vibration and makes an imprint or record. Water molecules have the ability to store these different vibrations and communicate them throughout ecosystems and our bodies.

Light, sound vibration, electromagnetic fields, environmental changes to rivers and lakes such as flow and speed, the presence of different ions and metals etc. all influence the behaviour of water through vibration. Water has the special ability to take on different qualities, but its chemical composition and structure will remain the same.

Due to hydrogen bonding water molecules exist in clusters, (many molecules joined together through positive and negative charge) which are interchangeable with surrounding water molecules. The clusters are said to maintain the memory of the water's interaction with its environment and transfer this information between clusters. Experiments have shown that when a chemical is added to water and then diluted 100 times again and again the water still contains the presence of the original chemical. This is the theory and concept behind natural healing such as homeopathy. Each medicine contains a tiny amount of the original chemical but the imprint or memory is contained within the water and the potency is not lost.



How would you describe Sri Swamiji's relationship with nature?

Amazing yet discreet. He was a very close friend of water: We organized his first conference in Colombia at a holiday resort in a town called El Ocaso, close to Bogotá. It was a Saturday and there were around forty people. As he began the lecture inside an open hall covered with a tin roof, a torrential rain poured down and it made a tremendous noise when it hit the roof. "Swamiji, we cannot hear!" Somebody shouted above the noise. "Let's stop for a while, and let's sing," he said and began chanting a kirtan. Two minutes later, the rain stopped. It was very interesting when we noticed that the rain had stopped above the hall, but all around it still rained until the conference was over.

—Fernando Sanz, Colombia

Water has consciousness

Water is strongly responsive to and influenced by vibration, in particular sound vibration. It is said that water picks up vibrations like an audiotape recording the sound of a voice, and becomes active when vibrations are imprinted into it. The vibration affects the behaviour and quality of the water. Japanese scientists have shown through ice crystals of water, that water molecules react to sound and word vibrations and that the actual ice crystal changes shape. The Japanese experiments showed that loving, kind words, mantras or classical music created balanced and beautiful formations; swear words and loud, aggressive music created scattered and random crystal formations.



In India at the time of our grandmothers and mothers, there used to be a rule in every house. At mealtime when water was given, we had to drink it in one go. We could not drink half a glass, leave it and drink the rest after ten minutes. Our mother used to tell us that for those ten minutes everything that had been spoken had entered the water and that that water should not to be drunk. We had to change the water so that it would be pure and not adulterated by the vibrations of the individual. This is one example of how water was treated by our grandparents, not even far back, only about fifty years.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Sanskrit mantras create specific vibrations that influence water in a positive way and bring about balanced and beautiful formations of the water's ice crystal structure. When all aspects of yajna (mantras, fire, offerings into the fire, yantra, satsang, daan and sankalpa) come together, the powerful energy field of yajna is created. This energy field influences every water molecule in creation, including the water in our bodies. The change created in form and structure of water due to the vibrations of yajna is then imprinted on the water and communicated throughout the ecosystems. This uplifts, purifies and recharges all of creation. If a yajna is performed regularly in a particular place this energy will accumulate year after year, and the imprint will become stronger.



We have seen the effect of yajna and havan on water in Satyam Udyan. The gardens are thriving and the water is good to drink. During the daily havan a glass of water is placed for the sannyasins performing havan to drink. During the havan the glass of water absorbs the vibration of the mantras, the fire, the sankalpa and the faith and devotion of the group of sannyasins who perform havan. It has been experienced by the sannyasins that the glass of water tastes cleaner and sweeter at the end of the havan.



If you want good health and a peaceful, strong mind, respect water. Water is a cause of a healthy body and mind due to the healthy crystals that it can create in you and the water of your body.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Sacred water in yajna

In yajna, in all religions and in spiritual systems around the world, water has been used in ceremonies to purify, sanctify and carry the vibrations and blessings of the holy ceremony. Water used in spiritual or religious ceremonies carries the faith and power of spirituality within it. This water then becomes sacred filled with special healing powers. The discovery that water has memory and can communicate the vibrations and experiences of the world around it, makes the belief in sacred water real and tangible. When water is made sacred through mantras, prayers and incantations, the energy spreads to all water it comes in contact with. It is said that water will only lose that memory and vibration when it changes form, for example when it is boiled and forms water vapour.

During yajna water is charged with the faith, the mantras and the sankalpa of the yajna. This water is then shared with all as blessed and sacred water. In every yajna water is used as a method of purification. Before any yajna begins the pandits or priests sprinkle sacred water on themselves, the yajna vedi (the area where yajna is performed), the materials to be used, and the deity. This sacred water purifies and sanctifies the whole area, cleaning, and renewing everything in preparation for the descent of the divine.

Yajna and apas tattwa

The vedic rishis designed many different yajnas each with specific purposes, such as protection from natural disasters, calamities, evil spells, or for good harvest and rains. They designed yajnas to bless and infuse auspiciousness and spiritual energy into all activities, stages and milestones in human life, from birth, puberty and marriage, to fertility and death. However, whatever the yajna may be, the primary purpose is to invoke the essential spiritual energies of creation and connect to them with head, heart and hands.

All tattwas exist in the manifest and unmanifest dimensions. All yajnas influence apas tattwa, yet there are yajnas that specifically invoke the gods of water. These gods are not separate divine forces; they are the divine force of water in the unmanifest dimension. Through the process of specific yajnas, those specific divine forces, for example apas tattwa, are awakened and activated within nature. When you perform a yajna with the intention to connect to Varuna, you are connecting to and influencing the water element and the outcome will be rain.



The Varuna Yajna has been performed for thousands of years to bring good rains, in particular before the monsoon

or rainy season. In 2018, the Varuna Yajna was performed in the state of Maharashtra, India, by pandits (vedic priests) with the sankalpa for good monsoon rains. In the Varuna Yajna the pandits sit in tubs of water to perform their *aradhana* or worship of Lord Varuna. Through the Sanskrit mantras and sankalpa Varuna is invoked.

Vajpayee Yajna in Rikhia



In 2017, the Vajpayee Yajna was performed in Rikhiapeth, Jharkhand, as per the instruction of Sri Swami Satyananda. The Vajpayee Yajna is a mahayajna. The effect of this yajna is felt more than 750 miles from its source and these far-reaching effects lasts for years. This yajna purifies and heals the environment: plants, animals, birds and people. Every tattwa is influenced from the unmanifest to the manifest form. It purifies the air and water, enriches the soil, encourages rain, fertilization, strong crops, health and auspiciousness to all.

During the course of the yajna, there are certain signs in nature that indicate the success of the yajna. One of these signs is what is called an ‘embryo’ in the clouds above the region of the yajna. During the yajna in Rikhia, the pandits recognized the formation of the cloud-embryo and they knew it was a sign that the yajna would be fruitful. It is said it takes six months for the effects of the yajna to be felt; and six months, almost to the day, the Rikhia ashram experienced good, abundant rain. The ashram remained green, luscious and relatively cool throughout the summer.



The fruit trees produced a plentiful crop. The full effects of such a yajna are still to be seen and experienced. As the ashram moves through the different seasons, the effects of the yajna will manifest through nature and the people living in the area.

Water is a living entity in itself, the elixir of life for all of creation, yajna is a natural way in which water can be purified. You cannot see wifi waves but you know they exist as they control all your modern gadgets like mobile phones, tablets, TV and computers. Similarly, the waves of vibration created by a yajna cannot be seen but they influence your body, mind and the environment in a posi-

tive and uplifting way. Yajna is an ancient practice for a modern world. The annual yajnas conducted at Rikhiapeeth, and Sannyasa Peeth, Munger, have become a gift of purification and happiness from Swami Satyananda to all.

The Vajapeya Yajna nourishes nature. Vaja means grain, peya means water. The Vajapeya Yajna is a yajna to bring grain and water in abundance. For Vajapeya Yajna the radius of influence is of seven hundred and fifty miles.

