



A special issue for

Ganga Dasahava

Online Celebration

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Tapasyalayam
Ashram

Opening Prayer

*I come and sit still by your banks
O! Ganga, Our Mother Divine.
You purify my whole being
With your gentle touch.
You are 'Shakti'
The Universal Energy.
In your presence all my fears
And doubts get washed away.
From afar I hear the Divine Call
And my heart dances with joy.
It spreads its wings
And crosses all barriers
Touching the dim edge of eternity.
Non-Duality has become a reality
And Duality an Illusion!
How blessed I am, O Mother
To have come Home to the banks
Of wisdom and peace.*

Swamini Pramananda (Ammaji)

Ma Ganga – A Sacred Civilization

>>> Message by Ammaji

A Welcome address at "The Inner Dimension of Climate Change" – an International Conference in Rishikesh, hosted by Purna Vidya and Global Peace Initiative of Women.

“When we talk of protecting the environment, it means protecting the Spiritual India, protecting India’s sacred identity – the Ganga and the Himalayas. Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita – Among the rivers, I am Ganga and Among the immovables, I am the Himalayas. This is one living civilization – the Vedic Civilization, for whom Divinity lives in its land, the air, skies, waters, fire, earth, forests, trees, herbs, birds and animals! If the Ganga and the Himalayas is allowed to be polluted, the soul of India dies..!

As long as Ganga is free flowing Ganga she symbolizes the “uninterrupted” flow of our ancient civilization, our faith consciousness of the collective people of India, our civilizational identity, our generational identity, our Indian ethos, culture & is literally synonymous with Indian civilization. We must respect the sanctity of river Goddess Ganga & must not ignore her uniqueness. Preserving her natural flow and course is our responsibility. She is a very special and cannot be seen in the same way as other flows of water are seen. Why? Because She’s Ganga.

In King Akbar’s court, Birbal was asked – which is the most sacred river of India? He answered Yamuna. This was highly offensive and he was questioned, Birbal replied – Ó Majesty, you asked which is the most sacred river of India. Ganga is not a river – she is the Goddess of Knowledge. How can I compare the incomparable, with other rivers? This is Ganga – India’s National River! She is the living symbol of Spiritual India, and even today, thousands of years into the Vedic civilization, the river goddess is a vital and indispensable part of the Indian life.

It is on Her banks that India rose to its highest glory, and Her literary excellence. The Katopanisad was revealed here as a dialogue between Lord Yama and Naciketas, the longest poem of the world, Mahabharata happened here between sage Vyasa and Lord Ganesa. This is the place where yoga and meditations flourished in the life practices of the kings, sages and seekers. This is a land of penance of great sages like Atri, Anusuya, Rishisrnga, Markendeya, Jahnu rishi, and hundreds of others. The Himalayas is where the Gods – Sri Krishna and Sri Rama walked in human form. It is the land where spiritual beings exist, where human beings find communion with nature, where Gods speak to those who have learnt to listen – this is Devabhumi, the land of the Gods or life-forces of our planet.

The UN needs to declare the Himalayas and the Ganga as the World Heritage Site – infact, as ‘World Spiritual Site’, as they are the spiritual core of our planet. It is said God is Everywhere, alright. But his permanent abode is the Himalayas. It is here that spirituality lives cutting across time and space limitations, barriers of culture, religions, traditions, beliefs.

Our Vedic tradition, explains that the Ganges fell from heaven to earth and was caught on the head of Lord Shiva. This was to prevent the intense damage that the force of it would cause to the earth if it fell directly on to the planet. This took place at Gangotri, and much of the river water comes from underneath the Gangotri glacier. But the prayer rituals carried out at the water's edge may not last forever -- or even another generation, according to scientists and meteorologists.

