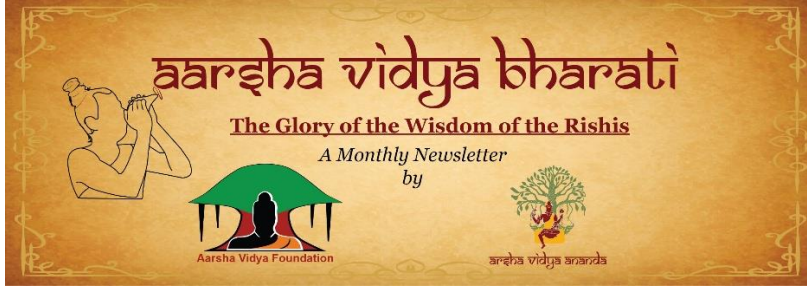

Aarsha Vidya Bharati - June 2022

Jyeshtha - Ashadha 2079

A monthly newsletter that will bring you more happiness, more wisdom and more freedom



This is one of many articles from our monthly newsletter. Access the [June 2022 issue](#) or read any of [the articles](#).

Living Our Traditions

By Swamini Brahmajnananda

Ganga Dassera

We celebrate Ganga Dassera on **9th June** this year, the day Ganga descended on earth to bless us all. Millions will have a dip in Ganga ji with the *śraddhā* that their *pāpa* will be washed off. Those who live away from Ganga ji will sprinkle a drop or two on themselves from the Ganga jal at home.

Before bathing we invoke the grace of the seven sacred rivers, saptasindhu by chanting this shloka -

गङ्गे च यमुने चैव गोदावरि सरस्वति ।
नर्मदे सिन्धु कावेरि जलेऽस्मिन् संनिधिं कुरु ॥
*gaṅge ca yamune caiva godāvāri sarasvati /
narmade sindhu kāveri jale `smin sannidhiṁ kuru //*

O Holy Rivers Ganga and Yamuna, and also Godavari and Saraswati. O holy rivers Narmada, Sindhu and Kaveri please be present in this water (and make it sacred)

Ganga is revered as most sacred and worshipped as Devi, a consort of *Bhagavān* Shiva. *Bhagavān* Krishna says – *Srotasāmasmi Jāhnavī*, Among the rivers I am Ganga.

She originates from Gomukh, the Gangotri glacier of the Western Himalayas and flows 2704 kilometers into the Bay of Bengal at Gangasagar. Gangotri, where a temple is dedicated to her, is one of the Chardhams. All along her course, devotees have a ceremonial dip in her waters, offer *arghyam* to our ancestors and to the devatas, by cupping the water in our hands, lifting it and allowing it to fall back into the waters. We offer flowers and in recent times, people float shallow diyas filled with oil and lighted wicks. On our return from Ganga, we carry some water for our use in our rituals. Devotees look forward to returning to her lap to meditate and perform *sādhana*-s.



Scientists consider the purity and efficacy of her water due to millions of viruses (bacteriophages) that consume pathogenic bacteria. This virus is always present in the water

and can survive for thousands of years even without food. Unlike water from other sources, Ganga water does not spoil for years when preserved.

You can revel in the meaning of Ganga Stotram by Jagadguru Adi Shankaracharya [here](#) where Swamini Brahmajnananda explains the meaning while sitting on Ganga ji's banks. Jai Jai Gange.

Vata Savitri Purnima

Married women will also celebrate Vata Savitri Purnima on **14th June**, by fasting and praying for the long lives of their husbands. The legend from the Mahabharata, of Savitri bringing her husband Satyavan back to life through her tapas and her dialogue with Lord Yama is celebrated. It is not clear why the term 'Sati Savitri' is often used to disparagingly refer to a devoted woman. Especially when you read what follows.

Before marrying him, Savitri was told that her husband to be would die in a year's time but she is adamant and they are married. The morning of Satyavan's predicted death, he is splitting wood and suddenly becomes weak and lays his head in Savitri's lap and dies. Savitri places his body under the shade of a *Vat* (Banyan) tree. Yama, the god of Death, comes to claim



him. Savitri follows him and Yama impressed by her love for her husband and words offers her any boon except the life of Satyavan. Savitri first asks for eyesight and restoration of the kingdom for her father-in-law, then a hundred children for her father, and then a hundred children for herself and Satyavan. The last wish creates a dilemma for Yama, as it would indirectly grant the life of Satyavan. Impressed by Savitri's dedication and purity, he offers her one more chance to choose any boon, but this time omitting 'except for the life of Satyavan'. Savitri instantly asks for Satyavan to return to life. Yama grants life to Satyavan and blesses Savitri's life with ever-lasting happiness. And so, even in current times, across the country, millions will

perform Puja at the Vata (banyan) tree, tie threads around the tree and pray for their husband's long life.

What a beautiful expression of love and care for the husband which continues with the *śraddhā* of women across generations. In modern times some people may think of these customs as outdated but what is outdated about such love for the partner that with her tapas and words, she snatches him from the jaws of death? What is outdated about having the courage to face Yama and not be scared but thoughtfully ask for what mattered to her - family? Something to think about.

[Subscribe](#) | aarshavidyabharati@gmail.com | [Aarsha Vidya Foundation](#) | [Arsha Vidya Ananda](#) | [SHINE](#)