In the month of March, April, May 2018, when the rest of India was sweltering in heat, the regions of seven hundred and fifty miles' radius of Rikhiapeeth, including Munger, had a very pleasant temperature and rainfall. Beyond that radius was sweltering heat and no rainfall.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Prayer to Mother Nature

*O Mother Nature! Salutations unto thee!
Thou keepest the world show
Thou art all-merciful and kind
Thou art the Vitamins A B C D and E
Thou art the hormones
Thou art the body mind and senses
Thou art the fruits milk and nuts
Thou art energy, vigour and vitality
Thou art health, disease and Nature cure
Thou art the naturopath and naturopathy
Thou art life, intelligence and consciousness
Thou art the bath and diet cure
Thou art the cell, gland and tissue
Thou art ultra violet rays
Thou art the sun and the sun cure
Thou art the curer and the patient
Thou art the herb and the juice
Thou art power, motion and light
Thou art mineral and salt
O Mother Divine! Adoration unto thee
Reveal thy true form unto me
Give me health and long life
Give me wisdom, light and power;
Let me behold thee in all things
Let me remember thee at all times
Let me see thee in all forms
Let me feel thy grace everywhere
Shower thy grace on me
Help me to merge in Brahman
Thy consort, Lord and partner
The refuge, the centre, the goal of all.*

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

7

Water and Yogic Lifestyle

Living a yogic lifestyle means bringing the sacred or divine into everything in life, including water, the most precious *amrit* or elixir of life.

Our connection with water

If we examine our relationship and connection to water in life, we will see that everything we do requires water: bathroom activities, the food we eat, the houses we live in, the cars we drive, the businesses we run, every activity involves the presence of water somewhere. When living a yogic lifestyle, we are full of appreciation for water and its role in our lives. We begin to see the importance of this precious *amrit* in every aspect of our lives and work to protect, purify and respect water.

Saucha – water the great purifier

Saucha means cleanliness, physical, mental and emotional cleanliness. Water is the great purifier of all aspects of our being. Without water there can never be cleanliness.

Water is a symbol of life, energy and change. To dive into the ocean, or stand in the ocean breeze purifies the body, mind and spirit. To dance in the first monsoon rain re-awakens, refreshes and stimulates. To quench the thirst with a glass of water is like drinking *amrit* or nectar. To relax in a bath calms and soothes the body and mind. To listen



to the sound of a flowing river, or the sound of waves of the ocean is healing, purifying and inspiring. When we feel over-emotional, both happy and sad, we cry salty tears and it relaxes and releases emotional tension.

Water has the potential to purify, soothe and heal all aspects of our lives. It can nourish us physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. We need to respect it and treasure it so it can nourish us.

When we begin to understand its true nature, we will realize that water is the key to spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing. If we reconnect with water, we reconnect with the forces of life. The yogis have always respected and used water in all aspects of life with awareness, care and gratefulness. To live yoga is to live in harmony with all the tattwas, especially water.

HOW TO CONNECT TO WATER

The first thing is to observe the way in which you perceive water. How do you treat and store water? How do you drink and use water daily? How do you think about water?

Water storage

Water is stored in many different ways. Since ancient times water was captured and stored in wells, deep holes in the ground that allowed water to breathe and light could penetrate. In modern times, we have designed huge reservoirs and dams for water storage. We store and channel water underground through cities and towns. How we store and care for the water we drink as individuals is our responsibility. We can influence the quality of the water we consume through our awareness and effort to treat water with care and respect.

Since ancient times, all cultures have revered water and kept it in special vessels and containers. The ancient Chinese kept water from the glaciers in jade vases; they believed the glacier water to be the highest quality water, untouched by man. Incas and Aztecs put water in obsidian. Since ancient times, water has been stored in clay pots. The vedic tradition stored water in clay and copper containers.

Clay pots

Water absorbs the vibration or energy from the environment around it. In nature, water percolates through rocks, sandstones, soils and clays in the ground, it is nature's way of cleaning and purifying the water and charging it with natural vitamins and minerals. Therefore, clay is a very natural environment for water, and keeps water healthy and happy.

Clay is one of the most ancient materials used for drinking utensils and storage of water. It is one of the most natural materials and beneficial for the body. For example: clay pots naturally cool the water to a temperature which is ideal for drinking water. Clay is porous in nature and allows

the water to breathe and as evaporation takes place the pot draws more water through the clay to the outside and cools the pot and water inside. It is the same with our skin, as we sweat the breeze cools as it passes over the water on the skin, cooling the body. Vitamins and minerals are released from the clay into the water and the body absorbs and benefits from these extra vitamins and minerals. Clay is alkaline in nature and helps to maintain the pH balance in the body, reducing acidity.

Copper

Copper has been used for generations for storage of water. Copper does not react with water and simply moves freely in the water. According to the science of ayurveda, copper balances the doshas in the body, the kapha, pita and vata. Copper affects the electromagnetic forces of the water and this positively influences the energies of the body.

Copper acts by interfering with the membranes and enzymes of bacteria and can kill bacteria in the water to prevent water borne diseases, including e-coli.

Copper is not naturally produced by the human body; it must be absorbed through food or water. Drinking water stored in a copper pot helps the body absorb the copper it requires for proper functioning:



- Copper increases the pH of the water making it more alkaline, which helps reduce acidity in the body.
- It balances thyroid function.
- It reduces joint pain and arthritis.
- It is beneficial in anaemia as it helps raise production of red blood cells and haemoglobin in the blood.
- It helps wounds to heal, it is an antioxidant and repairs connective tissue present in the skin, heart and arteries.
- It cleanses the stomach and removes harmful toxins.

Note: Copper vessels can be cleaned by rubbing them with lemon.

Glass

Glass is an inert material and although it does not influence the water in any way, some types of glass contain lead and cadmium which can leak into water and poison it. Glass breaks easily and if cracked should not be used for drinking.

Plastic

Nowadays most water is stored in plastic bottles and containers. Storing water in plastic is not good for the health of the water nor the person drinking it. Plastic carries chemicals, dioxins and bacteria which reduce the vitality and poisons the water. BPA is a chemical that was discovered in water stored in plastic water bottles. BPA affects the immune system and can lead to cancer.



Water, the precious elixir of life deserves to be stored in natural materials that allow it to breathe and maintain a healthy balance of minerals and ions.

Drinking water

How we drink water is how we connect to water. When we drink water it enters every cell of our bodies and the state of the water will influence each cell accordingly.

- Water is influenced by thought and words. Before drinking a glass of water relate to that water with a sense of love and gratitude. By simply connecting to the water in this way, the molecules of water will respond and feed the cells of your body with vitality and nourishment. Vibration, including thoughts and sounds, influences the structure and vitality of water.
- Drink clean room temperature water, not cold refrigerated water or water with ice, as it is more difficult for the body to utilize. A clay pot for water is a natural way for cooling water.
- Depending on activity, climate and diet the amount of water you drink should be adjusted accordingly. However, a standard daily requirement for the body and mind is to drink eight glasses of water daily. If you feel thirsty you should drink, that is the body's way of warning you that the water level in the body is down. Not drinking enough water can over time injure the body. Drinking too much water can also be detrimental to health and disturb the salt balance in the body. This can create many physical problems, including salt imbalance in the brain which can lead to depression and other mental disorders.
- Eat fresh foods containing lots of water, like fresh fruits, and vegetables. They naturally provide the daily intake of water for the body.
- Drink water first thing in the morning and last thing at night; it purifies the colon, increases the production of new blood and muscle cells, helps to purge toxins from the blood, and balances the lymphatic system. Water stored in a copper vessel overnight is best drunk in the morning on empty stomach.
- Warm water with lemon first thing in the morning cleans the liver.



- Drink water! Water is the healthiest drink for the body and mind. It is the senses that crave the sweet, salty, caffeine or bubbly drinks. Isn't it strange that globally we prefer to consume soft drinks and flush our toilets with fresh drinking water. What a high price to pay for our health and that of the planet.

NATURE CURE

Swami Sivananda always spoke of the healing powers of Nature. He called it Nature Cure.

The root cause of all disease is violation of the laws of nature.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

He said when we go against nature's law we perform sin and this makes us sick. The best remedy for this, is tapasya, using the elements of nature, in particular, the sun, water and fresh air. In Swami Sivananda's time these tattwas were clean and pure and he used them as therapy for purification and healing. He prescribed water fasts for healing and health. As a daily activity he would tell everyone to spend at least one hour a day in the fresh air and sunshine. Taking deep breaths 'to inspire', to clear the mind of negativity and fill it with fresh oxygen, prana and inspiration.



Utilize the five elements to your best advantage. Breathe in pure air, drink pure water, bathe in pure water, bask in the sun. You will enjoy perfect physical and mental health, you can do vigorous sadhana and realize god.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati



Water Cure

He prescribed water therapy to cure many common diseases, this he called water cure.