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The Himalayan source of Hinduism's holiest river, they say, is drying up. Climate change could throw into turmoil something many devout Hindus thought was immutable: their most intimate religious traditions. The Gangotri glacier, which provides up to 70 percent of the water of the Ganges during the dry summer months, is shrinking at a rate of 40 yards a year, nearly twice as fast as two decades ago, scientists say. "This may be the first place on Earth where global warming could hurt our very religion. We are becoming an endangered species of Hindus,"

According to a U.N. climate report, the Himalayan glaciers that are the sources of the Ganges could disappear by 2030 as temperatures rise. The shrinking glaciers also threaten Asia's supply of fresh water. The World Wildlife Fund in March listed the Ganges among the world's 10 most endangered rivers. In India, the river provides more than 500 million people with water for drinking and farming. The immediate effect of glacier recession is a short-lived surplus of water. But eventually the supply runs out, and experts predict that the Ganges eventually will become a seasonal river, largely dependent on monsoon rains.

If the glacier at Gaumukh does continue to recede or melt away, and if the Ganges would ever cease its flow or begin to dry up, it would certainly mean the end of an era and a drastic affect on the Vedic spiritual culture as we have known it in India. Indeed, it would never be the same.

All the rituals and ceremonies related to faith and worship, is not complete without the waters of the Ganga. If She is not protected in Her original form, the loss of the Ganga will be like cutting the roots of our culture and wounding the Indian civilization as a whole. The loss will be immeasurable. The loss will be irreparable to the collective psyche and consciousness of the people as a whole and to the people of India in future generations.

In the Mahabharata, the river Goddess Ganga says "I will stay on earth as long as you address me with reverence and respect. I will release myself from the earth, should you chose to abuse me or find no use for my presence on the planet". Is this the prophecy coming true that Ganga will dry up, like river Saraswati?

Well, if the purity of Ganga is not protected by us, and if She is allowed to be polluted through sewage drains and dam projects, and tunnel projects, if we allow deforestation, tourism, etc. we will be responsible for converting the sacred river which is the icon of Spiritual India, to being a mere symbol of Secular India! Let us stop this Sacrilege! Let us drop such detrimental behaviors and reclaim our Spiritual Heritage of this sacred land and rediscover reverence for Ganga and Himalayas in our hearts!

On behalf of Purna Vidya, I extend a very warm and hearty welcome to all of you – to the abode of the Gods, to the banks of Goddess Ganga!
Namaskar!



In Mahabharata Ma Ganga Says "I will stay on earth as long as you address me with reverence and respect. I will leave the earth should you abuse me." Our mission is to honour the presence of Ma Ganga on earth and implore Her to stay with us always.

-Swamini Pramananda (Ammaji)



Waves of Ganga ...an Introduction

MaGanga is no ordinary river. She is venerated by millions around the world as a Goddess.

She descended from the heavens upon Earth through the locks of Lord Shiva. Just like our biological mothers, She has created lives, nourished all physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually, cradled the magnificent Vedic civilization and most pertinent of all – She is the heart beat of Sanatana Dharma.

Her glory has been revealed in the many shastras starting with the Vedas and perpetuated by many sages and great teachers. Devotees, hundreds and thousands of miles away from Her, revere Her, invoke and include Her in all Hindu rituals, and seek to take a holy bath in Her with hopes of absolving papas and hastening spiritual development. She pulls millions of devotees to Her sacred banks and blesses all with Her waters. She is Jñana-Ganga as She purifies us internally and externally with Her heritage of the Vedas that has emerged on Her banks.

Like any mother, She keeps giving in abundance, nurturing agriculture on Her alluvial fertile soil for millions of people.

People of India knew how to revere Her in Her Divine form and nature and continued to receive Her blessings for thousands of years.

However, in the recent past, we have not been treating Her kindly. We have lost sight of Her as Mother Goddess and have started abusing Her. We have been taking more than we should and in turn drying Her up, stunting Her flow with disastrous effects on all beings and defiling Her sanctity. We are hurting the heart of Sanatana Dharma and it is time that we be reminded of and celebrate Her Magnificence.

My reflections on 'Waves of Ganga' express the glorious beauty of Ganga Ma. The purpose of penning down these reflections is to awaken our awareness of Her importance to Sanatana Dharma and inevitably our identity. In seeing how each of us are inextricably connected to MaGanga, may we rise to protect Her and prevent any activity that might bring Her destruction.

Jai Ma Gange!



