

LIVING *the* WISDOM *of* MOTHER GAṄGĀ

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inspired and creative, I remembered my friend, Gaṅgā! I returned to her, but this time with my

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suitcases ready for a more extended stay. Anxious to meet her, I rushed to my old playground but was awed by what I saw. My friend had now grown into a beautiful maiden! I was no longer her playmate. This beautiful, radiant presence of a goddess named Gaṅgā acknowledged my visit and invited me to sit by her side.

As I sat by her bank and watched her flow, I was stunned by the beauty of her form. Her graceful flow of water had a gentle rhythm that quietened my mind and remained absorbed within. I saw that her pure and delicate form was clothed in blue waters. As days passed, she would change to golden robes, while on full moon nights, she preferred to appear in glittering white robes. During the sunset hour, she remained draped in reddish-orange robes, while at other times, she wore multicolored attire!

She truly was the queen mother of the Himālayas! Her royal robes were adorned with ornaments that had stunning beauty. At sunrise, she adorned herself with glittering gold, but by noon, she would change her embellishments to pearls and diamonds. When darkness fell, reflecting in the moonlight, she wore strands of shining silver! In every single form, she was the most beautiful and enchanting divine goddess that I had ever seen!

With this insight from my mother goddess, the inner dichotomy resolved and I felt the weight of my thought cobweb disappear from my shoulders. The more I moved into my inner space of unconditional love, the closer I felt to my divine mother. I began to see life itself as a miracle. The miracle of conception, birth, growth, existence, and death became acceptable to me. Reverence and gratitude for the earth emerged from my heart as it is Mother Earth who provided me with all that I needed for my earthly life.

I now began to long for an earthly existence in the immortal realms. The call had come from my divine mother. I did not see any reason anymore to embrace my old identities whether as a renunciate, writer, or spiritual guide for others. All I wanted was to reach her abode. I left for the Himālayas, the devabhūmi, the land of the gods, to be with my goddess Gaṅgā.

This was my final journey, and while I would travel alone, I knew I would never be alone. The millions of stars in the sky would accompany me, the trees would give me shade and shelter, and my mother goddess would never leave me hungry. But I wondered how I would communicate with mother Gaṅgā as I journeyed along the riverside! I only knew the vaikharī language, the fourth level of speech known to humans in their waking state, and I knew my mother Gaṅgā would not speak vaikharī with me. Her divine voice was unique and had been heard, at times, as forceful and gushing; sometimes, it had been hushed; at other times, her serene rhythmic flow with multiple tones and pitches, carried a power of sound that I had heard or felt nowhere else.

I knew that connectivity with my divine mother would be free from all known languages of the earth. My journey with her became mysterious, as she taught me to understand the miracle called 'life!' As I began to think of mother Gaṅgā, I found that she thought of me too. As I walked one step toward the goddess, the goddess took ten steps toward me. Over time, I began to realize that my frequency of thoughts had begun to vibrate in rhythm with the frequency of her divine presence, and thus began yet another silent journey into the land of gods.

dialogue with them.

The camp doctor repeatedly warned us, pilgrims, not to enter the Mānasarovar waters for the sacred dip as the lake was frozen. I could not resist the call of Ādiśakti! I went towards the lake in the biting cold April

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weather and stepped on the ice sheet. Lo and behold! It cracked, and my feet went deep into what appeared to be 'sinking mud!'



I could not resist going deeper into the lake till I could take a dip! With the first dip, it was as though my body and brain froze. With great will, I managed a second dip, feeling needle pricks all over myself. By the time I completed my third, I found myself absolutely numb in thought, word, and action! I could not even turn around to return to the bank. I knew I needed help, and there was not a soul in the vicinity. Suddenly, I noticed long weeds in the marshy waters reaching up to the bank. I grabbed a bunch with each hand and, taking their support, slowly managed to reach the bank.

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I turned around to offer my salutations to the sacred

Every individual's life is intertwined and inseparable from the animate and the inanimate world. Each one nourishes the other, and functioning in unison, they

keep the cosmic wheel in motion. With their insights and sensitivity, humans propitiate gods and gods nourish and protect all living beings. This harmonious relationship fulfills the mandate of Īśvara and guides an individual to his ultimate fulfillment.

In the absence of the above attitude towards life, what else could be the outcome other than the sad life stories shared by the villagers. I patiently sat and heard story after story while the villagers continued to share their grievances with me.

In one of their stories, they said, “When we get indications from our devatā regarding some unforeseen disasters, they also tell us what to do to minimize its impact where possible. Once, we were told that lord Yama was coming with Bhairava, and to appease them, offer aṣṭa-bali. We did, and in spite of a major earthquake, where stones and boulders came rolling down, no damage occurred in the village.”

My heart sang:

I come and sit still by your banks

O! Gaṅgā, Our Mother divine.

You purify my whole being

With your gentle touch.

You are 'śakti'

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.

I dance in joy as I live with my mother goddess, protecting the sanctity of her banks, trusting that in her flow, would flow the spiritual knowledge through me in the same undistorted, undiluted, free-flowing, natural course without any diversions or degradation, as it is meant to be.

What a paradox of life – that time chose to gift me the timeless, making my own time-bound existence an illusion. The veil that had made duality into a reality had now begun to fade away, as oneness revealed itself as the only radiant living Truth of all that is. The presence of the river goddess, with her spiritual traditions and culture, has become my life today.

My interactions with the village people and their devatās had also left a deep imprint on me. I finally saw the truth of divinity walking on this earth realm, protecting, loving, and nurturing all life forms. Divinity gives and sustains and, if need be, metes out punishments to bring back order and justice in the universe. If we understand this, we will think twice before doing any action.

Would the day come when divinity would stop living amidst us, as the villagers fear? My heart shudders to think so, for that would mean that we would also lose mother Gaṅgā and her celestial worlds forever!

I turned around to offer my salutations to the sacred waters and the long weeds in gratitude for returning me to life again.

I could not believe what I saw!

The tall weeds had disappeared.

There were no weeds to be seen!

All that existed were the shimmering crystal-clear waters of Mānasarovar! Could I have hallucinated seeing the weeds? How was that possible? I had grabbed them for my survival and returned to the bank. The world of atoms and molecules was truly so transient that they could be moved around as per divine will.

Nāga Kings from ancient times rule in some places. They are – Śeṣa-nāg, Nāganāth, Puṣkar-nāg, Bhekal-nāg, Takṣak-nāg, Vāsuki-nāg, Lodiya-nāg, Kālīya-nāg, Sindūri-nāg, Mahasar-nāg, and Hun-nāg.

The Nāgadevatā seen in the Bhāgīrathī belt of Gaṅgā is inseparable from its village community. The deity reflects the consciousness of the village community, and it is the community that forms the village. It has a specific abode, such as a palanquin or ḍoli, made of wood and stone, that is kept in a temple.

At times of great need, such as when an individual is particularly very ill or when the village is facing an impending danger of drought, and the individual, the family, or the entire village requires divine intervention, the powers of a Nāgadevatā may be transformed into that of another higher deity, to bring relief to them. At other times, the Nāgadevatās help individuals dealing with agricultural and family crises, civic disputes, infertility, and disease.

As in family relations, the villagers' life is intertwined in honoring the relationships with the Nāgadevatā. Their self is defined in their interconnectedness to the devatā as life itself. In fact, the daily interactions with the Nāgadevatās have given these villagers a great privilege in life. They live in the spirit of deep

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connectivity and a sense of belonging to their devatā, while the devatā, too, permeates these people's lives.

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