Water is unique in its ability to flush out impurities and assist in the proper function of every organ and system of the body. Swami Sivananda said just as water cools the engine of a motor car and controls the heat, so also water controls the heat of our body and helps to expel many impurities through the skin.

Swami Sivananda utilized water for managing diseases and improving health in various ways:

- Hot or cold bath for feet, legs, hips and whole body with salt, minerals and herbs. Remedial baths are used to generate heat or cold in the body. For eye or tooth pain he suggested cold water wash;
- Water applied on the skin in the form of packs, both cold and hot;
- Hot steam and vapour treatments;
- Performing water fasts, only drinking water, flushes toxins from the body;

- Shatkarmas and enema (see Chapter 8);
- Balance emotions; drinking cool water when angry helps to cool the internal fire.

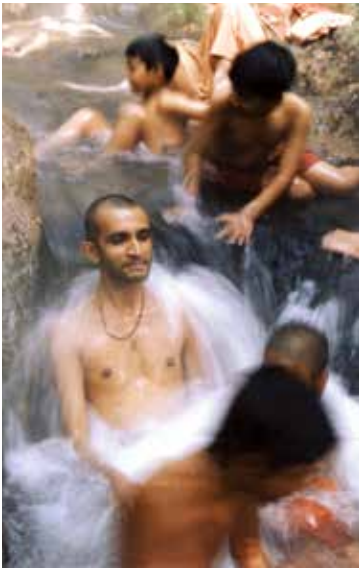
Water is ready at hand, cheap, reliable and always effectual when intelligently applied.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Hot and cold

Water has a great ability to absorb and maintain temperature, both hot and cold, for this reason it is very effective in maintaining balance or homeostasis within the body and can assist with many physical, mental and emotional ailments. Both techniques of hot and cold relieve the body of pain.

Cold water cools the body by contracting the tissues and muscles and thus reducing heat, inflammation and pain. For any kind of non-acute pain, such as headache, urinary infections, burns, bruises and cuts he would prescribe a cold pack. Fever or heat in the digestive system would also be treated with a cooling cold water pack.



He said a cold hip bath, sitting with the lower torso in water and arms and legs out of water, daily for ten minutes can help to cure chronic diseases of the heart, digestion, liver and kidneys by stimulating the nerves and blood flow to these organs and thereby reducing sluggishness.

Hot water expands the blood vessels and relaxes muscles. This encourages increased blood flow and removes congestion of blood and prana in the muscles and organs. Heat acts directly upon nerve fibres,

lessening their irritability or sensitiveness to pain. For acute pains and swelling he would prescribe a hot water pack. Dipping the feet in hot water for ten minutes he said would cure cold and give good sound sleep.

Hot water hip bath is helpful with menstrual disorders and pain, constipation and flatulence, rheumatism and lumbago. Drinking hot water at least half an hour before meals daily cures constipation.

Water therapy does not fill the system with poisonous substances which must be eliminated. The stimulus is in perfect harmony with the natural functions of the body and only serves to promote normal activity.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Dehydration

Water is required for all functions of the body. If we do not drink enough clean fresh water the body experiences dehydration. Chronic dehydration can lead to many serious illnesses in the body that could be cured and managed just through drinking more water.

Some common diseases caused by dehydration are:

- Dry mouth and bad breath
- Dry skin and wrinkles
- Dehydration makes any pain in the body worse; headaches, stomach aches, period pain and joint pain can be reduced through drinking more water.
- Dehydrated ligaments and cartilage can be injured more easily.
- Dehydrated spinal discs reduce in sponginess and effectiveness and increased pinching of spinal nerves can occur.
- Muscle cramps increase with dehydration as electrolytes deplete from the muscles due to less water.
- Dehydration causes constipation. Drinking eight glasses of water a day will assist in healthy bowel movements, even more so than exercise and fibre.

- High blood pressure occurs during dehydration due to the thickening of the blood, and thus the blood volume decreases, heart rate increases and blood vessels constrict, this means blood pressure raises and stays high until the body has enough water.
- Chronic dehydration can lead to stomach ulcers and problems of food absorption as the mucosal layer begins to dry and stops secreting its proactive film.
- The entire respiratory lining requires water to function, chronic dehydration dries out the mucus of the respiratory lining and it becomes vulnerable to dust, pollen and other irritants.
- Urinary tract infections are often caused by dehydration. Drinking enough water flushes the kidneys and bladder maintaining a healthy urinary system with natural healthy bacteria.
- Often when we feel hungry, we are actually thirsty. At this time the body craves for something to replace the loss of water, including food. Fresh foods such as fruit and vegetables contain water, however, most processed foods contain minimum water and by eating them we only gain weight and not health.
- Headache, fatigue, difficulty in concentrating, bad moods, irritation and laziness all increase during dehydration.

Drink eight glasses of water a day, this does not include the tea, coffee and other soft drinks you consume in a day. Replace them with water and definitely the health of the body, mind and emotions will improve.

Mother Nature's alternative – coconut water

Nature has provided everything we need for a healthy life. All nutrients are provided in natural fruits, plants and trees. One very special form of nature's healing power through water is coconut water. Coconut water is the clear liquid inside young coconuts, it helps to nourish the fruit as it grows. Each coconut contains between half and one cup of coconut water. Coconut water contains, calcium, sodium,

potassium, manganese, magnesium, Vitamin C, protein, fibre and carbohydrates.

In tropical regions of the world, coconut water has been used for hundreds of years as a natural way to nourish and replenish the body. If fresh drinking water is not available, then one can survive on coconut water alone. Coconut water is 95% water and the other 5% is the carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins and minerals. Coconuts grow along the ocean but contain no salt. In a salty environment like the sea shore, in a world without fresh water, coconut water is nature's alternative.

For the panchagni sadhana of Swami Satyananda, Swami Niranjan grew coconut trees in Munger; they were the first coconut trees ever grown in Bihar. Swami Niranjan would carry the coconuts to Rikhia for Sri Swamiji during his intense panchagni sadhana. Following the tradition, Swami Niranjan said it was coconut water that maintained the balance within his body during his own panchagni sadhana. It kept his body cool and nourished every cell with vital minerals and vitamins.



There are many benefits received from drinking coconut water such as magnesium which helps to increase insulin and reduce blood sugar levels, and antioxidants that protect cells from damaging free radicals. Coconut water contains potassium which can lower blood pressure in people with high blood pressure and can reduce risks of blood clots forming in the arteries; and there are many more benefits. However, all the restoring and healing properties of coconut water are only found in real fresh coconuts. There are many commercial brands available and some very expensive, but they lack the prana and vitality of real coconut water; just as bottled or filtered water lacks the salts, ions, prana and vitality of fresh mountain stream water. We try to improve on Mother Nature's gifts for commercial gain, but we usually fail.

Sanyam – saving water

There are many ways in which you can save water around your home, office and garden and practise *sanyam*, restraint. Every drop that you save counts, it helps the planet; and it conserves water for future generations.

- Fix any leaking pipes or taps in your home.
- Adjust the flush of the toilet so it uses less water, dual flush systems use less water.
- Turn off the tap when you brush your teeth or shave.
- Take short showers, cleaning the body can be done in a few minutes and with little water.
- Wash clothes with less detergent and use less water. Fill the washing machine with full loads and wear clothes until they really need a wash.
- Maintaining a lawn uses lots of water, small plants, hedges and ground cover in a garden are good alternatives. A vegetable garden is a more efficient use of water than a lawn, as the vegetables then become your nutritious food.
- Use a bucket to wash your car instead of a hose.
- Use a cloth or broom to clean and sweep paths, not water.
- Try to use grey water on the garden, grey water is water from shower, hand washing and clothes washing.



- Eat less meat and dairy. These products use enormous amounts of water in their production.
- Reduce the eating of processed foods. All steps required to process food require water. The less processed the food the less amount of water is used in its production.
- Drink water! All other forms of beverages such soft drinks, soda, juices use enormous amounts of water in their production. Water is nature's natural soft drink, perfect for body and mind.
- Everything you buy, use and consume has a water footprint. It took water to process and transport it. Being thoughtful about purchases, reusing and recycling what you can, reduces your water footprint. For example, eat and buy locally produced foods and goods. Food and other products that have travelled from far distant places utilize litres and litres of water.
- Be aware of everything you throw down the sink, drain and toilet. Many personal products like shampoo, washing detergents, soaps contain chemicals that are detrimental to our rivers and oceans. Try to use the natural products that are biodegradable.