***O Bhagavati Gange! You are the essence of the three worlds,
the necklace of the earth. May you remove our ignorance that impels
us blindly to destroy your river-form. Guide us to honor and worship you
in your full glory as did our rishis of the past!***

-Swamini Pramananda (Ammaji)



Waves of Ganga ...our Spiritual Mother

In the Bhagavad Gita, describing His eminent manifestations in the universe, Lord Krishna says, “Among the waters, I am the Ganga.” Thus begins the divine origins of Ganga Ma. She was brought to earth due to king Bhagiratha’s penance. The king sought Her waters to absolve the ashes of his ancestors who had been cursed and burnt to ashes by the Sage Kapila. Her thunderous and potentially destructive descent was then buffered by the locks of Lord Shiva so that She was released as a river of blessing on earth.

Just like sweetness is to sugar, purity is to Ganga Ma. It is Her dharma, Her innate nature. The Atharva Veda 1.4.2 says “Amuryaa upa surye yaabhirvaa suryaha saha. Ta no hinvantvadhvaram” – meaning “Coming in touch with the Sun, purified waters along with the powers of the Sun, bring result of the Vedic rituals”. No Hindu ritual or ceremony is complete without Her water. Her water must be used in all temple consecrations. Even when Her water is not used in yajñas or pujas, She is invoked along with the six other Divine rivers. Every Hindu will partake of Her water at least once in a lifetime and strive to reach Her banks for that sacred dip. Many also throng to Her banks to dissolve the ashes of their loved ones in Her sacred water so that She may in Her great compassion purify and make easy the journey of the departed souls. Most Hindu homes will also have a pot of Her water in their puja altars as Her very presence sanctifies a home. Such is the power of Ganga Ma.

Like king Bhagiratha, all Hindus hope that with Her divine touch, all their papas are absolved and

their human lives made easier and the ascent to the heavens secured. The great Adi Shankara has exalted in the Ganga Stotram that Her waters are pure (“Tava Jalam Amalam”), that She has the power to remove all our papas, the results of our wrong actions (“Kalusha Vinashini”) and help us gain the supreme abode (“Paramapadam Khalu Tena Grhiitam”) and thus never taking a birth in a womb again (“Punarapi Jathare So’pi Na Jaataha”).

She is not only the giver of supreme abode, She is also the purifier of the many mental afflictions we have, which slow our spiritual development. Again in the Ganga Stotram, Adi Shankara tells us that She is the destroyer of the disease of ignorance ‘Rogam’ and the host of wrong thoughts ‘Kumati Kalapam’. She destroys our ignorance through knowledge. She is the giver of knowledge. The Yajur, Sama and Atharva Veda were revealed to rishis living on and near Her sacred banks.

She cradled the great Vedic civilization that then, through the many years have transmitted the Divine knowledge of the Veda through the many well-established and unbroken Vedic teaching traditions. That is why even today gaining that knowledge and eradicating that ignorance of one's true Self is not a remote possibility.

Just sitting on Her banks in the Himalayas brings a calmness and stillness to the mind. Despite the roaring sound of Her movement, one hears only silence within. Like a mother, sitting by Her gives us assurance and a calmness that is then conducive for the contemplation of who I really am. This ultimate gift of knowledge is only possible through the grace and compassion of Devi Ganga Ma.

We must respect the sanctity of river Ganga and must not ignore its uniqueness, considering which She has been recognized as our “national river”. She is a special river and preserving her natural flow and course is our responsibility.

-Swamini Pramananda (Ammaji)



Waves of Ganga ...the Giver of Life

The Shatapatha Brahmana 6.2.2.2 says “Aapo va sarvasya jagatah pratishta“ meaning “The main cause of the life cycles on our planet is water”. Ganga Ma through Her sacred waters gives, sustains and takes life. She has blessed the Earth with countless majestic and extraordinary lifeforms with Her waters. She sustains and nourishes dizzying array of species, from the tiniest microscopic organisms to the large mammals like elephants, rhinos and the Sundarbans tigers. The Ganga basin drains an area of approximately 1,086,000 square kilometres, the fifth largest in the world. It spans the countries Tibet, India, Nepal, and Bangladesh and supports at least a tenth of the world’s population, making it the most populated basin in the world.