CONNECT TO THE SPIRIT OF WATER



Aradhana means worship, invocation, and realization of the higher divine nature that is within all. When we can perform simple actions with this sentiment in daily life then our spiritual awareness expands. Simple practices of aradhana awaken the spiritual awareness within us and connects to the spiritual and divine in the world around us. Aradhana helps us to break away from our normal mental activity and for a few minutes a day we connect to the divine within the elements around us, the trees, the fire, the air and water. In yoga ecology these are the practices that connect us to the divine in nature, and once we have reconnected then communication begins. Life takes on a new meaning and the spiritual consciousness can be felt in the small things in life, for example the water we drink.

Apas Aradhana

Take a glass, clay or copper *kalash* or cup and fill it with the drinking water you have available, tap or bottled water is fine. Place that cup of water on your pooja table or a special place, light a deepak in front of it and chant the *Sama Veda*

Shanti Mantras (see Appendix1) while waving incense at the container of water. Say a prayer of thanks and gratitude while placing your right hand on the glass. As you place your hand over the cup feel white light and peace filling the cup from your hand. This glass of water will now contain the purity of your intention and the peace of the mantras.

With a flower sprinkle some water on your head, your pooja place, around the room, home and garden. You can drink this sacred water or offer it to your aradhana tree or the garden knowing that the water is a source of vitality, prana and life. Continue with this practice for some time and see the increased vitality and energy that comes. Also appreciate the connection that builds between you and water.

Aradhana of rivers



If the rivers in India are worshipped by millions of people daily, why are the rivers not happy and flourishing? This is because people do not perform aradhana for gratitude of the river, or for the health and wellbeing of the river, it is selfish worship or aradhana. The prayers are always asking for something: to bless the individual, to relieve the pain and suffering, or to liberate them from this world so they no longer suffer.

Along with the selfish intention of the worship, the acts performed around the rivers do not offer care or respect to the water. People worship the river and then defecate and dump rubbish in it. Is this really an act of purity or care for the river's health? It is the selfish human mind and activities that are killing the rivers. There is still a chance that the rivers can regain their health and vitality if we start to heal and protect them and pray for their health and wellbeing.

To perform aradhana to a river, (lake, ocean or any water body) stand by it and offer your prayers for the health and vitality of its waters and give gratitude for everything the waters give you. This simple prayer and sentiment will connect you to the spirit of the river and also purify the water element within you.



LIFE LESSONS FROM WATER

We can learn many things from Mother Nature and the elements. All we need to do is look and learn.

1. Fluidity in life

Life must flow like water. The nature of water is continually flowing and moving forward. Stagnant and still water becomes putrid in time. Water must flow to stay full of prana and vitality. Similarly, in our life we must continue to flow and keep moving, not allowing ourselves to become stuck and stagnant.

2. Water finds a way, always

Water will always find a way. It may cut through, circumvent, overflow, percolate, but it will always find a way. Water is one of the softest elements yet most persistent and therefore

strongest elements. There is nothing it cannot wash away and dissolve. Similarly, in life we must always find ways to overcome any barrier or problem in life, with flexibility and persistence everything is possible.

3. Form and adaptability

Water always takes the shape of the vessel it is poured into and gets coloured by hues mixed with it, but essentially it remains the same. When we identify with the spiritual side of ourselves we can remain untouched by the different pains and problems of life. We remain like the spirit who remains true to itself no matter what form it make take. Life's truth is the truth of the spirit.

4. Still waters run deep

When a lake is still we can see to the depths of the lake and clearly see our reflection in the surface. Similarly, the depths of a busy distracted mind can only be fathomed in stillness. Within the silence, everything can be revealed. Through yoga and meditation, we can learn to still the turbulent mind and experience the depth of our being and see our full potential and possibilities. To immerse ourselves in spiritual practice and truth purifies and awakens, clearing away the dirt of negativity of lifetimes.



8

Yoga Ecology Sadhana

The main axiom in yoga ecology is that our body, mind and spirit consist of the same five tattwas as does the Earth and all of creation. The pollution of the water in the rivers, lakes, oceans and skies is reflected in the water of every cell in our bodies; in particular, the blood, lymphatic system, urinary system and reproductive system which are governed by apas tattwa.

Apas tattwa is governed by swadhisthana chakra and can be described as a vast quantity of intensively active matter which emerges out of the fire element. In the physical body, apas is the first tangible tattwa to emerge as matter, in the form of blood, mucus, bile, lymphatic fluid, and so on.

To live in a healthy society and on a healthy planet, we as individuals need to clean our bodies, minds and emotions, only then can we work to purify the world around us. The purification inside is reflected outside and vice versa, it goes hand in hand.

This purification begins with the hatha yoga sadhana of shatkarmas, asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha, and living a yogic lifestyle.



In Sanskrit, sadhana means spiritual effort, not physical or mental effort. It is the effort made to open the doors beyond which there is enlightenment. The term sadhana is a collective name for all those techniques which are deliberately adopted to remove the imperfections of the personality.

Sadhana is the effort to extend the horizons and rise above the pettiness of life; this should be the aim of sadhana. Sadhana is a highly developed science of evolution; it is practised for the evolution of oneself. Therefore, sadhana is not the end, but the means.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Use your discrimination and common sense when embarking on the sadhana of yoga ecology lifestyle. It is not the amount of practices you do that will bear fruit, but the sincerity and commitment with which you practise over a long period of time, with regularity and faith.

The following sadhana contains components from which you may choose to suit your situation. There is a saying: “If you are looking for water, it is better to dig one hole fifty feet deep, than fifty holes one foot deep.” So, consider which components of the sadhana you are able to realistically commit to in order to make yoga ecology a lifestyle, not for a day or week, but long term.

The following sadhana contains practices which reconnect us to the apas tattwa within us and without

MORNING – ON WAKING

Before the mantra sadhana, drink a glass of water. Water stored overnight in a copper cup or the water from the Apas Aradhana you have performed the previous evening are the best to drink on waking.

Mantra sadhana

When we wake up in the morning, the mind is relaxed, the senses are at peace and there are no mental, emotional or intellectual distractions. Therefore, the first impression the mind should receive in the morning is mantra.

Immediately upon waking, before you climb out of bed, sit on your bed. When you do that, you will find that you are still drowsy neither fully awake nor fully asleep. At that moment when you are in-between sleep and wakefulness, the subconscious mind is most active.

As soon as you wake up practise the three mantras: *Mahamrityunjaya* mantra, eleven times; *Gayatri* mantra, eleven times; and *Durga* mantra, three times. These mantras charge every water molecule in the body and maintain health and balance in body, mind and emotions.

Saucha – cleanliness

After the mantra sadhana, take a short shower, bucket or bath. Swami Sivananda always advised to take a shower after a night's sleep and before performing morning sadhana. The negative ions in moving water give us prana, which is why we feel revitalized after a walk near the ocean, in the rain or close to flowing rivers and waterfalls. A shower benefits us in the same way, washing away tiredness and the negativity of disturbing dreams, giving us energy, mental peace and happiness. For the brave, finishing the shower with cold water stimulates the heart and circulation of blood in the body.

MORNING

Asana to purify apas tattwa

Here is a selection of asanas. They are designed to assist the process of purification and maintain a balanced and healthy apas tattwa, by concentrating on swadhisthana chakra the vortex or centre of apas within our body.

These asanas remove blockages and weakness in the physical and pranic body. They particularly affect the organs that maintain the water of the body and help to keep them strong and vital. They improve circulation and enable the body to feed every cell with fresh blood, thus filling the body with water required for vitality or prana. In this way the body stays healthy, strong and disease free.

Awareness: While performing these asanas, adopt an attitude and awareness that corresponds to the qualities of apas: fluidity, softness, adaptability, continuity in body and breath.

Most forward and backward bending asanas influence and purify swadhisthana chakra and thereby apas tattwa in the body. Examples are:

- Pawanmuktasana part 3
- Chandra namaskara
- Marjari asana
- Vyaghrasana
- Shashankasana
- Bhujangasana
- Paschimottanasana
- Padmasana
- Eka padasana

Pranayama

Pranayama utilizes the energy of the air and of the body to expand and increases the prana in the body. It thus provides nutrition and energy for all cells of the body.

Awareness: During pranayama concentrate on the flow, continuity and fluidity of breath like a gentle continuously flowing river.

- Nadi shodhana – to a comfortable count
- Ujjayi – imagine the breath sounding like a gentle stream or water fall.

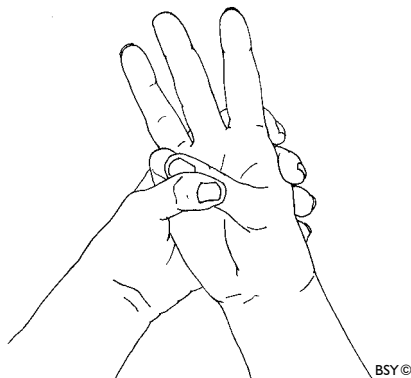
Apas mudra (gesture of the water element)

Apas is known to also control the fluids in the body. Thus, this mudra is also known as bhudi mudra, *bhudi* meaning 'fluid'. Apas or bhudi mudra subtly increases the water element within the body. It helps to restore or maintain equilibrium in the fluid balance and rectifies related problems in regard to the fluids which are governed by apas tattwa.

Technique 1

Place the tip of the thumb and the little finger together. Extend the other fingers in a relaxed way.

The following is a variation which decreases the water element, represented by the little finger. It especially helps with congestion of mucus or secretion in the frontal sinuses, lungs and the digestive tract from the stomach to the large intestine.



Technique 2

Bend the little finger of the right hand until the tip touches the ball (the fleshy part of the palm at the

bottom of the thumb) of the right thumb, and place the right hand thumb on top of it.

Cup the right hand with the left hand.

Place the left thumb on the right thumb and little finger and press down gently.

Sahajoli/vajroli mudra (thunderbolt/spontaneous psychic gesture)

Vajroli mudra is a practice for men involving gradual contractions of the urogenital muscles. The equivalent practice for women is known as sahajoli mudra in which the entire vaginal passage has to be contracted. Vajroli and sahajoli mudra are preferably performed in siddhasana and siddha yoni asana respectively.

Vajroli/sahajoli mudra regulates and tones the entire urogenital system, which is governed by swadhisthana chakra. It helps overcome psychosexual conflicts and unwanted sexual thoughts. It conserves and redirects energy, balancing swadhisthana chakra and thus apas tattwa.

Technique for the simple form

Sit in siddha/siddha yoni asana, or any comfortable meditation posture with the head and spine straight.

Place the hands on the knees in chin mudra or jnana mudra.

Close the eyes and relax the whole body.

Take the awareness to the urethra.

Inhale, hold the breath inside and draw the urethra upward.

This action is similar to holding back an intense urge to urinate.

The testes in men and labia in women should move slightly upward during this contraction.

Confine the contraction to the urethra.

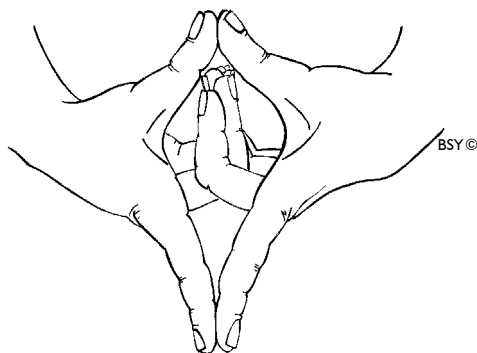
Hold the contraction for as long as comfortable, starting with a few seconds, and gradually increasing.

Exhale, releasing the contraction, and relax.

Yoni mudra (gesture of the source)

The word *yonī* means 'womb' or 'source'. Therefore, *yonī mudra* is the attitude by which one invokes the primal energy inherent in the womb or source of creation. It connects you to water, the source of life and creation.

The interlocking of the fingers in this practice creates a complete cross-connection of energies from the right hand into the left and vice versa. As well as balancing the energies in the body, it helps to balance the activities of the right and left hemispheres of the brain. Placing the tips of the index fingers and thumbs together further intensifies the flow of prana. This mudra makes the body and mind more stable in meditation and develops greater concentration, awareness and internal physical relaxation.



Technique

Assume a comfortable meditation posture with the head and spine straight.

Place the palms of the hands together with the fingers and thumbs straight and pointing away from the body.

Keep the pads of the index fingers together so that these two fingers form a triangle.

Turn the little, ring and middle fingers inwards so that the backs of the fingers are touching.

Interlock the little, ring and middle fingers.

Bring the thumbs towards the body and join the pads of the fingers and thumbs together to form the base of a yoni or womb shape.

Variation: Yoni mudra may also be performed by interlocking the middle, ring and little fingers without turning them inward. The thumbs may be crossed in front of the outstretched index fingers, or outstretched with the pads touching towards the body.

Shatkarmas

To begin the process of purification the ancient hatha yogis designed a series of practises called shatkarmas. The shatkarmas of hatha yoga, prepare our bodies and minds for spiritual awakening and transformation by cleaning and balancing the five tattwas of the body. These practices particularly affect the water, fire and air elements the tattwas that govern the doshas of the body. To receive the divine, the temple must be cleaned. Similarly, we need to remove the impurities in our bodies, minds and emotions, to allow our own spiritual light to shine. Once we use the shatkarmas to begin to purify ourselves we can then begin to live yoga. Living yoga means caring and nurturing the tattwas that sustain us.

Shat means six, karma or kriya means action. Shatkarma means the six actions of hatha yoga to externally and physically detoxify the body, to rectify the imbalances occurring due to dietary irregularities, stresses and anxieties, and other harmful habits.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

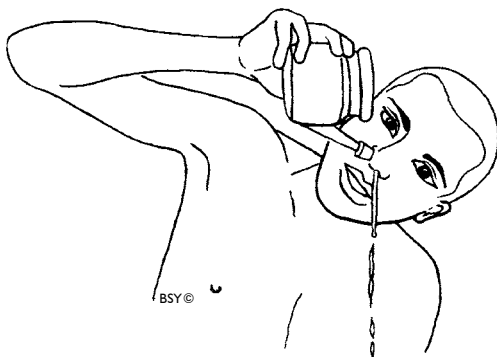
The shatkarmas of hatha yoga use salty water with the same ionic balance as the water in our bodies. It is the same salt as in our tears and the same salt as in the oceans. Salty water is the great cleanser for all aspects of personality.

The following are the most useful shatkarmas in daily life. All involve the use of salt water. Through the regular practice of these shatkarmas, the toxins can be removed

from the body and common illness of the body – cold, cough, digestive and urinary problems, can be prevented and managed by the yoga practitioner.

1. Jala neti (nasal cleansing with water)

A special *neti lota*, neti pot, should be used.



Stage I: Washing the nostrils

Fill the neti pot with the prepared salt water. Stand squarely, with legs apart so that the body weight is evenly distributed between the feet. Lean forward and tilt the head to one side. Breathe through the mouth. Gently insert the nozzle of the pot into the uppermost nostril. There should be no force involved. Keep the mouth open. Repeat with the other nostril.

Stage 2: Drying the nostrils

Stand erect. Close the right nostril with the right thumb and breathe in and out through the left nostril 10 times in quick succession, as in kapalbhati pranayama. Repeat through the right nostril, with the left nostril closed. Perform once more through both nostrils.

Frequency: Once a week or daily if required.

Warm water with salt became the trademark of neti kriya. You don't use just any water; it has to be clean body-temperature water with just enough salt, to be salty like tears. Neti is also a good practice if you are living in a city and continuously inhaling the black smoke of the cars and the polluted air of the city. If you practise neti in the evening after returning from work, you will see that the colour of the mucus that you expel is black from the city pollution.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

2. Kunjal kriya (the practice of vomiting water)

Kunjal is used for cleansing the respiratory and digestive system. If the digestive system is not functionally efficiently toxins will pollute the whole body and lead to disease.

Frequency: Once every two weeks or more often as prescribed by your experienced yoga teacher.

3. Shankaparakshalana

The salty water of shankaparakshalana draws the toxins from the body and by clearing out the intestines of clogged and rotting food waste. Regular exercise, along with a diet that promotes intestinal health, is also recommended.

- Poorna shankaparakshalana
- Laghoo shankaparakshalana
- TTK solution

Laghoo shankaparakshalana/TTK solution: Light, short variation of cleansing the digestive tract from mouth to anus. Once a month

To practise any form of shankaparakshalana, consult an experienced yoga teacher. It is not recommended to do it on your own until you have mastered the practice and are confident to practise alone.

AT ANY TIME DURING THE DAY

Remembrance of your connection to water:

Drinking water

Awareness of the water you drink throughout the day. Avoid soft drinks, artificially flavoured cordials and drink more water.