All humans living on the basin depend on Ganga Ma and the various lifeforms for survival. As She tumbles carefree from the daunting Himalayan slopes and races through the Indian subcontinent to make Her way to the Bay of Bengal, Her fresh and clean waters are sources of drinking water for all species. Her waters carry nutrient-rich silt from the Himalayan slopes which then sustain the growth of paddy fields and other vegetables. The flowers which bloom on Her plains attract honey bees which then make precious honey,

a priced commodity for the human inhabitants. In the lower plains, fishermen rely on the waters of Ganga Ma to earn their living. Ganga Ma is both a biological and economic provider. Each lifeform has an important role in the intricate and organised ecosystem supported by Ganga Ma. Her nourishment of all beings shows us that all lifeforms have an equal right to existence on this planet and that man is part of this ecosystem, not the kings or owners of it who can rampantly possess the various gifts of Ganga Ma. This knowledge is humbling.

Our role is to respect all lifeforms, protect them and be custodians of this ecosystem. We should be respectful of what we take from Her and take it in moderation without upsetting the vulnerable ecosystem. The people whose lives depend on Her know this and respect Her and all beings supported by Her. Every living moment is in prayerful attitude towards the Mother, who gives them all and yet can take away all in the blink of an eye. No day is complete without the Ganga Arati where lighted camphor is offered to Ganga Ma with deep devotion, exuberant prayers and songs. Such is the reverence and devotion to be cultivated for Ganga Ma.

Jai Ganga Maiyya!



Ma Ganga reached the earth plane from the kamandalu of Brahma, flowing down to the feet of Lord Vishnu, and reaching the matted locks of Lord Shiva. My mother is that unique Goddess, who holds the power of the Trinity!

-Swamini Pramananda (Ammaji)



Waves of Ganga ...the Defiling & Desecration

When Ganga Ma first descended from the feet of Lord Vishnu, she descended with such destructive force that had to be buffered by Lord Shiva. Despite trickling through the locks of the Lord, She still tumbles and weaves Her way with force through the Indian subcontinent's landmass. Such is the nature of Ganga Ma. In Her carefree tumbles, She dislodges massive boulders and thus carries precious minerals from these rocks which then fertilises the soil plains in the lower altitudes. As it is the inherent nature of other rivers, Hers also is to race free and uninhibited to the sea. Wherever She goes, She washes away the impurities of the land and gives birth to life. The Vedas taught us over the generations that "Aapo vai Pavitram" (Kataka Samhita 8.8) meaning, "Water is the purifier of the universe".

However, many of us instead of respecting Her rapidly flowing sacred water, have exploited Her very nature by building hydro-electric dams along Her course. In doing so, the greed for hydro-electric power to power to consumeristic society, has stunted Her flow and caused downstream destruction. The dams in the Himalayan region slow Her flow and render Her unable to erode rocks and transport the precious minerals and salts to the lower plains. Her slower flow and diversion into dam tunnels means that areas originally inundated by Her abundance are now going dry. This unnatural aridness kills many beings and destroys the livelihoods of many people who depend on Her presence. The force with which She used to carry away impurities is now blunted and She stagnates where She should be running free. She is unable to carry away the impurities and pollution and Her waters once upon a time pure, have become polluted. Ganga Ma, the bearer of the gift of life and knowledge now bears diseases in many areas.

The very waters that people intensely craved to take their holy bath and place on their lips, are now viewed with scepticism and make many recoil. Also, the heavy and destructive construction work that goes into building the dams causes massive cracks in the earth's surface and resultant landslides, which force many villagers to vacate their homes for fear of their own safety.

Along with the many damaging projects, Ganga Ma is being beaten and bruised by the global warming. Indiscriminate industrial practices in India and around the world are slowly heating up the atmosphere. As a result of this climate change, the glacier above Gangotri, from which the Ganges River starts, is retreating rapidly. As the glacier melts, it means that the source of the river is depleting and Ganga Ma is drying up. Countless lives are clamouring for Her life-giving waters and dying too. The rich ecosystem that once existed is now dying. Many species of plants and animals that once flourished on the Gangetic plains and sustained human lives are now lost forever. Many areas along Her banks where sadhus and the rishis used to sit and meditate and reveal the knowledge of the universe and God are now dried up and gone.