Say a prayer of thanks and connect to water in your glass or bottle before drinking.

Using water

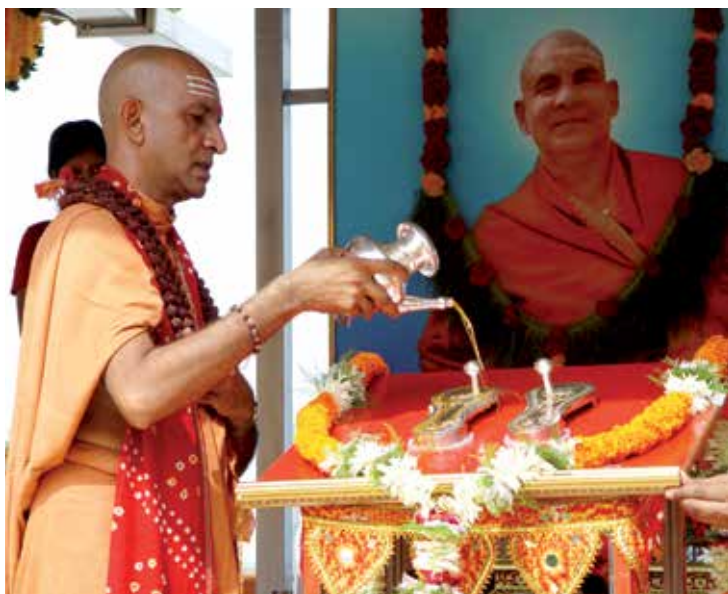
In all your daily activities be aware of how you use and connect to water.

EVENING/NIGHT

Apas Aradhana

Take a glass, a clay or copper *kalash* or cup and fill it with the water you have available, tap or bottled water is fine. Place that cup of water on your aradhana table or in a special place, light a deepak in front of it and chant the *Sama Veda Shanti Mantras* (see Appendix 1) while waving incense at the container of water. While placing your right hand on the glass say a prayer of thanks and gratitude. As you place your hand over the cup feel white light and peace flowing from your hand and filling the cup. This glass of water will now contain the purity of your intention and the peace of the mantras.

With a flower sprinkle some water on your head, your pooja place, around the room, house and garden. You can drink this sacred water or offer it to your Aradhana tree or the garden knowing that the water is a source of vitality, prana and life. Continue with this practice for some time and notice the increased strength and energy that comes in the environment and become aware of and experience the connection that develops between you and water.



One's desire and emotions inspire one to worship or establish a relationship with the Divine. If there is no such desire or emotion, then the person does not have a relationship with the Divine.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Review of the Day

Every night before going to sleep, analyze your day. How did you connect to water, from the time of waking until the present moment? When we are working to improve different aspects of our lives, the review of the day brings our awareness to specific aspects of our lives. In this case, water – the elixir of life.

The day may be divided into different sections of time: morning, afternoon and evening; or in smaller time periods, like before breakfast, between breakfast and lunch, from lunch to dinner, after dinner. According to your lifestyle, you may want to look at the day in regard to places: home, work and travel.

What did I do? How did I interact with water? How much water did I drink? Was I aware before drinking and during drinking? How and when did I use water? Did I save water, or waste even a drop? Did I consider the cost of water of my daily activities? Each moment, each hour of the day is observed. This will only take about five minutes at night.

Look at the connection with your external environment and your contribution to making the world around you a better place. Has your day been lived in the spirit of yoga ecology? Have you made any effort to improve yourself and the quality of the environment? Analyzing the events of the day must be done when you are about to go to sleep, to clear the mind of the clutter that has accumulated during the day.

To make the practice of self-observation more useful and beneficial, the next step is to write down the findings of the review in a spiritual diary.

Spiritual Diary

Swami Sivananda emphasized the importance of keeping a spiritual diary. It is meant to be a checklist of spiritual progress, not a recipient of your emotions. A spiritual diary is a matter-of-fact record, yet an honest and practical tool for chronicling your behaviour, attitudes and interactions in daily life.

The following five questions relate to water and the development of a yoga ecology lifestyle. You may want to start with only one question and become regular in your practice, before dealing with all five.

After a few weeks of practice, it is good to look at the spiritual diary and define areas of change, improvement or stagnation. Then the practice continues with renewed effort and the will to do justice to your commitment of respecting yourself and your natural and social environment.

Here are some questions you may use in your spiritual diary:

	Week 1							
	Day:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How much water did you drink today?								
Did you waste water today or did you save and conserve water?								
Did you say a prayer of gratitude before drinking water, cooking, washing your clothes or taking a bath?								
Did the qualities of water inspire you: flow and consistency, the strength to face any obstacles and the ability to work around them, the determination and one-pointedness of water? Did you discover these qualities in you? And how did you express them?								
Were your choices of food, purchases, transport, activities and attitudes healthy for you and the water of the Earth?								

Drink a glass of water every night before you do your personal mantra at the end of the day.



SHANTI MANTRA OF THE SAMA VEDA

शान्ति मंत्र

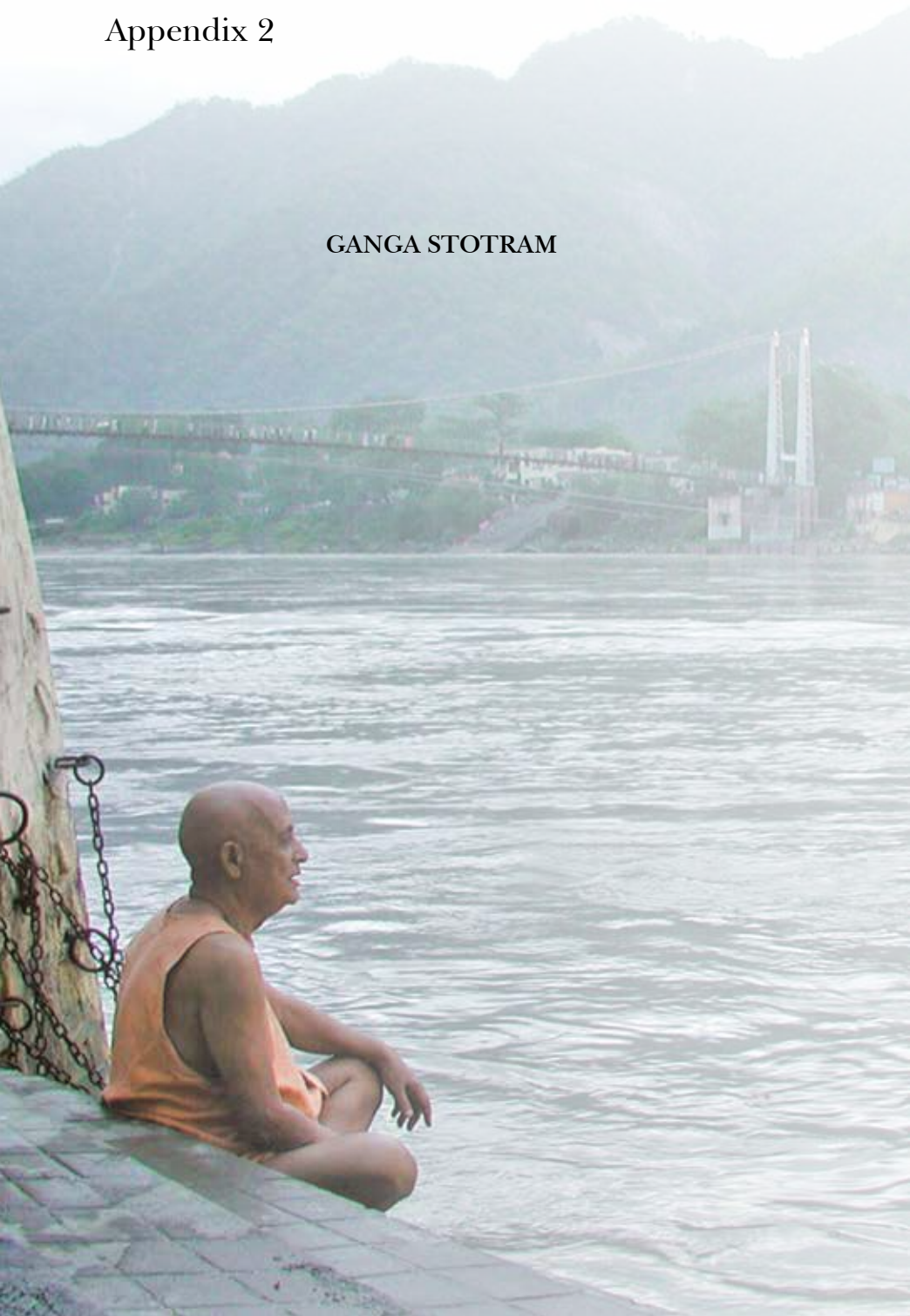


ॐ द्यौः शान्तिरन्तरिक्षं शान्तिः पृथ्वी शान्तिरापः शान्तिरोषधयः शान्तिः वनस्पतयः
शान्तिर्विश्वेदेवाः शान्तिर्ब्रह्म शान्तिः सर्वं शान्तिः शान्तिरेव शान्तिः सामा शान्तिरेधि ॥
शान्तिः शान्तिः सुशान्तिर्भवतु सकलारिष्ट सुशान्तिर्भवतु सर्वे ग्रहाः सुशान्तिर्भवतु ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