Along with the many damaging projects and global climate change, the rapid shift from agrarian to industrial consumeristic societies has made many greedy and view Ganga Ma as just another river through which they can earn more money. Rampant tourism and increased access to the previously remote hills and mountains through which She runs mean that the human population density has increased vastly.


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Many of these visitors care nothing about Her sacredness and pollute her waters thus destroying the many lifeforms in her waters and putting to danger those who rely on her to nourish them. In creating more spaces for tourism in the Gangetic plains, precious lives are destroyed. The silence and calmness on Her banks is rapidly being replaced by the cacophony of the human masses. Ganga Ma's rapid destruction is threatening the Vedic civilization. She is at the core of Sanatana Dharma. She is the mother who anchors millions of Hindus around the world in their rituals, ceremonies, knowledge and identity. However, Her polluted waters make many question Her purity and sanctity. This growing scepticism is deeply damaging the psyche of the Hindu.

How can one invoke the sacred goddess during a puja when at the back of the mind the thought of her polluted water lingers? How can one immerse in Her waters for the purifying bath when Her brown and murky waters lap at one's feet with dead carcasses floating in the distance?

One has to realize that this is no fault of Ganga Ma. All blame lies on us. Instead of being the custodians of this Mother and Her children, we are abusing her. We are damaging Her inherent nature and defiling her sanctity. In killing Her, we are killing us. But all is not lost. We can come together to fight for Her preservation, Her sanctity, what remains of Her ecosystem and the continued survival of the sacred Vedic civilization.

On this sacred day of Ganga-Dasahara, let us make a Pledge to Ma Ganga that as true children of this sacred soil, we shall respect and protect Her waters, Her land, Her mountains, forests and the living beings of Her natural world.



***Stop commodification of earth's resources!
Today water, forests, minerals and lands are exploited
to feed the greed of a few,
rather than to nurture life and enhance the wellbeing of the whole.***

-Swamini Pramananda (Ammaji)



Waves of Ganga ...our pledge for Ma Ganga

O Mother, today we come together as your children.

*We take this pledge to protect your purity, honour your sanctity,
love you and restore you to your full glory.*

*Forgive us for our greed, selfishness and ignorance.
Forgive us for all the damages we have caused to you and nature.*

*From this moment, we refuse to participate in activities
that damage your beauty and form and nature around you.*

We will not allow others to hurt you and nature's glory.

*We shall leave no stone unturned to bring you back
to your old glory, and honour you, the Goddess that you are,
as our ancestors did.*

*As children of this soil, we also pledge to protect our land,
its rivers, its lush green trees and its majestic mountains.*

*You are our Goddess Mother, please be with us.
Continue to guide our lives and to nourish us.*

You are our very life essence. If we lose you, we lose ourselves.

*Please Mother, give us the strength and courage
to honour our pledge.*

Jai MaGanga!

– from Purna Vidya Family

Protect life in and around her!

-Swamini Pramananda (Ammaji)

Reflection from a Disciple



Somewhere in the Himalayan Hamlet...
Serene, divine and mesmerizing,
Are synonyms for this beautiful place,
A small Himalayan hamlet,
'Netala,' is the name.
I wonder, if heaven is the same.

Unperturbed and untroubled,
'Tapasayalam' is the ashram.
Tall snow-capped mountains, surrounding it,
Flowing Bhagirathi with its gushing water
adorning it,
Composed and unruffled is the greenery,
Maple, cedar, oak, deodar enhancing it.

Such a heavenly place.
The very thought of quitting, just cannot be traced.
Serene, divine and mesmerizing is this place.

The ashram is like a second home, Imparting,
'Purna Vidya,'The Vedic mystical knowledge,
Keeping alive our spiritual quest,
Which we have forgotten and need to awaken to.

Leading to this path is none other,
Than my beloved guardian mother, 'Ammaji',
Whose message for us is, "Make non-duality
a reality, so that duality becomes an illusion."
May all of us actualize this beautiful vision.

A Small temple of 'Mother Ganga,'
Tucked into a little cave,
is the most precious part of this blissful place.
To be here, I always dream and crave.
Oh! How I wish to visit this place again,
To be in this space permanently
back again.



-Aparna Patwardhan Bhat

A Glimpse of Purna Vidya's Seva in Ganga Valley since 2005

Purna Vidya has touched the lives of many families and villages along the Ganga belt for the last 15 years through:

1-EDUCATION

- Balika-vidya-danam/scheme, which supports girl child in education for those girls who have excelled academically in government schools and seek financial support is a project conducted annually during Ganga-dasahara festival.
- Educational projects for underprivileged children such as providing school fees, books, uniforms, daily tuitions and nutritious meal in the evening, is integral to ashram's continued service to the surrounding villages.
- Sustaining of Village Schools that face challenges to sustain economically making sure that children of the Ganga valley are not denied basic education.





2-ANNADANAM -Food Charity

Annadanam for the village children has been an integral part of Food distribution project, in addition to the Annadanam conducted during cultural festivals and natural disasters.



3-WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Women Empowerment projects generate income for women by knitting caps, mufflers and making paper bags and other items.



In addition, sewing machines and knitting machines are bought for offering three month trainings to the village girls.



4-ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS



Ganga-se-ghar-tak project creates an awareness on Gangetic belt for protection of the purity and maintenance of hygiene from Ganga banks up to the village. This includes providing Environmental Sign-Boards along Ganga-belt from Gangotri to Uttarkashi for honoring the sacred culture of Gangetic.



An awareness campaign was created in 2015 and continued till the Pandemic. Cleaning Project of Varnavrat Mountain of Uttarkashi was conducted as a Youth Program during the Varnavrat Yatra, a 21-km Pilgrimage of the sacred Mountain's holy shrines.



5-NATIONAL CALAMITIES

Relief & Rehabilitation: During Kedarnath National Calamity in 2013, Purna Vidya was first to reach many remote villages and provide the families with relief materials such as tents, food, clothes and medicines. Over a thousand families in villages such as Didsari, Maneri, Gangori, Bukki, Baina, Lonthru, Ongi, Netala, Siror and so on were supported and many of them were rehabilitated.

In addition, during Uttarkashi Cloud Burst in 2012, Purna Vidya supported many families around Gangori in distribution of relief materials such as food and clothes. Medical Relief was also conducted for the villagers during the first six months of the calamities.



6-GODANAM: GIFTING OF COWS -in Charity



During the winter of 2018 over 300 cows were left lifeless due to severity of winter months and heavy snowfalls in the seven villages of Gangotri belt of Uppala Taknaur. Seventy five cows were donated to affected families in Ganeshpur, Sukki, Jhala, Jaspur, Purali, Dharali, Cholmi, Mukhva villages for their agricultural use and their food economy was revived.



7-MA GANGA

*A Call of the Great Goddess
Mother, on whose banks
Ammaji lived and wrote the
23 book series
on Spiritual Culture of India
over 30 years ago...*



*...and offered the world
'Purna Vidya',
a life package
on Self-Awakening
programs!*



8-FESTIVALS and Awareness Programs

Cultural festivals that bring celebration and harmony among villagers such as: Ganga Dasahara Temple Festival, Navaratri Puja Festival, and cultural awareness are annual programs of Purna Vidya in the villages of the Gangetic belt. Every year, Tapasyalayam Ashram invites hundreds of villagers and conducts Ma-Ganga awareness programs highlighting the Sanctity and purity of the land and the civilization.



9-NAGDEVATA

The Sacred Culture of India which emerged and was nurtured along Gangetic valley since thousands of years, continues to be a living truth in the daily lives of the villages with the Nagdevatas, other Devatas and Devis of the Himalayan villages.



Join us!

...inconnecting to the Natural World of Sacred Ganga and the Towering Himalayas, by participating in PURNA VIDYA'S Projects and receiving the Blessings of the Celestial World!

Closing Prayer

From the lap of Tapasyalayam

By the banks of Bhagirathi-Ganga

You come into manifestation

O! Mother Divine

In the form of Ganga Dhyana Mandir.

Your energy pervades everywhere

Your blessings flow continuously

Blessing one and all

Who seek it truly

And take refuge in You.

Your essence of Divine Knowledge

Pours out in Your message of 'Purna Vidya'

Teaching the Oneness of Life

and Universal Dharma.

Swamini Pramananda (Ammaji)