May there be peace in the heavens (celestial plane), peace in the sky (astral plane), peace on earth (physical plane), peace on water, peace among herbs, plants and trees, peace among the ten cardinal points of the planet, peace upon Brahma, peace everywhere, peace upon me, peace and peace alone. May there be peace and auspiciousness, may all the misfortunes and tribulations be pacified, may all the planets be pacified.

Appendix 2

GANGA STOTRAM



गंगा-स्तोत्रम्

जय जय गंगे जय हर गंगे जय जय गंगे जय हर गंगे ।
देवि सुरेश्वरि भगवति गंगे त्रिभुवनतारिणि तरलतरंगे ।
शंकरमौलिविहारिणि विमले मम मतिरास्तां तव पदकमले ॥ 1 ॥
भागीरथि सुखदायिनि मातस्तव जल महिमा निगमे ख्यातः ।
नाहं जाने तव महिमानं पाहि कृपामयि मामज्ञानम् ॥ 2 ॥
हरिपद पाद्य तरंगिणि गंगे हिमविधु मुक्ता धवल तरंगे ।
दूरी कुरु मम दुष्कृति भारं कुरु कृपया भवसागर पारम् ॥ 3 ॥
तव जलममलं येन निपीतं परमपदं खलु तेन गृहीतम् ।
मातर्गंगे त्वयि यो भक्तः किल तं द्रष्टुं न यमः शक्तः ॥ 4 ॥
पतितोद्धारिणि जाह्नवि गंगे खण्डितगिरिवरमण्डित भंगे ।
भीष्म जननि हे मुनिवर कन्ये पतितनिवारिणि त्रिभुवन धन्ये ॥ 5 ॥
कल्पलतामिव फलदां लोके प्रणमति यस्त्वां न पतति शोके ।
पारावार विहारिणि गंगे विमुख युवति कृत तरलापांगे ॥ 6 ॥
तव चेन्मातः स्रोतः स्नातः पुनरपि जठरे सोऽपि न जातः ।
नरकनिवारिणि जाह्नवि गंगे कलुषविनाशिनि महिमोत्तुंगे ॥ 7 ॥
पुनरसदंगे पुण्यतरंगे जय जय जाह्नवि करुणापांगे ।
इन्द्रमुकुटमणिराजित चरणे सुखदे शुभदे भृत्य शरण्ये ॥ 8 ॥
रोगं शोकं तापं पापं हर मे भगवति कुमति कलापम् ।
त्रिभुवन सारे वसुधा हारे त्वमसि गतिर्मम खलु संसारे ॥ 9 ॥
अलकानन्दे परमानन्दे कुरु करुणामयि कातर वन्द्ये ।
तव तट निकटे यस्य निवासः खलु वैकुण्ठे तस्य निवासः ॥ 10 ॥
वरमिह नीरे कमठो मीनः किं वा तीरे शरटः क्षीणः ।
अथवा श्वपचो मलिनो दीनस्तव न हि दूरे नृपतिकुलीनः ॥ 11 ॥
भो भुवनेश्वरि पुण्ये धन्ये देवि द्रवमयि मुनिवर कन्ये ।
जय जय गंगे जय हर गंगे जय जय गंगे जय हर गंगे ॥ 12 ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥ हरिः ॐ ॥

Gaṅgā-stotram

Jaya jaya gaṅge jaya hara gaṅge, jaya jaya gaṅge jaya hara gaṅge.

1. Devi sureśvari bhagavati gaṅge tribhuvanatāriṇi taralataṅge.
Śaṅkaramaulivihāriṇi vimale mama matirāstāṃ tava padakamale.
2. Bhāgīrathi sukhadāyini mātastava jala mahimā nigame khyātaḥ.
Nāhaṃ jāne tava mahimānaṃ pāhi kṛpāmayi māmajñānam.
3. Haripada pādya taraṅgiṇi gaṅge himavidhu muktā dhavala taraṅge.
Dūrī kuru mama duṣkṛti bhāraṃ kuru kṛpayā bhavasāgara pāram.
4. Tava jalamamalaṃ yena nipītaṃ paramapadaṃ khalu tena grhītaṃ.
Mātargaṅge tvayi yo bhaktaḥ kila taṃ draṣṭuṃ na yamaḥ śaktaḥ.
5. Patitoddhāriṇi jāhnavi gaṅge khaṇḍitagirivaramaṇḍita bhaṅge.
Bhīṣma janani he munivara kanye patitanivāriṇi tribhuvana dhanye.
6. Kalpalatāmiva phaladāṃ loka praṇamati yastvāṃ na patati śoke.
Pārāvāra vihāriṇi gaṅge vimukha yuvati kṛta taralāpāṅge.
7. Tava chenmātaḥ srotaḥ snātaḥ punarapi jaṭhare so'pi na jātaḥ.
Narakanivāriṇi jāhnavi gaṅge kaluṣavināśini mahimottuṅge.
8. Punarasadaṅge puṇyatarāṅge jaya jaya jāhnavi karuṇāpāṅge.
Indramukuṭamañirājita charaṇe sukhade śubhade bhṛtya śaraṇye.
9. Rogam śokaṃ tāpaṃ pāpaṃ hara me bhagavati kumati kalāpam.
Tribhuvana sāre vasudhā hāre tvamasi gatirmama khalu saṃsāre.
10. Alakānande paramānande kuru karuṇāmayi kātara vandyē.
Tava taṭa nikaṭe yasya nivāsaḥ khalu vaikuṇṭhe tasya nivāsaḥ.
11. Varamiha nīre kamaṭho mīnaḥ kiṃ vā tīre śaraṭaḥ kṣīṇaḥ.
Athavā śvapacho malino dīnastava na hi dūre nṛpatikulīnaḥ.
12. Bho bhuvaneśvari puṇye dhanye devi dravamayi munivara kanye.

Jaya jaya gaṅge jaya hara gaṅge, jaya jaya gaṅge jaya hara gaṅge.

Om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ. Hariḥ om

Victory to Ganga, Victory to Shiva!

1. Goddess Ganga, you are the divine river from heaven, you are the saviour of all the three worlds, you are pure and restless, you adorn Lord Shiva's head. Mother, may my mind always rest at your lotus feet.
2. Mother Bhagirithi, you give happiness to everyone. The significance of your holy waters is sung in the Vedas. I am ignorant and not capable of comprehending your importance. Devi, you are full of mercy, please protect me.
2. Devi, your waters are as sacred as the 'Charanamriti' of Sri Hari. Your waves are white like snow, moon and pearls. Please wash away all my sins and help me cross this ocean of samsara.
3. Mother, those who partake of your pure waters definitely attain the highest state. Mother Ganga even Yama, the Lord of death, cannot harm your devotees.
4. Jahnavi, your waters flowing through the Himalayas make you even more beautiful. You are Bhishma's mother, and sage Jahnu's daughter. You are the saviour of people who have fallen from their path, and so you are revered in all three worlds.
5. Mother, you fulfil all the desires of those devoted to you. Those who bow down to you do not have to grieve. Ganga, you are eager to merge with the ocean, just like a young woman anxious to meet her beloved.
6. Mother, those who bathe in your waters do not have to take birth again. Jahnavi, you are held in the highest esteem. You destroy your devotees' sins and save them from hell.
7. Jahnavi, you are full of compassion. You purify your devotees with your holy waters. Your feet are adorned with the gems of Indra's crown. Those who seek refuge in you are blessed with happiness.

8. Bhagavati, take away my diseases, sorrows, difficulties, sins and wrong attitudes. You are the essence of the three worlds and you are like a necklace around the Earth. Devi, you alone are my refuge in this samsara.
9. Ganga, those who seek happiness worship you. You are the source of happiness for Alkapuri and the source of eternal bliss. Those who reside on your banks are as privileged as those living in Vaikunth.
10. Devi, it is better to live in your waters as a turtle or fish, or to live on your banks as the poor, rather than to live away from you, even as a wealthy king.
11. Goddess of the Universe, you purify us. Daughter of Muni Jahnu, one who recites this Ganga Stotram every day definitely will achieve success.



Glossary

Agni – fire, Lord of fire

Adi Shankarcharya – celebrated teacher of the Advaita Vedanta philosophy; founder of the Dashnami tradition of sannyasa

Amrit – nectar, ambrosia

Apas – water, water element

Aradhana – to be fully immersed in worship of the deity with intense reverence

Arati – worship involving waving of lights with reverence before a deity

Ashram – place of spiritual practice and growth through internal and external labour

Chakra – circle, wheel or vortex; pranic/psychic centre; confluence point of energy flows (nadis) in the body; seven major chakras for descent of divine energy or for human evolution

Daan – gift, donation; unconditional giving

Deva – luminous being; a god or divine being

Devata – form of divine dignity or power; divine being representing the higher states of evolution

Ganga – river in northern India

Gangotri – source of Ganga in the Himalayas

Gopis – companions of the young Krishna in Vrindavan, on the banks of Yamuna

Granthi – psychic knot; the three granthis on the sushumna nadi which hinder the upward passage of kundalini, viz. Brahma granthi, Vishnu granthi and Rudra granthi

Guna – quality; the three gunas, qualities or aspects of prakriti (nature) are sattwa, rajas and tamas

Havan – a small yajna for groups; special samagri is offered with specific mantras into a fire; a powerful practice of individual and environmental purification

Himalayas – the world's highest mountain range in northern India; place of many pilgrimage places; source of Ganga and Yamuna

Indra – king of the vedic gods, the ruler of heaven; lord of the senses; the mind or the soul; the rain god

Janani – cosmic universal energy, power or shakti, the mother

Krishna, Sri – the 'black' or 'dark one'; eighth incarnation of Vishnu in the Dwapara Yuga; Sri Krishna is perhaps the most celebrated hero in Hindu mythology and seems to be a historical figure. His teachings to his friend and disciple Arjuna during that war are immortalized in the *Bhagavad Gita*

Kundalini – spiritual energy lying dormant in mooladhara chakra

Lokas – plane of existence, dimension

Mahabharata – epic of ancient India said to be composed by Sage Vedavyasa, involving the history and consequences of the great battle between the Kaurava and Pandava princes. It consists of eighteen sections and the *Bhagavad Gita* is a part of it

Mahayajna – great sacrifice; see Yajna

Mantra – words of power; sound vibrations which liberate the mind when repeated

Mooladhara chakra – the lowest psychic/pranic centre in the human body; situated in the perineal floor in men and the cervix in women; associated physically with the coccygeal plexus, excretory and reproductive organs, and mentally with the instinctive nature; spiritually it is the seat of kundalini

Mudra – literally, 'gesture'; psychic, emotional, devotional, and aesthetic gestures; attitudes of energy intended to link individual pranic force with universal or cosmic force

Muni – one who contemplates; one who has conquered the mind; one who maintains silence or stillness of mind

Narayana – *Nar* means ‘water’ and *ayana* means ‘abode or path’. Narayana is the abode of water

Pandit – priest; scholar

Patala – instinctive or animal realm; hell

Pooja – worship

Prakriti – individual nature; nature; manifest and unmanifest nature composed of the three gunas; the active principle of manifest energy

Pralaya – the space between destruction and creation where only water exists.

Prana – vital energy force, essence of life permeating both the macrocosmos and microcosmos; the sum total of all energy residing within the universe; breath; respiration; principle of life

Prithvi – earth, literally, ‘the broad one’; the solid state of matter

Rajas – guna or quality of dynamism, activity, restlessness

Rama, Sri – the seventh avatar of Vishnu and embodiment of dharma, hero of the epic *Ramayana*; a heroic and virtuous king

Rasa lila – cosmic dance, divine dance

Ravana – ten-headed demon king who kidnapped Sita; he was slain by Sri Rama; his ten heads symbolize attachment to the phenomenal reality

Riga Veda – one of the four Vedas

Rishi – seer; realized sage; one who contemplates or meditates on the Self

Rishikesh – town where Ganga leaves the Himalayas and enters the plains of northern India; seat of many ashrams

Sadhana – spiritual practice or discipline performed regularly

Sahasrara chakra – chakra of the thousand-petalled lotus, at the crown of the head

Sama Veda – one of the four Vedas

Samskara – mental impressions, archetype

Sankalpa – positive resolve; purpose, aim, intention; willpower

Sannyasi, sannyasin – one who has taken sannyasa initiation, surrendering everything to the guru and the spiritual journey

Sanyam – mastery, control, self-discipline

Sattwa – guna or quality of luminosity, harmony, balance, purity, goodness

Satsang – association with the wise and good

Shakti – primal energy; manifest consciousness; power, ability, capacity, strength, energy; counterpart of Shiva; the moving power of nature and consciousness; in Hindu mythology Shakti is often symbolized as a divine woman

Shaucha – cleanliness, purity of body and mind

Shiva – state of pure consciousness, individual and cosmic, original source of yoga; Lord of yogis; auspicious, benevolent one; name of the god of the Hindu trinity who is entrusted with the work of destruction; destroyer of the ego and duality

Stotras – group of mantras sung in praise of a deity

Swadhisthana chakra – literally, ‘one’s own abode’; second psychic/pranic centre; located in the coccyx, associated with the sacral plexus and governing the urogenital system; the storehouse of subconscious impressions

Tamas – guna or quality of inertia, stability, stillness, ignorance, mental dullness, unwillingness to change

Tapasya – practice of austerity

Tattwa – ‘that-ness’; true essential nature; an element, a primary substance;

Tirtha – passage, sacred place, place of pilgrimage

Upanishads – the philosophical portion of the Vedas, traditionally 108 in number; containing intimate dialogues and discussions between guru and disciple on the nature of the Absolute and the path leading towards it; literally, ‘to sit near and listen’ (to the spiritual teacher)

Varuna – Lord of water

Vayu – air, wind; Lord of wind

Vedas – ancient texts revealed to the sages and saints of India, explaining and regulating every aspect of life from

the Supreme Reality to worldly affairs; four in number: *Rig, Yajur, Sama, Atharva*, which are further divided into the Samhita, Brahmana, Aranyaka and Upanishads; the oldest books in the library of mankind, parts of them revealed to sages and seers before 5,000 BCE

Vishnu – vedic deity; the second deity of the Hindu trinity (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva), entrusted with the preservation of the universe, a duty which obliges him to appear in several incarnations; Supreme Consciousness

Yajna – sacrifice; fire ceremony having three components: ritual or worship, satsang and unconditional giving, process of creation and life

Yama – self-restraints or rules of conduct which render the mind tranquil and connect us to positivity within and help us live accordingly

Yamuna – river in northern India

Yoga – union; the root is *yuj*, meaning ‘to join’, ‘to yoke’; a system of practice leading to a state of union between the individual and universal awareness; practices, philosophy and lifestyle to achieve peace, power and spiritual wisdom as well as perfect health, a sound mind and a balanced personality; one of the six main systems of Indian philosophy

Notes



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Yoga ecology is the yogic and vedic way of ecological living. Only when all the forms of *Janani*, the Mother, are respected and loved will there be peace in the life of the individual and on Earth.

Inspired by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati, *Janani* is a series dedicated to the ancient *vidya* or science of yoga ecology which encourages aspirants to renew their bond with Mother Nature on a daily basis.

Janani: Water – the Sustainer of Life is the third volume of the series on yoga ecology. Water, the *apas tattwa*, is explored in all aspects – from the stark reality of misuse and abuse in today's modern societies to vedic and yogic concepts of water. Readers are given practical guidelines on how to save and respect water.

We have to get back to nature and natural living. We have to adopt the simple life and high thinking of our forefathers. Lead a simple, natural life. Be self-reliant. Reduce your wants. Be honest in your dealings. Develop noble qualities.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati



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